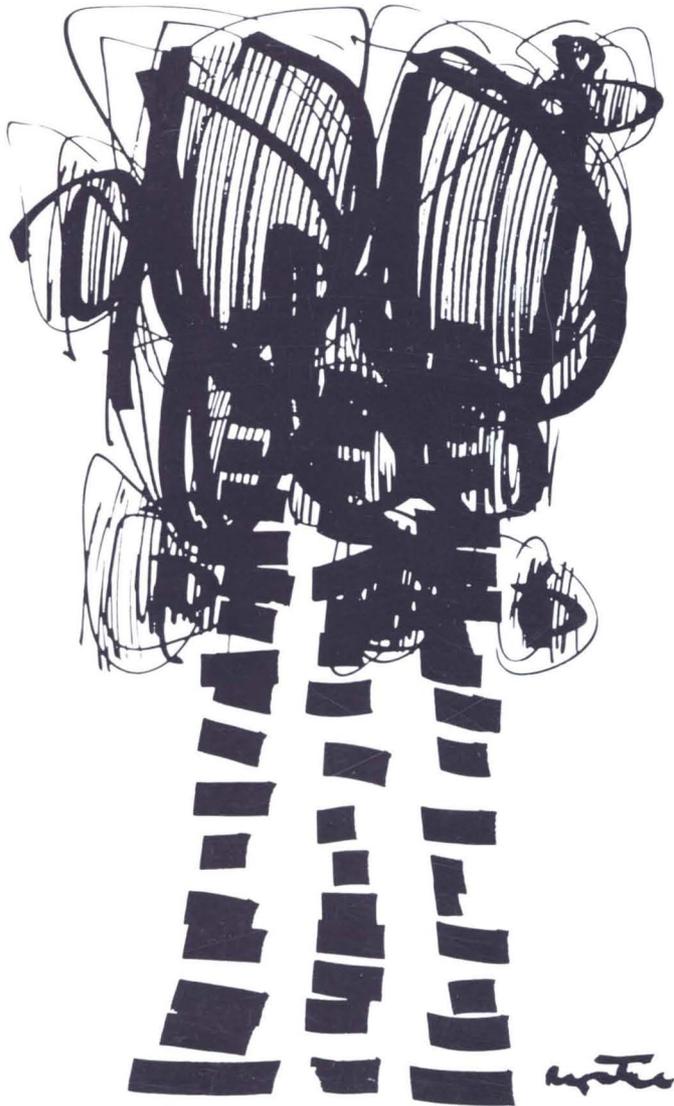


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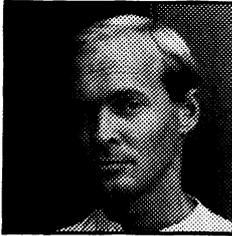
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WESTERLY

a quarterly review

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Drawings on cover and inside this issue were entries for the 1984 Fremantle Prize for Drawing exhibited at the Fremantle Art Gallery for the Festival of Perth in February 1984.

Cover: Stanislaus Rapotec, *Furies* 1984, India ink 63.5 × 48 cm.

p. 4 Jan Senbergs, *Around Port* 1983, pastel 80 × 120 cm. Senbergs' pastel was awarded the Fremantle Prize for Drawing for 1984.

p. 24 Alun Leach-Jones, *The Drowning Pool* 1984, charcoal 104 × 66 cm.

p. 38 Robert Birch, *Firebreak* 1984, charcoal, ink and wash 85.5 × 109 cm.

Drawings of banksias (pp. 14, 20, 64) and eucalypt (p. 58) by David Hutchison.

WESTERLY

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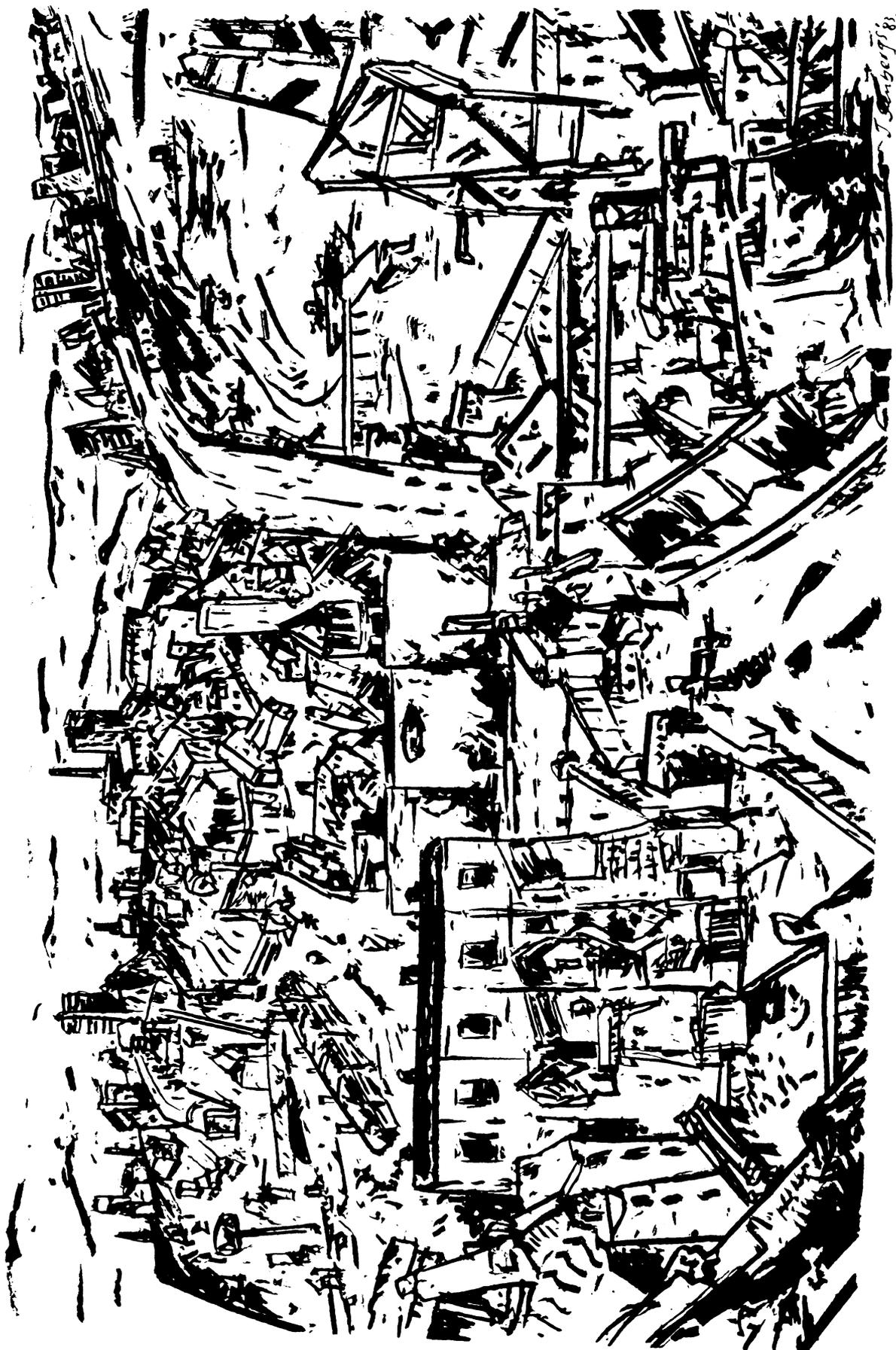
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J. S. Berg 1881

MERYL THOMPSON

Taking the Bus

"When do you have to be there?"

"One-thirty."

"I'll drive you."

"No. You're busy with that. Besides, you have to be there yourself at three."

"I'll make two trips."

"No, you won't. I'll catch a bus. And meet you at five. We'll come home together."

"Are you sure?" But she could see he was glad of the chance to keep on working.

"Of course I'm sure. The bus is fine. Besides, I'll be doing it for Australia."

"What?"

"You know. The petrol ads."

"Oh." They both laughed. He hardly noticed when she left.

It was a while since she had caught the bus. There had been at least one fare increase.

So she stood beside the driver and told him her destination.

"The University, please."

"Just a minute," he said, thinking. It seemed to be difficult for him.

"It's on the other side of the city. Bradford Park," she added, to be helpful.

"Yes," he said, as if he, of all people, knew that perfectly well. He was a bus driver.

But still he hesitated.

Perhaps there's been a recent change in fares, she thought. Or they've changed the zones again.

The bus rumbled on.

Finally, he said to her, very quietly, she thought, "\$4.60."

"What?"

"\$4.60." His voice was very low, almost conspiratorial.

She looked hard at his face. But his eyes were straight on the road.

"That's impossible!"

He made no response whatever.

"No bus fare is \$4.60. Not in the metropolitan area."

He shrugged. "You're going quite a way."

"No, I'm not. Not very far at all." She could feel herself being drawn into something ridiculous.

“Look,” she said, keeping her voice as reasonable as possible. “You must have some kind of paper, some official list. . . . Can’t you check?”

For a time he just kept driving, watching the road ahead of him. Then he started rummaging around on the floor beside him, and finally produced a sheet printed in clear, multi-colours.

Now we should get some sense out of him, she thought.

But for a while he simply looked at the chart, as if it were a photograph or a drawing, but mostly he watched the road. She wanted to snatch it away, find the relevant section and thrust it under his nose.

Then, when he stopped to let some passengers down, he began to study it properly, for the information it contained. He started at the top, and seemed to be reading every word, every detail, with great care.

He started the bus moving again, through the traffic.

For heaven’s sake, she wanted to scream, either read the damned thing or watch the road. Not both.

At last he seemed to reach the bottom of the sheet. He turned it over to check the other side, as if it were something he had never seen before. There was nothing there. It was blank. He turned the page over once more.

My God, she thought. He’s going to start reading it again. But, no. There was a difference. He rested the sheet on his knee and began to move his index finger slowly down the page, stopping at the figures. He seemed to be calculating.

Oh no, she thought. Aloud she said to him, “It’s not cumulative. You don’t have to add them up. Each figure is for the total distance. It’s a zone fare. You must know that.”

He did not seem to be paying any attention to her. There was silence between them, a stalemate silence. He knows I’m right, she thought. So why doesn’t he say something.

Watching the road, he spoke very quietly.

“What shall I do about the other passengers?”

“What do you mean? Have you charged them high fares, too?”

It was as if nothing had passed between them. At last she turned and faced the other people in the bus. They were trying not to look at her, not to notice anything. She raised her voice and spoke out at them.

“Has the bus driver charged you extra? Anyone? Has anyone paid more than usual for this ride?”

Some of them did look at her, but their faces were immobile, unrecognizing. They’re as mad as he is, she thought.

She appealed at those immediately in front of her.

“Have you paid more for your ticket today? You! And you? Did you pay extra for your ticket to this man?”

A couple of women and one man nodded, but almost imperceptibly. Encouraged just enough, she looked at the passengers further down the bus.

“Come on. Have you paid more for this ride than you should have? Oh, for heaven’s sake, speak out. Say something!”

The frustration was obvious in her voice. A few more nodded, apparently guilty at having left her high and dry. But there was no anger in their faces, no sense of having been cheated.

What on earth is the matter with everybody, she thought. Sitting there, knowing they’ve paid too much. Sheep, the lot of them. Perhaps they would respond like sheep.

“Look!” She was almost shouting now. “If you paid too much, put your hand up.”

A couple of hands went up, half-way. A few more followed. But it was nothing like a show of strength.

“Well, you *are* going to report it, aren’t you?”

But most of them were looking down now. Even those who were still watching her face seemed mildly curious rather than supportive.

She turned her back to them, ready to confront the driver again.

“Well?” she said.

“\$4.60.”

“Don’t be stupid. You can’t win with me. I’m not going to give you \$4.60. Unless you tell me some reasonable amount, I simply won’t pay at all.”

The bus went on, stopping occasionally to let off some passengers. But no-one got on. No-one to stand beside her and argue with him. She wanted to sit down. This was making her tired.

“Look. My husband travels in to the city by bus from Summerton Beach every day. It costs 70 cents. I’m not going anyway near as far as that. It can’t be more than 70 cents.”

He totally ignored her logic.

“I’m not going to pay \$4.60 for this ride, and that’s final. What’s more, I’m going to report you to the Transport Authority. What’s your name? And your number? You *are* properly registered with them, I suppose.”

He pointed to a metal number badge on his left lapel. She felt around in her handbag for a pen and a piece of paper.

“4273,” he said, quietly, giving her the information as she wrote, but not as if to assist her. “8 to 3 shift.”

“And what’s your name?”

“You don’t need my name. My number will do.”

“But I want it.”

“No.”

“Why won’t you give me your name. I’m quite happy to tell you mine.” Like a bargain. Show him there was nothing to be afraid of, exchanging names. Even under these circumstances.

He didn’t move.

“Mine’s Stafford,” she said. “Lois Stafford. Okay? Now, I’ve told you my name.”

“No.”

“Right. 4273. Wednesday, February 10th. 8 to 3 shift.” She had to impress upon him her determination, her business-like way of dealing with things. “I *will* report you, you know. Don’t imagine for a moment that I won’t do it.”

And she walked down into the body of the bus to take a seat. Most of the passengers had already gone, getting off at different places while she had been arguing at the front of the bus.

Before long, she was approaching her stop. She moved to the centre door as requested by the signs. Besides, she could not face the thought of standing beside that madman again. She had said everything she was going to say to him.

Two other women were also waiting ready to leave the bus at her stop. One of them pulled the cord. But the bus swept on, straight past the stop.

“Pull it again,” Lois said. “He can’t ignore us.”

They pulled the cord again, and then again as the next stop came up. But the bus went on.

Lois went into a cold sweat. He wants me to stay on the bus, she thought. If he keeps on going, to the terminus, he thinks I’ll have to come back with him. He wants to keep me on the bus. He thinks that soon there’ll be nobody left but me, and I’ll have to travel back with him on an empty bus.

“It’s because of me,” she said. “He won’t stop because he thinks it’s for me. Call out to him. Both of you. We’ll all call out. If he knows it’s not just for me, he’ll stop.”

They all shouted, "Stop the bus!"

Finally, he did. Four stops to walk back. The other two women looked at her, hostile, blaming her for the inconvenience, and walked off fast ahead of her.

Lois stood, watching the back of the bus, watching it get smaller and smaller, getting lost among the other traffic. She looked at her watch. She would be too late now. She might as well go home. She should get there before Bill left for his lecture. Besides, she could not face up to her group now. All that jolly camaradie. It would be just too strange after this.

A real physical tiredness settled on her limbs. She crossed the road. The bus stop had a shelter and a seat. She would sit there and wait for the bus to come back. It wouldn't take long. The terminus was only a couple of stops further on down the road. The driver would only have to turn the bus around, and then he would be coming back.

SHANE McCAULEY

Ibis in a rose garden

We walked in from the smell of marigolds
And saw this small anachronistic god
At his meditations, strutting, stylus beak
Probing the earth from time to time as if
Hungry for secrets; here was Thoth
Himself, lost out of Egypt, dignified,
Nobody's manchild this one, his tread
Soft in the ooze of evening's humidity.
We came too close, our humility suspect.
In cumbersome flight he left us, left
Us searching in the swift twilight,
Went time-travelling across the water,
Beyond the roses and the monuments,
Went somewhere to become motionless
Once more on the frieze of his night,
Delicate and ancient. Only we knew
That in previous stillness, by the lake,
Under the roses, a god had walked.

GLYN PARRY

Saigon Daze

Outside . . . a normal afternoon. The rush hour. A city breaking loose from within. Cars, movement, people . . . an uninterrupted motion of thoughts and ideas. Someone singing Bob Dylan in the mall.

Remember they made you a promise? Johnno and the boys. Before any of this. That Friday night, live music rubbing into walls, against bodies, slipping past conversation. Remember? How Johnno shouted that last beer, and someone pulled their trousers down? How they dobbed him in, the whole place breaking up, lights coming on, and later, out on the street, Johnno fast-talking the rookie cop while young Alan threw up in the laneway? Laughter and obscenities climbing from the throats of V8's, to be crushed by the thrill of rubber: lassos falling short of the moon. Remember a time before they marched you out of the surf and into the bellies of their tin pot gods and green? You were young. Hot sand stretching into ice-cold beer and rages, stretching into *Plan 9 from Outer Space*, the late, late show. *Too* young. The jungle is for older people. Men in suits. Caged romances. Secrets beneath an orange haze. You said it wouldn't finish you off, but . . . today the women carry away the nation's wealth in their genitals. There should have been more. Ballroom dancing in the jungle. Stoppard minus the curtains. A *real* Australian conflict. Japanese businessmen dive-bombing temples in requisitioned Santa sleighs . . . coca-cola for napalm . . . sweatshirts in place of flakjackets. Not just the usual *Time* magazine stench, the familiar breakfast table oatmeal hash. This country's finest, fighting for the greatest cause of all. They should have planned it differently from the start: a pink limousine sneaking through Harlem at dawn, stretching into anything . . . or nothing at all.

Soon the city will know. Name, age, height. That tattoo, sewn into the forearm . . . and a birthmark. Any noticeable scars? Already the information will have been distributed. Police marksmen, armed and ready . . . a description slotted between the space shuttle and some new comedy. A face, becoming public knowledge . . . then an ad . . . then nothing. Other faces, disinterested, pressed against the calm. No fear in their hollow faithfulness. Faces trusting strangers. Statistics waiting for a crash. For every person seized, a hundred spent lives get through. Escape the discord. Join the fastest growing industry in the twentieth century.

Johnno couldn't make it to the airport. His wife was sick. Being married meant he couldn't make it to many places. None of the boys were there. Once there was a party and you met Johnno's wife. They left early. Someone said it was like that when *he* came home. You live with it.

9.42 p.m. A shot tearing out through the cold air. Shouts. A crackle of communications. More shots. Heavy dogs baying in the distance. A sensation of sledgehammers, of being lifted off the ground and thrown against a wall, of broken glass being pushed deep. One mind, nailing the body. Folding it in two. And blood, drifting over concrete, diffused. A signature . . . something for the networks to bargain over. Is he dead? Any movement? Blood finding the kerbstone . . . hidden . . . vile . . . to be drawn down, into the shadows. Like acid rain, falling back to earth. Almost touching. Almost.

The ambulance asks calculated questions. A careful citizen, rummaging through the lizard-tongue ruins. An alien presence, grinding out decay. You try to pretend it has no effect on you. You try to pretend, but there is a dull ache, passing through the joints. Turning to hate. Police . . . media . . . a different army waiting in a corridor. Speculating. Listening for the sigh of sirens weaving through the night. Suck on the slash of the wasteland splitting above: a rush of flames twisting anger into panic. Fire beneath artificial suns. Sense the hands . . . the unkind fingers . . . fighting for you. The jolt hovering over your chest. Crumple under the shock of it . . . the weight of coming back . . . snap-frozen . . . a survivor . . . hoping it will stop . . .

‘Mummy . . . that man’s face?’

Hoping *they* will stop. The sun and petrol fumes crawling after you as you leave the underground cinema . . . thoughts of damp smiles and lace . . . thoughts scraping on strands of images that have no real place in your life. Tiny fists, pulling at your side . . . the dress Johnno’s wife wore . . . splashes of colour receding into a background of grey. Broken promises. There’s singing on days when it’s quiet after the rain. Down there. On the misty floor.

Strange the trails it will follow, the scents it will pick up. Inside. Rape . . . neon heat. Saigon days floating along dark, noisy channels. The usual fare of bullets, beasts, whores, children. Biting into the skin. Someone crouching low to film the jungle in the streets. Recording the trade-off. Hoping for a glimpse of Gethsemane.

10.03 p.m. A siren grows loud, then is silenced. Always in the city the hum of traffic tills the night air.

SARI HOSIE

Freya's Man

I

Freya felt his eyes, saw his shadow cross her. Planted fatly on the stool, she was vulnerable, precarious, as if a few words could push her off.

"What are you doing? More of your bloody letters?"

Easier not to answer. What did it matter, all these words, anymore? He started to prepare to go to the mill. Good. Peace for while. Soft checked shirt, smelling of yesterday's sawdust and sweat. Old cord trousers, brown, baggy, soft. How could things seem soft about him?

"Apples look good this season." Seasons of mist and mellow . . . words by way of placation.

"Here's your lunch." Her line was said; her part played. He was gone, rattling across the paddocks, the winter grass bending before his passage.

Funny about that truck. It used to be nearly new, it used to be quick and blue. She used to love him in it.

Once he'd driven it into the little mill town perched in the middle of the karri country. He had come to the wooden house (all the houses were wooden) and he'd said "Come and see my farm." Hat in hand. The quiet English man. Come and see.

She'd gone quietly, weighing everything, thinking along the lines of her mother's life. Bless me Father for I have sinned. Father I am not worthy. I have seen a look on my mother's face, a look of abandonment. She has abandoned herself to the grim destiny of the moment. She has struggled and bled and cried but now she cries no more. She is tired; her face shadowed. Father! How do you transform her thus with your accusations and your anger? How does she let herself go, deliver herself to you silently saying take me for I am unworthy?

Freya went with him. He was quiet, almost dour. He would never shout at her and when she saw his farm there was no question. Twenty cleared acres surrounded by jarrah and karri. A patch of light amidst those giants clawing the sky. The tallest of the giants seemed to hurl beams of light from their heads down to the little farm. An orchard, a garden. They both knew there was no question. He was thirty-five, a recluse, she, nineteen, a mill girl returned from school. She stood in the doorway of the weatherboard house and watched the forest. It protected the little farm.

"Yes," she told him smiling, so that he had no need to ask.

II

There's a flower in a book. Freya had put the flower in the book, pressing its yellow petals into the pages. He had given her flowers, once. It's women who expect flowers and expect them to keep.

III

He didn't shout. In fact he didn't speak much at all but he had a low, harsh voice when she didn't please him. He went about his life and there was much for her to do. Meals, animals, the house. Once she said to him, standing by a winter pool,

"The connection is broken. I am a stone here in the water and you another stone far away."

He frowned at her completely puzzled. She shouted once or twice.

"Why don't you . . . why can't you . . . What sort of marriage is this?"

Met the blank face again.

"You're crazy. You're a crazy hysterical woman." No, he made her feel a child. The child sulked. The woman grew angry. Pain flowed effortlessly and for her it was the end of hoping things would be better.

"Shut your babbling mouth," he said, when she complained.

She started writing letters, gathering some sense of herself.

"Dear Lene, I keep very busy . . . the orchard . . . Liquorice, my cat, two dogs . . . My chooks as well . . . clucking merrily like people talking . . . No children, we decided . . . yours sound wonderful . . . I gather all sorts of wildflowers . . . wattle . . . plent of time to read . . . He's mean, never giving me a penny for myself . . . He does all the shopping so I don't go out much . . . Not that I mind. This is home."

IV

Before she'd grown fat, an artist came to visit. An elderly man, friend of a friend, sent to see the karri.

"Come in," she smiled.

"No, he's at the mill. The farm doesn't pay. I'll make tea. No really, I don't mind . . . I love the blue cups . . . it's not often . . . Yes, I made the scones . . . What does my name mean? My Mother's fancy. Freya was Goddess of Spring, Music, Flowers . . . of love."

"I'd love to paint you," he said. She was beautiful for a moment, smiled at him as if he were twenty-two.

V

Freya listened to music on the radio, decided to hoe the garden between showers. Winter sunlight cheered her as she bent towards the earth, a top-heavy bird ready to topple. She looked towards the forest and blessed her luck at living in such a place. Just now everything would be thick and green. The rushes and reeds are sharp. Above, the song of unseen birds and the presence of the big dark trees like silent men watching over her.

VI

Suddenly Freya notices the chooks, somehow escaped, in her kitchen garden. She runs outside, a bulky flurry of anger and impatience.

"Bloody chooks! Why don't they stay where they're put?"

She chases them towards the run half laughing at herself.

Not thinking, she grabs a log of wood from the heap and aims it in the direction of the chooks, still running after them.

She stops in utter surprise. She's hit a chook. Poor foolish thing. It's dead. A tear runs down Freya's cheek, is flicked away ashamedly.

The thought strikes her as she plans the burial. What will he say? He can be angry, quick with cruelty. If only he would stay away. She looks around quickly. Thoughts don't kill people. She digs a hole under the side of the house, next to a red geranium and, grasping the chook by the feet, swings it into the hole. She works quickly to cover the bird, smoothing over the mound, bending one of the branches of the geranium closer to the ground.

He was late. But Bill was never late. She wished the truck would rattle along even if he was angry and didn't speak for a week. Just so he'd come home. Later and later. Afternoon became evening. She did all the jobs, all the daily things that needed doing and went inside to wait. Ever the fate of women, it seemed. To wait. She sat at the table and tried to write a letter but the words stuck somewhere before her fingers could shape them.

VII

It's very dark. Freya is slumped over the table. She hears a distant engine followed by the opening of the top gate. She jumps up, turning on the light and stands by the door. Bill walks in. His face is shadowed. Without thinking she puts her arms around him.

"What's wrong with you woman?"

Fat, white face, a huge middle-aged woman behaving like a child. She sees herself, wastes barely a second in self pity and sets about the dinner as usual.

VIII

"A storm I think," he said before setting off for the orchard.

"No mill today. Where's the brown speckled hen?"

The day was like many of Freya's days except it was humid. She wished for rain. She decided to walk down to the orchard to see what he was doing. She walked past the naked branches of the mulberry tree . . . she saw mulberries . . . the kitchen full of heat, stove heat, summer heat, body heat, mulberry preserving heat. She noticed the green of the grapefruit leaves and remembered the scent of the blossom, more tangy and rich than any flower. Reaching the orchard she saw he wasn't there and began searching the fence line with her eyes. She found him. He seemed to be sleeping. A branch lay over his face. No blood. Just a blue bruised patch over one temple. She stared. A karri branch. They often fell in the wind but no, not this time. One of the giants had thrown it with precise aim. She screamed a thin scream and ran into the late afternoon.

IX

No-one came for a long time. Sometimes the telephone rang but she couldn't hear the words, only breathing, even, steady like a heart beat and it filled her with terror to hear it.

A niece came one day, wearing her duty in the shape of a smile.

Freya heard her faintly.

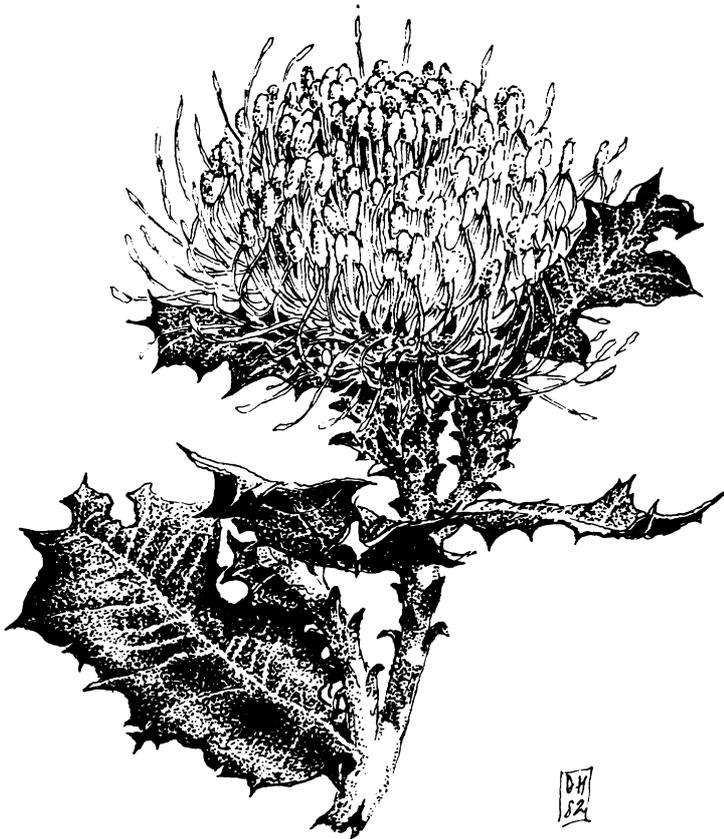
"He left quite a nest-egg, Freya. You don't seem to realise. He worked hard for you. Plenty of money . . . You could move to town. We could take care of you . . . a shock I know but really . . . time to snap out of it."

"No," Freya heard her voice say, "I belong here." The niece was gone, clackety in her town heeled shoes. She would ask the giants. Silly girl. She didn't know it wasn't an accident.

X

Night had come. Here was the night forest she didn't know. No matter. She looked up. It wasn't all his fault.

"Why did you take him?" she asked. "Answer me," she pleaded with rain on her face. She fell to the ground and the reeds were swords pinning her down. She tried to get up but the reeds cut and lanced, securing the sacrifice. She tried to scream but her mouth was filled, as if with leaves.



Eryandra praemorsa

FLORA SMITH

The Game

The young woman left the pony trail where the crooked wattle overhung the path. There was a smell of rain in the air as she began to climb the hill. The climb wasn't steep but it was difficult. The ground was littered with stones and boulders and the prickly undergrowth would have daunted many an ardent bush-walker.

She took her time about it, pausing once or twice to look down over the valley below, not so much to catch her breath as because she loved the view. Houses were perched here and there around the settlement and their garden trees added touches of colour—lighter greens, reds and oranges—to the grey backdrop of the eucalypts.

She was making for the retreat. It was a cave of sorts, formed by granite boulders near the top of the hill, and it gave privacy on three sides while affording an excellent view of the valley below. She had stumbled on it a year ago now and the odd hours spent there alone on weekend afternoons were treasured ones. But today there was someone there before her.

As the first drops of rain began to fall she ran the last few yards into the cave and almost collided with a man in a brown raincoat. She could barely hide her disappointment and turned at once to go, but the hand that reached out to steady her was now gently restraining.

"Heavens, you can't go back into that," he said with humour. "I'm not so bad, surely?" he asked, but she was too near tears to reply. "We might even talk to pass the time?" he persisted.

She looked up at him then and saw a man with kind, tired eyes; a family man.

"We might," she agreed.

"Very well then, that's settled. I'll begin," he said. "They told me at Headquarters to expect someone, and I have here your further instructions." He handed her a small slip of paper which she pocketed without glancing at. "They asked me to observe the house," he continued.

"Can you see it from here?" she offered, bemused.

"Yes, it's that one with the orange roof, to the right of the church." She found it with difficulty; he obviously had very good eyesight.

"What have been his movements?" She was managing better now.

"Very little, very little," he rejoined. "He went out some time ago to light a fire in the back garden."

"Would that be the signal they spoke about, do you think?"

"Oh, undoubtedly." His brown eyes shone but his face was very solemn.

"What do you think we should do?" It was going so well she felt she might trust him with the decision.

"All we can do is observe and report on his movements," he answered. "It may take hours," he challenged.

"Very well," she said resolutely.

And so they sat and gazed over the valley and made mental notes about one another. She saw a good-looking man, a man with a musical voice. He noted her small frame and the good clothes; he saw that she was still beautiful but that there were streaks of grey in the brown hair.

As they talked they wove a fantasy about the man whose house they watched. He had a name now, Alkunovitch, and a past created by both of them out of god knows what bits of half-remembered fiction. His identity was entwined with theirs too.

"Do you know, he was in Cairo when I was there," the man said.

"Yes, I heard he'd done service there," the woman replied. "And do you know I bumped into him, yes literally bumped into him as I was catching a train in Brussels. I wouldn't have recognized him only I was with our Chief at the time and he knew it for a certainty."

"It's that birthmark," the man contributed. "It's under the left ear, about the size of a one cent piece and a purplish-red colour. We were at some Diplomatic do in Cairo once and I was seated near enough to him to study it at leisure. I remember Donaldson telling me to watch out for it."

"What happened to Donaldson eventually?" she asked. He was so much better at it than she.

"Oh, he turned. Our boys realized there must have been a double agent involved in the Vienna dealings, and it was Donaldson. They sent one of the British boys after him, Carslake I think. There was a yachting accident on the Solent."

They spent another hour or two of quiet enjoyment as the rain drove up the valley again and blotted out the further hills. Sometimes they added to their spoken fantasy and sometimes they were silent, creating their own fantasies about one another. When she saw it was after four by her watch, she rose to go.

"Duty calls," she said.

"Shall I accompany you in case of danger?" he asked, "or would that be too conspicuous do you think?"

"No, I'll go alone," she answered, grateful for his gallantry. "Would you go first please?"

She was married and she knew too much to start opening doors. If he had wished for a different ending his disappointment did not show in his gentle smile.

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She followed him soon, not wishing to lose him, not just yet. She even managed to watch him get into a blue Datsun parked near the church and drive away.

As she walked the last half mile back to her house she remembered the scrap of paper he had given her and took it from her pocket. It was only a crossword cut from the daily paper, and it seemed such little reward for what she had lost. She knew she could never go back to her precious retreat again, and she even disciplined herself to throw away the crossword. What she could not do was to forget the expression in the brown eyes, and for years the sight of a bright blue Datsun would set her spinning dreams again.

MARGARET HOUGHTON

A Piece of Silver Paper

Children were singing. They came to each bed. Voices, young, sweet and happy.

I chewed what was put into my mouth. It tasted sweet and soft.

The voices grew softer as they moved away. Outlines, red, green, yellow, moved further down the rows of beds. The colours merged, blurred, as far as my eyes were able to focus.

A piece of silver paper lay before me, shining against the grey blanket. Unthinking, I folded it into a long strip, over and over. Wrapping it around my middle finger, I twisted it three or four times. It slid up and down my finger. The twist in front resembled a bow. Wings, if the ends were spread out. If squeezed together, a diamond. A diamond ring.

Once, a ring had been pulled forcibly from my finger. The first ring I had ever made. Just a plain silver ring. No stone. My finger hurt.

I examined the plain round band of silver paper. It fitted each of my fingers, with about a quarter of an inch to spare all round.

As she replaced the water jug by my bed, the diamond glinted in a sparkle of sunlight. She picked up the plain silver band.

What's this? Did you do it?

My hand slowly reached her finger, adorned with the diamond ring. Rough and cold on the soft, smooth finger.

It's my engagement ring—She spread her fingers. There were two diamonds.

You want this—? she held up the paper band. I drew my hand beneath the covers.

I'll leave it here.—She replaced the band on the locker. As she lifted the empty jug, her two diamond ring glistened again, struck by the sun's rays.

My eyelids flickered. The torchlight flashed rapidly by my face. She disappeared, as usual, out into the yellow sea of light in the corridor.

A tiny glitter nearby drew my attention from my nightly vigil on her movements. Some small, square pieces of silver paper, placed by the silver band, shone in the dimness, on the locker beside my bed.

Going to make some more?—

Morning. The night vigil was over. Perhaps. After sleep. Perhaps.

MARGARET HOUGHTON

Rings

Squares of silver paper folded diagonally so that they would be long enough to fit around a finger.

A white cuffed hand, wearing a plain band of gold on the fourth finger, examined each in turn.

Rings. You make rings? You used to make rings?

I saw his eyes for the first time. Dark blue. Direct. Covered by thick lens, dark-rimmed glasses.

These are very interesting. His eyes moved from the paper rings to my face.

Would you like to make real rings again?

The clock at the far end over the door said 10.10 a.m. His large silver watch said 10.00 a.m. Carefully releasing the clasp, I removed the watch from his wrist, moved it forward ten minutes and replaced it.

It's always losing time. Again I removed it, opened the back, advanced the inside works, and replaced it.

And you can fix watches?

I toyed with the silver paper bands.

You were a jeweller?

I placed a paper ring on each of my fingers.

It's hopeless. Nothing.

Is it? She swept past him. She put a thermometer into my mouth and held my wrist. The tips of her fingers pulsed. I gazed at the two-diamond ring on her left hand which crossed her chest as she read her watch. Breathing heavily she shook the thermometer. I watched her face. It contorted, twisted. Her eyes began to fill with tears. Her hand shook as she wrote on a chart. For a moment she noticed the silver paper bands scattered on my bed. Slowly she took the diamond ring from her finger. Gently she placed it amongst the paper ones. Holding the chart in one hand, she covered her face with the other. Hastily she wiped her hand across her eyes.

You can have it. I won't be needing it any more. He's dead. A car crash. He was going to be a doctor. That—that silver paper, it was from the toffees we had just before he left. We saved them for you.

I stared at the tiny ring lying sideways, lost amidst all the toffee papers. The sun through the window struck the fine strands of her fair hair showing below her veil.

You've lost everything. Please keep it. Her voice quivered. She pressed the ring into my hand, covering my fingers over it.

Sister! Come here, please! Quickly!

Her footsteps were barely audible as she hurried to the other end of the ward.

I sat staring at the ring in my hand. Turning it over. Holding it up to the sun which activated its radiating beams. It slipped quite easily onto each of my bony fingers.

I saw her hurrying out of the far end doorway. Carefully I laid the ring on the locker beside my bed. Collecting the silver papers, I laid them too in a pile beside it. I closed my eyes.

Jaina! Jaina! The night light was on our verandah. I had given her the ring as we said goodnight. My father had set it for us. It glowed, even under the dim light of the verandah.

It's beautiful.

I love you, Jaina. We embraced.

I shall keep it always. Whatever happens.

It was the last night we were together.

He spoke.

Of course he did.

What was that he sang out?

A name, I think.

If only he would say something else.

If we could wake him up—

No. You mustn't. Sleep all you want. You don't have to talk.

Who put that ring there?

He did.

It looks like yours.

It was. I gave it to him.

Why?

Never mind. Come on. Leave him alone.

Hello. Who is—Jaina?

Her eyes were large, blue. Her fair hair peaked forward from under her veil.

Jaina was my wife.

She sat on the side of my bed. What happened?

She was taken.

By the Germans?

Yes.

You were dreaming about her last night. That makes two of us.

I closed my eyes and turned my head away from her.

What's your name? All right, tell me when you want to.

When she'd gone I reached for the ring and put it on my finger.

Without her veil her hair was misty gold. Smooth. Sensitively framing each side of her face, like a gilt-edged frame on a watercolour. She stood looking out of the window, her red cape heightening the colouring of the picture. Fine rain was falling outside. At any moment the night light switched on would break the fading softness of the gentle dusk.

Good-bye.
You're awake?
Yes.

I'm off duty now. She gently touched the ring on my finger.
I'm so glad you'll take care of it for me.—Please, what can I call you?
Aron.

The red cape and floating hair, flaxen in the paling light wafted out through the far entrance, just as the gentle atmosphere was drowned by a yellow light from an electric bulb.



Banksia media
leaves & fruit

DH
81

JEREMY TAGER

Stages of Assembly

He wrestles with the names of things
that have no shape. His hands
burrow in the ruins of his hair,
his feet are bound to a patch of sky.

If he cries out
the waters encroach upon his room,
lovers are separated with axes
and the newly born birds
can be heard inside the hills.

If he departs, afraid,
upon the shoulders of a woman
he might learn to love
it is without words
and his eyes will never close.

He knows that if he sleeps
he will awaken old.

Streets curl beneath his window.
Visitors will arrive before dark
and arguments will be repeated
in other rooms.
He feels the negligence of doors
of formulas, of old phrases;
greetings never used
predictions of rain.

He clears the table of papers
and of tools.
He reads the directions once more
and waits for the sound of laughter
on the stairs.

MICHAEL SHARKEY

The Libertine

Ovid says two girls are fine,
but two is only half of mine;
I've got four, each one's a gem,
and I'll admit I'm fond of them, each one.
With four about, you're on your toes,
with writing letters, running round
to meet the train or evening plane:
with four around, do you suppose
your life can ever be your own?
Of course it's not: there's not a hope:
it's lucky that you gave up dope;
you haven't time to roll a smoke.
You say hello, you crack a joke,
and into bed: it's on again.

You thought you'd be asleep by ten:
no chance; it's lucky you! it keeps you fit:
you're full of repartee and wit;
when someone else knocks on the door,
you know it's someone of the four:
but do you tell the one you're with,
or tell the one who calls?
Of course you don't—or if you do,
and simply say 'Oh, here's a friend'—
or sister—each of them pretends
when introduced, and hopes it's true,
since both of them desire you;
and you don't know which of the two
you most prefer: you'd like to live
with both. And when they're gone,
who comes again but Vivienne,
who stays all night; you wake up
in the morning light, and thank your lucky stars
for life. Who cares if you're feeling stiff
on waking, since the play's the thing?

The highland days are short and cold,
and you stay in bed till the day is old:
who'd go to work? Apologize (while rubbing sleep
out of your eyes) for being late,
on the telephone (technology's great),
let out a groan, and say you're sick,
and back to work: you're not alone.

The difficulties fortune's placed
about you keep you sharp: the pace
is unrelenting; sometimes you
send letters off, addressed 'Dear Pru'—
to Monica, who says, 'You swine':
you suavely ask her up for wine;
or the calendar's a cryptic sprawl
designed to baffle nearly all
the KGB and ASIO: with four about
you can't be slow to come up with new tricks
each day: your life's an index-system, too,
of Renee's perfume, or Viv's scotch,
or Pru's champagne; who eats croissants,
and who cannot; who has a car,
who cabs a lot: forget it once,
and life's a botch: if once you let
the system lapse, your life's a mess;
just change address and start again.
It's always on, if someone rings:
you couldn't care what each day brings;
the police exist, of course, to help
if two should meet and fight and yelp
and bring the neighbourhood around;
you tell the constable which one
can stay—and then resume the fun:
he wheels the other off, who sobs,
and then performs his other jobs
about the town; a policeman's life
is mostly full of others' strife.

The life's an outrage, I agree,
offensive to morality:
I'd never recommend you should
begin to copy mine: one's good
is someone else's poison, and
I'd never run down, out of hand,
what you get up to on your own;
I'm not the one to point the bone;
I say directly what I do,
and do it with some pleasure too.



DAVID HEADON

Going for the Whole Hog – John Dunmore Lang’s Radical Republicanism and the American Connection

Since the mid 1960’s, Australian writers have acknowledged a surprisingly close relationship with writers from the United States—surprising because, in the standard critical appraisals and histories of Australian literature, few connections are noticed. This apparently sudden development, most conspicuous in recent poetry, raises the question: did *earlier* Australian writers read their American counterparts in any depth?

In 1976, an American scholar, Joseph Jones, issued a challenge that no Australian critics have adequately met: “How does a democracy help beget other democracies?”¹ The continued failure of Australian commentators to acknowledge the historical and literary importance of an American connection has resulted in a denial of the recognition due to certain nineteenth-century Australian writers and thinkers, in particular John Dunmore Lang and Daniel Deniehy. I intend to enlarge on the American flavour of Lang’s contribution to Australian literature through an approach which accords in one important way with that of Welsh scholar, Raymond Williams, in his two critical histories of English ideas and values, *Culture and Society* (1958) and *The Long Revolution* (1960). While mine is not a Marxist critique, it is focussed on cultural evolution—on the importance not only of the established literary genres, but of the wider “body of intellectual and imaginative work which each generation receives as its traditional culture”.² Discussion of Lang’s contribution to this wider body of work will necessarily involve steering a course away from strictly belletristic literature in the direction of polemic and political speculation, what Vernon Parrington establishes as the literature of “vigorous creative thinkers”.³

Lang’s case is a curious one. We still have no comprehensive text of his writings and speeches; Archibald Gilchrist’s two volumes of excerpts, though helpful, are oddly indexed, and frequently he alters the actual text to suit his own purposes, or perhaps to “improve” the original.⁴ Hence, scholars approaching Lang have virtually no critical tradition in which to write. There is a need for some concerted study of the man’s voluminous output, his character and milieu. He needs to be placed in a more adequate historical *and* literary context.

An outspoken Presbyterian minister, historian, land reformer, poet, critic, journalist, immigration and education theorist, anthropologist and confirmed political activist and republican, Lang bestrode the narrow world of colonial Australia. Typically obstinate, he reversed the usual human progression from youthful radical to middle-aged conservative. More pertinently, as his politics radicalized,

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Lang's debt to the protagonists of the American Revolution grew. His later prose contains many passages coming very close in spirit, and indeed in specific vocabulary, to the principal spokesmen of 1776, especially Jefferson and Paine. If local writers such as Deniehy and Charles Harpur were to have an audience for their ideas, they required Lang—like Tom Paine, a necessary stentorian figure—to manufacture an amenable social climate. How did he go about it?

It wasn't long after his arrival in New South Wales in May, 1823, that Lang began to reflect on the possibilities and challenges entailed in the peculiar and remote environment with which he had decided to identify himself. Some of his early poems bespeak an aggressive national spirit. In the poem boldly entitled "Australian Anthem" (1826), Lang for the first time enlarged on his dream for the future of the southern continent:

Australia! land of hope!
Thy sons shall bear thee up
Even to the skies!
And earth's exalted ones
Shall hail thee from their thrones,
Queen of the Southern Zones.
Australia, rise! . . .

O be it then thy care,
From Superstition's snare
And Slavery's chain,
To set the wretched free;
Till Christian liberty,
Wide o'er the Southern Sea,
Triumphant reign!⁵

Not memorable poetry, but then that probably wasn't the writer's intention. He wanted to awaken his countryment to the potential greatness of their future destiny as a leader in the southern hemisphere.

This desire to consolidate an original Australian perspective quite distinct from Britain evidently prompted Lang, at some point in his capacious reading, to consult American precedents. In a May, 1823, address, he cited the words of current American president Andrew Jackson to establish the importance of a country's general "population", in particular the "cultivators of the soil".⁶ A little later, in the first edition of his *Historical and Statistical Account of New South Wales* (1834), he demonstrated a surprisingly detailed knowledge of American political, religious and social history. This work prepares the reader of Lang in two ways for the statements and doctrines to come. First, he emerges as a clear and original thinker determined to judge Westminster legislation and bureaucratic action on ethical, rather than patriotic grounds. The revolution in America, he suggests, occurred as a result of arbitrary and tyrannical legislation. Second, Lang displays an obvious sympathy for the motives which prompted rebellion in America. His forecast of the coming Australian republic in the 1837 second edition of the *Historical and Statistical Account* therefore comes as no surprise. The terms in which he sees the republic are interesting, though, especially the recourse to analogy, so strongly reminiscent of Tom Paine's prose style in *Common Sense* (1776):

The colonists of Australia will doubtless at some future period establish a republican government for themselves and elect a president of the Australian states. It is a singular fact in the history of nations that Great Britain, with an essentially monarchical government, has for a long time past been laying the foundation of future republics in all parts of the globe and will doubtless be left at last, like the unfortunate hen that has hatched ducks' eggs, to behold her numerous brood successively taking to the water.⁷

In the tradition established by William Charles Wentworth, Lang indirectly, but no doubt purposefully, links Australia's tomorrow with America's yesterday.

In 1840, Lang decided to view the United States at first hand—as de Tocqueville had done, so fruitfully, less than a decade earlier⁸—thus establishing a connection destined to affect the course of Australian history and literature for decades to come. Lang's visit incorporated a wide number of both northern and southern states, and from the outset he meticulously recorded all his impressions.⁹ This resulted, soon after, in the copious *Religion and Education in America* (1840). In it, Lang broaches several areas of interest to students of Australian/American literary relations: the republican system of government, the baneful effects of aristocracy (compared with democracy), abolition and slavery, universal suffrage, voluntarism and universal education. Disenchantment with English theory and practice of government pervades the book. Many passages recall the critiques of James Otis and John Dickinson, and are, in substance, close to the speeches which marked the first and second Continental Congresses—at once bitter and mildly conciliatory.¹⁰ Lang discusses John Bull's chief failing:

. . . I confess I am still as much as ever in the dark as to where the Christianity of the British Government is centred, or in what it consists. . . . [It] is a subtle and evanescent quality, which perpetually eludes the search of the inquirer, and of which there is no possibility of fixing the *habitat*. . . . it is like a squirrel in a native fig-tree in an Australian forest—there is no doubt the creature is in the tree, for the *black fellows* saw it go in; but where it is exactly among the thick foliage no man can tell.¹¹

Even in his most serious moments, Lang could not, at times, resist the playful analogy (although here, as in most of his writing, one suspects careful method behind the sardonic humour).

At various points in *Religion and Education*, Lang's sense of the sharp contrast between an aristocratic and democratic order in society becomes clear. He refers, at one stage, to "the aristocratic lesson of bribery and corruption". Confronted by an eager, ambitious egalitarian people in America, he sees as inevitable the demise of privileged systems around the globe—and, like Paine, Jefferson and Samuel Adams, he rejoices:

. . . I have no doubt whatever, that . . . the full tide of democratic influence that is already setting in with a yearly increasing force and volume from the great Western world upon our shores, will sweep away in succession the law of primogeniture in Great Britain, and the law of entails, hereditary legislation, and the Established Church.¹²

Again, intentionally, he looks with suppressed enthusiasm to the "coming struggle" when the "moral and resistless influence" of America's "educated millions" will "overturn, overturn, overturn". An ominous outline of Lang's challenges to the colonial authorities in Australia and England, some ten years hence, is virtually mapped in the last sections of chapter six. The present combative mood of the United States—of Young America growing in confidence—will shortly be Lang's own public commitment.

While in America, Lang expressed grave reservations about the existence of slavery in a so-called democratic country. In an address to the American Colonization Society of New York on May 13, 1840, he refused to sweeten the pill of criticism for fear of causing offence. That was never his way. At one point he proclaimed:

I trust I am under no obligation to conceal from this assembly my own cordial abhorrence of slavery, as a civil institution, and my own earnest desire for its immediate and entire abolition. I have ever regarded slavery as an evil and

bitter thing for the country in which it exists, as well as for its miserable victims. It is the grand calamity of this country, that such a system was entailed upon it from a bygone age. It constitutes the only dark spot in your star-spangled banner—the only gloomy and portentous cloud in the firmament of your glory.

(*Religion and Education*, pp. 454-5)

Further, Lang again made reference to Australia's future noble role. In a passage of seminal importance to the history of Australian/American relations, he jubilantly asserted that Great Britain was currently

raising up a second America in the Southern Hemisphere, to tread, I trust, the same path of glory as this great nation has trodden in the North.

(*Religion and Education*, p. 465)

Religion and Education in America chronicles Lang's increasingly militant attitude towards English dominance, but it also serves as evidence of possibly the first significant interaction between articulate spokesmen from America and Australia. Lang could never be silent on issues about which he felt strongly, and it is certain that, while in America, he sought to enlighten those he met about social conditions in Australia. And he met some of America's most eminent citizens—among them Noah Webster, the committed nationalist and lexicographer, John Trumbull, author of "M'Fingal", and even President Van Buren, who impressed Lang, when they chatted, with his informality. There was none of the "stiffness and hauteur" characteristic of the "military Representatives of Royalty". As usual, Lang couldn't resist the opportunity of baiting his Australian Tory enemies. In addition, *Religion and Education* reflects the author's close knowledge of America through its casual mention of a variety of major American literary, religious and political figures. A more detailed study of Lang might do well to touch on the common ground he shared with two Americans he deeply admired—the impassioned theologian Jonathan Edwards (whose grave Lang made a special point of visiting) and the theologian and scientist Cotton Mather, whose history of the American church, *Magnalia Christi Americana* (1702), Lang regarded as a "great work". Lang makes incidental mention, as well, of William Ellery Channing ("a literary man and a man of talent"), Emersonian Transcendentalism, Dr Witherpoon, Aaron Burr, Washington and Patrick Henry. Characteristically, he refers to Wirt's account of Henry's legendary speech (1765) to the Virginia House of Burgesses, in which Henry issued his renowned challenge to George III:

Tarquin and Caesar had each his Brutus, Charles the First his Cromwell, and George the Third . . . may profit by their example! If this be treason, make the most of it!

This is Lang's language.¹³

The American visit represented a turning point in Lang's personal philosophy of government. As the Forties progressed, his public voice grew more assertive; by the end of the decade, he could justly lay claim to being the Australian Thomas Paine. He steadily sought to apply what he had learnt in 1840, beginning with the gradual introduction of an American revolutionary vocabulary into the Australian political arena. A couple of years after his return, in a speech in the Legislative Council on judicial estimates (1843), Lang paraded all the old clichés—in particular the "taxation without representation" slogan—along with a few original departures, as if to signal his future intentions. Blaming "a jealous despotism", Lang predicted that the people:

having obtained one inch of the freedom that belongs to them of right, can only regard that inch as of value in so far as it enables them to obtain the whole "ell" that is their due. The struggle may be long and arduous, but the victory is sure.¹⁴

Taking care to avoid implicating himself at this precarious stage, for treason retained a harsh prison sentence, Lang prudently explained the inevitable consequences of arbitrary rule. Alienation, he cried, would take hold of the people, and more:

... what can we expect but that [a feeling of alienation] will gradually ripen into disaffection, and that disaffection will at length display her insurgent flag and rally around it a hundred thousand freeborn Australians to repeat the same scenes ... as have been exhibited already in the misgoverned colonies of Britain in other and far distant lands.

Lang spent the period 1846-9 in England agitating for Colonial-Office support of his plans to stimulate widespread British emigration to Australia in order that his vision of a Christian population of small farmers might come to pass. He met with apathy, if not outright resistance. Thus, on November 14, 1849, shortly before he returned to Australia, Lang wrote an open letter to Earl Grey which was later published in the *British Banner*. The contents indicated that Lang well knew the kind of language to which the English responded. America's escape from the fold of Empire still grated many acquisitive British citizens and, recognizing this, Lang devoted most of his letter to the close similarities between America and Australia. "I am now returning to Australia", he declared, "with the bitterest disappointment and deepest disgust, cherishing precisely the same feelings as the celebrated Dr Benjamin Franklin did when he left England as a British subject for the last time".¹⁵ Lang had at last identified himself unequivocally with the cause of Australian independence after encountering the expedient workings of the English ministry, just as Franklin opted for the revolutionary cause when exposed to the many devious political games in London. But in case his allusion to the American scientist and statesman was lost on some of his younger audience, Lang clarified the point. The situation had escalated to such an alarming extent that the colonists would "now 'go for the whole hog', or for nothing at all". He went on:

... your lordship has for three years past been knocking at the gate of futurity for the president of the United States of Australia. Be assured, my lord, he is getting ready and will shortly be out; and he will astonish the world with the manliness of his port and the dignity of his demeanor.¹⁶

On arrival back in Australia, Lang endeavoured to make good on the direct threats contained in his letter to Grey. If the *Sydney People's Advocate* was right in saying that the letter represented "the first stake driven into the ant-hill",¹⁷ then Lang determined to repeat the effort as much as possible in the next few years. His openly republican writings came increasingly to resemble Thomas Paine's at the time of writing *Common Sense* (though Lang was loathe to advocate violence and, while attacking English malpractice, usually absolved the monarchy). In April, 1850, Lang delivered three lectures in Sydney which were soon published under the title *The Coming Event; or the United Provinces of Australia*.¹⁸ He makes no direct reference to *Common Sense*, but throughout the lectures a number of the points he makes virtually replicate Paine's. Even his choice of title seems to owe something to Paine who had, for example, spoken of the independence of America as "an *event*, which sooner or later must arrive, so from the late rapid progress of the continent to maturity, the *event* could not be far off".¹⁹ Further, Lang actually uses the phrase, "common sense", throughout *The Coming Event*.²⁰

The similarities between Lang and Paine are striking. Both the Australian and the American abhorred government from a distance.²¹ Both dedicated themselves to convincing their fellows that independence could only happen with vigilant, and, most importantly, immediate commitment.²² Both exploited a revolutionary,

egalitarian vocabulary, talking constantly of, in Lang's words, the "natural and inherent right, indefeasible and indestructible" of the colonists of New South Wales to their "entire freedom and independence".²³ Paine's introduction to the *Rights of Man* spoke, in like terms, of "a system of universal peace, [founded] on the indefeasible and hereditary Rights of Man".²⁴ Lang and Paine both proclaimed the need for a united front of citizens, and sought the expression of that solidarity in titular form as an integral part of the attempt to change the thinking of a nation. Naming was important to them.²⁵ Both saw the need to incite their compatriots to sever ties with Great Britain in an attempt to ensure peace with the rest of the world. They were deeply suspicious of Old-World liaisons and scheming.²⁶ Where they differed was on the issue of tactics. Lang in 1850 merely toyed with the idea of a military revolt when he declared:

... [taxation without consent] roused the spirit and nerved the arm of the American Colonists for their great and successful struggle for entire freedom and independence in the year 1776; and it is mortifying to reflect, that British despotism should have become no wiser from the lesson it was then taught, notwithstanding the lapse of full seventy years. Does Great Britain require that instructive lesson to be taught her in the Southern Hemisphere, as it was in the Northern? It would appear that she does.

(*Coming Event*, p. 19)

Paine, on the other hand, never wavered in his belief that independence could only be gained by forceful means.²⁷

In his *Coming Event* lectures, Lang outlined his most comprehensive plan, up to that point, for his projected republic. At several points he indicated his debt to the United States Constitution and federal system.²⁸ That is, he made elaborate use of the American system—and yet, like Deniehy, he almost immediately conceived of Australia surpassing the model:

... I question whether even the United States of America will have a more extensive field of political power and of moral influence to expatiate over than will one day acknowledge the sovereignty of the United Provinces of Australia.

(*Coming Event*, p. 37)

Ten years earlier, addressing an American audience, Lang had brazenly maintained a similar position. The proud members of the Presbyterian Church of America could not have been all that impressed when Lang, a self-appointed spokesman for Young Australia, told them:

... it must be evident to every intelligent American, that the series of colonies that have thus been successfully planted on the shores of the Australian Continent ... will, in all likelihood, exceed all former precedent, will, at no distant day, exert a mighty influence, either for good or for evil, on a large proportion of the whole family of man.²⁹

But there is no doubt that in the more publicized *Coming Event* lectures, the aging myth of Australia as a better America was given its most promising airing. Deniehy, strongly influenced by Lang throughout this period, would try and give the dream some life in later years.

Lang's radicalism came to the boil in the early 1850's. He delivered his *Coming Event* lectures in varying forms throughout the colonies, arguing constantly for the introduction of certain fundamental principles. His efforts culminated in the publication, in 1852, of the long political treatise *Freedom and Independence for the Golden Lands of Australia*. Less rhetorical and more articulate than the *Coming Event* lectures, *Freedom and Independence* struck responsive chords at home and abroad. Essentially, it synthesized the fragmentary republican ideas that

Lang had been widely disseminating in Australia during the previous two years. It was his major statement of liberation, not just for the benefit of his countrymen, but for the world to peruse. The volume ran to three editions.

In the introduction, Lang proclaims the work to be his “proposal to establish free institutions throughout the Australian colonies on the basis of universal suffrage and equal electoral districts”.³⁰ Relying heavily on James Grahame’s *History of the United States of North America* (1836), he launches his first elaborate defence of republicanism as the most desirable political model available. Further, for a British colony aspiring to independence, it is the only “form of government either practicable or possible. . . .”³¹ Lang illustrates just how far his Calvinism has been usurped by his democratic inclinations when he declares:

Why should [Englishmen] object to a form of government which has given birth, in every department of human excellence, to a series of the greatest and noblest men that have ever trod the earth?

(*Freedom and Independence*, pp. 64-65)

In keeping with his public statements down the years, he supports his arguments by citing established American sources such as James Otis, Benjamin Franklin, Cotton Mather, the decisions of the American colonial legislatures, the 1765 New York Convention and the first Continental Congress in Philadelphia (1774).³² Indeed, Otis and Franklin—“that great authority” whose opinion on colonial matters “is worth that of a hundred Westminster Reviewers”³³—are the only two writers actually mentioned in his introduction. The clarity of their arguments aids Lang throughout his searching enquiry.

The targets for Lang’s vitriol are the same as in earlier years: Empire rule from London and the supposed infallibility of British officials in the colonies. (He bitterly attacks, in particular, Governors Gipps and Fitzroy.) But he now more directly hints at the possibility of military action by New South Welshmen if their demands are not immediately met. Lang uses an old ploy, one first exploited by his perennial opponent, William Charles Wentworth, decades earlier:

. . . the passes of the Blue Mountains, on the road to the Gold Mines of the interior, like the Straits of Thermopylae, could be defended by a mere handful of Australian Greeks against the whole power of Persia. If “two or three thousand badly armed men” should attempt a revolutionary movement at the Australian mines, there is no calculating the possible issue.

(*Freedom and Independence*, p. 361)

Again, the spectre of revolt raised to obtain Colonial-Office concessions. A familiar American and, by the early 1850’s, Australian pattern.

In the years after the publication of *Freedom and Independence*, Lang continued to stump for independence and an Australian republic. During that time, it became more and more obvious that, like William Ellery Channing, he despised war, but he considered some issues worth fighting for. Still an avowed enemy of Unitarianism, Lang evidently knew his Channing well, and in seeking to explain his stand on war in a Scots Church sermon in 1854, he alluded to the American when seeking justification:

I have no sympathy with those who maintain that all war is unlawful and unjust. The American divine, Dr Channing, says: “A community may employ force to repress the violence of its own citizens, to disarm and restrain its internal foes; on what ground, therefore, can we deny it the right of repelling the inroads and aggressions of a foreign power?”³⁴

Two things are interesting here: the man Lang had categorized as talented, but certainly not a “Christian divine” in 1840, had evidently assumed that elevated

position in the Presbyterian minister's thinking in the middle 1850's.³⁵ Secondly, Lang's tone, in his sermon, suggests that his congregation had at least a working knowledge of Channing's prose.

In keeping with this stand, Lang violently denounced the prospect of Australian involvement, alongside Britain, in the Crimean War. On the other hand, he sought to justify the Eureka Stockade and establish it as but the first skirmish of a long campaign climaxing in the independence of both Victoria and New South Wales. Lang blamed Eureka wholly on Australia's ruling colonial officials and their sympathizers among the local gentry. In a letter to the Sydney *Empire*, a week after the short battle, he articulated his position—one as close as he would publicly get to encouraging armed revolution—Lang had come a long way since the tentative criticisms of English rule in the first edition of his *Historical and Statistical Account*, twenty years earlier:

No sane person will suppose that this outbreak is likely to end with the shooting down of thirty diggers at Ballarat. The blood shed will not be forgotten. The men in whose spirits the wound that has thus been inflicted will rankle long and widely, will "nurse their wrath to keep it warm" for some other and more fitting occasion. If a republic, such as certain at least of the more prominent diggers proposed, were successfully established at Port Phillip, it would be absurd to say that an irrepressible desire to follow this example would not be immediately created in ten thousand breasts in New South Wales, in which no such feeling now exists. We have precisely the same grievances to complain of as the Port Phillip people. Let it be remembered that these grievances are incomparably greater than any the American colonists had to complain of when they put forth their famous declaration of independence in 1776.³⁶

Thirty years of living in a country at best described as a "dependency of England", thirty years struggling to motivate a community to resist being "a mere football, kicked about at pleasure by every underling in Downing Street", had wrought significant changes in Lang.³⁷ In the early 1850's, at the peak of his powers, he had established himself as the preeminent spokesman for the Australian republican movement. His commitment to the cause of the colonies had deepened to such an extent that in 1855 he drafted a Declaration of Independence for the "Province of Victoria" which suggested "force of arms" as a feasible alternative.³⁸ The minister had turned into a militant. In the spirit of 1776.

NOTES

1. Joseph Jones, *Radical Cousins: Nineteenth Century American and Australian Writers* (St Lucia: Univ. of Queensland Press, 1976), p. ix.
2. Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1958), p. 320.
3. Vernon Louis Parrington, *Main Currents in American Thought*, 3 vols. (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1927), p. vi.
4. Archibald Gilchrist, ed., *John Dunmore Lang*, 2 vols. (Melbourne: Jeddarm Publications, 1951).
5. John Dunmore Lang, *Poems: Sacred and Secular* (Sydney: William Maddock, 1873), pp. 106-7.
6. Quoted in David S. Macmillan, *John Dunmore Lang* (Melbourne: Oxford Univ. Press, 1962), p. 10. Lang used the same passage, twenty years later, in his *Freedom and Independence for the Golden Lands of Australia* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans, 1852), p. 269.
7. Quoted in Gilchrist, p. 226. I was unable to obtain a copy of Lang's second edition (1837).
8. Lang refers to *Democracy in America* as an "admirable work", and he labels Tocqueville himself "the ablest European writer who has yet written on the subject [of America and her institutions]". See John Dunmore Lang, *Religion and Education in America* (London: Thomas Ward, 1840), pp. 11, 271.

9. Between 1840 and 1841, Lang visited Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North and South Carolina. See Lang, *Religion and Education in America*, p. 9.
10. Lang makes specific reference to James Otis' *The Rights of the British Colonies Asserted and Proved* (1765) in his later *Freedom and Independence* (1852), p. vi.
11. Lang, *Religion and Education*, p. 261. See also, John Dunmore Lang, *The Coming Event; or, the United Provinces of Australia* (Sydney: D. L. Welch, n.d. [1850]), p. 6.
12. *Religion and Education*, pp. 42, 306.
13. References in this paragraph are to *Religion and Education*, pp. 13, 109, 150-2, 256, 373, 378-9, 426-7.
14. Gilchrist, p. 347.
15. Gilchrist, p. 457. Franklin would become a favourite source for Lang. In *Freedom and Independence* (1852), Lang's major republican treatise, he refers to Franklin constantly, taking care to identify their common pursuit. In 1850's Australia (and England), Franklin evidently had sufficient prestige that he could be used as Lang's principal model and inspiration. See *Freedom and Independence*, pp. ix-x, 35-7, 39, 339.
16. Gilchrist, p. 459.
17. *People's Advocate*, July 13, 1850.
18. The lectures were delivered April 11, 16, 23, 1850. The first and second lectures were combined and published as *The Coming Event* (1850).
19. Thomas Paine, *Common Sense*, ed. Isaac Kramnick (Philadelphia, 1776; rpt Harmondsworth: Penguin 1976), pp. 91-2. The emphasis is mine.
20. See *Coming Event*, pp. 5, 8, 27, 30.
21. For example, *Coming Event*, p. 7; Paine, *Common Sense*, p. 90.
22. See *Coming Event*, p. 5; Paine, *Common Sense*, introduction, pp. 63-4.
23. *Coming Event*, p. 9. See also, p. 7.
24. Thomas Paine, *Rights of Man*, ed. Henry Collins (London, 1971-2; rpt Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969), pp. 183-4.
25. Conscious of the importance of the title, the "United States of America", Lang declared at the end of his first lecture: "... I anticipate that the United Provinces of Australia—for I would decidedly prefer that name to the United States, both because it is equally appropriate, and because it would prevent all ambiguity, showing that we had no connection with the shop over the way—will, ere long, be the great leading power of the Southern Hemisphere, and will one day exercise an influence over the civilised world not inferior to that even of the United States." (*Coming Event*, p. 16). See also, pp. 27, 37; *Freedom and Independence*, pp. 253, 262-3.
26. See *Coming Event*, pp. 10-13, 31-2; *Common Sense*, pp. 86-7.
27. *Common Sense*, pp. 71-5.
28. See *Coming Event*, pp. 14-15, 26-30.
29. John Dunmore Lang, *The Moral and Religious Aspect of the Future America of the Southern Hemisphere* (New York: James Van Norden 1840), pp. 5-6.
30. *Freedom and Independence*, p. x.
31. *Freedom and Independence*, p. 64. See also, *Coming Event*, p. 64.
32. *Freedom and Independence*, pp. vi, ix-x, 15, 35-40, 339.
33. *Freedom and Independence*, p. 339.
34. Quoted in Gilchrist, p. 567. Lang uses Channing as a source in *Freedom and Independence*, p. 266.
35. See *Religion and Education*, p. 373.
36. *Empire*, December 12, 1854, quoted in Gilchrist, p. 581.
37. *Coming Event*, p. 36.
38. Lang's "Declaration of Independence", in Geoffrey Serle, *The Golden Age* (Melbourne: Melbourne Univ. Press, 1963), appendix 6.

ARTHUR LINDLEY

The Intercession at West 79th

Walking back up Central Park West
from the Ice Age Exhibit,
we paused to buy the squabbling
children Italian ice, and saw

a man run down. In heavy traffic
in the midst of the customary
darting, where no one is ever hurt,
we caught the sideways, squealing slither

of a braking cab and the thump
of wounded tin. Sure enough
no one is ever hurt, at least on Sundays.
So we saw a bearded cyclist, down

but only out the cost of his bike,
and a bit too dazed to apprehend
the circle of cops and joggers and staring
cars apprehending him, or the pleasure

of his audience, us, at this
break in the smog-lit day:
a small adventure without blood, TV
with odors (burned rubber, dog
shit, water ice and nervous sweat),
plus a glimpse of wonder for the car
ride home: death laughing at us,
behind a trashcan with his Sunday joke.

Octavius Suppresses His Memoirs

“Feliciter audax”

After the play, he lives in a villa by de Chirico.

After he has pulled down the sky, like
a canvas blind on their long, bright day;
after he has paved the world with shields
from Rome to Egypt, like brown cobblestones
in a leaden light; after his troops have
flattened Greece for a parade ground, trampled
Nilus' mud to beaches, put up villas, yes,
and sold 'em; after he has brought her children's
coffins home for souvenirs—he finds it is
always evening. After evening. The odds is gone.

The poets are hung in their cages, sleeping;
the scald rhymers, out of tune, sent home.
What then keeps a drowsy Emperor awake—amid
marble copies of himself marked “for shipping
everywhere”, Speer's blueprints, the stacked decrees
forbidding and proclaiming—if not one ancient
toil of grace, like a rope of dust around his neck?
One faint, marmorial, serpent's smirk? (Which no-
one saw, thank god. Still, wasn't that dead servant
laughing too?) Ah, soldier. Caesar's beguiled.

The last poet burps to sleep, and the last bird.

ARTHUR LINDLEY

Vindice at Home

Revenger's Tragedy: 0.0.1-14

He sees the world, we know, in black and white:
black silk and silver; in the corner, yellow gold
and worms. (He feels their grey crawling
mimicked behind his eyes.) A cut-crystal
sister, needing light—or smashing. A mother
of dull white china shaped for dubious uses.
Away in the woods of court, black wolves
run on. Their howling crawls in his ears.

An ill painter, truly, shaped this retirement:
a white skull in a black room—his love;
nine years' contemplation writhing in his brain . . .
until Hippolito, smiling, brings the smiling mask,
out of whose speaking tube, the bright
red, festive serpent slides, dripping light.

Look Up

With one tilted cluster of dry-blood
coloured trumpet-flowers, my wife's
orchid hangs in its pot like an angel
in a gondola, blowing news from heaven
or soil, the same as yesterday's. I've
never known its name, but it hangs
from the rippled black grating just above
the uplifted hands of trees outside; from bars
that keep the golden, croaking birds away;
hanging, out of reach, blowing silent news:

ANDREW LANSDOWN

This Place

Sticking to the side
of the rusted incinerator,
a small skink—

and below it, snarled
among weeds, tender
for fire, a tinder

of rose-clippings.
This place is death
little lizard.

With a delicacy and precision
to surpass all imagery,
it glances at me

cocking its head like a dog.
This place is death.
Gingerly, I reach out . . . but

it darts towards the ashes,
disappears among the thorns
and dry grasses.

I poke about, impatient
for fire. But the skink
does not think of flame or smoke

It will not come out.
Who am I
to have the care of every creature

in my hand? If I had not seen . . .
I drop a lighted match
into the drum.

This place is my place
and my place is death
little lizard.

I do not wait to watch
the refuse fragment with flame.
But, hauntingly, a hymn

takes me in its hum:
*His eye is on the sparrow
and I know He watches me.*



GIOVANNI ANDREONI

The Farma

As a young man he cut sugar cane, drank beer and slept in Queensland pubs. The blade of the knife cut low at the root of the sugar cane . . . sun, sweat and then rain and mud.

The cut was to begin the next day. The snakes hiding in the moist soil of the sugar cane farm uncoiled slowly. They set fire to the cane brake. A crackling sound, the first red flames, the fire spread fast: heat and thick smoke. A snake heard the fire, his angry eyes still, for a second he bit at the smoke and the flames with his poisonous teeth.

In the depression years a lot of people had gone hungry in Australia. The Australian farmers in the Wheat Belt first had to tighten their belts; the hunger increased and despair followed. He wasn't aware of what was going on, and kept on working from dawn to dusk, in those huge flat fields of green wheat turning yellow in the sun.

At midday he sat on the ground under a gum tree and had a morsel of food. Without a breath of wind, the air lay heavy and stagnant over the green sea closed in at the horizon by a row of gum trees fringing the barren river. There were no mountains. The river began who knows where in the desert, a strip of fine sand narrowing and widening for endless mile on endless mile.

All over the place were the dens of the racehorse goannas between the trees, more than a metre long, their tails as fat and as tasty as chicken breasts.

A small flock of cockatoos flew up into the tree. They were grey and pink. When they saw him sitting there, dunking his bread in the wine, they flew up into the sky again, noisily, with slow graceful movements of their wings.

They disappeared into the sky.

Flies covered his hands, shoulders and face. He had to repair the "fenza" before dark, or the sheep would go there to graze and destroy the crop. He started to dig a hole for the post. His shirt was soaked in sweat and stuck to his skin. He pressed the ground down well. Twenty yards further on he dug another hole. A hundred yards, five holes, five posts. He would be finished by the evening. The wire for the fence was scorching.

The flies gradually disappeared. The sky changed into a reddy-pink colour. The still green sea waited calmly for nightfall. He would have liked to lie down and shut his eyes, but he made his legs go on walking.

His boss called for him. He stood at the door of the homestead, cap in hand. The boss told him that he was quitting. He couldn't stand it any longer: hunger, loneliness, dirt, thirst, a thirst which gnawed at the very marrow of your bones.

He stayed. From simple farmhand he became Boss. It was *his* land now. By the end of the Great Depression he was really rich. He had given all his energy and strength to the land. He had worked the land when his children were born, when his wife had died, when the drought had burnt his whole crop. Now his children had left home. They spoke English among themselves and with their friends. They had helped on the farm, working not as farmhands, nor as his sons, but as hired workers. With the money he gave them they had left . . . He had tried to find words to stop them from going . . . they spoke English.

He went to see his elder son in town. He was a builder. He got there in the middle of the night, his lorry loaded with vegetables for market. It was a still night, not a breath of wind, a soft dark night . . . the long tar road lined by rows of little houses, the rubbery tar under the wheels of the truck, still hot from the sun; the crystal clear stars shone in the dark moonless sky.

His son had built up a good business, and had an Australian accountant to keep his books. He had married a German girl from Melbourne. At home they spoke English. His grandchildren didn't know any Italian. He would say: "Nice, Nice . . . Come on bello: Give Nonno a kiss . . ." and they would smile and look uncomfortable, and run to hide behind their German mother.

His elder son didn't like farm life and told him so quite frankly. He earned more money and was better off with his houses.

His second son took no interest in the farm either. He specialised in fish, mixed fry, and the Australians went to eat it at "Nino's", and listened to Neapolitan songs.

The old man used to go to the Italian Club. The beer was good, and there were always old friends to chat with. You could drink standing at the bar, or sit down at the tables. Australian MPs went there after votes, and you could talk in a mixture of Italian and Australian. It works better that way; you understand each other better. The Australian MPs want our votes, and we want more money. We want to fill our pockets with dollars until they burst, with dollars worth more than American dollars.

He went back to the "farma" by himself.

He couldn't make his children out . . . the farm was theirs. All they had to do was work every day from morning to night. With the money from the harvest, they could buy more land, more sheep, more cows . . . And they had gone to live with the Australians.

One day just after he had finished spreading fertilizers, a little man came to the farm. He was dressed in black and had a big black book under his arm. He spoke in English and told him that he was a Jehovah Witness. He talked and talked . . . he couldn't get rid of him. He kicked him out when he said that the Pope was a devil.

He had had the photograph of his wife enlarged, and he kept it in a frame on his bedside table. He sometimes looked at it at night before turning off the light. Every morning he got up good and early and went out to work: the fence to repair, the sheep, the cows, the harvest . . . the money continued to accumulate as the years went by, while his strength faded away.

He didn't go to the Italian Club anymore. None of his old friends were there. Some had died; others had got too old; others had gone back home. . . . The younger men looked Australian, and didn't take any notice of the old man sitting at the table drinking beer, his hat on the chair next to him.

An American had made him a good offer for the farma. He had gone to see his children about it. "See how much the farma is worth?" he said. "You have to come back now. It's yours . . . it belongs to you and to your children . . ." They advised him to sell, to get a good price and buy a house in town. He could live in comfort at last.

He got up early every morning, but he often felt tired, and in the evenings he gazed at his wife's photograph beside the bed for hours before falling asleep. The American came back and made another offer. He wanted the land, and was prepared to pay a higher price. His children didn't want the "farma", they didn't want to come home . . . Two young Australians worked for the old man, but in the evening they went home. He stayed there alone with his wife's photograph, in the house covered in dust. The photograph had faded, but the photographer next to the Italian Club said that there wasn't anything you could do about that. The silver frame had lost its shine. The old man bought a tin of brasso; he poured a little on a woollen rag, and started to rub. It came up like new, and he put it back near his bed. He couldn't sleep. He just stared at the picture. He could barely read, and it was even harder for him to write. Sometimes he bought a comic from the newsagent in the Italian suburb, but he didn't like the stories much, and reading tired him anyway. He liked to just sit and let his mind wander back to Italy.

The mountains almost reached the sea. The fields, the flat fields between the mountains and the sea, belonged to two men who lived in the area. They were shooters . . . the quail, turtle dove, and then woodcocks . . . The houses in the village were all of stone and built one on top of the other up the steep hill. The barber in the square in front of the church was always open on Sundays for a hair cut and a chat. Even the parish priest used to go there to read the paper out loud.

He had to sack the two Australians. They didn't work. One evening after a long day outside working, he fainted. He couldn't get any air. He lay on his bed, his mouth open, trying to breathe: he felt his heart beating hard inside his chest and his veins throbbing. The room spun around and he couldn't see his wife's photograph. It wasn't there . . . Then the pressure on his throat eased; exhausted he turned his head towards the side of the bed; it was there . . . the faded photograph was right there near him in its frame. He dozed all night on and off. He kept opening his eyes to see if the picture was still there . . .

He went to see his children. This time they had to come home. He stayed with his elder son for three days. They tried to persuade him to sell the place. He could live in comfort, go back to Italy to see his village . . .

You can't just sell land like you can a house in town. You work at it day after day, and every year the harvest becomes money, cows, sheep and more land. They are always there: the fields, the homestead, the sheep, the cows . . .

He didn't get up early to milk any more. He bought what he needed every evening at the local store. That last summer had been too hot, and he had been feeling shivery even though he wore an enormous old hat to protect his head and wrinkled neck. He would feel the fits coming on . . . an icy feeling went right through his body, and he had to lie down on the bed exhausted, with the fence to repair and lots of other jobs waiting in the hot sun . . .

The Jehovahs Witness came to see him often, with an Italian from the Abruzzi region, a convert who spoke to him about the bible, about a God he didn't know . . . Their talk frightened him, but at least it was company . . . A big syndicate wanted his land. They would divide it up into lots, and build a holiday village for city people who wanted to get away from the town. He hadn't given them a definite answer. Then the parish priest read the newspaper to them, he sat listening. Times were hard and there wasn't much work for farm hands.

He had sold a lot of the animals, and didn't bother to repair the fences any more. He would have new ones put in some time. It would cost a lot, but save work. He couldn't do much now, because he was so short of breath. He had to keep stopping for breaks . . . he would sit down and drink a glass of water. Wine

went straight to his head if he drank it in the morning; he could only have it with dinner.

He enjoyed feeding the chickens. When he was young he never took any notice of them. That was his wife's job: a pinch of wheat, a handful of corn . . . every evening he went to get the eggs.

He usually went to bed late. He would drop off in the armchair, and wake with a start, his eyes staring at the walls . . . they needed a coat of paint. His back often ached . . . he could put up with it, but the cows weren't as quiet and as easy to manage as before. All that cross-breeding had made them wild, and now it was hard work rounding them up and getting them into the paddock. The two sheep dogs had been getting lazy of late.

The weed inspector came to visit the farm . . . if he didn't spray the weeds that were growing all over the place and ruining the pastures, he would have to pay a fine. He engaged the men of the Board to do the job, even though it was expensive . . .

He tried not to go outside in the hot hours of the day. He did as much as he could early in the morning, or late in the afternoon. It was so cold in Winter now, and the fire didn't burn as it should; it didn't heat the house as it used to.

He went to see his elder son in town, but he didn't know how to pass the time. His son was in the office all day; his grandchildren didn't speak any Italian. He sat in a corner watching his German daughter-in-law drink tea.

He sold the farm to a neighbour. His children were so pleased. They wanted him to go back to Italy to see his village and his old friends, and then decide whether he wanted to stay there or come back to Australia and buy a house in town. They drove him to the airport, his four grandchildren, his two daughters-in-law, and his two sons. They filled his arms with magazines and sweets as if he were a child; he didn't try to stop them.

The smiling hostess guided him to a seat next to the window. The old man watched the land, the buildings, and the people grow smaller and smaller, and then disappear. He was alone, empty and tired . . . empty, and tired . . .

GRAHAM JACKSON

The Blanket

An Essay In Definition

Large woollen sheet as bed-covering

This is where the history of the blanket begins, on the bed. In colder climates the blanket is particularly useful. Here one may even have to sleep under a number of blankets, or on top of an electric blanket.

In tropical climates the blanket is less useful. In fact it is often a liability (keeping it dry, storing it), unless one happens to get malaria, in which case the blanket is functional, if uncomfortable. One should have slept under a mosquito net in the first place.

In extreme climates—deserts, for instance—one needs a blanket at night, but during the day the thought of it is sufficient to start a heat rash.

Horse-cloth

As man covers himself with blankets, so he covers some of the lesser animals. Horses are favoured in this regard, but the blanket can be used on any species. Stud animals (cattle, sheep) and well-bred domestics such as cats and dogs can be conveniently covered with blankets. In the United States of America blankets are even used on caged canaries.

Etcetera

Man covers many objects with blankets: the ground, on a picnic, for instance. Similarly, a damp seat may be covered with a blanket. In Australia, from the earliest times, the Aborigines were given blankets to cover themselves with as a diplomatic gesture. Blankets have regional uses in other countries as well.

Wet blankets

This expression refers to a person who dampens a conversation by mentioning something unpleasant. Venereal disease, alcoholism and unemployment, in this context, are all unpleasant. In Germany it is still possible to wet blanket a conversation by referring to the unpleasantness over the Jews. Again, the pessimist is the wet blanket at any dinner party, and so on.

Born on the wrong side of the blanket

A popular euphemism for bastard. This was brought to my attention recently by a so-called friend of mine, Dennis. Referring to my pale complexion, he

mentioned the wrong side of the blanket, implying that my mother had been compromised by a white man. He got what he deserved, the bastard, and it is only fair to point out that any more innuendo of this kind will be dealt with similarly.

Stifle, keep quiet

To blanket, in this sense, refers to rumours, scandals and questions of an unpleasant nature. Thus in these difficult times the white rulers in South Africa have blanketed the fate of black South Africans, the white rulers in the United States of America have blanketed the question of red and black Americans, the white rulers in Russia have blanketed all other Russians, and so on. All societies, it would seem, have issues they want to blanket. I mean, for crying out loud, here in Australia they still dole out the blanket ration. I got mine just the other day. So stick *that* in your pipe and smoke it, Dennis, the government says I am black as you.

Toss in the blanket

This is a recent expression, a variation of toss in the towel, meaning to give up (enterprise, hope). As far as I know, it was coined in Australia, but canaries in the United States of America could just as easily have been responsible for it. Or the Indians there, or the Russians in Russia, I suppose, or the blacks in South Africa. I mean, you name me the person not entitled to toss in the blanket these days. You could fit them all in one of the smaller Aboriginal reserves. That is how few have got it good enough to escape worry about tossing in the blanket.

ADAM SHOEMAKER

Sex and Violence in the Black Australian Novel

There is an extremely disturbing scene in the recent film, 'The Eye of the Needle', in which Kate Nelligan, as the British heroine, submits sexually to her husband's murderer, a German Intelligence spy played by Donald Sutherland. It is not until the following day and after a terrifying series of events that Nelligan gains revenge by killing Sutherland but, to the perceptive observer, the thoughts of death and murder are visible in her eyes during the entire love-making scene. This is not only a testament to Nelligan's acting ability; it can also be taken as a striking symbol of the close interrelationship between sex and violence in our culture.

One has only to recall the Elizabethan concept of the sexual climax as a 'miniature death' on the part of the male in order to gain an appreciation of the historical longevity of this interrelationship. Similarly, the Freudian phallic symbolism of guns, pistols, and missiles merely expands upon the imagery of swords and rapiers put to the same purpose—and with the same sexual associations—in Shakespearean drama. This reveals, I believe, a fundamental ambivalence towards sexuality in western culture, an ambivalence which is exemplified by the often brutally invasive nature of our language describing love-making. As we are all aware, sexual relations—theoretically in the realm of love—have all too often been perverted into forms of violence. Whether to assert physical dominance over intellectually superior women or out of related feelings of jealousy or inadequacy, men have used sex as a weapon. Put crudely, in our culture, to achieve victory in the so-called battle between the sexes (itself, a damagingly aggressive concept) males far too frequently feel they must both complete and control the sexual act.

In contemporary Australian society, this destructive ambivalence towards what is supposed to be the summit of human affection persists both linguistically and actively, as belligerent and violent slang terms for intercourse and rising rape statistics both attest. But, what of the original, indigenous Australian society: that of the Aborigines? Some anthropologists and ethnographers, such as Geza Róheim, have maintained that sexual relations in traditional Aboriginal society were 'violent, excessive, and really . . . [amounted] to constant rape of women by men'.¹ If this were true, then one could argue that Aboriginal contact with western civilization has at least partly improved this rapacious situation. But, there is strong evidence to the contrary, and there are clear indications that Róheim's description is wildly inaccurate. For example, despite the powerfully patriarchal nature of traditional Aboriginal society, a number of anthropologists have concluded that sexual relations were treated with considerable reverence and respect, as an integral component of ceremony and ritual. Significantly, in Brain's words, 'In Black Australia sexuality, not marriage, has been ennobled with elaborate

preliminaries of courtship, songs and the visual poetry of rituals and ceremonies'.² Indeed, in the artistic sphere, some traditional love song cycles compare favourably with the greatest examples of amorous poetry ever written in English. On a more practical level, in traditional Aboriginal culture, one of the most common positions for sexual intercourse involved the male lying on the ground while the female squatted on his penis—hardly a posture conducive to rape of the woman. Finally, with reference to the common tribal custom of subincision:

The ethnographical evidence seems to suggest that the subincised penis is considered an imitation vulva. . . . The wounded penis in some parts of Australia is actually called 'vulva' and the bleeding that occurs when the operation is repeated during ceremonies is likened to women's menstruation. . . . Black Australian rites recognize that men feel a need to express their femininity and women their masculinity. . . . White Australians on the other hand theoretically follow a 'myth' of the pure male and the pure female, a myth based on a misguided belief in exaggerated sexual differentiation. . . . This refusal to accept a degree of bisexuality is so extreme that it results in bitter sexual antagonism and a neurotic belief in the superiority of one or the other sex.³

Hence, there was in many ways less potential for sexual violence in traditional Aboriginal society than there is in the contemporary western world.

Of course, traditional Aboriginal culture is now retained only very locally and imperfectly, primarily in central and northern Australia. But, nowhere are there Australian Aborigines untouched by modern White Australian culture, whether *via* its doctors and community advisors or by its miners and liquor salesmen. A significant proportion—some argue, the majority—of Aborigines are now urbanized, and it is therefore not surprising to find that the five novels under discussion here are written by urban-dwelling Black Australians. All of these books have been published during the past twenty years and all exhibit a distinctive worldview which, though not Aboriginal in traditional terms, does incorporate elements of the Black Australian cultural past and present into a unique contemporary synthesis. Therefore, while it may not always be as overt as are the themes of sex and violence, an important connective thread in all five of these novels is the theme of a singular Black Australian identity, forged as a result of both historical and contemporary attack on the Aboriginal way of life. All three novelists are to some extent 'integrated' Black Australians who have been influenced by White Australian teachers, authors, editors and publishers, let alone by the media and the political system. But Johnson, Bandler, and Weller are all aware of the extent of their integration and this self-knowledge has enabled them to succeed in a culturally-foreign form of creative expression, and has steeled their resolve to preserve and celebrate that distinctive Black Australian identity which they retain.

I contend that the strong emphasis upon sexual relations as a mirror of violence in the Black Australian novel exemplifies just how attuned to this form of contemporary brutality these authors have become, and shows how incisively they have examined the White Australian world, as well as their own. Two of these authors, Colin Johnson and Faith Bandler, project the image of that violence back into history to illustrate how self-sufficient peoples were forcibly removed from their homes, killed, violated, and transplanted into foreign and unwelcome shores. It is noteworthy that, in Johnson's *Doctor Wooreddy's Prescription for Enduring the Ending of the World*, a clear parallel is established between the rape of the Tasmanian Aboriginal women and the physical rape of their land, sacred sites, and heritage. Furthermore, differing approaches to the sexual act reveal that Black Australian novelists consider their own people to have been consummate artists of love-making, and that the arrival of White men in Australia cheapened, degraded, and perverted the beauty of that art.

Sexual and cultural violence is dealt with in historical novels such as *Wooreddy* and *Wacvie*, but the treatment of the subject is relatively muted when compared with the direct, searing sexual and physical brutality of Aboriginal novels set in the contemporary urban environment, particularly Johnson's *Long Live Sandawara* and Weller's *The Day of the Dog*. For, as White society has become increasingly dominant in Australia, so it has had more and more violent effects upon Black Australians. It is ironic that, though they were the instigators and perpetrators of that violence, few White Australians have had the bravery and insight to recognize and describe it accurately until very recently. Thus, Aboriginal novelists, in their best work, play the important role of illustrating the often base, raw reality of Australian social violence. Sexual relations as the reflection of that violence are so pre-eminent in these novels primarily because they are stories of cultural clash in which White mores are dominant. Were they stories of traditional Aboriginal culture, the theme would very likely not be present, nor would it be necessary. These novelists directly, perceptively, and disconcertingly hold a mirror up to European violence, sexual jealousy, physical brutality, regimentation and authoritarianism.

This is not to say that Aborigines were devoid of violent passions and were perpetually peace-loving people before the advent of Whites in Australia. Such was not the case. But I contend that the behaviour which novelists such as Johnson and Weller describe—the excesses of violence and liquor, and the degrading of sexual relations—allegedly 'deviant' or 'anti-social' behaviour according to White sociologists—is actually a response largely in European terms to an untenable situation created by White Australians. In this sense, it is sadly ironic that Aborigines are now satirized and harshly punished for emulating too enthusiastically the 'deviant' behaviour of their White mentors. In order to illustrate the development of this theme of sexual and larger cultural violence, the historical novels written by Black Australians—Faith Bandler's *Wacvie* and Colin Johnson's *Wooreddy*—will be discussed before the harsh, unrelenting brutality of the contemporary scene, imaged most clearly in Archie Weller's *The Day of the Dog*, is examined.

In this connection, the descriptive term 'Black Australian' has been deliberately selected, rather than 'Aboriginal', for it embraces the published work of other oppressed, dark-skinned minorities in Australia, such as the Torres Strait Islanders. According to this definition, Faith Bandler is a Black Australian, for she is the direct descendant of a 'kanaka' labourer: a Nineteenth century slave-worker in the sugar cane fields of Queensland. The novel, *Wacvie*, is a partly-fictionalized biography of her father, Wacvie Mussingkon, who was forcibly transported from the Pacific island of Ambrym in the New Hebrides to the Mackay area of Queensland, in 1883. *Wacvie* is, stylistically, the most simple and most reserved of the Black Australian novels. One of the book's strengths is Bandler's keen eye for detail and colour, but her work is flawed by an over-emphasis upon culinary and housekeeping minutiae in the houses of the Queensland plantation managers. At times it appears that she is more concerned with her fictional menu than with the squalid living and harsh working conditions endured by the 'kanakas' outside the owner's mansion. There is also a rather too ready idealization of traditional Ambrymese life; it is described in Utopian terms which strain credibility:

In the main they knew no sickness. Childbirth was without pain. Their teeth did not decay. Their days were an endlessly repeated cycle only broken by their desire for food. They fished, cooked and ate; they danced, sang and made love.⁴

Pacific island life was admittedly leisurely, self-sufficient, stable and, until the arrival of the Europeans, relatively secure, but one has difficulty believing that it was as perfect as Bandler's description suggests.

The author is very keen to illustrate the institutional violence of the slave labour trade, both through its impact upon the Pacific islands and upon the transported individuals themselves. Bandler illustrates this form of violence quite effectively, as when she describes the White overseer in the fields:

Unmercifully, with all his strength, he flicked the whip across the sweating, flannel-covered backs, and vehemently cursed them in the new language, repeating over and over the two words: 'Black Bastards! Black Bastards!'. (p. 25).

Bandler also gives examples of individualized cruelty and shows very clearly how such violence can breed a like response:

Suddenly the overseer was standing over her. Cursing, he ordered her back to work. Then, with his highly polished boot, he kicked her. Emcon gently put her baby back in its cane trash cradle. Then she picked up a knife and with all the strength she could muster, she plunged it into the field master, at the same time calling to the other women for help. (p. 40).

Sexual exploitation of one race by the other also takes place in Wacvie's world. The Whites use their Black servants and slaves as sexual chattels and transform sexual relations into a crude form of bartering. In return for sexual favours the Whites—both male and female—offer minor privileges or concessions. There are a number of dimensions to this relationship of manipulation and exploitation. First, as Bandler aptly illustrates, the European women on the cane plantations could wield as much sexual power as could their menfolk, especially as there were far more available Black men than women working in the fields. The author's description of the owner's wife's post-coital bliss is effective, and reveals how meaningless sexual relations between the races had become:

Maggie waited for her husband's snores but they didn't come. She was feigning sleep, afraid that he might take from her the pleasure still lingering from having successfully seduced one of the black men that afternoon. She was unaware that none of them were happy about taking pleasure with her, that they considered she didn't really know how to excite a man. She didn't know that each man had come to her thinking he might as well take his share, since others would have if he didn't. Even if the piles of red flesh, flabby thighs and blue veins were repulsive, it was free and he was usually rewarded with some of Russell's tobacco or a bottle of his rum. (p. 53).

The second major aspect of this sexual power play which Bandler describes is the fact that Black Australians themselves began to perceive the potential of intercourse as a tool for gain, a means of advancement. For example, Emcon, who earlier murdered the overseer in the fields, reacts to the advances of Ted Fox, the sugar refining company chairman, in the following way:

'Well?' Fox whispered. His hands twisted in hers and she tightened her grasp. But he was listening. She would use this man like a tool, like her kitchen tools; she could use him to make things better for her people. (p. 75).

Thus, sexual relations between master and slave can be seen as a reflection of their imbalanced power relations. The sexual act is transformed by the Whites into a means of asserting their authority; by the Blacks, into a means of attempting to make relations between the races more equitable. The European debasement of Black Australian sexuality went hand-in-glove with the exploitation of their labour, the restrictions on their freedom, and the introduction of alcohol and gambling, which both had the effect of maintaining White supremacy. Wacvie is perceptive enough to realize that the dangers of drunkenness and gambling are far more than physical ones. He pleads with his fellows not to attend the horse races: 'If we

come to this place, the money the White man gives us for working, he will now take back—then we can't start to work for our own ground—and our freedom' (p. 109). *Wacvie* is, however, at base an optimistic novel, for it shows how, with persistence and bravery, that freedom was achieved.

A very different novel indeed is Colin Johnson's *Wooreddy*, which details the progressive enslavement and virtual annihilation of the Tasmanian Aborigines. Both *Wacvie* and *Wooreddy* end with the death of the eponymous character but *Wacvie*'s death signifies the sacrifice which has made liberty possible; *Wooreddy*'s, the awareness of the true ending of the traditional world for the Tasmanian Blacks. Still, the matter is more complex than this, for it is significant that the spirit of Doctor *Wooreddy* lives on and makes it possible for Johnson to write with a distinctive Aboriginal pride and world-view. The corpse of *Wooreddy* may be buried in a shallow grave but 'the real Doctor *Wooreddy* had disappeared before they could get to him and inflict further humiliation upon him' and a symbolic spark of light representing his spirit or soul 'shot up from the beach and flashed through the dark sky towards the evening star'.⁵ As this example illustrates, the structure and informing ideas of Johnson's book are far more symbolic, subtle and intricate than are those of Bandler's novel.

In *Wooreddy* the violence wrought upon traditional Aboriginal life is said to be the result of a generalized malevolence inspired by *Ria Warrawah*, the evil and dangerous spirit most wickedly manifested in the ocean. The *num* (that is, the 'ghosts', or White men) are thought to be agents of this malevolent force, given their spectre-like appearance and their ability to traverse the oceans with ease. Hence, initially, the Tasmanian Blacks of Johnson's novel accept the sexual violence done to their women as being a result of the unavoidable dictates of fate:

Mangana's wife had been raped and then murdered by *num* (ghosts) that came from the settlement across the strait. What had happened had had nothing to do with her, her husband or her children. It had been an act of *Ria Warrawah*—unprovoked, but fatal as a spear cast without reason or warning. (p. 10).

Hence, Mangana laments because one cannot kill a supernatural being, because all his people are under the curse of an evil deity:

They were under the dominion of the Evil One, *Ria Warrawah*. They killed needlessly. They were quick to anger and quick to kill with thunder flashing out from a stick they carried. They kill many, and many die by the sickness they bring. . . . A sickness demon takes those that the ghosts leave alone. (p. 11).

As the novel progresses, Johnson relates how *Wooreddy* gradually comes to realize that the *num* are human as well—often violent, cruel and rapacious—but still human. He gains his knowledge largely through an observation of the Europeans' treatment of Aboriginal women, who themselves were initially less afraid of the *num* as they were protected by their femaleness from the forces of *Ria Warrawah* in the ocean. In many cases, these Black women were fatally mistaken to be unafraid, for the Whites viewed them as valuable only in sexual terms. Johnson illustrates both the European sexual greed and *Wooreddy*'s gradual enlightenment concerning the corporality of the Whites in the following passage describing the rape of Truganinni:

On the soft, wet beach-sand a naked brown-skinned woman was being assaulted by four ghosts. One held both of her arms over her head causing her breasts to jut into the low-lying clouds; two more each clung to a powerful leg, and the fourth thudded away in the vee . . . The doctor noted with interest the whiteness of the ghost's penis. He had accepted the fact of their having

a penis—after all they were known to attack women—but he had never thought it would be white. . . . He was beginning to find the rape a little tedious. What was the use of knowing that the *num* were overgreedy for women just as they were overgreedy for everything? He could have deduced this from the record of their previous actions and they did appear fixed and immutable in their ways. (p. 21).

Significantly, Truganinni does not resist these rapists; like Emcon in *Wacvie* she learns the material value of sexual availability. But, she pays an important price in so doing. Though she does not realize it, Truganinni's agreement to debase her own sexuality—to make prostitution a virtue because it is a necessity—renders her incapable of sexual tenderness even with other Aborigines whom she loves. When Wooreddy finally successfully woos and marries her,

The woman accepted her fate with a numbness worthy of Wooreddy. In the past she had found sex to be a weapon useful for survival and felt little pleasure in it. She gave her body in exchange for things and that was where the importance lay. Her husband's love-making meant less than the rape that had been inflicted on her. She hated the men for doing that, and was indifferent to what Wooreddy could or would do. (p. 47).

Wooreddy, for his part, is confused and distressed by his wife's frigidity, and cannot fully appreciate the psychological trauma she has undergone:

Wooreddy did not know that Trugernanna had only endured the rough embraces of ghosts, and so many older women had died that she had remained ignorant of the different sexual positions. The man, almost twice her age and having already had one woman go to the fire, wondered at her lack of knowledge and movement. (p. 47).

But, significantly, though disappointed, he does not reject her for her sexual coldness:

Each day Wooreddy made love to his wife, but her lack of response began to bore him. After all, he was a doctor with a knowledge of love-making and he had already been married. Now it all seemed for naught. Finally, he accepted the fact that they were together, not for love, but for survival. (p. 48).

One can draw a number of conclusions from Johnson's treatment of the theme of sex as it relates to violence. First, the author clearly implies that Black Australians were traditionally masters of the art of love-making and only the invasion of the brutal Europeans extinguished this talent. Second, the Whites rape not only women, but, in symbolic form, practically everything else with which they come in contact. They appropriate terrain as easily and as completely as they conquer individuals:

Bruny Island belonged to the ghosts. The land rang with their axes, marking it anew just as Great Ancestor had done in the distant past. . . . The ghosts had twisted and upturned everything. (p. 25).

Third, even well-meaning Whites were unable to give real help to the Tasmanian Blacks because of their persistent but paradoxical belief in the child-like intellect, yet licentious nature, of the Aborigines. One of the real strengths of Johnson's novel is his wonderful lampooning of George Augustus Robinson, officially the Protector of Aborigines, whose policies ultimately ensured the sterility and near genocide of the race he was allegedly preserving. One of Robinson's most enthusiastic converts was, of course, Truganinni, who readily accepted the juvenile role Robinson assigned her: 'the word "fader" constantly fell from her lips when Robinson was within hearing' (p. 33). But Meeter Ro-bin-un, as Wooreddy calls

him, is no saint: his reaction to Truganinni is constantly and comically sensual, as when she and other women emerge from an oyster harvest in the ocean:

Robinson's mouth went dry and his ruddy face paled as the women rose like succubi from hell to tempt him with all the dripping nakedness of firm brown flesh . . . 'Very good,' the *num* replied, meaning not the harvest of the woman, but her body. (p. 43).

As Johnson makes explicit, the Whites are no less licentious, and may well be more so than the Blacks to whom they impute this sinful trait.

There are many examples of brutality in the novel: axe murders of Aboriginal mothers and children; retaliations against White shepherds by Wooreddy and other remaining Blacks; and the final scene, in which Ummarrah is publicly hanged. But, in all cases, Johnson maintains careful control over his material, and sexual relations are an accurate reflection of both the invasion of the Whites and, occasionally, of the dwindling havens remaining to the Blacks: 'Wooreddy enjoyed Walyer's firm body as much as she enjoyed his. Somehow, both found a tenderness which they had thought lost' (p. 121). Thus, even in the face of the ending of their world, Aborigines who remain sexually undefiled by the Whites can still find solace in each other's sensuality.

What is noteworthy about Johnson's first, and in a number of ways least successful novel, *Wild Cat Falling*, published in 1965, is that such a sexual haven does not exist. The nameless part-Aboriginal protagonist, recently released from gaol, seems to have internalized all the brutality of his surrounding society and the institutional violence of life in boys' homes and prison, so that he rejects any opportunity for tender intimacy with women. This rejection applies equally to Black and White females; in all cases, he feels not love, but anger, bitterness and disgust in his sexual relationships. In fact, his aversion to sex, accentuated by a constant association with drunkenness, is so severe that it produces acute feelings of nausea:

Some of the men came in with a few more bottles and the women gathered round like flies. A big full-blood gin cottoned onto me. 'Give us a drink, yellor feller. Just a little one and I'll be nice to you. . . . Come on. . . . Jesus, that was good. Just one more. Come on. . . .' Shrieks of laughter, sound of breaking bottles, angry argument and drunken couplings. . . . Warm brown breasts and heavy nipples rising and falling in drunken sleep. . . . I staggered out, vomited and stumbled to a tap. . . .⁶

When a drunken White girl tries to seduce him at a university party, his repugnance is just as strong:

She pushes open a door and I feel for a switch. 'Don't need any light,' she says. I understand her now. She pulls me down with her onto a bed and sighs as her arms twist round my neck. My body is as warm as hers but my mind is detached and cold. This time I don't feel anything like hate or love. Only feel sick. I throw off her stranglehold and fling myself out the door. (p. 93).

But the most disturbing aspect of the protagonist's attitude towards sex is his transformation of sexual overtures into aggression; of intercourse into attack; of love into hate. The most lucid evocation of the synthesis between sex and violence occurs when he is in bed with an Aboriginal woman, Denise:

God, I feel awful and I want to be alone, but she's here and I suppose I have to sleep with her—oh damn. . . . The bottle falls to the floor and she leans back against the wall. Her breasts jut under her jumper and desire floods into me. I want her and hate her for making me want her. I pull off her clothes and take her violently, like it was rape. Hate her. Hate her. Love

her. It is finished. I fling away from her and she lies like a discarded doll. There's no more wine blast it! When I get drunk I usually end up with a chick, but why should this girl mean something to me? I want to be unmoved by everything—like a god. (p. 59).

It is difficult to imagine a more lucid and distressing example in contemporary Australian literature of the blending of sexual and violent impulses.

A number of points are worth emphasizing. First, in *Wild Cat Falling*, violent sex is always triggered by over-indulgence in alcohol; throughout all of Johnson's work, intoxication is always linked with cruel, excessive or pitiful behaviour—often sexual abuse or attempts at seduction. It is significant that this alcoholic trigger for sexual violence is, in *Wild Cat Falling*, described very much as a Black Australian problem. In his later novels, liquor is described as a curse introduced by White Australians, which sapped the strength and purpose of the Blacks. In both *Sandawara* and *Wooreddy*, it is therefore considered to be at least as much an historical White Australian problem and, therefore, a contemporary White responsibility. This is not to say that there is an implied advocacy of, for example, repressive drinking laws for Blacks; rather, the implication is that White Australia must bear the onus for the wasted life of an alcoholic ex-convict like the character Tom in *Sandawara*—and that it should provide financial support for his rehabilitation.

Fifteen years elapsed between the appearance of *Wild Cat Falling*—the first published Aboriginal novel—and Johnson's second book, *Long Live Sandawara*. In the former, Johnson's style is, for the most part, spare and direct, although his Beatnik idiom has dated very rapidly. In the latter, he ranges from urban Aboriginal slang in the contemporary segments to near epic prose in the historical sections of the book. It is in some ways unfair to consider the two halves of *Sandawara* separately, for the historical and contemporary segments provide such a successful counterpoint, but for the sake of this argument such an artificial division will be made. It is striking that, in the historical portion of the book, sexual relations are hardly mentioned, although the violence of the liberation struggle against the White settlers and police outriders is described in great detail. In addition, the theme of alcohol as a weapon in the invasion arsenal of the Europeans is emphasized: much like smallpox or venereal disease, its importation to Australia bolstered the campaign to oust the Aborigines from their territory. Johnson makes this obvious in the historical segment of his book, in which the guerilla leader Sandawara permits his followers to drink the liquor captured from a raided party of settlers:

He lets the liquor be passed around among his people, unaccustomed to any sort of drug. He should stop it, but hell exists deep within his mind. He has known the viciousness of the white man—thus comes despair and the desire to experience to the full a moment or two of heightened life before death. He drinks deeply of the whisky, feeling the warmth spreading like a fever through his numb body. The ways of the white men begin to prevail in the gorge. The natural disciplines, the obedience to the Law, passed down from the very dawn of humanity, disappears from the river flat. Scenes as riotous as in old England erupt in shrieks and cries of alcohol pain kicking out in spasmodic violence. . . . This is his earth, his people and the white man's hell.⁷

Unlike the historical segment, in the contemporary section of *Sandawara* there are, in Blanche d'Alpuget's words, 'lashings of casual sex',⁸ and a considerable amount of violence as well—especially during the novel's climactic bank robbery. It is salient that, though there is a significant amount of both sex and violence in the novel, unlike in *Wild Cat Falling*, the two are disparate. It is adolescent, exploratory sex described in minute detail; virtually sex for its own sake. Further-

more, Johnson's descriptions of sexual relations in *Sandawara* are often humorous, both because of their frequency and due to the location of some of the participants. For example, Rob and Rita have an insatiable appetite for each other which is amusingly paralleled with their constant cooking. They make love constantly, but it almost always seems to be in the kitchen:

The couple are in their territory, the kitchen, where Rob's trying his hand at kangaroo stew and dumplings. He wants to try something simple, something Rita can't spoil. Often he wishes that she wouldn't offer to help him every time. She's always brushing against him, and the kitchen table's becoming rickety from their constant screwing. He still has a blister on his arse from the time she fucked him right up against the stove. (p. 29).

At one stage in the novel it appears that Johnson is writing a primer of adolescent sex, as two girls, Sally and Jane—neither more than thirteen years of age—become initiated into the sexual activity of the so-called 'crashpad'. What is noteworthy is not only the explicitness of the author's description, but also the matter-of-fact attitude which the girls have adopted towards sex. Intercourse is, initially, hardly more interesting for them than watching television:

The youth manages to get the girl on to her back. He gets off her jeans with a lot of help, then plunges ahead. He bangs away and Jane lies beneath him wondering why this activity is supposed to be wonderful. Sally stares at her friend jealously. No one ever takes any notice of her. Why haven't they got a telly in this place? She doesn't want to sit there watching them do it all night. She wants it done to her too. . . . Sally hasn't really got past the fumbling stage before. Well, once or twice and then she hadn't found it much fun. It was something to endure and part of life. (p. 86).

Some have argued that Johnson over-emphasizes the character and frequency of the sexual encounters in Aboriginal urban communes, and that the reader is occasionally made to feel like a *voyeur*. Interestingly, such arguments have actually been voiced by Black Australian readers; in Johnson's words, 'Aboriginal criticism of *Sandawara* is often about the amount of sex in it. . . . Aborigines criticize it from what they know or what they want to see themselves as, rather than from historical fact.'⁹ But, in interview, he has maintained the accuracy of his depiction: 'That's the way it often is with young people today. It's realistic; it's like that', and he adds, 'most of the characters are based upon real-life individuals',¹⁰ even Ron, the humorously grotesque derelict of the novel.

If sex is not used in *Sandawara* as a mirror, or a concomitant of violence, as in the other Black Australian novels, what is its purpose? To begin with, the concept of Aboriginal sex as a refuge from a hostile White world is again emphasized: when the police raid the crashpad, it is the under-age girls whom they take into custody. Then, when Alan, the leader of the group, rescues Sally and Jane at the holding centre, he symbolically and audaciously makes love to each in the dormitory before helping them escape. Alan is significant in another sense as well: as the new *Sandawara*, or liberation fighter, he is far more in touch with his Aboriginal heritage than are the other urban Blacks. Consequently, because of this traditional connection, he is described as being by far the most accomplished lover, despite his young age. When Sally climaxes with Alan, it is far more than a level of television excitement that she achieves, although the description does come close to being a cliché: 'Suddenly the ceiling and floor seem to meet. She gives a scream and her mind goes blank for an instant' (p. 92). The third use of sex in the novel is a more sociological one: though it often appears gratuitous and, therefore, meaningless, intercourse, is always harmless and always a means of escaping from the boredom, poverty, and depression of Aboriginal life. Not only is sex free, but it is described as a far more wholesome and unifying 'high'

than are either alcohol or drugs. The social implication clearly is that in a rebellious commune such as this one, unrestricted, casual sex is fortifying and helps to form a sense of group identity and solidarity.

One of the chapters in Johnson's novel is entitled 'Love and Guns'. It is a convenient epithet for the second half of the novel, which moves from sexual exploration to a brutal slaughter in gunfire at the end. All of the members of Alan's group are mown down by the police in gory technicolour as they try to rob a bank, only Alan—the modern Sandawara—survives this baptism of fire and thereby grows to maturity. In Johnson's words:

Alan didn't really know what violence was like until it hit him in the face. His youth dies then and this is paralleled by Sandawara's death: all his loving world is wiped out by their gunfire.¹¹

The violence at the close of *Sandawara* is brutal, excessive, and graphically-described. But, because the book is replete with satire and irony, the tone of the novel as a whole is not overly harsh. In fact, the massacre at its close has a distinct air of unreality, of attempting to push an ideological line to an unreasonable degree. Johnson obviously feels that these mass deaths are essential for Alan's illumination, but there is no logical sense in which they can be considered inevitable or even likely, and this strains the credibility of the end of his book.

Archie Weller's first novel, *The Day of the Dog*, does not suffer from any such internal inconsistency or strain. It has a searing, pressing inner momentum and a stylistic force which carries it inexorably forward. There is no other Aboriginal novel in which a sense of being foredoomed is so clearly conveyed. Whereas Johnson's contemporary characters choose their future in an undramatic, easy-going way, Weller's protagonist, Doug Dooligan, is relentlessly pressured back into the criminal world by ties of family, friends, and the dictates of his own false pride. The most apt metaphor for *The Day of the Dog* must be a spider-web. Indeed, it is an image which repeatedly surfaces in this extremely violent, disconcerting, and stylistically and linguistically precise novel. Of Doug and his mates Weller writes:

No-one owns them. They are their own bosses. They have cobwebs in their hair and minds and, spiderlike, they dream up new dastardly deeds for their initiation. They paint on lies and blood from fights, to make themselves look elegant with patterns from their new Dreaming. They dance to their gods of flashing lights and hopes.¹²

But, from the day he is released from Fremantle gaol, Doug is far more a vulnerable insect than a spider; he is open to exploitation from all quarters, as his girlfriend laments, 'Them boys just use ya up; ya people use ya up, ya think I don't see that?' (p. 116).

If Doug is the pawn of others, the women in the novel are even more so the physical and sexual property of their men. Valerie Yarrup, for example, endures the drunkenness, the violent rages, and the infidelity of 'Pretty Bóy' Floyd:

Floyd pretends to sulk, which is the closest he will get to telling Valerie: sorry about hitting you and running out on you and stealing all the time. But just try to see the good things about me. Valerie, who knows her man, accepts and coils up beside him, wrapping an arm around his elegant neck. (p. 96).

The Day of the Dog is a novel which illustrates, not violent sex as is *Wild Cat Falling*, but sex in the midst of an overwhelmingly violent life. This means that the love which should accompany the sexual act is normally absent in this novel, for those such as Floyd just do not have the vocabulary or the basic ability to convey their affection, as Doug muses: 'Poor Floyd, so young and unable to

express himself in any way except through violence—even to express love, the tenderest yet cruellest of emotions' (p. 78). Hence, one night Floyd sleeps peacefully with Valerie, the following night he beats her, and the next night he is forgiven: the world which Weller describes is an extremely brutal, cruel and chauvinistic one.

The only character in the book for whom sex and love actually coalesce is the protagonist, Doug Dooligan. He and his girlfriend, Polly, have a very passionate relationship but their sexual experiences are described as being on a different plane from those of their friends:

They both think it is the best lovemaking they have ever experienced; not out loud, like a rooster crowing at the death of gentle night and all her warm secrets, but soaring silently in circles of inner joy like a godly eagle, swift and high above earthly matters. (p. 66).

Furthermore, in a book in which men treat their women as expendable sexual objects, Doug surprisingly shows that his love is more than just the afterglow of intercourse, as he confides in Polly: 'If ya love a girl, then ya don't 'ave to make love all the time. If you do, that's not proper love, ya know' (p. 52). This may not be a particularly profound concept, but in Doug Dooligan's world such an attitude borders upon the heretical.

Violence is ubiquitous in *The Day of the Dog*: gangs feud with gangs; individual Blacks take on others to prove their masculinity; and the police harass the Aborigines constantly. They hound Doug and make it clear that their aim is to get him back behind bars as soon as possible. On one occasion, after belting him by an old railway bridge, one of the special constables hisses, 'I hate your guts, you little mixed-blood misfit,' . . . 'If it's the last thing I do I'm putting you back in Freo, where snivelling gutless snakes like you belong' (p. 87). Weller emphasizes this theme in the novel and writes of it so persuasively because it is a type of abuse which he has personally observed and endured. When asked in interview about the special police squad in the book, nicknamed 'The Boys from Brazil', he replied:

Yes, there were some police called the three stooges . . . and . . . they used to be the 'Larrikin Squad' when I was younger, and they used to give people a really hard time. They even called my foster brother in one time and they said 'Come 'ere, David', and he came down; and they wound up the window of the car with his head in it, and . . .took off. He put his foot flat on the floor—this was just for fun.¹³

The police harassment in the novel is so severe that even when Polly and Doug are peacefully sleeping in each other's arms in his bedroom—another example of Aboriginal sexuality as a temporary refuge from the persecution of the outside world—detectives burst into the room without warrant to interrogate them both about a car theft. The symbol is patently clear: even the most private and intimate Aboriginal relationships are open to police abuse and authoritarianism. Even their sexuality is degraded by the detectives, as Weller illustrates:

Carnal knowledge. There they were, making what they thought was beautiful love, and all along it was just 'carnal knowledge'. People have to spoil everything. (p. 100).

But, in this novel, sex is not only a symbol of exploitation or of Doug's attempt to find peace and solitude in the face of the White world of authority and the Black world of crime. As in *Wooreddy*, the image of rape is associated with the wanton destruction of nature, in order to satisfy the White man's innate aggressiveness. For example, Weller's description of land-clearing is very revealing:

The youths revel in the hard work and in each other's company. They have not been together just by themselves for a long time. Amidst the tortured screams of the dying trees, as the chainsaw's teeth bite into their virgin bodies and the rumbling of the old faded red dozer smashing into the trees, knocking them senseless, and pushing them into broken piles, their raw yellow roots jaggng obscenely into the air, and the thudding of the cruel axe,—amidst all this Doug no longer needs the friendship of the bush. In all its silent dignity it draws away from the youth who so badly needed a proper friend. Now he laughs as he slaughters the trees with his companions. (pp. 151-152).

Finally, sex is also used by Weller as a potent image of temptation and rejection, which sets in motion the events leading to the blood and destruction with which the novel ends. Doug finds comfort and fleeting happiness in his sexual relationships with other Aborigines, but in his seduction of the White waitress at the Halfway House, he degrades himself, demeans the woman, and makes the sexual act totally meaningless and damaging. Angelina's attitude towards sex is made painfully clear by the author—it is no more than physical stimulation: 'She will go with anyone if he has the money. A quick hello, a bit of fun, then a clean goodbye; it's quick and clean love that can be used over and over again with no worries' (p. 140). But the absence of worries in this case necessitates the absence of any affection and commitment, so that what Doug and Angelina experience is little more than mutual masturbation:

Naked, they struggle into the back seat, giggling from the whisky and the difficulties encountered. On the plush sheepskin covers, he reaps the reward that his money and patience sowed and grew. They love and drink and love and sleep; at least, they make what they think is love. (p. 143).

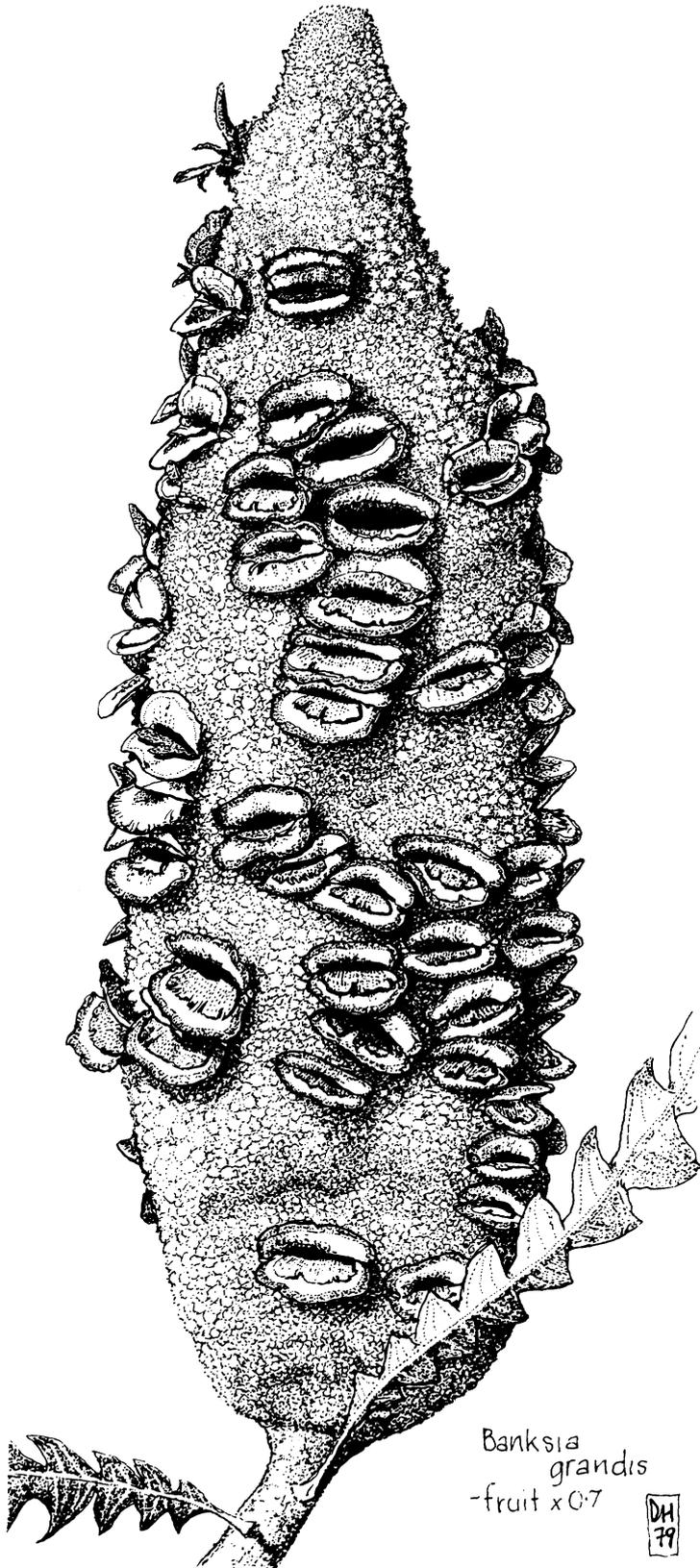
This mutual exploitation provides a fine example of the degradation of sexuality through its transformation into a commercial undertaking—a theme which one can trace throughout the Black Australian novels under consideration here. The passage illustrates another major, related theme, which is the frequent association of alcohol with repellent sexual contact, in which one partner designedly takes advantage of it, or inflicts violence upon, the other. Third, sex is often a mirror of power relations, be they of master and slave, rapist and victim, or prostitute and customer. Most of the Aboriginal novels show how such relations were introduced into Australia by Europeans, were originally inimical to Aborigines, but have now been adopted as part of Black adaptation to White Australian society. Fourth, temptations for liquor, for cars, for wealth, all play a major part in motivating both crime and materialistic sexuality in these books: one steals the car or money to impress the woman, and assumes that the expected sexual reward will be forthcoming. Hence, the White Australian consumer culture helps to entrap Black Australians into illegal modes of behaviour, in order to live up to the image of success which it portrays. Fifth, the theme of symbolic or actual rape surfaces in all the Aboriginal novels and, again, the initial aggressive impulse is described as coming from the Europeans. Finally, authority structures such as the prison system and the police force are frequently perceived by Aborigines as potent forms of institutionalized, systemic, violence, which severely circumscribe Black Australian freedom.

The relationship between sex and violence is a venerable one. But, despite, and perhaps because of the longevity of the interrelationship, western cultures still suffer from disturbing rates of rape, child molestation, and physical abuse related to sexual conflict. Black Australians are by no means immune to the perversion of sex into violence; indeed, as these authors have shown, the post-contact world of the Aborigine has been marked by these forms of cruelty to an alarming degree.

Today, crimes of a sexual nature—almost all related to alcohol abuse—are rife in many Aboriginal communities, as they are in the larger Australian society. What is noteworthy, therefore, is that White Australians now have the opportunity of observing the impact of their mores upon a rapidly-adjusting foreign culture in their midst. One can only hope that the reflection of sex-related violence which these novels mirror will be recognized as being a White Australian problem, just as much as it is considered to be a Black Australian one. If, by their candour and directness, these authors can help to raise awareness of the extremely damaging nexus between sex and violence while they entertain the reader, they will have performed a valuable service. It is not the Black Australians who are, in sociological terms, 'deviant' and 'anti-social' but those who refuse to recognize the seriousness of the issues addressed in these novels. It is a testament to the artistic skill of Johnson and, in particular, Weller, that such an important theme has been handled so effectively: through their work the Black Australian novel is evolving as a significant alternative form of literature in contemporary Australia.

NOTES

1. Robert Brain, *Rites, Black and White* (Ringwood, 1979), p. 173.
2. Brain, *Rites, Black and White*, p. 177.
3. *ibid.*, pp. 143, 144, 146.
4. Faith Bandler, *Wacvie* (Adelaide, 1977), p. 7. All further quotations from *Wacvie* will be taken from this edition, and page numbers will be included in parentheses in the body of the text, immediately after each quotation.
5. Colin Johnson, *Doctor Wooreddy's Prescription for Enduring the Ending of the World* (Melbourne, 1983), p. 207. All further quotations will be taken from this edition, and page numbers will be given in parentheses immediately following each quotation.
6. Colin Johnson, *Wild Cat Falling* (Sydney, 1979), p. 74. All further quotations will be taken from this edition, and page numbers will be included in parentheses immediately following each quotation.
7. Colin Johnson, *Long Live Sandawara* (Melbourne, 1979), pp. 81-82. All further quotations will be taken from this edition, and page numbers will be included in parentheses immediately after each quotation.
8. Blanche d'Alpuget's review of *Long Live Sandawara* in *24 Hours*, quoted on the back dustcover of *Wooreddy* (Melbourne, 1983).
9. Personal correspondence with the author, dated 24 August 1982.
10. Personal interview with Colin Johnson, Brisbane, August 1980.
11. Personal interview with Colin Johnson, Brisbane, August 1980.
12. Archie Weller, *The Day of the Dog* (Sydney, 1981), p. 44. All further quotations will be taken from this edition, and page numbers will be included in parenthesis immediately after each quotation.
13. Personal interview with the author, Perth, February 1983.



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GRAHAM JACKSON

In Buckley's Cave

The State of Culture in Australia

(The following notes, recently discovered in Buckley's Cave on the Bellarine Peninsula, represent the last work of the cultural anthropologist, Elaine Bernstein. Ms Bernstein, of course, is still missing. I have taken the liberty of giving the notes their present title myself, after Steiner.)

1. William Buckley, an escaped convict who lived with the Aborigines for thirty years, was the first European known to have been assimilated by the original Australians in this corner of the continent. On his return to the European settlement at Port Phillip, he refused to discuss his experience of Aboriginal life. Buckley's Cave should therefore be understood as a symbol of the capacity of Aboriginal culture to retain its singular identity.
2. I have had to accept Buckley's Cave as the setting in which my own contract with the Aborigines will be formally signed for this reason: that Europeans now have no alternative but to agree to any conditions the Aborigines may place on our activity in their country.
3. The pertinent clause in the recent *Makarrata** is as follows:
Anthropological and archaeological research should not be conducted without full approval from those Aboriginal people whose territorial jurisdiction prevails in the chosen area.
4. I am aware that the nature of my research, sorting through the bones of past generations, does not recommend itself to Aboriginal sensibilities.
5. I am reminded of another convict, James Hardy Vaux, who unlike Buckley was more intimately acquainted with the ways of European society. In his Vocabulary of the convict slang he included *resurrection cove*, 'a stealer of dead bodies', Am I no more than this?
6. The idea of the christian resurrection is worth looking at again. We are more interested in Christ's death than his resurrection: the symbol of christianity is the cross. Christ, we are instructed, was nailed to it and died on it to expiate the sins of mankind. His resurrection and ascension to a seat of judgment is a less popular part of the catechism. Most of us want to be redeemed from our sins, not condemned for them.

*Our Treaty with the Aborigines.

7. Yet there *is* no redemption. If we allow redemption, we allow irresponsibility, and we should make ourselves responsible for our actions. That is the tragic imperative.
8. The acceptance of the idea of tragedy ennobles mankind, that of salvation enfeebles it.
9. Our bleeding hearts are noted not for their acceptance of the tragic view but for their low evaluation of culture in this country. They treat me with contempt, as a ghoul, stealing the knowledge of a supposedly dying culture in order to prop up what they understand as their own. But this is an ethnocentric view, assuming the dominance of Western civilization and the vulnerability of the Aboriginal.
10. My own view is different. It is that if either civilization is carnivorous it is the Aboriginal, which in the past has consumed every external force it has encountered. Western civilization is its latest conquest.
11. These last notes are being written in Buckley's Cave after the contract formalities, which included, not unexpectedly, my participation in one of the Aboriginal women's secret ceremonies. As a consequence I have a new name, *Myrna*, which I understand means food, and as *Myrna* I am being prepared to live for a time here in Buckley's Cave, exploring its levels of silence . . .

FRANCIS KING

Foot Feel

Four long years he stood—
His back some inches from the palm—
Hating his feet
And the sand with which they established
A relationship
Of intimate inaction.

The sea was always
Mildly wavy,
There were large birds passing
Like white linen
Along the circumference.

Sometimes the palm clattered
Like shod feet
On an old floor
In a dream about to occur.

At Christmas
One coconut fell
Missing his shoulder with some exactness
Rolling down the rotund sand
To the sea.

He was perfectly content,
Eyes quite cool
Though no breeze reached across the dune
From the mild coruscations of water;
Only his feet
Were intimate and offensive.

And he laughed once,
Holding his hands before him
Palm upwards
Beneath the rattling
Unimaginable palm.

After four years
He turned on his shod heel,
Stepped back across the room,
Opened winter shutters
And wrote.

MARTYN WILEY

Cycle Song

Tonight the cousin I grew up with
goes to Australia.
As children we rode bikes down
Yorkshire summers, our brown knees
clipping the handlebars.

In four days he will be lowered
into the cool of a Brisbane bungalow
he will get fat and begin to turn
into a faded photograph
I will never see him again.

Yesterday I noticed that the rooks
had gone, my father said they hadn't
been back in two years.
The nests are turning to wire wool
scratching a living from branches.

Now I think about it the old man
who pushes his wheelchair along
our street hasn't been seen for weeks.
Someone has folded him up with the chair
he is almost forgotten.

It's the constant erosion that's hardest
to take, the relentless pounding of
rocks into sand.
Soon I will be sand, I will be in a
crowd pushing wheelchairs heavy with
rocks through the cool dark of
a bungalow in Brisbane.
My cousin will watch from his dusty
print on the wall.

Not to Scale

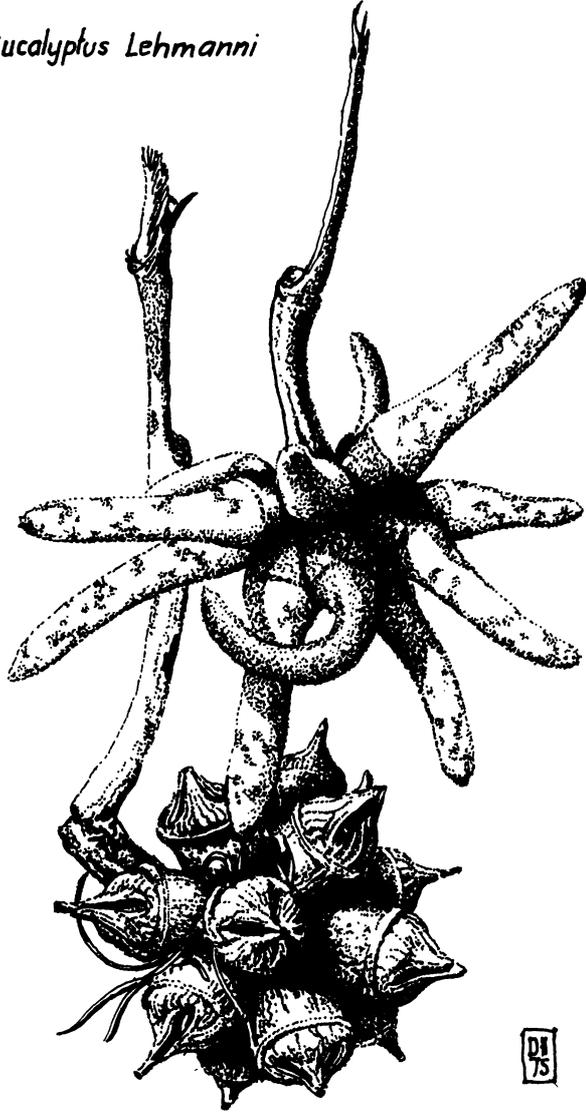
In this flat county we
brush the sand from our hair
pick the crabshells from the trees
and feel the breathing of the sea.

We climb a spiral tower
breaking surface above the bells
and listen to the muffled ringing
of the waves.

We walk on the sea bed and
swim up the beach holding
a bell and a crab shell and
breathing only sky.

It's a big sky full of falling
churches and a sea where
fish glide down the aisles
and seaweed wraps the bell ropes.
I'll take your hand and we'll
run for the hills climb onto their
backs and lie to each other
about the scale of things.

Eucalyptus Lehmanni



JEAN LANG

It is time now
(for Donald Stuart)

On this side of the bar
shapes from far to west
travel to the secret waterplace
of proper men
across the Land;

through spinifex country
faintly shadowed by skeletal kandji
and stunted bloodwood trees
crossing straggling slopes
then twisting and turning through
the familiar lift of hills.

Slowly now, westward on
in the pale glow of Pilbara dusk
closer to Djerraloonya
to the tumbled rocks rounded smooth
a spearhead long as wide as high
coming in at sundown
humbly to the sacred place
as proper men should

drinking deeply waiting
drinking then again
resting refreshed
with Malloonkai
and Ilbarana proper men
gone now to their place of sleep.

The ritual crying rises, falls, rises again.
Now it is time to go.

The shapes recede.
It is time now, and you go.

CHRIS WALLACE-CRABBE

Under the roof of the World

It was I who pounced on the back of the burly werewolf,
struggled and cried, pinned it at last to the ground,

black fur flattened in backyard, held it down there
unremitting, tightening my grip, choked out its life

and broked it in pieces like bread. Those bits lay there,
bearlike pelt, claws splayed in pearly-grey dust.

Up I got: thank the powers: it was clean over,
time for a scotch so I turned on a heel and went.

But no, godsbreath, NO, I found they had forgotten
to burn those scattered hunks of the dead beast.

More whisky called for: come night, sure as day,
the pieces would all join up, spring back together

as filings leap to a magnet. My weird would rise again
following nose toward me in even the pitchiest blackness

in need of a bait, of a death, of me-flesh
waiting where tears of the stars drip down through a ceiling

onto the bones' sleep, slow drip of the pancreas,
tendons and string gone lax but skull containing

germs of a tale where by an unpainted cottage or house
it was I who crashed on the back of the writhing werewolf,

his throat soft under my fingers . . .

We'll Build a Stairway to Paradise

There is curious distinction
in that ladder
running up into a tree.

One looks in vain
for a plump couple
fornicating in the forks

or for some leafy staircase
feathering right on up
to lucid puffball heavens.

It appears
a wooden conception
of ascending;

absurdity
props up
its painted slant shafts

but one could fancy them
the bonded stilts
of a prestidigitator god.

Dark yellow
parcrumpled leaves
glide glumly groundward.

RORY HARRIS

most days/other days

at the railway station
after school
the kids slouch, lay, grumble
they push their backs into the fences
they've done it so often
the wire sags
they've left their mark on something
cigarettes dangle, defiant
as their homemade tattoos
most days nothing happens
they catch trains
& complete their rituals
like any worker
& stare out windows
into the backyards of factories
where their grandparents
their parents
may have worked
where their grandparents got through
on Empire rules, school rules & free boots
where their parents got through
on hire purchase agreements
but, sometimes something does happen
& allies gather
& one group screams abuse at another
it continues until the train arrives
& sweeps the platform
clean of division
they stumble like their grandparents
like their parents
anger smarts their bruises

MAY-BRIT AKERHOLT

Female figures in the Plays of Dorothy Hewett and Patrick White

Dorothy Hewett once said in an interview that Australians are frightened of the imagination, of using image, symbol and poetry in their writings.¹ This fear of experimentation with form and content may be linked with a fear of language, a suspicion of eloquence, which has been an element of Australian literature from Henry Lawson's "Ah, well" to David Williamson's ironic treatment of language in *Don's Party*. The idea that eloquence and imaginative language are synonymous with insincerity forms part of the Australian 'way of life'. While we Australians encourage tidiness with the catchy slogan "Do the Right Thing", Colombo Zoo in Sri Lanka discourages litterbugs with this sign:

If you with litter will disgrace
And spoil the beauty of this place
May indigestion rack your chest
And ants invade your pants and vest.

Traditionally, the female character in Australian drama has conformed to certain patterns of behaviour and language, whether she is satirised, romanticised or used as a comic device. In earlier drama (as well as fiction), she is either overlooked or idealised; often barred from expression herself; she is seen through male eyes in terms of proverbs rather than feelings: "the best of a woman is finer than the best of a man".² In Lawler's *The Doll Trilogy*, Olive shies away from expression and communication in order to maintain her idealised world. Interestingly, the stereotypical suburban housewife Irene Harding in John Romeril's *The Floating World* misuses foreign and difficult words in her efforts to appear refined and cosmopolitan.

No wonder Patrick White threw his audiences in 1961 with the soulful *Anima* and the fat, vulgar *Alma Lusty* of the basement, through whom an artist-figure full of euphemisms finds the seed of spiritual growth and poetic expression. No wonder Dorothy Hewett, even if ten years later, finds her audiences, and critics, perplexed when confronted with a questing female Sir Lanclot, who not only wants to "walk naked through the world", but who does it. People just do not behave like that, as an indignant critic claimed in 1890 about the characters in *Hedda Gabler*, thus echoing one of the key expressions of the play.

White and Hewett reject the restrictions of the so-called naturalistic drama for an extensive use of symbol, chorus, poetry, ritual, in order to move beyond what Jack Lindsay calls "clock-time", and A. A. Phillips "the imprisonment in the pragmatic".³ They create a theatrical spectacle which defies conventions and labels. They take Shakespeare's "All the world's a stage" and add "all that is on the stage

is a sign denoting the world"⁴ and in doing that, they dramatise the ways in which the individual is imprisoned in the pragmatism of 'the Australian way of life'.

Australian in its essence, their dramatic dialogue combines economy with fertile imagination, poetic expression with colloquial speech. In the opening scene of Hewett's *The Man from Mukinupin*, a play about life in the wheatbelt of Western Australia, giggles and coo-ees, lovers' calls and Edie Perkins' "wash your hands . . . put on your nightgown . . . don't look so pale" merge with Zeek the water-diviner's chant and the Widow Tuesday's mystical refrain of "moth and rust" (words which put a terror into wheat farmers). When the 'witch' Clemmy knocks with her crutch, the spell is broken by church-bells in the best tradition of a Hawthorne story; not to signal a return to day-life in the village, however, but to introduce the fertility rite of the Morris dance. Yet the play is as Australian as the naturalist dramas of the 1950s.

In both playwrights the full vitality of the language is usually conveyed by the female characters, in White often by the more eccentric females. The poetic quality of the goatwoman Miss Quodling's soliloquies in *Night on Bald Mountain* combines with a raw, energetic idiom to create a language which reflects the very rhythms of life; a language the learned Professor Sword and the innocent heroine figure Stella Summerhayes are incapable of using. In *The Ham Funeral* the poeticised, pretentious speech of the Young Man and the enigmatic, philosophical utterances of his Anima get perspective from the vitality and vividness of the landlady's language. In Hewett's *The Chapel Perilous*, Sally Banner's speech ranges from ritualistic to choric to idiomatic; her use of rhetoric and jargon is as important to the play's meaning as its literary and mythic allusions.

Range in the use of language is important to the way White and Hewett explore seriousness and comedy simultaneously. Their portrayal of the darker side of life combined with a comic expression of it relies on a co-existence of opposite forces, the best example of which is, perhaps, the whole second act of *The Ham Funeral*, which is acted out in a grotesque 'comi-tragic' combination in which raucous wise-cracking funeral celebrants probe aspects of life and death, guilt and pain. Preceding this act is the Scavenger scene which takes its grotesque impact from the incongruity between the serious thematic implications and the funny expression of them. The sardonic humour and ironic portrayal of attitudes in this interlude as well as the previous scene where the landlord dies, anticipate White's Sarsaparillan plays.

The Scavengers, two tattered female figures of tarnished splendour who devour life literally from the dustbins, are rejects of society, thrown out with the garbage by which they sustain themselves; there is no room for eccentricity. In their search for life's surprises and opportunities they are ironic images of the Young Man's conflict, his search for poetic expression. Their feasting on a bloater is a parody of Alma's 'bread and dripping' meals, and anticipates the funeral ham. They are dramatic expressions of the idea that *all* aspects of life have to be experienced and devoured in order to create an integrated whole.

Hewett also uses tarnished females, usually to illustrate the chasm between childhood innocence and adult experience. But they are closer to realistic figures than to eccentric vaudeville characters. In *This Old Man Comes Rolling Home*, a not always successful mixture of realism and experimentation, the interludes with Daisy, Pansy and Violet, those "fiercely respectable Redfern housewives" and dipsoes, are comments on the pain of lost dreams. The reality of the Dockerty existence is encapsulated in one of their lines: "Gawd! I feel like Cinderella *after* the ball." (p. 23). In *Bon-Bons and Roses for Dolly* the pathetic and somewhat vulgar Ollie becomes the choric voice of the play when she delivers a terrifying and hilarious wail on the pain and the pleasures of being alive.

The Scavengers, the Redfern ladies and Ollie act as Chorus to the action. The extensive use of choric voices in the plays of White and Hewett is often ironic because of the Chorus's traditional function of reflecting the voice of the people; the voice of wisdom and knowledge. In White's *A Cheery Soul* the Chorus of old ladies from the Sundown Home is at once the voice of society—the Sarsaparillan upholders of convention—and the voice of the Sarsaparillan inner mind, reflecting the fear of exposure to life's forces. In order to preserve peace of mind, it is better for the soul to bury itself in cosy woollens.

In *The Chapel Perilous* the choric function of the dancers and the Authority figures is a particularly complex one, because it is part of the various shifts of tone in the play. But one of the functions, which is similar to that in White's plays, is to reflect society's rejection of Sally Banner and to express the fear of society to be exposed to the Sally Banners of this world; she is a threat to tradition, religion and politics: "Sally Banner, for all our sakes, it is necessary that you be guilty." (p. 83). And as both the Mistress and Jude put it: "I can't really bear that much individuality." (p. 20).⁵ This is ironically exposed in the Amplifier's voice which expresses that Sally is practising, acting out, the dreams, thoughts, lusts and visions of the Authority figures, that is, of society.

The plays of White and Hewett dramatise the conflict between the individual's demand for freedom, or creative expression, and the pressures of society. The characters, and particularly the females, are both victims and perpetrators of the action in which they are involved. By dealing with each playwright in turn, it becomes clear how these concerns, while similar in nature, take different expression and directions in the work of the two writers.

White's characters are simultaneously victims and creators of that of which they are victims. His drama emphasises both the potential growth and the lack of development of the individuals caught in a sterile society they have themselves helped create. This idea is most clearly expressed through his female characters, who embody the paradox of life: they are often barren and fruitful at the same time. Sterility may be a caprice of nature, as coincidental and arbitrary as one's sex. Nola Boyle (*The Season at Sarsaparilla*) and Mrs Custance (*A Cheery Soul*) represent this 'fate of life': the one is simply physically unable to reproduce, the other is a victim of the surgeon's mistake; she was on the wrong operating trolley. But the concept of sterility is always made complex through the different meanings of the word 'nature'. Alma Lusty (*The Ham Funeral*) destroys through her very nature, as does Nola; they are both caught up in the mechanisms of their bodies, feasting on passion. But Alma, who once created life, is a source of growth as well as destruction: "Alma Jagg breathed life into the hedges. The frost melted when I lay beneath 'awthorns. I touched the warm, moist earth with my 'and. Afterwards, when flowers come, I lay back . . . an' crushed 'em." (p. 65)⁶ Simultaneously a life-giving source and death-bringing agent, she is at once fruitful and barren. Her atonement as well as redemption is her gift of life and poetic creativity to the Young Man who, after the seduction scene, is able to "put out [his] hand and touch [the night] . . . like a face" (p. 74).

It is interesting that Nola Boyle, the Sarsaparillan Alma created 15 years later, embodies the paradox of Alma, but without the same ability to breathe life into nature and inspiration into potential poets. Although Nola is *The Season at Sarsaparilla's* link between untamed nature and sterile society, she remains, in the final instance, barren, her actions unresolved. In this play the potential for growth is stifled, dormant, without finding release or expression. There is no atonement with the cycle of life in the end.⁷ The form of the two plays emphasises this difference. *The Ham Funeral's* linear structure and the set with a stairway reaching upwards, is in *The Season at Sarsaparilla* replaced with a circular structure and a set with near-identical boxes offering no escape. All exists lead to the traps of

society, in a Beckett-like predicament with starting and ending point in Mildred Street. The landlady of the city basement has become the housewife of the Australian suburb.

In Sarsaparilla, man-made society destroys the natural environment. While flowers grew where Alma touched the moist earth, Nola's affinity with nature is mixed with her suburban fear of it: "I could eat the roses! Dawdling in the back yard. If there was none of these busybodies around (glancing at the Pogson home)—thin, prissy operated women—I'd take off me clothes, and sit amongst the falling roses." (p. 125) She succumbs both to her natural instincts and to the pressures of her social environment. She, too, is "operated on", and is as much part of the monolithic life-rhythm of Girlie Pogson as she is of her rebellion against the suburban rituals. Thus she is caught in the paradox of growth turning into decay, and in this sense, her character is crucial to the play's conflict between inevitability (social conditioning) and possibility (individual growth and creativity).⁸ Nola's character illustrates that in Sarsaparilla, the combined forces of nature and society hold the human being in a paradoxical grip of potential growth and inevitable sterility.

There is a change in the expression of these concerns in the later plays. In *Night on Bald Mountain* Miss Quodling, who, like earlier females, destroys love through her capacity to feel it, bows to her own humanity in the end, in a sense like Sally Banner. But unlike Sally, who also bows to Authority, the goat woman of Bald Mountain rises triumphantly out of the ashes of her own ruin, providing her own life-cycle. The achievement of the barren Miss Quodling is that she embodies the hope of continuation. Her sexual barrenness is relieved by a metaphorical continuity embedded in her character. The vision of life destroyed and life continued, dramatised in this character, embodies one of the paradoxes of White's dramatic world: the pull between life and death, between constructive and destructive forces. Both operate at the end of the play, and in this sense *Night on Bald Mountain* has broken the cycle of Sarsaparillan sterility.

Miss Quodling belongs to a group of Whitean figures which cuts across literary genres, an elect whose strength emanates from an inner largeness (Voss, Stan Parker, Theodora Goodman, Amy Hare). This becomes a problem in the play, however. The narrator's voice and the narrative passages which link and express streams of different thought and concerns in the prose fictions, are not easily transferred to dramatic expression. In White's fourth play the dramatic conflict does not always arise from the characters' interaction but from what they represent, from their symbolic value. Thus the realistic action and its symbolic meaning are sometimes at variance with each other, and characters and themes tend to develop through parallel streams of action rather than being logically and inevitably related.

Big Toys, the first play from White in 13 years when it was performed in 1977, lacks the conflict between natural instincts and social conventions. It is interesting how White has moved from city basement to Sarsaparilla to the mountain overlooking city and suburb, and back to the city. In his two latest plays, *Signal Driver* and *Netherwood*, he is moving 'back to nature': the action of the former takes place on a suburban bus-stop, the latter is another "Bald Mountain" with society intruding and eccentric characters reminiscent of Miss Quodling and the Scavengers.⁹ However, whether the plays are concerned with life in the basement, in Sarsaparillan brick homes, on a farm in the country, on a barren piece of mountain or in fashionable Point Piper, setting, set and dramatic form always reflect White's preoccupation with the interaction of society and the individual.

Big Toys' Mag Bosanquet is a refined Alma/Nola figure. She is not driven by glands and displays no affinity with nature's forces, but is a victim of her social environment. She lacks the vital energy of the earlier female characters, and,

unlike Miss Quodling, for instance, she fails to confront the black void of life, both the sumptuous, glittering one outside her windows, and the one inside her. The change in direction is also seen in the nature of the dramatic dialogue; the poetic quality and colourful vitality of the earlier plays are replaced by rhetoric and brittle artificiality of language.

Mag is White's first trendy woman, the city product, a perfect blend of rich bitch and soignee socialite, spiced with a risqué naughtiness. The sterility of her life, sexual and otherwise, is quickly established in the image of the burst balloon, "some ugly old wrinkled scrotum" (p. 5) which she fishes for with an elegant toe, and emphasised in the artificial brilliance of her wit throughout the play.

While the influence of Ibsen on White's dramatic writings has been mentioned by critics in connection with the earlier plays, *Big Toys* has been more extensively compared with both *A Doll's House* and *Hedda Gabler*.¹⁰ I believe, however, that the contrasts with Ibsen's female figures are more interesting than the parallels. For instance, while Hedda Gabler and Mag Bosanquet both manipulate their environment with consummate skill and ruthless application, Mag lacks Hedda's direction, her private creed of beauty and power. Hedda gambles with codes of her own which become destructive in the world to which she applies them. She is closer to Sally Banner, who even has a line directly out of Ibsen's play: "Why does everything I do turn into such a farce?" Mag, however, gambles with acquired codes and rebels within accepted channels. She exploits the existing codes, she does not challenge them. Yet, she is a nuanced character; in the world in which corruption is "merely one of the procedures by which civilised society comes to an arrangement with its members" (p. 29), her vulnerability can be compared to that of Alma Lusty and Nola Boyle. Once more, it is through the female character that White illustrates the consequences of society's corrupting codes on the human being. Mag, too, is a victim of a society she is herself exploiting. The naked despair in her figure at the end of the play, when she is pressed against the void of the city view, acknowledges that she has allowed, and will continue to allow, a continuous rape of her freedom and individuality to take place because she has accepted society's glittering prizes; Miss Quodling's "rhinestones of Sydney. Too much glitter." The Sarsaparillan cycle repeats itself once more in the Point Piper penthouse; recognition and acknowledgment bring no release, no change.

There is in White's drama a female sensitivity which makes women vulnerable to life's exigencies. This, combined with the fact that women physically create life, makes the female characters central to white's concerns. They have the possibility to combine the spiritual and the physical. But although the women embody the inherent strength and creative vision of Australia, they also symbolise an inability to create, to reproduce, and thus they illustrate the destructive effect on the individual living within society.

In the drama of Hewett, the female sensitivity manifests itself in sexual expression, and destroys itself through this, but her female characters display a simultaneous sense of ideality and reality. They are victims of their dreams; dreams created from the innocence and imagination of childhood. In adolescence, experience is longed for and sought enthusiastically and romantically, but once experience invades this Eden of innocence and ideals, there is a Fall. This is usually linked with social pressure, sexual experience, or marriage. Her female characters often fall pregnant, but they either terminate the pregnancy, or leave their children, or are unable to look after them properly. In that respect they are sterile mothers. This is often connected with their role as wives, and closely linked with the conflict of the individual's demand for freedom and search for creative expression, or expression of the Self.

Sally Banner (*The Chapel Perilous*) has been acclaimed as a feminist heroine whose quest represents the demands of the female to exist wholly and creatively as a woman, as herself. But she is also a romantic idealist whose creed "to walk naked through the world" is as laudable in its demand for freedom as it is unrealistic in its lack of regard for others. When Sally finally echoes Jude: "None of my friends ever looked very good naked" (p. 88) she has accepted reality, but also become a traitor to her own conviction of what constitutes beauty and freedom. The greatest irony of her character is that she both repeats after others and demands that others act according to her own beliefs and ideals.

Sally's actions are constantly juxtaposed with larger events of society, especially war, invasion, assassination. Her belief in "the blood and the flesh as being wiser than the intellect" (p. 23) takes on certain connotations when linked with events in which 'blood' and 'flesh' are wantonly destroyed in the name of freedom, philosophy and politics, those euphemisms for aggression. Like Nola Boyle, Sally is fighting a war with two antagonists: society and herself.

Sally's rejection of conventions is seen in the light of her very search for them; she always depends on others for her creativity. Her language emphasises both the creative and the destructive qualities in her character. It encompasses the discourse of rebellion and politics, of religion and romance. Her line "I choose Michael" conveys defiance of conventions and affirmation of the right to choose, but this is set in relief by romantic banalities about love. She is Cathy to Michael's Heathcliff. Similarly, her euphemism "I heard a voice from Heaven say unto me . . . 'WRITE'" (p. 85) is ironically juxtaposed with the repetition throughout the play of Sally as a "minor poet" with an OBE, the stamp of society's approval. In the Prologue, when interviewed as a publically acclaimed figure, Sally's language echoes the social jargon of the other characters. When she becomes a political activist, the platform speech in which she confesses her sins and her conversion to communism, is similar in nature to that of a meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous or the Salvation Army.

The opening scene which establishes the heroine's quest is a Morality play in character, with its allegorical language, claps of thunder, and Sally seeking entrance to the Chapel Perilous. When the Chorus foretells her death, they refer to Society's victory over her questing spirit, and her rebirth into the community. But while the dangers will come from Society because she exposes its "blackened land", she is also warned by the Chorus about the nature of her own character. Her quest is based on the self: "by my very courage and great heart I will win through" (p. 13) says our heroine. In this lies the romantic challenge of Sir Lancelot but not the necessary humility; here is the courage but also the hubris of an Oedipus.

At the end of the play Sally abandons her rhetoric and acknowledges the end of a particular era: "I was a rebel in word and deed. The latter usually tones with time." (p. 88) And as the Amplifier echoes the last word "time", Sally enters the Chapel, after her much debated bow to the altar of society. While the bow is in recognition of life, "a gesture to the exigencies of life" (Hewett, Prefaces, p. 5), it also signifies resignation to the forces of Time, of the Chapel: pure in heart and humble in Sally Banner, but she is also "minor poet", OBE, who like Hedda Gabler fails to recreate the world in her own image, and like Mag Bosanquet accepts society's glittering prizes.

Tatty Hollow (*The Tatty Hollow Story*) possesses many of Sally's qualities. The complexity of her character is heightened by a multiplicity of viewpoints, her life described by a variety of characters whose relationships with Tatty throw new and constantly changing perspectives on her actions and her character. But unlike Sally, Tatty remains many-faceted, an elusive character: "You come from nowhere and you're going nowhere. All you've got's a name, and that's a

mockery.” (p. 150) Because she is to each what they seek in her, and in themselves, there cannot be one Tatty Hollow, only variations on a theme. But this kaleidoscopic, mock-heroic female character takes on allegorical dimensions through the play’s use of symbol and metaphor. She is Hewett’s Alma Lusty, capable of simultaneously creating and destroying life and love. She is another Sally Banner in her rebellion against Authority, but her quest for Self is without atonement at society’s altar. Her answer to the world is to paint her name on the city walls in luminous letters.

In 1979 came *The Man from Mukinupin*, a play without a fierce or questing heroine, but a play which in many ways is a gesture, albeit sometimes an ironic one, to all Hewett’s heroines. Like most of Hewett’s drama, *The Man from Mukinupin* is a vast, sprawling depiction of existence, but the tone is different from the earlier plays, although it is unmistakably Hewett in its histrionic and imaginative portrayals, in its constant shifts of mood, expression and form. This play is a mixture of sharp, social and political comment, burlesque, and an exuberant salute to life. Mukinupin and its people are at once satirised and romanticised; the play is a manifestation of the life force and the power of the imagination. It is Hewett’s ironic and celebratory bow to existence, to life precariously balanced on Clemmy Hummer’s tightrope—the dizzying heights of Eden and the shattering fall to the ground.

What the play is celebrating through the great traditions of literature and the theatre is a dried-out Western Australian wheat town “east of the rabbit proof fence”: arid, dusty, its physical features reflected in the attitudes and behaviour of its inmates. Yet Hewett salutes the riches of Mukinupin, its nursery rhymes and folklore, its eccentric figures and its imagination. It is as if the dreams and visions of the night-life arise out of the conventions and restrictions of the day-life. In the same way that the kernel of life in White’s Sarsaparilla is not extinct while the roots of nature continue to grow: “The great trees continue to spread, never quite exorcised” (*Four Plays*, p. 118), the life force and its potentially creative imagination is inherent in the people of Mukinupin, in the wheat, the stars and the dry creek bed.

The co-existence of creativity and destruction is expressed through various forms of ritual, including folksong, dance and mythical rites. The play also contains a profusion of ironic literary allusions. Edie Perkins, who is trying to keep up respectability in the sleepy Mukinupin becomes, at one stage, a version of Lawson’s the drover’s wife: “I was a city girl. I’d never *seen* the real country. . . . sometimes I thought, ‘I’ll die of the loneliness’—but, of course, I didn’t. They were such long, hot summers; but I must have got used to them.” (p. 101) Similarly, the Widow Tuesday, a tall, gaunt bush woman, is a Mrs Spicer who has let go of the last vestiges of propriety; the madness has manifested itself.

The play’s conventional story line, with a happy ending, enhances its mixture of the celebratory and the ironic. Tone and form are always ambiguous, the double level achieved through use of double figures. The male heroes are twins, the local-boy-makes good Jack and black sheep Harry. The innocent melodrama-heroine Polly, who listens to her parents and accepts their choice of husband (travelling salesman Cecil Brunner), has a night-figure in her illegitimate half sister the half-caste Touch of the Tar, who is full of sexual expression and is physically and spiritually in touch with nature. But little Polly of the “vieux rose” bedroom and romantic dreams of true love also has fantasies of the night, of a life beyond Mr Brunner’s acid drops and Jack’s bunch of flowers. When Polly is ready “to put her hair up”, the Mukinupin ritual, accompanied by didgeridoos and bull-roarers, turn into an initiation rite based on an old fertility chant and the mask of the Hobby Horse. Polly is carried away by Harry, Touch of the Tar’s lover: Experience is about to invade Eden.

Touch of the Tar is the song and the colour of the nation, and she acts out the rituals of life and death. Thus she represents the very rhythms of life, like the goat-woman Miss Quodling. But she is also a victim of what Polly represents: she is a double figure in herself, Lily Perkins/Touch of the Tar: "me Daddy is as white as flour, me Mam was black as coal" (p. 105). She brings the water of life to Mukinupin in the ritual of rain, holding out her arms to the rain "like a fertility rite" (p. 106), but the white part of her puts up the ragged social parasol as if to ward off the fertile forces of nature.

If Touch of Tar is the song of the nation, she is also its conscience and guilt. The one half of her heritage, the white race, righteously fights the white man's war overseas, and massacres the other half of her heritage on home ground, where they, the whites, are the invaders and aggressors. The conflict this creates, the consequences for Australia, is illustrated in the figure of Edie Perkins: the Edie who refuses to serve blacks, and who recites Tennyson at public functions without remembering the words, is also Lady Macbeth stalking the night, full of guilt for the Aboriginal blood staining her hands.

By sexual violence followed by murder, the white man has made Touch of the Tar homeless; she is a displaced person who, at the end of the play, finds life through a Shakespearean marriage ceremony and on the shimmering salt-lakes over which she and Harry disappear. The two outcasts find exile in the Australian desert. Although her character embodies a terrible indictment of racism and genocide, Touch of the Tar is the song, colour and spirit of Australia: white and black in one, day and night figures fusing. She represents the paradox of Australia. Our attitudes preserve the image of being displaced Europeans, of living down-under in what Judith Wright calls "the upside-down hut", at the same time as we romanticise Australian attitudes of mateship, of pioneering spirit, of freedom—in short, of the little Aussie battler.¹¹

The Man from Mukinupin is the symbolic expression of the stifling dryness of Australian conventions and the inherent presence of an Australian imagination—the imaginative expression we are suspicious of, afraid of, and which we often transform into aggression and irony. As Mal says in *Don's Party*: "[My prick] isn't small. I just think it is." There is creative potential in the life of Mukinupin, in its tales and rituals and its eccentric figures, in its corner store and dry creek bed, in its very environment. It is in the Cecil Brunners and the Perkinses, as much as in the Hummer sisters, who, like Puck, sweep out the night and who operate as something between the witches of *Macbeth*, Gladys Moncrieff and Nellie Melba, with a touch of Mary Poppins: "Take my arm, dear, and we'll . . . whirl off into the dark" (p. 121). Mukinupin gives rise to a wealth of riches if we only know where and how to look for it.

Patrick White and Dorothy Hewett both put the stage and its tools to full use. They invent new ways of portraying life in the theatre, and they use ritual, poetry, music and symbol to portray on stage the ironies of life, and of Australian life in particular. Their plays take different directions and forms of expression, but they are both concerned with the pull between creative and destructive forces. Their main female characters defy a narrow and schematic codification because they embody a paradox of life, the co-existence of perception and delusion, sterility and fertility.

NOTES

1. *Contemporary Australian Playwrights*, ed. Jennifer Palmer, Adelaide University Union Press, Adelaide, 1979, p. 85.
2. Arthur Adams, *The Wasters* (1910), quoted in Leslie Rees, *A History of Australian Drama*, Volume I, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1978, p. 117.
3. Jack Lindsay, *Decay and Renewal*, Wild and Woolley, Sydney, 1976, p. 365.
4. A. A. Phillips, see *Contemporary Australian Playwrights*, p. 85.
4. See Keir Elam, *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama*, Methuen, New Accents Series, London & New York, 1980, p. 7.
5. In this respect the choric function in *The Chapel Perilous* is comparable to Brecht's dramatisation of the conflict between Galileo and the Papal Authority in *Life of Galileo*.
6. The use of Alma's maiden name in this passage also suggests the effect of marriage on the individual, and is similar to the way Hewett dramatises the ambiguous aspects of love and marriage.
7. Pippy Pogson, whose adolescent curiosity and appetite for life harbour some hope, accepts the natural cycle of life but also her mother Girlie's cycle of dainty meals.
8. Brian Kiernan makes a similar point about "the paradox of growth as decay" in his discussion of White's novels in *Images of Society and Nature*, Oxford University Press, London, 1971, p. 178. Nola's characterisation is the more ironic because her rebellion against the Sarsaparilla codes of behaviour is, in the final instance, defeated as much by the destructive nature of her rebellion (her own glands) as by society itself.
9. *Signal Driver* and *Netherwood* seem to incorporate the most important of White's previous dramatic figures. Mag and Ritchie Bosanquet reappear in Theo and Ivy Vokes, but Theo is also a reflection of the Young Man, Ivy of Girlie Pogson. The Beings are expressions of the Scavenger world, infused with aspects of the Anima. Alice and Roy Best are Custances who had the courage to keep Miss Docker and move away from Sarsaparilla to form a society with the eccentrics who Sarsaparilla won't allow because they echo the inner life of the suburb; a life which must be killed by society if expressed in 'real life'.
10. Dennis Bartholomeusz compares Mag with Nora Helmer in *A Doll's House* ("Theme and Symbol in Contemporary Australian Drama: Ray Lawler to Louis Nowra", in *Themes in Drama: 4: Drama & Symbolism*).
10. Brian Hoad (*The Bulletin*) finds many similarities between Mag and Hedda Gabler.
11. Judith Wright, "The Upside-down Hut", *Australian Letters*, III, 4, 1961, pp. 30-34.

TEXTS

- Patrick White, *Four Plays*, Sun Books, Melbourne, 1967.
 ,, *Big Toys*, Currency Press, Sydney, 1978.
Dorothy Hewett, *The Chapel Perilous*, Currency Press, Sydney, 1972, new edition 1977.
 ,, *This Old Man Comes Rolling Home*, Currency Press, Sydney, 1976.
 ,, *Bon-Bons and Roses for Dolly/The Tatty Hollow Story*, Currency Press, Sydney, 1976.
 ,, *The Man from Mukinupin*, Currency Press, Sydney, 1980.

DAVID HUTCHISON

Translated from the Greek of C. P. Cavafy

Myres ; Alexandria 340 A.D.

When I learned of the disaster, that Myres had died,
I went to his house, although I avoid
calling into Christian homes
especially when they have griefs or festivals.

I stood in a passage. I did not want
to go much further in, because I noticed
that relatives of the dead were watching me
with patent doubt and displeasure.

They had put him in a large room
of which, from the end where I stood,
I saw little; rich carpets everywhere,
and utensils of silver and gold.

I stood at the end of the passage and wept;
thinking how our meetings and excursions
without Myres would no longer be valued,
and thinking that I would see him no more
at our beautiful but unseemly night carousals,
enjoying himself, laughing and reciting verses
with his perfect sense of Greek rhythm,
and thinking how I had lost forever
his beauty, how I had lost forever
the youth whom I adored passionately.

Some old women near me spoke quietly
about the last day he had lived—
the name of Christ always on his lips,
holding in his hand a crucifix.—
Soon afterwards four Christian priests
entered the room, saying prayers
fervently, entreaties to Jesus
or to Mary (I do not know their religion well).

We knew, of course, that Myres was a Christian.
We had known it from the first hour, when
he had joined our group the year before last.
But he lived absolutely as we did.
He was more addicted to pleasures than all of us,
scattering his money lavishly on entertainments,
indifferent to the world's esteem,
throwing himself readily into night street brawls
when our group chanced to meet a rival group.
He never mentioned his religion.
Indeed once we told him
that we would take him with us to the Serapeion.
However our joke made him grow cold
towards us: I remember now.
Ah—now I call to mind two other times
when we offered libations to Poseidon
he withdrew from our circle, and looked aside
when one of us, in his enthusiasm,
said, "May our company
come under the favour and protection
of most beautiful and great Apollo",
Myres whispered (the others did not hear),
"Excluding me."

The loud voiced Christian priests
were praying for the young man's soul.—
I noticed how diligently,
and with how much intense attention
to the forms of their religion, they prepared
everything for the Christian funeral.
But suddenly a strange impression
took hold of me. Vaguely I sensed
that Myres was leaving from beside me,
sensed that he, a Christian, was united
with his own, and that I was becoming
a stranger, very much a stranger.
I felt as well approaching doubt:
as if my passion had deceived me,
and to him I'd always been a stranger.—
I fled from that frightful house,
fled before their Christianity
seized and falsified my memory of Myres.

MARIAN DE SAXE

Through the crowded bar

Through the crowded
bar
open necks and almost
off the shoulders
noisy to the point of
silence
she thought,
to a table
where
tonite's special
caught her eye—
crudely chalked,
The Virginia Woolf
Cocktail
Especially
For the Ladies.

Who, prowling bars
pursuing after-hours
the smoky half-lit
conscious, was this
one lady, toasted in
her absence
or
was she
there among the group
of well-to-do
executives
Virginia belle
lady in black
lady with the purple smile
lady whose finger pointed
at silent diners
as rooks might
watch a child?

Or, for the drink had
arrived pure white
with a red cherry
on one side,
was she a voguish
Ophelia
lady to man
ghost to warn
as the potion warmed?

Ah, if it could
be,
our silent lady sighed
for this is
her
night.

PETER LOFTUS

The Kiosk

Under the bridge, they whispered in certain deferential phrases
Until it seemed as though oil-lamps had sprung
From the water. He helped her out. She dusted her dress
And they moved with the ease of practised foragers
Along the spent shingle where there were gaps like pockets of dust.
A suede jacket, a faintly billowing greyness in her eyes
She couldn't help smoothing the wrinkled surface of his hand
As if that dim tottering vista of industrial haze
And scabby point would swallow their recollections
And leave them with nothing but the clattering debris of tram-noise.
Ahead the kiosk looked as though it was making contemplative
Plaintive pleas about its appearance to a line of swirling grey water
And when the first face appeared, passing close by them with a knowing smile
Their deferential phrases turned to sharp points of crystal
Like messages the city had forgotten in its thrust from the water.

MARK MACLEOD

The Traffic Beyond the Glass

I've let myself in too far.
You take my hand, your fingers
test its curve as if
it were clay and slip out
from it reassured. *I'd only say
this to you you
whisper but everyone falls
in love with me.*
It sounds like a question.
Suddenly I'm unsure
how much your eyes have
seen, fingers known.
Your stupid beauty fixes me
again, I crowd to your words.
But you're on your feet already
you raise your arms
for the traffic beyond the glass
and, for me,
you throw the window up, laughing.

PAUL K. NAY-BROCK

Photographs of Grandfathers

I. *My Grandfather's Photograph*

Still staring out proudly
from within the ovalled frame
of ever-enduring wood
that mocks the decay of flesh,
my grandfather's moustacheod face
proclaims not a fierceness
but a stolid strength
Of Edwardian robustness

A police sergeant was he then
long before they became cops or pigs
at school I held my head up high
to boast that my grandfather
was the famous retired and revered
(or so I assumed always)
Inspector Hammond Joseph Boland

A strange name—Hammond
heard it since but once
I wonder what they called him
as he traipsed on foot
his twenty mile beat
around the Hawkesbury shores
or up the Hunter Valley.

II. *My Grandfather's Grandfather—No Photograph*

There is no portrait of old Mick
my grandfather's grandfather
who was freepassaged from Ireland
at his majesty's expense
for the crime
of being the at-home catchable young brother
of a man the English cops
were too dumb or lazy to find
old Mick's grandson Inspector
would wince and grin at his pedigree

And what an end old Mick had
swaying home drunkedly
from Branxton pub on horseback
he fell off
opening up his skull while
a startled woman
hearing the crash
ran to the gate
and
after timidly peering outside
fled back inside
rather than be seen dead with a drunk
lying in the gutter
Good Samaritans, it would seem
were not a dime a dozen
in Branxton last century.

III. *My Grandfather—My Own Photograph*

Grey haired sinewy strength
fragiled only by my memory
of his later untimely stroke
my grandfather sits there still
imprinted on the film of my brain
rubbing his brown grained skin
soaking up that sunshine
nine and twenty years ago.

Temporarily escaping
my grandmother's nagging tongue
he sought refuge with me
reliving his long-gone days
of cricket's halycon years
 (or so he always said)
bathing me in memories
and some of those other ruses
we use
to while away our time
graspingly awaiting
'birth copulation and death'.

So why was my grandfather forced
to trod his path to bone-ash
by lugging buckets of wet cement?
his ruggedly warm gentle life
surely deserved better
than such a cruel swipe
which tore out his life
not at a flash
but in the slow ebbing
of weakened tides
of what had once been
strength.

IV. *My Grandson's Grandfather's Photograph*

And what of Hammond's grandson
as he peers out from tomorrow's squared frame
what will his face proclaim?
how will my grandson's eyeballs
read that look?
what memories of an aged man
will he salvage
from that decaying framework
of this life I am now building
when then my ashes kiss the clay?

BOOKS

The Younger Australian Poets, ed. Robert Gray and Geoffrey Lehmann: Hale & Ironmonger, 1983.

I suppose the interest of any anthology lies not only in the poems it contains but in what it tells us about the editor's taste. To take a recent example, D. J. Enright's *Oxford Book of Contemporary Verse 1945-1980* was a very personal selection and all the better for being so. It made no claim to be either representative or self-effacing but, as a collection mirroring Enright's own poetic preoccupations—his wit, quirky judgment, and a leaning towards poems of balance and order—it couldn't be bettered. It illuminated the corners of a complex, lively mind, perverse and bloody-minded though some of his choices and omissions certainly were.

Nobody objects to editors showing preferences—an anthology *per se* presupposes the subjective act of choice. And, fortunately, good poets usually survive their collectors. But what are we to make of an anthology with two editors who come on like Cerberus guarding boundaries that extend conveniently between Bunyah and Balmain? Their introduction must be the last word in prescriptive muddle-headed arrogance, with any number of escape clauses built in. Like drill-sergeants, Gray and Lehmann station themselves up front to show the natives what they ought to be doing and so signally aren't.

With the best interests of poetry and its readers at heart, the tone intimates a Final Solution of the cruel-only-to-be-kind variety. According to the editors, in slacker hands, the reading public has, until now, been subjected to poetry that is "semi-literate, pretentious, obscure, silly or vicious". But with rigour at the helm, the harm may yet be undone, and the introduction concludes on a more conciliatory note: "Our concern, often at the cost of personal loyalties, has been to produce a book which disregards partisan lines, and in which the reader can find both insight and enjoyment."

I can't see, given the amplitude of representation, that too great a cost in personal loyalty was incurred. Nor does the variability of control in the handling of disparate styles and content make clear just what it was that the editors had in mind in their pronouncements on rigour.

There are other sticking points too. The question of selection implicit in the title, for example. What defines a 'younger' poet? With the usual Australian zeal for literal-minded classification by chronology, the editors seem little conscious of the fact that poets, like most human beings, don't develop chronologically. They flip backwards and forwards in their lives. Some may mature in one area and remain childish in another. Chronologically youthful poets like Jamie Grant, Alan Gould, and Mark O'Connor can deliver themselves of staid, elderly cadences that make A. D. Hope and Gwen Harwood seem positively kittenish.

But no matter. For editorial purposes, the cut-off point is 45—the age of the oldest contributor, Les Murray, to whom homage is paid in the introduction as a founding father. And we are given a very generous 25-page sample of Murray's work. As "established figures", Lehmann and Gray give themselves 17 and 19 pages respectively. Other "established" poets like Roger McDonald, Rhyll McMaster, and Geoff Page rate 27½ pages between them. And "newer" poets from the same stable like Kevin Hart, Alan Gould, Mark O'Connor, Jamie Grant, and Andrew Sant are more than adequately represented.

Out of the 29 poets included, only 6 are women and one of these is dead. To be fair, Dransfield and Buckmaster have been included to balance the posthumous contingent, but the imbalance is striking nevertheless, as it was in Tranter's anthology to which this volume would appear to be a kind of reaction. Given the lively talent of Susan Hampton, it is good to see her four poems, but she's surely worth a bit more space. The patronizing and irrelevantly insular comment preceding her work is indicative of the fatuous level of assessment directed at all the contributors. Nobody survives the relentless categorization:

"Some of her work is influenced by the 'word games' style of John Tranter and John Forbes, and by their sources. We have used her alternative style of poem which is full of fresh and convincing realistic detail."

Alternative to what, we may ask? The poems are perfectly straight free verse and refreshingly free of gimmickry. The realistic detail is only a quarter of the story—the sensuous, immediate, childlike eye is rare, and rarer still is the artist's capacity to fix the image and insulate it from a chaotic world.

Hampton's particular gift is to make of the observing self something more than a passive receptacle for the debris of daily life, unlike less arresting contributors more fully represented. Equally, Robert Adamson, who is only given token space with two poems, has this same capacity for compelling our interest in quotidian detail. Jennifer Rankin also gets short shrift, along with another highly individual voice, Peter Kocan.

In fact, there are 11 of the 29 poets represented by only one or two poems which suggests slender enthusiasm for their total output. Are these single poems to be viewed as a socio-historical data or as accidents of poetic excellence? It's not easy to tell because the editors' comments evade direct personal response to focus instead on derivations and schools. In the cast of living poets, the inclusion of a single poem could be read either as polite capitulation to local politics, or as oblique reproof. I was certainly puzzled by some of these isolate inclusions, and was led to ask not only why they were there but, in the case of several outstanding figures, why such quality was not given more space.

No matter how much the editors protest their search for "human values along with literary values", the mere evocation of a grandparent or a father is no real guarantee of a poem's humanity as several pieces on ancestors prove. And, despite the editorial claim to have rejected "intellectual pleasure in cruelty", I can think of few more cerebrally callous exercises in this area than John Tranter's 'The Letter', Robert Gray's 'The meat works', or Vicki Viidikas's second-hand foray into Plath country with 'They always come'. Set beside the refreshing bounce, wit and tenderness of Nigel Roberts's work, these heartless self-destructive reflexes look pretty tired and willed, however skilfully crafted.

The poems struggle up for air under the crushing weight of the headmasters' report. Comparing John Forbes's poem, 'Drugs' with Dransfield's infinitely more imaginative trans-

mutations of the same subject, the editorial imprimatur falls with a tendentious thud:

"'Drugs' is an entertaining essay in one-upmanship. Forbes takes us on a connoisseur's tour of drugs, not unlike weekend newspaper tours of the vineyards, but in the middle of the performance admits that his personal favourite is alcohol. There is no self-aggrandising here, nor elsewhere in Forbes's work, which is like an entirely compatible marriage between the melancholy and deflated Philip Larkin and the determinedly cheerful, party-going Frank O'Hara."

Can one really trust an editor capable of this kind of extravagant incongruity to know a good poem from a bad?

Humility would be too much to expect, but if only Gray and Lehmann had cut the pseudo-critical warblings, said 'We like the stuff', and left it at that. There is something so forced and bogus about the assumption of the role of arbiters of taste deeply engaged in the cut and thrust of critical debate when they are so obviously ready to waive whatever shaky criteria were nailed into the oaken thickness of their preface. With heads full of precursors and competitors, the determination to set not only the Muse's house in order but the Muse's tenants and followers to boot, looks a pretty risky undertaking. Far from being particularly illuminating or surprising, it's a fairly standard example of contemporary compromise between the secular academy and the discotheque. This makes it difficult to construct even a vague map of the kind of work indicating consistency of editorial direction.

It turns out that they like almost everybody young enough to be anybody. If there is any one concept informing their choice (and it is not mentioned in the introduction except for the odd dig at Melbourne University poets), it might be said to be a clear distrust of intellectuality. In this, the editors are only too faithful to the dictates of a culture which has never taken poetry very seriously at the best of times. I doubt that this anthology is going to change things. Despite the note of righteous reformism that pervades their commentaries, the editors have played safe with the established figures and, by exhibiting commitments both wide enough and shallow enough to seem non-committal have contrived neither to disturb nor to greatly reassure.

FAY ZWICKY

Fay Zwicky, *Hostages*, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, Fremantle, 1983. 91 pp. \$7.50.

No-one was more aware than Thomas Hardy, following the violent critical attacks on *Wessex Poems*, his first collection of poetry, published in 1898, of the dangers faced by the known writer who chooses expression in another form. Not least among these, as he observed in one of the passages omitted from the famous *Life*, written by himself and his second wife, was the attitude of 'reviewers of the rank and file' to someone 'whose personality they had some objection in the role of a poet'. Hardy, certainly, had good reason to demonstrate his contempt for certain types of critic and the attendant mores. Again, in a cancelled passage from *The Life*,¹ he writes:

One smart paragraphist said that he was nearly deluded into a belief in Hardy's verses after reading them one night; but he saved his critical credit by getting up on a cold wet morning and reading them again on an empty stomach. It happily cured his weakness. It was an apt illustration of the vicious practice of those who, in Henry James's words, prepare beforehand to limit their surrender to the book under review.

Today, fortunately, the creative artist is cast a little less firmly in the single, immovable role of novelist or poet, short-story writer or playwright. The choice of what seems the most appropriate form for what is to be said must remain the author's prerogative. And with Fay Zwicky's *Hostages*, the situation of the prose-writer who produces a volume of poems is reversed. Not that Ms Zwicky has suddenly downed tools as a poet in order to write these stories. They were produced, as she makes clear in her preface, over a period of thirteen years. She describes them, moreover, as having been written 'by a late-developer'.

For my part, I see them rather as the work of a writer intensely self-critical and discriminatory about just what or what might not appear in print. Like Philip Larkin, Fay Zwicky may well have engaged in the writer's inalienable privilege: that of producing a dud. But, as with Larkin, if it has been published, I have still to discover it.

Ms Zwicky's rigorous standards as a poet, with all that this implies, arm her well for the delicate and dangerous transition from poetry to prose. *Hostages* is the work of a poet finely attuned to the subtleties of treatment demand-

ed by that exacting and perilously-alluring form, the short-story. And never for a moment are we served with that most revolting of literary diets, poetic prose.

Not a word is wasted, and (particularly difficult to avoid in the case of the seemingly-autobiographical story, of the tale of childhood) there is no trace of self-indulgence on the part of the writer. Dr Johnson's salutary advice on having written something that seems to the author to be particularly fine ('Strike it out') is observed to the letter. The prose is muscular, flexible, and what becomes immediately apparent is Fay Zwicky's narrative skill. The surface events, as well as the internal emotional and imaginative developments of each story, move forward with the speed and seeming-simplicity of the traditional ballad: that core of the story-teller's art. Here, for example, is an early passage in the piece from which the collection takes its title.

Sophie Lindauer-Grünberg, German refugee, piano teacher, used to visit our house once a week. Poor fat sentimental Sophie, grateful recipient of my mother's pity. I was to be her first Australian pupil.

'But why me?'

'Because she needs help. She has nothing and you, thank God, have everything. She's been a very fine musician in her own country. You have to understand that this is someone who has lost everything. Yes, you can roll your eyes. *Everything*, I said. Something I hope, please God, will never happen to you. So you'll be nice to her and pay attention to what she says. I've told Mr Grover he lives too far away for me to go on taking you to lessons twice a week.'

Suddenly dull and bumbling Mr Grover in his music room smelling of tobacco and hair oil seemed like my last contact with the outside world. I was to be corralled into the tight, airless circle of maternal philanthropy.

This study of the relationship between a young child of an upper middle-class Jewish home in Melbourne in the 1940s, her mother, and an immigrant music-teacher ('Spare your sympathy for the poor reffoes!'), reveals with terrible clarity, and in a comfortable Australian rather than an imagined European setting, how the obscenities of the holocaust may invade all our lives.

That night I ground my face into the covers of my bed, no longer a place of warmth

and security but a burial trench. At the mercy of my dreams appeared Sophie Lindauer-Grünberg, pale as brick dust. Her face wasting, crumbling to ash, blasted by the force of my terrible youth. And, waking in fright, I mourned for the first time my innocent victim and our shared fate.

The stories are arranged thematically rather than chronologically. So skilfully are their fictions presented that often the reader may be deceived into reading them as fragments of pure autobiography. But it would be a mistake to assume, for instance, that the narrator, the sharp-eyed 'I' of the childhood pieces, remains one and the same person. By the subtlest re-arrangements of emphasis and detail, of delicate shifts in the angles of observation, the effect is obtained in this cohesive collection of a voyage round a group of central characters. The child who speaks of her stay with the scarifying Miss Vizard in 'On your Own' does so on a different level, and in a different key, from the young girl in the marvellously-realized 'Teddy': perhaps the triumph of the whole book. So complex is the human animal, so suggestible Ms Zwicky's prose, that we can do little other than pause and ponder on the successive varieties of identity possessed by that mysterious 'I', pinned so persuasively on the pages of each story. 'It didn't happen quite like that,' one of the characters remarks, 'but the truth can be pretty boring at times.' What is significant about these stories is, of course, their poetic truth: almost without exception, beautifully rendered.

What is also impressive is the range of theme, subject, setting: we encounter the parents of two young children, all semi-stranded in the airport at Honolulu. There is the merciless annotation of the break-up of a marriage; the George Grosz-like depiction of the antics at a family wedding; the private thoughts of a Visiting Fireman: 'a drop-out himself after two years at university, he felt weakened by the sadness of educational institutions. The corralling of youth in their fumbling prime, Eden spoiled.' Equal in strength to the earlier portrait of Teddy with his lumbar trouble ('Shagger's back, you mean') is that of the truly awful Warren Lamb ('P.S. I would remind you that I am a friend of Ottoline Trench'): an eager member of that great army of word-jugglers more interested in wearing the mantle of the poet than in sitting down and

devoting a lifetime to the grind of trying to get poems right. It is as hair-raising a portrait in words as one in paint by Francis Bacon.

As a postscript, Ms Zwicky adds 'Gone West', an assembly of journal entries and items from a commonplace book. Less skilfully arranged and ordered, this could well have acted as some kind of uneasy coda to the stories. In fact, the reader moves easily from the one mode to another, and in which we again see, vividly and directly, the effect (in particular) of the West Australian scene on a creative imagination of considerable power. The extracts end here with an entry for September, 1981:

Down by Shenton Park lake, where turtles have to cross a suburban road to lay their eggs in neighbouring gardens, not five miles from the city centre, there is still a sign: 'Caution! Turtles Crossing!' There's a kind of truth about the place in that, whichever way you look at it.

I have only one complaint: that slightly more vigilant editing has not eliminated from the general text a number of repeated references to 'the haul and slam of linkages' during journeys by train, the impression created by telegraph-poles of crucifixions or Stations of the Cross, and to 'whiskered' warts. As Lady Bracknell might have said, 'To use two whiskered warts may be regarded as a misfortune; to use three looks like carelessness.'

CHARLES CAUSLEY

1. *The Personal Notebooks of Thomas Hardy*, edited by Richard H. Taylor (The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1978).

Dal Stivens, *Jimmy Brockett*. Penguin Australia, 1983. 257 pp. \$6.95.

It is one of the mysteries of Australian literary history that Frank Hardy's *Power Without Glory* became a household word whilst *Jimmy Brockett* went out of print and was forgotten.

The two novels are uncannily alike, both providing a meticulous blow-by-blow account of the rise to wealth and notoriety of a poorly-educated self-made "businessman" and political manipulator. In each case the central character is initially interested in crooked sporting fixtures (especially boxing and wrestling, in the

case of Jimmy Brockett) and eventually drifts into an uneasy manipulative alliance with the Labour Party, only to grow increasingly disenchanted with Labour's refusal to endorse the jingoistic attitudes of pre-war "patriotism". Each author makes frequent but intermittent reference to the central character's private and domestic life, and in both novels the pain and failure involved in human relationships is used to offset any sense of "glamour" or "success" that might arise from achievements in the public domain.

The two books were published only a year apart: *Power Without Glory* in 1950 and *Jimmy Brockett* in 1951. Hardy's novel, of course, became a source of controversy and a *cause celebre*—but does this really account for the demise of what is undoubtedly the better novel of the two?

Stevens allows Jimmy Brockett to tell his own story in his own idiom—a tactic which instantly enlivens the narrative, for Brockett's language has a rich colloquial humour:

Some people are so dumb they wouldn't know Santa Claus was in bed with them unless they heard the toys rattle. (p. 90)

I was as busy nowadays as a one-armed bill-sticker in a gale. (p. 178)

Most facets of Brockett's character are defined (or at least implied) by the limitation of his language. Other people—whether they are friends or enemies, intimates or mere associates—are addressed as "brother" or "sister", and Brockett often talks about himself in the third person:

I'm a dinkum Aussie, through and through, but Jimmy Brockett knows good tailoring when he sees it. (p. 1)

Confronted by a display of paintings of the female nude, Brockett's language reveals more than he realizes:

I don't know much about art, but I know what I like. I couldn't keep my eyes off the toms without their clobber. Some of them were a bit on the hefty side for my taste, but all the same it was better to be that way than flat like a hallstand. (p. 21)

Thus Stevens' control of language and viewpoint is more honed than that of the early Frank Hardy.

In its structure, too, Stevens' novel is more sophisticated. Although both novels develop mainly through a linear accumulation of events, both strive to give some sense of "circularity". *Power Without Glory* ends with John West, now old and near death, thinking back to the incident with which the novel began. *Jimmy Brockett*, by contrast, begins with an account of the public reaction to Brockett's death. This places the character in a wider framework right from the outset, counterbalancing the narrow focus of Brockett's first-person narrative. And to maintain the reader's awareness of Brockett as a public figure, Stevens concludes each chapter with brief "documentary" material (such as an anecdote about Brockett's habits, or an excerpt from an article written about him after his death).

Some of the novel's delightful subtleties emerge from this "documentary" material. It is asserted at one point (p. 53) that an incident in Randolph Bedford's *Naught to Thirty-three* actually refers to Brockett (a situation which is unlikely since Brockett is fictitious—but which is also quite plausible since the fictitious Brockett is clearly modelled upon many real-life counterparts). Stevens later quotes, without comment, a letter-to-the-editor about Brockett published in a local newspaper. The letter is merely signed "Oldtimer", but its phrasing suggests that it might have been written by Brockett himself.

More important than these teasing "in-jokes" are the different community attitudes to Brockett which emerge from the "documentary" material. The novel is sub-titled—with conscious irony—"Portrait of a notable Australian", and to many Brockett is a larger-than-life legendary figure:

This pushful, raffish, humorous Australian became a legend during his lifetime. (p. 52)

To others, though, he is evil and dangerous:

Brockett was the first of the Australian muckrakers and there are ugly stories of blackmail hanging to his name. (p. 223)

Even in the "documents" which seek to offer a more penetrating and objective appraisal, radically differing viewpoints emerge:

The simple truth is Jimmy Brockett symbolized much of what Australians with their pioneering background admire. (p. 52)

Brockett was the last of the "great brutes" of the era of capital accumulation—last of the robber barons of a new country. (p. 146)

It is a measure of Stevens' skill that the novel manages to show that *both* these statements are true.

And therein lies *Jimmy Brockett's* superiority to *Power Without Glory*. As the difference between the two novels' titles implies, Hardy is writing primarily to advance a thesis whereas Stevens' focus falls upon the human individual (though with sufficient structural apparatus to place that individual within a wider perspective). The reader "disapproves" of Brockett just as much as he or she "disapproves" of Hardy's John West, but in the case of Brockett

the reader is forced to confront the distressing fact that the man is, after all, a human being and that he is, despite everything, capable of human feelings and aspirations and failings. So, without wishing to ignore the anger and energy that informs even the earliest work of Frank Hardy, one is forced to conclude that *Jimmy Brockett* is an infinitely more tough and "hard-nosed" novel than *Power Without Glory* because it refuses to simplify or gloss over the underlying humanity of its villain.

Why, then, did *Jimmy Brockett* lose the contest with its rival? Any answer is of course mere speculation, but one cannot avoid the worrying possibility that Australian readers found Hardy's dogmatic assertions more satisfying than Stevens' cautious and considered explorations. Should this speculation prove correct, the demise of *Jimmy Brockett* is not a mystery but a scandal.

VAN IKIN

KATHARINE SUSANNAH PRICHARD

The centenary of Katharine Susannah Prichard's birth (5 December 1883 in Levuka, Fiji) was celebrated in Western Australia and London. Readings from Prichard's work and commentaries on it took place at her former house at 11 Old York Road, Greenmount, which has recently been classified by the National Trust; discussions of aspects of her life and writings occurred at the University of Western Australia's Summer School; a radio programme on her work was broadcast on 6UVS FM; and Ric Throssell, Prichard's son, was guest speaker at the Fellowship of Australian Writers (WA Branch) Corroboree in February 1984. In London, in December 1983, Professor John Hay organized a successful seminar at the Australian Studies Centre, University of London, on Prichard's work; an edited selection of papers from the seminar will be published by the Centre for Studies in Australian Literature at the University of Western Australia in 1984.

DONALD STUART

Donald Stuart, the well known novelist and short story writer, died in Broome on 25 August 1983. He is commemorated in this issue of *Westerly* by Jean Lang's poem 'It is time now' on p. 65.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

GIOVANNI ANDREONI—teaches in the School of Modern Languages at the University of New England. An article on his work by Anna Fochi appeared in *Westerly* No. 2, 1983. A translation of some of his stories is to be published. *La Farma* is the first of his stories to be published in English, and is based on his Western Australian experience.

MAY-BRIT AKERHOLT—educated in Norway and Australia, and has taught English and Australian literature and drama at Macquarie University. She is translating *Pillars of Society* for a production by the Sydney Theatre Company. She has published articles in books and literary magazines.

CHARLES CAUSLEY—was writer-in-residence at the University of Western Australia in 1983. He is one of Britain's best known poets. His *Collected Poems* appeared in 1979.

RORY HARRIS—lives in Adelaide. He has published poems in literary magazines and been poet in residence at a number of schools. He has edited children's anthologies.

DAVID HEADON—teaches at the Darwin Community College. He is an Australian who recently completed postgraduate studies at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver.

SARI HOSIE—was born in Collie and has lived in several country towns. Graduated in Arts at the University of W.A. and in Education at Murdoch University. She has taught in secondary schools.

VAN IKIN—born and educated in Sydney, he teaches in the English Department at the University of W.A. He edits a science fiction magazine, and has published reviews and articles on Australian Literature, and recently a book on Australian Science Fiction.

MARGARET HOUGHTON—was born at Geraldton, attended the University of W.A. and trained as a pre-school teacher. Has taken a degree at WAIT. She is interested in writing children's stories and plays. Her stories have appeared in *Westerly*.

DAVID HUTCHISON—lives in Fremantle. He was a contributor of poems and reviews to *Westerly* from 1958 to the early 1960s.

GRAHAM JACKSON—lives in Albury-Wodonga, he is a part-time clerical assistant at the Riverina College of Advanced Education, part-time writer of fiction. His most recent book is *The Decline of Western Hill*, 1983, and he is working on another, *The Resurrection Cove*, to which *The Blanket* and *In Buckley's Cave* belong.

FRANCIS KING—formerly lived in Western Australia, now teaches in the English Department, Monash University.

JEAN LANG—born at Dongara, is a teacher by profession. She has won prizes for poetry, including the Canning National Poetry Award for 1983. She has published historical and children's books and her work has appeared in literary journals and anthologies.

ANDREW LANSDOWN—is a graduate of WAIT, and has published poems in literary magazines. *Homecoming: Poems* was published by Fremantle Arts Centre Press.

ARTHUR LINDLEY—is an American, he is a Lecturer in the English Department at the National University of Singapore. He has published literary and film criticism, translations and poetry in a number of literary journals. Is co-editing a collection of essays on the family in 18th and 19th Century English fiction.

PETER LOFTUS—lives in Tasmania. Best known as a poet, he has contributed to Australian literary magazines. His story *The Wave* was published in *Westerly* No. 3, 1982.

MARK MACLEOD—teaches in the School of English at Macquarie University. He has published poems and articles in Australian and critical magazines.

SHANE McCaULEY—lived in Perth, now lives in Sydney. His poems have appeared in Australian literary journals.

PAUL NAY-BROCK—is a lecturer in English at the University of New England. His principal research and teaching are in English in Education in which field he has published widely.

GLYN PARRY—was born in England, has lived in Perth since 1971. He has completed a degree course at WAIT.

MARIAN DE SAXE—was born in South Africa and has lived in Sydney, where she works in a library, since 1981.

ADAM SHOEMAKER—is a Canadian Ph.D. student at the A.N.U., completing a thesis on *The Literature of Aboriginal-White Race Relations Since 1929*.

FLORA SMITH—lives in Darlington. She was born in Perth, and is a former languages teacher. Has worked for the Australian Tourist Commission since 1979. With her father, Donald Barrett-Lennard, published a family history, *A History of Houghton*, in 1979. *The Game* is her first published story.

JEREMY TAGER—has been a teacher, is now part owner of the Mary Who? Bookshop in Townsville. He has been published in American and Australian magazines.

MICHAEL SHARKEY—worked as a publisher before taking up teaching positions at the University of New England and, most recently, the Darling Downs Institute of Advanced Education. His poems have appeared in Australian and overseas journals.

MERYL THOMPSON—has been working for the Department of Further Education in South Australia, and teaching English to adult migrants. Her first published story was printed in *Westerly*.

MARTYN WILEY—lives in England and has had poems published in English poetry magazines, and broadcast on BBC radio. His first collection of poetry is to be published in 1984.

CHRIS WALLACE-CRABBE—born in Melbourne and teaches English at the University of Melbourne. He has published a number of books of poetry and a book of criticism.

FAY ZWICKY—teaches in the English Department at the University of W.A. Her publications include a book of poems and a recent collection of short stories, *Hostages*.

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