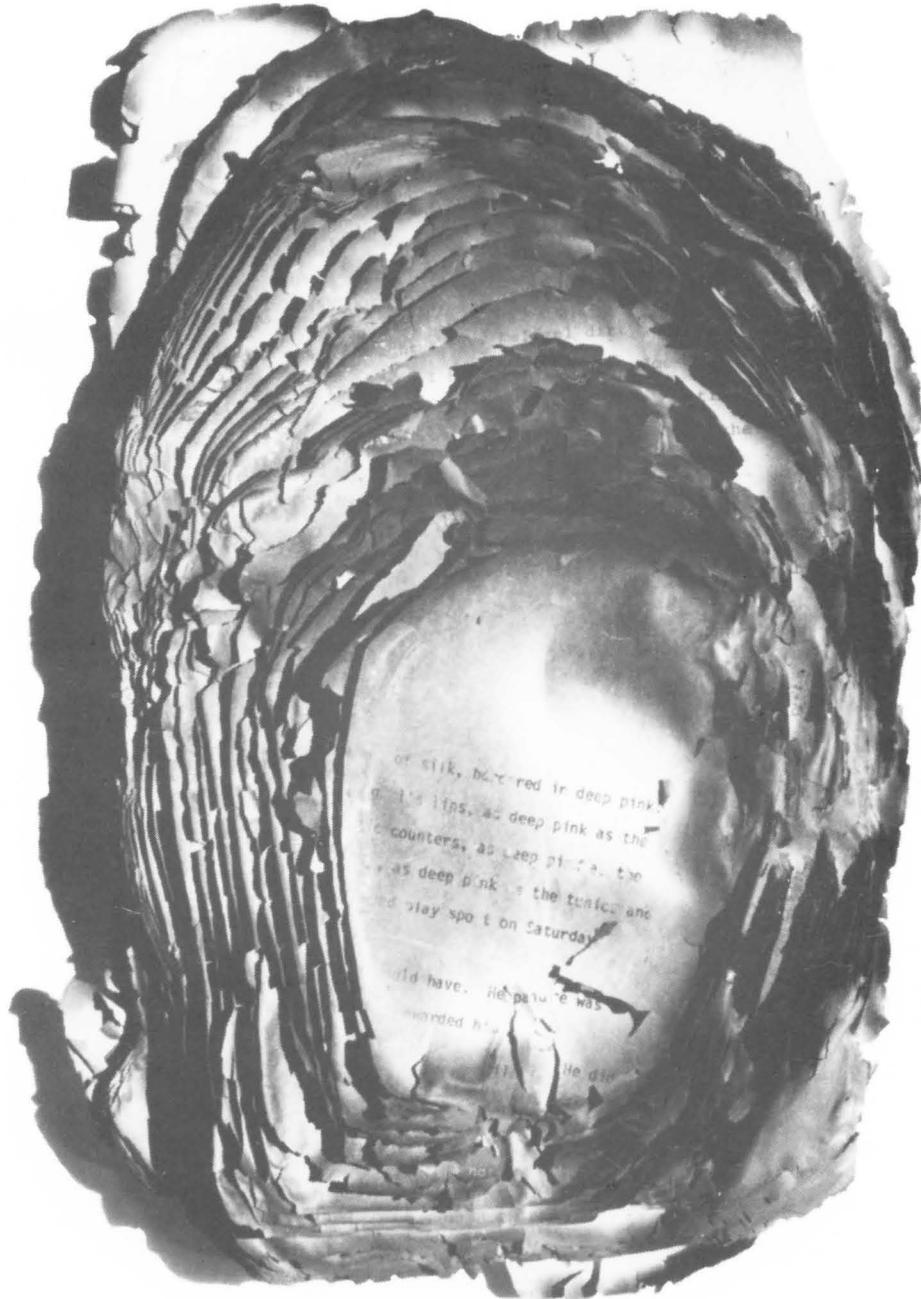


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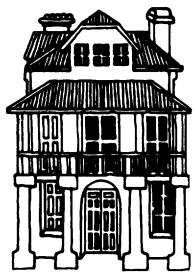
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JULY, 1984

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WESTERLY

a quarterly review

ISSN 0043-342x

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Comments on Our Disaster*

Hope the ashes reveal something.

Rory Harris,
Renown Park, S.A.

Best wishes in your nightmare.

Alec Choate,
Wembley, W.A.

Hard luck.

Mike Greenacre,
Norseman, W.A.

Perhaps you could retitle the June issue Phoenix.

Michael Dugan,
Surry Hills, N.S.W.

I'm sitting in my new office on a box—not all the furniture is here yet. I do feel for you and hope things will sort themselves out, that it won't be as bad as you hope.

Elizabeth Smither,
Auckland.

The been-through-the flames editors of *Westerly* . . .

Actually, since everyone loves a conspiracy theory, I think Fay Zwicky probably started the fire in the hope of destroying this very poem, since, as an indubitable example of a tough okker weeping publicly, and about a woman too, it clearly contrarifies a thesis she has been promulgating.

Bob Hay, Rockhampton

(Fay is on leave and innocent—eds.)

*A fire at Alpha Print Pty. Ltd. Perth, which destroyed the first version of this number of *Westerly*.

WESTERLY

Vol. 29, No. 2, July 1984

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JOHN WEBB

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ROSS BENNETT

HELEN WATSON-WILLIAMS

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Cover: Charred remains of first version of *Westerly* no. 2.

'J. M. Harcourt and the Nineteen-Thirties'—p. 92. Photo of Treasury Riot from G. C. Bolton's *A Fine Country to Starve In* (University of Western Australia Press, Nedlands, 1972).

Photo of plane of Bertram and Klausmann by courtesy of Mr. S. C. Martin.

Western Australia Week Literary Awards 1984

The following awards were announced on Thursday, 7th June, 1984. They were for books published between 2 March 1982 and 1 March 1983. The judging panel was Bruce Bennett (Chairman), David Foster and Helen Watson-Williams.

Non-Fiction Prose:

Hugh Edwards, *Port of Pearls: A History of Broome*, Rigby, Adelaide, 1983.

Robert Pascoe, *Peppermint Grove: Western Australia's Capital Suburb*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1983.

Poetry:

Philip Salom, *The Projectionist: A Sequence*, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, Fremantle, 1983.

Prose Fiction:

T. A. G. Hungerford, *Stories from Suburban Road: An Autobiographical Collection 1920-1939*, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, Fremantle, 1983.

GEOFFREY BEWLEY

East is East

We'd been in Delhi before. When we came down from Simla we didn't want to spend any time there. We dropped our packs at Delhi Station's luggage counter and bought tickets for the overnight train to Bombay.

That took four hours. We found Bombay trains left New Delhi Station, two miles away, so we had to get our packs back and take a motor rickshaw round. The New Delhi ticket clerk told us the train was booked out, so we'd have to ask in Railway Headquarters at India Gate for seats on the tourist quota. We took another trishaw and waited an hour and a half in that queue. Finally we got back to the right station with the right forms, and after another hour in another queue we had the things.

We'd already seen more of Delhi than we'd planned. We had something to eat at the cafe on the terrace, and then it was time to get our luggage again and tip the guard to find us our seats. I beat off a couple of small boys looking for a way into Denise's pack. We dodged the beggars and climbed aboard.

The train was crowded but at first we had the four-berth second class sleeper to ourselves. It was an old wooden compartment with stiff hot imitation leather seats. I couldn't get the ceiling fan to work but we shut the windows anyway against the noise and dust.

I called a chai-wallah and bought two cups of hot sweet tea. We cooled off so our clothes were only sticky, not soaking with sweat. There was that good feeling of starting a new stage in the long trip. After a yellow-faced Brahmin scowled in at us and then pushed the door shut again, it even seemed possible we'd have the compartment to ourselves.

Then a minute before departure time, the door rattled open. A short plump Indian in a cotton suit backed in. He had his hands full with a big suitcase and a briefcase. He smiled at us and then leaned out the window, talking to somebody on the platform. The whistle blew and the train jolted, and the door opened again for a tall curly-headed young Indian carrying a canvas holdall and a hockey stick. Denise and I ducked as he swung it high and heaved it on the luggage rack.

The faces on the platform fell behind. We saw the brown roofs passing outside. Both the Indians turned to us.

"Good afternoon, good afternoon," the plump man said. "I am Mr. Ghose. You are American, I think, isn't it?"

The big fellow put out his hand. "Chohan," he said.

"Australian, Canadian," I said. We told our names. We all shook hands.

"Is it to Bombay you are going?"

"Bombay and then Goa."

"Ah, Goa, yes. You have been staying long in India?"

"About a month now."

"You are tourists? You find much to see?"

We said we were travellers. We all talked a while about what we'd seen so far. We found Mr. Ghose was a sales chief for a fire extinguisher company, on his way to visit his head office in Bombay. Chohan was an engineer on a western railway construction team, coming back from a holiday hiking in Sikkim.

We mentioned we'd come down from Nepal. Chohan asked us about the trekking there. We told him about the scenery and people on the trails out of Katmandu.

"I think there are many of those hippies in Katmandu," said Mr. Ghose.

"Still a fair few, yes."

"Can you tell me, please, what is it that they are doing there, exactly?"

"They sit around the post office a lot," said Denise.

"They are waiting for letters?"

"Waiting for money," I said.

"Do they trek?" Chohan asked.

"Not usually."

"They are in India also," Mr. Ghose said, "and frequently I am asking myself, why is it that they are coming here? What is their purpose?"

"Drugs," said Chohan.

"Yeah, that's part of it, but it's more than that. They're really looking for a different sort of life. They're rejecting all their own values, the way they were brought up, that sort of thing. It's all a bit much for them. They think things will probably be a bit simpler in the East."

"A lot of them are studying the religion," said Denise.

"They are wanting to study, yes. I have read in a book about it. I cannot now remember the name of it. Oh, it was only quite recently I was reading it. It was by an American, you know. He was a doctor. But he came to India for his studies, and he became a sadhu."

"A holy man," Chohan said.

"Yes, he became a holy man. His name was Richard Albert, Albert, and he was an American. But I cannot now recall the name of his book."

"What was in this book?"

"This man Albert was a doctor. He was studying questions of health in northern India, and he heard of this sadhu in Nepal who could take nine pills of LSD, the drug, you know, at one time."

"Nine?" said Denise. "Wow."

"Nine pills, yes. And Doctor Richard Albert said, this is an impossible thing. But he went to Nepal to see this sadhu, this holy man. And he saw the holy man take nine pills, all at once together, and he watched. And the holy man sat there still. This fellow went into a trance, you see."

"I can imagine," I said.

"And so this holy man sat still for, oh, a very long time. And then quite suddenly this man Albert had the vision. He had the sadhu's vision, you see. So he gave up his doctor's work and he became a follower, a disciple of this sadhu, and now he is a sadhu also. He wrote this book about."

"I think he wrote it to make money," Chohan said.

"But he had this experience. He had this fellow's vision. He was quite certain about it."

"But the hippies always talk about experience. They say, we must be getting this experience. But all the time it only means drugs. This is what they are looking for."

"A lot of the time it is," Denise said.

"Often, you know, I have asked them," Mr. Ghose said. "I have said, what do you look for in India? What do you find here? Once, you know, two of them stayed at my house. I invited them. I wondered whether perhaps they would enlighten me. But in the end it was all for nothing."

"They wouldn't say?"

"They wouldn't say or they couldn't say. At any rate it came to nothing."

"What happened exactly?"

"In Bombay I met them. I was talking to them in this way, and they were telling me how they wished to come to know India, to understand the land and the people. And they were arriving, you see, and they were looking for some place to stay. So I told them, you can put up with me if you wish. You are quite welcome. I am an Indian, I live in an Indian home, perhaps you would find it interesting. Perhaps we could learn from one another. So then the fellow said, yes, we will be delighted."

"Who were they?" Denise said. "I mean, where did they come from?"

"That fellow was an Australian also. His name was Ian, Ian something. The girl was English, she was called Mandy. I'm sorry, I can't recall their other names."

"We probably wouldn't know them."

"Ian was quite tall and thin with a long beard. He used to wear a Sikh bangle on his wrist, but I don't think he was a Sikh."

"The kara," Chohan said.

"In fact he said he was a pacifist, so he could not have been a Sikh. They are a very violent people, you know."

"The first blow is the thing that counts," Chohan said.

"No, we don't know them," Denise said. "What happened, anyway?"

"So, at any rate, they came to my house. They put up in a room my wife's family are using when they are staying with us. This was to be for a few days only. In the daytime I had to be at my office, and sometimes they would be looking around the city, and in the evenings I would talk with them. I wanted to find out what made them tick, you see."

"Of course I asked what work were they doing in their own countries. This fellow, Ian, said once he was a school teacher in Australia. Then he went to England for some reason and there he worked in a factory. The girl had done some other things, she was an artist once, she showed me some drawings. Once she was a newspaper reporter. For some time I think she had done no work at all, because the government there is giving money to people who do not work."

Chohan scowled. "It happens," Denise admitted.

"So I said to them, well, you know, if your government is prepared to pay you for doing nothing, why do you bother to come here? They said, to get away from the violence. They told me that those countries were full of violence. The rich men there hated the poor and treated them like slaves. They controlled the country and the poor people had to do whatever these chaps told them to do."

"Wow," Denise said.

"This is what this fellow was saying, you see."

"What else did he say?"

"Well, then I said to him, surely, even so, that is a rich country. Very technically advanced, isn't it? So surely people must be quite well off. But he said, no, this is greed. All the time people want bigger houses, bigger cars, television sets. But none of this is truly needed."

"I said to him, surely this is your advanced living. But he said, this is just material rubbish. This is why the West is so bad. People are made to want these things. They don't need them but they want them all the same. The girl, Mandy, told me, we don't wish to be involved in such a life."

"I asked them how long had they been in India, and it was quite a long period. She had been in this country for almost a year and the fellow had been here for I think a year and a half. I said you are very fortunate that you can go about in this way. Don't you have any responsibilities at home? But they said all the talk of responsibility was only a way of keeping them under control. They said, that was what was wrong with such an organised Western society. But India was not organised and in India one could do whatever one liked."

Chohan had been looking out at the dusty afternoon light over the fields. I think he only caught the last few words.

"That's true," he said. "My father was a farmer in his village, and he lived there all his life. But he sent me away to high school. He made me go, I didn't want to. But I went, and I went to Dehra Dun School of Engineering, and now I'm second in charge of my section. In two years time I'll be head of section."

"No, they were not engineering," Mr. Ghose said. "It was spiritual matters only that they were studying. They were looking for some religious enlightenment. They were no longer Christians, you see. They no longer believed in all that. They were saying, the Christian churches are rich and greedy but they do nothing for the people. They were asking me, you are Indian, what do you believe?"

"I was saying, well, in Indian religion there are all these gods and so on, if you want to believe in them. I said to them, I would certainly like to believe in something of that sort. But I am not quite a believer now."

"What did they believe?"

"Well, you know, they talked of finding happiness and knowledge. They were the followers of some guru, you see. But I think they were not absolutely happy with that teaching, so they were wanting something new. They were wanting something the same but not the same. They talked about purity and purifying one's spirit. I don't think they were very pure themselves, however."

"You see them," Chohan said. "They're always dirty. They're crazy for sex."

"They were quite dirty," Mr. Ghose said. "They were not the dirtiest I have seen. I tell you frankly, I would not have had the dirtiest ones in my house. They were telling me that they did not have sex together, but they would meditate together. Well, they used to sit and stare quite a lot, so I thought, perhaps yes. But I think what I heard from their room one night was not any kind of meditation."

"How long did you have them there?"

"They were in my house six days. In fact it was a little too long, to tell you the truth. Of course my neighbours saw all their comings and goings. I was, oh, a little bit worried. My wife was worried that they might run away with something, but I told her that was foolish. But I was worried that perhaps they were using some sort of drugs, you know, hashish or something of that nature. When they came I told them, I will feed and house you as guests, but I will not permit any of this drug business in my home. But then actually I suppose they smoked it when I wasn't looking."

"But you trusted them about the rest of it."

"I trusted, yes. Actually I don't quite know why. But as guests they had the run of the place, you know. But one evening I offered them a glass of gin, as a gesture of hospitality, you see. And they told me that as an Indian I should not have such stuff in the house. Of course I said to them, well, you don't have to drink it if you don't wish. But of course they drank it."

"Then I came home the next day, and what did I find? They were completely drunk. They had found the gin and drunk the whole bottle, more than half full between them. They were lolling, isn't it, lolling about in chairs in the sun. They had their shirts open. They were laughing like little children. They couldn't stop it. When I found them they were too drunk to stand up.

"That fellow said, don't worry, nobody can see us, there's nothing to be so alarmed about.

"I said, I can see you, that's enough. My wife and children can see you. Now go to your room and stay in there. Oh, I tell you, I was furious at them.

"Well, they went into their room. I left them there that night. In the morning when I woke they were asleep, so I searched the house to make sure everything else was in order. Then I woke them and told them, I'm sorry, now you must leave.

"That fellow said to me, where can we go? We have no money. So I gave them one hundred rupees and said, take it now and go. I don't want you to be here any more.

"So they took the money and I saw them leave with all their odds and ends of stuff. And that day I was late at my office, because I was having to deal with these people. So that is what I know about them."

Mr. Ghose sat back and folded his arms. Chohan shook his head, and stretched his long legs across the compartment. Outside the train the night was coming on.

"You were generous with them," Denise said.

Mr. Ghose wagged his head. "I told them, you are guests in my country, isn't it? We can learn from one another. But actually I learned nothing, nothing."

"They were very spiritual after all," Chohan said. "Gin is spirit, you see."

"Yeah, that's probably as good an answer as you'll get."

"But that is not a sensible answer."

"No, it's not. But it's probably the best you'll get."

Outside it was quite dark. It was gloomy in the compartment and the whites of the Indians' eyes showed out. Chohan stood and stretched and found a switch by the door, and the electric light blinked on above the flickering fan.

"Yes, yes," Mr. Ghose said. "Well done, Mr. Railway Engineer."

RORY HARRIS

i recall holding strands of your hair

i recall holding strands of your hair
against my face

fine wires of electricity
connecting body to body

& you continued to sleep
as if nothing was happening

as the room filled
with electricity

smash & grab

we share the same air
inside rooms

where at one time
or another

we have both put
our fists

through the walls

JAMES WHITELAW

A Friend in the Square

Moses Doherty sits in the shade of the weeping willow and sips his cappuccino. He watches the market place where people are walking to and fro, all stocked up; some of them sit on the seats and the steps of the market square, drinking coffee, exchanging pleasantries, listening to the jazz group, waiting for partners, reading *The Age*, watching others watch themselves. Children ring the handbell as they ride on the miniature merry-go-round. Appearing as if from nowhere, a dishevelled, intoxicated-looking local eyes Moses closely.

"Don't I remember you from the Greville Street, days?" asks the local, while his body wavers on uncertain legs. "Jonesy, isn't it?"

"No, not me," says Moses. "I live in Armadale."

"Didn't the two of us pull off that job with the jumpers?"

"Look, mate, it wasn't me. *I'm not Jonesy.*"

"Didn't you drink at the Alma with me? I'm young Potsy."

"Look, Potsy, I don't drink. Only cappuccinos."

"Remember we used to roll the drunks in the park?"

"Look, mate, I'm enjoying the sunshine. How about buzzing off and annoying someone else?"

A bounding English sheep dog distracts Potsy. He totters after the dog. "Argus, here boy . . . Digby, here boy."

POTSY, DEAR YOUNG POTSY, YOU STILL LOOK SO LOST WITH YOUR FATHER GONE. GONE WITH SPIDER, DAVO AND JONESY. ALL GONE. KILLED BY THE RED LIGHT. ALL GONE.

Young Potsy staggers back to Moses, and bends before him, looking eyeball to eyeball at Moses, until Moses is forced to look away.

"But I'm certain it is you, Jonesy," says Young Potsy. "You were with me when we did Anderson's in the old truck. Remember, we lost the jemmy?"

"No, it must have been someone else."

ANDERSON'S. WORKED THERE FOR A PITTANCE, DELIVERING FURNITURE, DAY IN, DAY OUT. THEY DESERVED TO GET ROBBED . . . BUT OLD POTSY DIDN'T DESERVE HIS END.

"Where do you live now?" asks young Potsy. "Toorak, did you say? Slumming it down here? Come to save a deener, a bob or two?"

TOORAK. RUNNING THROUGH THE TOORAK MANSIONS IN THE DEAD OF THE NIGHT. IT SEEMS LIKE AN INCREDIBLE DREAM NOW.

JUGGLING WITH BACK DOORS, PRISING WINDOWS, JONESY ALMOST GETTING CAUGHT WHILE HE CARRIED OUT A HALL-STAND. DAVO'S FOOT TRAPPED IN A RAT TRAP. THEY ARE ALL GONE. GONE WITH THE RED LIGHT.

"Want to see my old mum? We're toffs now, too. Moore Street, South Yarra."

MRS. POTTER; A LOVELY MUM, FAG OUT OF THE SIDE OF HER MOUTH, RAISED FOUR KIDS THAT WEREN'T HER OWN. SPONGES AND BUTTERFLY CAKES. LUNCHES AT THE CARD TABLE OUT THE BACK ON THE SQUARE OF GRASS.

"Come on home for a beer. See Mum. Listen to her talking. A cup of tea? Come on home."

"No thanks, Potsy."

OLD POTSY WON'T BE THERE. HE'LL BE WATCHING THE COLOURED LIGHTS FROM ON HIGH. GUIDING HUMANS THROUGH THE INTERSECTIONS OF LIFE; THROUGH THE GREEN LIGHTS TO SAFETY.

"Come on, Jonesy. It's just down the road. Just a few minutes. See my Mum."

"Oh, okay. *But I'm not Jonesy.*"

"Well, who are you?"

"Moses. Moses Doherty."

"Impossible. He went away with my old man."

"Mum, this is Jonesy. We've come home to finish off that beer."

"Hullo. A friend of Jethro's is a friend of mine. I'm Mrs. Potter . . . *But you're not Jonesy.*"

"No, Mum," says Moses. "Moses Doherty."

"Ah, Moses? I never forget a face. But names; blah."

"I used to come around to your milk bar with the footballers. From the boarding house."

"Ah, Moses. I never forget a face. So you've come back."

THE FOOTBALL DEMONS WEAR RED AND BLUE. BOOM RECRUIT FROM BENALTA BREAKS BARASSI'S TOE. BANISHED TO THE QUILTED MAT OF THE BOARDING HOUSE CARAVAN . . . SULKED FOR A WEEK AND THE MELBOURNE DEMONS TRANSFERRED MOSES TO ST. KILDA . . . DREAMS REVISITED. BOB MURRAY'S JAW BROKEN. CARL DITTERICH'S ANKLE FRACTURED BY DEMON FROM THE BUSH . . . NEW SAINT'S STAR KICKS TWENTY-FIVE GOALS AGAINST THE MANGLED MELBOURNE MACHINE . . . MY CARAVAN. I SHARED THE CARAVAN WITH DAVO AND THE RATS.

"Afraid the beer's flat, Jonesy. Have a port? No?"

"Look, love," says Mrs. Potter. "I'll make a cuppa. Had any lunch? I'll make a nice sandwich."

THE OBJECTS IN THE ROOM SEEM FAMILIAR. A PAINTING OF BLUE HYDRANGEAS IN A CLEAR GLASS BOWL. BLUE IS BETTER THAN RED. RED LIGHTS ARE FOR STOPPING. BLUE AND RED. OLD MAN POTSY FOLLOWED THE RED AND BLUE MELBOURNE DEMONS. MOSES GOES DOWN TO THE DEPTHS AND MAGICALLY THROUGH THE REDNESS TO THE BLUE OF THE OUTSIDE WORLD.

I'M INSIDE NOW. INSIDE THIS ROOM THAT OLD POTSY WOULD ENJOY. HE TALKED TO ME IN HIS OLD LOUNGE ROOM ABOUT HIS

TRICKS OF THE TRADE. WORK ALONE, HE WOULD SAY; SHOW INITIATIVE, STAY NEAR THE SCENE, HIDE IN COMPOST HEAPS, SWIM OUT TO SEA WHILE THE POLICE COMB THE BRIGHTON HOUSES. WORK TOGETHER, HE WOULD OFTEN SAY IN CONTRADICTION . . . WORK AS A TEAM, THINK BIG, PLAN AHEAD, BE PREPARED LIKE THE SCOUTS, MAKE IT A GAME.

"Here you are, love. A salad sandwich and a good cuppa. You couldn't do better in Toorak."

"I come from Armadale," says Moses.

"What's that? Not Toorak?" mumbles young Potsy, slumped behind a flat beer.
"No, not Toorak."

TOORAK. I SLIPPED INTO AN INNER ROOM OF THE TOORAK MANSION AS A RUCKUS AT THE BACK DOOR MOUNTED INTO A CRESCENDO OF YIPS AND AHOYS. I STOOD IN THE DARK INNER ROOM AS A DIM RED FIGURE BECKONED ME FROM A HUGE BED. SHE SMELLED OF APPLE BLOSSOM. HAD I BEEN MISTAKEN FOR ANOTHER?

I HAD VISIONS OF HER BEING MY RESCUER. I THOUGHT THAT SHE MIGHT FLING ME INTO THE DEPTHS OF HER BED AND CLUTCH ME TO HER BOSOM. IN MY MIND THE BED SAGGED SHARPLY; THE SIDES OF THE MATTRESS SEEMED SO HIGH, THEY BECAME ANOTHER BARRIER AGAINST WHOEVER WAS OUTSIDE ACCOSTING DAVO. THE SCARLET WOMAN'S CURVACEOUS BODY STRADDLED MINE AS I LAY, ALMOST SUFFOCATING, TOO PETRIFIED TO MOVE, IN THE RED CHASM OF THIS SAVIOUR'S BED.

THE HERO, MOSES, MUST HAVE PASSED OUT, FOR THE NEXT MEMORY IS OF A MAID, DRESSED IN A PINK UNIFORM, CARRYING IN A BREAKFAST TRAY: CORN FLAKES, HOT MILK, BACON AND EGGS, SYRUP, MILK COFFEE, TOAST AND MARMALADE.

"Want to go down to the Argo for fresh supplies?" asks Potsy, waking from a cat-nap. "Stretch the legs before the footy?"

"Sure," says Moses. "Thanks for the lunch, Mrs. Potter."

"That's okay, son. Any time. Only too happy to see someone from the old days."

"Suzie Dickeson and the Bopbenders are playing. Want to listen?" asks Moses.

"Yes, why not? We'll just have a few beers while we're here."

"Let me buy you one," says Moses. "I'll have one, just this once."

THE ARGO, THE ALMA. THEY'RE ALL THE SAME. SIXTEEN YEARS AGO, THE ALMA; OLD MAN POTSY, DAVO, SPIDER, JONESY, ALL GONE. CLOSING TIME, CARS SPEEDING THROUGH THE RED LIGHT. BANG. ALL GONE. MY FAULT. AS IF BY MAGIC, DRAWN OUT OF CAR BY FRIENDLY HANDS. I KEPT GOOD COMPANY WITH THE RATS IN MY CONVALESCENT CARAVAN. "BARASSI'S DEAD", I KEPT CRYING. I SMASHED HIS HEAD IN WITH A RED FOOTBALL BOOT. ELECTROCUTED SAM LOXTON WITH A FAULTY HAND DRYER. OLD POTSY, JONESY, SPIDER AND DAVO, ALL GONE TO THE LAND OF NOD.

Young Potsy and Moses stagger out of the Argo. Blinded by the bright daylight, they both blink rapidly and seem bewildered as they look up and down the street.

"We'll best be on our way home," says Moses.

"Home is where I-I-I belong," sings young Potsy.

"Got to get you home, safe and sound."

"Home for the footy and a few cans. Which way is it? Left or right, take your pick."

They stumble through the front door into the dimly lit passageway.

"A red demon is chasing me," says young Potsy, as his mother appears at the end of the hallway, silhouetted against the bright light of the kitchen.

"I've returned, Mrs. Potter," says Moses. "I want to take your son away and dry him out."

"You're not taking him anywhere."

"I want to put him through the wringer and hang him out to dry."

"He's staying here with me. You look to yourself."

"But, Mrs. Potter, I've done you all wrong. I want to make amends. Get young Potsy a new job, a new suit, a new standing."

"He's a red demon," says young Potsy, collapsing at the kitchen table. "Come to take me away from my mum, my Miriam."

"I remembered you, Moses, while you were away at the pub. You and your traffic lights."

"I was to blame," says Moses.

"No you weren't," says Mrs. Potter. "If it hadn't been then, it would have been another time. My man had a good innings. Looked after me like a queen, he did. Always kept me supplied with the best stockings."

"A red demon mixed my drinks," says young Potsy, to himself. "We crashed and the demon took us away. Away."

"But I want to help *young* Potsy," says Moses to Mrs. Potter. "Get him rehabilitation."

"He doesn't want any rehabilitation. I look after him. He's okay. You take care of yourself, Moses. Forget about the past."

"Forget about the past," echoes Moses.

"You have to take care of your own soul now, Moses. And if you want to help, then just be a friend."

"Be a friend," says Moses.

"Away . . . away," says young Potsy. "And now Jonesy is back. Back to be my friend."

Moses says goodbye to Mrs. Potter, and with young Potsy, walks back down the long corridor.

"I'll see you next Saturday at the market, Jethro," says Moses. "We'll have a coffee together."

"Yes, a cappuccino", says young Potsy, with a smile.

Moses walks south down Moore Street, away from the small cottage, as the Saturday afternoon light begins to fade. A hint of a red sunset pervades the autumn sky.

NORALD LOVSAK

Mr. McVey's Mantra

Tom McVey sat in his workshop gazing at the clothes hoist through the window. His tools hung neatly on the shadow board gathering dust. The wooden floor lay bare, the only sign of past industry being a few scattered drops of dried paint. He sat still, every now and then drawing back his lips to emit a sound like the buzz of a badly tuned radio. He had described it to his wife as his 'Z' word. She hadn't understood.

And it had taken Tom a long time before *he* had understood. A sudden swerve of the car had alerted him. There in front of the windscreen loomed a metal bar, heading for his friend. Time seemed to slow as he watched its passage. He could see it now in freeze frame—it seemed to float—and as it struck, slivers of glass exploded from its path. It continued unchecked, colliding with his friend's face midway down his nose, tearing at it, cracking against his teeth, ripping his cheek aside in its deliberate ghoulish flight to expose the instantly bloody cavity of his mouth. With only half a face left, Peter pulled up at the side of the road and collapsed.

Thomas could do nothing but stare at his shattered remains. The blood, with each pump of his heart, spurted forward a little and then oozed thickly down over his jaw collecting on his now red and white shirt. He could see the glint of the gold fillings and his tongue lying idle in its bed. This wasn't Peter. He had been transformed into a shape—grotesque, malformed, horrible—and yet he couldn't look away. They were separated by more than event: a landslide of reality had left a gaping chasm between them so that all he could do was gaze at his dying friend, unable to make a sound or offer any aid.

From the deathly quiet in the car, the sound first came to his ears, a soft moan, rising from the pit of his stomach into his head like nausea. Slowly it grew in intensity, blocking all other sounds and dimming his vision, as if a door had closed and locked him inside a dark throbbing engine-room. He felt immobile, trapped inside the powerful rhythm of a sound, his senses deprived of stimulation. His body having outgrown its purpose, had been discarded, leaving him floating with no sense of cause or consequence or time or being.

'I see you're awake now Mr. McVey. How do you feel?'

She leant over and shone a light into his eyes.

'You'll be alright in a little while.' She plumped the pillows behind his head and then turned away, squeaking across the lino floor. He felt sedated. Dark spots appeared before his eyes and then scattered as things moved. His tongue felt heavy. People in uniforms walked about, talking quietly amongst themselves.

His wife appeared through the swinging wooden doors, walking directly towards him.

'Darling, I'm so happy you're well,' she said tearfully, sitting on the bed edge, talking quickly as if they had been reunited after a long separation. She held his hand to her cheek, stroking its back.

'Why am' he began slowly, his tongue still thick and unresponsive. She put her hand gently over his mouth.

'Later, darling. We can go when you feel up to it.' He watched her talk. There was something different about her. It was her eyes. They were puffy—that was from crying. . . . There was something else—they seemed dismal, as if steeled to some event about which she wouldn't speak. And her lower lip seemed both fuller—as if she had suddenly put on weight—and thinner when she drew it back in a grim line. She seemed to talk, but say nothing, as if all her words purposefully circumscribed her real feelings. She was being secretive. Something was locked inside her eyes. . . . He would wait.

Tom sat in the two-seater in the lounge room. She had lit the gas fire and sat with him, coffee in hand, making small conversation.

'Tom,' she began after a pause, 'I don't think you know what happened today.' She buttoned her lips as if to restrain words that threatened to issue unaided. Slowly the words faltered from her lips, gathering speed until they burst from the well of her grief and bridged the gulf in Tom's memory. He tried to listen but couldn't. When the word 'accident' sounded *It* began, and with each word thereafter it crescendoed. His vision began to blur as the sound pressed more strongly on his senses. He could just make her out—she was still talking! Where was it coming from? He put his hands over his ears. Still it rang, a bell that wouldn't stop reverberating. It kept jarring, forcing him back into the darkness, away from some precipice. He couldn't see himself: he was lost and then suddenly was falling down a dark well and above him It continued to peal, sounding farther away the further he fell.

When Tom woke, he knew that he had been sedated. That same thick feeling lay heavily on his muscles, pulling them down into the bed, resting his mind from what he feared would confront his eyes. He struggled free of its hold. He willed his arms to respond and forced his eyes to open. And then he felt it ringing hollowly, somewhere between his ears and behind his eyes. He closed his eyes and remembered the sound, listened to its peal and clamour. The name formed on his lips—'Z' word. The last letter of the alphabet. Why the last letter? What was there after the last letter?

In his still drowsy state, he struggled with its meaning. He felt it to be a symbol, something that he couldn't quite grasp but set him apart from others. It loomed in front of his eyes and with it a knowledge that he had a key to unlock its meanings, this something that he called his 'Z' word. And at the same time, he heard another sound, like an alarm bell that kept telling him, 'Don't. There's danger there. Don't. Please don't.' He was being pulled different directions by his desire to understand something that he knew and his fear of the danger in that understanding. His head pounded as if his blood pressure was rising to the point of implosion.

The recognition that his wife had entered the room intruded:

'How do you feel?' she asked.

He felt alright—and preoccupied.

'The doctor says you should take some time off work.'

'And what would the doctor know?' he answered savagely, but then more kindly, 'I suppose. He could be right.'

Thomas did rest. He took to sitting in the workshop gazing at the clothes hoist through the window. His tools hung neatly on the shadow board gathering dust. In the mornings he would bring his coffee into the workshop, make himself comfortable in the chair and fold a blanket about his knees. Sometimes before he settled, he thought of himself as an invalid—he couldn't quite grasp the 'Z' word's meaning and so an important faculty was missing. He'd sit there and listen to its sound pervade all his senses. He wanted to understand and overcome his fear. There was something in it that hinted of both past and future. And this desire would transmute itself into his submission to its control. For hours he would sit and listen to it. Invariably his wife would catch him staring blankly. He'd say irritably: 'You'll never understand.'

But as the days went by that found Tom more relaxed with the word, he began to understand its origins. And when his friend's images flooded back to him, he again felt their raw horror. His body stiffened as he remembered Peter's face squashed like a ripe melon and could see the blood oozing from his veins like honey from an upturned jar. He sensed a grim foreboding as he watched death again drawing close to its victim while in the sound he heard a menace that *inexorably* was drawing a shadow over his own life. The darkest recesses were behind the visions of death rather than behind the gruesome. As had this latter phenomenon played tricks on his perceptions, so did the shadows behind the visions of death. He began to hate its deception and found no solace in his wife's diminishing sympathies. As each day passed, he felt increasingly isolated, as if he had been cast adrift on a small lifeboat that floated further from safety with each wave's passage.

In his mind, he'd see himself stand in its bow and each time it reached the crest of a wave, he'd crane for a view of safety. Sometimes he'd sit at the tiller and a black seagull would perch on the bow, as if it were guiding him on his voyage. Often he would wonder what the boat was and how he had come to be in it. The sea would whisper Its sound, as if in answer to his questions and he would merely understand the existence of a threat, vague and nagging.

But whatever the Word's power he knew it wouldn't kill him. He was in its virile yet impotent grasp. It could, he felt, overpower his hearing to make him become one with it. Instead it waited. What was its intention? He puzzled as he sat in the chair, listening to its lapping at the edge of his consciousness.

Tom knew that he was coming to terms with 'Z' word, but his wife thought differently. She'd complain to her closer friends that it was as if he lived in another world. 'You know how clever he used to be with his hands. He doesn't do a thing now.' she'd say and then begin to cry.

Tom thought he was doing more than he had ever done. Each day would bring some landmark in his understanding of 'Z' word. Somedays he would see flotsam and wreckage of other boats. Sometimes in the same sound he would hear a change so that it appeared to him to be a lament at one time and a dirge at others. Sometimes he imagined that he looked into the texture of the sound and shapes in its patterns—a huge, burning furnace near which sweating men were chained to their toil; metal bars stacked neatly; a vast series of numbered squares each beautifully painted with faces depicting terrible agonies. The more he sat and experienced the shapes and sounds of 'Z', the more he realised he was waiting for something that hadn't occurred. He felt he was in a limbo, like purgatory, listening to what others couldn't hear or see or even fear.

As the days went by and his wife talked to 'doctors', her husband would smile at her remonstrances and criticisms of selfishness. Many times she would talk to him and be sure that he heard none of it. She had no patience left for him. To her, he had departed and left her with his baggage. Perhaps he had, if only judging by a statement he made at the time to her: 'Fate isn't as predictable as the next heart beat.'

Tom sat in his workshop gazing at the clothes hoist through the window. His tools hung neatly on the shadow-board. He was waiting.

COLLEEN BURKE

Given the Odds

After the long
drought I welcomed
the rain with open
arms.

Now there's
a fine green moss on
my bones. I'm slippery
to touch. The unresolved
quarrels fester in the
moist air. Given the odds,
a ray of sunshine,
could work
miracles.

ANNE MAREE WILSHIRE

The Feminist and the Caterpillar

Once, about a year ago, there lived in the city of Sydney a young feminist who went by the name of Lucinda. Luke for short.

She had cropped blond hair and heavy-rimmed glasses and ten pairs of overalls, one for every occasion.

Luke's mother hated her overalls. In fact, she hated almost everything Luke believed in these days.

"Jennifer," Luke's mother called her Jennifer, "why can't you look pretty for a change. You could, you know, if you made an effort."

But Luke knew life was not about looking pretty. It was about social conscience, education and above all equal opportunity for women to be full individuals.

One day Luke was meditating in the garden, when a large caterpillar uncurled itself from the centre of the Boston Fern and winked at her. For a moment her eyes were riveted. Then she cleaned her glasses and went back to meditating.

Shortly afterwards the caterpillar winked again.

"Did you just wink at me caterpillar?"

"I sure did," said the caterpillar.

"Good God," said Luke, "I must be experiencing transcended consciousness."

"You are," replied the caterpillar. "I've come to ask you a special favour."

"You've gotta be kidding! What favour could you possibly want from me."

"I'm not really a caterpillar."

"Uh huh."

"I was turned into a caterpillar by an evil young bitch who wanted to marry my father for his money."

"Sure!"

"Please, it's true. You must help me!"

"Even if it is, what can I do?"

"You must search for a solid gold bankcard and as soon as you find it, bring it back here and touch me on the head with it."

"You're crazy, there's no such thing."

"Oh but there is," insisted the caterpillar, "and when I've been touched by the bankcard I'll turn back into a handsome law student."

"You're . . . a male . . . caterpillar?"

"Sure," said the caterpillar, "what's wrong with that?"

"As far as I'm concerned you can find yourself a male to help you. I'm not spending my time bringing another narrow minded chauvinist into the world."

The caterpillar looked desperate. "I'm a person as well, you know. Please, you're the only one who can help me."

Luke thought for a while. No man had ever brought her anything but trouble. "If you help me," he pleaded, "I'll show you that not all men are arrogant pigs."

"How."

"I'll . . . I'll help you edit a magazine for thinking women. I'll convince every man I can find that feminism is a positive thing."

Luke looked at him challengingly. Her fondest wish was to edit a magazine for women.

"Ok." she said, "You're on."

She spent days roaming the city: foyers of skyscrapers, department stores, pubs, parks. Everybody she spoke to looked hostile and walked on. Eventually she came to Wooloomooloo, where an old alcho gave her explicit directions she couldn't understand.

I'm mad, she thought to herself and exhausted sat down on a doorstep, knocking over a couple of flourishing geraniums.

Wild sounds came from behind her, followed by loud unboltings and a crash, as the door suddenly opened inwards.

This is really bizarre, Luke thought laconically. She was looking up at an old lady with gold shoes. Further up the body she could see gold hair, gold teeth and solid gold finger nails.

"What do you mean, disturbing people in their own homes," she yelled. "Go home and do something useful!"

"I can't go home," Luke mumbled. "I have to find a solid gold bankcard."

"A gold bankcard? What do you know about a gold bankcard?"

"A . . . a friend of mine, he's . . . he's been turned into a caterpillar and unless I can touch him with the bankcard he'll stay that way forever!"

"Oh," said the old lady as she stroked her chin with her gold fingernails, "this is a problem. But maybe I can help you. Come in and have a cup of tea."

Luke got to her feet and walked into the house dubiously. Then stopped. everything she could see was gold! The curtains, the sideboard, the lights, even the TV!

The old lady wandered down the hall, reflecting in the gold walls as she went.

"Sit down, sit down. I'll put the kettle on."

Luke sat down stiffly on the gold couch and waited for her tea, wondering about the burglary rate in the area.

"Here we are, dear," the gold lady said, pouring from a gold teapot. "I think I can help you and your friend. It just so happens that I'm minding a gold bankcard for a friend of mine.

At this stage Luke wasn't at all surprised. "Oh really?"

"But you must promise me you'll return it to me within 24 hours. If you don't you'll be condemned to living out the rest of your life as a typist in the public service."

Luke gasped in horror. "I promise to have it back as soon as I possibly can."

After finishing her tea, Luke thanked the gold lady profusely and charged home.

"Caterpillar! Caterpillar! I've found the gold bankcard! Now you're saved!"

The caterpillar uncurled himself as quickly as he could.

"Hurry Luke, touch me on the head!"

Out of the fern jumped the law student. (His idea of handsome was different from Luke's, but this wasn't the time to quibble over details.)

Perhaps some of you are expecting the law student to dump Luke and run off with the bankcard. But this is a fairy tale. He did keep his promise and the magazine flourished.

JULIE LEWIS

Sequence

As the train slides to a standstill a man sitting in a little box half way along the platform says 'Mind the Gap'. He keeps saying it until the doors start to shut. Then he says 'Stand Clear of the Doors'. Every time a train pulls in he says the same thing. Over and over.

The underground is only moderately crowded. It is not peak hour yet. The doors slam open. People jostle to get off. To get on. Nobody speaks. Nobody smiles. The doors slam shut.

The American woman strides past the WAY OUT sign, along the tunnel (lavatory tiles on the wall, chewing gum splodge and grime underfoot—grime is a word that covers soot, grease, vomit, squashed chocolate and dried puddles. Urine? Orangeade?) She swings around to the right leaning like a motor-cyclist. She is wearing a loose tweed coat that flows from her shoulders and brown leather boots softly folded below her calves. Around her neck is a long scarf with a fringe. It matches her coat. She moves with the freedom and looseness of a practised rider.

Up the escalator,

A giraffe's shrivelled tongue. After the others,

Smirnoff doesn't seem so expensive.

Fly the tube to Heathrow.

Alyn's worst handicap is other people's
attitudes.

Pregnant? If you're happy, fine.

If not, phone 245 ...

Along another tunnel to a short flight of stairs.

An English man is almost keeping pace, though he is not with her. He too, walks firmly. There is a sprinkling of dandruff on the collar of his dark over-coat.

There is no way of knowing as yet that she is American, he English. Yet she is and he is.

A tableau forms at the bottom of the short flight of steps. The American woman and the English man are held, each with one foot on the bottom step of the stairs on the right side of the handrail. The action is on the left.

A black woman grapples with a twin stroller. She is a young woman. One child is asleep, its head buried in shawls. The other is almost hairless, its black

scalp merely dusted with down. It is wide awake, but quiet. Its eyes swamp its face. Enormous stones in milky pools. The black woman stops, unable to move the pusher. Her skin is not black after all, but coffee coloured and her belted coat is fake fur. She too wears a scarf, but it is used decoratively, not against the weather. It frames her face. She struggles again with the pusher, reverses it and tries to drag it up the steps one by one.

The American woman and the English man move up the steps. Their legs lift in slow motion. At first they glance at the black woman then they quickly stare straight ahead.

A young man catches up with the group. He is in a hurry. (Is he Scandinavian? English? Australian? German? American? It is impossible to tell. But he is white.) He wears a shabby leather jacket, jeans, thick rubber-soled sneakers. He bends down and grabs the front of pusher and lifts it clear as the black woman starts to bump it from step to step. They reach the top at the same moment as the American woman and the English man. The black woman does not smile or speak. The young white man lowers the pusher and without a break in his momentum hurries on.

'God, that makes me mad,' says the American woman and it is only at this point that she can be identified.

The Englishman says 'I beg your pardon', so that he too is identifiable.

'Doesn't that make you mad? That', she says, nodding in the direction of the disappearing black woman. 'Why, I'm telling you, in my country no-one would have lifted a finger to help her. Where I come from they would have just let her get on with it. She should be so grateful to that guy. And she couldn't even give him a smile. Not even a smile. I ask you. What kind of people are they?

The English man hangs back, fumbles in his pocket for his ticket.

The American woman strides on, calling back over her shoulder. 'There's no future in it, you know'. But he doesn't reply. The woman shrugs. She flings the trailing end of her scarf around her neck and struts out into the wintry mid-afternoon gloom.

JENNY de GARIS

Moon over Mullalyup

I had driven without stopping from Perth to the apple country
and on beyond Donnybrook
and the quick dusk had come, almost gone;

suddenly hills and moon rose together
on the south-east horizon
into a sky growing mauve;

the moon was not
silver
not
a disc
not even
electric,
but a strange numinous
gas balloon
of pale
yellow
which clumps of trees tossed
to
and fro
across the sinuous road,
until

unexpectedly
a straight stretch
caught it
and held it directly in my path;

as I drove uphill
the moon
dropped,
fell to rest on the road,
and I
was driving straight towards it
faster and
faster

PENNY LEE

Coming to Broome

What if
Coming to Broome
I should step out of the web
Of caged light and intricate doubt
I've raged and cried in
And say
This
For better or worse
Is how it has always seemed to me
And so saying
Stand alone
Nothing new although each time
Is a passage traversed the first time
Again

They tell me there's something I miss
Not passed in words
And so barring me
Verbal prototype that I am
Or seem to them to be

They say there are lines I've not perceived
And battering on others to make them fit
My mould or plan
Never can

Humbled
More simply perhaps
Alone

I turn each time from my own strange sight
To lumber in muddy compromise
A fool with long blind arms and transparent mimicry
Trading a narrow trail for company
When I could be out dancing
On fire with the fusion of sun and night
Which is home for me.

Monte Bello

She held his papery hand on the sheet as the blood oozed over his teeth, collected round his shrunken gums and trickled over the greyed, flacid lips to drizzle down his chin. Bones jolted over heaving lungs. Deep pools. His eyes. Lift and wipe. Prop. Wipe. More pillows. Prop the head.

Tomorrow there is an early appointment at the radio therapy clinic. She had a feeling it would be a 'call the ambulance' occasion tomorrow. Doubt he'll be walking in the morning. Still, somehow, one can never tell; they'd seen him rally so many times and think, gosh, it's a remarkable recovery—a miracle. So perky he'd be, almost his old self again—laughing, joking, sitting up at his place at head of table. Eating. Fish. Tailer done in a little egg and breadcrumbs—"brought back childhood memories", he said "of growing up. Plenty of tailer about in those days. Plenty of everything, crayfish, sun, water—life; it was a young man's world in a town with a future. Wool and wheat, and underground wealth. Frontier land" he said, "the end of the railways and the beginning of the station country. One of the earliest settled parts, isolated. Seemed to be pulled in so many directions; the aborigines, gentle, warm easy going; the station country harshness; or the call of the City to the South; and the sea; beguiling, seductive, licking hungrily at the fishing boats' planked hulls. "To sail away up to the North fishing", he'd tell us, "was like nothing else you'd ever know. It's another world up there, so beautiful and remote. And the Islands off the coast—so grand—a retreat from cyclones and easterly raging winds. A shame the powers that he gave them over for the blasts. Remember the front page of 'the West'—that mushroom cloud—you were only ten at the time. Hard to believe we felt nothing here when it was just a thousand or so miles away. Did the fishing in, they say, around those parts—dead fish floating round the bays down here for months after!"

A gurgle of blood surged from his throat and choked the words, as the rattled bones shook with his cough. Sponge and mop. Prop. Plump his pillows up. The white blood cells advance as the red cells retreat, fraught with weariness of defeat, ravaged and routed, and she held his pale hand on the sheet.

The voices of the people in the dinghy floated out across the surface of the khaki coloured creek, drifted shoreward and were swallowed in the muddy banks of mangrove roots washed with the sucked and seeping tidal water. Someone grasped the twisted frame of an overhanging mangrove branch with the long armed boat hook as the dinghy slurped into the quickly oozing edge of the creek and slid along while the occupants stepped over the side, sank ankle deep in the slime and hauled the little boat in between two gnarled old trees further up the bank.

"Grab the wheat bags Sim".

"Pass the other boat hook too Rhea," Sim said.

"We might need the two bags, never know your luck!"

"Oh God, this mud is foul. Do you think there's 'things' in here too?"

"No fear—nothing to bite you here, safe as a Church."

"I'll just sit in the dinghy and wait for you—someone ought to stay and take care of it."

Howls of laughter clapped about her, yells and shouts and urging sounds.

"Think of the fresh bread and hot crab meat with a cold stubby. Only those that work for it get to eat it."

"Come on Rhea. Don't be a piker."

"Someone has to hold the other bag open, ready for the catch."

"Oh come on Rhea."

Reluctantly she stepped over the side of the aluminum tender, grabbed the bag from Sim, and squelched her way along the creek bed bank after the men with the hooks, poking and prodding into likely looking holes amongst the mud encrusted roots. With yells of delight and excited swoops the men scooped the mud crabs, clinging fiercely with their huge orange streaked claws to the boat hooks, into the open wheat sacks where they were shaken down into the damp depths of hessian, away from fingers and hands. Still, hot air beneath the deep green blanket of succulent leaves, overhanging the water's edge, hung heavy with midgie flying insects assaulting in battle force the exposed arms, necks, faces and what remained of their legs, above the thick gluggy water, with bites and stings. Slapping and slipping and sticking with the grasping mud and pulling out each leg laboriously, they worked their way along the bank.

"Do you reckon that's enough?"

"How many've we got now?"

"There's four in this bag and you've got three in yours."

"That's enough for a good feed."

"You're sure? Well, okay we'll head back to the boat and get the pot boiling."

She breathed a sigh of relief and turned about, back towards the dinghy, dragging the bag in the water behind her, looking over to the opposite bank lying low and soggy with a slippery mud expanse between the water and the ribbon of mangrove trees winding lazily up the creek.

"Quite a catch eh?"

"Make a good feed."

"I wonder if Kay's back with the bread yet."

"Take a while to walk the three miles in, and back again—hopefully she'll have got a lift at least one way."

"Looking forward to that cold beer."

"Will that mud ever come out?" she wailed, looking disconsolately at her toenails.

The tired soft thud of the rubber strip of the dinghy on the green planks of the lugger, hugging close beside the jetty, and the thump of the sacks landing on the wooden deck, brought forth the other girl from below.

"Did you get any?" she called.

"Yep, seven. Got the water on, Kay?"

"Oh yes, and fresh baked bread cut up ready. Got a lift into town from just over by the fuel tanks and lucky enough to be picked up by the storekeeper about half way on the way back. God it's hot on that track."

Lazily they sprawled about the deck; under the shade of the canvas awning stretched, green, between the starboard stays over the boom, encased in lashed up sail snug resting, onto the ladder rung of the port stay; and munched soft on the fresh bread and hot crab meat, contentedly. Cracking, with teeth, on the claws,

for the sweet meat. Swallowed. The cold beer that followed. Swapping yarns. Drowsy. Her mind drifted to the dust track she had walked the day before to town, passing the camps of Aborigines along the way, the small brown children squatting under the trees, pressed down in the heat. The sight, with surprise, of the old straight man with black body and silver hair, so erect and proud bearing in the dry boned sand stillness, among the car bodies and the wine bottles, cans, and dogs infested with lice and fleas, and the dirty struggling dark warm women. Shuffling. Into tomorrow as if they are yesterdays.

"We'll leave on the next tide, the skipper said. "This lazy life gets at you after a while, we'll never go if we don't make a move soon. We'll head out for the Islands and then move up to Barrow and the Monte Bellos in a couple of days."

"Might catch some mackerel on the outside of the Barrow. The barge is going too on tomorrow's tide", Sim said.

Voices of children on the rocks, beyond the wharf, drifted around the boat and the gentle plop of their fishing lines mingled with the splattered splash of the small crabs skelter to safety, into the creek of muddy, moving mouthward, moon sucked water, washing away from the man-made rocked entrance.

Sluiced to the blueness of ocean. It would return, lifting the boats up to the grey wooden jetty planks and carry them seawards to freedom.

"She's a goner mate", she heard him say from the jetty as the lugger heaved and humped with soft canvas unfolding, flapping, and unwrapping between stays, slipping a cushion of soft faded white between rocks and blue sky. The whispered slip of the water's soft whip at the wooden planked hull as she leaned hungrily seaward, bellied and rolling.

"Might as well chuck the lures over the side Sim—never know your luck. It's worth a try."

"Right you are. Hey, Kay, fix the red one to the starboard stay—and keep your eye on it. Some of them are real big 'uns out here."

"Outside the reef at Barrow's the place for the big mackerel—God you've never seen anything like it. We were flat out hauling them in last time. Filled the freezer choc-a-block. Paid the fuel for the whole trip that time," the skipper said.

Flat calm, clear ocean stretched out and in the distance on all sides small dots of islands, scattered, like ships in harbour riding anchor. Occasionally the surface zipped alive with the flying fish's silver gleam and the black round shape of turtles barely submerged beneath blue green water, sometimes broke through with inquisitive head, to stare at the boat. The loathsome coils of the seasnakes glide to safety through the depths. Lazy old lugger, lapped with sea foam, in waters familiar, proud in her creaking.

"Does anyone know what year it was the Brits detonated the bomb?" Sim said.

"I think it was round 1952-53. I remember the hullabaloo in the papers at the time, but can't remember exactly when it was. Guess it was pretty much the back of beyond round these parts that far back—isolated except for the occasional pearl lugger looking for safe anchorage or weathering a storm, maybe an odd fisherman about."

"I thought there was some sort of oyster farming going on too."

"Yes, I believe someone was pickling and bottling oysters from the Montes. There was also a pearl culture farm, spatting, I think it was called, breeding pearl shells in a pond. Bloke by name of Haynes started it in 1908. He had a home-stead there too."

"I wonder if there are cave paintings and Aboriginal burial grounds on these Islands?"

"God no, the Abos weren't seafaring people really. They wouldn't come this far off the coast—80 miles—it's a fair hike—safer at home, on the mainland for them."

Leaning, searching, for the emergence of Islands to starboard, when suddenly the red ragged rearing of cliffs rose, rigid before them.

"It's the Barrow", the skipper said. "Montes are just ahead."

"It's one hell-uva entrance, so close up all the hatches and tighten everything up on deck with you? We have to go up to the North seaward end and with this swell on it won't be much fun."

Round between headland rocks, giving them entrance, the waves lifted, smacking and tossing, plunging and kicking the lugger sea bed wards, then raised her up to settle her in the water, inside the circle of Islands, laying barren, around them. A sense of relief flooded over them. The sails flapped, and softly they furled down over the deckhouse curling and rolling, twisting inside ropes wound tight around them, hugging the canvas close on the warm wood.

From the stillness about them, the water sounds, sighing, sobbing, salty like tears, hung on the sight that confronted them. Delicate the water on white sand. clear, and above this the pale barren landscape. On the hilltop a cist of grey cement buildings, barricades of steel and cement—a mausoleum.

They dived over the side and swam amongst the twisted and black encrusted strips of metal rising from the seabed, covering the sand, like a carapace, the remnants of ships and aircraft anchored here in the bay, for the blast.

On the shore they walked up the narrow winding strip of seeping salty water-way, like a creek bed, drifting through the whiteness and stillness of sand denuded of growth, scattered with broken and twisted branches of trees. And occasionally the sight of a tiny bonsai mangrove tree, standing, on the bank between sand grains, made the breath catch. Remains of jeeps and engines strewn about with rusted fuel drums, leaning.

They stood on the edge of the hillside and looked into the circle of water before them, rocking the lugger, to the circles of small clustered Islands each within the circular whole of the group.

The silver body of a fish glinted in the clear water below them and somewhere down among the rocks the slap and splash of turtles, chasing out in the suck of tidal wash, to deeper water, rose.

"We'll drop a line of the rocks", Sim said. "Probably get a coral trout for tea, here in this spot."

"Who's going to swim out to get the dinghy and the gear? It's getting late, we'll have to hurry."

She watched the men pull strongly through the water, reach the boat and haul themselves up the old black rubber tyre hanging on the side, and listened to the little swishing sounds Kay's feet made paddling in the shallows, amongst the shells and fat round grains of sand. Kay's voice,

"Oh Rhea, look, come look at this crab will you?"

She bent over the small shape, squeezing beneath the strip of dried out weed. The body of the crab, twisted round at an angle, one main claw protruding from the back of the shell. Three stunted growths, distortions of legs, supported the frame. Rhea shivered.

The voice remembered, "Dead fish floating round the bays for months—you probably don't recall it—hard to believe we felt nothing down here." She hugged her arms round her body, wishing she had a shirt with her.

DIANE FAHEY

Assignation

Some inner light shines through the cracks
in his teeth: 'Velcome to Transylvania!'
. . . at least, that's what she *thinks* he says—
his accent is rather thick.

A dusty room with a dustier feather bed
is given her at this gingerbread inn.
The woodwork is highly wormed,
but interesting.

The hotelier winks with his seeing eye,
knowing she is the adventurous kind.
At eleven, sure enough, she exits through
large cracks in the shutters, slides

down the hill and up to the castle,
where he is waiting . . . He serves champagne—
the best—then smiles, his teeth pointed,
with many cracks. She smiles too,

her neck in a brace from that ski fall
in Sun Valley when, even so, she'd finished
and won the race . . . *Her* teeth are regular,
like all Americans', and seem to fill

the room. Her opponent's eyes blur
for a moment, then focus. 'Chess?' he suggests,
bravely. He knows he's in for
a long and lonely night.

MIKE GREENACRE

Proverbial Sojourn

He was a sturdy person
born into his father's business
of boat making and sailing
sure-footed, more aware
than us make-believe learners turning
pages and wagging school.

I've tried to write about him
before, the words
caught between walls of what he
was never knowing where
to end or begin—an image left
climbing locked inside
photo albums and deeds we
all believed were him.

Quick of tongue sharp
witted he fought his father's
idea of privilege—the hours
too wild and rapid left
him cast out
one night under Canning Bridge—
why his better friends
didn't offer the nights in
their homes? as he didn't refuse
my offer just up the road
. . . why does one
find life suddenly alone?

"You *un*-desirable", "mervis the pervis"
"the proverbial . . ." he would
say in a croaky tone
riding danger two-up behind
a 4-pot kawasaki
clinging to leftover wine
this time from my
place and the show after,
meeting the stop sign that flew
before he realised there
would be no more.

Memory fades but picks up
other faces of affected style,
the girls that rose
to his side in Matheson road
and a whirlpool of other
rages riding high
into the early hours of one of
his favourite tunes: *I am
the little red rooster, too la-ate
to crow the day. I am . . .*

. . . fossicking feelings
of respect and envy
that seal what time has
left unchanged.

ALEC CHOATE

Wittecarra Creek

But for the milk and blood
of the stone's plinth and pillar,
but for the plaque with the thick tongued names,
the creek would say nothing,
and the spume weathered casuarina trees
would still hide the story's anguish
in their needles' whisper.

Three hundred and fifty years and more
have passed since the two men stood stranded and staring
as the ship, sails raised as the white hand of justice,
turned cruelly, and sailed from shore.

It is restful here, with noon half sleeping,
the sun lightly feathered in cloud.
Cars are parked with their metal hazed
in thin tree shadows and tree shredded sunlight,
while people, not many, who read the plaque
or sit eating their picnic lunch
or simply walk idly,
share the mood of the creek,
now without ripple, either of wind
or its near zero progress
to a mouth that is barred by sand
but which in time it can sigh through
and escape to the sea:
poised, and spread to a lake,
its shallows are fathomless
as fringing vermillion flowers and rust tinted boughs
look back from an abyss of mirrored sky.

Over the sandbar's crest
and between the upsweep of ranging dunes
the sudden olive of sea
fans to the skyline, the fixed
clear cut limit of the castaway's outlook.
That water, too, is tranquil.
Across this background, his rod
slanting, probing the air like a whisker,
a fisherman passes, his purpose hunched
in the naked brown of his fit shoulders,
his slouch easy, at home in his playground idyll.

But the two castaways,
the first white aliens to give foot and settle
on a continent unawakened to the world it shared,
the two men, biting
the bitterness of crime and punishment,
looked round in terror and disbelief
at their flowering solitude.

ALEC CHOATE

Odalisque with Red Trousers

Poetry, an inflammable word,
but my folder, flat on the coffee table,
nudges the glass
where a small coin of wine
winks at the closed red cover.
An undowned face of wood
as smooth as youth, the table is tan,
its flush of reflections drowsily still.

So these things tease my eyes
as I rest on my lounge this slack sandalled morning,
but also I see, above my raised feet,
the wall with the Matisse portrait,
the girl, herself on her lounge and alone,
who looks through my room
past her anyhow knees in her huge red trousers.
By the listless way her eyes avoid mine
they are surely drawn
to the window behind me
which I know frames a picture
of the patio's languid and basketed ferns
and the trees that stand about in the garden
with their burden of leaves
held to a remote and vacant sky.
Or perhaps she looks nowhere,
or just so far as her naked breasts
which she erects by clasping her hands
at the back of her head,
turning her arms into two pale moth wings.

How long ago I first hung her picture
I cannot remember.
There are times I believe it is almost a mirror,
for I know my eyes
will wander and want as hers
and my mind discover itself
in the slack of her body's waiting.
I too have to live each lapse
between the ecstacies
of a screened and outsider calling.

The tumbles and sweeps of her huge red trousers
are a restless and sullen fire.

ELLY McDONALD

Tidal

In the laundry we found a postcard
Victorian erotica
a woman with blancmange buttocks and
a tentative smile
like her
malleable curves, bovine
eyes: a Gibson
girl, in sepia tones, her body
all graceful billows, as
rich as her husband's wheatfields
her breasts, white as orchards in bloom
heavy
featured honey-lips and now
decades later, her country child
wades through pocked-coral tidal-pools
compulsive
he still finds relics
of a ship smashed by the bay
shards of pottery, faded
pitted like daguerrotype
shattered; once-sharp edges smoothed
now aged, in submarine silence
he assembles the fragments for
mantlepiece display—a voyeur
caressing
he holds them with the tenderness
of her remembered
touch

Paisley Print

A paisley scarf, large, of silk, bordered in deep pink. Deep pink as lipstick on a girl's lips, as deep pink as the unblemished tubes on cosmetic counters, as deep pink as the tunics and bloomers of the girls he watched play sport on Saturday afternoon.

Yes. That was the one he would have. He paid the girl behind the counter. Her interest rewarded him.

I'm sure your friend will like it.

He smiled his answer, nodded to her as he took the small parcel. He had not satisfied her curiosity.

Absolutely bald. Perhaps fifty-five. The sales girl wondered about his friend as she reboxed all the scarves examined but not chosen. He blushed when she presumed he was choosing a scarf for his wife. Said it was for . . . a friend.

Wilson caught the 12.20 home from the city. He always did on Saturdays except in winter when he stayed to watch the girls play hockey on the Esplanade. The girl would be on the bus too, he knew.

She would be in the Terrace, but he would not give the gift to her yet. He noticed her then talking to some of her friends. She smiled at him. He would wait, and he stood apart from the group of young people.

The midday crowd dispersed, left city streets deserted on Saturday. At the bus stop the pungence of cape lilacs pervaded senses, but gradually became forgotten like the crowd as the bus left the city, passed suburbs of houses and factories, till, with its few remaining passengers, crossed the bridge over the river to reach the outlying urban districts. Wilson saw these things with familiarity. The bus now passed river flats that had been a bed for floods many times in his life. At such times he was cut off from the town. Now there was a new bridge, built high to cheat the floods.

The girl alighted at her stop and so did Wilson. He did not give her the gift immediately, though the bus had only turned the corner, was barely out of sight when he thrust the small paper parcel into her hand. She accepted it, yet protested. She knew he awaited her response so she must open the parcel now, but she would like to have opened it privately.

Laura put down her bag, knelt on the road-verge in the warm early afternoon sun. It was still, and quite noiseless save for the rustle of some small insect, its size magnified in the dry grass at her side. It arrested her thoughts only briefly as did the bus receding along the country road, the road that took her to the city now she was older, the road that led her out of this country town, but always brought her back. She made a ritual of the unwrapping for his sake, even though

she was embarrassed by it. And the paisley silkiness fell raptuously from the wrapping paper onto her knee. Exquisite lipstick pink that swam with liquid sperm shapes. A fine piece of silk too. Untamed by folding, it spilled a fascinating square in front of her. She smiled. He looked happy.

It really is beautiful. You shouldn't buy me things though.

They did not talk of the gift again on the way to her house. She talked of many things, mercurially moving from one matter to another, and he listened. Rows and rows of vines grew on either side of the narrow road, its sameness interrupted only by a small rise in the flat country once river flats. Good soil, but flat, evaporating human thoughts to replenish its own ageless thirst. Some lives became permanent fallow, some produced constantly. The coloured scarf lay fertile in her thoughts, its silkiness lingering still upon her finger-tips. Possibly she would never wear it, but its luxuriosness warmed her.

She did not show her father the scarf, but later showed it to her mother.

Wilson loves to buy nice things.

Like the marcasite brooch he had also given her. Exquisite too. Two leaves, delicately shaped, the size of a small privet leaf like the ones that grew at the path near the front door. She would not mind if she did not possess a piece of jewellery like it, but now she did it pleased her. She was embarrassed when he gave her gifts though. They were not given on birthdays and he did not buy them for her sisters.

Her uncles said things about him to her father, she knew. Just what they said she could only wonder at. Wilson had been coming to their house as long as she could remember. Lonely, she supposed. He had never married, but his brothers had. She did not think he would ever marry. He seemed content with small parcels of appreciation. He watched her team play sport on Saturdays. Bought the oranges, too. The girls always thanked him.

'Stay on to have tea with us', her mother often said to him. No particular fuss was made of him. He stayed, did not cause any change in the routine. But tonight Wilson had invited them to his house, a musical evening he planned from time to time. Her father would not go, but that did not offend Wilson. Laura and her mother and sisters would go and there would be others. Wilson would play the piano and the violin, entertain them in his front room. As a younger child Laura had always drifted off to sleep to the music, she remembered, recollecting the sound of the violin in the small front room of his house.

They were the first to arrive near 8.00 and the house was in darkness. But the bare verandah globe, stark on conduit bracket, suddenly threw out an arc of light when their car stopped at the gate. Then the window of the front room itself became a yellow square.

I've been doing a bit of developing.

Wilson spoke apologetically, hurriedly turning on more lights. It was warm inside the brown room. Laura sat in a large leather chair opposite the fireplace. The polished jarrah floor was covered partially by a brown patterned linoleum square. The walls were brown too, and the jarrah dado that went half way up the wall. It was a man's room with that peculiar smell of houses closed up during the day—a room cleaned of activity. His mother's eyes caught her attention. Those eyes stared at her. Some photographs and paintings were like that. Wherever you sat the eyes still followed you. The large photograph of his mother was above the mantelpiece. She must have been dead a long time, but her eyes were on everyone. The girl fingered the leather on the arms of the chair, now beginning to craze with age and, she thought, lack of care. These would have been this woman's chairs, like the teacups placed ready for supper on the side table. Possibly she had hung the small muslin curtain at the window. A shadow on her uplifted hairstyle arrested Laura's attention. It was a hairstyle typical for those

times, the woman quite young, her hair upswept from her face and piled high. But shadow made the woman's hairstyle forbidding, a wave involuted, and her eyes, penetrating.

Laura withdrew her concentration, became absorbed with the activity in the room filling with other guests. She moved from the large leather chair to a less conspicuous place, saw Wilson, his large frame on the piano stool, his thick unmanipulative fingers coming down hard on the keys. He was almost immobile as he played, only moving from one tune to another, and another. Gladys Foster, who lived in the same street, began to accompany him with her singing, and others, even her own mother, joined in when they knew the words. So the brown room was filled with colour. The fine china teacups vibrated gently on the side table. Wilson warmed, constantly wiped the perspiration from his smooth bald brow, now pink.

As everyone became less restrained, more relaxed, he turned to the violin and Laura heard notes, melancholic notes, coming from the intense concentration. Saw his chin, his plump chin, resting heavily on the violin. Saw his eyes, too, deep in their involvement and saw again the eyes in the photograph.

Then they were making their way happily across the dark ground from the house to the car. It was late and voices parted the night air. Sounds of piano and violin commingled with teacups and tunes floating and won't you have something to eat and would he never marry and why did he give her presents. Her uncles did not give presents. They said things about him. And her mother said he liked nice things and she did like the feel of silk, of pink silk, and she did not like to be singled out and his thick hands, his unmanipulative hands, came down hard on the keys and her heart heard discordant sounds, broken chords, broken words. Her father's words.

You know what they say. You know what they say about him.

He only likes to do nice things.

They say you shouldn't go. They say we shouldn't have him here. They say...
Out of the void of darkness, of dreams, of music to voices raised...

Laura's hand reached in the dark for her bedside cupboard, fretfully groping till her fingertips reached the cool, smooth silkiness.

She saw cavorting sperm shapes swim, wildly colliding, in the hot deep pools of night.

RORY STEELE

It Still Seems Odd Sometimes

It still seems odd sometimes
When shoe in hand I realise
My own enormousness,
How grown proportioned
Feet of me will fill these boats;
Shrink thinking back to infancy
Big brothers, teachers,
Kindergarten City!
Blockhouses, asphalt acres,
Hubbub in the street,
And all unedited. For then
A foot might individually
Step out ahead, a thought drift on
Beyond its foursquare edge.
Across this room
Still, small, full-size, you
Curl asleep as I get dressed
And add to me,
My oddest prize of adulthood.

DAVID McGUIGAN

Joe

8.

It is midnight, my favourite time of day, when the stench of the suburban burning has drifted away, across the city, and the purple Valiants have finished screeching their brakes and ripping open their tyres.

And these are my best hours, my haunting hours. I become a phantom as I walk along Taylor Avenue, the street-lights attempting to reveal my presence, but unable to do so. I feel as though my form flows into, and mingles with, the night air and we become one. It is quiet. The air is semi-fresh.

1.

I live in a house which is square: from the front, from the back, from the side. When I was young, I stood on my head, but the house was still square, just like the next-door neighbour's and my grandmother's.

My parents are square too. Every evening, my father drives his car, containing his gold-plated broom, to the factory, where he brushes the counters and floors, and scrubs the rubbish bins. He loves his job and this also makes him unusual, a rarity to behold.

While he cleans at work, my mother cleans at home. I watch her during the day, polishing the pride of the family, the television. She repolishes it later, and then again a little later. I ask her why she does the housework many times over, and she replies that it is her job to do so. She was born to look after children, and clean.

2.

Joe sits in the bedroom, slicing off his toenails with a freshly-stropped cut-throat razor. He has strange habits, and I think this is why I respect him so.

When my parents are out, he knocks off girls in his room. The bed rocks, and they giggle and make other sounds which embarrass me. I usually rush into the garden to get away from the noise.

Joe uses his razor on the girls' clothing, slicing jeans and bras and panties in two. He doesn't believe in taking their clothes off in the conventional fashion. Apparently, the girls go crazy over this, enjoying it at first, but come time to leave, they find it embarrassing to walk out of the house holding their garments tightly to their bodies. No girl ever visits Joe twice, but this doesn't deter Joe. He knows a lot of girls.

Joe is not really weird, only outrageous, teaching me things I do not know, but which I copy, without really understanding. They sound fine though.

I have been on the dole for two years, ever since I left school. I am not ashamed to be idle because I have no idea what working is like. But I am very bored.

The days follow days and start again without really starting again, some turning up in most unpredictable places. Last Wednesday seemed to be followed by a Sunday, and I could not work it out.

I asked my parents about it, but they said that it was impossible. Things like that did not happen. Joe was more help, explaining my mistake in assuming weeks to be like circles, where the days roll around again at regular intervals. But weeks are really triangular, the apex sometimes causing the weeks to miss certain days. Joe made sense. I told my parents about his solution but for some reason they could not understand.

Most of the time I just laze in bed and stare at the ceiling. Today I lie on my side with my eyes shut. And the day passes slower—slower and slower. My heart is slowing too, beating every minute or so. Soon it will beat once an hour.

I do a bit of exercise, but only when I'm asleep. And that exercise is sleepwalking. The family knows about it, but keeps it a dark secret from the neighbours, who also know about the habit, but keep their knowledge a secret from my parents.

3.

I lie on my bed. The fiery whisky rips open my throat, but not as much as the ascending bile does. The room is a blurred giant, circling towards me and then moving away. My thoughts are unclear. I do not know if it is caused by the drink or not, as my thoughts are never clear.

The book I have been reading is now splattered with vomit. It fascinates me. I read little, I drink much, yet the book intoxicates me more than the alcohol—even though I cannot grasp the meaning of the story. It seems to be about a normal person who is a misfit in Society, not because he is a misfit, but because the society is a misfit. It is weird. I imagine I am the person in the story, although I cannot tell why.

I move my head across the pillow and drain the whisky bottle, which feels as though it has changed shape in my hand. But I know it is still a square. I have a morbid fear of squares. I realize books are square too. I will ask Joe what he thinks of my book later—when I feel normal and depressed again.

I sniffed petrol when I was younger, but petrol became short, and then rare, and my wallet could not afford to charge each nostril.

I tried glue. But somehow I used it wrongly, and the hairs in my nostrils stuck together, and Joe had to cut them open with his razor.

I sniffed baked bean tins, till the doctor on television said there was no nourishment in baked beans, so I gave them away, and moved to greener pastures.

I do not smoke. Smoke hurts my eyes. I have not tried heroin. Joe told me never to try it. He says that, although it is cheap, it is dangerous, and he doesn't believe in it. He said heroin was only for fools and freaks.

I became a television addict for a while, but the violence sickened my stomach, and the sex made me feel dirty and ashamed.

I have never had sex, and I hope I never do. Joe says it's not what it's cracked up to be. Once you've had it ten times a day, it becomes boring; and apparently he only does it to pass the time.

4.

My father sweeps the garage where the car once was. I watch but he does not see me, and I do not want him to see me. Even though he is bent and his body wasted, he seems to have a special power, an inner strength that emanates from his body, but the source of this power is a mystery. I think it is the purpose in

him that radiates. As I watch, I try to capture some of it. But the radiation does not touch me.

He looks sicker than he has ever been. Somehow I know it is the last time I will see him alive.

8.

I shuffle by Reynold's park. A wind has sprung up and it blows the paper bags and sparrow-pooped newspapers across my path: an invasion of a paper air-force. But I enjoy it. It is part of my world. During the day, the litter blown into the air is monotonous; at night it becomes eerie ghosts, silent owls swooping by and giving me contentment.

My ripple-soled shoes caress the pavement as I walk along quiet streets, dead-ends, dirt roads by the airport, alleyways squeezed between factories. And I have begun my stalking, preparing for the fun and entertainment to come. The night is mine alone, to mould and shape into whatever I want. Silently I approach another cluster of lighted houses.

I choose a nearby home—my first stop for the night. I sneak around its exterior, looking for an opening to its exciting heart. A square window leaks out light under a half-drawn blind. I sense excitement, as if I were unwrapping a surprise toy.

5.

Joe sits in his bedroom, slicing off his curls with his cut-throat razor. His triangular fringe points towards his newly-rolled joint, which hides the scar on his lower lip. The smoke fills the room, and when I look at the ceiling, it shimmers.

Joe blows triangular "rings" from his mouth which cloud the room and make the walls shake. He told me Grass breaks down squares. That's why he's a triangle person.

I ask him what he plans to do with his life, once he leaves school.

"Nothing," he says.

I ask him if that means he wants to be like me.

He laughs, "No, big brother. I don't want to be like you: lost, not knowing where you're headed, not understanding the world or how to put up with it."

"What do you want to do, then?"

"Be a dreamer. There must be some corporation around that wants one. I will think up new ideas on how Society can change and grow and improve. My Grass shows me the way. It broke me into the triangular world. By the time I leave school, I'll be a master of the art; and I might even write about my inner experiences to pay for a new razor."

I feel envious of his confidence and his ability to see clearly and know his goals. No wonder I respect him.

"Could I ever be like you?" I ask.

He considers me before he speaks. I do not know if he is thinking over my qualifications or looking for tactful words.

"No, but I can teach and guide you. It will take a long time."

I know he cannot teach me. He has explained things to me before, but I have not understood. I am ashamed to say it, but I am stupid, and will always be stupid.

Joe tries to convert me to Grass. I smoked some once which made me ill. I tell him that I will smoke it again, but I know I won't. It is impossible for me to do so.

Joe convinces me of one thing: alcohol is bad. Through his arguments against Nationalism, Fascism, Squarism and Communism, he shows me why drink is dangerous for Man and Beast. I heed his advice, and give up alcohol—mainly because the trips have been getting worse, anyway.

6.

My father is dead. Mum is a black shadow at home. She sits in front of the television, still in her shroud, and shakes like a jelly.

Things are bad. Joe has been taken away. He was becoming more and more violent, and I had been unable to communicate with him.

On his last day with us, I could not see him because his bedroom was filled with a deep haze. I assumed he was there, but I did not attempt to speak to him, nor he attempt to speak to me.

I heard him curse at strange times during the night, and was frightened by his violent moods. His renown calm was disintegrating.

His women companions became fewer. Those who came, left with cuts over their bodies like bloody triangles.

I still respect Joe, and I miss him. He was very close to me—even for an adopted brother.

I feel loneliness. I cannot speak to my mother who is still hidden in her shroud like a cocooned caterpillar. I know I am gradually becoming anaesthetised.

7.

Memories flash across my mind as I stand in the cemetery-park where my father was buried. It seems so long ago.

No-one watches as they bury Joe but me. I feel neither regret nor sadness, only loathing. I see Joe as he really is: encased in a square box and lowered into a square hole—as my father was.

After all the talk of being different, Joe was covered and becomes a square too.

I must forget all of his preachings and find understanding on my own, without being diverted from my path by charlatans. I will break the square and find what lies beneath.

8.

Behind the tattered blind is a dimly lit bedroom. On the wall sits the large head of a moose. Its antlers support various forms of clothing and undergarments.

A fat woman comes to the door and invites me in. Nervously, I enter the room. She is watching a Blue Movie and Smoking Grass.

“Everyone should be free,” she says. “Allowed to do what they want, when they want, and how they want. That’s what Life’s about: freedom.” As she speaks, she strokes my thigh.

I say that I must be going, jump off the bed and move towards the door. But she is insistent, and becomes angry.

“Stop. I invited you in so you could see my lifestyle. The least you can do is show some civility, and do as I ask.”

“But I don’t want to.”

“Don’t move,” she shouts. “I don’t care whether you want to or not.”

“But I have the freedom to do as I please.”

“Not in this house, you haven’t.”

She pulls out a knife from the drawer. Her voice is quiet and strange.

“You will remain here and enjoy my little pleasures. If you try to get away, I will cut your body into small pieces. I have never experienced the thrill of murder, and I may enjoy it.”

My mind does not work. I back away, watching the long blade. Although sick and frightened, for the first time I know what it's like to want to live—so desperately.

Suddenly I understand the purpose and meaning of life. We are born to want to live. And we want to live only because we don't want to die. Life is simply not wanting to die.

I try to tell her this, but she is deaf to my words. The knife is pointed towards my chest. The knife does not know of my discovery, my enlightenment.

It flashes towards me. It wants to separate me from my understanding. But at last I have lived—though only for a moment.

CAROLE WILKINS

Alien

At breakfast you sit in front of the screen
With blue eyes permanently fixed on 'Stun'
Should I interrupt the programme
You'll turn and knock the dishes from my hands

Communication channels crackle over cereal
As you reach for your glass, drain it
I want to say "Don't rust your circuits!"
But you wouldn't laugh so why bother

Time to leave—you run to the classroom
The door of the spacecraft opens
And I stand waving goodbye
To the child who never glances back to Earth

GRAEME HETHERINGTON

Christmas Eve

An ill wind blew on Christmas Eve
And lifted lids from rubbish bins,
Our guest at random saying things
About her round mouthed, hollow doll,
How once she stuffed it full of food

And left it lying in the sun
With no one knowing till it breathed,
And still I see her bosom heave
As she came rushing through the door,
A gift box cradled in her arms.

Renison Bell (8)

For Peter Hetherington

To occupy the winter hours
We had few books and fewer games,
A father who sat head-in-hands
And said we worried him to death,

A mother who cleaned off the signs
We drew on misted window panes,
A clothes horse like a wall of snow
We tunnelled through to watch the flames.

JENNIFER COMPTON

The Man Who Died Twice

He didn't of course. Not symbolically. Not even if you wanted to get into a psychiatric sort of mumbo jumbo—which you probably don't. "I feel dead!" she can say across the dinner table suddenly, the polished dinner table before the coffee after the roast, "I am dead," she can say and the mind, one's mind doesn't run on and on like an Andy Warhol movie or flip about to three dead donkeys on a white piano to one dead woman across the polished table. Because because. But—"Are you? Do you?" Mild interest. Quite valid. "Do you take coffee in the evening?" But that of course is another story. She wasn't actually dead in any sense if I'm a judge. It just occasionally happened for her and perhaps not always across the dinner table. Another note. Her husband didn't miss a beat with his knife and fork, a slow eater and steeled against flinches. Sudden drops in temperature. Swift changes of level. But sometimes the plunge off the edge really is. Off the edge. And then—I—you—any of us is/are really looking at something that really does mean something or should mean something, that is quite inexplicable.

He was a big man, about 30 when I was 17. With a gang of youths younger than himself and like them He affected careless disdain (joyful bonhomie?) towards me and my girlfriend. Much duffle coated and black stockinged (this is the 60's this is a true story this actually happened all of it which is no excuse but please allow me my cri de coeur I wish to speak from the heart from my life—you don't have to believe any of it) we were into Picasso and T. S. Eliot and cautiously drinking to get drunk. Into LIFE. EXPERIENCE. And I was going to be a writer. (Much later on one finds that one already is everything that one is ever going to be.) And on one occasion He looked across the room at me and saw a certain thing in my face which He couldn't help liking. (I won't try and explain what my friend and I were doing among the carelessly disdainful joyful bonhomie. Something to do with experiencing life and I suppose the gang of youths with their large ageing out of it but in it one of the boys good bloke but older than us wouldn't let us go. Girls are girls and can be persuaded to stop talking and lie down. Most of us. At some time or another. I don't think they would let him go either which was why He was still amongst them. Well a loss is a loss. Always and forever.) However He couldn't help liking me and so He visited. Once with the smell of tomato relish made for his Mother (who He lived with or she lived with him) still on his hands. Once to like my brother's records (this is important please note my brother's records) which I had borrowed and decided I didn't like at all at all no way. Pop. Popular. He liked them. Once to persuade me into bed (He arrived late at night and I was already there, the per-

suading was for me to let him in too . . . but . . .) my friend through the wall banging on the wall all night be quiet can't you be quiet? me giggling and saying get on with it then which when He eventually did He did incredibly quickly. Once it used to be that those who liked you most knew least how to express it. Not so now I don't think. And after that very long night be quiet can't you be quiet? He got more and more well—smaller? And less talking and less anything in him at all for me to like to amuse me so got crosser and ployful. So—He was a chemist. A science chemist, no a *research* chemist. So I had affections of suicide.

"What is the quickest poison there is?"

"Tincture of timothy grass." That doesn't sound right it can't be right. But if I remember right.

"How long?"

"About three seconds."

"Get me some and I'll sleep with you." Or sleep with you again I can't remember which but its place in the pattern isn't important. What was important was that He considered it. Just for a moment I saw in his eyes that He considered it. Or, in perspective, considered giving me lactose or glucose instead. His own ploy in this game. Anyway I laughed it only lasted a moment the thought that went through his head and we both knew we both had gone too far and He left and I didn't see him again for years. I went away and became a writer. I came back and I was still a writer. With a poster on the door of a theatre to prove it and my very own piece of foyer to sit in and observe the audience arriving. (Alone. My friend is right out of the picture and won't return. My brother is still around though.) And He arrived. I knew who He was straight away although it took me a moment to recognize him. (He had the look of a guy I'd come to know about who spoke imaginary Maori when drunk which was often. That was what I came up with first.) But we knew each other well enough to know He'd seen my name on the poster, come to the play because . . . perhaps hoped to see me or something or other. Well *something* anyway. We exchanged words. And after the play which I won't attempt to explain describe but perhaps it was the sort of thing to explain me to him, describe something the thing in my face He had liked but couldn't manage to touch or reach or whatever. To expose me to him as any committal to paper or canvas or bare boards is prone to explain describe expose reach for touch in some sense or at the least make things some things seem relevant even important to people who are listening or looking with a certain sort of expectation. Perhaps it showed him why . . . well I don't know. It doesn't matter now anyway.

After this play he was in the coffee bar alone as I talked to a poet. A friend of mine. The poet. The poet talked to me too but he seemed to be full of gloom that night and when the stage manager, my stage manager, joined us the stage manager was lectured unmercifully and I was so aware of *him* sitting alone, perhaps followed me across the road certainly wanted to sit with me have coffee with me and talk to me perhaps more and even more certainly I was being ordered not to. Not to approach. So I didn't. The poet, my stage manager and I left and went to our homes. And I suppose He did too.

More time passes although not years. My brother with his own small business in a small way rents new premises, a third of a new building. Delays and hold ups resented by him and the whole family at first and then noted received with relief because the chemist (now don't get clever here because I am pointing the pattern out to you and perhaps I should have noticed but there are many chemists even in our small city) because the chemist in another third of the building working late had exploded himself. Or burnt himself up. Or carelessly arranged things so there was a chain reaction and in a new building with no fire extinguishers yet or fire alarm and late so there was no one to notice and see He died.

Or killed himself with a subconscious knowledge of if I stack this here and that there and do this then it will all link up come together and blow me apart. I don't know exactly. I don't remember what people said. They all said different things and I didn't track down through all the words and what the paper said (no names next of kin his Mother) and a friend who lived round the corner and lying in his bed heard the noise of him leaving this life late at night what he said. I didn't really want to know. But my brother's relief at not being there—himself or his machinery important to a small business man in a small way—was apparent and the focus of our family. And his grief. And I mourned and wondered. Mourned because someone who I hadn't known but might have wanted to had died. Bizarrely. Horribly. Before his time. No of course not *before* his time. But anyway in his prime. Middle thirties. Unmarried. (More clues.) And wondered at the series of things that had prevented delayed and preserved my brother and his machinery.

More time passes.

Sitting in my pub in which I have my very own corner to observe the atmosphere the arrivals and departures and all such things as amuse such as I. Sniffing and pondering and making hieroglyphics in my head about the rather extraordinary one could almost say dense almost tense but on the edge even over the edge sense of things happening just beyond my gin and tonic tonight when a friend (this is a new character, an acquaintance, a colleague, all of these things and yet none really but tonight the god out of a machine who is going to wrap it all up for me, for you, for all of us—living with his Mother and her with him in the same suburb as He had lived with his Mother was still living with his Mother for all I knew—really should have twigged at some time but then again the whole point of this story called The Man Who Died Twice is that I didn't shouldn't have nowhere along the line) this friend in his middle thirties unmarried and very drunk tonight fell out of the atmosphere at me and shouted at me over my, in front of *between* me and my drink and what it was about was that He had died, it had been him and I had mourned and not known and this friend or whatever he was that night he was very drunk indeed was angry. Angry at him dying, angry for him, angry that I had not loved him when He had loved me so well and from such a distance for so long and often talked about me and him implying so much more than had ever actually happened and so much less as well. And I became angry. At being told such a thing in such a way. Like this. And not knowing. Never having known.

I could have done this, I could have done that. But I didn't. He was one of the woodlice scrabbling on the edge of a burning log, one of the men running across the bottom of the battleship as it turns that no hand reaches out to pluck up and return to a safe place. But apart from the metaphor or is it a simile?) I don't truthfully think I could have done anything. I was not an instrument for him and He was not for me. If I could have done anything at all I would have. It would have happened. Instead what did happen happened.

P.S. A story He told me. Sleeping with no no sleeping was being done and the other words are not handy but you get the picture—with a girl in an old shed faute de mieux for lack of anything better down South and as He was about to reach? have? I forget the exact word He used but anyway about to have the joystick as He called it and the floor of the shed collapsed on him under the girl under him. He was a very big man.



RUSSELL SOABA

Russell Soaba: An Interview

K.S.: Russell, when did you actually start writing? Who inspired you or influenced you? Who encouraged you? What made you write? And why did you choose to write in English?

R.S.: I started writing in the mid-sixties. In 1969 I had a couple of poems published by Marcia Kirsten in Adelaide, but these were high school experiments or exercises—poems that I wrote for a little school newsletter of which I was founder/editor. No one taught or inspired me to write. But it could be that I had some excellent English teachers who were predominantly English and “English” Australians. Hence, the unconscious eagerness in choosing to write in English. These teachers recited to us and taught us Tennyson, Blake, Byron, Shelley, etc. Shelley was my favourite. *Ozymandius* simply got me entranced in high school. I often saw myself as one “colossal wreck” then, and I still do. I say we had excellent English teachers because they not only taught us English grammar, but taught us also to see deep into poetry and try to understand and appreciate literature in general. They taught us to think, to feel the same things Tennyson and Shelley might have felt when writing poetry, and then threw us into the arena of further literary, sometimes philosophical, enquiry. Why, for example, in a poem we see nothing else but the wreck of an ancient statue, that of a proud Pharaoh brought down, and the desert “stretching far away”? Or why the harsh and repeated usage of the word “break”, then the somewhat serene picture of a boy fishing in the quiet of a bay? And that sort of thing. But I wrote poems because I was interested in beautiful things that appealed to the human senses—the tune of a hymn, for example, or Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony, etc. Hence, the very Churchly imitative qualities of those first attempts at poetry. But truthfully, I did not seriously and consciously consider myself a writer then. In fact, until the age of sixteen I had only one ambition in mind, and that was to become an artist, a painter in the Western sense. My father was an artist, and I took it for granted that I myself was born an artist. I have won many prizes for my art both in primary and secondary schools. So writing poems in high school was merely an extended piece of exercise stemming from my original preoccupations or obsessions as an artist.

K.S.: Could you give some background about yourself: such as where you were born, the type of upbringing you had, the early schools you attended, university education, the possible influence of the village or of your elders?

R.S.: I was born in Tototo, Milne Bay Province, in 1950 and went to four different primary schools—two within the Anglican Church (Pem, Tarakwaruru)

and two Administration schools (Divinai, Losuia). I then went to Martyrs' Memorial School, the Anglican secondary school near Popondetta, and later Balwyn High School in Victoria, Australia. I came to the University of Papua New Guinea in 1970 but left in 1972 and took up a succession of jobs in the Public Service, losing my scholarship that way. In 1979, sick of Public Service and of people picking at my lack of academic qualifications, and having saved enough for study fees, I returned to complete the B.A., which I did in 1980. I wanted then to go away somewhere and continue writing, but convinced that a lot of Third World writers roam about within university circles these days, I applied for a Teaching Fellowship and the University was kind enough to accept my application.

The type of upbringing I had was initially a traditional one which lasted for eight years. I come from what can traditionally be regarded as an aristocratic Anuki family, the Warakouta, who were the rulers of the Anuki people for centuries. Such chiefly set-ups were common around the Cape Vogel area of the Milne Bay Province. They were successfully broken down to fragments by the Anglicans during the last decade of the last century and the early parts of this century, through the introduction of the Christian religion and the somewhat radically socialistic type of Western-civilization. A few survive, however, and the Anuki one, the Warakouta, finally came to its lonely end in 1969 when my father died. But I had managed to lean a great deal about my family history, the history of the Anuki, my social status, etc., during those first eight years of my life which, according to the traditional educational practices of the Anuki, were spent exclusively in the house of my grandmother, who was then also my excellent teacher.

K.S.: Many writers here in Papua New Guinea are only too keen and eager to condemn the ex-colonials in their writings. The white man is seen as being essentially evil or bad. What is your opinion of such an attitude? Do you feel this is extremist or do you feel it is necessary for Papua New Guinea writers to get rid of all latent hatred first before they actually express themselves meaningfully and creatively for their people?

R.S.: The hatred of the colonial and the ex-colonial was and is predominant in much of Papua New Guinea literature. But it seems that Papua New Guinea writers who were involved in that type of literature simply failed to realize the more humanistic qualities of such a sentiment of hatred. It is as if they hated, through their writings, but did not pause to reflect on the nature of their hatred for the white man. Why is the white man so unpopular, for example? What makes him evil or bad? How can we truly understand him? Is he really worth the trouble of us hating him? If so, to what purpose? These questions are missing in much of the earlier anti-colonial literature. Which is tantamount to starting a long story about certain people, a certain culture, and then stopping abruptly in mid-sentence as if the whole story carried little or no meaning. If, initially, a Papua New Guinean writer's aim was to condemn colonialism, then one would expect a suggestion at least from that very writer on how to go about creating a new people, a new society; and whether or not such a new creation would be meaningful after all to the Papua New Guineans themselves. Such a venture did not seem to be present as an idea in the minds of our writers. Perhaps we need a new kind of literature that must go deep into the roots of this sense of hatred, scrutinize it as far as possible, and then present it as a philosophical phenomenon for those who might be interested in understanding it. We cannot even say that Papua New Guineans wrote in such

a manner in order to do away with certain psychological torments, frustrations, complications, etc., and attain that which is sublime and beautiful in the distant future, as even that possibility is missing in much of our anti-colonial literature.

K.S.: Most people outside of Papua New Guinea have heard only of Vincent Eri's *Crocodile*. Do you also see the novel as being a significant step in the right direction for Papua New Guinea writing in English? Or do you think it has been over-praised, given undue attention?

R.S.: *The Crocodile*, in my opinion, has been praised so much that its own qualities as a work of art have been understated or underwritten. The outside world, through the entrepreneurship of Professor Ulli Beier perhaps, seemed to have been too preoccupied with the propagandist idea of which Papua New Guinean did what first, or was the first to obtain what and where and how. Even the local press seems to be too keen on promoting so and so, sometimes too quickly, to really pause and take a closer look at the real worth of the person being promoted. This is how I think *The Crocodile* has been maltreated by the critics. I do not know how cruel I am in answering this question, but it certainly is worth the trouble in being conscious of the warning offered by T. S. Eliot that if we are not careful as literary critics we might find ourselves saying things which the author (for example, Shakespeare) himself might never have contemplated before. So the opinion on *The Crocodile* being a significant "first" novel for much of Papua New Guinea writing in English could be justified but only if Mr. Eri had cared enough to give us a second, even a third, novel.

K.S.: Did you begin as a poet or playwright? Why have you been reticent about bringing out a second volume of your poems after *Naked Thoughts*? Is it difficult to get your works published here in Papua New Guinea? If so, why?

R.S.: I began as a poet—or more precisely my first creative writing attempts were in the form of poems. Then I wrote short stories. And plays. And afterwards, the somewhat abortive attempt at a first novel. It is certainly hard to publish works in Papua New Guinea. It seems that the literature that is truthful about Papua New Guinea and Papua New Guineans gets no attention whatsoever. And the literature that is less truthful gets published right away. But there are other reasons as well. For example, I get promises of getting my works published, and the money is always easily found, but nothing ever materializes. I once had two volumes of poems and a novel scheduled to appear during the years 1974 to 1979. To date none of these books has appeared, and I am wondering, wrongly of course, who it is that is having a grand old time with all that money which could have been used to cover the printing costs. This is how it is done in our country. The big boys down at the Waigani offices give so much to such and such a literary organization with the message: "Right, fellas, this is your share. You have exactly twelve months to make good use of it. If by the end of that period we find that you're still sitting on it, we'll take it back. And you know what we'll do with it? We'll spend it for ya—that's wot!" Yes, it is hard to get works published in Papua New Guinea. But I feel most comfortable in sending poems and prose pieces for publication in literary magazines in Australia, where I believe literature is properly understood and appreciated. Which simply means that I cannot at this stage get a volume of verse or prose published professionally, as competition, I understand, in a predominantly English-speaking country such as Australia, is fairly high.

K.S.: What are your comments about creative writing in Papua New Guinea? Do you think it is unfortunately too self-consciously political to have any lasting significance? Do you feel that, like elsewhere in the developing countries, it is in poetry that the largest leaps have been made? Or do you feel here in Papua New Guinea it is drama which has captured the local imagination?

R.S.: I find it rather difficult to understand the nature of creative writing in Papua New Guinea. I cannot make any assessments on the quality of it, as I know a very small number of new writers and their literature. The few of my contemporaries that I have been in constant association with as literary acquaintances for the last twelve or so years do not interest me at all, nor do I interest them in any way. It seems that I carry a great bulk of prejudice of bias about me. Hence, the difficulty in deciding who is authentically a writer and who is not. Perhaps the future of good creative writing lies in the hands of those currently studying literature at the University here. But for the moment, I cannot say what direction creative writing is taking in Papua New Guinea, particularly in the genres of prose and verse. From out of the other Third World countries one hears of *Song of Lawina* hitting the Danish market via translation, or the poetry of Derek Walcott being studied in American universities. But in Papua New Guinea it is difficult to say which genre will finally catch the world's attention. Kasaipwalova's poetry certainly sold out in New York. But is Kasaipwalova himself aware that the thought content of all that prolific writing was nothing new to Western ears; that the poetry he has written was merely a footnote to the Anglophone and Francophone excitements of the 50's and 60's? And is he capable of repeating such a creative writing venture today?

Perhaps what we might be sure of here is drama, which has certainly captured the local imagination and is itself thriving as a literary genre. Nora Brash is one writer I know who is doing well in that field, along with John Kolia and others. The drama that Nora is writing now is important in that it contains comments that directly reflect the type of society modern Papua New Guinea has made itself become. We need that kind of critical approach in our creativity in order to understand the society we live in. This is precisely what Sartre means by litterature engagée. And since that literature of commitment is devoted to man in society, it serves the purpose of observing closely the things that man, as a social animal, does—what he thinks, for example, what he makes of himself, and how far he can go whilst in the process of creating and shaping the society of which he is no doubt a part. I am only glad to note that Mrs. Brash is already succeeding in helping us see ourselves and our society better from that perspective.

But apart from drama there is nothing else to turn to, in order to successfully answer the question on the *quality* of the current literature that is being produced. Are we, for example, so much engrossed in the current issues of the day that we forget true art and literature, even drama? What is the NBC trying to prove if it spends so much money, the people's tax money, on promoting the type of drama that is politically, and to some degree racially, partial and biased? These are unfortunately questions that no longer interest me, as I have long since abandoned the local literary scene and I am now searching for new horizons elsewhere.

K.S.: What made you write *Wanpis*? Did you want it to contain that philosophic vein deliberately or did the philosophy force itself upon you? Some readers say that *Wanpis* is too self-conscious a novel: would you agree? Looking

back at the novel, would you say you are happy with it? What was the most important thing you wanted to communicate through that novel? Do you feel you succeeded?

R.S.: It was loneliness, I think, that drove me to write *Wanpis*. But wait. There was something deeper than loneliness that finally compelled me—in 1975-76 when I was completing it—to want to see the novel appear in print. In the years 1970-72 I wrote plays and short stories which carried much of the philosophy that I wanted to put together in a single volume, preferably in the form of a novel, that could sum it all up. The philosophy was already there. It only needed a medium of expression or outlet, and hence my choice of the novel form. *Wanpis* is certainly too self-conscious a work to be credible, particularly to the much more mature readers from other countries. Anyone reading the novel, can quickly shut it and say, "Bullshit." But it is a first novel, mind you, and a first novel cannot successfully avoid being either too personal or self-conscious. But self-consciousness, in my opinion, observed at a very personal level—a level in which both the reader and a character are at close intimacies over a certain human meaning—is a beautiful gift for mankind. It is a rare gift but it is also as beautiful as the statues of youth were to the Ancient Greeks. It must thus be represented truthfully and existentially, as a complementary gesture of human innocence, even perfection. That in turn should enable it to become of itself a work of art. Perhaps what some readers fail to realize here, and I am simply annoyed by this, is that I have tried to represent that state of self-consciousness as consciously and existentially as possible. I wanted to include and treat it in the novel as art, as separate truth.

What did I want to communicate in this novel? As early as 1970-71 I could foresee a lot of things happening in Papua New Guinea. Some clever politician would one day, at Independence for example, get up and say, "Papua New Guinea is a multi-racial society. We are happy to be citizens of such a nation." That wouldn't be enough, of course. Something more would have to be said and thought about. Individuals such as Just Call Me Joe would have to be understood, and if possible tamed and accommodated. The white man would go his way. The Melanesian would take another direction. The cultural mixed-race (Asian? African?) would take yet another direction. Someone would be left behind to keep an eye on a few things here and there, it seems. And he would certainly feel abandoned, lonely. In that state of existential abandon, isolation, detachment, and exile, he would have no choice as a responsible human being but to endure the suffering left by these others who have fled. He would take in that suffering, become of himself that sense of emptiness which would be nothing other than that new society, that so-called happy multi-racial society. The pains, the anger, the hatred, the anguish, the vices and virtues, of that society would be his destiny, his ultimate human condition. And he would contain all these, willingly, joyfully, and with thanksgiving if he were a religious person. He would remain as accommodating as possible, at all times. Thus, the creation of the novel *Wanpis*. But I really cannot at this stage say if the novel is a success or a failure. I am less talented than I should be in looking into the mirror of my own work. Besides the book hasn't been read and criticised enough. And apart from so many printing errors and miseditings which help a lot in destroying the quality and thought content of the novel, I feel I have said what I had wanted to say.

K.S.: You have published both poetry and prose: why have you not published your plays? Are you working on more plays now? What is your current

genre? Are you working on a second novel? Do you feel that fiction has the most potential here in Papua New Guinea?

R.S.: I had abandoned writing plays as long ago as 1974 simply because no local theatre or publisher was interested in my drama any more. The producers claimed I preached too much through longish dialogues. The other thing which discouraged me from writing any more plays was the talent of the actors and actresses themselves. They could not understand my long sentences, and on top of that could hardly read and speak a line correctly in English. That was a long time ago. Nowadays they are doing well in either Pidgin or Australian. The last time I had a play produced in Port Moresby was in 1979, but that was purely out of chance and when the Chairman of the Board of Governors of the National Theatre Company wasn't looking. He later succeeded in discouraging the Director of the National Theatre Company from taking the play to South Korea, despite the fact that it had proved very popular indeed among those audiences who could think. I am in an awkwardly funny position now as a writer. I cannot get anything produced or published locally for reasons already given, along with the fact that the producers and editors themselves have that self-conscious inferiority complex about them. On this point, I am very much of the same opinion as the Kenyan writer Ngugi Wa' Thiongo who, when talking about the theatre in his own country, made the claim that the Kenyan writer was at the mercy of the amateur European producer. We too are at the mercy of the Australian and ex-Australian producers and literary experts, so called, who possess little or no talents whatsoever in recognizing a writer or an artist. But they probably have some other secret things in mind that are far removed from the world of literature and the arts. So right now I am keeping myself as far away as possible from such people.

I write poems mainly, and these get published outside Papua New Guinea. But I feel that I do better with prose than verse. Those who read my creative writing efforts think otherwise. Some say that my poems, the very recent ones, better qualify me as a writer, others say that my plays are the best; and yet others say that I express my philosophies better through prose. Right now I feel that I must have a novel published by a recognized or a professional publisher. I am working on my third novel now. It is all about Papua New Guinea's search for its own identity in the person of a certain gentleman by the name of Dasaïd.

I feel too that fiction has great potential not within Papua New Guinea itself, but from out of Papua New Guinea. That type of fiction should be existential in nature, because that is the only way Papua New Guinea as a country and a people can hope to acquire for itself the honour of being viewed and talked about enthusiastically by the outside world. Previous works of fiction on Papua New Guinea, both local and expatriate, have failed because they have looked at the country from all angles and biases but existential perspectives and perceptions. Existential literature, in my opinion, invites the reader to look deep into and at people and their civilizations with a greater sense of human understanding. It does not just tell a story then stop abruptly. It actually encourages the reader to become warm and sincere, to become less mean and more hopeful, in the act of learning about other people, other cultures. This is why I think Albert Wendt is such a success within and without the South Pacific, because rather than just presenting to us the picture of how beautiful island life is, the author takes us further into the core of what it really means to be

human within this part of the globe which, for many years, seemed to have been appearing as a cheap advertisement on someone's tourist brochure or pamphlet.

K.S.: In *Wanpis* and in several of your poems, you show a very deep-seated interest in existential philosophy: why is this so? Is there anything in your background that encourages an existentialist way of thought? Do you feel this is only a phase and you will soon get through it or do you feel existentialism is a permanent feature of your own personal philosophy?

R.S.: My interest in existentialist literature and philosophy has something to do with several things. Firstly, my childhood: I tasted the sense of aloneness, selfhood, independence, etc., at a very early age. I spent the first years of my life—from the ages of 2 or 3 to 8—in my grandmother's household, purely for traditional educational purposes, which means that I rarely visited the other members of the family in my father's household. There were the long school trips away from home from the age of nine onwards. Secondly, the schools I went to were either Church and private institutions, or geographically far removed from my native surroundings. Thirdly, the type of people I had associated myself with at these schools. At Martyrs', for example, you were automatically a man the moment you walked into the school at 13 or thereabouts. You were required to think and live that way. And you lived among priests, dedicated men and women teachers, artists, and generally Europeans of the middle and upper middle class. They taught you things, those rare things in life, which in turn enabled you to view the outside world with a greater sense of courage and confidence. Fourthly, the village environment itself. Tototo is situated in the middle of what is known as the Great Anuki Savannah. Hence, the sense of isolation, emptiness, abandon. In high savannah (kwamra), for miles around, one sees nothing but burnt out and naked trees clawing desperately for an empty sky that pays no attention whatever to all that is dead and silent beneath. And the sea merely reflects eternity, which is the sky. So when at last someone recommended Camus to me in high school, I felt pleasantly surprised and deliriously joyful. I felt that I was reading the French existentialist (in English translation) not only to learn a new idea, a new philosophy, but also to re-live what had already been my past, my inheritance as it were.

Camus' Mediterranean existentialism changed my line of thinking, particularly when my main desire in high school was to absorb as much as I could out of my literature and art courses, which were entirely Western in content. I thus regarded Trollope and particularly Conrad from a special, somewhat superior, stance. I somehow felt too that there were great similarities in Camus' and my own personality, even though he was an Algerian with European extractions and I was a black Papua New Guinean. When, for example, I learnt in 1969 that Camus had died nine years previously in a car accident I too died existentially in Melbourne. And I felt happy and proud to have 'died' in a Western City. No, I cannot do away with existentialist literature and philosophy. It is too much a part of me to be easily forgotten. And I feel much happier and at home with Camus. I read Sartre, Heidegger, Kierkegaard, Jaspers and others, but only for academic reasons. Some of the topographical aspects of the Great Anuki Savannah resemble in many ways Camus' descriptions of the Algerian scenery. This savannah in question does not end within the Anuki country itself. It spans from the border of Milne Bay and Northern provinces right down to Dogura. Burnt

sienna is the only phrase I can think of to describe that part of the world. (All that I have said here denotes a very personal reaction to existentialism. There are, of course, far greater things to learn from the Western Existentialists.)

K.S.: What are your future plans? Are you happy with the state of criticism in Papua New Guinea? Do you miss serious criticism of your work? Is your commitment to writing based on ideological considerations or on considerations of pure aesthetics? Do you think the Papua New Guinea writer in English has, really, to turn to an overseas audience for readership? Do you feel the Papua New Guinea government could do more to encourage creative expression?

R.S.: What are my future plans? I would like to go away from the country for a while. That way perhaps I might see if the literature that I am writing now is in any way important. One of my weaknesses is not being challenged enough, not being criticised enough, particularly by fellow writers. It is also true that I rarely receive serious criticism on my work from outside. And I believe the other much more serious Papua New Guinea writers face the same problem. We do, however, have a good number of expatriate critics who offer us the occasional send-up of so-and-so's work. But perhaps some serious criticism such as those offered by Dr. Nigel Krauth would help a lot in setting the whole of Papua New Guinea literature on a firmer foundation. Dr. Krauth is one remarkable writer-critic I am aware of, and a very lonely one at that, who gallantly moves from one sector of modern Papua New Guinea society to another, truthfully and honestly saying what is really valuable as a work of art and what is not. The others are simply too polite, and hence the great number of writer-friends that they have in Papua New Guinea.

On the question of philosophical or ideological literature and pure aesthetics I am rather more prone to the former. But I do realize, of course, the limitations an entirely idealistic type of writing can have, particularly in developing countries, in which case it is indeed necessary to balance the two, or to allow both to complement each other as necessary ingredients that will help offer a good read. Thus, in my prose I concentrate on existential philosophy, and in my poems I strive to entertain a more balanced approach to the two. Poems are such delicate little things in creativity that must be treated nicely and gently, all in the name of "art for art's sake".

Coming back to the more technical questions; what I think a serious Papua New Guinea writer should be keeping in mind now is where to turn to for a wider audience. Papua New Guinea is one of those small countries where the percentage of illiteracy is very high indeed. Hence, the difficulties her writers have in venturing to publish their own works locally, in order to read and criticise them in, preferably, a manner so familiar to them that it would give them the feeling that they would be indeed speaking about themselves as a culturally independent people. The Papua New Guinea government certainly helps in promoting literacy at national and provincial levels. But it should also try to understand the loneliness of the serious writer. Most Third World writers, it is true, begin by being themselves unheard of even in their own countries simply because they write in English or some other borrowed language. Then they embark on a long pilgrimage to an overseas Mecca for salvation. I see little chance of similar voyages being undertaken by even the most-talked about of our writers, something which is less pleasing to think and talk about.

R. B. SOABA

Port Moresby in High Savannah

Sun on light mist, the yellow
hills. Smoke, mucous sky.
An early riser casts
a glance at the sleeping sea
and yawns.

The day is a tired old earth
panting 80° F. The afternoon
brings in dusty wiry hair,
and stomachs that are empty.
Then dusk;
burnt sienna clouds, sky:
a solitary mud lake.

We could love this city,
a fluorescent lagoon
of suburban tropicalities:
areca drug days
bahasa sunsets;
and no betel nuts
for the gods

The fall of evening blinks out
silhouetted signs:
itambu
nogat wok

R. B. SOABA

Here

we come as our own visitor
to the sanctuary leaves that fall

gird the season red each breeze
speaks of green on silver
or moss on the moon

whispers fire in a tropical universe
Here the gods sleep
as ashes of savannah

mounds of dead dynasties
we do not attempt to change time
we are what we are & let all

still
balance the day spent

Houses Over Water

The houses of Koki stand over water,
wave after wave shaping their crooked
posts for straightness in vain.

The land is the city's.

And so are the men of Koki
employed as clerks, carpenters.

The women wade out to the deep
with nets. The children fight over
empty bottles along the seawall. Overhead,
gulls turn for the coast. A boy, seized
by the flash of wings upon the seascreen,
leaps skywards, laughing and dancing.

From the cliff tops, within the skyscraping
skeletons of the city's eye, the sea rises,
tucking the houses into the market bay.

R. B. SOABA

Before the Wall

(after reading a little of Solzhenitsyn/Soyinka)

sometimes, when perceptions
slip, slide
tilt a little
details matter more to me then

where to stand
what to face
how soon or late

to reach the end
of one more beginning
i might not utter a prayer
for every dove or hawk
that soars overhead

the finger squeezing the trigger
might show rings, cigar stains
& hair, if not memories
of a strayed handshake

& will explode colourless
in that jarring impact

Point-of-view and Consequent Naturalism in the Novels of Henry Handel Richardson

It has been said of the author of *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony* that her "great strength is her ability to enter the consciousness of her main characters and present events through their eyes."¹ Of *Maurice Guest*, another critic has remarked: "The one literary device common to fiction of the period which is missing from the novel is authorial intervention." Richardson's husband, Professor J. G. Robertson, said of this same novel, that the "technique of *Maurice Guest*, the disappearance of the creator behind his creations, was strangely foreign to us. . . ."² Furthermore, Professor Robertson states of Richardson's characters, that "If these people live a more real life than those of most books of our time, it is due, in no small part, to those foreign influences under which the writer began her career."³

Indeed, Henry Handel Richardson represents a particular kind of novel writing that had begun already with Flaubert, who, so to say, had left the stage to his characters and their world; his characters think and speak for themselves as if they were independent of their author. As Richardson's husband has remarked, something of her manner can be found already with Jane Austen; and this is even more so with Henry James. In Germany, at the time of Richardson's stay there, Spielhagen, quoted in *Maurice Guest*, had argued for the objectivity of the novelist, for a kind of dramatic illusion created by withdrawal of the author. This illusion is well demonstrated by Dorothy Green's examples of dramatic skill in Richardson, where according to Green, "emblematic gestures" create drama and a sense of real present unmediated by the author. This exclusion of elements referring to the author, the dominance of setting, of reflected awareness, and, chiefly, the location of the point-of-view each time in the consciousness of one of the novel's characters, results in a basic change of the reader's perspective, compared to an authorial novel, say one by Dickens. For the reader now appears to be confronted directly by the world presented, without the guidance and comment of the author. Or, as Professor Robertson noted of *Maurice Guest's* critical reception, what was "felt to be missing was the personal note of the author, the sympathetic appreciation of the good and the virtuous and the emphatic repudiation of the evil and the vicious. We have always expected our writers to throw in their weight unequivocally with the moral order of the world."⁴ But this absence of authorial guidance can also be seen as a gain in characterisation and in engagement of the reader's own judgment: Dorothy Green suggests, "The very fact that readers take sides with Richard or Mary, Maurice or Louise, as though they were real people, testifies to the success of her characterisation."⁵ The reader believes himself to be transposed into a character, to be looking at the world through the eyes of this character, to participate in the thoughts and feelings of

the character. Naturally, those characters whose minds are opened to the reader in this way have a privileged position in the novel; they are the ones who dominate, who are almost always present, like Maurice Guest and Mahony, and they take up the interest of the reader far more than do the other characters. This type of novel disguises the mediated character of its invention by an appearance of objective immediacy. These personal mediators of the author determine the point-of-view from which the reader is to perceive events; their reactions already contain implicitly an analysis and commentary on these events, and they thereby take over functions of the author in other forms of the novel, say of the authorial commentator or the first-person narrator. The reader thus needs to ask about these characters, . . . about their trustworthiness as representatives of a world view. For they are a kind of optical lens provided by the author. We might ask why is it not possible to present this lens, say Mahony or Mary, solely by their actions alone, without copying their words. This of course can be done, but an ideological world different to that of the author cannot be adequately expressed without, as it were, letting it express itself in its own words. The degree of difference here can range from that of Richard Mahony, greatly verbalised and given much space, to that of minor characters, who hardly come to word at all. The acts of Mahony are always ideologically emphasised: he lives and deals in his own world and not in the unified epic world of *The Fortunes*; he has his own knowledge of the world, embodied in his acts and speech. Likewise with Mary, and to a lesser degree with other characters. The point-of-view each time shifts; it is fragmented and hence implies dissolution of the work as a whole, unless there is another, covert point-of-view from which we sense a unity underlying these separate selves.

When authorial presence is excluded from the novel and the perspectives presented are solely those of the fictional characters, a position is reached that brings to mind the Perspectivism of Friedrich Nietzsche. It appears to be more than coincidence that Richardson's particular use of point-of-view should have emerged at the same time as Nietzsche's analysis. Undoubtedly, there is a whole complex of social and intellectual factors operative here. Both A. D. Hope⁶ and Dorothy Green⁷ have given considerable attention to Nietzsche's bearing on Richardson. Vincent Buckley⁸ too has noted a Nietzschean presence in Richardson. Nevertheless, none of these critics has noted the fundamental affinity between Nietzsche's Perspectivism and Richardson's technique of point-of-view. Professor Hope complains, for instance, that Schilsky in *Maurice Guest* is seen "only from the point of view of his fellow students" and Green comments here that "Richardson is just as non-committal about Louise," that Richardson shows Louise from various points-of-view and endorses none of these, and Professor Robertson remarks that "*Maurice Guest* offers no hint of what its author thinks about her unhappy lovers; or on what side her sympathies lie. It is all so heartlessly impersonal, objective. . . ."; the point here being that from a Nietzschean perspective there are *only particular* perspectives, or points-of-view; there is no true or privileged point-of-view.⁹ In Nietzsche's view, there are no facts, only points-of-view, interpretations from a perspective. An authorial perspective has no privileged place, even though the author may use every device to impose it on the reader. Suppression of the authorial point-of-view forces the reader to bring the points-of-view of characters into the unity of his own perspective. Hence, the increased sense of realism attendant on experiencing Richardson's fictional events through "the consciousness of her main characters" is met by ambiguity and variety of interpretation by readers, analogous to the historical increase in autonomy and plurality of individuality in real life. As Professor Robertson remarked of his wife, "Nor did Victorians ever stand so amorally 'beyond Good and Evil' as this modern writer."¹⁰ Plainly, there must be a limit to the distinction

of point-of-view presented each time, particularly in the context of reception dominated by traditional expectations of organic unity of a work; otherwise the work will be perceived as fragmented. The process of authorial "de-construction" of her characters' point-of-view, that is arrangements for the mutual undercutting of say Maurice's and Louise's, or Mahony's and Mary's points-of-view, must yield to an overall unity suggested to the reader.

That *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony* has not escaped this danger of fragmentation is suggested by critical reception at the time, as cited by Leonie Kramer: *The Way Home* was seen as "a thick crumby slice of life, but no story;" Mahony was dismissed, for the author "... has lost all control of his hero . . . it is difficult to believe he has taken any trouble to arrange his thoughts or construct his character. . . ."¹¹ But, as we know, much of this was made good in 1929, when the third and final volume appeared, revealing the overall design of a work, in which the first two volumes were only contributing parts. However, possibly the majority of critics still see the work as an intermediate case, that is as structured in general outline but with much arbitrary material. At the one extreme, Dorothy Green, for instance, is of the view that "Every detail in the book can be shown to bear on these themes. . . ." that is on "the historical image of the gold miner, but also on the image of gold as a symbol of psychic wholeness and health, and finally on the biological interaction between permanence and change, replication and mutation."¹² Leonie Kramer, on the other hand, and more representative of critical consensus, notes the organisation of detail, how the detail is "controlled by a strict design, and used to exemplify a point of view,"¹³ but also notes the presence of material that "does not seem justified by the relatively small gain in knowledge of his [Mahony's] character."¹⁴ And Richardson herself has said that character is her chief concern in novel writing: "I never cease to believe that character-drawing is its main end and object, the conflict of personalities its drama."¹⁵

Indeed, the particular advantage of Richardson's style, of what, in her European context must be called "consequent naturalism," is its ability to create a sense of the unmistakable individuality of the consciousness of her figures. The whole tendency of her particular kind of Naturalism, of what her husband called "that naturalism which dominated European letters at the close of the last century"¹⁶ or what James Joyce called "that tide which had advanced from Flaubert through [Jens Peter] Jacobson to [Gabriele] D'Annunzio,"¹⁷ is towards the drama of consciousness, the experience of the inner life, reflected in a seemingly unmanaged way and without authorial comment. In the development of this form in Europe, we find that it is the close and fitting form for the new material of the times, that is the consciousness itself, and the unconscious. The form is suited less for outer events, wars, adventures, and more to the inner life; outer events, as with *The Fortunes*, are largely of a daily, banal kind that function as setting for images of the consciousness of characters.

An essential feature of Consequent Naturalism is the so-called *Sekundenstil* (second-by-second style) noted by Dorothy Green and defined by her as "the minute notation of trains of thought." Green states that "The similarities with Richardson's practice are obvious enough."¹⁸ Although the method is associated with the German authors, Arno Holz and Johannes Schlaf, co-authors of *Papa Hamlet*, mentioned in *Maurice Guest*, they themselves first presented their work as Norwegian, to gain acceptance with the German public, because of the enthusiasm for the North, the "Norwegerei" of the time.

It is of interest that another young Melbourne authoress had preceded Richardson in her tastes for Scandinavian literature. Mary Chavelita Dunne, who wrote under the pseudonym of George Egerton, was born in Melbourne in 1859. She had written *Keynotes* (1893) and *Discords* (1894), both published in London, had gone to Norway for two years, learned the language, translated, not J. P.

Jacobsen's *Niels Lyhne*, as did Richardson, but Knut Hamsun's *Hunger*; she had also read Ibsen, Bjørnsen and others, as did Richardson. She was enthralled by the then virtually unknown Scandinavian realists. In the 1983 introduction to her works, Martha Vicinus writes of George Egerton and these realists: "From them she absorbed the value of describing the minutiae of the moment—the tiny seemingly irrelevant impressions that remain after emotionally important events . . ."¹⁹

Whatever the provenance of the manner, it is present in Richardson, and, since it devotes space to the depiction of the moment, it naturally has consequences for the treatment of larger intervals of time: the time-scale is presented differently to that in earlier kinds of naturalistic novel. Instead of a large span of time being more or less steadily traversed, we have indeed a long time, some quarter of a century in the case of *The Fortunes*, but the greater part of this time is traversed quickly, compared to certain inner moments, which are expanded on. In *The Fortunes*, about two-thirds of this time is covered in the first volume, which is "largely concerned with what the aesthetics of realism called *milieu*," while the remaining third is traversed in two further volumes, in which "the *milieu* falls away, and the individual human fates usurp its place, just as had been the case in *Maurice Guest*."²⁰ Within the limits of publishing space, the two aspects of time, quality of the moment, that is the simultaneous presence of various factors, and chronological duration, mutually compete for place. The turning inward, particularly to the inner world of Mahony, precludes a full account of the outer world of events. Accordingly, these events tend to break in inexplicably on the consciousness described. This relative lack of attention to the outer world is matched by a freedom with time in inner life: a large span of time can pass in inner life, while clock-time advances little, or appreciable time can be taken up by rumination, or a moment can be dilated on at length. A danger accompanying this style is that a paucity of outer events may weary the reader and lead to judgments, as has happened, that the work is tedious, "has no story". To avoid monotony, skill is needed in establishing connections, repetition of motives, leading almost to a story within the story, or to the suggestion of analogies between the world of Mahony's consciousness and a containing myth. One thing we do not find as allowed by the style of *The Fortunes* is any humorous play with the reader's illusions, any light-hearted, liberating play between the levels of reality and fiction. This suggests a more general feature of Naturalism and incidentally brings to mind the anti-naturalistic Foreword to the May, 1923 issue of the Australian magazine *Vision*: "unless gaiety is added to realism, the pestilence of Zola or the barometer ataxia of Flaubert must finally attack the mind." At no point does Richardson wish to emancipate us from identification with her characters and their world. In this sense, *The Fortunes* is not a novel, that is fiction; rather it is life itself. Or, as Professor Robertson remarks, "*Richard Mahony* is stripped of all semblance to the arbitrary happenings of a novel."²¹ *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony* does not narrate a story, instead reality is presented in scenes, in the consciousness of characters, to persuade the reader of its realism. Ultimately, this approach is of course a design on the reader, to produce in him the illusion of realism by rhetorical device.

The author has conceived the novel, selected, arranged, structured the elements of the whole so as to present an impression that is not planned but taken from life itself. Hence the confusion in criticism, between reality of depiction and the palpable fact of artistic design in the work. It would seem that both Professor Robertson and Dorothy Green wish to have it both ways, that the novel is both a clear mirror of life and highly designed in every detail. Which is to attempt the reification of a contradiction. The actual world and the world of a novel are two fundamentally opposed things. The novel must be planned backwards, from its result to its beginning, even if this is only sensed, not drafted in detail, and then

the novel must be written forwards, from its premonitory beginning, as in the Proem, but so as to appear real, that is not like a fiction. For this purpose, every natural-looking aid is required, even great detail in incidental matters to increase the sense of nature and veil the unavoidable use of artifice. Without this pathos of the real, this kind of novel could not attain its humanitarian effect. Like a documentary program of present times, it takes us into the life of Mahony and shows us closely how it is with him. This style of novel, of Consequent Naturalism, in which realism is pursued by focus on subjective impressions, without overt authorial presence, favours central characters who are not positive heroes in the old sense but conflicted natures, who thereby have the complexity and stress of inner life that favours the method. That is the method and its type of central character are mutually conditioning. Having practised the method already on *Maurice Guest*, Richardson can be seen from this perspective as conditioned in her choice of Richard Mahony and motivated to shape this character away from the relatively healthy model of her father, toward the type of nervous temperament favoured by this phase of European literature. This nervous temperament has been projected all the more effectively where it might be least expected and recognised, even by the fictional character himself, namely onto an Irish migrant medical practitioner in Australia, at a time when Consequent Naturalism, Impression, Aestheticism and the *Fin-de-Siecle* had not yet been heard of.

If "Richard Mahony is the first substantial character in Australian fiction,"²² his character and the novelist's treatment of it nevertheless hardly allow us to categorise *The Fortunes* as a novel of character. It is interesting, that a year before the appearance of *Ultima Thule*, in 1929, Edwin Muir's *The Structure of the Novel* appeared, in which Muir offers three principal types of classification for novels: novel of character, dramatic novel, and chronicle. Whereas Muir's typical "novel of character" includes much of the world and direct its gaze steadily outwards onto political and social reality (he mentions *Vanity Fair* as typical), so that the already formed and relatively static main character can reveal his nature by active engagement, the "dramatic novel" in contrast (typically limits its world narrowly about its characters, even if this world determines character and events. A much stronger mutual dependence exists in this latter kind of novel, between events and character, than in the first kind; one event leads consequentially to another, everything points to a logical conclusion of the problem of character, the meaning is fulfilled in time, whereas, according to Muir, a novel of character finds its development essentially in breadth of action, in space. From the viewpoint of this typology, it would seem that Muir confirms Dorothy Green's view of *The Fortunes* as essentially a dramatic novel, not a novel of character, even if a type of character is treated at length in it.

Certainly, as already mentioned, the chief characters in Consequent Naturalism are often, as with Mahony and Maurice Guest, rather ordinary people, even unprepossessing and unattractive. Because of their literary treatment, however, the reader's attention to them grows: at first Mahony engages us but little; but the more the reader is compelled to put himself in Mahony's place, the more inclined he becomes to extend sympathy or at least understanding to this figure. Whether this sympathy can extend with the reader to the view that, yes, Mahony is *universally* representative, is a matter for a reader survey. Here, it would seem best if the author preserved what her husband has called her "rigorous and self-suppressing objectivity."²³ But it is precisely her defects of rigour here that unsettle the critics. Jennifer Dallimore for instance does not expect the author to answer problems raised by Mahony's fate and is disturbed that answers are nevertheless attempted. She notes²⁴ that the author's objectivity is marred by an uncertain blending with the viewpoint of her characters: "Part of the difficulty is that the narrative has a disconcerting habit of drifting, taking on, without

warning, the characteristic idiom of the character it discusses," and this same critic also notes that what is perhaps the most important preoccupation of the novel, namely "the question of suffering and the very meaning of human life itself," is met by the author's hint of answers that "are only ineffectual gestures in the face of a problem that is 'great' certainly, but which demands intellectual and imaginative resources far greater than Richardson shows us."²⁵ It seems that Richardson's departure from objectivity, her too obtrusive guide to the reader, or simply carelessness in letting her own interpretation show, has brought a severe judgment upon her. Here, the defects of an intermediate position are shown, that is the remnants of the authorial novel present in a work of consequent naturalism behave like a playwright who peeps out from the wings and engages in his own creation, disturbing the focus of the spectator. Without this authorial presence, the explicitly presented world of values in *The Fortunes* becomes wholly identical with those worlds of the specific characters in the novel, which make no claim to more general validity. The reader is thus freed to think for himself, though it is unlikely ever, given the selective and formative process of art, that implicit prompting by the author will not have effect. It is a question of relative success in creating the illusion of unmediated reality.

More than the typical Naturalist novel, *The Fortunes* has gone further towards objectivity in mimetic and dramatic presentation, so that its readers become more like the audience of a stage-play, are relatively free of authorial direction and so more independent in response. It seems that criticism sets in where the author departs from this style suggested by her novel as a whole, where her material is more than necessary to establish this objectivity, where her blurring of distinction between narrator and character points-of-view suggests authorial intrusion, where sentimentality and clichés suggest authorial values, where encumbered style inefficiently mediates action and hence calls attention to itself and its author, where lack of tautness in dramatic structure diffuses the reader's attention and returns him to the author's world instead of absorbing him in that which she is mediating; for it is the paradox of a novel that would present reality that it must give no hint that this reality is mediated through the subjectivity of its author. If *The Fortunes* suggests that it is a reproduction of reality, in which "everything . . . takes its place, inexorably as in life itself,"²⁶ then it also opposes itself when it fails to reproduce this reality free of its narrator's philosophical and moral sentiments. Here, the irony that has been noted in incidental repetitions in the novel could surely have been applied to advantage following authorial judgments suggesting universality.

It is an assumption in criticism that *The Fortunes* has its base and its object firmly in "life" and can therefore be understood in terms of experience, psychology, world-view, awareness of the human condition, spirituality, historical grasp, biography, love, fate, etc. Perhaps it is not inappropriate here to think of Roland Barthe's "probability critic," who tests a work for probability of conformity to life, as judged by the critic himself. As opposed to this approach, the artificiality of *The Fortunes* is hardly mentioned. The conflict to be sensed between the view of the novel as authentic reproduction of reality on the one hand and its author's "control over response to Mahony's defeat," on the other, is not brought out. How are these two factors to be reconciled? While a great deal of attention is given to the author's psychological interest in herself, her family and origins, in its bearing on her material, this attention does not go so far as to consider that the whole process of selection, presentation and co-ordination of presumed images of reality is a projection of need. While it is true that criticism has suggested that Richardson followed a kind of psychotherapy in *Ultima Thule*, and that in following "the tyranny of organisation" there is an "inextricable linking of physiological, psychological and metaphysical factors

omnipresent in her work,"²⁷ there is no real attention given to the status of these presentations as *reality*, although the novel is said to be one of realism. We may well ask then the general question of what has the so-called realist novel got to do with reality. Richardson, in her formative years in Germany, where she spent some 16 years of her life till the age of 34 years, was very much aware of the literary struggle for realism.

The objectivity and impassivity that Zola, like Flaubert, demanded of the author in mediating a realistic view are precisely the qualities that *The Oxford History of Australian Literature* ascribes to Richardson: "Richardson is . . . the doyen of realism in Australian fiction, scrupulously objective and impassive . . ."²⁸ However, though we find much of Zola's principles in her work, that is biologism, determinism, physiological concepts, the theory of temperaments, study of nervous disease, extensive documentation as a basis, we find also the consequences of the historical dilemma of this kind of realism: the impossibility of truly objective presentation of the social order, because of the inevitable subjectivism of deciding a "correct" view in a society divided by conflicting interests. In Richardson's case, it appears that this dilemma, prominent in literary thought at her time, is met by setting her story well back before her own years and remote from her own situation, and also by a progressive blending out of the social factor; the effect is of realism, but the remove is such that comparison with reality is not easily available to the reader. It was already noted in Richardson's time that Zola's method led to an impasse and repetition, that the objective world and subjective life tended to break apart, a feature already noted by Flaubert and the Goncourt brothers, which is also paralleled by *The Oxford History of Australian Literature*: "The most evident limitation of *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony* is in momentary failure of the imagination. The particularities of the landscape remain authentic, but may not consort with the inner reality of character. . . ."²⁹ It is here that Richardson shows response to Scandinavian literature, particularly J. P. Jacobsen, and the style of German Consequent Naturalism represented by Arno Holz, whose influential work *Papa Hamlet. Ein Tod*, mentioned by Richardson in her *Maurice Guest*, first appeared in Leipzig the year before Richardson arrived there, presented as though it were the work of a Norwegian author, Bjarne Holmsen.

Arno Holz, in his *Laws of Art*,³⁰ believed that the inherent law of literature was its will-to-nature, to actuality; complete presentation of reality, of the objective world, was its basic aim. But for Holz, Zola had not gone far enough: subjective life was reality too, it conditioned perception of the social milieu, therefore the author should become scrupulously objective and impassive in the recording of her characters' experience, even second by second, showing art, not as life mediated by the temperament of the author, but through the temperaments of the characters in the novel. Comparison of a Zola novel with Richardson's *Fortunes* would illustrate the point.

This development towards realism, termed "consequent naturalism" at the time, implicitly accentuates the problem of formal organisation of material. The chief factor which distinguishes a literary work of art from reportage or documentation, including detailed description of subjectivity, is aesthetic form, the overall organisation of its material. Indeed, the distinction between life and art resides there. If the novel of realism, in the interest of truth-to-reality, were to give up its form, its designs on the reader, it would cease to be literature, a situation which is blurred over in the modern semiotic approach to "text," and which appears to have been at the base of Soviet dislike of Formalism; that is reflection on the role of form in the literary depiction of reality suggests emancipation from the literary illusion, breaking the literary spell and awakening inquiry into the causes of its effects. The presumed analogy between art and life becomes questionable when

attention is directed to what makes them mutually exclusive. The quest for realism in literature already assumes a division between literature and life. The overcoming of this division, entailing the elimination of the overall form or myth of the work, is tantamount to the destruction of the novel. If this end is to be averted and Art saved, then the artificiality of the novel, its fictional character, must be fully accepted.

Would it be going too far to suggest that these ideas bear on Richardson's novel *The Young Cosima*, published in 1939, ten years after *The Fortunes* was completed? In this novel, the documentation of reality is taken to the point of giving an appendix of "Sources and Authorities." Nevertheless, though the authority of life is imported into the novel, and reproduction of the banal, even vulgar idiom of its historical characters, and a lack of "unifying imaginative vision"³¹ suggest a step towards the style-less character of reality itself, the author, as it were, recoils from the brink of precipitation down into this artless reality by choosing as subject matter the artistic life itself, artistic genius, the special life of its devotees. Indeed, there is considerable play in this novel on the notion of Art as curse, as imperious dominator of life. A paradox emerges here when the *Oxford History* observes: "The novel is defeated by its own premise. Cosima and Hans Bulow, Liszt and Wagner, all sacrifice their life to Art, and the consequence is that the novel itself loses the sense of life."³² It seems that the author has gone over the border: instead of a view of life through the stylised lens of Art, we have here a view of Art from an unstyled perspective outside of it. The blurring of the language of the narrator with that of her characters, presumably in the interests of realism, and a counter tendency towards the romantic suggested by a novelese of popular romances, do nothing to retrieve the situation. Instead, it shows on looking back over Richardson's career, that the tendency to reality is fraught with artistic peril. *Maurice Guest*, 1908, most clearly a fiction out of Richardson's novels, is formally the most successful of her works, even if its subject matter, the Leipzig musical bohemia, is of less national importance than *The Fortunes*. *The Young Cosima*, on the other hand, is the novel most overtly based on reality and also the least artistically successful of her works.

It is worth noting in this development that while subjectivity is treated objectively in *Maurice Guest*, with a relatively clear distinction of presented subjectivity in each figure, this is less so in *The Fortunes*, and even less in *The Young Cosima*, where there is a marked confusion of objective and subjective. If the realist wants to shape the experiences of her individual figures authentically she must submit herself to the inherent logic of realism, which at least is a relation between the individual as experiencing subject and the world as experienced object: her presentation is realistic when it presents the concrete experience of individuals. But it is plain that this relation to reality is mediated via experience, hence is no longer reality as such but merely an individually experienced reality. The narrator is always someone who has had an experience, that is the subjective factor is present in individuality. But when the experience of the narrator contains the experience of another figure, the role of the narrator changes almost automatically to this figure and leads to a logical contradiction in the technique of narration; it appears impossible to ever realise fully the will-to-realism; the subjective factor is discovered all the more clearly by striving for realism in art. There is a parallel here, not only with the progressive blurring of authorial and figural points-of-view in Richardson, but with the growing dominance of the subjective factor as content of narration: Mahony's inner life and then Art, as realities separate from the world.

This is a perhaps round-about way of saying what happens when the naturalistic novel leaves the world out of account, that is when those factors detested by critics of Naturalism, the unsavoury class of economic and social interests, are

passed over in favour of the dramas of Art, Love, Ideals and the inner life. The leading critics of Richardson's day did not like the "naturalistic school." Edmund Gosse, who wrote the introduction to Richardson's translation of *Niels Lyhne*, said of this school, that "in their sombre, grimy, and dreary studies in pathology, clinical bulletins of a soul dying of atrophy, we may see what the limits are of realism. . ."³³ Frederick William Farrar, Dean of Canterbury, spoke of "that leprous naturalism which disgusts every honourable reader in the works of Zola and his school."³⁴ Robert Louis Stevenson said of Zola, that "To afford a popular flavour and attract the mob, he adds a steady current of what I may be allowed to call the rancid. . ."³⁵ Even Richardson's husband approved of his wife's abandoning "a too consistently unsympathetic depiction of 'things as they are,'"³⁶ which marked the naturalistic doctrine toward the end of last century. Professor Robertson's remarks, that *Maurice Guest* is "the end and summary of the movement of which it is part," might be extended to Richardson's work as a whole. The paradox of her realism is that, setting out in a guise of fidelity to history, it comes to reject historicity for the sake of a putatively timeless subjectivity, only to be marked thereby as all the more characteristic of her times.

NOTES:

1. Dorothy Green: *Ulysses Bound—Henry Handel Richardson and her fiction*, A.N.U., Canberra 1973, p. 384.
2. J. G. Robertson: The Art of Henry Handel Richardson, in Henry Handel Richardson: *Myself When Young*, Heinemann, Melbourne, 1948, p. 159.
3. p. 210.
4. p. 159
5. Green, p. 384.
6. A. D. Hope: Henry Handel Richardson's *Maurice Guest*, *Meanjin Quarterly*, No. 2, 1955.
7. Green, pp. 173-217.
8. Vincent Buckley: *Henry Handel Richardson*, O.U.P., Melbourne, 1970.
9. Of the various sources that might be quoted, both from Nietzsche and his commentators, the chapter on "Perspectivism", in Arthur C. Danto: *Nietzsche as Philosopher*, Macmillan, New York, 1965, is suggested as convenient orientation.
10. Robertson, p. 208.
11. Leonie Kramer, Introduction to Henry Handel Richardson: *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony*, Australia Felix, Penguin 1981, p. v.
12. Green, p. 385.
13. Kramer, p. xxi.
14. p. xiv.
15. p. xxvi.
16. Robertson, p. 163.
17. *The Critical Writings of James Joyce*, ed. Ellsworth Mason and Richard Ellmann, New York 1959, p. 70.
18. Green, p. 47.
19. In, George Egerton: *Keynotes and Discords*, Virago Press, London, 1983, p. xii.
20. Robertson, p. 180.
21. p. 209.
22. Kramer, p. xxvi
23. Robertson, p. 206.
24. Jennifer Dallimore: The Fortunes of Richard Mahony, in *Australian Literary Criticism*, ed. Grahame Johnston, O.U.P., Melbourne 1962, p. 155.
25. p. 153.
26. Robertson, pp. 209-210.
27. Green, p. 295.
28. *The Oxford History of Australian Literature*, ed. Leonie Kramer, O.U.P. Melbourne 1981, p. 96.
29. p. 94.
30. Arno Holz: *Die Kunst. Ihr Wesen und ihre Gesetze*, Berlin 1891.
31. *The Oxford History of Australian Literature*, p. 96.

32. p. 95
33. Edmund Gosse: The Limits of Realism in Fiction, *The Forum*, New York, June 1890, pp. 391-400.
34. Frederic William Farrar, in *The Contemporary Review*, No. 56, September 1889, pp. 370-380, in a review of George Gissing's *The Netherworld* published in the same year.
35. Robert Louis Stevenson: A Note on Realism, in *Magazine of Art*, No. 7, 1883-84, pp. 24-28, quoted from *The Works of Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed., with notes, by Edmund Gosse, London 1907, XV, pp. 262-268.
36. Robertson, p. 209.

JOHN HEYWOOD

Lucretia

for Vanessa

still shackled to our moorings
dragging ankles in a brown river

there is a
recurring vision
of permanence

though we still catch
the ripples of passing
boats

MICHAEL DUGAN

Spin any coin

1.

The small house is quiet
after the weekend, and Monday's round.
Tired, still irritated by the boss's words,
he can hardly bother opening a can;
stares dully at the drab kitchen
as he stirs the saucepan and then,
still standing, spoons its contents to his mouth.
Leaving the saucepan to the sink,
he throws himself into a chair
in the cold and silent lounge
and sits, staring at emptiness.
By now the kids will be dressed for bed,
fed and bathed, the day's events discussed
by the old home's cheerful fire.
There will be laughter, a game before bedtime;
he misses them most the day after.
He reaches for the winecask on the mantelpiece,
the half-feared proof against his loneliness.

2.

The children have been difficult today,
brat-like and tiresome,
always the way the first day after
the weekend with their father.
It's easy to give them a fun-filled time
for two short days of the long fortnight,
then shrug them off to the routine world,
and dull discipline of home and school.
Already the gloss has started to go
from her two quiet days of cleaning;
today the school complained of her son,
the teacher in tones she found condemning
suggesting she should have left it longer
before resuming her part-time job.
'Emotional support'—the words ring harshly,
how long can you give without receiving?
The fire's gone out and Lee-Anne is screaming;
she never was good with fires
and wonders now about children.
Rising wearily to her feet,
she pictures orgies in that small house
whose door, twice monthly, encloses her kids.

MARGARET SCOTT

Walking to Cape Raoul

The track starts in a pig-yard
picking its way through the rank, mealy stink
of flap-eared sows with long cannibal grins.
We climb the hill that stands in the farm's sight,
wearing about its shoulder skies, weathers, seasons
the farmer's wife knows like the feel of flour.
Then the track falters in reeds and pocked mud,
and the forest steps close.
Darkness peeps through the legs
of its towering guard as we flounder and point.
There's a faded plastic pennant nailed to a tree:
"To Cape Raoul". It has the malicious look
of a bad joke, pointing away from the cleared land
and familiar beasts.
But we move in under the still gums
and take it steadily, slogging along
as rain begins outside, patterning down banks,
catching at spiny ti-tree, clambering over logs
slippery as black butter, mooching down lost paths
with the wet brushing our shoulders and soaking our boots,
until at last there's a gleam of sun on a broad slope
of bracken and scattered bull oaks.
We can stroll and take the view
of mountain, cloud and wooded hill we've climbed.
And then the ground stops, sheered off clean
in cliff plummetting down three-hundred feet
to slow, slavering waves.
One moment you might be looking round for the dog,
or saying, "We ought to have our picnic here",
and the next you'd be in another element, flailing ungainly air
down a long exploding scream past streaking rock.
My daughter is unperturbed, accustomed at ten years old
to mirrors and secret doorways that open on new dimensions.
She tugs my hand, impatient to move on.
Close by the waiting forest breathes its dank scent
of a million years' decay. We take up our packs
to walk through green fronds sprouting in rotted wood.

ELLY McDONALD

Janie

Janie is a sea-monster
On the beach, they don't know yet
A serpent in the brine, green-eyed and unholy
She cuts breakers down to size and devours
the shore with each wave. She slashes
bitter salt-whips across the bone-white flesh of the
sand. She smashes
fists of glass; they shatter they pierce callous shrapnel
assassin blades of foam
Janie threshes barbed, brutal coils
causing dangerous rips, gouging depth out of
shallow. The froth, a frenzy of jade
Sun-plated, chill as armour and rage
She's a deep-sea dragon, malice embodied
She is vengeful
The wrath of the excluded, elemental
force. Like an agent of retribution
She eyes the beach-towels, beach-balls, umbrellas
all the people in all the lycra-bright colours
judgemental
Janie in the ocean

CAROLE WILKINS

Laser

The steel man is lying near you
Immersed in some faraway design

Impulsively you reach out to touch him
He sees your fingers on his arm

And a beam pours from his eye
Burns a hole in your frozen hand

Shocked, you shrink back, move away
Light softens links—they melt

His space returned the machine shuts down
Quickly he re-enters his unbuilt city

BRUCE BENNETT

Concepts of ‘the West’ in Canadian and Australian Literary Studies*

Orthodox definitions of ‘region’ stress its earthbound solidity. Thus the OED definition: ‘a large tract of land; a country; a more or less defined portion of the earth’s surface, now especially as distinguished by certain natural features, climatic conditions, a special fauna or flora, or the like’. Figurative extensions are of ‘a place, state or condition, having a certain character or subject to certain influences; the sphere or realm of something’. In applying these concepts to literature, and literary study, some commentators have been earthbound and literal, stressing the relationship of certain writers to a defined portion of the earth’s surface, while others have flown higher, wings testing the metaphoric atmosphere. Most, though, have observed a ‘character’ to their region or its special subjectivity to certain influences or conditions. The observers may be native sons or daughters or migratory birds; they have in common an interest in place, though from different vantage points.

Yet place has seldom been rated highly in literary critical discourse, where it is generally relegated to minor status beside considerations of plot, theme, style, character, or time. This is in spite of Eudora Welty’s argument that place, “the named, identified, concrete, exact and exacting . . . gathering-spot of all that has been felt”¹ is often the essence of a story, as of a poem, or play. Furthermore, the analysis of a single writer’s, or a group of writers’ relationship to a physical and social environment can provide revealing insights into the creative spirit at work. What then is the barrier to this kind of regional study? I would suggest that the chief obstacle is a powerful orthodoxy, expressed by Wellek and Warren, that “most of the writings on regionalism amount to no more than the expression of pious hopes, local pride, and resentment of centralizing powers”,² and that the study is consequently hardly worth pursuing. This view is often accompanied by the notion that to study a writer’s relationship to place is a non-literary undertaking. In Australia, Leonie Kramer has declared that “however strong a writer’s local attachments . . . he is also the inheritor of a literary as well as an historical experience. The pressure of literary and cultural tradition is towards the archetypal”³. This kind of statement can be interpreted as discouragement of allegedly ‘lower level’ analysis of a writer’s geographical and social environment and its uses in fiction.

Challenges to the validity of regional literary studies seem to have had less influence in Canada and the United States, where much interesting research has

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been done. Nevertheless in Australia, a national project commenced in 1983 by the Association for the Study of Australian Literature is concerned with the compilation of a Literary Guide to Australia,⁴ which involves a close investigation of place references in authors' work and their biographical connections with Australian places, and this has stimulated a renewed attention to regional literary studies.⁵ As the author of some tentative forays into this field I am interested in the problems and possibilities which North American studies of regionalism have revealed and their implications for Australian researchers. The obvious place for me to focus, as a dweller in Perth and editor of a journal called *Westerly*, is on western regional studies in North America.

The idea of the west, and the notion of an east-west axis, has a long history of symbolic usage. From John Donne's poem *Riding Westward* to Malcolm Bradbury's novel *Stepping Westward* is a long jump. But inherent in each, and in most of the prolific journey motif literature which employs a symbolic east-west axis is a notion of change, of movement towards death, or more abundant life. Margaret Atwood's poem 'Migration : C.P.R.' summarises a persistent myth and puts her own stamp upon it:

Escaping from allegories
in the misty east, where inherited events
barnacle on the mind . . .

and language is the law

we ran west

wanting a place of absolute
unformed beginning . . .⁶

Atwood's scepticism will not allow her to accept the possibility of rebirth, but the West does provide a qualified new start: it is a place where unpacking can begin. In Western Australian writer William Grono's poem 'The Way We Live Now'⁷ his persona is an inhabitant of the west who *has* completely unpacked, but who, in his vacancy and inertia subverts popular images of America's Cup winners, thrusting millionaire businessmen or official slogans for the West as a "State of Excitement".

. . . We are, we often feel, living
on the edge of something good.

Nothing disturbs us.

Winds from Africa and Indian waves
bear each day to our long white shore
only what we most admire : fashions,
technology, and rich strangers as neat as
beetles who smile at our
simple friendliness.

Yes, we like it here.

Sometimes the shrewdest of us find the time,
after the gardening, before television,
sipping beer on enclosed verandahs,
to speculate on the future.

Grono is well aware of the irony of his west (he quotes the *Odyssey*, Book 4 in his epigraph), as Atwood is of hers. Each makes ironic reference to a common

expectation of the west, that it should be an agent of new and liberating experience perhaps rebirth of the spirit. Their ironic use of traditional connotations of the west is a sign of their contemporaneity, as is perhaps their refusal to completely undermine those assumptions, or hopes.

Academic studies of the West have generally taken a different tack. They are chiefly concerned with establishing patterns of image and theme in the literature which will help to define the region. In some studies the geographical region is foregrounded, and descriptive references stressed, while in others the literature is given close analysis in its own right.

The first question that arises from these studies of the west are: West of what? How far west? In short, where is the west? The first of the book-length Canadian studies, novelist and critic Edward McCourt's *The Canadian West in Fiction* (1949) is uncompromising. The west is the prairie provinces, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Alberta: "regional unity begins near Kenora and ends in the foothills [of the Rockies] . . . To the native of the prairies Alberta is the far west; British Columbia the near east".⁸ Later books on prairie fiction by Laurence Ricou⁹ and Dick Harrison¹⁰ accept this geographic definition, though they are usually more careful to avoid McCourt's capitalised East-West dichotomy, preferring to focus on the significant novels of the area.

Both Ricou and Harrison accept Henry Kreisel's point that "all discussion of the literature produced in the Canadian West must of necessity begin with the impact of the landscape upon the mind"¹¹; Ricou analyses the recurrent theme of man in relation to landscape; Harrison examines the confrontation between an old (European) culture and a vast, open landscape in process of being named. Like Australia's western third, the Canadian prairies seem to offer national and archetypal images to their writers. Randolph Stow's observation of the epic possibilities of the Western Australian interior could be transposed to the Canadian context, with a different thermometer count:

"So that what, in the end, I see in Australia (so far only in the bush, but that need not be the end of it) is an enormous symbol: a symbol for the whole earth, at all times, both before and during the history of man. And because of its bareness, its absolute simplicity, a truer and broader symbol of the human environment than, I believe, any European writer could create from the complex material of Europe."¹²

Such breadth of vision is not denied to the regional writer, or to his or her interpreters.

But what of that other Canadian west, British Columbia, which Edward McCourt preferred to think of as the near east? W. H. New's book, *Articulating West*,¹³ shows that he, too, considers himself a westerner, and also a Canadian. His use of the terms East and West is more metaphysical, more inclusive, than the interpreters of the prairies. 'East' and 'West', he declares, are only loosely tied to geography and hence alter their meaning from place to place. But they remain useful, at least, in the Canadian context, because they enunciate "the inchoate basic assumptions of a way of life"¹⁴. The East often conveys a notion of "a settled order which may be imaginatively static"; the West can be "half-mad in its visions but attractive as well"¹⁵. In a reference which suggests an interesting parallel between Vancouver's Pacific and Perth's Indian Ocean outlook, New comments that to Canadian westerners the Orient and Near East "at once represent the stability of ancient civilizations and the disordering threat of unfamiliar belief;"¹⁶ and he draws attention to the formative influence upon any comprehensive image of the west of the indigenous Canadian cultures, Eskimo and Indian. Similarly, a Western Australian regional cultural study must take proper account of Aboriginal written and oral literature, and art.

The attractive flexibility of New's procedures is also apparent in his inclusion of contemporary literature, which others might exclude on the grounds that it is insufficiently place-oriented. New comments on a movement in the second half of the 20th century away from an "artistic language out of the real landscapes among which writers moved" to "the landscape that is language itself"¹⁷. In this process, the geographic frontier was transformed from a physical to a metaphysical place. While it is important that traditional definitions of a regional literature should be extended to accommodate such perceptions, certain questions might also be asked of the modernisation process. For example, have western writers been more conservative in matters of literary experiment than their eastern equivalents (as appears to be the case in Australia but not in Canada)? How do these different concepts of place relate to higher education, travel, mass communications and the increasing urbanisation of writers? If regional studies are to make significant contributions to knowledge of the post-1950 period, these questions must be addressed.

The convenient identification of regional literary studies with state or provincial boundaries is challenged not only in the Canadian, but also in American regional studies. Such questioning and redefining of boundaries which must always be considered mutable, is a legitimate investigation of the theory and practice of literary regionalism, but it is often clouded by political considerations. Hence the differences of opinion about the cultural significance of the Canada-United States border—a problem which for Australians has less literal force but is still significant. (A comparison of Margaret Atwood's and Frank Moorhouse's accounts of American incursions into their respective territories would be revealing.) Many regional models are clearly hortatory as well as descriptive, but this does not necessarily diminish their effectiveness: It may help the reader to see that region's point of view. Dick Harrison, for instance, admits that most Western Canadians think of themselves as "living in a northern extension of the great frontier West they know so well from American popular culture".¹⁸ He criticises this tendency, while recognising its threat to an independent regional outlook: "Western Canadians are, in effect, assuming a new colonial state of mind before they have outgrown the older one dominated by British-Ontario culture".¹⁹

South of the border, interpreters of the American west are considering the necessary fragmentation of that concept, though whether this process is what Henry Miller called in another context a 'great fragmentation of maturity' remains to be seen. The Pacific Northwest is now assuming a greater awareness of the roots of its inhabitants' sense of difference not just from the east but also from the Californians to the South.²⁰ Educated Californians are themselves aware of their founders' dreams and of the enormous, often exciting, eclecticism of the inherited cultures which Kevin Starr has written about in *Americans and the California Dream*.²¹ This has led to discussions of different literary regions within California. A recent study has proposed five major literary regions in California: The North Coast, Southern California, the Great Central Valley, Wilderness California and Fantasy California.²² The author, Gerald W. Haslam, claims that each of these 'areas' has produced distinctive literature: all are in part regions of the mind, but Fantasy California is principally only that. Fantasy California is "the State as aspiration and illusion as reflected in the work of writers such as Nathanael West, Ernst Callenbach, Cyra McFadden, and Evelyn Waugh." Yet if one thing is established in American letters, it seems to be the assumption that there is a genre of Western American literature. A journal of that name flourishes. And significant new books are published, such as Glen A. Love's *New Americans: The Westerner and the Modern Experience in the American Novel*,²³ which illuminate attitudes, values and literary responses to modernisation, cities and the

machine in 'western' writers, who come not only from the west coast but from the mid and north-west America as well.

What then are the major implications of these studies for continuing work on the literature of Western Australia?

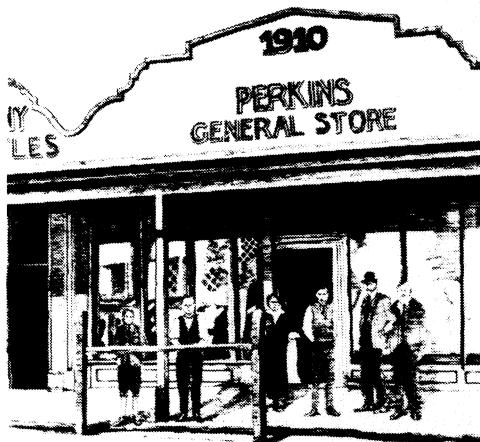
First is the need to think in terms of subregions within, and sometimes across, state borders. Examples of these in Western Australia are the South-West, the North-West, or Kimberleys; the Pilbara; the Central and Southern Wheatbelt; the Goldfields; and Perth and suburbs. The categories are from physical geography, regional administration and functional land-use but all are terms which have lodged themselves in the consciousness of Western Australians. It has been suggested that the Goldfields and the Wheatbelt have provided the most distinctive literatures,²⁴ but all of them can claim at least a small body of writings which contain significant original responses to landscape or society; which together build a distinctive picture of place, conditions and atmosphere. Further subregions may emerge within the more general concept of Western Australian literature; in this way we will better understand the cellular structure which contributes to State and national identities. One danger is that this exercise will become too involved with parish pumps, or dry soaks, but the other danger of promoting archetypes and national stereotypes is more evident in Australian literary studies.

The crossing of borders has not been as easy for Western Australians as for most Canadians: the vast deserts of the interior intervene, giving the state the relative isolation of an island, which may be conducive to regional cultural activity—or decay. But the question of borders does arise in the North-West, where the Durack family sagas, Xavier Herbert's *Capricornia* and the stories and art of Western Desert and Northern Aborigines are only artificially divided by the Northern Territory-Western Australian border.

Criteria for the definition of a region within Western Australia are suggested by the Goldfields. Not only is this region functionally and geographically described as an area of goldmining activities some 600 kms east of Perth and located in the towns of Kalgoorlie and Coolgardie and their hinterland, but a more comprehensive definition would also insist that a regional literary identity was evident within a finite historical period, from the 1890s to around 1950. During that period, particularly in the 1890s and early 1900s, an enormous literary output occurred, due not only to the extraordinary conditions of the goldrushes themselves but also to the means of literary production in the form of a host of local and syndicated newspapers and magazines which were hungry for copy.²⁵ A. G. Stephens' description of the prolific versifiers of the area as 'manly' writers²⁶ defines a major characteristic of the literary expression of this region; their voices often sound tribal rather than individual, expressing group feelings, values and attitudes; hence their preference for the ballad form. During the 1930s and 40s Gavin Casey and other writers²⁷ reinforced aspects of the tradition which had been set for them but developed it in accordance with changed conditions such as underground mining: group loyalties among the men were still paramount as were notions of mateship between individuals, a fierce independence from the Eastern States and from the capital Perth, a labour-oriented sense of democratic justice and a rough, sardonic humour which often declined into sentimentality. The region too has its historical saga, Katharine Susannah Prichard's Goldfields trilogy,²⁸ which reinforces myths, legends and actual social circumstances and details as well as providing a socialist critique of a place and time. Oddly, the nickel boom of the early 1970s in this area did not produce an ethos out of which a group literary identity could grow, nor have outstanding individual writers seen in that period of fervid stockbroking activity anything of the romance which the Golden Mile produced in the 1890s.²⁹ The Goldfields identity is heavily dependent on its past.

The Man From Mukinupin

Dorothy Hewett



DOROTHY HEWETT *This Old Man Comes Rolling Home*

A play about family life among
the Sydney workers of the '50s.

With notes on the Redfern
they remember

by JACK BEASLEY
and MERV LILLEY



Dorothy Hewett's 'West' and 'East': Garden and City

After taking into account regions such as these, there remains the question of whether a larger regional identity of the West exists in Australia. So many Western Australian writers have asserted that a state identity does exist,³⁰ or has existed, that we must take notice of this consciousness. Self-definition is often accepted as the criterion of membership of a group, or community,³¹ and in this case must be taken as persuasive, supportive, if not final evidence. It is possible, of course, that these writers and commentators have deluded themselves and loftier views of the evidence may emerge from high towers, perhaps ivory, in our larger cities. In the meantime, we could do worse than listen to the testimony of writers on the scene.

This testimony refers often to the land. Randolph Stow has been quoted. Peter Cowan refers to the 'quite pitiless but utterly attractive landscape' out beyond metropolitan Perth.³² In his view, the sameness which threatens Australia is not that landscape but the replicas of suburbia which are placed upon it. Cowan's own work reflects a close involvement with the physical landscape and the interaction of people with it; in his work (which might interestingly be compared with that of Sinclair Ross) the land is often a more significant character than the people. Dorothy Hewett's characters, on the other hand, are larger than life and rebel against the constraints of parochialism which threaten to confine them. Hewett, more than any other writer, has promoted the idea of an East-West axis around her images of the West as garden and the East as city.³³ Her garden is Edenic in the full sense, with the snake foregrounded: Western Australia is a place of 'brutal innocence'. Hewett's Sydney is corrupt, materialistic, vulgar, articulate and unashamed: the dreamed-of city of liberation and fulfilment, the necessary anti-thesis to her garden.

But other axes can be drawn: between intellectual habits and trends in Melbourne and Perth, for instance, in the small but influential intelligentsia of these cities. Walter Murdoch, a Scot educated in Melbourne felt isolated from that city when he was appointed as the first Professor of English at the University of Western Australia in 1915. His widely read literary journalism was in a sense a product of both cities, and highlights the fact that for most of this century Perth has been influenced by ideas and values from Melbourne rather than from Sydney, though the intellectual orientation, at least until the 1960s was always principally towards Oxbridge, London and Europe.

It will be obvious from what I have said that I advocate a study of regions from the ground up: commencing with particular places, the biographical connections of writers with these places and their literary references to, or recreations of these places, together with a study of their intellectual and cultural milieux. A broad definition of literature is presupposed, which includes diaries, letters, journals, children's literature, popular romances and indigenous songs and legends as well as the established literary forms of novels, short stories, poems and plays. While the most perceptive or memorable renditions of a region are often those of recognised major authors, important contributions to a regional awareness may also come from sources less recognised by the academies.

The social dimensions of a comprehensive study of literary regionalism would include an account of the relation between the region under review and other major metropolitan centres, not only in terms of literary images such as I have described, but also in terms of social and economic conditions such as the opportunity for local writers to publish. Before the advent of Australia's most successful regional press, the Fremantle Arts Centre Press in 1975, for instance, Western Australian writers were more favourably treated by publishers. The policy and practice of literary magazines and newspapers are also elements of the social and

cultural milieux. It is interesting that *Westerly's* policy of publishing a national literary magazine with a strong regional base has been followed by other journals such as *LinQ* (Northern Queensland), *Island* (Tasmania) and *Northern Perspective* (Northern Territory).

Concepts of region are intimately related to processes of naming. In his novel *The Merry-go-round in the Sea* Randolph Stow writes:

"Java the Great became New Holland, and then Western Australia. Costa Branca became Edels Land, then the Northward and at last Victoria District. Wittacarra became Champion Bay, and finally Geraldton."³⁴

That process of naming moves from an historical sense of Western Australia as an extension of Southeast Asia through Spanish, Dutch and anglicised Aboriginal senses of place towards a relatively stable Anglicisation. Now the process is being reversed towards a renewed recognition of links with a larger region which includes Southeast Asia. A second Indian Ocean Arts Festival and its associated Conference in Perth in December 1984 indicates a growing awareness that Australia is indeed a land looking west. Not unreasonably, there is talk of an Indian Ocean region. It is necessary that our concepts of region should be sufficiently flexible to accommodate such changes of awareness.

NOTES

1. Eudora Welty, 'Place in Fiction', *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, vol. LV, no. 1, January 1956, pp. 57-72; reprinted in *Critical Approaches to Fiction*, ed. Shiv K. Kumar and Keith McKean, McGraw-Hill, New York, 1968.
2. Rene Wellek and Austin Warren, *Theory of Literature*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 3rd edn., 1963, p. 52.
3. Leonie Kramer, 'Islands of Yesterday: The Growth of Literary Ideas', *Westerly*, vol. 25, no. 2, June 1980, p. 94.
4. An Oxford Illustrated Literary Guide to Australia is expected to be published in 1986. Literary Guides to the British Isles and the United States of America were published by Oxford University Press in 1981 and 1982 respectively. The Literary Guide to Canada will be published in 1985.
5. Exceptions to the general neglect are Paul Depasquale, *A Critical History of South Australian Literature 1837-1930*, Pioneer Books, Warradale, 1978; Bruce Bennett (ed.), *The Literature of Western Australia*, University of Western Australia Press, Nedlands, 1979.
6. Margaret Atwood, *Selected Poems*, Oxford University Press, Toronto, p. 25.
7. William Grono and Nicholas Hasluck, *On the Edge*, Freshwater Bay Press, 1980, p. 7.
8. Edward A. McCourt, *The Canadian West in Fiction*, The Ryerson Press, Toronto, 1949, p. 41.
9. Lawrence Ricou, *Vertical Man/Horizontal World: Man and Landscape in Canadian Prairie Fiction*, University of British Columbia Press (Vancouver), 1973.
10. Dick Harrison, *Unnamed Country: The Struggle for a Canadian Prairie Fiction*, University of Alberta Press, Edmonton, 1977.
11. Henry Kreisel, 'The Prairie: a State of Mind', *Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada*, vol. 6: series 4, June 1968, p. 173.
12. Randolph Stow, 'Raw Material', *Westerly* no. 2, 1961, p. 4.
13. W. H. New, *Articulating West: Essays on Purpose and Form in Modern Canadian Literature*, New Press, Toronto, 1972.
14. ibid., p. xi.
15. ibid., p. xix.
16. ibid., p. xx.
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18. Dick Harrison, *Unnamed Country*, p. 209.
19. ibid.
20. See, for instance, Edwin R. Bingham and Glen A. Love (eds.), *Northwest Perspectives: Essays on the Culture of the Pacific Northwest*, University of Oregon/

- University of Washington Press, 1979; Michael Strelow (ed.), *An Anthology of Northwest Writing 1900-1950*, Northwest Review Books, English Department, University of Oregon, 1979.
21. Kevin Starr, *Americans and the California Dream 1850-1915*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1973.
 22. Gerald W. Haslam, 'California Writing and the West', *Western American Literature*, vol. XVIII, no. 3, November 1983, pp. 209-222.
 23. Glen A. Love, *New Americans: The Westerner and the Modern Experience in the American Novel*, Bucknell University Press, London and Toronto, 1982.
 24. See H. P. Heseltine, 'A Local Habitation: Literature of Western Australia's Sesquicentenary', *Westerly*, vol. 25, no. 2, June 1980, pp. 99-103.
 25. Beverley Smith, 'Heyday of the Goldfields', *Westerly* no. 3, September 1976, pp. 57-75.
 26. A. G. Stephens, 'The Manly Poetry of Western Australia'. *The Leeuwin*, 1910-1911;
 27. See Gavin Casey and Ted Mayman, *The Mile That Midas Touched*, Rigby, Adelaide, 1964.
 28. Katharine Susannah Prichard, *Roaring Nineties*, Jonathon Cape, London, 1946; *Golden Miles*, Cape, London, 1948; *Winged Seeds*, Cape, London, 1950.
 29. Although fortunes were won and lost on the stock markets during the nickel boom, Ted Mayman has noted that it lacked the 'romance' of the Roaring Nineties era. See 'Sense of Place', *Westerly*, no. 3, 1976, pp. 51-56.
 30. e.g., Elizabeth Jolley, Peter Cowan and Tom Hungerford in 'Time, Place and People: 'Regionalism in Contemporary Australian Literature', *Westerly*, vol. 23, no. 4, December 1978, pp. 72-76; Dorothy Hewett, 'The Garden and the City', *Westerly*, vol. 27, no. 4, December 1982, pp. 99-104; Veronica Brady, 'Place, Taste and the Making of a Tradition: Western Australian Writing Today', *Westerly*, vol. 27, no. 4, December 1982, pp. 105-110.
 31. For instance, self-definition is the basis of E. P. Thompson's description of the working class in *The Making of the English Working Class* and of many other social groupings.
 32. Peter Cowan, *Westerly*, vol. 23, no. 4, December 1978, pp. 74-5.
 33. Dorothy Hewett, 'The Garden and the City', op. cit.
 34. Randolph Stow, *The Merry-go-round in the Sea*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1972, pp. 238-9.

Winner of the 1978 Miles Franklin Award

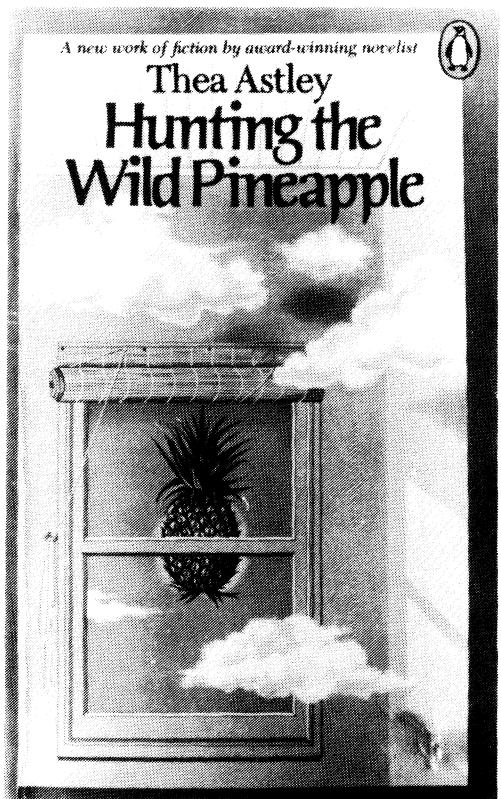
Tirra Lirra by the River



Jessica Anders

A new work of fiction by award-winning novelist

Thea Astley Hunting the Wild Pineapple



GILLIAN WHITLOCK

Queensland: the state of the art on ‘the last frontier’

There is something very special about Queensland. Something that can't be captured on film. Something no magazine article can ever do justice to. It lives in the coral reefs and tiny islands, and wide open deserts and the smiles of the locals. Some people have a name for it. The spirit of Australia. If you want to feel that spirit, you have to come to Queensland . . .

When Qantas began, Queensland was full of empty spaces . . . Even the people themselves were seen as something special. A breed apart. With hearts as big as the wilderness they had tamed. Queensland was the last frontier.

Nothing has changed.

Queensland Tourist and Travel Corporation
advertisement in Qantas' *Airways Inflight*,
May/June 1984.

It was established in the opening speeches of this conference on Regionalism* that if we were going to look for a sense of regionalism in Australia the logical places to turn were to the west and to the north—those spaces in the continent which were set apart. In this paper I will speak about ‘the north’ with some critical licence in that I am translating ‘north’ into my own home paddock, Queensland. There are of course sub-regions within the state—clearly the far-north sometimes poses itself against Brisbane and the term ‘north’ itself links together the ‘top half’ of two states and one territory—but I will argue here that these are not strong enough to compete with the powerful mythology of a Queensland identity. It was both comforting and ironic to find an epigraph for this paper, and to have my suspicions of what a ‘Queensland identity’ might be confirmed, in the act of leaving Brisbane—if one had any doubt about what was being left behind 30,000 feet below, the Queensland Tourist and Travel Corporation was pleased to label it as ‘the last frontier’, inhabited by ‘smiling locals’.

This is not to say that the analogy of Quebec and Queensland which has been drawn several times during this conference is to be reinforced here. To the contrary, the temptation to bring the two together has substance in little more than a sense of regional identity based on local, indigenous cultural and linguistic differences. It is for the same reason that Joh Bjelke-Petersen’s boast that “We are not Australian, we are Queenslanders” doesn’t make sense, for the very condition of being a Queenslander is determined by its Australian context. The way we see

*A Conference of the Australian and New Zealand Association for Canadian Studies held at the University of Canterbury, Christchurch in May, 1984.

ourselves, and the way others see us in Queensland, is generated from the outside; the Queensland state of mind is imported, derivative and, like many other things, comes to us from the south. So, whilst I will be using literary evidence to argue that 'the north' has a particular identity within the Australian framework, it is an identity which I will label as 'different' rather than 'regional', for it is not 'made in Queensland'.

Despite the earlier comments on Quebec I do want to begin my pursuit of Queensland there. This is because my own first acquaintance with connections between Australia, Canada and ideas of regionalism come via Hugh MacLennan's novel *Return of the Sphinx*.¹ MacLennan's contrast of Australia and Canada confused me on first reading, I was unable to make sense of his use of Australia as a symbol because his outsider's sense of Australian national identification did not relate to my own indigenous perceptions.

MacLennan's novel begins with: "The land defied everyone's idea of what a land ought to be; just the land by being where it was, what it was, and how it was." The novel is set in Montreal and the first chapter is concerned with a discussion about the future of Quebec. Gabriel Fleury, a sympathiser of the French-Canadian cause, is trying to explain the uneasy balance of the Quebec cultural compromise to an Anglais, Tarnley. As their conversation proceeds, strange things begin to occur round and about, a clear sunny day in Montreal is threatened as "A cloud shaped like Australia was bulging over the mountain, and the sun darkened." The conversation goes on nonetheless—a critique of political nationalism and an explicit rejection of Canadian nationalism as destructive and divisive: "The Australia-shaped cloud was now directly over their heads and a few heavy raindrops fell out of it, making splashes on the pavement." Gabriel Fleury, perhaps a little alarmed at this stage, makes an attempt to articulate and defend the delicate poise and compromise which must be made if Quebec is to survive, he tries to explain the threat which both French and English nationalisms represent. In direct response, "The light grew dramatically stronger as it does after an eclipse and he saw the Australia-shaped cloud, its underside the colour of a bruise, drifting down the St. Lawrence Valley."

It was only after discussing this chapter at length with Canadian readers that I began to see that Australia was being cased as a kind of thug here, that its monolithic nature, a lack of cultural diversity and attachment to centralist nationalist rhetoric are what is perceived by the Canadian view, and precisely what Gabriel Fleury must speak against in the Canadian context. The bruised, Australia-shaped cloud looms over Montreal, threatens, and retreats only when Fleury begins to speak, however tentatively, to validate a sense of cultural diversity and to imagine "a land which defied everyone's idea of what a land ought to be" because it does allow regional diversity, it thinks in terms of the mosaic rather than the monolith.

In this way MacLennan's image suggests that Australia and Canada have quite different attitudes to regionalism and cultural diversity, and that Canadians should desperately hope that the Australian cloud does not linger overhead and dump its acid rain over Canada. This raises the question of how useful it might be to import a Canadian cloud into the traditionally cloudless Australian sky. Can and should we translate a more regionally tolerant perspective into Australian literary studies? Is it the case that Australian critics have ignored potentially fruitful and locally based readings of Australian texts, or is it the case that the region is not a useful framework in the Australian context and that to think about our literature in this way is merely arbitrary?

MacLennan's caricature is hard to dispute. Diana Brydon has pointed out that the Canadian approaches the Australian nationalist tradition as an outsider in

more than one sense; the ethos is quite unfamiliar and the national cultural assumptions in Australia and Canada are quite different.² My own puzzlement with MacLennan's cloud reproduces in reverse Diana Brydon's sense of being in foreign territory as it were, for in Australia regionalism has not been an important issue in literary studies or cultural analysis in general. Australia, the nation that occupies a continent unchallenged by cultural diversity, has always had a propensity for the monolithic, continental perspective. The Australian sense of nation located itself in a powerful bush myth which was carried—as the story goes—like a swag on the backs of nomad bushmen to whom state boundaries were unimportant. The thrust of this myth was very much a centrist impulse and it was, as Graeme Davison has argued, a dream of the bush generated by an urban intelligentsia in the southern cities.³

In Henry Lawson's short story "Hungerford" we find an archetypal rejection of regional differentiation and a narrative to set against MacLennan's.⁴ Hungerford in Lawson's story is a shanty town poised on the Queensland-New South Wales border, a feature which is marked by the rabbit-proof fence which is "a standing joke with Australian rabbits". Even the vermin reject the slight pretension to regional boundaries! There is the superciliousness of a southerner towards Queensland in the story (its difference is recognised via the label 'Bananaland') but the whole impulse of the narrative is to mock by taking the state boundary at its most literal. At the end of the story Clancy, the aging bushman, stands at the rabbit fence and spits over it into New South Wales. He then steps leisurely through the fence and spits back into Queensland, saying "And if I was at the Victorian and South Australian border I'd do the same thing." This is quite eloquent for an Australian bushman; here Clancy voices what has been the prevailing attitude towards a sense of regional difference within Australia; critics have been expectorating on readings located in the local and the specific ever since.

Yet possibilities for more regionally specific readings seem to exist. Barbara Hanrahan's perspective is firmly and self-consciously located in the Adelaide suburb of Thebarton. *Such Is Life* is a novel of the Riverina and *Capricornia* a novel imprinted with the particular cultural and geographic configurations of the "top end". However our readings of these texts have, traditionally, not made much of the local, specific perspective which these might contain. In our readings of Australian texts and our cultural histories a Ptolomaic view of the nation has prevailed. Like some brave Ontarians, southern intellectuals in Australia have tended to promote their local values as by definition 'national'. But, whereas in Canada regionalism has prevailed over and above the sense of "Canada as Ontario", in Australia the areas which have been defined as peripheral by the centrist conception of nation—most obviously the west and the north—have not made an effective challenge to this hegemony.

We cannot conclude from this that regions don't exist, indeed Queensland is a regionalist's paradise in some senses, and is the most decentralised of all Australian states. Yet this has not led to very powerful cultural statements from a regional point of view. Indeed the *Bulletin* of the 1890s suggested that it discerned the most ardent nationalism coming from Queensland mainly, it thought, because of the bush background. If we look to the areas from which this powerful sense of nationalism emerged we see that they tend to be distinctly 'un-Queensland' in some senses. For example, in the Etheridge area Queensland-born came fourth of all the groups which made up the population at the end of the nineteenth century (they were out-numbered by English, Irish and Chinese. Indeed 35% of the population were Chinese in the 1880s⁵). In this context it is clear why so many Queensland-born were such ardent nationalists, for a white, Anglo-Saxon patriarchal form of nationalism became an attempt to counteract numerical infer-

iority by an aggressive statement of cultural superiority via a nationalist myth. In the north of Queensland also large groups of coloured aliens were imported; here too this seems to have encouraged Queenslanders to accept the nationalist myth rather than promote a sense of regional difference. Here ethnic difference bolstered nationalism rather than regionalism; in Canada, on the other hand, settlement patterns and ethnic difference has led to appreciation of regional differences and cultural heterogeneity. Faith Bandler's book *Wacvie*, which chronicles the experiences of Melanesian labourers in Queensland, makes it clear that a kind of cultural apartheid existed and they remained outsiders, excluded from a rigid statement of what it meant to be an Australian.

I am suggesting, then, that quite different impulses prevailed in Australia and Canada. In Australia the development of regional differences in the cultural sphere has been dwarfed and stultified by a powerful continental vision of nationhood which has been the mainspring of our sense of identification. On the other hand, in Canada a sense of the integrity of regions has led to a more pluralist conception of the nation. In Australia our sense of difference has been determined by the national construct, in Canada on the other hand the tail wags the dog as it were and the sense of nation flows from the regions.

Yet it would be wrong to assent to MacLennan's image to the extent of asserting that Australians have no sense of differences within the continent. For in reading Australian literature, intimations of difference are common. In *Voss*, *Eye of the Storm* and *A Fringe of Leaves*, Patrick White creates parallels between travels north and internal journeys of discovery and freedom in a frontier-type environment. Peter Corris's detective Cliff Hardy feels stirrings whenever he ventures north of Newcastle; by the time he reaches Byron Bay his sense of difference, of being in foreign territory, alarms him, he must quickly retreat back to Glebe. Such differences appear too in Australian films. Jon Stratton has argued that in the modern Australian cinema Queensland is projected as a place of para-disaical escape, much as the Riviera was portrayed in French and Italian new wave films of the 50s and 60s. In films as diverse as *Mad Max* and *Picnic at Hanging Rock* this pattern appears.⁶

These are examples of what I would describe as an inscribed sense of difference, not a sense of regionalism and a reconsideration of nationalist assumptions but, to the contrary, a division between centre and periphery, city and bush which is produced by the bush myth. I am suggesting that the nationalist myth cast a role for Queensland as the Big Country via the city/bush opposition and Queensland writers and critics have tended to receive and reproduce this sense of being a fringe-dweller, the 'other' defined as outsider by powers located elsewhere. As Richard White argues in his book *Inventing Australia*, national image-making has been the prerogative of a metropolitan intelligentsia which has sustained and reproduced a Ptolemaic vision of the nation.⁷ Of course there are firm social, economic and political underpinnings in attributing to Queensland a kind of rural peripheral ethos; it is not 'myth' in the sense of illusion. Queensland's political economy is grounded in primary industry, the percentage of population living in rural areas is the highest for all mainland states, and our resources policy has meant that Queensland has continued to be a frontier for overseas investors.⁸ Nevertheless it can be argued that the determinant of Queensland's cultural voice is not so much grown in local soil but a role in a drama which is produced elsewhere. The most appropriate analogy for this perspective of Queensland seems to be that of the Barbadian writer George Lamming, who suggests that this peripheral identity can be an advantage but it is, nevertheless, produced as the 'other' by a centre of values located outside of its own boundaries.⁹

In what ways does Queensland writing demonstrate an acceptance of this continental-based identity? What kind of reading does this 'Queensland' framework

produce? If we look at some recent novels by Queenslanders the Caribbean comparison produced by reference to Lamming becomes more established. For example, Thea Astley, one of the most self-consciously 'Queensland' writers, has written a reminiscence entitled "On Being a Queenslander: A Form of Literary and Geographical Conceit"¹⁰ in which she recalls pejorative remarks about Queensland as "the home of cockroaches, white-ants, bananas" and remembers "growing up in an isolated, neglected place, a sprawling timber settlement on a lazy river" which was the butt of a kind of racism from "the South". Astley's "timber settlement" here is not Cooktown or Cairns but Brisbane! It is a pattern in writings about Queensland that Brisbane itself is not presented as a metropolis but is collapsed into a tropic wilderness which is "the north". It was Astley who dubbed Brisbaneites "the slow natives"; this too relates them to the wilderness rather than any kind of urban settlement. What emerges from Astley's comments is a sense of Queenslanders as doubly colonised: by the metropolis of the South and, at another remove, by Europe; she speaks of the "Queensland wounded", those injured by their inability to measure up to standards imported from elsewhere and not strong enough to embrace "the pleasure of exile" and generate an autonomous identity. The collection of stories *Hunt the Wild Pineapple* is a good example of how the sense of wilderness enters Queensland writing. Here Astley describes the fecundity of the north as "all in nature and not in the mind", the north is both Edenic and somnolent, "an unalterable ballad in nature".¹¹ Again this is much like evocations of the Caribbean which tend to reproduce a mind/body, civilisation/nature split in its presentation of itself as deeply colonised. Elsewhere, notably Peter Carey's *Bliss*, Brisbane is a provincial town "On the outposts of the American Empire", still the colony of a 'great good' elsewhere.

Jessica Anderson's *Tirra Lirra By the River* also presents Queensland as doubly colonised. The central character Nora Porteous 'escapes' Brisbane for Sydney as a young woman and, a latter day Richard Mahony, completes the archetypal journey of the colonial back to London. She retraces these steps as a very old woman and breaks the Richard Mahony pattern for, much like Morag in Margaret Laurence's *The Diviners*, she finds identity and 'home' beside the river of her childhood. The presentation of Brisbane in the novel is very much of "the last frontier" pattern: there are the "slow natives" and Brisbane is still the timber settlement, not a city but a wilderness, a New Eden infused with the scent of frangipani, and lantana. Unlike the Lady of Shalott, Nora survives her departure from the tower of illusion and discovers her own truth in the green frontier of a Brisbane backyard. As in Derek Walcott's *In a Green Night* poems, greenness is both the decay of the colonial outpost and the vitality of a frontier; a new sense of patriation and embracing a place on the periphery arises out of ashes and decay, the rich detritus of an acutely colonised place. Like Nora Porteous, Peter Carey's Harry Joy also experiences a miraculous kind of rebirth in a suburban Brisbane garden:

The lawn was very, very green, composed of broad-leaved tropical grasses, each blade thrillingly clear, and he wondered why everyone else had forsaken it for the shade of the verandah . . .

Ecstasy touched him. He found he could slide between the spaces in the air itself. He was stroked by something akin to trees, cool, green, leafy. His nostrils were assailed with the smell of things growing and dying, a sweet fecund smell like the valleys of rain forests.¹²

In criticism we can turn to A. G. Stephens, for it was not only in *A Queenslander's Travel Notes* that we can place Stephens' Queensland origins. The arrogant self assertiveness of his 'Australzealand' perspective grew from his sense that the peripheral voice was not inferior or infantile but, to the contrary, was new and different. Because it emanated from outside the metropolis he felt it had

particular authority and legitimacy. Stephens saw himself as a critic poised on an Arcadian frontier; from his verandah in the bush outside of Sydney he could, he argued, gaze at the Southern Cross and reach a kind of impartiality of judgement, "the standpoint of Literature".¹³ In this, of course, Stephens is reproducing the bush/city split which marked the Bulletin nationalist rhetoric, yet he went further than any other literary nationalist in his denunciation of the centre, the authoritative voice, and shaped a quite specific and distinctive sense of the peripheral perspective: the outsider, closer to nature and beyond the metropolis, can offer new judgement. In this, Stephens was very much speaking from the Queensland state of mind.

Indeed, in doing so he inaugurated something of a critical tradition. It was another Queensland critic, Vance Palmer, who revived Stephens' reputation thirty years later in his own attempt to establish a radical nationalist canon from a Queensland base. It was to this tradition that Clem Christesen turned to begin *Meanjin Papers* in 1940. The title of the magazine is derived from Brisbane's native name, which means a place that is an outpost. It was from this outpost—situated much like Stephens' bush cottage—that Christesen wanted to inspire a revival of local values and judgement in art and literature, to develop an independent voice. Like Lamming, like Stephens, *Meanjin Papers* argued that the outsider was ahead in some senses, that the fringe-dweller had a voice of its own.

Other writers may perhaps be related in fruitful ways to the Queensland milieu—Lindsay, Penton, Malouf, yet such locally-based readings do not amount to the kind of regional ethos which waxes so strongly in the Canadian context. The Queenslander's sense of difference is part of MacLennan's caricature of a monolithic Australian cultural perspective because this difference itself is spun by a strong nationalist mythology produced from the southern metropolis. Nevertheless the nationalist myth, whilst denying regional diversity and cultural mosaic, has produced a distinctive set of differences, it is within this framework that the north is cast as a kind of frontier wilderness which has access to certain kinds of truth and insight. Like our rabbit-proof fences, boundaries within Australian cultural studies are fragile, easy to dismantle or ignore and, rather than separating one region from another, ultimately invite us to follow Lawson's Clancy and to mock Bananaland's pretensions to "Queensland made" identity and cultural autonomy. After all, nothing has changed.

NOTES:

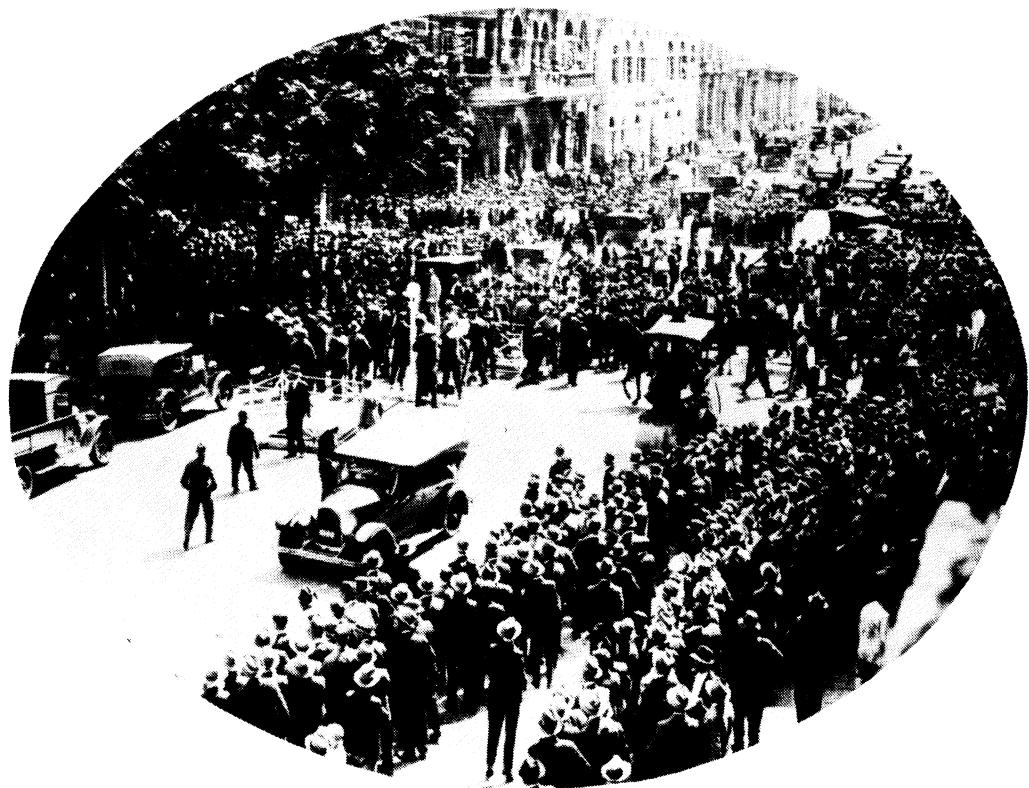
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2. Brydon, D. 'Australian Literature and the Canadian Comparison', in *Meanjin* 2, 1979.
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4. From *While the Billy Boils*, First Series.
5. Johnston, R. W. (1980) 'From Local to National History—The Case of Queensland', in *AHAB*, 24 (September, 1980), p. 15.
6. See Jon Stratton, "What made *Mad Max* Popular?", *Art and Text*, 9 (1983), pp. 37-59.
7. White, R. *Inventing Australia*. Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1981.
8. McQueen, H. 'State of Mind', in *Gone Tomorrow. Australia in the 80's*. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1982.
9. Lamming, G. *Pleasures of Exile*. London: Michael Joseph, 1960.
10. Astley, T. 'Writing in North Queensland'. in *LINQ* 9, I, 1981..
11. Astley, T. (1976) *Southerly*, 3, 1976.
12. Peter Carey, *Bliss*. London: Picador, 1981, p. 8.
13. See 'The Red Page', *The Bulletin*. 12/3/78.

I should like to thank John Matthews and Griffith colleagues, whose ideas have flowed into this paper.

R. G. HAY

Once I might have written a love poem

He's one of the more perceptive editors, and when he returned my poem about revisiting uni, recalling the turmoil of emotion in which I'd seemed to live at nineteen, he remarked that, thus refracted, the raw edge of the original experience seemed unduly masked. Perhaps I'd like to try a more direct recall.
Like hell I would: I enjoy the tranquillity of a life which no longer soars or plunges whenever someone smiles or frowns. Thinking thus I went late into the carpark and there you sat, who should have been gone half-an-hour since, and as I approached, you started to get out and before I could stop it my heart leapt, but, wiser than nineteen my thought raced after, warning stop, there's some mistake, she can't mean me. The leap must have looked on my face, for you, not cruel though cold, turned swift away, to where he gallant came to start your stalled car. And my foolish heart, though warned, much older, scarred, and toughened I would have believed, plunged, and still hurt. That bloody editor can never have been in love to wish it set down unshielded, without reflection or refraction.



The mounted police arrive at the Treasury Building demonstration, March 1931



The plane of Bertram and Klausmann off Wyndham. The missing float was used by the airmen, and featured in Harcourt's third novel, *It Never Fails*.

J. M. Harcourt and the Nineteen-Thirties

Of the three novels J. M. Harcourt wrote during the nineteen thirties, the first two were set in Western Australia, and the third began with the arrival of its central character, Julius Windowen, at Fremantle in the early part of that decade. The novels, in many ways unusual in their time, received oddly different receptions, the second, *Upsurge*, being subject to banning in the state it was attempting to portray, and later in the Commonwealth.

Harcourt's first novel, *The Pearlers*,¹ published in 1933, depicted Broome when the town was facing difficulty in its pearlling industry, but was still seen by the outside world as a romantic and exotic port. The actual period covered by the novel was not clearly stated, but lay evidently in the mid twenties, perhaps coinciding with the period Harcourt spent in Broome. The novel gave a realistic rather than romantic picture of life in Broome, the hard work, the boredom, occasional adventure, the dishonesty and corruption long associated with a hazardous industry, and with the problem of racial tensions and conflict between Australian, European, Japanese and Aboriginal people.²

The novel was well received, praised by reviewers including those in the Western Australian press, one writer seeing it as a 'vivid rendering of some aspects of northern life'.³ Those aspects of northern life had received some attention from other novelists, but Harcourt had an approach and style more in keeping with American fiction of the time than Australian, and his frankness of attitude and sharpness of style were not to be found anywhere else in Western Australian writing of the period.

This realism, and an irony that took in social attitudes and pretences, did not offend readers or reviewers in Western Australia or elsewhere. Harcourt, perhaps not entirely seriously, later remarked that some of the 'townsfolk of Broome, having erroneously identified themselves with some of the less ethical characters in my first book . . . made a public bonfire of such copies of it as they could find in that then Port of Pearls'.⁴ In the confines of Broome other writers had faced this problem of recognition, real or imagined, of their characters, but long-time residents of the town must have become accustomed to it as a hazard of that particular place.

Harcourt's second novel, *Upsurge*,⁵ met a different reception. *The Pearlers* had shown corruption, public and private, but for Perth readers all that had been in Broome, where they expected it anyway. With *Upsurge* they were confronted with a picture of corruption not in some distant town that had always had a reputation for making its own rules, but of corruption in the police and judiciary, in trade unions and among employers, among businessmen and government, in their

own quiet city. While the people of Perth were not so naive as to imagine they lived in the paradise some of their novelists liked to depict, most probably did not expect, or entirely believe in the kind of corruption Harcourt so bluntly stated in this novel. Somewhat unexpected also was the fact that Harcourt formed his novel from the city, and from the depression years which they were living through. They would hardly have found a parallel in previous writing.

Later writers have seen Perth as possessed of a kind of innocence. Perth was innocent in the sense that any small city—or town—isolated from larger centres, in Australia or anywhere else, was innocent. It was hardly a special quality. It might have been said that Perth's inhabitants were neither more nor less tolerant of scandal and corruption, neither more nor less aware of these things, than the inhabitants of any larger metropolis. They had their own newspapers whose stock-in-trade was scandal, as they had a larger more respectable, indeed eminently respectable, press. They were, and they had this in common with the whole of Australia in those years, innocent of much that happened abroad—a state carefully nurtured, and where necessary imposed, by their governments, which was in itself something of a scandal. In a small and closeknit society they were aware of a great deal that happened in one another's lives. As many found, nothing could be kept quiet in Perth.

So when Harcourt suggested the owner of one of their biggest city emporiums was in the habit of picking up girls at the fashionable beaches, using them for one-night stands in the motor cars of the day, or the flats of friends, and that a local magistrate had met and was having an affair with a girl he had a few days earlier sentenced for indecent exposure on a beach, they might have been quite remarkably unsurprised by such facts, but hardly expecting to find them so baldly stated in a local novel. They would have had little difficulty guessing the counterparts of Harcourt's characters. There was obviously some considerable speculation, the *Daily News* suggested sales of the book had been 'considerably more than' a hundred copies, and that 'in recent months the book has been the subject of much comment here'.⁶

This speculation was inevitable, and Harcourt must have expected some such reaction. Perth had not found many writers interested in it as a setting for fiction. In the same year as *The Pearlers*, J. K. Ewers' novel *Money Street*⁷ was published, in which he used the name of an actual Perth street, stating in a foreword:

Its name perpetuates the memory of a Perth solicitor, C. A. Money, who, however, has nothing to do with the story. The characters in this tapestry are as imaginary as any may be who have in their weave the threads of real life.

Ambiguous perhaps, but no one seemed to dispute the fictional nature of the book, and it was published again in 1948, in Perth.⁸ *Money Street* was a very different portrayal from *Upsurge*, though something of its use of an actual locality may have carried over into readers' expectations of Harcourt's novel. The very realism of *Upsurge*, and, less tangibly, something of its writer's attitude, suggested an attempt to expose not only in fictional form but in actuality, to draw attention to local problems in reality, and to local people. It is not hard to feel that Harcourt, writing as he later admitted as a fellow traveller, and a communist sympathiser, did not mind if identifications were made between his characters and the actual people and officials involved in the incidents he described. Indeed he may have intended them. Harcourt said he was told by the police that a well known and respected Perth business man had consulted his solicitors about a libel action on the ground that he was portrayed as the dis-

reputable businessman of the novel. The real model, Harcourt claimed, never suspected he bore the slightest resemblance to the man described in the book.⁹

So there were models, and local readers could not be blamed if they found themselves trying to identify them. It seems likely Harcourt took facets from numbers of well known people and blended them to offer some disguise. Putting the pieces together was a puzzle Perth readers at least seemed to be enjoying. A friend wrote to Harcourt in Melbourne that his book was 'selling like hot cakes in Perth'.

The city had at that time some five emporiums that might have given something to the store in *Upsurge* run by the businessman and anti-unionist Kronen. These were well known businesses, surviving until recent years when changes of ownership and name blurred the identity of some, and were the kind of stores described in the novel. Harcourt reduced the field, if he was thinking of an actual prototype, by his description of the shop:

His office was on a gallery overlooking the ground-floor counters of the great shop. Through the glass walls of the office he could see the counters stacked with merchandise, with tweeds and calicos, silks and cambrics, dress goods from every quarter of the earth. The counters were arranged in pairs, and black-clad girls hurried to and fro between them. There were over an acre of counters. Customers swarmed in the wide aisles . . .¹⁰

He limited it still further by his portrayal of the family dynasty—shades of today's soap operas—where the father had founded the business his son now owned.

These factors probably bought local readers to form a short list of two. They would have to reject the failure and collapse of Kronen's shop, none of the emporiums went down in the depression, but there were other clues, which may have been deliberately false, such as the suggestion of church approval of methods used to break unions and cut wages, a particular car driven by Kronen, some of the businessman's associates, but readers would have found it difficult to regard this book as entirely fiction, and two well known businessmen would have been seen as likely models.

Harcourt did not comment on the magistrate, whose identity must have been even more a subject for speculation than the businessman. Fairly or unfairly the magistrate who heard the cases of resisting arrest after the Treasury riots, which involved a number of the characters, must have been a prime candidate. And the chemist, friend of the other characters, must have been seen, at that time, as reflecting one of two well known figures in the city.

The communist involved in the demonstrations, and some of the women leaders of the protests at the dismissal of workers at Kronen's, and in labor and communist activities, must have been seen as those actually known in the city, and in some cases charged in the courts. Harcourt had indeed drawn his people and events very close to reality.

Upsurge had none of the humour or the lighter ironic touches of *The Pearlers*. It was serious and sober, more determined in its exposure of the harshness and brutality of the depression years for those who did not have the insulation of jobs or capital. Its ironies were destructive. It was a novel of social classes, and its vision and style had no parallel at all in Western Australia.¹¹

The novel never realised the possibilities of its characters or the situations contrived for them—the magistrate who becomes drawn to the woman who appears before him in court, and who is involved with another man whom he sentences, a communist; a woman who becomes a leader in strikes and union activity which lead her inevitably in this society to confront the magistrate again

in his court: the businessman and shop owner who dismisses the girl he picks up one night when he discovers her to be one of his employees, and causes the destruction of her family, and the conflict of this man with his own father who had handed him the business and cynically sees him losing control: the hopelessness of the man who is unemployed and forced to join the sustenance workers, and join them in their brief revolt. All these characters are involved in a network of tragedy, but the relationships never deepen or become complex, rather they are simplified for the sake of social comment. The confrontation and involvement of characters representing law and revolt, freedom and oppression, wealth and poverty, too often moves towards obviousness. Katharine Susannah Prichard is said to have claimed this the first 'truly working class novel' ever written in Australia,¹² and in this respect Harcourt revealed an interest in American fiction rather than any Australian writing of the time.

The critical reaction to the novel outside Australia was favorable, a review in the *Times Literary Supplement*¹³ quoted by Harcourt discussed the issues raised by the novel without finding anything sinister or indecent. Western Australian reviews, however, showed no such response. These reviews stressed what the *Daily News* termed 'an overpowering taint of the sexual'.¹⁴ The *West Australian* found 'frankly erotic situations and choice specimens of schoolboy obscenities'.¹⁵

Where were these choice items? In such passages as that describing Kronen's appreciation of his secretary:

She was young and competent and pretty, and had a good figure. Paul Kronen watched her appreciatively as she went through the office door. Her light dress moulded itself to her hips and thighs, and clung cleanly to her legs behind the knees. He would have liked to slip his hand up under her skirt and pat her firm buttocks. But it would not do. It did not pay to mix women with business, or to become too familiar with employees. They talked. One lost prestige and the power to make them cringe when the need arose.¹⁶

Or the scene of the magistrate and the girl he had fined for indecent exposure on the beach bathing naked in a river pool:

And the cool contact with her naked body thrilled him. Despite the exhausting ardours of the previous night, desire welled up in him again. The girl became aware of the emotion he was unable to conceal, and smiling a little, yielded herself to his arms and kissed him. Her own flesh responded. They climbed out of the pool and took their pleasure on the carpet of dead leaves and grass at its bank, while flies and ants crawled over them unnoticed.

When the short tumult of their passion was over, they continued to lie for a little. But a growing sense of discomfort pierced the pleasant lethargy, and presently they scrambled to their feet, scratching at the insect bites and laughing ruefully. They plunged again into the pool, and when, for the second time the cool water had assuaged their discomfort, donned their clothes and returned slowly to the villa.¹⁷

Perth in those years found nothing particularly offensive or embarrassing in its Roe Street brothels. But they had not found a place, in such matter of fact prose, in novels:

Riley made his way to the nearest brothel.

A tiny shutter in the door swung back. He was scrutinized then admitted. It was not a brothel to which he had ever been before. The grossly fat madam smiled at him, wrinkling her raddled cheeks, and showed him to a room in which two women sat at a table, playing cards.

"This is Rose, and this is Yvonne," said the madam. "You can take your choice."

Riley regarded the women indifferently. They had risen at his entrance and were smiling at him. They were raddled like the madam. They wore high-heeled red shoes and black stockings and dresses that reached only half-way down their thighs. He indicated the younger, who came forward and slipped her arm round his waist.

"Do you want to love me, darling?" she said mechanically.

In her room she examined him to make sure that he suffered from no disease, annointed him with a smear of ointment, then extended her hand.

"You'll give me some money first, darling?"

He dropped five shillings into her hand. She put it away in a drawer, then went to the bed, pulling up her short dress and smiling fixedly.

It was over in a moment.

Ten minutes after he had entered the brothel Riley was out in the street again. Fatigue oppressed him but the fever was out of his blood, and even of Theodora he could for the nonce think calmly.¹⁸

Even taking these passages out of context it is hard to see their power to provoke the response of the local critics. They might indeed serve as museum pieces demonstrating what Australian readers of those years were told to regard as indecent. While Harcourt's book may have surprised, it would be oddly naive to suggest readers could not evaluate its prose and its ideas, and that they should demand its banning. When in August 1934 the book was removed from Perth bookshops it was not as a result of readers' anguish or disgust.

What was disturbing to some sections of Perth society was the book's attitude to police and judiciary, and its statements of corruption and bias. Harcourt in discussing the banning named a journalist and police official he believed to be behind the local reviews of the book and the police action.¹⁹ Harcourt had by then moved to Melbourne, where he worked in journalism and radio. He was told that he would have been prosecuted had he remained in Western Australia. Similar action to remove the book from sale was taken in New South Wales, and towards the end of the year the Customs Department forbade importation of the book. *Upsurge* became another on the list of banned publications of that infamous period, where censorship was directed not by a reading public seeking cultural and intellectual blinkers, but by government officials of varying position and a few zealots of various persuasions. Harcourt seems to have taken this view, since his comments over the Perth action are not directed at a reading public that had, for whatever reasons, wanted to read his book, but a few, named, individuals.

Though this second novel might be said to have in this respect ended disastrously, Harcourt quoted the *Mirror* as suggesting: "We can do without much of this nature—but what a rush there'll be for Harcourt's next book."²⁰

The rush failed to materialise. *It Never Fails*, in 1937,²¹ proved a very different novel from *Upsurge*, though it covered some of the same ground, and if the public still remembered the earlier novel, they would hardly have expected this as a successor. Its publishers termed it 'a glorious satire on the Australian nation.'

The first two novels had been set in small, closed communities. *It Never Fails* ranged in picaresque fashion around Australia. Its central figure, Julius Windowen, arrives at Fremantle as an emigrant from England, looking for work. At the port he is taken for an English lord by a newspaper reporter, and though he denies this, allows the cynical reporter to write him up as Lord Persiflex, eldest son of the Earl of Norts. In return the reporter helps him find a position on a Perth newspaper.

Windowen is insulted by the customs officer who would like to see a duty on 'bloody pommies', and have them subjected to the notorious language test.

From the beginning, Windowen is to encounter this antipathy to Poms. Almost as soon as he arrives in Perth he is involved in a brawl between unemployed and police outside the Premier's office.

Some harsh voices began to sing the *International*. Red flags waved. Julius was reminded acutely of home.

And there was something else reminiscent of home about this angry, unwashed crowd of unemployed. What was it? Their voices? Those cries of hatred and despair were not uttered in the shattering accents of the Antipodes, but in those of Home. They were cries such as he might have heard in any town of the Midlands, or in London itself; for there were Cockney voices as there were Northumberland voices, but they were the Cockney voices of home! And gazing about him with suddenly opened eyes, Julius beheld English faces; drawn, want-marked, despairing English faces. They were his countrymen, pommies almost to a man. The Antipodean sun had drained the red from their cheeks, leaving a dirty, unhealthy pallor. Yet they were plainly his countrymen. Suddenly he started. Could it be true? Could they . . . did they bear a facial resemblance to potatoes?²²

The riot is the same as that described in *Upsurge*.²³ But the attitude and style have changed. The implications are no longer local, but seen in a wider context. And while *Upsurge* held a seriousness and sense of commitment, indeed involvement, there is a lightness, an irony, that comes through the most pointed scenes of *It Never Fails*. There is a detachment never apparent in *Upsurge*, a sense of the humorous that lightened *The Pearlers*. Windowen is knocked over by the police, as he watches the demonstration, and finds himself in hospital, then in court, charged with taking part in the riot and attacking a police officer. Again, it is the court that tried the unemployed of *Upsurge*, but the scene now is obvious satire. The magistrate is not the man who was perplexed and troubled by his duties and the conflict of opinion and feeling these bring him, as in *Upsurge*, but a figure cynically upholding one class of society against another. He dismisses Windowen's attempt to explain how he was unintentionally involved in a demonstration he did not understand, and had been injured deliberately by a policeman. The magistrate accuses Windowen of 'brutally assaulting a constable . . . (and) making . . . wanton and irresponsible statements'. The magistrate concludes:

I may say that, bearing in mind its duty to the public, the court would not have been justified in believing them even if they had been true!²⁴

From this point Windowen is portrayed as the injured innocent, whose best efforts meet betrayal and failure. The reporter publishes his story of the meeting with Lord Persiflex, in which he claims Persiflex had been hoping to travel incognito in Australia while making 'a comprehensive study of the psychology of our workers'.

The general attitude of dislike of the English costs Windowen the girl he is attracted to, who will make love with him, but not be seen by her friends in his company, and would have cost him any chance of working on a newspaper, until he informs the editor he had worked on *The Times*. Windowen has realised that in this new land he had better abandon 'honesty as a practical policy'. The other edge of Harcourt's satire emerges here, the Poms and things English are despised, but a clear evidence of snobbery and servility to some English institutions and attitudes is alive and well.

Windowen is sent to Darwin to cover a report of two missing Dutch airmen, lost on a flight from Timor to Darwin. While Windowen's plane is in Broome a

corrupt pearler suggests to him that the Dutch aviator was trying to bring in drugs. From Darwin Windowen takes a lugger to search the coast for the airmen and the drugs. On his return he finds another journalist from Perth has sent in a highly colored story of the finding of the two airmen. The account is given in full, and has some obvious echoes of De Rougemont. Windowen's recent experience of the area and of the possibilities of survival in it are limited, but sufficient to suggest the reporter's story is 'preposterous'. He sends his own account, contradicting much of the published report. He is told from Perth that the two airmen are now heroes and his account is 'scurrilous' and probably libellous. He is to return at once.

The incident, like the riot outside the Treasury Buildings in Perth, has a basis in fact and obviously refers to the flight by two Germans, Bertram and Klausmann, in 1932. The two airmen crossed the Timor Sea, were lost, and landed off Wyndham, where they survived for 53 days. The episode had a wide publicity at the time, and is at the present time being made into a film, set in Broome, apparently with the title used by Bertram for his own account in a book *Flight Into Hell*.

Windowen, discredited for trying to publish what he believed to be the truth, returned to Broome, where he was employed as a shell opener, robbed of his wages, and threatened with a false charge of stealing a pearl by the pearler who had suggested the drug angle to the story of the airmen. More than ever disillusioned by Australia, he is allowed to take a boat to Queensland, where he goes to Townsville.

In the Broome episode Harcourt offers the same scenes of pearling, the luggers, and the town which he had used in *The Pearlers*, and while these are now abbreviated, the implications go beyond Broome, have less of the sharp local reference that marked the earlier book.

In Townsville Windowen is, by now predictably, betrayed by the daughter of a plantation owner he tries to help in a struggle against the extortion of the Italian *Camorra* an organisation exploiting, among other things, the sugar cane plantation owners. Windowen finds it hard to believe in this, and suggests his friend call the police.

"The police!" echoed the other with a bitter smile . . . They will not believe there is any such thing as *Camorra*. It is private Italian feud, they say: let them fight for themselves; they are only dagoes, anyway. But even if that were not so, of what use would be the police? They arrest, perhaps, this agent who call upon me, and the next night I see my sugar in flames . . .²⁵

This network of extortion and graft has a distinctly contemporary flavor in the numerous recent inquiries into drug trafficking, and suggests these networks are hardly a recent phenomenon.

Windowen is beaten up and shipped out of the area in a railway truck, to find himself again in gaol, by now completely sceptical of Australian courts. He carries a swag outback and finds a fencing job.

Here his apparent impersonation of Lord Persiflex catches up with him. He is suspected of murdering a man believed to be Lord Persiflex because of papers stolen from him in Townsville. He is accused of taking the identity of the murdered man, as Lord Persiflex. Believing no court in Australia is going to accept his account of what has in fact happened, he claims to be Lord Persiflex.

The satire moves to Sydney where as an English lord Windowen finds everything before him. He now has to cope with daughters set after him by ambitious mothers, businessmen offering places on their company boards, and an array of social occasions, culminating in an invitation by the Governor who knew the

father of the real lord. Windowen escapes on a boat he discovers is heading for the South Pole.

There is some neat and often relevant satire. Some of it translates easily enough into today's Australia. But in widening his view, Harcourt lost the particular force of his earlier restricted settings. There seems no real bite to the satire, apt though much of it is. After *Upsurge* it is all oddly detached, and perhaps too manufactured, as if the writer would now rather laugh at than attack the weaknesses he exposes. Harcourt found nothing funny in *Upsurge*. It seems he found nothing serious in *It Never Fails*.

Harcourt claimed his last book was ignored, despite the controversy over *Upsurge*, and that it dropped out of sight. This would seem borne out by its scarcity in Australia, though it went to three impressions in England. Perhaps satire was not a popular or much practised mode in Australia at the time. Perhaps by 1937 there had been other novels that made *Upsurge* seem less unusual, novels with a force not apparent in Harcourt's satire. And possibly Western Australian readers were again enjoying the chance to fit names to characters with the publishing in the same year of Seaforth Mackenzie's *The Young Desire It*²⁶—something they could continue in the following year with a novel set in Perth and suggesting, at least as pointedly as *Upsurge* had seemed to do, people well enough known, *Chosen People*.²⁷

Harcourt's books did become ignored. Indeed lost. Yet he had, with such varying result, offered during the decade three novels unusual in their time and place, in some respects far in advance of it.

NOTES:

1. *The Pearlers*, London, John Long, nd. (1933).
2. See Peter Cowan, *Broome, A Fiction*, Westerly 3, 1983.
3. Norbar, *The West Australian* 13 November, 1937.
4. J. M. Harcourt, *The Banning of Upsurge*, Overland 46 (70-71).
5. *Upsurge*, London, John Long, nd. (1934).
6. *Daily News*, 15 August, 1934.
7. John K. Ewers, *Money Street*, London, Hodder & Stoughton, 1933.
8. *Money Street*, Perth, Patersons Press, 1948.
9. *The Banning of Upsurge*.
10. *Upsurge*, pp. 101-102.
11. For discussion of *Upsurge*, see D. J. Grant, *Not so Fine a Country to Starve In*, Westerly 2, 1973; and Veronica Brady and Peter Cowan, *The Novel, The Literature of Western Australia* ed. Bruce Bennett, University of W.A. Press, Nedlands, 1979.
12. *The Banning of Upsurge*.
13. *The Times Literary Supplement*, 26 April, 1934.
14. *The Daily News*, 28 April, 1934.
15. *The West Australian*, 2 June, 1934.
16. *Upsurge*, p. 101.
17. ibid, pp. 76-77.
18. ibid, pp. 189-190.
19. *The Banning of Upsurge*.
20. ibid.
21. *It Never Fails: Being a narrative of the adventures of Julius Windowen among the natives of the Antipodes*, London, John Long, nd. (1937).
22. ibid, pp. 25-26.
23. For discussion and illustration of the riot scenes in *Upsurge* see D. J. Grant op. cit.
24. *It Never Fails*, p. 37.
25. ibid, p. 162.
26. Seaforth Mackenzie, *The Young Desire It*, London, Jonathon Cape., 1937.
27. Seaforth Mackenzie, *Chosen People*, London, Jonathan Cape, 1938.

STEPHEN EDGAR

The Fitting

Cold from salt water on a gusty beach,
A small child shrieking at the wind,
I raised my arms. My father's sweater dropped
Like night. He didn't need it. Blind,
Delighted, I tunnelled till my head emerged
Though my arms could scarcely reach
Halfway, leaving the sleeves to drag the ground
Like an ape's knuckles. No doubt
I briefly wondered how long it would be
Till such a prodigious garment was a perfect fit.

Another day with water and a wind
And a need to keep away the cold,
Jibbing at first, like tomb robbers who lose
Their heads in the dark, but growing bold,
Warming to the task, my brother and I
Go through his things to find
Among the shirts, old sweaters, trousers, piled
Shoes (one pair never worn)
Something that fits, since he won't need them, and see
In the speechless mirror what we've dressed for now we've grown.

ELIZABETH SMITHER

On first taking on an animal

On first taking on an animal

I foresee a voyage in which your heart
Cannot be kept at sleeve-level
Though you stay close to a kennel.

I foresee all kinds of theology
Natural history, ideas of heaven
Demanding proof as bones and teeth.

I foresee something broken and put back
Softened where it does not show
A meeting across an abyss.

Angry Penguins

Editors: Max Harris—John Reed

1945



Melbourne of the 1940's: Albert Tucker's *Angry Penguins* cover

The Surreal Decade: Swaying in the Forties

Ration books, whatever became of ration books? Those little buff pocketbooks, the coloured tickets and a neat pair of scissors tied to the shop counter, these are so deeply ingrained in my childhood as to seem inevitable, not memorable. They have a routine quality, like *Champion* or "The Search for the Golden Boomerang" or visits to the flicks on Saturday arvo, hoping against hope for a film marked out by June Allyson's distillation of corny sweetness. And opposite the deep naturalness of all these—in the mind's other eye—are to be found the forties' inherently surrealist artefacts: gas producers on the left front mudguards of cars, slit trenches, gas masks and midget submarines, all worthy of the starkly graphic imagination of an Eric Thake or a Paul Nash. One recurrent social problem was that of how to cope with rainwater in trenches, especially when there were toddlers at hand. Also, what on earth was done with all that camouflage netting one learned to knot? Of gas masks, on the other hand, I have never lost the stale, rubbery smell.

When, a few years ago now, I cobbled together a cluster of reflections on "my" 1930s the job was easy, the problems of selection few, for my best-loved screen memories were just sitting up there like Jacky, waiting to be made use of, waiting to be strung together. The forties come harder, since in dealing with that faraway but larger memory-field I have to take account of causation and chronology. In the wake of syntax-acquisition, there comes history.

The forties have their music too, their distinctive flavour, nonetheless. At one end of the dial sound the beguiling strains of "Lili Marlene" and "The Lady from Twentynine Palms" (or was it Forty-nine?), familiar occasions for escape: both, differently, with desert associations. At the other end were darker musics which I did not yet know how to hear. Like this, for instance:

Nietzsche respected the great god Plumb
That lays his pipes in a baby's tum.
Beneath our logic's pure avowals
Heheha rd the murmur of the bowels.

(James McAuley, "The Family of Love")

Or the fact that another unknown, Judith Wright, was declaring that "The trains go north with guns." As a schoolboy I knew nothing of the peculiar utterances of the modern arts; my classmates still called Picasso "Pig's arse-o" and Dad was to tell me on one occasion that a poet called T. S. Eliot had written, "The sun was setting like half a tinned apricot into a sea of junket." And, ah yes, I did know the private collection of our grandest friend, Hilda (Mrs. R. D.) Elliott, a per-

sonal gallery which displayed Orpen, Brangwyn, Degas and the wrong John, Elioth Gruner and Blamire Young. Of more interest to me was the fact that she kept kangaroos in her Toorak front garden. A bit weird, that was. Even as a young kid I was aware that she was privileged: she was one of the Finks, whatever they were.

I have on the desk beside me a copy of the *Herald* for Thursday, January 4, 1945. The day was warm, 82 degrees F.—poor old Fahrenheit, I still can't do without it in these diminished Celsian days—and we were probably on summer holidays, I do not believe we said, "holidayed", during the War. But it is the front page of this newspaper which brings rushing back my common childhood terms of reference: "NEW ATTACK ON NAZI WEDGE", "ALLIES ON MANDALAY RAILWAY", "CANADIANS PRESS ON N.W. OF RAVENNA", "TURKEY BREAKS WITH JAPAN" and "NEW GREEK LEADER FORMS CABINET AS GUNS ROAR". No wonder we all knew so much geography in those days; one of my exact contemporaries still remembers the capitals of all the countries in the world, as they were in 1939.

It was not only a World War; it was also a war world. Come August 1945 and the flurry of VJ Day, my main source of puzzlement was to be what on earth they would put in the papers now it was peacetime. You cannot get much media mileage out of the return of Jack Baird's pace bowling to the Carlton team, nor out of such items as "Mr. J. D. G. Medley, Vice-Chancellor of the University, is spending the holidays at Khancoban and will return to Melbourne on January 15." In the event, the editors do not seem to have been troubled: politics is just a way of continuing war by other means.

Let me place a figure in the picture, my own. I begin the decade as a small boy going off with his mother and younger brother to share an aunt's timber house at the seaside (Grandma is there too), because Dad has sailed away towards the impending war in Malaya and will not be back—except for one brief compassionate leave—for five years; I end it as a swarthy, lumpy youth of sixteen scarping through a science Matric by the skin of my teeth and finding a job as Junior Technical Officer at the Royal Mint, William Street, Melbourne, there to work amid the buying and smelting of gold, the smelting and stamping of bronze or silver coinage. The intervening period is stuffed full of schooldays, full of sustained routines, inkblots, nicknames, lunchbags and only rare showings of memorabilia. I begin by going from one small school, Yarra Bank, to another, and then on to another, where we start French at six, Latin at seven. There's history for you. I move to a very large school indeed ("The biggest boys' school in the southern hemisphere", but then I recall that Nelly Kelly's Passionfruit Nursery in Sandringham was also the biggest in the southern hemisphere), where one-and-a-half thousand boys could be loosely deployed in picturesque landscape settings, and stay there for eight years and more. For nine years, after Black Rock, we are crammed into a tiny flat hugger-mugger, just off Toorak Road. Only reffos or bachelors are meant to live in flats; ordinary people have, or rent, houses with gardens around them. My mother ignores this palpable fact, willing to put up with being a sardine for the sake of a toffy address: we can buy our chops and cakes and potatoes in Toorak Village. Having no garden, we play in the street. An old tennis ball bounces interminably against brick walls. Forty-love.

Buildings were not being completed those days, so that "paddocks" or vacant blocks were common everywhere, some even with names, like Payne's Paddock. We played in the paddock round the corner, where delightful collages of household rubbish had been tipped to form treasure-hoards mingled with cork-ridged elm-suckers, blackberry strands, dry native grasses, milkthistles and harlequin armies of soldier beetles, the latter yielding jade-green blood when squashed.

Sometimes, at best, I might happen on an old clock or a broken wind-up toy; but in rusty tins the redbacked spiders lay in wait, as Peter Cowan was to recall in a powerful short story.

It was my mother who had some awareness of what moved artistically. Before the war her friends had included pianists, potters, painters and printmakers, but global melodrama and the need to look after two boys had cut other cultural input. Once he had escaped from the jungles of Burma, a thousand miles on foot, lost most of the time and Missing Believed Dead, Dad had it much easier. Stravaging around India, Persia and Lebanon, he could wallow in costume and drama and ruined temples, devour exotica, take snaps, imagine the sweep of tribes, peoples, dynasties through the Krac des Chevaliers, the Red Mosque and Shepherd's Hotel, keeping alive in his heart the ideals of Norman Lindsay and the great illustrators. Fortified by a century of illustration, his response to most modern painting was an easy one: "The bugger can't draw." But I was only to hear this line in the latter half of the decade. Until then my father was a faraway source of photos, flimsy airletters rich with oriental travel details, and curvilinear gifts in lacquer or brass from China and India. He was geography personified: already I could see how he idealized Ptolemy the Great, Asoka the Furious, Alexander—not the British field marshal but Iskandar himself.

History diffuses as much as it classifies: indeed, it dissipates aura because it classifies things and places them in boxes; it is earnest metonymy, not prestidigitating metaphor. But mute household objects, humble tastes and modest smells retain their eloquence through some innately mongrel or maverick quality. So the 1940s are for me still encapsulated in chops, cauliflower cheese and those sparsely fluted metal containers in which were served the chocolate malted milks I loved so well; in the wooden grid that floored the central area of trams; in the smell of a summer northerly bringing malthouse and Rosella tomato sauce flavours richly over from Richmond; in dust and fallen tickets by the wicket gates on railway platforms; in thin, flat wafers of Beechnut chewing gum, the currency of our American invaders; in aeroplane scrapbooks; and in the prickly feeling of grey worsted suitpants (short until Form Two, then long) against my sweaty legs after a lunchtime spent playing some hectic game in the school grounds. Zinc, chromium, manganese . . . in those lost days I became obsessed by the chemical properties of metals. I wanted to own a jar of potassium dichromate crystals.

It was a time of displacement and imaginative subversion as well as of common participation in that abstract solidarity which was called "the war effort" or, later, "reconstruction". People were moved from place to place in random ways. Not only was Nolan sent off to the Wimmera, there to discover newly expressionist landscape images; not only were Harold Stewart and McAuley sent south to Victoria Barracks, St. Kilda Road, there to give birth to that gaudy bell-wether, Ern Malley; not only was Patrick White sent to the Aegean and Slessor to the Western Desert. Dad breezed into Baalbek, Isfahan, the Shalimar Gardens. Whole schools went up country to escape from incipient Japanese bombs. Whole industries changed their identities. And many familiar products, like the penny Nestlés, vanished from daily life. Most surreal of all, there were a few years in which, for the first and last time, it was patriotic to be a Communist.

Whatever the war effort was doing, it was also peeling back piecemeal the sunlit surfaces of life, revealing mental flora as bizarre as Albert Tucker's *Images of Modern Evil* or such lines as these, hatched from A. D. Hope's often parnasian imagination:

Full sail the proud three-decker sandwiches
with the eye-fumbled priestesses repass;
On their swan lake the enchanted ice-creams freeze,
The amorous fountain prickles in the glass
And at the introit of this mass emotion
She comes, she comes, a balanced pillar of blood

"Morning Coffee"

This was the decade in which Hope also wrote "The Damnation of Byron", an extended sexual nightmare unlike anything before it in our literature. From the present world of genteel letters, it has become almost unimaginable; from the present hermaphroditic climate, downright rude. Which reminds us that this was not only the time of midnight-oilstained Ern Malley but of something far creepier, McAuley's apocalyptic "The Incarnation of Sirius". It seems that there were angry penguins under everybody's pillow.

But nothing of this artwork was visible to a boy growing up, quietly enough, sweetly enough, sportingly enough, through the bipartite forties. The only real artistic flurry I can dredge back from those years was the journalistic brouhaha over the Archibald Prize for 1943. For my rapid-reading machinery it was a span of time that began with William, Biggles and *Puck of Pook's Hill*, and ended with an undifferentiated mishmash of Mark Twain, Keats, mathematical puzzles, Neville Cardus, *Eyeless in Gaza*, *The Rape of the Lock* and *Ulysses*. The one thing I was clear about was that all nineteenth century prose was unreadable, an extended hoax foisted upon us by adults: well, by some adults.

By the end of 1950 habit-sets were slipping and sliding. I went for almost the first time to surf beaches instead of the flat, tepid waters of the bay. I had sharpened up my net game, but the old backhand was still my weakness. The local municipal library—for we had changed to an outer suburb—proved to be marvellously rich in Bloomsbury colourations, Gide and Stendhal; I not only read *Aspects of the Novel* but excitedly followed up all Forster's tips, nothing but the cetaceously fat *Moby Dick* failing to make an impression. Summerly suntanning daily, such was my private fealty to Apollo, I waited for news about my impending job. Communists were bad once again, Korea improbably offering itself as a potential flashpoint. My father was working for General Motors-Holdens while remaining a steady advocate of the Red Army against "that bastard, Kai-Chek". I and my peers knew all the models of shiny Yank-tanks while our hearts burned for natty little English sports cars. England still produced quality, and Japanese cheap, tinny junk. I bought a brown pork-pie hat, along with some army disposals shirts. It was time at last to start working in the city: all those marvellous hours of reading on the train.

Soon, for the gap before metallurgy classes at night school, I discovered the Hoddle, an Italian eating house with a studious queue all the way up its terrazzo stairs to Little Collins Street. It was the first trattoria I had ever encountered. It had an aura, a very modest aura, which remains with me still, as clear as day and as thick as evening. Thick white table-cloths, thick white china, thick white bread with hard crusts and, it goes without saying, minestrone for starters. I was now fairly launched in the city. The National Gallery and the Public Library waited under their flat grey dome, prepared to swallow me up.

Under that dome, like a blocked and ruinous gateway, hung Russel Drysdale's overwhelming picture, "The Rabbiter". The surreal had left its spoor in Melbourne, reproaching all pastoral.

BOOKS

Robert Drewe, *The Bodysurfers*, James Fraser, 1983, 165 pp., \$6.95.

Beverley Farmer, *Milk*, Penguin, 1983, 178 pp., \$6.95.

James McQueen, *Uphill Runner*, Penguin, 1984, 202 pp., \$5.95.

Frank Moorhouse (ed.), *State of the Art*, Penguin, 1983, 280 pp., \$9.95.

Bruce Pascoe (ed.), *Australian Short Stories*, journal, distrib. Gordon & Gotch. \$2.95.

The short story is one of the most durable literary forms in the history of Australian writing, and in the publication of several recent anthologies of stories, there is ample evidence that the form is alive and well, and contributing to the process of rigorous self-examination which seems to typify much Australian art at the present moment.

The "State of the Art", to borrow the title of Frank Moorhouse's selection, is well advanced, and the story is undergoing something of a resurgence in popularity. The anthology *The State of the Art* (Penguin, 1983) is a book of expertly crafted, confidently written pieces in a variety of styles and formats, in which the form is stretched from the more stolid centre of carefully observed realism to the limits of ingenuity in typography and language. It is a book of sophisticated stories, requiring an alert reader capable of a broad range of response.

The "state of the art" is an embarrassing term: one which you might hear from an armaments salesman as much as in a stereo shop. "Oh that? It's the state of the art: you can't get anything more . . ." Frank Moorhouse, as editor of the anthology of that name, makes large claims in his introduction for the contemporaneity of the view of Australia, and the comprehensive review of the state of short fiction in Australia offered by his selection. He avoids the better known writers in his search for the "burning edge" (p.1), and is honest about his interest in stories which play around "with structure, language or arrangement to make pleasing shapes of meaning or

patterns of sensation—beautiful toys" (p.3). While the anthology achieves a good overview of the variety of ingenious approaches applied to the complex form, I am not sure that Moorhouse achieves the "map of social concerns" (p.1) which he sees behind the stories of the last decade with anything like cartographic clarity. The literary and biographical base from which literature is drawn is fortunately far too various for that.

James McQueen's *Uphill Runner* (Penguin, 1984) and Beverley Farmer's *Milk* (Penguin, 1983) make an interesting comparison. McQueen is a "masculine" writer: more often than not he assumes the masculine viewpoint, and emotion is inferred rather than directly stated, as in the title story, in which, after having been carefully observed by the male narrator as appearing "strangely pinched" and "different . . . over the past year", a character shoots himself with a shotgun after a hunting party. Sometimes this laconism works against the impact of the story, yet when it succeeds the tragic tone is more effectively achieved, as in the bleak exploration of guilt before death in "A Diminishing Balance" and the adept use of ironic manipulation of narratorial persona in "Funeral in Tautira". In the latter story the tensions of the central relationship are economically implied through a more direct exploration of the male narrator's reactions, and despite his throwaway manner, the rawness of his feelings, caught in the stop-start, up-down world of friendship with an addict, is more readily fully evoked.

Beverley Farmer, on the other hand, is concerned with an entirely different range of experiences and registers of feeling. Her characters move in more blurred situations than McQueen's solid and familiar settings. Australians visiting and living in Greece: Greeks who have emigrated to Australia; first generations of Greeks in Australia seeking to adapt to their setting. The feelings of characters are more directly explored from a more involved viewpoint: witness the following from one of the best stories in the collection, "At the Airport". The narrator (a woman, as are most of the narratorial personae) has just watched her former husband leave for Greece with her beloved son.

"No self-pity, she thinks, having worked hard to keep her composure, the outward signs of dignity, intact. It is her crust, her

shell. Her carapace. Loss and the fear of loss assail her." (p.57)

Contrast the above with the following passage from McQueen's "In the Money". Jimmy has just fought a remarkable fight against a far more powerful adversary, taking a severe beating, but he and his friend have made the money they wanted to make on the bets, and Vic is patching up the battered Jimmy.

'Knuckle's broke, too,' said Jimmy. 'I felt it go at the end there . . .'
'I know,' said Vic. 'Don't worry bout it.'
'No.'
Then. 'He took some stopping, didn't he?'
'He sure did.'
'But I wrapped him up, didn't I?'
'You bet.'
'How much we get?'
'Nearly fifteen thousand, all told.' (p.128)

In the extract from Farmer, the shell is there, and recognised as a barrier between emotion and expression: in the extract of McQueen's, despite the begging Jimmy gets little praise from Vic for his efforts. The constraints of the male setting cramp emotion.

Robert Drewe's *The Bodysurfers* (James Fraser, 1983) is a close-knit set of stories in which characters appear and reappear, and archetypal contemporary families and settings are delineated and coalesce as each successive story is read. The stories cover a more impressive range of narrative approach and method than McQueen or Farmer, ranging from surreal and disquieting dreams and their origins (at the end of "The Bodysurfers") to a spare journalistic mode (in "Sweetlip") and his use of American settings (as in "Looking for Malibu") allows similar oblique insights into the nature of being Australian by displacement as does Beverley Farmer's use of Greece.

What makes *Bodysurfers* a more satisfying collection to read as a whole is the clear theme that runs through the book, well implied by the pun in the book's title: "the body's surface". Here are people at the edge of a continent, sandwiched between desert and sea, living the "robustly hedonistic" life which Moorhouse sees evidenced in *The State of the Art*, and yet still only skimming the surface of their own fears and foibles, "bodysurfing" the waves of the unconscious.

To me the most effective stories in bringing this theme out are the last two in the selection, "The Last Explorer", and "Stingray". In the

former, an unidentified explorer (the symbolic nature of his life's calling is obvious as a metaphor) is recovering in hospital from a stroke at the age of eighty-two, and "from his bed at the end of the ward he can see the Indian Ocean" (p.148). Though the explorer cannot swim, this is no matter: his ocean is the desert, and he unhesitatingly calls his camels "ships of the desert", using them to move about the trackless wastes with the same confidence that Kevin Parnell shows in his swimming in the seat in "The Silver Medallist". The last explorer's final gesture as death approaches is to turn his bed so that it is "facing the desert" (p.155), yet this is no reaction of fear: rather it is a gesture of readiness and courage in that he is prepared to face the powerful emotions the centre calls forth, emotions others are not willing to face. The "Fleet Street boys" want a frisson for their readers, the B.B.C. for their listeners.

"A Fleet Street interviewer asked him in 1913 what the desert meant to him. The question stopped him in his tracks. 'Finding your own love', he remembers replying. Moira touched his sleeve. It still embarrasses him to recall saying it." (p.153)

This brief passage demonstrates well the economy of Drewe's style. Moira is the B.B.C.'s publicity woman, who took him out to lunch after his broadcast and with whom he discovered a fair affinity. She seems to understand his liking for the desert, and what it brings out in him: witness the seemingly insignificant gesture of touching his sleeve. When Grace, his wife who "would not face the desert" (p.150) finally died, the explorer tried to write to Moira in reply to a letter of hers, but threw the letters away, yet the revelation of love, which he achieved in those few words in front of Moira, and her response, merely hinted at in the involuntary action of Moira's touching his sleeve, are an important consummation of his life. The explorer is one who has gone beneath the surface of things.

In "Stingray", David is stung by a fish, probably a stingray. The pain of the unexpected wounding "spreads quickly to deeper levels and expands" (p.159) and it is through this pain that the foreground of his life comes into a new perspective. Driving back to his flat he is struck by the idea that he is poisoned, and death seems a distinct possibility. Once at the

flat his sense of physical existence changes: "The hand dominates the room" so much that "he wishes to relinquish responsibility for it as he has done for much of his past life" (p.161). He thinks of ringing up his former wife Angela, cool and competent in a crisis, who is now living with Gordon, who is "... wonderful with the kids, she'd said, driving a barb into David's heart," (p.161). The wound so dominates his existence at that moment that the rest of his world is construed in its terms.

Instead he telephones Victoria, whose present relationship is in its final stages. She takes him to hospital, and in the same ward a nurse called Hilary, who has swallowed an overdose of pills, is roughly made to recover. Hilary and David's recovery are paralleled: "David wants nothing more at this instant than for Hilary to recover," (p.164), and by the story's end David and Victoria are shocked into an apparently stable friendship.

These stories are perhaps the most striking examples of characterisation going beneath the surface. The explorer actively and deliberately, and David fortuitously, achieve insights into the depths of incomprehension that surround accustomed daily existence, and their lives are changed. All too often in the other stories the shifts in understanding are achieved by careful authorial control of the story's ending. The final paragraph of "In Search of Malibu" sees a sudden distance intervene between the bizarre events and the character's memory of them. Much time ("... over the years . . .") and many events (David and Angela's separation: note the same names as employed in "Stingray") are compressed into a brief space, and yet there is no loss of control, and the ending does not in the least frustrate the reader by being slick and manipulative.

In such an outstanding collection of twelve stories, a worthy successor to *The Savage Crows* in their exploration of the most recent developments in our vision of ourselves, especially in the American context, the only false note is "Sweetlip". As mentioned earlier, this is dry and journalistic, and appears to have sprung from two pieces which Drewe wrote for the *Bulletin*¹. For those who may remember the original, the fictional treatment offers nothing more, and that is perhaps the greatest criticism one can make: the material of journalism is not used with the same gruesome effect-

iveness as in say, the 'thrill killing' in "The Bodysurfers".

The most encouraging sign of the buoyancy of the short fiction market is the appearance from a Melbourne-based editor, Bruce Pascoe, of a regular anthology, *Australian Short Stories*, now well into its first year. The format is most intriguing. With eye-catching, solidly coloured covers, and illustrations which genuinely complement the text, the magazine seems to be aimed at the leisure time reader (one cover on volume one, number four, shows a figure at the beach in a shining wet inner tube reading that edition) who sees reading as being possibly enjoyable. The stories are by a good balance of established and newer writers, and use conventional and novel approaches and styles: designed perhaps to extend a reader without enraging. It is a pleasing reflection of the wealth of talent available (Moorhouse in *State of the Art*, for example, says that his shortlist was of 1500 published and 1200 unpublished stories) that newer writers such as Tim Winton and Helen Garner can rub shoulders with older writers such as Kylie Tennant and Alan Marshall, and be so ably supported by such sensitive artwork: Mary Leunig's illustration for "The Usherette" on page 33 of Volume One, number 2, is a good example.

To use Frank Moorhouse's terms, the "bright and openminded readership" which is "tuned to the form" (p.3) seems to be there, and from the anthologies discussed the state of the art appears to be a healthy one.

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1. "Inquest to be held into Island Death", *Bulletin*, 4/8/1981, p.31.
"Bizarre aspects emerge in Rowe Inquest", *Bulletin*, 1/9/1981, pp.30-32.
"Death in Paradise", *Bulletin*, 7/6/1981, pp. 22-30.

JOHN WEBB

RURAL MYTHOPŒIA: PHILIP SALOM'S "THE PROJECTIONIST"

"*The Projectionist*" by Philip Salom, 77 pages, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1983, \$7.50.

Like Philip Salom's first book, "*The Silent Piano*" (1980), this is poetry which requires and justifies, much re-reading. Individual poems are often a maze of ideas that harden into concrete images, or they are portraits which convey personality through an intense stylization akin to much modern sculpture.

The projectionist of the title, Mr. Benchley, is the first character to be introduced in this poem sequence. The reader initially "sees" him in a sort of suspended animation, a state which ushers in an atmosphere of stillness that pervades the book, a stillness paralleling the sometimes ominous quietness of the country landscapes Salom knows so well. But if Mr. Benchley is found silent, it is only because he has a store of violent and vivid memories:

Retired projectionist, sits day-long
under the skylight.
Unfilament light pours down
glows on his fingers
his bald head
carved ivory.

Lurking in the present and the re-called pasts of Salom's characters is the constant threat of some menacing spirit, some guilt or emotional paralysis that verges on engulfing them. Central to Mr. Benchley's catalogue of fears and anxieties is "Always the threat of fire" resulting from the trauma of a particular memory. His emotional core is deadened and without will. His workshed is his only sanctuary:

In his workshed
now, mute, he touches
the silent images:
blade, oil-stone, plane.
With floating white dust
polishes a projector's
metal spools, sprocket wheels,
condensed on thick glass.

This poem, ending as it does with Mr. Benchley's communing with the artifacts of his past, also introduces the theme of memory and its relationship to current behaviour, a theme which permeates the book in a variety of manifestations.

Much of Salom's poetry is dense with metaphors, metaphors generally so lucid and precise that they quickly focus the reader's mind on actual experiences rather than obfuscating them. The portrait of Mrs. Benchley, for example, consists of grossly unflattering variations upon her goat-like nature and appearance. There is an uncanny ugliness, one which aspires to the creation of some bizarre or Satanic terror, in the features which emerge:

From where I lean on the sill
there seems the goat's head
grown from her shoulder, and six
legs straining at the ground.

The description here is redolent of some of the bucolic horror recorded in Keneally's *A Dutiful Daughter* wherein human nature merges gruesomely and destructively with the rest of the animal world.

The poet's voice, in *Mrs. Benchley* as in other poems, frequently expresses the discovery of paradoxes; there is both anger and attraction when confronted by "the deformity/of her goodness". The speaker in this poem (and in *Seeing*) draws an unspecified strength from the pantheistic philosophy of the Sufis, though it is a strength rooted in fatalism. *Mrs. Benchley* concludes starkly with the speaker brooding on his relationship with greater knowledge. It is difficult to convey the momentum of the whole just by quoting a few lines, but something of the poem's cold clarity and perverse beauty might be revealed by the following fragment:

I have stood there in the head-killing wind
pierced by the line that pierces
all things
stolen the blood across my shoulders
that nears ecstasy
only to know random
delays on the heart, my sense a poor bird
stunned by static.
Of what is light and dark,
film flickering at the gate
neither fully
annihilated or renewed.
To search further upon the self
is to ask how am I in knowledge?
How am I any useful part in this?
And hear nothing . . .

Some of the poems in the sequence unfold with complete simplicity, though the opportunity is rarely lost to equate a physical reality with a spiritual state; thus, in *Out* the search for a leak in waterpipes suggests the possibility of fixing a mind that is also "leaking upwards". In *The Coast* the finely balanced lyrical description ("vigilant water among the rocks,/ fusion of light") evolves towards a rarer statement of emotional harmony. In the ebbing and flowing of the sea, the rising and setting of the sun, the poet too can find more of order in his existence:

As here I too feel within myself
fragmentary shell and tang,
and here too feel
light
shimmering and returning.

At times, pin-pointing the "self" in this poetry is difficult. Although he is often the

poetic observer and maker of *The Coast*, he is often more complex, more camouflaged, seeming more disembodied spirit or idea than human commentator; he is sometimes reminiscent of Arthur C. Clarke's star-child, sentient energy soaring in and through the mythopoetic world of his rural past at will. The portending violence and lust of *Night II* is rendered in a series of staccato statements that attain the intensity of a nightmare:

I burn like a flask . . .
The girl obsesses me . . .
I am mad for her skin . . .

Sometimes the "self" of the poem adopts a particular role, as if momentarily occupying and regulating the character he must impersonate. The cadences then become a parody of colloquial speech, filled with terse clichés and brittle self-righteousness: "stubborn as/I don't know what", "There are voices enough, God knows" (*Him*). In other poems, the speaker more directly addresses both himself and the reader, and the tones range from mild wonderment—"The coast attracts me, whispering/of tasting and change" (*The Coast*)—to extremes of pain, anger and bewilderment:

I wake in terror, the air crushed by stone,
my limbs numb, asphyxiated animals.
(“Dream”)

I witness every degradation, knowing
them as mine . . .

God have mercy upon us
when we shatter the machine
of sanity, suffer what you have made us.
(“Poet”)

There is an aura emanating from this poetry that can perhaps best be described as a form of tension. Every line is taut with the hint of an impending explosion. The concentration of energy is there in the language itself, in the crucially effective judgement of pauses, in the combination of narrations and meditations. One of the few weaknesses of the book seems to be the unnecessary number of exclamation marks in some of the earlier poems (*Two Kinds of Weather, Preservation, Answers*); the natural emphases are weakened by the melodramatic use of such punctuation. This is, of course, a small matter. The control and modulation of language is otherwise characterized by the freshness of imagery (one of the lasting delights of *The Silent Piano* as well), and the ways in which stanzaic and linear structure have been

used to accentuate the constant intellectual drama of his phraseology.

What Philip Salom has done in *The Projectionist*, above all, is to create his own world, often odd, sometimes obscure but fascinating, for the reader to delve into. I am not entirely sure that the concept of "a sequence" works with total efficacy; it was difficult for me to approach the volume as a series of linked poems, while realising that there are links—of character, of ontological association—between many of them. The Benchley poems are clearly sequential, but there are several more purely introspective poems that, while excellent in themselves, tend to throw any overall design a little out of kilter.

The pervasive mood of this book is a grim one; the implied judgements and actual descriptions of the human animals, including the poet himself, are generally harsh, though sometimes tempered by the reflections on the freer and less sullied natural world. Whether or not one shares the implicit outlook of the poet, though, one is continually engaged by what he has to say, and by the variety of ways in which he has experimented with expression. Extreme examples of this experimentation are the intricately wrought and complex poems *The Son* and *Tenant's Tradesman*; the first of these is actually two adjacent poems that, after initially boggling this reader's mind, work by suggesting nuances derived from, reflected from, each other—a poetic expression of multiple personality.

The Projectionist is a bold book; I hesitate to say that it advances beyond *The Silent Piano*—I like too many of its poems too well to give it second place. *The Projectionist* deserves to be widely read, and wrestled with to some degree. It is not the "easiest" book of poems to read, whatever that means exactly. My preference is for Salom's lyrical writing—the portraits are a fraction too sardonic for my taste. Others will, I hope, disagree, and find many felicities of expression that I have failed to note. There is both technical mastery and a fine mind to be enjoyed here. Philip Salom is one of the relatively few contemporary Australian poets who actually has something to say; he is concerned with more than the lint in his belly-button.

SHANE McCUALEY

Strephyn Mappin, *Chiaroscuro*, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1983, 120 pp. \$8.50.

Strephyn Mappin is twenty-eight years old and comes from Perth. A graduate of the Western Australian Institute of Technology, he has written television and radio documentaries and is a former editor of *Compass* magazine. *Chiaroscuro* is his first collection of stories.

As is often the case with a first volume, there is an unevenness of quality, both among the stories and in the control of the writing within some of the individual pieces, but this is more than compensated by Mappin's originality and the diversity of his subject matter and style. The fiction is not distinguished by strong narrative development, some of the pieces being hardly more than sketches, and, except in several of the longer and more successful stories, characterisation is fairly minimal. Yet Mappin is often at his best when he seems least preoccupied with the conventionalities of storytelling: he is mainly concerned with tracing the outlines of self-enclosed (and self-enclosing) worlds, macabre, symbolic imaginings that can appear at once both real and dreamlike, hallucinatory. Though, like his fellow Western Australian, Robert Drewe, he stands slightly aside from the strong fabulist tradition of much of the best contemporary Australian writing, in their most vivid, most successful moments his stories invite comparisons, in different ways, with, say, Peter Carey, or David Ireland.

One of the first things the reader will have to come to terms with, and what the critics will all want to talk about, is Mappin's preoccupation with violence. Violence goes hand in hand with drunkenness, involving either intoxication of the spirit and emotional frustration ("Outside, The Dancer," "The Holistic Vision of J. P. Wunderwald," "Slipping Off The Edge Of The Ice-Cube"), youthful depravity and boredom ("Spitman, Jinx And Dango"), or several of these vectors on collision-course ("Pariah And The Boxer"), but Mappin does not glibly assign any simple cause-effect relationship, nor does he seem especially concerned to analyse or attempt to explain the phenomenon. There is no sophomoric psychologising, no trendy anthropological gloss.

If anything, violence arises in these stories when limited human capacities find themselves trapped in a world that threatens to further rape the already repressed and brutalised imag-

ination. No matter what form it takes, immediate or barely sublimated, violence is basically an expression of something going wrong. And given the particularly enclosed, bizarrely lit, and fragmentary fallen worlds that Mappin feels drawn to explore, it seems inevitable that something will always be going wrong. The closest he comes to relating this vision to any wider, general view of society, in the political sense, is in "Complications In The Ice-Cream Factory." The narrator, who resembles perhaps a somewhat retarded version of The Samurai in Ireland's *The Unknown Industrial Prisoner*, has not known any world outside the factory since birth. He tells us:

At night in our dormitory room we discuss the possibility of something going wrong inside the factory. Of what might happen should one tiny sector break down or the people who run it simply decide not to do what they're supposed to. What *would* happen? What would it mean to the world outside the factory? These are questions that will always be beyond our limited comprehension.

Apart from the terrifyingly ambiguous "Outside, The Dancer," the only story that canvasses transcendence is "The Possibility Of Effervescence," a parodic dialogue of self and soul that only succeeds in deliberately undermining its own tentative assertions: "'Oh, to be free. Light as air. Floating upward to the magnitude of greater possibilities' . . . A tiny bubble shot upward, broke the surface and disappeared."

Where some of the stories fail for me, it is most often because they are resolved too easily. There is a world of difference between inevitability and predictability. "The Assassin," for example, is a trite exercise in the traditional *Döppelganger* story: it fails not only because the ending is so banal but because it is so predictable; pages earlier you have heard the trigger being cocked; now when the story finally goes off you almost feel showered by the flaking rust:

Action took an age in seconds. A figure, as black and smooth as himself, moved quickly forward. They seemed to flow together, each action an image of the other. Close. Fingers/triggers/guards. One precise shot. And the loud echoing shatter of glass.

In his mirror, spider-laced around the bullet hole, a thousand reflections lifted guns to their heads.

This represents a species of contrivance and heavy-handed effect that comes to Mappin's aid far more often than it should. Perhaps because *Chiaroscuro* is his first collection, he seems a little too overtly concerned with making sure every single thing in a story contributes, that every effect is well and truly felt. He needs to learn the power of understatement and restraint.

But perhaps I am reading it wrong, and this kind of ending is intended to be humorous; perhaps many stories in *Chiaroscuro* are only playing games with well-established genres.

The story that seems most intended to be funny is "Ape." The narrator, a thoroughly unpleasant character called Inge, devises a plan to murder all the apes in a zoo by feeding them fruit and nuts laced with strichnine. Again the Nemesis-doppelganger-figure intervenes, a huge gorilla who speaks "in a voice that had all the qualities of Orson Welles with a heavy cold." He offers Ingle a choice of three atonements for his sin: he can "accept what you've seen and heard here as real, in which case it will probably send you insane and your people will put you away. Or you can deny it to yourself and try to pass it off as a dream, in which case you'll still be considered insane for being found naked with a large female ape after hours." The third is suicide.

Taking a narrator with the fastidious, pathological revulsions of a post-theory-of-evolution Swift/Gulliver (who shaves all the hair from his body, has nightmare visions of shoving his nose up mother-mandrill's rear) and subjecting him to a process of ironic self-revelation, in the manner of Poe, is a good idea, but the attempted humour fails again because of overstatement:

Sometimes, at night, after the male nurse has called a friendly "Goodnight monkey-fucker" through the slit in my door and passed off on his rounds, a face will appear at the barred window high up on the wall and my cell fills with the screams of monkey laughter.

Yes, Mappin indeed sees the world through a glass, darkly. As the dust-cover tells us, he

is currently studying screen writing at the Australian Film and Television School, and there is no question that his imagination is predominantly a visual one, his style cinematic. In every story we encounter the " chiaroscuro" of the title: brilliant or blurred fragmented glimpses of the contrast or the interplay of light and darkness, shadows, reflections, refractions, shifting focus, specialised lighting. The motif is not merely stylistic, however; it is intimately and symbolically a part of the post-moral world-view of the collection as a whole; together with the careful arrangement of the stories, it tends to add to the impression of a *livre composé*. The connection is most strongly felt in the final scene of "Spitman, Jinx And Dango". Despite the sense of strain and the tendency to overwriting, this is in many ways the most successful, most fully realised story in the book. The narrator has escaped upstairs from a police raid, at the height of an electrical storm. Fantastic as it seems, a bolt of lightning has created a holocaust in the backyard below. He has avoided capture and death, but the flash has shocked him into—or out of—something, nevertheless:

With effort I regained the window. The lightning had set even wet grass alight. The fire fled in streams of guttering red, striving against the rain. The car was filled. Flames curled out from it, strong with the wind. Men helped each other off the ground. Voices sounded weak in the chaos of sound from outside. I held the window ledge tight, my fingers trying to find their way into the wood, down the cracks in the grain, to become a part of something solid. I could feel myself rocking backwards and forwards, moaning, straining out against the tension that held me at the window. It did not seem to be connected with anything I was involved with. The black. The quiet.

This passage, I think, demonstrates both the best and worst features of Mappin's writing. The cover-blurb is being a little over-enthusiastic when it claims that *Chiaroscuro* places Straphyn Mappin "among the best of the new Australian writers." At the moment this writing has too many flaws to allow him that. But this collection certainly does announce the arrival of a significant new talent.

ROSS BENNETT

Robert Pascoe, *Western Australia's Capital Suburb, Peppermint Grove*, with assistance from Neil Cumpston, Barbara Evans, Margaret Evans, Maude Sholl, Tom Worsley, Oxford University Press, Melbourne 1983. pp. 168. \$25.00.

There are many advantages in choosing a small and, by Australian standards, fairly long established community for a study of social and economic changes over nearly a century of our history.

Robert Pascoe's *Peppermint Grove* takes such a community as subject of close analysis and although his findings may not always apply to other, more mobile, fluctuating, mixed suburbs of capital cities, they may well illuminate if not duplicate other long settled suburbs.

Peppermint Grove is the account of continuous white settlement of a remarkably small, sharply defined suburb halfway between Fremantle and Perth. Founded in 1890, coinciding with the wave of migrations brought about by the gold rush and development of the pastoral industry, bounded by river and main road between capital and port, consisting of some 256 acres and settled initially by some forty families, the descendants of whom, in some case, still live there, the small settlement furnishes an unusually homogeneous example of the evolution of community in Western Australia during ninety years.

From the 1890s to the 1980s, a total of seventy-five families can claim connection with the locality for periods of fifty years or more. The population remains reasonably stable, never exceeding about 1500, so these seventy-five families together represent something like a quarter of all families resident at any one time; this is a remarkable record of dynastic stability. (p. 2).

The formation of such a stable group is the subject of this "suburban biography", as Pascoe calls it, drawing attention to the homogenous calls it, drawing attention to the homogeneous ed to individual histories. Pascoe, assisted in his research by "a dedicated team of local residents" (vii), distinguishes four phases of settlement: pioneer; the second generation (1910-1940) including two wars and the depression; the third generation in post-war expansion; and the fourth generation of today.

As an account of the changes within unchanging boundaries, limited turnover of resi-

dents, a recorded history of singularly undramatic events, *Peppermint Grove* would not seem at first acquaintance to justify either the attention paid to it or the interest to be found in Pascoe's elegantly written analysis of a community of less than 1500 residents. That it assuredly does so seems to me to be partly due to his care in siting it firmly within its physical and anthropological setting; the river path with its limestone cave, commonly known as Lovers' Lane is attributed to its early aboriginal users whose tools have been dated to c. 8000 B.C.; the haphazard early buildings and dwellings are set on functional points of the Fremantle-Perth roads (a satisfactory explanation of the apparently illogical "View Street" which bisects the shire from North to South without a river view is offered since it served as an alternative track along the crest of a low hill); and the sub-division of land in the 1890s and erection of dwellings of different degrees of ambition and effect all account for the "Pioneer" phase.

Once so firmly established, supported by maps, plans, photographs and details, the history of the small Anglo-Saxon community is developed through wars, depression, sub-division, increased population, changes in occupation and source of wealth and hence power, in a way that may well throw light on development elsewhere in less homogeneous social groups.

One can only draw attention to certain of Pascoe's general observations that seem particularly striking.

This district has always been, largely but not uniformly, inhabited by relatively wealthy people whether the money came from pastoral holding, mercantile means or more recently the professions. From this follows such phenomena as a servant-based society, pre-1939 particularly; from that system follows the activity of the women, in social welfare or the arts; from such activity almost inevitably follows self-reliance in the women. Such independence together with freedom from the necessity to earn a living and their numerical superiority after the losses of the Great War contribute to Pascoe's impression of the predominance of women.

He makes further comments on this affluent and privileged group: the extended working life and hence influence, of both men and women, and the prevalence of kinship ties and an almost tribal system of marriage.

Two other approaches are noteworthy: one, the importance of personality within such an enclosed yet nevertheless influential community. Pascoe offers two illuminating examples, one the person of Miss Annie Nesbitt, founder of her own school (with her sister Jane) in 1902 continuing until the late 1930s, who exercised far greater influence on the early residents than perhaps Mr. Pascoe could know. Miss Nesbitt, as any old Peppermint Grove pupil would assert, inculcated an ethos of loyalty to the Crown, personal integrity, uprightness that far exceeded the formal disciplines of school. Her spirit still binds her pupils today and consequently excludes those who by misfortune of age or residential qualifications, must be considered barbarians. The other personality distinguished as stereotype of the early years was "the redoubtable Talbot Hobbs", as Pascoe calls him, carpenter, architect, part-time officer. His industry, efficiency, discipline and dedication (plus his marriage to his employer's daughter and his move to Peppermint Grove) led him to the rank of colonel at the outbreak of the 1914-18 war and his ultimate achievement of rank and status as General Sir Talbot Hobbs, owner of one of the largest properties in Peppermint Grove, including four windmills. The career of this "archetypal Peppermint Grove Man" in Pascoe's words (p. 73) could not fail to influence his suburb, indeed the entire state; and Pascoe goes on to observe the social effect it could produce; For "the suburb they (Hobbs and others like him) created was initially *nouveau riche*; it would not epitomize the Establishment proper until at least the 1930s or 1940s" (p. 75).

In many ways the constantly modified social conditions Pascoe notes from the 1940s to today are mirrored elsewhere: sub-division of large properties, closer settlement, changing tastes in domestic architecture and all that goes to make up the current tag of "lifestyle"; rate-payers, plans and aerial photographs of 1948 and 1980 prove the continual reduction of holdings. But the special conditions noted in the final chapter of which the most obvious are differences in education, employment and wealth and from which derive the extended exercise of independence, authority, and power serve as Pascoe's answer to his own "crucial question" posed in his "Introduction": "how exactly do the prosperous weld themselves into a distinct social group?" (p. 2).

That such a community has developed in Peppermint Grove is certain and this book's examination of the tiny suburb as microcosm is of much interest. It cannot be, however, the whole story of the exercise of power in an ever-growing and developing state. There must be other *milieux*. Nor is such a community undesirable, subject to the charge of *élitism* or to nepotism as the author suggests in his final line. Admirably under control throughout, the author's personal stance towards this influential group is finally revealed when he considers the future of the young generation growing up in Peppermint Grove. Where one might see a stable and warm association of old friends, as a recent marriage demonstrated in its congregation, he sees marriage as an unchanging force of consolidation:

Perhaps the only remaining area of life where change has not (and perhaps cannot) intrude is their choice of marriage partner. This is a community cosseted by the cloy of kin, and it is most likely to remain so. (p. 154).

This emotively charged final sentence, presumably, expresses the author's own view of his subject. However, his conclusion carries less authority than the earlier analysis and indeed suggests a superficial judgement on the complex circumstances of socio-economic changes today. Complaints of over-emphasis on certain families, of omissions of others are sure to occur in histories of this kind. Nevertheless errors in fact and attribution of photographs such as have occurred are less excusable.

To this reader, *Peppermint Grove* is an unexpectedly readable and enjoyable account of a potentially unexciting subject matter as seen under the historian's microscope. The book is admirably presented, illustrated by photographs from private collections, appendices of pioneer families and long-standing residents. It might have been pushed for examination of attitudes and values further. But it above all is effective because the author's perspective keeps the limited subject in context, both within the developments of our whole state but also within the larger context of the "Europeanizing of a very large island", as the historian describes the settlers' task from the 1820s until today. He sees Peppermint Grove, from the 1890's, "as the

residential location of those who had the most say in how this process would take place" (p. 1)

This is a refreshingly long view of what could be seen as a parochial subject of interest to few. It is also written with a wit and elegance that transcend the immediate detail.

I hope other local histories can be interpreted within the same perspectives. They could appreciably and richly extend our boundaries.

HELEN WATSON-WILLIAMS

East, West and in between, including South

Surely there was never a more European, 'Western' intellectual than Arthur Koestler? There is a brilliant, long study of Koestler and his books in the latest *Overland* (double issue, nos. 94/95), in which David Martin traces the parallelisms between his own life and that of Koestler.

The East is represented in Cecil Holme's remarkable reportage "Journeys East", in which Holmes summarises his personal philosophy and artistic beliefs in a wide-ranging account of his journeys to the Soviet Union and to China since 1956, and tells us of some of the problems of planning to make an Australian film in China. This feature is supported by Victor Ye's story "The Test", a glimpse of the 'Cultural Revolution' seen through the eyes of a Chinese teacher of English (which Victor Ye is).

The South? Jim Davidson's interview with the South African Afrikaans/English writer Andre Brink throws new light on contemporary pressures in South Africa, while returning home again Sir Walter Crocker's extensive review article on H. V. Evatt is an important contribution to the understanding of that enigmatic character.

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OVERLAND

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YORK THEATRE FESTIVAL

The small historic town of York, 100 kms east of Perth was the scene of a successful inaugural Theatre Festival over the Foundation Day long weekend from Friday 1st to Monday 4th July 1984. The success of the weekend should encourage the organizers to plan future festivals, perhaps in the years between the biennial York Music Festival, the third of which will be held in 1985.

The Theatre Festival drew largely on the talents of Western Australian writers, actors and directors. Several new plays by local playwrights and several other plays not previously performed in Western Australia were among the works presented at different venues in York. The Hole in the Wall Theatre Company presented Raymond Omodei's production of the Australian play *Down An Alley Filled With Cats* by Warwick Moss. Students from the W.A. Academy of Performing Arts presented *Masterpieces*, a powerful new play by British dramatist, Sarah Daniels. The Pit Theatre presented an outstanding production of Harold Pinter's *Betrayal*. The Murdoch Performing Group gave its own chilling version of Orwell's *1984*. The English Department of the University of Western Australia brought together two plays from the turn of the century, Schnitzler's *Anatol* and an original "ocker" interpretation of Chekhov's *The Proposal*. The W.A. Theatre Company presented *Jam Tomorrow*, written and directed by Tom Rothfield.

Artistic director of the York Theatre Festival in 1984 was Bill Dunstone.

Writers-in-the-community

The Australia Council's Literature Board is encouraging community groups to commission writers to produce their own creative work or to help develop that of local writers.

Outside Perth, in the hills district first settled mainly as a fruit growing area, senior citizens of the close-knit, distinctive community of Kalamunda will work with a writer on a book recording their memories.

In Queenstown, Tasmania, playwright Graham Pitts and the Salamanca Theatre Company are developing plays about the area's mining history and working life.

Local poets who hold monthly meetings in Nambour, Queensland, are bringing poet Michael Sharkey there to run a weekend workshop.

'The important factor is community input,' says Tom Shapcott. 'Not only to the communities involved, but to the participating writers who otherwise may not have the chance to work in this way, experimenting and developing new skills by working with others, often in a multi-artform context.'

The Literature Board already supports writing in the community by funding widespread literary organisations and writers tours.

The Board's writers-in-the-community scheme is similar to its writers-in-residence program, but instead of working on campuses, writers-in-the-community work from a variety of venues: in community centres, local libraries, in factories and workplaces—wherever projects take them.

The Board hopes the scheme will lessen the isolation felt by many people throughout Australia who are interested in writing and reading but who find it difficult to meet others with whom they can discuss literature or share critical expertise.

'Some people live in culturally disadvantaged areas, perhaps geographically isolated,' says Board Director, Tom Shapcott. 'The idea is to bring writers *to* the people, to these areas.'

The Board believes the writers-in-the-community scheme will also help to raise the status of writers in Australia by creating opportunities for many more Australians to learn about our literature and to meet professional writers.

Further information:

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R. B. SOABA—see interview with Kirpal Singh, p. 49.

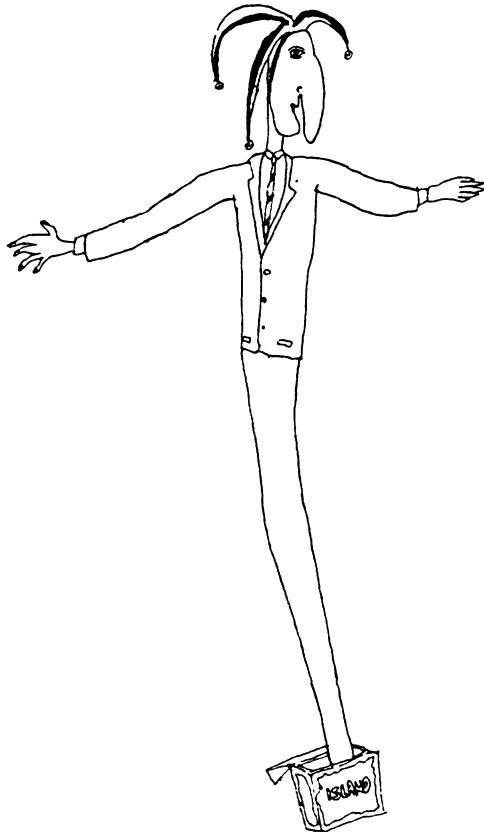
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It must be said *Quadrant* has always exercised a most courageous editorial policy, publishing responsibly on occasion articles that wouldn't have had a dog's chance of appearing in print elsewhere.

— Clement Semmler,
The Australian.

Quadrant has survived and flourished in a jungle full of pygmies with poisoned arrows, has succeeded in McAuley's original aim of bringing together in many spheres of thought and art the essence of the Australian variant of the culture of free humanity . . . Australia is lucky to have it. So are we, in the world at large.

— Robert Conquest,
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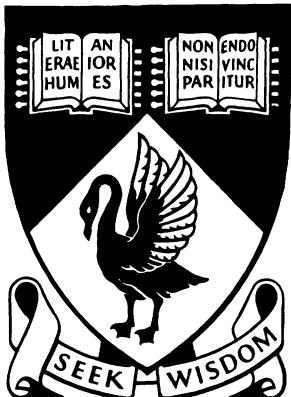
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