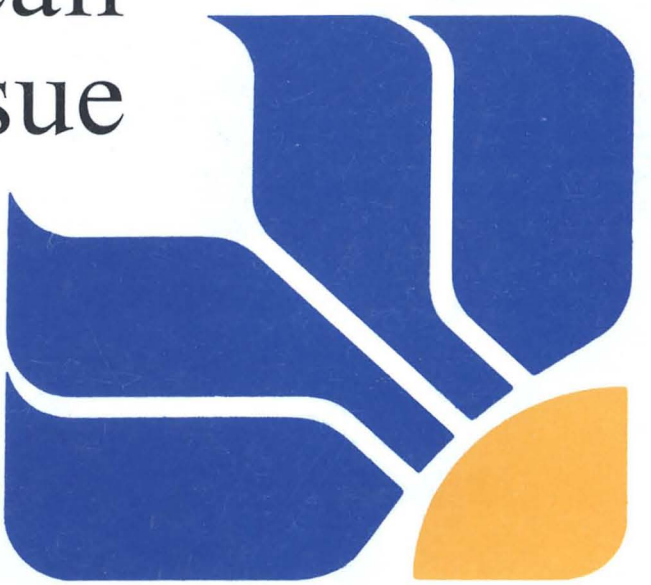
WESTERLY

stories poems reviews articles

Indian Ocean Issue

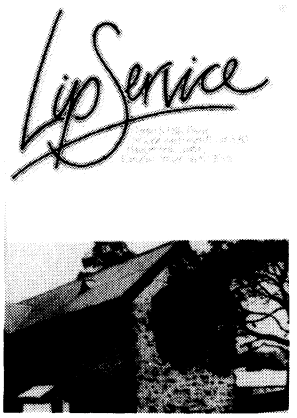


a quarterly review price two dollars registered at gpo perth for transmission by post as a periodical Category 'B'

Four excellent books from the publishers of

Artlook

The West Australian Arts Magazine

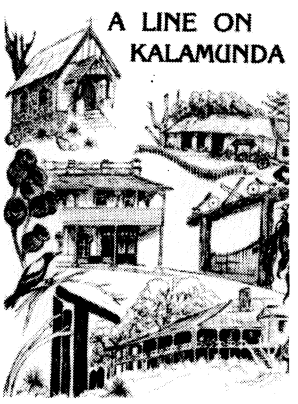


Lip Service

A new anthology of West Australian poets. Readings from the monthly meetings in the Stables gathered by Andy Burke and Murray Jennings.
$3.00 plus postage.

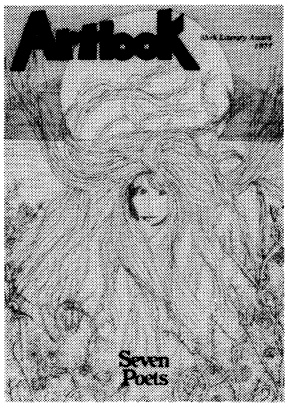
Sawdust Firing

An easy to follow, step-by-step pictorial instuction manual on hand-building pots and constructing a simple back-yard kiln. A must for all hobby potters, tech. school teachers, students, play group leaders, etc.
$3.00 plus postage.



Line on Kalamunda

Researched by the Historical Society and beautifully illustrated with line drawings by eleven members of the Arts Society. Not just a history of the district, but a highly readable book, relevant to the whole State. A collector's item.
$2.80 plus postage.



Seven Poets

The award-winning and commended poems in the Artlook/Shell Literary Award 1977. Kate Lilley, Mark O'Connor, Caroline Caddy, Dianne Dodwell, Bryn Griffiths, Dorothy Hewett and Susan Whiting. A short biography of each poet is included.
$2.50 plus postage.

Special offer: All 4 books for only $8!

All books available through the post from:
ARTLOOK BOOKS, P.O. BOX 6026, EAST PERTH, 6001.
Add 60c per book for postage and handling, or $1.00 for the special book offer of four books.

Stocks are running low on some books – post early to avoid disappointment.

WESTERLY

a quarterly review

Westerly is published quarterly by the English Department, University of Western Australia, with assistance from the Literature Board of the Australia Council and the Western Australian Literary Fund. The opinions expressed in *Westerly* are those of individual contributors and not of the Editors or Editorial Advisors.

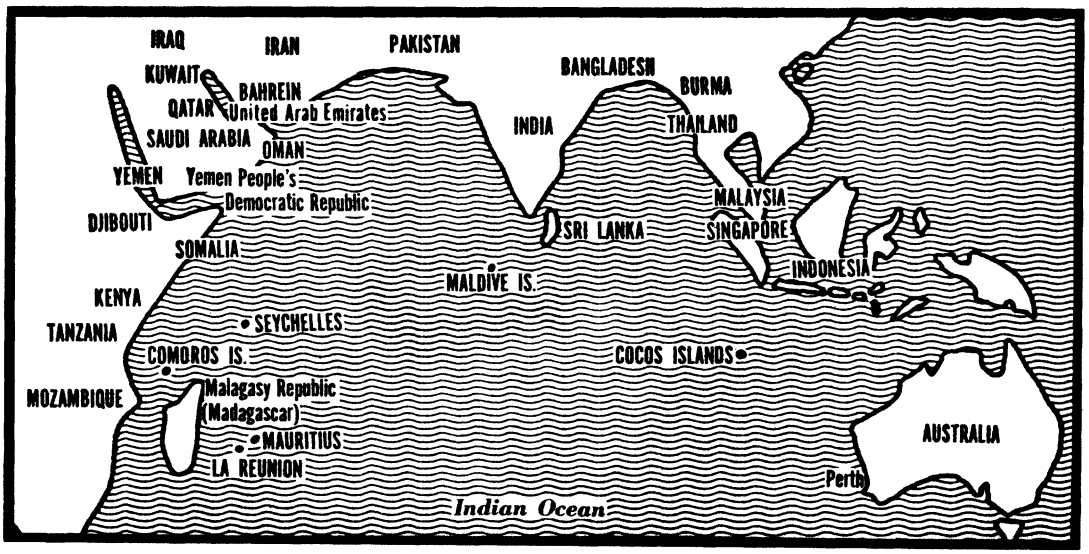
Correspondence should be addressed to the Editors, *Westerly*, Department of English, University of Western Australia, Nedlands, Western Australia 6009 (telephone 380 3838). Unsolicited manuscripts not accompanied by a stamped self-addressed envelope will not be returned. All manuscripts must show the name and address of the sender and should be typed (double-spaced) on one side of the paper only. Whilst every care is taken of manuscripts, the editors can take no final responsibility for their return; contributors are consequently urged to retain copies of all work submitted. Minimum rates for contributions—poems $7.00; prose pieces $7.00; reviews, articles, $15.00; short stories $30.00. It is stressed that these are minimum rates, based on the fact that very brief contributions in any field are acceptable. In practice the editors aim to pay more, and will discuss payment where required.

Recommended sale price: $2.00 per copy (W.A.).

Eastern States distributors: Australia International Press, 319 High Street, Kew, Victoria 3101 (Phone: 862 1537).

Subscriptions: $8.00 per annum (posted); $15.00 for 2 years (posted). Special student subscription rate: $7.00 per annum (posted). Single copies mailed: $2.40. **Subscriptions should be made payable to Westerly, and sent to The Bursar, University of Western Australia, Nedlands, Western Australia 6009.**

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



Indian Ocean Region

WESTERLY

Vol. 24, No. 3, September 1979

INDIAN OCEAN REGION ISSUE

CONTENTS

SOUTH-EAST ASIA

BURMESE TRADITIONAL VERSE

THAILAND

SINGAPORE

MALAYSIA

INDONESIA

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Photographs by E. B. Martin (Boat-building) and John Ogden (South-east Asia and page 8)

Introduction

In 1498 (so one remembers from a long time ago) Vasco da Gama sailed around the Cape of Good Hope and "discovered" India. The Indian Ocean was already at that time a bustling network of shipping, plying its way along the coast of Africa, around the Middle East, across to India and Sri Lanka, through peninsular Southeast Asia, and finally to China and Japan. Governed by the regular alternations of the monsoons, the trade was extensively organised and profitable. It was also associated with a rich interchange of highly civilised cultures, which were well-grounded in the realms of literature, religion and scientific achevements.

An Indic influence had flowed into Southeast Asia from the beginning of the Christian era. When da Gama arrived, the mainland Southeast Asian states were devoted to Buddhism, and the island states were slowly throwing off a fusion of Hinduism and Mahayana Buddhism in favour of a mystically-tinged Islam. Islam was also extending its reach into the north of India and along the coast of East Africa, where a Swahili literature was beginning to form.

Europeans came and went, holding a fortress here and a town there, for the next three centuries, until the Industrial Revolution and the consequent scramble for resources and markets started a stampede between the major powers to share the world among themselves. Looking back, the period of colonial rule was amazingly short. In many cases, it lasted in real terms less than half a century. Some changes were superficial—telegraph, radio, shortlived attempts at alien political systems. Increasingly, after the Second World War and the end of colonialism, the old patterns (if ever challenged) have reasserted themselves and, while modified by the needs of international capitalism and world economic systems, continue to grow in their own terms.

Surprisingly, *The Elek Book of Oriental Verse*, an elegant collection of verse from Japan back to Egypt by sea and the lower steppes of the Southern U.S.S.R., can nevertheless claim that "The Orient is a Western fiction, a shorthand term for Asia and those parts of the Mediterranean world inhabited by peoples regarded as neither European nor African."[1] In Australia, even now, the fiction seems barely credible, apart from occasional reports of the movement of the American and Russian navies.

Trade moved from Southeast Asia up to China and Japan, not down to the coast of Western Australia, which William Dampier described in 1688 as "dry, sandy soil, destitute of water", with strange trees, only limited numbers and birds, inhabited by a people he considered "the miserablest People in the World".[2] We have repaid the compliment by conceiving of the region, if at all, as so many strangers with their backs resolutely turned to each other. The fact that we are one of those strangers, and that the others have known each other for two thousand years, touches us not at all.

This issue of *Westerly* is an attempt to enter into that conversation. *Westerly* has over the years made a significant contribution to the understanding of Australia's geographical reality. The October 1966 issue concentrated on Indonesia;

over half the issue was devoted to the work of Pramoedya Ananta Toer, imprisoned the previous year for his literary-political convictions. Fourteen years later, Toer still remains a prisoner of conscience. The September 1971 issue provided a focus on Malaysia and Singapore; in December 1976, the focus was broadened to present some of the major writers of the entire Southeast Asia region. In ever increasing circles, this issue now covers the entire Indian Ocean region.

Our time focus has, as far as possible, restricted us to significant writing of the last decade. The issue opens with terms of reference most likely to be familiar to 'Western' readers, those of the Middle East, which so strongly underlie European culture and have recently been revived by writers such as Cavafy and Durrel's *Alexandria Quartet*. Side by side with the rich imagery, mordant humour and self-mockery, is a political consciousness of continual betrayal and deep pride in one's regional identity, no matter how oppressed that identity.

In East Africa, the struggles for Independence, particularly that of the so-called Mau Mau movement in Kenya, provided the generative impulse for much of the literary output, while notions of a betrayal of *Uhuru* (Swahili, 'Freedom') ideals remain a dominant focus of concern as writers are faced with the continuing rule of small *élite* groups, massive socio-economic problems, Idi Amin, Rhodesia, exile, imprisonment and the cult of "the white black man".[3] East African literature, sometimes thought to be about village life, cow dung, bare breasts, and beautiful black skin, has produced Rubadiri's anguish that "the West is let in", p'Bitek and lo Liyong's earthiness and zest, Craveirinha's castigation of the "mine cattle" and Ayi Kwei Armah's powerful prologue to his novel *Two Thousand Seasons*, in which he moves beyond the erstwhile prophets of despair into a militant and liberated *negritude* that is perhaps still only a hope, although a pointer to future.

The exuberance of ideology is more muted in India, no doubt because the size of the problem is so overwhelming. Kiran Nagarkar's extract from his forthcoming novel *Seven Sixes are Forty-Three* skilfully juxtaposes the world of the grasscutters, poor anonymous figures of the fertile earth with the obsessive lust and intellectual self-indulgence of the new brahmins, whose security derives from the meaningless manipulation of technology. Desire and sudden, brutal death provide the counterpoise for these two worlds.

Each of these areas—East Africa, the Middle East and South Asia—contain their own contrasts between tradition and modernity, with further subtle shifts from one geographical region to the next. This variety is particularly striking in Southeast Asia. Burma and Thailand show the influence of classical Buddhism, Indonesia the disdainful reaction to Western tourism and the United States Postal System. Pramoedya Ananta Toer, writing of his recollections of life as a child growing up in north coastal Java, considered a stronghold of Muslim orthodoxy for five hundred years now, shows how superficial that contact has been and what conflict (and ultimately indifference) it can arouse in the heart of one who realises that his family can never be really religious because they will always be poor. Toer's Java is almost the extreme of the Indian Ocean and bears its contradictions as uncomfortably as one would expect.

Writing around the Indian Ocean uses its awareness of the past to respond to the turmoil of the present. It is by turns tender, mocking, self-aware, defiant and angry. "We are not a people of yesterday," Ayi Kwei Armah asserts. "Do they ask how many single seasons we have flowed from our beginnings till now? We shall point them to the proper beginning of our counting ... let them seek the sealine. Have them count the sand. Let them count it grain from single grain."[4]

Perhaps these fragments from the literatures of the Indian Ocean can be a start in that accounting, as well as a pleasure on this western Australian 'sealine'. For the accounting is well overdue, and the pleasure yet to come. Both are necessary for our dialogue.

SWAMI ANAND HARIDAS
HUGH WEBB

NOTES

1. Keith Bosley: *The Elek Book of Oriental Verse* (Paul Elek, London, 1979), p. 5.
2. (ed.) Manning Clark: *Sources of Australian History* (World Classics Series, Oxford University Press, London, 1957), pp. 24-5.
3. See Franz Fanon: *Black Skin, White Masks* (Paladin, London, 1970).
4. Ayi Kwei Armah: *Two Thousand Seasons* (East African Publishing House, Nairobi, 1973), p. 1.

☆ ☆

A NOTE FROM THE EDITORS

This special issue of *Westerly* has been timed to coincide with two major events in Western Australia's 150th Anniversary Celebrations: an International Conference on Indian Ocean Studies from 15-22 August and an Indian Ocean Arts Festival from 22 September to 6 October 1979.

Westerly, the University of Western Australia and Western Australians generally are happy to welcome participants in these events. The main aim is to foster interest, understanding and a sense of interrelationship among people of the countries that border the Indian Ocean—an important antidote to parochialism and narrow nationalism.

THE MIDDLE EAST

Translated from the Arabic

For I am a Stranger

BADR SHAKIR AL-SAYYAB

For I am a stranger
Beloved Iraq
Far distant, and I here in my longing
For it, for her ... I cry out: Iraq
And from my cry a lament returns
An echo bursts forth
I feel I have crossed the expanse
To a world of decay that responds not
To my cry
If I shake the branches
Only decay will drop from them
Stones
Stones—no fruit
Even the springs
Are stones, even the fresh breeze
Stones moistened with blood
My cry a stone, my mouth a rock
My legs a wind straying in the wastes

Translated by Mounah A. Khouri
and Hamid Algar

Is this You or the Tale?

UNSI AL-HAJ

my history goes back
to a fifth century since
I was baptized in my mother's presence
from whom I inherited the feeling
that whoever escapes four walls
commits
every treason

my history goes back to the time
when the head of the family
defied the Sultan in
Constantinople
and I wanted to be within things
for a while
by way of necessary aggression and violence
like an old statue

my history goes back to Eil and Baal
they printed me in Gilgamesh
and I was raised
in Ugaret
Sur Seidun Byblos
visited with me Greece
Persians ornamented me and Hebrews
bought passages from my works
Egyptians simplified me in their drawings
of the living
Astarte and I
through mascara were
merged together
I lived by the river
gods slaughtered me I them
I carried my little grandmother
on my back and fled
in the valleys she said
like a parrot
better if you
had buried me
when I did
I was born and died in Beirut

my history goes back downward
to storms blowing from books
and sitting for hours among crowds
to what is not of me
and as my age is counted in years
likewise
as drops of pearl
I wander outside this necklace

is this me or you
is this you or the tale?
after a while musicians will disappear
poet officialized behind buttons
cities of soul
flee through the chimney
psalms and roofs blown away
and stars of desperate longing to reach them

my sorrow is great
for a history steeped
in destiny
steeped in mish-mash
marching through chance through danger
marching through our fictions
marching in holes in inner pockets
marching in birthmarks
and astrology

marching in Too-late
marching through pallor of lips
on the slope of the eyes
which doesn't need
to be invented again
but only reconsidered

Translated by Sargon Boulis

Dialogue

UNSI AL-HAJ

I said:
Tell me, of what are you thinking?
—Of what your sun which does not illuminate me, o beloved.
I said:
Tell me, of what are you thinking?
—Of you, and how you can endure the coldness of my heart.
I said:
Tell me, of what are you thinking?
—Of your might, o beloved, of how you can love me, when
I do not love you
She said:
Tell me, of what are you thinking?
—Of how you once were, and I grieve for you, o beloved.
I think too of my sun which melted you,
Of my patience which made you submit,
Of my love which brought you to your knees,
And then spurned you,
O beloved.
I think of elegies,
O beloved,
I think of murder.

As if the blood I drink from you were salt
Whole draughts of it still not my thirst
Where is your passion? Where you unbared heart?
I bolt on you the gate of night, then embrace the gate
Conceal within it my shadow, memories and secrets
Then search for you within my fire
And find you not, find not your ashes in the burning flame
I will cast myself into the flame, if it burns or not
Kill me, that I may feel you
Kill the stone
With a shedding of blood, with a spark of fire
. . . or burn then without fire

Translated by Mounah A. Khouri
and Hamid Algar

Memoirs of Everyday Sorrow

MAHMOUD DARWISH

I hire a taxi-cab to go home....

I chat with the driver in perfect Hebrew, confident that my looks do not disclose my identity.

"Where to, sir?" the driver asks me.

"To Mutanabbi Street," I reply. I light a cigarette and offer one to the driver in recognition of his politeness. He takes it, warms up to me, and says:

"Tell me, how long will his disgusting situation last? We are sick of it."

For a moment I assume that he has become sick of war, high taxes and mounting milk prices.

"You are right," I tell him. "We are sick of it." Then he continues:

"How long will our government keep these dirty Arab street names? We should wipe them out and obliterate their language."

"Who do you mean?" I ask him.

"The Arabs of course!" he replies.

"But why?" I inquire.

"Because they are filthy," he tells me.

I recognize his Moroccan accent, and I ask him:

"Am I so filthy? Are you cleaner than I am?"

"What do you mean?" he asks, surprised.

I appeal to his intelligence; he realises who I am, but does not believe it.

"Please, stop joking," he tells me.

When I show him my identity card, he loses his scruples and retorts:

"I do not mean the Christian Arabs—just the Moslems." I assure him that I am a Moslem, and he qualifies his statement.

"I do not mean all the Moslems—just the Moslem villagers." I assure him that I come from a backward village that Israel demolished—simply razed out of existence. He says quickly:

"The State deserves all respect."

I stop the car and decide to walk home. I am overtaken by the desire to read the names of the streets. I realise that the authorities have actually wiped out all the Arab names. "Saladdin" has metamorphosed into "Shlomo". But why did they retain the name of Mutanabbi Street, I wonder for a moment? Then in a flash I read the name in Hebrew. It is "Mount Nebo", not Mutanabbi as I have always assumed.

I want to travel to Jerusalem . . . .

I lift the telephone and dial the number of the Israeli officer in charge of civilian affairs. Since I have known him for some time, I inquire about his health and joke with him. Then I appeal to him to grant me a one-day permit to Jerusalem.

"Come over and apply in person," he says. So I leave my work and I come over. I fill out an application and I wait—one day, two days, three days. There is hope, I rationalize; at least they have not said "no" as usual. And I continue to wait. Then I appeal to my friend once again, because by now my appointment in Jerusalem is imminent. I beg him for a response:

"Please say no," I plead with him. "Then at least I can cancel or postpone my appointment." He does not respond. Exhausted and disappointed, I tell him desperately that I have only a few hours left to get there.

"Come back in an hour," he says impatiently. I come back an hour later to find the office closed. Naively I wonder why the officer is so diffident, why he hasn't simply refused as usual? Finally, consumed by anger, I decide—not too judiciously—to leave for Jerusalem even at the risk of evading the State's "security measures".

Upon my return, I receive an invitation to appear before a military court. I queue up with the rest and I listen to the charges brought against the people before me. There is the case of a woman who works in a kibbutz and who has a permit which clearly forbade her to stop on her way to work. For some pressing reason, she stopped and was immediately arrested. Similarly, some young men wandered away from the main streets, only to be arrested. The court acquits no one. Prison sentences and exorbitant fines are automatic.

I am reminded of the story of the old man who, while patiently ploughing his field, discovered that his donkey had wandered off into someone else's land. Intent on retrieving his donkey, he left his plough and ran after him. He was soon stopped by the police and was arrested for having trespassed on government property without a permit. He told them that he had a permit in the pocket of his caba, which he had hung on a tree. He was arrested anyway.

I also remember the "death permits" which obliged farmers to sign a form blaming themselves for their own death if they stepped on mines in an area that was used by the army. The signatures allowed the government to shirk all responsibility for their death. Intent on earning their livelihood and unconscious of the dangers, the farmers signed these statements anyway. Some of them lived, but many of them died. Tired, finally, of the dead and living alike, the government finally confiscated the farmers' land.

Then there was the child who died in her father's arms in front of the office of the military governor. The father had long been waiting for a permit to leave his village for the city to hospitalize his sick daughter . . . .

When the judge sentences me for two months only, I feel elated and thankful. In prison, I sing for my homeland and write letters to my beloved. I also read articles about democracy, freedom and death. Yet I do not set myself free; neither do I die.

I want to travel to Greece . . . .

I ask for a passport and a *laissez-passer*. Suddenly, I realise that I am not a citizen, because either my father or one of my other relatives took me and fled during the 1948 war. At that time I was just a child. I now discover that any Arab who fled during the war and returned later forfeited his right to citizenship. I despair of ever obtaining a passport and I settle for a *laissez-passer*. Then

I realise that I am not a resident of Israel since I do not have a residency card. I consult a lawyer:

"If I am neither a citizen nor a resident of the State, then where am I and who am I?" He tells me that I have to prove that I am present. I ask the Ministry of the Interior:

"Am I present or absent? Should you so wish, I can philosophically justify my presence." I realise that I am philosophically present and legally absent. I contemplate the law. How naive we are to believe that law in this country is the receptacle of justice and right. Here, law is a receptacle of the Government's wishes—a suit tailored to please its whims.

Notwithstanding all this, I was present in this country long before the existence of the State that denies my presence. Bitterly, I observe that my basic rights are illusory unless backed by force. Force alone can change illusion into reality.

Then I smile at the law which gives every Jew in the world the right to become an Israeli citizen.

I try once again to get my papers in order, trusting in the law and in the Almighty. At long last, I secure a certificate proving that I am present. I also receive a *laissez-passer*.

Where do I go from here?

I live in Haifa, and the airport is close to Tel-Aviv. I ask the police for permission to travel from Haifa to the airport. They refuse. I am distraught, yet I cleverly decide to follow a different route and to travel by ship. I take the Haifa port highway, convinced that I have the right to use it. I revel in my intelligence. I buy a ticket, and without trouble pass through the passport checkpoint and the health and customs departments. However, near the ship they arrest me. I am again taken to court, but this time I am sure the law is on my side.

In court, I am duly informed that the port of Haifa is a part of Israel—not a part of Haifa. They remind me that I have no right to be in any part of Israel except in Haifa, and that the port—according to the law—is outside Haifa's city limits. Before long, I am charged and convicted. I protest:

"I would like to make a grave confession, gentleman, since I have become aware of the law. I swim in the sea, but the sea is part of Israel and I do not have a permit. I enjoy the weather of Haifa, yet the weather is the property of Israel, not of Haifa. Likewise the sky above Haifa is not part of Haifa, and I do not have a permit to sit under the sky."

When I ask for a permit to dwell in the wind, they smile . . .

I want to rent an apartment . . . . .

I read an advertisement in the paper. I dial a number.

"Madam, I read your advertisement in the paper; may I come and look at your apartment?"

Her laughter fills my heart with hope:

"This is an excellent apartment on Mount Carmel, sir. Come over and reserve it quickly." In my happiness, I forget to pay for the telephone call and leave in a hurry.

The lady takes a liking to me, and we agree on her terms. Then, when I sign my name, she is taken aback.

"What, an Arab? I am sorry, sir, please call tomorrow."

This goes on for weeks. Every time I am rebuffed I think about the apartments' real owners who are lost in exile. How many houses have been built destined to remain uninhabited by their owners! Awaiting their return to their

houses, the owners keep the keys in their pockets—and in their hearts. But if any one of them should return, would he, I wonder, be allowed to use his key? Would he be able to rent but one room in his own house?

And yet they insist:

"The Zionists have not committed crimes; they simply brought a people without a country to a country 'without' a people."

"But who built those houses?" I inquire.

"Which demons built them for which legends?"

On that note, they leave me alone, and they continue to breed children in stolen houses.

I want to visit my mother during the holidays ....

My parents live in a small village an hour's drive from where I live. I have not seen them for several months. Because my parents regard holidays with emotion, I send a carefully-worded letter to the police department. I write:

"I should like to draw your attention to some purely humanitarian reasons, which, I hope, will not clash with your strong regard for the security of the State and the safety and interests of the public. By kindly granting my request for a permit to visit my parents during the holidays, you would prove that the security of the State is not contradictory to your appreciation of people's feelings."

My friends leave the city and I am left behind by myself. All the families will meet tomorrow, and I have no right to be with mine. I remain alone.

In the early morning, I leave for the beach to extinguish my grief in the blue waters. The waves bear me; I resign myself to their might. Then I stretch out on the warm sand, basking in the sun and a soothing breeze with my loneliness.

"Why does the sun squander its warmth so?" I wonder. "Why do the waves break against the shore? So much sun ... so much sand ... so much water." I contemplate the obvious truth.

I hear people speaking Hebrew. I understand what they say, and my grief and loneliness increase. I feel the urge to describe the sea to my girlfriend, but I am alone. With or without justification, those around me curse my people, while they enjoy my sea and bask in my sun. Even when they are swimming, when they are poking, when they are kissing, they curse my people. Could not the sea, I wonder, bless them with one moment of tranquility and love, so they would forget my people for a while? How can they be capable of so much hatred while they lie stretched out on the warm sand?

Saturated with salt and sun, I go to a cafe on the beach. I order a beer and whistle a sad tune. People look at me. I busy myself with a tasteless cigarette, and then I buy an ear of corn and eat alone. My wish is to spend the entire day on the beach in order to forget that it is a holiday and that my parents are waiting for me. Soon, however, I realise that it is time for my daily visit to the police in order to prove that I have not left town. The searing blueness of the sea and the sky blaze my eyes as I leave the beach.

At the entrance of the police station, my little brother meets me and says:

"Hurry up and prove to the police that you are present; Mother is waiting for you at your apartment." I prove that I am present and reach home panting.

My mother has refused to celebrate the feast without me, and so she comes to my apartment bringing everything—the bread, the pots of food, the coffee, olive oil, salt and pepper.

In the evening she leaves. I kiss her and close the door behind her. I cannot take her across the street because the State does not allow me to leave the house after sunset—not even to bid my mother goodbye.

In my room, I become aware of my loneliness once more. I sit on an old chair and I listen to Tchaikovsky's First Concerto. Suddenly I cry as I have never cried before. For years, I have carried these tears and they have finally found an outlet.

"Mother, I am still a child, I want to empty all my grief onto your bosom, I want to bridge the distance between us in order to cry in your lap."

My next door neighbour calls to tell me that my mother is still cleaving to the door. I run out to her and cry on her shoulders.

Translated by Adnan Haydar

You Want

NAZAR QABBANI

Like all women, you want
the treasures of Solomon
like all women
ponds of perfume
combs of tusk
and a flock of maidens.
You want a lord
to extol your name
like a parrot
to say I love you in the morning
to say I love you at close of day
and wash your feet with wine
O Scheherazade among women.

You want me to get you
the stars of heaven
like all women
bowls of manna
and bowls of honeydew
and a pair of sandals
of chestnut rose.
You want silk from Shanghai
and fur-skins from Isfahan
but I am not a prophet
to strike the sea
open with my staff
conjure up a palace
among clouds whose stones
are made of light.

You want fans of
feather, kohl and perfume
like all women.
You want a very dumb slave
to recite poetry
near your bed:
in two successive moments
you want Rascheed's court
and Khusrau's estrade
and a caravan of captives and slaves
to hold your trailing robes, Cleopatra.

I don't happen to be
a space Sinbad
to present before you
Babel, Egypt's pyramids
or Khusrau's estrade;
and I don't own Alladin's
lamp, to bring you the sun
on a platter, as all
women want.

And then Scheherazade:
I am just a poor worker
from Damascus
and dip my bread in blood
my feelings are simple
my wages modest
and I believe in prophets and bread.
Like the others,
I dream of love
of a wife who sews the holes
in my garment, and a child
who sleeps on my knee
like a water lily
like a bird of the field.
I think of love like the others
because love is like air
because love is a sun
that shines upon dreamers
behind palaces:
upon toilers and the wretched
and those who own
a bed of silk
and those who own
a bed of weeping.

You want the eighth
wonder like all women: but I
have only my pride.

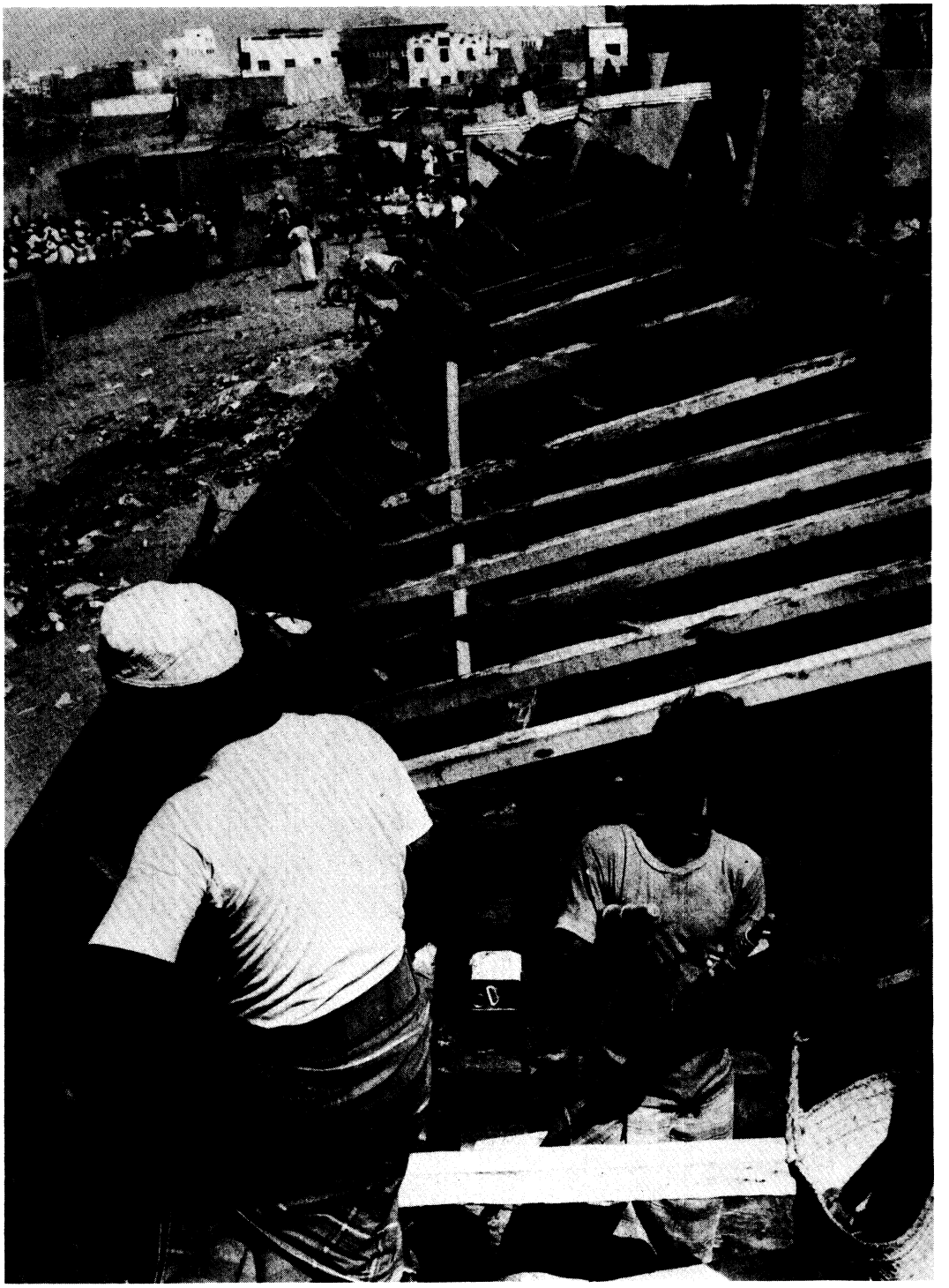
Translated by Sargon Boulus

Fidelity

ALBERT ADIB

I never loved you
But loved myself in you
The reflections of a dream, a vision
And I know that in your mind
I was only the revenge
For some wasted love
We lived together
And from us was composed a lying legend
That stifled our souls in pain
While the world thought us some eternal song
O the contempt of love
You were not mine, I was not yours
I shall leave, you will leave
Two strangers that lived together
Leaving behind them
Lies

Translated by Mounah A. Khouri
and Hamid Algar



A dhow being built at Hodeidah, North Yemen, 1978 *Photos E. B. Martin*

A *shasha* fishing craft being sewn together on the Batina coast, Oman, 1978

Feast

SAMEEH AL-QASIM

With blood in my eyes
and snakes in my suitcase
I wander through ruins
I prepare a full table
under the vaulted sky
Through the mail of massacre
I write invitations
with the bones of the dead
and sign them with scorpions
I invite to my feast
inhabitants of
a thousand graveyards!

Translated by Sargon Boulus

Lorca Elegies

ABD AL-WAHAB AL-BAYYATI

1

The wild pig gores the belly of the deer
and Enkidu dies in his bed
ignobly sad
as a worm dies in mud
the fate of Luqman's seventh eagle
was his, and this tale has approached its end:
you will not come upon light or find life
for this beautiful nature
has ordained that death
be the lot of men
while it keeps
the live flame to itself
through the passage of seasons
What could I tell
my death, O queen
I have never seen the blue flame
nor visited its far-off country

2

An enchanted city
by the side of a river
of silver and lemon
where man at its thousand gates
neither dies nor is born
protected from wind by olive groves
encircled by a wall of gold
Through my sealed
rotting tomb I glimpsed it
while worms ate their way
into my face
Will I return
I said to my mother the earth
She laughed and shook off
the mantle of worms
and wiped my face with a torrent of light
Astride my green wood horse
I came back, a dazzling youth
shouting at her thousand gates
but sleep sealed off my eyelids
and drowned the enchanted city
in blood and smoke

3

The black-eyed beauty
radiant in her earrings
adorned her hair
with leaves of citrus
perfumed with dew of fire rose
and drops of rain at dawn
Granada of happy childhood
trembles above the wall
a poem, a kite
tied to the thread of this light
Granada of innocence
rains down its load
of wind and stars
sleeping under snowflakes
on shingled roofs
pointing to its black dunes in dread
for the enemy brothers
on their horses of death
came from there
to drown this house in blood

4

Unseen by the rider
a bull of silk and black velvet
bellows in the ring
his horns in the air
chase the evening star
and gore the enchanted rider
till he lies in his blood
his sword broken in the light.
On the slopes of the legend mountain
two red mouths open
red anemones
and blood on a willow
—O red fountain
the markets of Madrid
are all without henna
stain with his blood then
the hand of the one I love.
Roar of the clown audience
here: look how he dies
while the stabbed bull
with all his might
bellows in the ring

Translated by Sargon Boulus

What Value has the People Whose Tongue is Tied?

NAZAR QABBANI

1

I bring you news, o my friends,
That the old language is dead,
So too the old books.
Dead
Is our speech full of holes like an old shoe,
Our terms of obscenity, slander and abuse.
I bring you news
That our way of thought —
Which led to the defeat
Is dead and at an end.

2

Bitter in the mouth are poems,
Bitter are women's tresses.
The night—curtains—chairs—
Objects stand bitter before us.

3

O my sorrowing fatherland,
In a single moment you changed me
From a poet writing of love and longing
To a poet writing with a knife.

4

What we feel
Is so much greater than these pages.
We cannot but feel shame
At our poems.

5

If we have lost the war, it is not strange,
For we entered it
With all an Oriental's rhetorical gifts,
With empty heroism that would not kill a fly;
For we entered it
With the logic of the drum and the rebab.

6

The secret of our tragedy
Is that our cries are stronger than our voices
And our swords taller than our stature.

7

The essence of the matter,
Summed up in a phrase:
We have donned the husk of civilization,
Yet our soul remains primitive.

8

With pipe and flute,
No victory is won.

9

We have paid for our love of improvision
With fifty thousand new tents.

10

Do not curse the heavens
If they have abandoned you, do not curse circumstance,
For God grants victory to whom He wills,
Not to your blacksmith fashioning swords.

11

It pains me to hear the morning news,
It pains me to hear the dogs barking.

12

The Jews did not cross our borders;
Rather they crept in,
Like ants,
Through the aperture of our faults.

13

For five thousand years
We have been underground.
Our beards are long, our names unknown,
Our eyes harbors for the flies.
O my friends,
Try to read a book,
To write a book,
To sow letters, like grapes and pomegranates,
To voyage to the land of snow and mist.
For you are unknown
To those above ground.
You are thought to be
Some kind of wolf.

14

Our skins are numbed, unfeeling,
Our souls lament their bankruptcy,
Our days pass in witchcraft, chess and slumber.
Are we that "best of all communities raised up for mankind"?

15

Our oil gushing forth in the desert
Might have been a dagger of flame and fire.
But—o shame of the nobles of Quraysh!
O shame of the valiant men of Aws and Nizar!—
It flowed away under your concubines' legs.

16

We run through the streets,
Carrying ropes under our arms,
Screaming, without understanding.
We break windows and locks,
Curse like frogs, praise like frogs,
Make heroes out of dwarves,
Make the noble among us, vile,
Improvise heroism,
Sit lazy and listless in the mosques,
Composing verses and compiling proverbs,
And begging for victory over the foe
From His Almighty presence.

17

If my safety were promised me
And I could meet the Sultan,
I would say to him: o Sultan, o my lord!
Your hunting dogs have torn my cloak,
Your spies pursue me without cease,
Their eyes pursue me,
Their noses, their feet,
Like destiny, like fate ineluctable.
They interrogate my wife,
Write down the names of my friends.
O Sultan, o your majesty,
Because I approached your deaf walls,
Hoping to reveal my sadness and my plight,
I was beaten with my shoes.
Your soldiers forced this shame upon me.
O Sultan, o my lord,
You have lost the war twice
Because half our people has no tongue—
And what value has the people whose tongue is tied
Because half our people are imprisoned like ants and rats,
Enclosed in walls.
If I were promised safety
From the soldiers of the Sultan,
I would say to him: you have lost the war twice
Because you have abandoned the cause of man.

18

If we had not buried our unity in the dust,
And not torn its fragile body with our spears,
If it had stayed well-guarded in our eyes—
The dogs would not now be feasting on our flesh.

19

We need an angry generation,
A generation to plough the horizons,
To pluck up history from its roots,
To wrench up our thought from its foundations.
We need a generation of different mien
That forgives no error, is not forbearing,
That falters not, knows no hypocrisy.
We need a whole generation of leaders and of giants.

20

O children
From Atlantic Ocean to Arabian Gulf,
You are our hope like ears of corn,
You are the generation that will break the fetters
And will kill the opium in our heads,
Will kill our illusions.
O children, you are still sound
And pure, like dew or snow.
Do not follow our defeated generation,
For we have failed,
Are worthless and banal as a melon-rind,
Are rotten as a worn-out sandal.
Do not read our history, do not trace our deeds,
Do not embrace our thoughts,
For we are the generation of nausea, of syphilis and consumption,
We are the generation of deception and tightrope-walking.
O children,
O rain of spring,
O saplings of hope,
You are the fertile seeds in our barren life,
You are the generation that will vanquish
The defeat.

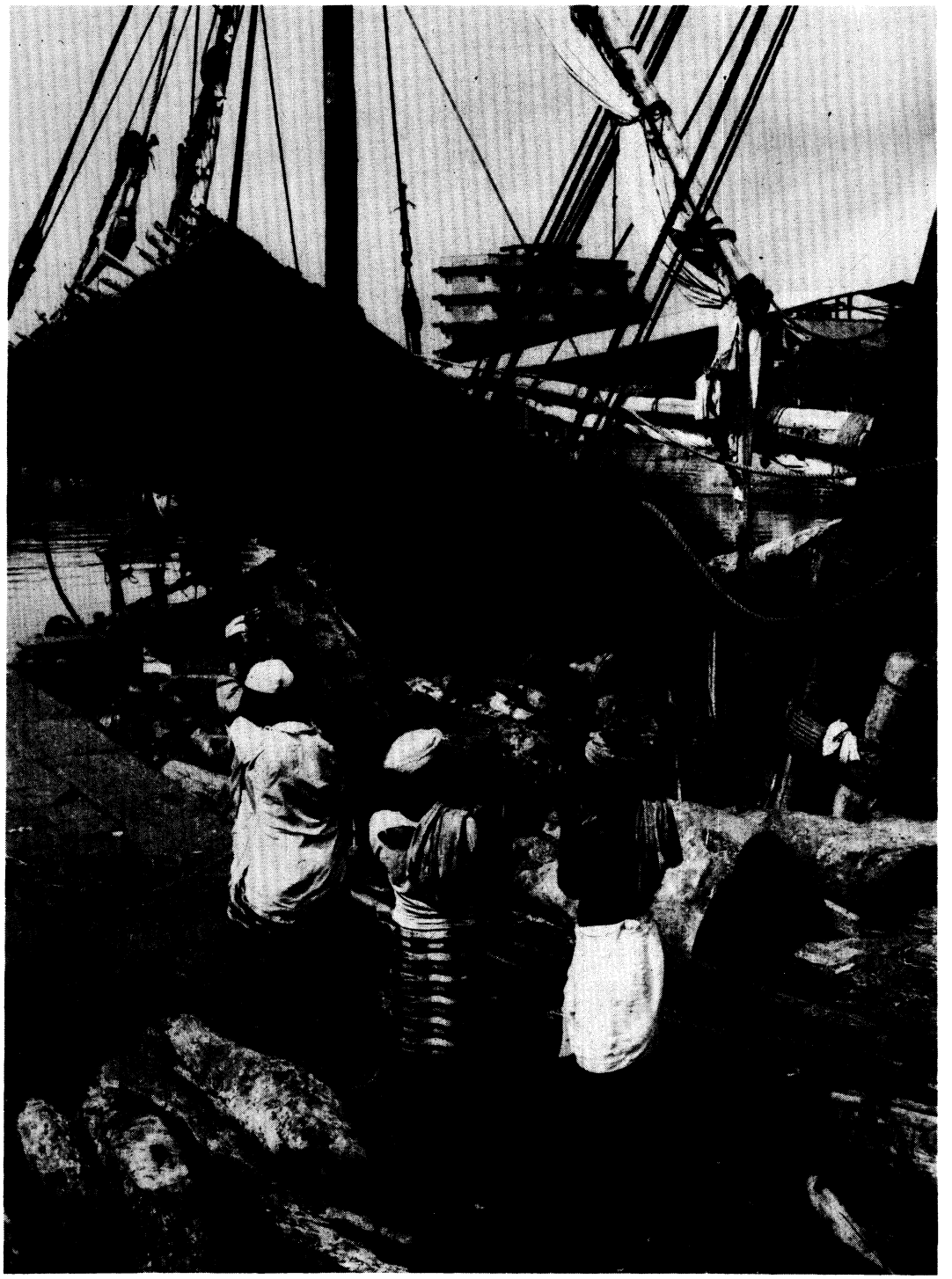
Translated by Mounah A. Khouri
and Hamid Algar

And Then

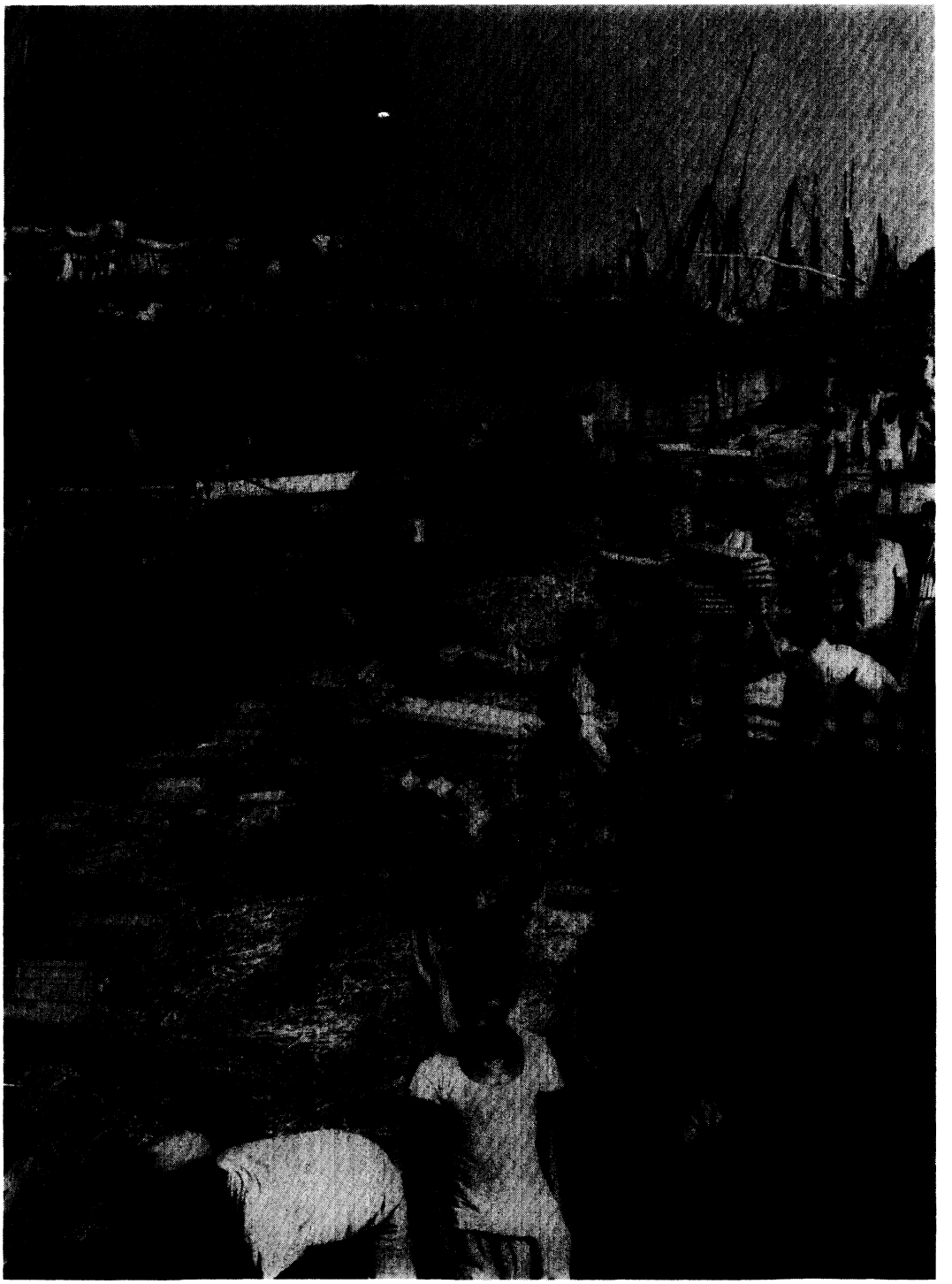
SAMEEH AL-QASIM

Born a pomegranate seed
I began to grow in six directions
The day I became twin
to the earth
I shall light forth with truth
I shall wipe off the tears
from your eyes, my friend
And then
no matter if I'm found slain
on a bench in the park

Translated by Sargon Boulus



Unloading logs from Kerala in wood bunder, Bombay, 1978



Unloading Mangalore tiles in the tile bunder, Bombay, 1978

EAST AFRICA

Stanley Meets Mutesa

DAVID RUBADIRI

Such a time of it they had
The heat of the day
The chill of the night
And the mosquitoes
That day and night
Trailed the march bound for a kingdom.

The thin weary line of porters
With tattered dirty rags
To cover their backs
The battered bulky chests
Perched on sweating shaven heads;
The sun fierce and scorching
Its rise their hope
And its fall their rest;
Sweat dripping off their bodies
Whilst clouds of flies
Clung in thick clumps
On their sweat-scented backs,
Such was the march
And the hot season just breaking
Each day a weary pony dropped
Left for the vultures on the plains,
Each afternoon a human skeleton collapsed
Left for the hyenas on the plains,
But the march trudged on
Its khaki leader in front
He the spirit that inspired
He the beacon of hope.

Then came the afternoon of a long march
A hot and hungry march
The Nile and the Nyanza
Like a grown tadpole
Lay azure
Across the green countryside,
They had arrived in the promised land.

The march leapt on
Chaunting, panting
Like young gazelles to a waterhole.
Hearts beat faster
Loads felt lighter
Cool soft water
Lapt their sore feet,
No more

The dread of hungry hyenas
Or the burning heat of sand on feet
Only tales of valour,
Song, laughter and dance
When at Mutesa's court
In the evening
Fires are lit.

Only a few silent nods
From a few aged faces
Only a rumbling peel of drums
To summon Mutesa's court to parley;
You see there were rumours
Tales and rumours at court
Rumours and tales round the countryside:
That was expected
Mutesa was worried.

The reed gate is flung open
The crowd watches in silence
But only a moment's silence
A silence of assessment—
The tall dark tyrant steps forward
He towers over the thin bearded whiteman
Then grabbing his lean white hand
Manages to whisper
'Mtu mweupe karibu'
White man you are welcome,
The gate of reeds closes behind them
And the west is let in.

Song of Lawino

"The Woman With Whom I Share My Husband"

OKOT p'BITEK

Ocol rejects the old type.
He is in love with a modern woman,
He is in love with a beautiful girl
Who speaks English.

But only recently
We would sit close together, touching each other!
Only recently I would play
On my bow-harp
Singing praises to my beloved.
Only recently he promised
That he trusted me completely.
I used to admire him speaking in English.

* * *

Ocol is no longer in love with the old type;
He is in love with a modern girl.
The name of the beautiful one
Is Clementine.

Brother, when you see Clementine!
The beautiful one aspires
To look like a white woman;

Her lips are red-hot
Like glowing charcoal,
She resembles the wild cat
That has dipped its mouth in blood,
Her mouth is like raw yaws
It looks like an open ulcer,
Like the mouth of a field!
Tina dusts powder on her face
And it looks so pale;
She resembles the wizard
Getting ready for the midnight dance.

She dusts the ash-dirt all over her face
And when little sweat
Begins to appear on her body
She looks like the guinea fowl!

The smell of carbolic soap
Makes me sick,

And the smell of powder
Provokes the ghosts in my head;
It is then necessary to fetch a goat
From my mother's brother.
The sacrifice over
The ghost-dance drum must sound
The ghost be laid
And my peace restored.

I do not like dusting myself with powder:
The thing is good on pink skin
Because it is already pale,
But when a black woman has used it
She looks as if she has dysentery;
Tina looks sickly
And she is slow moving,
She is a piteous sight.

Some medicine has eaten up Tina's face;
The skin on her face is gone
And it is all raw and red,
The face of the beautiful one
Is tender like the skin of a newly born baby!

And she believes
That this is beautiful
Because it resembles the face of a white woman!
Her body resembles
The ugly coat of the hyena;
Her neck and arms
Have real human skins!
She looks as if she has been struck
By lightning;
Or burnt like the kongoni
In a fire hunt.

And her lips look like bleeding,
Her hair is long
Her head is huge like that of the owl,
She looks like a witch,
Like someone who has lost her head
And should be taken
To the clan shrine!
Her neck is rope-like,
Thin, long and skinny
And her face sickly pale.

* * *

Forgive me, brother,
Do not think I am insulting
The woman with whom I share my husband!
Do not think my tongue
Is being sharpened by jealousy.
It is the sight of Tina
That provokes sympathy from my heart.

I do not deny
I am a little jealous.
It is no good lying,
We all suffer from a little jealousy.
It catches you unawares
Like the ghosts that bring fevers;
It surprises people
Like earth tremors:
But when you see the beautiful woman
With whom I share my husband
You feel a little pity for her!

Her breasts are completely shrivelled up,
They are all folded dry skins,
They have made nests of cotton wool
And she folds the bits of cow-hide
In the nests
And calls them breasts!

O! my clansmen
How aged modern women
Pretend to be young girls!

They mould the tips of the cotton nests
So that they are sharp
And with these they prick
The chests of their men!
And the men believe
They are holding the waists
Of young girls that have just shot up!
The modern type sleep with their nests
Tied firmly on their chests.

How many kids
Has this woman sucked?
The empty bags on her chest
Are completely flattened, dried.
Perhaps she has aborted many!
Perhaps she has thrown her twins
In the pit latrine!

Heres Something Ive Always Wanted To Talk About

TABAN LO LIYONG

heres something ive always wanted to talk about
the marriage between negritude and debased whitetude a man lived in a hut with mudded wattle for a wall the earth for a floor and grass for a roof top on branches of trees because he couldnt live in something else
his hut is part and parcel of his life its cycle its entity and its culture so he builds the hut as the thing to do for it has been done for years and years place of habitation he sees in a hut born there grown up there eaten there fucked there and possibly died there it is house home everything and as it should be

now another man comes around and laughs long and bitter then he stops and begins to wonder whether he should not have a change in his own home and he decides that of course there should be a change and he is going to adopt the outside tramellings of what the nigger is doing and so he comes around to the nigger and says he says hey man how would you like me to join you for a change for you know what im so tired and fed up of life in them storey houses now i wana come down to nature and fuck like you do right here on this earth floor and ill get my broad and lay her right here as the good lord had wanted us to and you can go ahead and lay your own miss right here beside me so that my woman and i can keep to your rhythm and we can also smoke maryjane right here equality has arrived and theres no difference between you and me for am i not your brother right on the floor and so the game is initiated and the nigger whose hair has now grown larger than a lions says yea man and and and he says soul brother you are wonderful and please go ahead and fuck right here on my floor and damn them civilized people

Mamparra M'Gaiza*

JOSE CRAVEIRINHA

The cattle is selected
counted, marked
and gets on the train, stupid cattle.

In the pen
the females stay behind
to breed new cattle.

The train is back from "migoudini"*
and they come rotten with diseases, the old cattle of Africa
oh, and they've lost their heads, these cattle "m'gaiza"
Come and see
the sold cattle have lost their heads
my god of my land
the sold cattle have lost their heads.

Again
the cattle is selected, marked
and the train is ready to take away meek cattle

Stupid cattle
mine cattle
cattle of Africa, marked and sold.

Translated by Margaret Dickinson

* Mamparra M'Gaiza: idiot miners (returned from working in South Africa or Rhodesia).
* "migoudini": dialect for the mines.

The Mubenzi Tribesman

NGUGI WA THIONG'O

The thing one remembers most about prison is the smell: the smell of shit and urine, the smell of human sweat and breath. So when Waruhiu shrank from contact with the passing crowd, it was not merely that he feared someone would recognize him. Who would? None of his tribesmen lived here. The crowd hurrying to the tin shacks, to the soiled fading-white chalked walls with 'Fuck you' and other slogans smeared all over, scribbled on pavements even, Christ, what a home; this crowd had never belonged to him and his kind. Waruhiu could never bear the stench of sizzling meat roasted next to overflowing bucket lavatories; he and his tribesmen always made a detour of these African locations or kept strictly to the roads. Now he recognised the stench. It reminded him of prison. Yes. There was an unmistakable suggestion of prison even in the way these locations had been cast miles away from the city centre and decent residential areas, and maintained that way by the Wabenzi tribesmen who had inherited power from their British forefathers, for fear, one imagined, and Waruhiu accepted, the stench might scare away the rare game: TOURIST. *Keep the City Clean.* But these people did not behave like prisoners. They laughed and shouted and sang and their defiant gaiety overcame the stench and the squalor. Waruhiu imagined that everyone could smell his own stench and know. There was no gaiety about his clothes or about the few tufts of hair sprouting on his big head. The memory of it made him bleed inside and again he imagined that these people could see. And he saw these voices lifted into one chorus of laughter pointing at him: they would have their revenge: one of the Wabenzi tribesmen had fallen low. The shame of it. This pained him even more than the memory of cold concrete floor for a bed, the cutting of grass with the other convicts, the white calico shorts and shirt, and the askari who all the time stood on guard. The shame would reach his friends, his wife and his children in years to come. *Your father was once in prison. Don't you play with us, son of a thief. Papa, you know what they were saying in school.* Tears. *Is it true, is it true?* And the neighbours with a shake of the head: *We do not understand. How could a man with such education, earning so much, what couldn't we do with his salary.* The shame of it.

That is what galled him most. He had been to a university college and had obtained a good degree. He was the only person from his village with such distinction. When people in the village learnt he was going to college, they all, women, men and children, flocked to his home. You have a son. And the happy proud faces of his parents. The wrinkles seemed to have temporarily disappeared. This hour of glory and recognition. The reward of all their labour in the settled area. He is a son of the village. He will bring the whiteman's wisdom to our

ridge. And when the time came for him to leave, it was no longer a matter between him and his parents. People came to the party even from the surrounding villages. The songs of pride. The admiration from the girls. And the young men hid their envy and befriended him. It was also the hour of the village priest. Take this Bible. It's your spear and shield. The old man too. Always remember your father and mother. We all are your parents. Never betray the people. Altogether it had been too much for him and when he boarded the train he vowed to come back and serve the people. Vows and Promises.

The college was a new world. Small but larger. Fuller. New men. New and strange ideas. And with the other students they discussed the alluring fruits of this world. The whiteman is going. Jobs. Jobs. Life. He still remembered the secret vow. He would always stand or fall by his people.

In his third year he met Ruth. Or rather he fell in love. He had met her at college dances and socials. But the moment she allowed him to walk her to her hall of residence, he knew he would never be happy without her. Aah, Ruth. She could dress. And knew her colours. It was she who popularized straightened hair and wigs at college. You have landed a true Negress even without going to America, the other boys used to say. And their obvious envy increased his pride and pleasure. That's why he could not resist a college wedding. She wanted it. It was good. He was so proud of her as she leaned against him for the benefit of the cameras. Suddenly he wished his parents were present. To share this moment. Their son and Ruth.

Should he not have invited them? He asked himself afterwards. Ruth's parents had come. She had not told him. It was meant as a joke, a wedding surprise for him. Maybe it was as well. Ruth's parents were, well, rich. Doubts lingered. Perhaps he ought to have waited and married a girl who knew the village and its ways. But could he find a girl who would meet his intellectual and social requirements? He was being foolish. He loved this girl. Oh my Negress. She was an African. Suppose he had gone to England or America and married a white woman. Therein was real betrayal. All the same he felt he should have invited his parents and vowed not to be so negligent in future. In any case when they saw the bride he would bring home on top of his brilliant academic record! He felt better. He told her about the village and his secret vows. I hope you will be happy in the village. Don't be silly. Of course I shall. You know my father and mother are illiterate. Come, come. Stop fretting. As if I was not an African myself. You don't know how I hate cities. I want to be a daughter of the soil. Ruth came from one of the rich families that had early embraced Christianity and exploited the commercial possibilities of the new world. She had grown up in the city and the ways of the country were a bit strange to her. But her words reassured him. He felt better and loved her all the more.

His return to the village was a triumphal entry. People again flowed to his father's compound to see him. She looks like a whitewoman, people whispered in admiration. Look at her hair. Her nails. Stockings. His aged father with a dirty blanket across his left shoulder, fixed his eyes on him. Father, this is my wife. His mother wept with joy. For weeks after the couple was all the talk of the area. She is so proud. Ssh. Do you not know that she too has all the wisdom of the whiteman, just like our son?

A small, three-roomed house had been built for them. He became a teacher. Ruth worked in the big city. They lived happily.

For a time.

She started to fret. Life in a mud hut without electricity, without music, was suffocating. The constant fight against dirt and mud was wearying. She resented the many villagers who daily came to the house and stayed late. She could not

have the privacy she so needed, especially with her daily journeys to the city and back. And the many relatives who flocked daily with this or that problem. Money. She broke down and wept. I wish you would ask them all to go. I am so tired. Oh, Ruth, you know I can't, it's against custom. Custom! Custom! And she became restless. And because he loved her and loved the village, he was hurt, and became unhappy. Let's go and live in the town, we can get a house at the newly integrated residential area, I'll pay the rent. They went. He too was getting tired of the village and the daily demands.

She kept her money. He kept his. He gave up teaching. The amount of money he would get as a teacher even in the city would be too small to meet the new demands of an integrated neighbourhood, as they preferred to call the area. An oil company was the answer. He worked in the Sales Department. His salary was fatter. But he soon found that a town was not a village and the new salary was not as big as he had imagined. To economize, he gradually discontinued support for his countless relatives. Even this was not enough. He had joined a new tribe and certain standards were expected of his and other members. He bought a Mercedes S220. He also bought a Mini Morris—a shopping basket for his wife. This was the fashion among those who had newly arrived and wanted to make a mark. There were the house gadgets to buy and maintain if he was to merit the respect of his new tribesmen. And of course the parties. He joined the Civil Servants Club, formerly exclusively white.

His wife spent her money mostly on food and clothes. She would not trust him with any of it because she feared he might spend it on the troublesome relatives. But he had to keep up with the others. Could he shame her in front of the other wives? The glory of their days at college came back. He was grateful and stopped even the four visits to his parents because he had no money and she would not go with him. And because his salary was now too small—house rent, a Mercedes Benz and the shopping basket, all to be paid for—he began to 'borrow' the company's money that came his way. Of course I shall return it, he told himself. Still he learnt to play with the company's cheques. When at last he was caught, the amount he had consumed was more than he could pay.

Waruhiu left one street and quickly crossed to the next. Though he hated the locations, it was easier to hide there, in the crowd until darkness came. He did not want to meet any of his tribesmen while his body exuded the stench. At night he would take a bus which would take him to the only place he would get welcome. He loved Ruth. She loved him. Her love would wash away the stench —even the shame. After all, had he not done those things for her? As for his village, he would not show his face there. How could he look all those people in the eyes? As he waited for the bus, the last scene in the courtroom came back.

The case had attracted much attention. The village priest and people from his home had come. The press with their cameras. First offender, six months with a warning to all educated to set an example. This was a new Kenya. As he was led out of the crowded courtroom, he saw tears on his mother's face. Many of the villagers had grave, averted faces. Hand-cuffed hour of shame. He put on a brave, haughty front. But within, he wept. His one consolation was that Ruth was not in the court. He would have died to see her pain and public shame.

The bus came. And the darkness. He looked forward to seeing Ruth. Had she changed much? She was a tall slim woman, not beautiful, but she had grace and power. He would take her in his arms, breaking her fragrant grace on his broad breast. Perhaps the stench would go. That was all he now wanted. He was sure she would understand. In bed, she had always been able to still his doubts and he always discovered faith in the power of renewed love. Ruth. He would not seek work in this city. He would go to one of the neighbouring

countries. He would begin all over. He now knew wisdom. He would live faithfully by her side. He had failed the village. He had failed his mother and father. He would never fail Ruth.

He came out of the bus. He knew this place. The smell of roses and bougainvillea. The fresh, crisp air. The wide spaces between houses. What a difference from the locations. Here, he was the only person with strong stench. But he already felt purified as he walked to his house and Ruth. He could not bear the mounting excitement.

Near the door, and he heard a new voice, a deep round voice. He felt utter despair. So his wife had moved! How was he to find her new house.

He gathered courage and knocked at the door. At least he would try to find out if she had left her new address. He stepped aside, into the shadows. The sound of high-heeled shoes; how that sound would have pleased him; the turning of the key; how he would have danced with joy. A woman stood there. For a moment he lost his voice. His legs were heavy. Desire suddenly seized him. Ruth, he whispered. It's me. Oh, she groaned. Ruth, he whispered again, don't be afraid, he continued emerging from the shadows, arms wide open to receive her. Don't, don't, she cried, after an awkward silence, and moved a step back. But it's me, he now pleaded. Go away, she sobbed, I don't know you, I don't. Please—he hesitated. Then came a hard gritty voice he had never heard in her: I'll call the police, if you don't clear off my premises: and she shut the door in his face.

He was numb all over. The stench from his body was too much even for his nostrils. All around him people drunkenly drove past. Music and forced laughter and high-pitched voices—laughter so familiar, reached him with a vengeance. Suddenly he started laughing, a hoarse ugly laughter. He laughed as he walked away; he laughed until his ribs pained; and the music and high-pitched voices still issued from the houses in this very cosmopolitan suburban estate, to compete with laughter that had turned to tears of self-hatred and bitterness.

Two Thousand Seasons

A Prologue to the Novel

AYI KWEI ARMAH

Springwater flowing to the desert, where you flow there is no regeneration. The desert takes. The desert knows no giving. To the giving water of your flowing it is not in the nature of the desert to return anything but destruction. Springwater flowing to the desert, your future is extinction.

Hau, people headed after the setting sun, in that direction even the possibility of regeneration is dead. There the devotees of death take life, consume it, exhaust every living thing. Then they move on, forever seeking newer boundaries. Wherever there are living remnants undestroyed, there lies more work for them. Whatever would direct itself after the setting sun, an ashen death lies in wait for it. Whichever people make the falling fire their aim, a pale extinction awaits them among the destroyers.

Woe the headwater needing to give, giving only to floodwater flowing desertward. Woe the link from spring to stream. Woe the link receiving springwater only to pass it on in a stream flowing to waste, seeking extinction.

You hearers, seers, imaginers, thinkers, rememberers, you prophets called to communicate truth of the living way to a people fascinated unto death, you called to link memory with forelistening, to join the uncountable seasons of our flowing to unknown tomorrows even more numerous, communicators doomed to pass on truths of our origins to a people rushing deathward, grown contemptuous in our ignorance of our source, prejudiced against our own survival, how shall your vocation's utterance be heard?

This is life's race, but how shall we remind a people hypnotized by death? We have been so long following the fallen sun, flowing to the desert, moving to our burial.

In the living night come voices from the source. We go to find our audience, open our mouths to pass on what we have heard. But we are fallen among a fantastic tumult. The noise the hypnotized make, multiplied by every echoing cave of our labyrinthine trap, is heavier, a million times louder than the sounds we carry.

Hoarsened, we whisper our news of the way. In derisive answer the hurtling crowds shriek their praise songs to death. All around us the world is drugged white in a deathly happiness while from under the falling sun powerful engines of noise and havoc emerge to swell the cacophony. Against their crashing riot nothing whispered can be heard, nothing said. Indeed the tumult welcomes who would shout and burst the veins on his own neck. His message murdered before birth, the shouter only helps confusion.

Giver of life, spring whose water now pours down destruction's road a rushing cataract, your future is destruction, your present a giving, giving into a void with no return. Your flow knows no regeneration.

Say it is the nature of the spring to give; it is the nature of the desert's sand to take. Say it is the nature of your given water to flow; it is the nature of the desert to absorb.

It is your nature also, spring, to receive. Giving, receiving, receiving, giving, continuing, living. It is not the nature of the desert to give. Taking, taking, taking, taking, the desert blasts with destruction whatever touches it. Whatever gives of itself to the desert parts from regeneration.

It is for the spring to give. It is for springwater to flow. But if the spring would continue flowing, the desert is no direction. Along the desert road springwater is the sap of young wood prematurely blazing, meant to carry life quietly, darkly from roots to farthest veins but abruptly betrayed into devouring light, converted to scalding pus hissing its own vessel's destruction. Along the desert road springwater is blood of a murdered woman when the sun leaves no shadow.

No spring changes the desert. The desert remains; the spring runs dry. Not one spring, not thirty, not a thousand springs will change the desert. For that change floods, the waters of the universe in unison, flowing not to coax the desert but to overwhelmn it, ending its regime of death, that, not a single perishable spring, is the necessity.

Receiving, giving, giving, receiving, all that lives is twin. Who would cast the spell of death, let him separate the two. Whatever cannot give, whatever is ignorant even of receiving, knowing only taking, that thing is past its own mere death. It is a carrier of death. Woe the giver on the road to such a taker, for then the victim has found victorious death.

Woe the race, too generous in the giving of itself, that finds a road not of regeneration but a highway to its own extinction. Woe the race, woe the spring. Woe the headwaters, woe the seers, the hearers, woe the utterers. Woe the flowing water, people hustling to our death.

What remains? To sing regret, curse ancestors and throughout stagnant lives pass down the malediction on those yet to come? Easy that lazy existence, sweetly drugged the life spent waiting upon death. Easy the falling slide, even for rememberers.

We who hear the call not to forget what is in our nature, have we not betrayed it in this blazing noonday of the killers? Around us they have placed a plethora of things screaming denial of our nature, things welcoming us against ourselves, things luring us into the whiteness of destruction. We too have drunk oblivion, and overflowing with it, have joined the exhilarated chase after death.

We cannot continue so. For a refusal to change direction, for the abandonment of the way, for such perverse persistence there are no reasons, only hollow, unconvincing lies.

And the seers, the hearers, the utterers? What sufficiency is there in our hearing only this season's noise, seeing only the confusion around us here, uttering, like cavernous mirrors, a wild echo only of the howling cacophony engulfing us? That is not the nature of our seeing, that is not our hearing, not our uttering. Only our drugged weariness, unjustified, unjustifiable, keeps us bound to the present.

How have we come to be mere mirrors to annihilation? For whom do we aspire to reflect our people's death? For whose entertainment shall we sing our agony? In what hopes? That the destroyers, aspiring to extinguish us, will suffer conciliatory remorse at the sight of their own fantastic success? The last imbecile to dream such dreams is dead, killed by the saviours of his dreams. Such idiot hopes come from a territory far beyond rebirth. Those utterly dead, never again to wake, such is their muttering. Leave them in their graves. Whatever waking

form they wear, the stench of death pours ceaseless from their mouths. From every opening of their possessed carcases comes death's excremental pus. Their soul itself is dead and long since putrified. Would you then have your intercourse with these creatures from the graveyard? Go to them, and speak your message to long rotted ash.

This sight, this hearing, this our uttering: these are not for dumb recording of the senseless present, unless the vocation we too have fallen into waning is merely to be part of the cadaverous stampede, hurrying on the rush to destruction.

The linking of those gone, ourselves here, those coming; our continuation, our flowing not along any meretricious channel but along our living way, the way: it is that remembrance that calls us. The eyes of seers should range far into purposes. The ears of hearers should listen far toward origins. The utterers' voice should make knowledge of the way, of heard sounds and visions seen, the voice of the utterers should make this knowledge inevitable, impossble to lose.

A people losing sight of origins are dead. A people deaf to purposes are lost. Under fertile rain, in scorching sunshine there is no difference: their bodies are mere corpses, awaiting final burial.

What when the tumult and the rush are yet too strong for the voice to prevail uttering heard sounds of origins, transmitting seen visions of purposes? What when all our eyes are raped by destruction's furious whiteness?

Easy then the falling slide, soft the temptation to let despair absorb even the remnant voice. Easy for unheeded seers, unheard listeners, easy for interrupted utterers to clasp the immediate destiny, yield and be pressed to serve victorious barrenness. Easy to call to whiteness, easy the welcome unto death.

Have we not seen the devotees of death? They are beyond the source's beckoning. Purpose has no power to draw them forward from dead todays. Make way for them along the easy road. Those with their guts cracked out of them, those with minds so minced all their remembrance would turn to pain, leave them along the easy road. Do not condemn, do not pity them. Let them go. Or would you try reminding them of their murdered selves? As well graft back blighted leaves. Some restful night after the first thousand and the second thousand seasons the loss of such, devoted to whiteness in their souls, will appear justly: a gain.

But among the rushing multitude remember well the many rushing just because that is the present road—rushing not out of devotion but because they are of a nature to take their internal order from the present season's surroundings. It is a waste of the seer's thought, the hearer's breath, a waste of the utterer's spirit to pour blame on such natures. Were the surrounding order the order of the way, these also would again be people of the way. It is their nature to flow along channels already deepened by recent flow. It is not in their nature to wonder, threatening their easy peace with thinking if channels already found run true. Finders they are, not makers. Would you too, in pride miming the white, deathly people, would you also heap contempt on them? Do it directly then, and for your own satisfaction undisguised. Only plead no disappointment that the ones you so condemn, they too have not turned out to be makers. Finders they are—never did they deceive you with any promise to be creators.

And if the mind-channels of the way are all destroyed, and the only channels left lie along the white road? Drawing from remembrance, from knowledge of future purpose, it is for the hearers to listen, for the hearers to glean what through accident death's messengers have not found to silence.

And if all around has indeed been touched by them? The destroyed who retain the desire to remake themselves and act upon that desire remake themselves. The remade are pointers to the way, the way of remembrance, the way knowing purpose.

In this present season the flow is so powerful in the direction of death. It has been so long, even since before Anoa spoke her prophecy of a thousand seasons and another thousand seasons: a thousand seasons wasted wandering amazed along alien roads, another thousand spent finding paths to the living way.

The reign of the destroyers has been long. It will be longer. But what is our present despair against the sharp abandonment of those first snatched away to waste? What puniness is this our anxiety against the howling agony of their murdered soul?

Remember this: against all that destruction some yet remained among us unforgetful of origins, dreaming secret dreams, seeing secret visions, hearing secret voices of our purpose. Further: those yet to appear, to see, hear, to utter and to make—little do we know what changes they will come among. Idle then for us to presume despair on their behalf; foolish when we have no knowledge how much closer to the way their birth will come, how much closer than our closest hopes.

Not all our souls are of a nature to answer the call of death, however sweetened. Easy these seasons to forget this too. Seasons, seasons and seasons ago the first thousand seasons passed. Before the passing of the second thousand, even before then, the time will come when those multitudes staring out on the road of death must meet predecessors returning scalded from the white taste of death.

These first returners, their wounds are so raw, their mind so butchered with the enormity of a fate so recently, so closely grazed, that the very sound of their voices, the very sight they present is unacceptable, unreal, impossible to the hastening, careless, prancing, advancing multitudes. These first returners, amid the general oblivious happiness they appear mere capricious nightmares, specific, unfortunate accidents, particular mishaps to be sidestepped on the jubilant white road, single apparitions easy to ignore, most pleasantly easy to forget.

But farther along the road more returning apparitions arise. They are intermittent still, but frequenter. Minds still unwounded in the dizzy, happy deathward rush, chancing upon this frequency of warning casualties, begin to wonder if the advancing dance will really be the promised revelry.

More apparitions. The thoughtful are given greater pause. These are many now, some half concealed in the other wreckage along the happy highway. Completely ruined, bled of life's juices they have staggered groping for the source, their purpose now the contemned past. Unable to stagger farther, they lie unburied by the common road, their corpses multiplying, their feet pointing to their destruction.

Returning casualties, many now and desperate, challenge the progressing revellers for right of way. When the numbers of the hopeful going and the desperate fleeing back are almost even, then the interrupted revelry becomes pure carnage. For those with no understanding of the source, those blest in their ignorance of doom's whiteness, the blind revellers, are anxious to cascade away, to obey the highway's call. Those who have seen the white destination and yet escaped death, stampeding back, crash in unbuffered collision against the revellers. In their spirits contempt from those escaping death—contempt against the others for seeking what so recently they themselves sought—clashes with pure incomprehension from the hopeful revellers.

How indeed would a living understanding come to those who have fled knowledge of the source? And those running back to the source in their new desperation, have they not more fear of death's horror than love of life? Whiteness indeed they have known; of our own blackness they have yet to learn.

You who yearn to be hearers, you who would see, you the utterers of the future, this is not the season for contempt. Look upon those in whose nature it

is to wait upon death to create in them a need to know life. Look upon them, but in this season do not look too steeply.

Say then the multitude is noisier after the shaking, shattering knowledge of the pale road of death. Are your ears also dead? This noise is not the recent uniform cacophony of death victorious, death alone ruling. Now the customary noises of triumphant death have the tone of lies to some of our ears. In such a season the voice informed with knowledge of the way, that voice whose utterance is inseparable from life, that voice will be heard. For there are ears straining against the loud nonsense of the destroyers, ears that have heard all the sweet and easy sounds of death and found them false.

Would you lock your gift away in pallid silence? Know then that in the absence of the utterers' work the carnage will be long and pure, and not the wisest mind can in the absence of the utterers' work trace in all our flowing blood even one broken ring of meaning. For those returning, salvaging blistered selves from death, and those advancing still hypnotized by death, in the absence of the utterers' work what will they be but beast devouring beasts, zombis fighting zombis, a continuation along the road of death in place of regeneration, the rediscovery of our way, the way?

Leave the killers' spokesmen, the predators' spokesmen, leave the destroyers' spokesmen to cast contemptuous despair abroad. That is not our vocation. That will not be our utterance.

INDIA

Curfew—In a Riot-torn City

KEKI N. DARUWALLA

Blood and fog
are over half the town
and curfew stamps along the empty street

a thinning drizzle
has smeared the walls
and given moss and fungus a membrane of bile
You glide along, the headlights rake the walls
barracuda-eyes
searching for prey
amongst nocturnal glooms.
Gears shift and change with the streets
wild eyes follow you
behind shuttered doors
fish-eyes following you from a reef-crack

the starch on your khaki back
turns soggy, the feel of things is queer
you wish to forget it all
the riot, the town, the people
—that mass of liquefied flesh
seething in fear

the town is tumour-growth
mud-brick and concrete
streets high-walled and brick-sandwiched
houses back to back / streets
back to front, walls bulging towards
each other in a half-embrace
lanes branch tentacular
you prowl along
an octopus on his beat

at the crack of dawn
you enter the reef

above you a ledge of black light
turns its overhanging limbs
towards the first embryonic fingers of the sun.
A scurry of footsteps
a jungle of walls interchanging shadows
announce that dawn has come!

suddenly a gunshot
dynamites the silence
—a scamper of feet
you rush there, pistol cocked
search the lanes and scan the walls for blood.
You feel weak with relief, knock-kneed
the bullet hasn't claimed a corpse!

you know what is waiting on the rooftops
brickbats, soda bottles
and acid bulbs
"Get on to the roofs!" you shout
Lanes swarm with khaki
reluctantly they move up over crooked stairs
no one wants acid running down his face
the face running with acid
and spend a lifetime
trafficking
with bizaare mirrors

a street is lined with idle butchers
strange: death and curfew have not stampeded here;
tense and sullen they watch your prowling jeep
—red meat hanging on the cambrel
red meat hanging on their jowls.
you keep them within gunsights
behind the forehead is the pit you fear
for they are the sick tribe and if they lose their heads
others will lose theirs

theme for a nightmare:
carting headless bodies in a burning van

No one remembers how the trouble started
it was a fight over the dead perhaps?
was this a graveyard or a burning ghat?
A ploughshare bit through the mud graves
one night and exhumed passions / iron
and for these neither pyre
nor grave was the answer

two days have passed
without turning up a corpse
Knuckles return to their original brown
tomorrow you may come out with a press communiqué!
but the war has travelled
outwards in a spiral
two men climb into a rick
and drive into the dusk
        where the town
dwindles into mudhouse and machan
        over maize-fields. they get down
one pins the rickshaw-puller's arms behind him
the other takes a brick
and excavates his brains

trailing the siren comes the iron law
you clamp the curfew on the outskirts now
on the outer fringe
the outer striæ of this whorl of madness

what the hell is it, you wonder
curfew or contagion?

The Epileptic

KEKI N. DARUWALLA

Suddenly the two children
flew from her side
        like severed wings

Thank God, the burden in her belly
stayed where it was

The rickshaw-puller was a study in guilt
It was too much for him:
the convulsionary and her frightened kids
floundering about in a swarm of limbs

A focus in the brain
        or some such flap
the look had gone from the mother's eyes
the way her children
        had flown from her lap

The husband dug through the mound
that was her face; forced the mouth wide
plucked out the receding tongue
        warped into a clotted wound
        and put a gag between her teeth

The traffic ground
to an inquisitive halt. A crowd senses
a mishap before it sees one
They fanned her, rubbed her feet, and looked around
for other ways to summon back her senses
A pedestrian whispered
"Her seizures are cyclic
they visit her in her menses"

She was not hysteric, she didn't rave
her face was flushed, abstract, the marionette-
head jerked from side to side to side, a slave
to cross-pulls. A thin edge of froth
simmered round her lips
like foam-dregs left by a receding wave

The hospital doctors frowned with thought
light words like *petit mal* were tied
to the heavies: "psychomotor epilepsy"
a physician pointed out with pride
the "spike-and-wave" electrical activity
prescribed belladonna and paraldehyde

Just when he said "she isn't shaping
too well", she recovered, bleached white
        and utterly raped.
As a limp awareness slouched along her face
I found it was the husband who was shaking

Approaching Thirty

R. PARTHASARATHY

As a man approaches thirty he may
take stock of himself.
Not that anything important happens.

At thirty the mud will have settled:
you see yourself in a mirror.
Perhaps, refuse the image as yours.

Makes no difference, unless
you overtake yourself. Pause for breath.
Time gave you distance: you see little else.

You stir, and the mirror dissolves.
Experience doesn't always make for knowledge:
you make the same mistakes.

Do the same things over again.
The woman you may have loved
you never married. These many years

you warmed yourself at her hands.
The luminous pebbles of her body
stayed at your feet, else you had overflowed

the banks, never reached shore.
The sides of the river swell
with the least pressure of her toes.

All night your hand has rested
on her left breast.
In the morning when she is gone

you will be alone like the stone benches
in the park, and would have forgotten
her whispers in the noises of the city.

The Grasscutters

KIRAN NAGARKAR

This was my second trip to Benares.

Sudhan had written, "Come for a few days, before I go away to the United States. We will have a couple of weeks together and talk." My four school friends. Rakesh, Raghu, Jitendra and Sadhan. Until a few years ago, Sadhan and I weren't very close.

"Benares hasn't changed," I remarked.

He didn't answer. Even after he had been appointed a lecturer, the youngest in his faculty, there was little outward change in him. Dressed in a woollen suit. Receding forehead and aggressive, large, protuberant teeth. He had either stopped expanding or had got himself a new pair of trousers. I remembered his clothes when he was a student at the university. You never knew when the buttons of his fly would pop and hit you in the face.

But I sensed another kind of change. He seemed more relaxed, more at peace with himself. He'd probably still be in the thick of any fracas, but I doubted if he'd strike the first blow.

He had a five-room bungalow on the campus. Only a few minutes away from the hostel where I had stayed with him on the previous occasion. The lovely, old red-tiled roofs made me feel at home. There was grass everywhere, like the last time. But it was green and not yet shoulder-high. A little playful breeze skimmed over it and touched me lightly as it disappeared. I looked down at my hands. The hair stood up on them. Sadhan remarked, "Benares doesn't change; it changes people."

I didn't understand. For a moment I thought he was trying to be profound. But I should have known better.

He had wasted an academic year and had been disqualified from entrance to the Indian Institute of Technology. So he went to Benares. Small, slight, vegetarian, South Indian, Sadhan. He had spoken little Hindi at the time. Four years in Benares and he looked and spoke Hindi like a *Bhaiyya*. Thick curved moustache. Body like a steel cable.

"I work like a slave every year to get a First. I've got one now for the past four years. I'll get one when I do my B.E. next year, and also when I do my M.E. Then I'll teach for a year. And slave again for a Ph.D. from the M.I.T.," he had said once. And it had all happened. Like clockwork. Now only the doctorate remained. But there were no doubts about that either. Nothing left to chance.

That first evening we went for a walk. He stretched himself out on the grass. "I'm ready," he said. Then was silent. Ready to take on the world single-handed? I smiled at him. But that wasn't what he meant. Whatever he was

ready for had better be ready for him. "I'm ready for the States. The *M.I.T. Journal* published my last paper this month." He drew a cable out of his pocket and passed it to me. "I can have a grant to do research on anything I want. I'll be my own boss and I can ask for all I need. I'm going to take that place by storm, Kushank!" he laughed. Then, turning to me affectionately, he said, "But you'll always be there, won't you."

And then the grass grew high and turned yellow. Sadhan was twenty-two again and we leaned over the third floor balcony of his hostel, exchanging friendly abuse with the boys in the hostel across from us. Sadhan opened the innings. "Slave of my forefathers, eunuch of the harem, go take a flying fuck at the moon."

Quick came the retort, "You bastard. Listen, you, whose cock is like the crescent moon....."

It was a beautiful campus. Vast open spaces, like an open jail. Very pretty and methodically mad. Sadhan said it was blazing hot in summer and froze the veins in winter. The hostels spread out far and wide. And in those buildings were let loose boys from all over India: from Bombay and Delhi and Calcutta and Madras and Agra. Only one thing was taboo—women. Girls, women, females. And that's all they ever talked about. All twenty-four hours of the day, even as they studied. Studied, swore and talked about women. Over and over and over. Till the words ran out and tongues fell limp and ears grew numb. Talk, talk, talk, but never a woman in sight.

A third-year friend of Sadhan's accosted me one night and wiped the superiority off my face.

"Yep, that's all we do. Rub our cocks the whole day long. But Superman, all it's going to take to bring you down to earth and make you human is ten days. Tell you what, smart ass. You get the hell out of here if you know what's good for you."

The next evening Sadhan, his room-mate Ravindra, some others and I went into town to the movies. A group of girls from the Ladies' College came out of the theatre after the matinee. The usually quiet Ravindra turned to me and asked, "Do you think they talk about us as much as we do about them?"

"I pray to God every day that they...."

The third-year friend who had confronted me the night before cut me short. "Don't worry, Ravi, only another week and the women who cut the grass will be here....."

Sure enough, five days later the women came. I could feel their presence even before I woke up. The air had stopped moving. The atmosphere was electric with the swish of sickles. I laughed and put on my glasses before going out of my room. The boys were out on the balconies and down below, making you want to throw yourself down in a mindless ecstasy, were dots of shrill yellow, dazzling red and lime green. The dots moved imperceptibly with the grass and made me dizzy.

My laugh rang hollow. The campus had claimed its latest victim. The women sang softly as they moved forward on their haunches. Occasionally one of them laughed. And the eyes of the watchers on the balcony turned upon her with infinite love. For the next two or three days the air felt cool and tender like a shower of rain in the midst of dog days. Faces relaxed and there was much camaraderie. But not for long. Gradually the temper changed. Faces began to show the strain. And God's gift turned sour before our eyes. The women and us. Face to face. All of us so free, yet bound hand and foot. Miles and miles

of grass extending to the horizon and our machismo lying mortgaged with those witches.

We could have touched them if we had leaned over from the road a bit. And then either they or we would have turned to ashes.

Those women must have smelt the acrid smell of our sordid desires. When they couldn't see one another in the tall grass they made sure they stayed within calling distance of each other. The mid-day meal was eaten together, giggling, chewing *paan*, combing each other's hair.

Their simplest gestures and movements turned into screaming sexual signals for us. All day was spent on the verandah, on some pretext or other. And then the long night, descending like black pepper on an open wound. Restless, agonising, dismal. Masturbating in the bathrooms to the point of indigestion. But frustrated and dissatisfied more than ever. As their faces became familiar, we picked favourites. Sometimes there were arguments over the same woman. But mostly we dreamt of sweeping down on them on our horses like Genghis Khan and vanishing with one of them into the hills.

The morning found us back on sentry duty. Trying to glimpse a thigh or a breast through the folds of their saris. The topic that caused the most heated debate and gave rise to much anxiety was, don't these women ever pee? And then we went wild with the vision of slit flesh under a thatch of curly hair. But maybe they didn't indulge in that kind of thing. Or they had a couple of extra bladders so they could hold out for ten hours at a stretch.

On Friday evening as we argued about this for the fifteen-hundred and ninety-first time, Murari laughed at us derisively. "Oh, cut it out. As if you believe the rubbish you talk. I've seen them do it."

He said it with such confidence, we were struck dumb. What bloody luck! "Who did you see? When? Where? How? All of it? Where were you?"

He answered some questions, ignored others. We were crazy with envy. And then, a few hours later the doubts began. "The lying swine. We know him. He and his stories: Who would believe him?" But of course we believed him. He had seen that beautiful landscape denied us, and he looked as though he had.

The next day we redoubled our efforts. We spied every move with renewed enthusiasm, taking turns. No luck. In the evening Ravindra asked Murari, "Did you hit the jackpot today too?" "What if I did?" and Murari turned away whistling. Every one of us was listening intently to this exchange. "Oh, come on, Murari, tell us the truth." Ravindra's voice had sharpened with frustration and hope.

Murari shrugged, and Ravindra was almost at his throat when Sadhan pulled him back and told him to shut up. Murari lost every friend from that moment. Nobody spoke to him, except his roommate. Then one day we plied his roommate with hooch. And he talked.

"That son of a bitch. Calls me his friend. Stares at them for hours through his bloody binoculars, and when it's my turn, pulls them away after a few minutes. Says what the hell do I want to look at them for, all day. The selfish bastard...."

In an instant we had sobered. He too seemed uneasy at how much he had blurted out. But we were smart. We didn't bring up the subject again.

The next day, as we returned from lunch, the sky was rent with blood-curdling cries. They came from the hostel, from our floor. Murari burst out of the room next to Sadhan's, a knife in his hand. There was a crazed look in his eyes. He must have slashed at a mattress, he was surrounded by clouds of cottonwool. The stairs disgorged boys from the other floors.

"You wait here," said Sadhan, and vanished. For a moment or two Murari did not realise that Sadhan was standing only a few yards behind him. Then he saw him and raised his hand to strike, his whole body rigid with blind hatred. For a second their eyes were locked, the one unseeing, the other willing him to see. Murari rocked indecisively as his blurred mind slowly brought the world back into focus. He dropped the knife and collapsed on his knees. He was screaming now. Weird, inhuman screams that were more terrifying than his rabid rage of a few moments ago. It took us a while to decipher his cries. "Who stole my binoculars? I'll kill him, I'll kill him. How can I look at them now?"

The next morning Sadhan said half jokingly. "Come, let's go to the Ganges. Wash our sins away."

He'd said it before. "You've come all the way to Benares and haven't even been to the Ganges?"

But I had ignored him. I don't know why I agreed today.

"Let's go."

Sadhan and Ravindra were going on field work to a place a few miles away, near a canal. I took the opportunity to get away from the campus.

We left early on our bicycles. The sun was just coming up, like a bump on the forehead. Green and yellow clouds of cut grass lay everywhere. The women hadn't arrived yet. I thanked God, but not quite honestly.

After a while when I looked down, I found that my legs had parted company from my body. Someone had wound a spring and for the next few days they would keep going up and down. Non-stop. Breaking the world record for cycling. A record player played raucous Hindi film songs to stop me falling asleep. And an audience crowded around me. Through my reddened eyes I saw Sadhan passing a hat round among them. Three coins and a note. Would that buy me a lemonade? Then Sadhan passed me a bottle to pee into. The audience livened up. "Next time, pass the hat around after I've peed," I said to Sadhan. "Let the bastards pay for their curiosity."

"Hey, you doddering old fool, what are you muttering to yourself?" Sadhan said, stopping by my bike. "We'll stop if you dying to have a leak."

When we got there, my shirt was stained with the butter from the sandwiches. I undressed and jumped into the canal. Then slept a deep sleep under the peepul tree with a book over my face. Sadhan and Ravindra would come up occasionally to see how I was. We had brought food enough to feed a small army, but it was all gone by the afternoon.

Around eleven, a farmer came by with his cow. "Jai Ramjiki," he stopped to chat.

"Does she give milk?" asked Sadhan.

"She is *Kamadhenu* herself, God's own gift of a cow," he said, "Blessed our family, she has. One drink of her milk will even cure a snake bite! The other day we fed her milk to Yadram's barren wife: the woman will be a mother soon," he simpered.

We touched her teats reverently.

"What do you call her?"

"Meenakumari," he said proudly.

"Give us a drink," said Ravindra.

"Oh no, sahib, her calf hasn't been fed yet. You wouldn't be so cruel, would you now?" He had sized us up all right.

Sadhan gave him a Rupee. Meenakumari fed us milk till we burst.

"Now the hash?" I said.

He refused. When we persisted he promised to bring us some the next day. Before leaving we had another swim and started back.

A pale moon. Not a cloud in the sky. Then the sun hit the horizon and the sky was bathed in yellow and red. We would ride together for a couple of minutes and then I'd fall behind. Sadhan and Ravindra would wait for me or I would pedal furiously to catch up.

About four miles from the campus we sighted the women. Each with a bale of grass on her head and a sickle at her waist. Long plaits of hair done up with brightly hairpins. Glittering tinsel *tikas* on their foreheads. Wiping the sweat with the ends of their saris. No cholis; just the sari hiding the body completely.

I think the three of us saw her in the same instant. She stood alone. The evening seemed to wind itself round my throat and pull it tight. We went mad. The wind stung our faces. We hadn't seen anyone for a few minutes, and then, suddenly, there she was.

She had a large bundle of yellow grass on her head and was tightening her green sari at her waist. As we got closer her dark face looked extraordinarily beautiful.

Some kind of seismic signal flashed between Sadhan and Ravindra and they shot off like lightning. I was damned if I was going to be left behind.

She stood still, slightly puzzled as they pedalled madly towards her. Then suddenly realising that they were heading for her, she balanced her heavy load with one hand and ran. Her free arm sliced through the air like an oar, but the distance between them kept on decreasing.

She disappeared into the grass. Sadhan and Ravindra dived in after her. The wind parted the grass and I saw her crouched with her back to us. As Ravindra's bicycle wobbled towards her, she dropped the bundle and thrashed her way deeper into the high stalks. He let go of the handles and threw his arms around her. Her left breast was in his palm, his eyes lit up with the joyous innocence of a child.

Her sickle missed Ravindra's hand and coiled around his neck, half disappearing in it. Sadhan followed close behind. Jets of blood soaked his shirt front. She seemed riveted by the horror in his eyes. She shuddered convulsively and jerked the sickle out.

Sadhan and his bike fell together and Ravindra keeled over with his lolling neck. Red butterflies alighted on the yellow grass.

Sadhan clung fiercely to me as he raised himself. My shirt started to tear. He banged his head again and again on my shoulder, on my chest.

"God, Kushank, and I was going in after him too," and he fainted to the ground.

She stood there still, the sickle in her hand, her lips apart and disbelief on her face. Her eyes, those large eyes, were terrified and even larger now. *Durga's* eyes. Her black skin shone like finely polished ebony. Her red nose ring and the orange *sindur* on her forehead. The small, firm breasts still in the folds of her sari.

A drop of blood dripped down the point of the sickle. Golden light filtered from the hostels on the horizon. The grass round Sadhan has been flattened. I crouched and felt for Ravindra's pulse. "Oh, my God, what have I done," I heard her say as she turned away.

I gave the cable back to Sadhan and we returned home. The lights had been switched on and the table laid for dinner. I went to my room. My head felt heavy. The bed was made and there was a soft quilt on top. I lay down and must have slept. Till Sadhan called "Dinner".

As I washed my hands and sat at the table I noticed the woman trying to keep to the shadows.

The red stone had fallen out of the nose ring. And the Durga eyes were gone too. But her incredible beauty still took my breath away.

After dinner Sadhan said, "Aren't you going to say anything."

I was silent.

"I'll be away for two or three years."

She watched us both, motionless.

"Kushank, shall I tell you something? Take Meha with you."

She didn't blink an eye.

"She's a good woman. She will look after you well."

Translated from Marathi by Shubha Slee

Extract from a forthcoming novel *Seven Sixes are Fortythree* to be published by Queensland University Press.

Some Day Ivy, the Snow Will Seem Happy Again

CHANDRAN NAIR

in arizona
the trees grew leaves in crazy patterns
and in the snow was inviolable happiness.
in lafayette park
when the young sun closed your eyes
you were winefilled, smiled and were beautiful.

in kirrimuir, in scotland
on someone else's doorstep, again in snow
you have sat and waited for love
to grow into a unified being, not doubting,
rehearsing the happy days already lived
in other places, for the final affirmation,
and it did not come.

so now on this fenced in balcony
you sit with these year old slides
letting the japanese viewer light up eyes.
with no resentment, you can cry
and I can bear to feel your past happiness
melt into your anguish tasting your tears
slowly mixing their salt into snow.
while your voice, now strong, now fading
moves a wind in some high mountain
whispering, questioning, sad but not sorrowful.
and even if I want to, I cannot touch you
or comfort you. I am external to your past.

Top: Buddhist priest, Bangkok, 1974
Bottom: War waifs, Vientiane, Laos, 1975

Photos John Ogden

Bali, 1972

SOUTH-EAST ASIA

BURMESE TRADITIONAL VERSE

Translated by U Win Pe

Danubyu

Our King, whose name
is written down in the annals,
halted at Danubyu. It was cloudy.
As in old times, the throng of war boats
crowded against the river bank
until not one boat more could find a berth.
A strong wind blew, waves broke on the boats,
turbulent water swirled and shifted,
oars could not hold,
punting poles would not reach,
rudders hung useless in the air,
mooring lines broke, the boats were tossed
and thrown, some sank, men swam,
boatmen clutched at ropes or vine
and so pulled the boats against the river bank.
The damaged boats were tied up in disarray.
Darkness fell on the fleet.

A tight swarm of boats. A multitude of men,
scolding and cursing, but with no hurt feelings,
going without dinner on the deltaic mud flats.
Not a patch of raised ground in the black night.
The ceaseless rain pouring from dark swirling skies
lowers the spirits and inflicts with double cold
a hundred thousand men already possessed
of ancient yearnings. This is characteristic
of lower country wind and rain.

I knew my lover even before
the flowers of her breasts had bloomed and she
had gathered her hair in a knot.
Chaste and graceful, she is impeccable.
She thinks I find pleasure in war, my native place,
and so she worries. She does not know
what privations we suffer. The mosquitoes
at dusk are like thrown gravel, biting and sucking
our red blood. They will not retreat
nor will thick cover give protection.
Dense bushes, thick reeds, towering clouds,
rising winds, noisy rain and gathering dusk
make me long for home. These things
are exactly as we had been told.

Seintakyawthu
(1736–1783)

Do Not Wish to Love

Listen, my friends, I do not wish
to wear that which I should not wear,
a jewelled flower, perfumed, celestial,
though it were proper
for a royal daughter
to wear this flower of heavenly bloom.
Alas, my peers and noble friends.

Listen, my friends, I do not wish
to adore that which I should not adore,
which like tiger and doe,
wild snake and gentle frog,
fragile egg and hard rock,
like slave and master, are forever opposed.
Alas, my peers and noble friends.

Listen, my friends, I do not wish
to love that which I should not love,
that royal person, king of kings.
It would be a union fatally flawed,
like master and slave, goat and elephant,
though it might be in accord with law,
and I wear him as a flower in my hair.
Alas, my peers and noble friends.

Listen, my friends, I do not wish
to long for that which I should not want,
nor join myself with what should not be mine.
Such union brings grief
to one who stands beneath,
and withering lamentation.
Alas, my peers and noble friends.

Yawe-shin-htwe
(f. 1605–1628)

Contrition

It's the beginning of my training, lord,
have consideration. No more dressing
up for each occasion; no more coyness.
I discard the red and blue of motley wear;
the nun's yellow cloth is befitting.
I shall use few words. I shall suppress
my longing. At the crook of the forest,
almost in tears, he tried to deter me.
Cancel our youthful covenant
to free me from anxiety
uncomfortable like a taut strand of hair.
I can love no more, it's unbecoming.
Seek a new lover and marry her.
Let these notches on a fig and an acacia
bear witness to our separation.
I shall meditate on life's loathsomeness
to win the stages of sanctification.

Queen Ma Mya Glay

THAILAND

It is Late

ANGKARN KALAYANAPONGSE

It is late, life is running down;
What do I desire of the world?
I must awake and use my intellect.
Let not this slumber be my death.

I know only eating, sleep and sex,
My soul is exceedingly coarse;
What do I know
Of life's many good things?

No! No! my existence is empty.
How can I—living like a dog
Or pig, devoid of mind—
Claim to be human?

The knowing mind is a light
Revealing the nature of all things;
Examine all before accepting,
Shun all forms of ignorance.

Make the mind a magic garden:
Follow high values;
Dream of the unbounded good
Which is itself eternal.

Be ashamed of the four elements,
The arrogant creditors of life:
Set yourself free, by graceful coin,
And sleep not enchained by ignorance.

Though base, pebbles, dust and sand,
Give the earth dignity,
Have we, then, born human and high,
Nothing to contribute?

Is the great gift there,
The ideal of life?
When the immortal work calls,
To what else lend the divine hand?

Though brief, more precious than a jewel:
May this shine brightly,
By its essence, its aspiration,
And timeless beauty.

Translated by Montri Umavijani

All Over the Sky

ANGKARN KALAYANAPONGSE

All over the sky, my teachers
Are the stars that light the heavens,
Telling the wonders of night,
When the worlds glitter like diamonds.

The mountains teach me solitude,
The floating clouds bear me sadly along,
The dew touches me with its cold,
The night makes me melancholy.

As the stream whispers across the stones,
I weep at my broken dreams;
Awakened, the god of love
Stings me with his flowery darts.

Even a tiny wild flower
Is a friend teaching hidden knowledge:
I learn from each in the woods
Of life and art immortal.

At the earth's core is a book
For study and careful observation;
Forgetful of the day and hour,
My soul is given to continual learning.

Oh fools, they who try to teach me more!
Who only give me pain and misery.
The cost of their harsh lesson
Is my increasing ignorance.

I wait for the great teacher Death
To lead me to the next world;
The test is taken at the cremation,
The degree awarded is karma.

Inert, the earth of stone,
Empty of true feeling,
Eroded by mud and water:
This is the shadow world of Ash.

Translated by Montri Umavijani

SINGAPORE

Back Street, Singapore

GERALDINE HENG

evening moves the soul precariously
in this alley of sandalwood homes
paint-peeled doors mingle close
with the sound of cats' breath

the years sit undisturbed by
faces in doorways, watchful
as moon-carved figurines that hood
their eyes knowing, immemorially
knowing

and the gods hover in mummified air
made vague by joss, fuming smokily
over meagre altars, no destiny here
but the faint tappings at a window sill.

boxes heap. garbage grows like babies
and cockroaches are flowers blooming
in crevices. between walls, the howling
children dart bodies in play,
kitesticks quivering in the wind

from windows white sheets rise
to billow fiercely, lifting wings, beating
great white fowl tented to wooden hearts
staked to timeless unceasing straining
against an inexorable will

soon they are taken away by anonymous
hands
soon, the night's earthbound ghosts walk
unseeing.

MALAYSIA

Disinherited

EE TIANG HONG

It was soon made obvious
The more powerful of our immediate kin
Would rather the estate break up
Than number us
In a greater happiness.

I remember that whole morning and afternoon
The anxiety, disbelief, dismay
In that humid room, the house all shuttered,
My vacant state,
Too embarrassed to seek involvement
Lest our trustees grudged,
Took umbrage at our pointed stake
In the imminent legacy, larger heritage.

We waited all the same
Till half-past-six
Professor, lawyer, doctor came
To salve the agony,
Leaving only at twilight
The real issues as they claimed
Deciding to let our patriarch lie
As they thought fit.

Kuala Lumpur, May 1969

EE TIANG HONG

We stayed indoors day after day,
Whiling away the hours playing cards,
Counted ourselves lucky not to have been caught
In Jalan Pantai or some other
Inflamed section of the city
Where the *parang* mobs had gathered.

On black-and-white T.V.
Spasmodic national bulletins,
Discreet shots of charred wreckage,
Soldiers in leopard-spot uniform, barbed barricade,
Ministerial explanations of the causes of the riots,
Reasons for the curfew.

The family together we could still
Joke, laugh, speculate,
Between regrets still hope
Things would return to normal.

As now more and more distant,
Bitterness, recrimination day by day subside,
Ashes on flower, leaf and shoot
In the sparse valley of a memory.

Top: Uluwatu Hindu temple, Bali, 1974
Bottom: Bali, 1975

Balinese fisherman, Uluwatu, 1974

INDONESIA

La Condition Humaine

ABDUL HADI

Within the forest of my ancestors,
I am a single manggo tree
—without fruit or leaves—
My father says: "The earth in which you grew
was unfertile, my son," as he greedily devours
my grandfather's fruit

And sometimes at night
without my wife knowing it
I steal and eat the unripened fruit
from my son's tree too

Translated by S. Sutro

A Gift of Love from an Indonesian Gentleman in Iowa City USA to a Young Indonesian Maiden in Jakarta

SUTARDJI CALZOUM BACHRI

some lovers send gifts of flowers
some lovers send gifts of blood
some lovers send gifts of tears
I send my penis

may it grow longer and longer
may it stretch thirteen thousand miles
from me to you, oblivious of the United States postal system
which refuses to accept parcels longer than 3'6"

my lady, my love, don't cry, relax,
open your soul, your mind, be naked,
let us hope my almighty penis
can stand tall, erect,
as magnificent as the flagpole outside the United Nations building,
soaring, offering you peace,
amen.

Translated by the author and Harry Aveling

Song of Bali

W. S. RENDRA

Because we believe in industry,
and are convinced we can make money
from our art and scenery,
we have decided to turn Bali into a tourist resort.

Well then,
let's not kid ourselves about what we're doing
when we open Bali to tourists.
After all, jets exist,
airlines need passengers,
and passengers need places to go.
The airlines can compete
to process leisure
and family holidays.

We will shrink Bali,
its art, culture and beauty,
and sell it to the tourists,
wrapped in tinsel.

Jets fly over the forests of Brazil,
past Badui mountain settlements,
appearing in the most unlikely places,
swifter than dreams,
bringing culture shock.

This is a different sort of oppression.
It came so quickly we were taken by surprise.
It came so cunningly we were powerless.

And while we were still dazed,
jet-planes came out of our dreams,
with new forms of financial domination:
hotels serving steak and coca-cola;
airports; highways; and sightseers.

"Oh, honey, look!
Look at the natives!
He's climbing that palm-tree like a monkey!
Isn't he fantastic! Do take his photograph!"

* * *

"Watch out! Don't touch his hand!
Just smile and say hello.
See—his hand's filthy.
He might have lice."

* * *

"My God, they're so innocent.
The women don't even cover their breasts.
Look, John, what magnificent breasts.
And look at this pair. Wonderful!
The people are so free and spontaneous.
I wish I could be like that.....
OK! OK! ..... I was only joking.
I know you hate it when I don't wear my bra.
All right, John, stop complaining!
Stand next to her, dear,
and I'll take your picture.
Ah! Fabulous!"

The World Bank
helps backward nations
with huge projects,
in which ninety per cent of the goods are imported.

We progress like slaves
or middlemen and consumers.

In Bali,
Indonesian-owned hotels fail,
smashed by packaged-tours.
Our folk-culture is destroyed
by the standards of international trade.

Our dances are no longer ceremonies;
they are simply entertainment.
Our carvings do not express our emotions;
they are mere handicrafts.

We live dominated by whim,
forgetful of nature.
We are subject to harsh,
strongly-institutionalised rules,
which ignore our hearts,
our livers and kidneys,
the rivers and forests.
In Bali, they spit on us,
our beds, mountains and temples.

Translated by Harry Aveling

Circumcision

PRAMOEDYA ANANTA TOER

Like the other children in the village, I went to a small mosque school every night to learn how to chant the *Koran*. Nothing pleased a child more. We paid two and a half cents a week for the lamp-oil. Chanting began at five in the afternoon and continued until nine at night. It was the only way we could get out of doing our home-work.

Our chanting largely consisted of telling jokes, talking in private about sex, annoying other people as they prayed the sunset and evening prayers, and waiting for our turn to pray. This was our world at the age of nine.

I, like my friends, wanted to be a good Muslim. None of us had yet been circumcised. Our religious observances extended only as far as annoying people at prayer, avoiding home-work, praying as a group in the mosque at the Friday prayers without understanding a word of the Arabic—we were not so different from other Muslims.

Then one of my friends was circumcised. There was a large celebration. And I wondered if I really was a proper Muslim, not having been circumcised. I thought about it to myself. I wanted to be a proper Muslim. But could I, without being circumcised? No one in the whole world knew what I was thinking.

In our small town, Blora, boys were usually circumcised between the ages of eight and thirteen. The celebrations were as grand as possible. Girls were incised at fifteen days, there was absolutely no celebration at all.

One night my father came to me. I don't know where he had been. The house lights were all out, except for a single light in the middle of the house. I could tell he was very happy. At the time, my mother was telling me about a *haji* who had a lot of wives. It was an amazing story. Because of my father's presence, the story died.

"Are you brave enough to be circumcised, my son?" he asked.

There was a hopeful smile on his face.

I was terrified. But I wanted to be a genuine Muslim. My father always frightened me—I don't know why. His smile conquered my fear.

"What would you like for a circumcision gift? A ceremonial cloth or a *sarong*?"

"A cloth, father."

Then my father asked Tato, my younger brother, aged seven, the same question.

"Are you brave enough, Tato?"

"Sure, sure." Tato was delighted.

Father laughed contentedly. The lamp highlighted his white teeth and dark red gums. Mother rose from the mattress on the floor.

"When do you intend to have them circumcised?" she asked.

"As soon as possible," he replied.

Mother lay down to rest again. She did not continue her story about the lascivious *haji*.

"You must thank God for making your father want to have you both circumcised," she told us.

"Yes, mother," we replied.

"Your grandmother and other ancestors in heaven will be delighted when they find out you've been circumcised," she said.

"Yes, mother."

I could scarcely sleep that night. I imagined how much the cut would hurt. I also thought of the new cloth and sandals my father would buy me, the new shirt, the headband, the fez, of not going to school, the guests, the presents I would receive. I wanted the cloth and headband so I could be a good Javanese as well as a good Muslim. I wanted the sarong, hopefully two or three of them. My uncircumcised friends would be jealous too.

I rose in the morning full of excitement. Tato and I went to school very early. Usually our feet seemed to hate going to school, now they flew. Everyone listened to us. The uncircumcised children looked at us with respect, especially those who were older than us. Their eyes had never gazed at us like that before. The teachers treated us kindly. Soon—soon we would be real Muslims: circumcised Muslims. Then—and this was more important than anything else—we could take our places in heaven, just as our religious teacher, the *kiai*, had taught us. If we were circumcised, we would go to heaven. There would be no need for those beautiful things we wanted, they were not really ours forever.

Our friends at the mosque school were stunned. The *kiai* looked at us the way the teachers had. I felt taller and more important than everyone else. Heaven's gates seemed to open in front of me. Our teacher had promised us lovely *houri* as well. I imagined them to be as beautiful as a certain girl all the boys at school talked about.

"When I'm circumcised, I'll be a real Muslim," I told the *kiai*. "I can go to heaven."

He laughed happily and added: "And you can have forty *houri* as well."

"I hope they don't have six or eight tits like a bitch," I said.

He laughed again.

"I want one like Sriati. She goes to our school. She's beautiful."

He laughed.

"And I'll fish in the rivers of milk every day," Tato added.

Again the *kiai* laughed. His unbrushed teeth were revolting. Our older uncircumcised friends listened in silence. Their eyes showed that they were afraid of not going to heaven but to hell, and missing out on the *houri*.

From then on, we chanted diligently. We got our school-work done as quickly as possible. Every Monday and Thursday until the school year was over, we fasted. We were both promoted.

Two weeks before the end of the school year, father decided to stage a play and to hold the circumcision on the next day. The play was to be performed by the boys in his private school. He wanted to do this every year, so that the poor could have their children circumcised as well. The response was disappointing. People were ashamed of the idea that someone else should pay to have the children circumcised. So this time only six boys were to be circumcised: myself, Tato, a nephew of father's aged ten, a step-child aged sixteen, and two poor boys from the edge of town. Father's other stepson, a youth of eighteen, who had already had a child by our maid, refused. He said his own father would arrange it for him.

As far as I can recall, father's wish to close the year with a play and a charity circumcision, was never really carried out in a satisfactory manner.

At the time, I was in class six, Tato was in class two. Five days before the close of school, the six of us had to learn the traditional *panembrana* tune, so we could tell the audience at the play we were going to be circumcised the next day and ask them for their blessing.

Our teacher wrote a play about a goat that got lost.

At last the day we had longed for arrived. Our grandmother gave us green silk sarongs, our mother gave us lacquered sandals and new shirts. The girl students gave us a fan each. Father gave us eight children's books in Dutch. We forgot about the morning's pain.

The school was crowded with spectators. A meal was served: sweet-potato, boiled peanuts, fermented cassava, and various delicacies. The six of us lined up on the stage. I wore a ceremonial cloth and a head-band, as did my brother. The others were bare-headed. As soon as the curtain opened, the *gamelan* percussion orchestra began. We bowed. I felt very grand. The audience watched us, fascinated as we told them of our circumcision the next day. The girls gazed in awe: soon there would be six more eligible bachelors.

When the song was done, we bowed again. The audience clapped loudly. Then the curtain fell. Our task was over, we were free.

There were few spectacles in our town. People came from everywhere to watch the play. The four teaching areas were crowded.

As soon as the *gamelan* faded, other music began: the catchy "Peanut Flower" song, "Rosemarie", cowboy songs, songs from folk opera, and traditional songs with a Hawaiian influence.

A lot of people patted us on the shoulder after the play, to give us courage. That pleased us too. Tato sang and sang in bed, until eventually his voice grew soft and he fell asleep.

Circumcision days were among the most important days in our part of town. They were like birthdays, weddings, funerals and public holidays. The news always spread rapidly. Although mother did not issue a single invitation, she received contributions from all over town. As happened on all major occasions, we went to bed late and rose early. The house rang with noise at 4.30. Tato and I had to be bathed and dressed in new clothes. My younger sisters had new clothes too. My mother wore a new skirt with a traditional design known as "broken swords", a pattern of parallel slanting lines, and an ornamented jacket with narrow lapels. The jacket was a present from an aunt who taught in a girls' school in Rembang. She also wore a green stole. Father was dressed in his school clothes: a "broken sword" pattern sarong and a jacket buttoned to the neck. As usual, he wore no shoes. At home he sometimes wore wooden sandals.

The neighbours seemed to be affected too. They rose early, dressed in new clothes and accompanied us to the school, about fifty metres from our house.

A shelter of tulle netting had been erected inside the school. The candidates for circumcision sat in chairs near it. Gradually more and more adults came. Children swarmed around the shelter. The girls did not come quite as far forward as the boys. Finally the circumcision specialist, the *calak*, came. He brought a bundle of handkerchiefs containing three razors.

An old man came over to us. "Don't be afraid," he said. "It won't hurt. It's just like being bitten by a red-ant. I laughed when I was circumcised."

There were a lot of other comforting voices. But no matter how sweet the voices sounded, we were still scared.

Then it was time. Mother and father rose from their large chairs in the centre of the guests and approached the circumcision hut. Pride and elation showed on their faces.

The first one in was the step-son. He was older than the rest of us. The other adopted son, who had already fathered a child, did not attend the celebrations.

The children crowded so close to the shelter that the adults were forced to drive them away.

I was terrified. I wanted to be a genuine Muslim, but that didn't stop me being frightened. My heart seemed to beat more quickly every time the *calak* bawled out the prayers. Soon my adopted brother was led from the shelter. He could scarcely walk. His face and lips were pale; he seemed exhausted. They sat him in a chair and placed an earthenware dish filled with kitchen ash between his legs to catch the blood dripping from his penis.

One after another the boys went into the shelter and came out pale and scarcely able to walk. At last my wait was over. Two people held me by the shoulders, as though afraid I might run away, and led me inside. There was a cruel look on the *calak*'s face. At least I thought there was. I sat in the chair and tipped my head back. Someone held me by the shoulders, an old man pressed my forehead down so that I couldn't see. There was a bowl of ash under the chair. The specialist grabbed my penis then manipulated it until it felt very hot. Then he cut the foreskin with a razor. I was circumcised. I watched the blood drip from the end of my penis.

"Don't move," said one of the men.

"No, don't. Wait until the first flow is over."

I watched the first flow—a thick thread of congealed black blood—slowly fall and vanish into the bowl of ash.

Tato, being the youngest, was last. We sat in our row of chairs. From time to time drops of blood fell into the earthenware dishes. Everyone looked at us. Mother came over and kissed me on the cheek. I was aware of how much she loved me and I cried. She kissed Tato too. Father came over and said: "Well done. Well done."

The children began to leave. Finally only adults were left in the sixth form class-room. One by one they excused themselves and left.

The circumcised boys walked home. We were treated like kings all day. People did whatever we asked. The families of the two poor boys brought us chicken and rice.

"Well, Muk, do you feel any different?"

"I'm very happy, mother," I replied.

"Do you feel like a real Muslim?" she asked again.

The question startled me. I didn't feel any different, even though I was a proper Muslim now.

"I feel the same as I did yesterday," I told her. "And the day before that. I still don't feel like a real Muslim."

"Perhaps you haven't kept the five daily prayer times?"

"Yes I have. Every day."

"Your grandfather went to Mecca. Perhaps you'd feel different if you made the pilgrimage. Feel like a proper Muslim."

"On a boat, mother?" Tato asked.

"Yes, on a boat to Arabia."

I suddenly realised that I would never be a genuine Muslim. My parents were poor. We would never be able to afford to go to Mecca.

"Why hasn't father been to Mecca?" I asked.

"We're poor, Muk."

Even though we wanted to be rich, we knew we never would be. Once I recovered, I never wanted to be a good Muslim again. Poverty killed any ambition anyone in our neighbourhood might have. Gradually Tato and I became like all the other children, who had nothing because poverty had taken everything.

Translated by Harry Aveling

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Flight 250 to Perth

BRUCE DAWE

for Bruce Bennett

Playboy—or Walkabout? 45,000 feet above
the late great planet Earth panic
becomes immensely irrelevant, the hostesses
flexing practised smiles and a lovely
array of clouds spread out there below
this tin cylinder within which by some concatenation
of the gods upward of two hundred folk are strapped
firmly for their better health, eating, drinking,
chatting, reading and My God even dozing
inside the roar of jet-thrust as in cotton-wool,
already forgotten the bullying rush
down the runway at take-off, everyone
most thoughtfully casual as the wings
lift and the wheels rumble out of raison d'être...
Your first flight sir? (How
do they guess these things?) and of course they're
dead right, in fact; for some of us it will always be
our first flight *and* descent, dropping out of the dark air
over a city glittering wickedly as an agéd queen
into whose basilisk presence we stumble
dulled abstracted survivors of the time-shuttle,
a hostess's push-button *We hope you*
enjoyed your flight lighting
our poker-faces with its orange glow.

Mahatma Gandhi

ALEC CHOATE

His statue in Tavistock Square, London

I never saw you, the living man,
But standing before your statue in Tavistock Square,
I can believe bronze breathes, that you are here,
And were you not withdrawn in meditation,
Even believe your lips could speak a prayer
Or ask me who am I to stare at you.
Body and mind, this counterpart rings true.

You sit with bare legs crossed, their skin and bone
No more than old boughs, old roots, if I did not see
How one thin ankle in your quiet hand's hold
Is quick with the same spring that makes each tree
In the square's oasis green take heart against
The city's brick and stone.
And this defines your meaning,
Your quiet quick hold of mind
Always reviving its green of compassion
For the unfavoured of mankind.
The wonder of this moment is
That some mute metal can lay bare your conscience.

A hundred pigeons that had flocked the grass
Fly up and skirt your shoulders, and then pass
Out of my sight beyond the square.
As suddenly as their going, as if from nowhere,
A girl stops by a garden bed
To be as still a flower as any there
Until down from a copper beech
She idly picks the leaves within her reach.
Birds and girl together give
A nonchalant but wistful reminder
Of my own small way to live.

From the Desert

TERRY TREDREA

on arrival,
you saw the sky open,
    like a vast and mirthless laugh;
and panicked / were suffocated by the spaces.

the vacant silences
    drank your purpose,
opened the mind so far,
    but not near.

you knew, from the desert
    the flies would come,
eating the flesh's rich
and delicate prize,

in this country like death:
as near as the wrist,
    but as far as fear.

Lake Scene

At dawn, the lake smooth as steel,
sunlight bolted to its lacquered face,
fallen trees stacked and steaming in the reeds.

Enter speedboat left:
    growling like one
                long clearing
                    of the throat.
Enter pelican right:
    wading with his beak
                on the end
                    of a spear.

A feathered football he is punted clear,
and the herons in the grandstand cheer.

Arrival

ANDREW LANSDOWN

September 17. Ray said that Mr Gallagher will exchange the old 1924 Overland for a cow and our hay cart. I am reserved. The car is dilapidated; it has been sitting out in the paddock for six months. But Ray is convinced. He's been bartering with Gallagher for weeks. I didn't try to dissuade him. It would have availed to nothing anyway. He's going to exchange Daisy. He says she's a good-for-nothing—won't come when she's called, kicks when she's milked. I think he exaggerates; and I'm sure if he was kinder to the beast it would be less defiant. But anyway, if we must lose a cow, it might as well be Daisy.

September 20. Ray is working on the Overland. My heart sank when I saw it. It is in shocking disrepair—worse than I had imagined. A cow and our cart for *that!* I thought; but I said nothing. To be fair, the motor does run. "Like a clock," Ray says. I think he is trying to comfort himself that he has done the right thing. He's working on it now, in the shade of the shed.

The crops won't be ready for a few weeks. The lull before the harvest provides no rest for Ray—though it could if he cared to avail himself of it. He has a passion for work. He never stops—or if he does, he's pining to be back at it.

September 22. I had an idea this morning, while I was bathing Cathy. (She's a good child and affords me no trouble, save the attention such a little one constantly needs.) I thought that perhaps we could use the Overland to go home to South Australia. I am quite excited about the prospect. I can't wait for Ray to get in to ask what he thinks of the idea.

September 23. It was terrible. He was weary from the working, so I should have put it off. But I was so excited I just had to ask. I don't know whether he was filled with fury or despair. I thought then it was anger; but this morning I think it was despair. "Woman," he said, "we've not ten shillings to our name, and you want us to trapes half way across the country on a social call!"

It may have been a foolish idea, but I thought at least we would talk about it for a while. I remember when I was little how I used to talk about my childish dreams with mother: just to share them with her made them seem real. Well, I began to weep, and to speak wildly in my weeping. It went beyond anything I had intended. I said things I should never have said. I told him he was a brute and unfair. I told him he had promised that we would return home after the first harvest—as if he needed to be reminded. I didn't mean the half of them,

and I should never have said the rest. By heaven! I wish God had sealed my mouth!

He went off this morning without breakfast. He's going to work on the car, then look over the crop. He said he'll not be back until evening. I have hurt him, and it breaks my heart.

September 29. I am cursed today. The cramps in my stomach are unbearable; and I am greatly depressed. Catherine is a burden to me, though she does not misbehave. God pity her, that she must grow to be a woman!

I can think of nothing but home, today. I have been weeping all the morning for the loss of my mother. I pray that when Cathy grows up and marries she will not have to live far away. It is the curse that is making me feel so despondent; but knowing this does not help.

I started in on Ray again when he came in for lunch. "When are we going home?" I said; and he could see that I had been crying. He tried to cuddle me, but that only made it worse, and I began to weep again. He could see I would not be comforted, so he left me to my tears and went out to work again. He had eaten nothing, and took nothing with him.

October 6. I can think of nothing but home and mother. I am hard on Ray. I am wearing him down—like the nagging wife Solomon spoke of: a constant dripping upon the stone. I hate myself for it, but I can't seem to stop it. I am filled with longing for home, like the birds in Europe that feel the urge to fly south when the winter sets in. It has been four years since I have seen mother. I have a child that she has never seen.

Three crops have failed, and the fourth will probably be no better. We could not possibly have returned after the first harvest, nor the third, for that matter. It is not Ray's fault: he is not God to have power over the seasons. How we have prayed for this crop, though! But it will probably make no difference: it didn't with the last three.

Ray read from *Habakkuk* for our devotions last night: "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet will I rejoice in the Lord . . ." You could tell by the way he read it that he meant it. I wanted it to be real for me, too. In my mind I said, "I will rejoice in the Lord no matter what." But in my heart I knew I couldn't. I wish my faith was like Ray's. . . .

I left off writing to pray the Lord's forgiveness for the way I have been despairing and hurting Ray over the past week or two. I feel better. He may not give us a good harvest, but He has made me clean.

October 11. Ray was nearly killed today. He was over by the shed working on the car when he saw a dingo at the sheep in the near paddock. He came running to the house, shouting for his gun. I got his shot-gun from the cupboard while he snatched a handful of shells from the drawer. He loaded it as he ran out the door. Alice, our sulky horse, was the only horse in the yard. He jumped onto her back and was off. She is not a good horse for riding—though she is certainly the best we have for that purpose. As a sulky horse you couldn't do better, but she's not a rider. Ray had her heading towards the paddock at a gallop before she knew what was happening; but she shied when they reached the creek bed, and threw him. The gun discharged, like thunder. Alice screamed. If you have ever heard a horse scream in pain or terror—even from a distance as I did then —you will know how it makes your scalp crawl. I snatched at Catherine and

started to run: I felt sure Ray was dead. But then Alice fell down, kicking; and Ray got up, shaking. I stopped running, and turned back to the house. Cathy was crying, almost screaming: she had sensed my terror and responded to it in her own way. The second shot came before we reached the house. It gave me a headache which has dogged me all day, even as I write.

Ray was ashen-grey when he came in. "I had the hammers back. I should have known better." That was all he said. I made him a cup of tea, but he didn't drink it, just stared into it until it was cold and had to be thrown out.

October 15. We didn't hear about it until this morning: the Dawsons lost their horses yesterday. Six of them dead! Nobody can say why. We lost one because of a snake bite a year ago. But six? nobody can say why. We are all fearful for our own.

We went over to see them, to offer our help. But Dawson says he's leaving—going tomorrow if he can pack everything in time.

It is a serious thing to lose a team just before harvest—or any time, for that matter. But I think Dawson is taking it too hard. Ray offered to help with our team when our work is done—and I believe some of the others have, too. And, as Ray pointed out, he could catch some brumbies and break them in time for ploughing next autumn. And besides, it might not even come to that. He might have enough money from the harvest to buy another team. But Dawson was implacable. He just cursed and said that it had been coming to this for a long time, and it was no use putting it off any longer. Ray said it was worse in the city. But Dawson said, "We'll see." And that was it.

October 16. We drove across in the Overland to see the Dawsons off this morning. Wilsons have lent them their bullock drays to cart their belongings into town to the railway siding. Dawson says they are going to his brother's place in Perth. The whole district came to see them off. Everyone tries not to be too grim; but Dawson's is the fourth farm in the district to be deserted. It's worse in other areas. We all wonder who will be next.

October 25. Ray finally finished the Overland today. He has cut off part of the body and fixed a cart-top onto the back of it to make it into a sort of truck, or ute. I don't know how he managed it; but he did. He has a genius for improvising. It runs well; and the back seems to be fixed firmly in place. I wonder if Gallaghers are as pleased with Daisy.

November 1. It is unbearably hot. How we will survive the summer when spring is like this I'm at a loss to say. You can see the heat lifting off the plains. Nothing moves bar the rising air, which makes everything—the trees, the outbuildings—contort and shimmer. The dogs lie under the house; the hens pant on their roosts—and some have died; our few sheep huddle under a tree for shade. Poor, silly beasts! The heat of their bodies as they pack together must surely counteract a thousand times the coolness of the shade! Cathy is listless and doesn't want to play. I am worried about her, and try to make her drink as often as possible.

I said that nothing is moving. Well, I was mistaken. The crows are out, cawing in the heat. A murder has just settled in the gums over by the shed. They've come to steal eggs again, no doubt. They always come when Ray is away from the house and there is no fear of being shot. I can hear some of them down at the pen now. I'd best go and fetch the eggs. Heaven knows we've had precious few lately—with some hens dying and the remainder off the lay for the heat.

I hope Ray comes in for lunch. He is in the top paddock poisoning rabbits—the paddock is riddled with warrens. I hope he is careful with the cyanide. How he can do anything in this heat! I haven't his will: even to fetch the eggs seems to require too much effort!

November 18. Les arrived today. I had quite forgotten he was coming. When he knocked on the back-door I started and almost dropped the plate I was drying. There have been a lot of swagmen lately—looking for work or just passing through. We haven't had any because we are off the main road, but others have had trouble with them. I have been dreading the possibility of one coming to the house while Ray is away. Catherine screamed. The knock doubtless scared her; but I think she sensed my fear and it made her panic. It was pathetic and horrible to see her so frightened. She ran around to and fro within the space of about a yard in the middle of the kitchen floor, quite bewildered with terror. I snatched her up quickly, and she clung like a barnacle while the waves of fear washed over her. I didn't want to answer the door. But he knocked again, this time harder, and the knocking was frightening Cathy further, so I had to go. I half laughed, half cried when I saw that it was Les. I hugged him and kissed him, quite beside myself with relief—much to his surprise and embarrassment.

Les is several years younger than Ray, but they look alike—almost as if they were twins. He came last year, up from Perth, to help with the harvest, too. Ray is grateful for the help, but more so for the company of another man, I think. It is hard on him out here in the middle of nowhere with only a woman and a child to talk to. But then, I suppose it is much the same for me. But I must be careful now, or else I might start pining again.

Ray and Les are in the kitchen, talking, as I sit in the bedroom writing this. I don't know what they are talking about—and I'll probably never know—but they'll be at it for hours, so I will go to bed by myself.

November 20. The Government has announced a subsidy for the farmers. Gallagher brought the news over this morning. They are going to give a bonus of fourpence ha'penny per bushel in the hope that it will enable the farmers to buy supplies enough for the coming year and stop them from leaving the land. Things must be getting to their lowest ebb if even the Government is moved to action. Ray was wild with joy. He shouted and leapt about like a schoolboy, and slapped Gallagher on the back. It is the first time I have seen him lightened from care for months. He was so pleased that he told Les to fetch the horses, and they started the harvest at once. I was left to entertain Mr Gallagher, who having brought good news was forsaken because of it.

December 2. Every day is much the same, which is a blessing in many ways. The men get up at sunrise each morning and tend to the horses—groom them, water them, feed them, harness them. They load the dray with the supplies for the day—mostly chaff and water for the horses, though various odds and ends are also thrown on. Then they come in for breakfast. They have a large bowl of porridge each and half a dozen eggs between them; then some toast and tea. Then they go out and hitch up the cart horse and the team. It is lovely to see the team hitched up and moving out. They are yoked three and three in tandem to the bin side of the harvester. They are always in high spirits in the morning, and seem almost to frolic in their eagerness to be off—if you can imagine the large, regal draught-horses doing anything so undignified and "small" as frolicing!! An occasional whinny, the chink of chains, the creak and strain of leather,

the rattle and rumble of the harvester, the dogs barking and yapping at the horses' heels, the sun catching golden in the dust! It is glorious!

I take them out some lunch at midday. I go out in the ute. Since we lost Alice, we can't use the sulky; so Ray has taught me to drive. I must confess a certain excitement as I sit behind the wheel.

They do another four hours in the afternoon after lunch, then bring the team in. Ray unhitches and waters them, then stalls and feeds them before he comes in for tea. And after tea he goes out again to groom them—to remove the dry sweat and dust. He replenishes the chaff in their mangers, and strews some straw for their bedding and for hygiene. How he loves those horses! Then he comes in and has supper with Les and myself. He and Les talk a little about the day's work, and sometimes plan certain aspects of the following day's. Then we have devotions and go to bed. Though Ray is tired, he usually is awake enough for me.

December 14. The harvest is going well, though Ray is having trouble with the team. One of the mares is in heat—which shouldn't be too much of a problem seeing there are only mares and geldings in the team. But one of the geldings, Darky, is playing to her. He must have been gelded late—doctored proud, as they say. Well, anyway, the whole team is agitated because of them. Ray comes in every evening with some new grumble about the team's misbehaviour because of "that damned gelding". "Could be worse, Ray," Les said this evening in his usual, dry way, "he could have been a stallion." I had to laugh.

Christmas Day. It is hard to remember that Christmas is the celebration of the coming of the Saviour. I tried to keep this in mind, but succeeded only once or twice for a few moments during the whole day. Perhaps it would have been different if we could have gone to a church service.

We had no presents to speak of. Catherine seemed to like the rag doll which I made for her over the past few weeks. Ray gave me a small piece of lace which he must have bought with I-don't-know-what at the oddments-come-haberdashery store. It is lovely lace, but not large enough to do anything major with. I think I will edge the collar and the sleeves of my best dress with it; and then if there is any left, I will edge a handkerchief or two. I had nothing to give Ray. And Les received and gave nothing.

We had a splendid meal. Ray had managed to get a small turkey from Mr Gallagher; and I baked it with potatoes and carrots. I made a rich fruit pudding, which we had with custard. Ray gave me a threepenny piece to hide in Catherine's slice. She was delighted by the unexpected treasure.

But it was a depressing day, really. I thought constantly of mother, and missed her more than ever. I said nothing of this to Ray, though: he tried so hard to make the day go well.

January 1, 1932. 1932 has begun. I am wearied just thinking of it.

January 11. Ray was livid when he returned home from Burracoppin this evening. I knew something was wrong before he said a word because he came straight in without unhitching and feeding the horses. He and Les spent the morning topping up and sewing the bags they harvested over the past week. Then they loaded the wagon, and Ray took it into town while Les returned home (there is no need for both of them to go, as the Lumper does most of the unloading). Well, Ray had delivered the load to the siding—weighed and unloaded it—and

was about to collect his weigh-chit from the weighbridge hut when the team bolted. Some, or all, of them decided that it was time to be off home and, as there is no breaching horse in the team to hold them back, they started off at a gallop. The Lumper cranked his car and was off after them like a shot—with Ray balancing on the front mudguard. They caught up with the team about half a mile down the road, and Ray jumped on to the wagon and took control. He kept them going until they tired, and even then he forced them to canter the rest of the way home. You could see his anger ebbing as he told us all this; and though he had sworn earlier that he would not tend to them until after he had had his tea, by the time I had set the table he had recanted and was taking them in for feed and grooming.

When he came back he was in love with them again. He praised William, our only pure Clydesdale, for his strength and steadiness. It seems that the team came to a halt on a slight, sandy grading at one point; and when Ray tried to move them they simply pranced about and wouldn't pull. William alone set to and almost moved the load by himself, and then the other horses fell in and got it moving again ("William shamed them into action," is the way Ray put it).

Ray said the bags were a good weight. Fifty came to a little over five ton. You can't complain about that.

January 30. Though we have had a good crop, it will avail us nothing. As it turns out, the prices are so low this year that they cover only about half our production costs. Our agents advanced us three hundred pounds to put in the crop; but we will receive only one hundred and eighty pounds for it. So we still owe them one hundred and twenty pounds. We are thankful, though, that the Government is going to pay a sustenance bonus of fourpence ha'penny per bushel. This money is for our use, and the creditors cannot touch it. We expect that our bonus will come to forty pounds. It should come through in a week or two. It will be heaven to have money again.

February 23. Our money came through today! £41 & 6/-!! Ray bought a dress for me, some liquorice for Cathy, and some lump-sugar for the horses. The dress is lovely, though a little large around the bust. I will take it in tomorrow. It is a light cotton material, pale blue with an even paler floral design. It tapers tightly to my waist, then falls loosely over my hips and down to my ankles. It has a thin belt which accentuates the narrowness of my waist and the flare of my hips. "Like a skittle!" Ray said when I came out to show him; and he ran his hands down my sides. Les was watching. I felt so embarrassed!

It is a funny thing, but I could never understand the way Ray sees me—I still can't, for that matter, though I've learned to accept and appreciate it. I am no belle—though I would simply be fishing for compliments if I were to say I am ugly. Yet Ray takes great pleasure in me. He makes of me the Shulammite that Solomon wooed; and I have come to feel lovely because he has loved me.

Les and Ray are still talking in the kitchen—planning what to do with the money, no doubt. I can't sleep. I wish Ray would come to bed.

February 24. Even to write it makes the joy of it seem unreal. We are going home! Ray told me this morning at breakfast. Les is coming with us. We are going to use the sustenance money to pay for the journey. *That* is what he and Les were talking about last night. We are going home! I will see mother again! We are going home! If I write it a thousand times, perhaps it will seem real. We are going home!

February 28. Les took the waggon into Burracoppin and bought the supplies we will need for the journey. He also paid off the debts we have run up at the general store over the past year. He didn't get back until late.

Ray spent the whole day going over the ute. He seems to be satisfied with it.

March 2. A man from the Agricultural Bank came to see us today. He had a lot of papers and things for Ray to sign. We won't have any debts, it seems—something to do with the Government's Debts Adjustment Act—but we will be left with nothing. After all the work Ray has done, and all the money we put into the property when we first arrived, we will be leaving with nothing. The joy of our homing is dampened by this. If we stayed, we might battle through. Things surely could not get any worse. I know Ray would have stayed—at least until next year's harvest—if it weren't for me. But he is set on going, now; and I am too relieved to try and dissuade him.

March 4. We loaded everything today. A 44 gallon drum of petrol and half a dozen 4 gallon drums of water took up half the back of the ute. We packed the food, bedding, clothes, and the rifles and ammunition in the remaining space. Ray put extra springs in the back to help take the strain. And he fixed a box to the running-board on the passanger's side, in which he has placed all the tinned meat.

March 5. Ray spent a long time with the horses before we left this morning. Like the rest of the stock, they came with the property, so they must be left with it. His eyes were red when he came back. Les and I looked away, and said silly, awkward things, trying to pretend we hadn't noticed.

We stopped at Gallagher's on the way out. They have been good neighbours and friends, and our farewells were not easy. What do you say to people you love when you are leaving them and will probably never see them again?

We left our two dogs with them. As we were driving away, I could see them barking and pulling frantically at their chains to be after us. To know that they will be well cared for will hardly make up for the loss of them.....

We passed a camel train just out of town. Cathy was most excited. Burracoppin is a staging for the camel teams that service the Number One rabbit-proof fence which runs from Hopetown on the south coast to Pardoo on the north. Why they bother to maintain it now, I don't know. "Typical governmental affair," Ray says; "Slow to take up an idea, and slower still to abandon it once its usefulness is spent." It is a standing joke here that the fence keeps the rabbits in rather than out.

Now that we are on our way, our spirits are higher. Ray is whistling—at least, he appears to be—I can't hear a thing above the sound of the engine.

We are going in to Kalgoorlie. From there we will travel east along the transcontinental railway line to Cook, then down to Nullarbor Station, and then east again along the main overland route. Ray said that we can be assured of plenty of water this way—as we will be able to use the fettlers' tanks which are situated about every sixty miles along the railway track.

March 6. Kangaroo shooters have been working the part of the country we passed through earlier today. We saw several heaps of kangaroo corpses. The hillocks of raw flesh were grotesque; and the stench was nauseating. The shooters are supposed to burn the bodies after they have skinned them, but they rarely do. The kangaroo heaps were the only things that broke the monotony of today's travelling. I think I would have preferred total monotony.

Cathy finds it hard to keep still: she fidgets and grizzles continuously. We have set up camp about twenty miles short of Coolgardie. I ache all over because of the long sitting and the constant bumping.

March 7. We have been travelling along the track made by the camel waggons since we left Kalgoorlie. We will have to use this track until we reach the fettlers' camp at Rawlinna, some one hundred and eighty miles on. The track is terrible. It is simply one mass of limestone lumps and protrusions. We clatter and jar along at a snail's pace. To ride bareback on a brumby would seem like heaven by comparison! And to add to this, the car is constantly swaying, for the track curves every couple of chains or so. I asked Ray why the track snaked like this instead of running straight. He replied that camel teams never pull straight: the camels in the middle of the team pull to the side to increase the leverage against the load. In this way they are able to move heavy waggons of wool or railway material. So in following their track, we sway to and fro, as if we were in a small boat rocked by a huge, persistent swell.

March 8. I didn't sleep well last night. I was too sore from the jarring and jolting of yesterday's journey. Ray thinks we have another one hundred miles to go to Rawlinna. I am dreading today's travel; but we must begin again in a few minutes, as soon as we've finished our cups of tea.

* * *

It is only early afternoon, but we have had to stop. Ray had a premonition that something was wrong, and stopped to check over the ute. It is well that he did, because several of the spokes on the right, rear wheel have broken. The weight of the load and the constant swaying and jarring has proved too much for them. Ray has packed the ute up and taken the wheel off. He is going to remove the broken spokes and space the rest out so that they will take the strain equally. He and Les are working in the hot sun. There are no trees to provide shade. The only vegetation is low salt-bush and spinifex grass. I have unloaded the things and Cathy is gathering sticks for the fire. We will be going no further today.

March 9. The wheel has held up; and we are in Rawlinna. Thank heavens that that part of the journey is over! Ray was hoping to be able to buy a spare wheel here, but there are none to be had. The men in the fettlers' camp seem pleased to see us. They have given Ray a few odds and ends that might come in handy for the ute, and me several pounds of flour to bolster our dwindling supplies. We have filled our water drums; and I was even able to have a bath, and to bathe Cathy. They offered Ray and I a tent for the night, which we gratefully accepted.

March 10. We travelled well today. We have made camp beside the railway-line not far short of Forrest. Les is off with the rifle in the hope of rabbits. Ray is tinkering with the ute. Cathy is running around and screaming. She is like a little animal let loose from a cage when we stop. She rushes about pulling at the salt-bushes, throwing sand and sticks, growling and screaming, and generally doing anything that enters her head to release the excitement she feels at being free. How she can have so much energy after nearly ten hours of travelling, I've no idea. I wish she would give me the secret.

March 11. This morning we are tired and short with each other. We lost much sleep last night because of the train. One minute we were asleep on the silent

plain, the next we were wakened by the roar of iron on iron and the whirl and rush of wind. It startled us all, but it terrified Cathy. She could not comprehend what it was. She screamed and screamed; and even when we had quietened her down she would not sleep.

We will camp further away from the railway track tonight.

March 12. We reached Cook last night, and slept there. Today we travelled down to Nullarbor Station, near the coast, and on along the main overland route towards Ceduna, which is still about one hundred and twenty miles on. We have stopped at some water tanks, but there is no water. Someone has stolen the taps —for the brass,presumably. Fortunately, we filled our drums at the Station: we would be in real trouble if we hadn't. I think Ray had forebodings of this kind of thing, and that is why he chose the railway route.

The ute has run well today—though Ray is always on tenterhooks concerning it—and we have covered a reasonable distance. Yet, in spite of the eight days we have been travelling, we still have a great distance to go. I sometimes find myself wondering if it is all worth the effort. I try to comfort myself that at the end we will see mother; and this knowledge is a comfort of sorts, though it does not stop Cathy's whingeing or soften the bumps or diminish the days we've yet to endure before our arrival.

March 13. We have reached Ceduna, despite delays to change a tyre and, later, to mend a pipe which came adrift from the carburettor.

March 14. We were able to buy a secondhand Chevrolet wheel in Ceduna this morning. It cost us five shillings—a sum which we can ill afford now. Ray has used the spokes from it to replace those broken or weakened earlier in the trip.

March 15. We have come to within one hundred miles of Port Augusta today. When we made camp tonight, Les went off, as usual, to hunt for rabbits. As usual, he returned with nothing. To lift our spirits, I decided to cut into the fruit cake I cooked before we left, and which I had been saving for such a time as this. But when I went to get it from the box in which it was packed, I found to my dismay that some Lifeboy soap had been packed in with it. The smell of carbolic had permeated through it—and the flour which was also stored in the box—and it was inedible. I sat down in the dust and wept, I was so depressed.

March 16. By the time we reached Port Augusta late this afternoon we were almost out of petrol. We were in a dilemma. We hardly had enough money to buy petrol, and yet we had to buy some food, too. Ray decided that we would have to buy power kerosene for the ute instead of petrol, which would leave a little money over to buy several loaves of bread, some flour, a few vegetables, and a jar of vegemite.

March 17. We were a sight this morning when we left Port Augusta! I've never seen so much smoke! Ray had to fill the bowl of the carburettor with petrol and run the car until it was hot before turning on the kerosene. Then we set off with the engine roaring and smoke belching out behind us.

We are camped half way between Port Augusta and Adelaide. We had hoped to be much closer to Adelaide by now. The problem is the kerosene: it clogs up the engine with soft carbon, so Ray has to stop every so often to clean the spark plugs and what not.

Ray says we will go on tomorrow until we reach mother's. The hardships of the journey seem to take on meaning now: the past fourteen days have been steps towards tomorrow, when we will see mother. Now that we are so close, I am impatient to be off. I wish we didn't have to stop for the night. I don't feel weary at all. How pleased mother will be to see us again! and Catherine for the first time!

March 18. Mother is gravely ill. The first sight of her was an indescribable shock—like when the train started us from our sleep. It is hard, it is bitterly hard to think we have left everything and endured so much only to arrive at this: mother dying and a deep darkness in our hearts. Yet I must at least be thankful that we have come in time to see her—and for her to see Cathy. She was propped up in bed like a pathetic rag-doll. She groaned, almost wailed, when she saw us—as if her heart were torn, as if to be surprised by joy at a time like this somehow heightened her decrepitude and despair—and rolled her head to the wall so we wouldn't see the tears streaming down her dear, wizened face.

☆ ☆

Modern Fiction Studies, a twenty-five-year-old critical quarterly with an international circulation, is devoting its Spring, 1981, issue to critical studies of modern New Zealand and Australian fiction. Articles are being called for. Manuscripts, preferably between 4,000 and 7,000 words in length, should be addressed to William T. Stafford, Editor, *Modern Fiction Studies*, Department of English, Purdue University, W. Lafayette, Indiana 47907, U.S.A. The deadline is December 1, 1980.

Indian Ocean Politics: An Australian Perspective

RICHARD LEAVER

In the latter half of the 'sixties, the structure of Australian foreign policy began to erode. That structure was composed of a series of treaties—ANZUS covering the Pacific flank, the more informal ANZAM arrangement guarding the Indian Ocean flank up to Malaysia, with SEATO bridging the Singapore-Manila gap to intercept 'the downward thrust of communism between the Indian and Pacific oceans'. The cause of erosion of this structure lay both in the Tet offensive and in the less ideologically inclined British decision that their imperial commitments had been successfully terminated. This should have precipitated a major reassessment of Australian foreign policy, but instead one senses that the last decade has been more marked by a yearning for the golden age of forward defence. Beazley and Clark's book* is one of a mere half-dozen academic publications in the course of the decade which could usefully contribute to the reassessment of Australian foreign policy. As Henry Albinski rightly says in the Preface, the book "... will likely attract some controversy ... it will also serve to disentangle and to clarify, and to deflate some stubborn myths".

Oddly enough, this book is authored from Western Australia, for it is in this state that the myths which the book attacks are most acutely actualized. As *The Australian Financial Review* (2/4/79) recently commented,

> .... West Australians have a preoccupation with defence issues, especially those relating to the Indian Ocean and their empty coastline.
>
> It takes little more than the sighting of another group of Taiwanese fishing boats in territorial waters, or suggestions of increased Russian naval presence on the other side of the Indian Ocean, to produce a touch of local paranoia.
>
> ... A local newspaper once conducted the baffling exercise of calculating how much of Australia's defence budget was spent in each State.

One is forced to say that the authors are *from* Western Australia rather than *of* Western Australia.

The authors are equipped with excellent credentials. Beazley has particular interests in American and Australian foreign policy, and Clark has published widely on Soviet foreign policy. Both are well grounded in the 'traditional' approach to the study of international relations in its modern guise; they see the importance of domestic politics and ideology in influencing the form of foreign policy, and both view the State as a disaggregated rather than a unitary

* Kim C. Beazley and Ian Clark, *The Politics of Intrusion: The Super Powers and the Indian Ocean* (APCOL, Sydney, 1979).

'actor'. All of these tendencies come to a head in a massive eye for detail. Their book is exceptionally well researched and documented. The focus of the book is upon the policies of the super powers in the Indian Ocean region over the period 1968–1978, and the object of their analysis is the following paradox:

> ... while there had been sporadic Soviet and American forays into specific parts of the Indian Ocean littoral during the cold war period of the 1950's, it was only in the latter 1960's and early 1970's, when détente was the order of the day, that the Indian Ocean emerged as a significant focus of super power competition. (p. 1)

The book is divided into three sections. The first two deal with the evolution of policy for each super power in turn. Apart from the obvious convenience of this mode of exposition, the authors justify this separation by arguing that a simple action-reaction cycle is incapable of revealing the *independent* and *asymmetric* nature of the interests of the super powers. Each of these sections contains four chapters. The final section is but one chapter long, and addresses the contours of Australian foreign policy towards the region.

The section on Soviet doctrine and strategy is cool and dispassionate. The authors stress the interconnection between Soviet assessments of the nature of Third World régimes which changed dramatically in a conservative direction with the rise to power of Brezhnev and Kosygin, and the adoption of a more rounded strategic posture designed to assert the super power status of the Soviet state. The latter was prompted by the ignominious backdown over Cuba, and was directed against both Polaris deployment on the strategic front as well as the conventional doctrine of 'limited war' which was popular at that time in the West. So the USSR did shift from a more strictly continental to a global posture, but traded off much of its already low stocks of ideological fervour in achieving this diversification. The pecularities of Russian strategy so far as the Indian Ocean region is concerned are rooted in the fact that the USSR relates to much of the northern ocean littoral as a continental power, and in the opposition to Chinese diplomacy which motivates much of its African policy. The overall perspective is therefore far richer than the simple obsession with naval strength which dominates most of the popular Australian analyses of the region. Beazley and Clark argue that the respective navies are locked in a symbiotic relationship, but that much of the meaning of this conflict is symbolic. The authors do not come down behind the popular assessment of soviet expansionism; the 'loss' of Egypt and Somalia, together with the strict even-handed foreign policy of India after Mrs Ghandi, are argued to offset any contemporary gains. Imputed Soviet threats to Western shipping are deservedly not taken too seriously, and it is correctly argued that Soviet naval strength is often below that amassed by the United States, with inordinate difficulties for surging into the region. These chapters deserve a wide audience.

The chapters on American policy are founded upon a more detailed level of research made possible partly because Congressional scrutiny of foreign policy has strengthened. The analysis makes fascinating reading for the student of bureaucratic politics as the heterogenous public record is scoured to reveal the diversity of policy inputs. The major conflict which emerges here is that between the Departments of State and Navy, with the former acting as a restraint upon the rather more hawkish analysis of Zumwalt in particular. The basis of naval 'radicalism' is depicted in the geopolitical fact that the United States relates to the Indian Ocean region as a maritime power, and must use this endowment as a means to project 'relevant power' on to the littoral. More proximally, the Nixon Doctrine was, as the authors realize, a bluewater doctrine; its enunciation has accompanied the rise to clear predominance of the Navy within the defence

complex. This has led to more or less continual pressure from the Navy for the upgrading of Diego Garcia against Congressional and State Department reluctance. One of the spin-offs of this division of bureaucratic interest has been the paranoia over Soviet naval facilities and the Soviet capacity to interdict Western shipping from the Gulf States in particular. The authors leave no doubt that both of these fears are exaggerated, and stress that they must be evaluated within the context of bureaucratic infighting.

Beazley and Clark trace the development of American Indian Ocean policy through the successive crises of the Indo-Pakistani war, the oil embargo and the Yom Kippur war. Each of these crises provided the Navy with a rationale for deeper degrees of involvement in the region, expressed in the presence of carrier task forces detached from the Pacific fleet. The authors argue that these task forces failed to support the American diplomatic effort, and at times came dangerously close to being counter-productive. Yet despite these failings, the decision was made by Schlesinger to institutionalize the irregular presence of such task forces, which in turn made the upgrading of Diego Garcia nearly inevitable. This decision, representing a victory for Naval interests within the Administration, was prompted by divisiveness amongst the Western allies generated by the oil embargo and the American disillusionment with the failings of littoral diplomacy in the conservative Gulf states. Task forces gave the United States an independent capability free from the fickleness of allies, and Diego Garcia reinforced this independence. The thought of a 'zone of peace' in the region receded quickly into the background, notwithstanding Carter's brief flirtation with regional demilitarization. The prospects for bilateral arms limitation between the super powers, which were reasonably good at the start of the Carter administration, deteriorated under the convulsions in the Horn of Africa, and Carter returned to his point of departure—an informal balance in the naval *status quo*, and a greater attempt to eke out allied support.

The concluding chapter on Australian foreign policy towards the region is, as the authors candidly admit in their Introduction, aimed specifically at the needs of Australian audiences. It is clearly the best piece of writing available on this topic. But despite this high quality, the chapter is something of an anomaly within the completed text. Australia could hardly qualify as the most significant medium power on the littoral; the meaning and significance of this chapter will probably escape international readers. On the other hand, if the authors addressed this book primarily towards a domestic audience, this demands more than a single chapter on Australian diplomacy. To serve this aim properly would require a complete reorientation of the book. The product, as it stands, is too obviously a compromise, with this chapter appearing almost as an afterthought. The authors would have served their own interests better by opting one way or the other.

Despite this structural criticism, the substance of this chapter is generally above criticism. The picture which the authors draw shows the Liberal and Country Party governments of McMahon and Fraser as continuing the role of *agent provocateur* which has generally characterised Liberal foreign policy under ANZUS, and the decidedly cool attitude of the American administration to this mode of behaviour. The limitations and contradictons of the Whitlam initiatives in the region are fairly assessed as constituting 'critical support for the US alliance', but it is a pity that no sustained attempt is made to deal with the policies of the early Gorton government other than to note *en passant* the fated pronouncements of Gordon Freeth. These policies are interesting not simply because they expose the entrenched Liberal strategic perspectives of the Menzies entourage, but also because they created a legacy which Whitlam was to inherit.

A proper interpretation of Gorton still remains to be done. When it is, we will be better able to understand the degrees of ideological and strategic freedom manifest in Australian foreign policy.

The book as a whole is lacking in some regards. Certainly one would not want to criticize the degree of research which underpins the work, but it is appropriate to suggest that relatively less thought has gone into the organization and presentation of this research. At a simple level, the book is too descriptive and insufficiently analytical. This comes out in rather mundane ways—for instance, there is no attempt to provide a genuine conclusion to the book as a whole or to any of the individual chapters. The old-fashioned but rather commonsense guidelines of 'hypothesis testing' could well have ordered the material presented here in a more comprehensible manner than the purely chronological mode of exposition. Certainly the lack of an index does not assist the authors' choice.

A plea for a greater degree of theoretical indulgence on the part of the authors is not simply a pedantic and academic debating point; it has important political consequences. For instance, the authors rather cautiously adopt the rather generalized concept of 'the Indian Ocean region' in their work. While they clearly see this region as constituting a system in only the most primitive sense, they defend it to the extent that the super powers employ the region as a whole as their strategic frame of reference. I would have favoured some attempt to disaggregate this notion of 'the Indian Ocean region' into specific sub-regional groupings within which the bonds of interaction upon the littoral are more readily displayed. Such an approach would serve to problematize the extent and manner of interaction of these regional subgroupings. This approach would be particularly useful if the authors were clear about their desire to educate the lay audience inside Australia. It is one of the hallmarks of Australian foreign policy that it has consistently projected itself into the central balance of power. This tendency was exceptionally well developed in the Menzies years, and is coming to the fore again under Fraser; the present Australian government is paying close attention to developments on the African continent, the Northwestern littoral of the Indian Ocean and to the European theatre in framing its foreign policy. A sub-regional approach offers an implicit critique of this totalizing perspective and guards against any illusions of grandeur on the part of a medium power such as Australia. In the present political climate, this seems a more politically progressive approach.

It would be extremely remiss of any reviewer not to mention the extreme disservice rendered to this high quality manuscript by the publisher. This is a book of some 110,000 words with over 700 footnotes; it is presented in a most unsatisfactory format. Its physical size suggests that this is a large monograph rather than a book, since the whole volume is compressed into less than 150 pages. A crude calculation suggests that this is in excess of 850 words per page. This publishing feat is achieved through the use of exceptionally small print, absolutely minimal line spacing and negligible margins all round. Reading the book is, to say the least, extremely tedious; indeed it borders on the impossible when trying to absorb lengthy quotations and footnotes. APCOL have clearly attracted these authors by their ability to publish quickly, but this advantage is more than offset by the shoddy format. Extreme skimping on this scale is likely to restrict the sales of this book to the dedicated specialist and to deprive it of the wider market which it deserves.

Volcanic Lake

ALEC CHOATE

The island rises, terraced hill on hill,
Sheened with green silk, or set in sea-green jade.
A thousand years of loving cut and fill
Have spiralled it into a place of stairs
Which, more than for mere rice crops, was so made
Because all height is sacred, and they lead
To this volcano that still sometimes flares,
The great shrine of the island people's creed.

They reaffirm its truth each time they raise
Their eyes in prayer. Where the last terrace ends
I stand and share their awe and share their praise,
But let my mind search its own mystery.
The tropic sea, to which the land descends,
And where they say the powers of evil are,
I see through haze as passive imagery,
The noon sky's lowered eyelid, grey and far.

Perhaps a crater too, there is the lake
Where the volcano's skirt leaves shouldering land,
So wide a sweep of water it can take
The whole volcano on it upside down
With still the cone far off from where I stand:
And it is there that this scene's counterpart,
Set in its oval frame of green and brown,
Intensifies into a work of art.

The noon's hush makes this true. Even the palms
That round the frame seem handworked, do not stir:
And there's a held breath over those small farms
That touch the water. Someone painted this.
My eyes half close, bringing a dreamier
Impressionism where there's so much grace,
But either picture is an emphasis
That art here shapes both people's lives and place

I shrug away my envy. Time is near
When my own country puts its prose on me,
Yet that's what my heart aches for, even here.
I'd rather rage to rip its hessian through
Than let this vision's silks of poetry
Slip me into a trance I would not break.
Clearing my eyes, I ask if it is true
That fire and terror mirror in this lake?

And now, nearby, a girl's head parts the water,
Turning its glass to ripples as she rises
Into the sun whose arms at once have caught her.
Where I thought art I now think animal.
Even with face averted she surprises
My mind with more excitement than could stir
It when I felt my picture's spell, and all
Its wonder is diverted onto her.

She slowly turns and wades up to the shore,
Then naked, honey-skinned, kneels on the sands.
She smiles, unstartled, seeing me before
Her, lifts her arms, and gathers up her hair
As if the world can be controlled by hands.
The lake is only lake, as, not once shy,
She gives her body to the sun's good care
And waits for its man's touch to make her dry.

Bali 1972

Acknowledgments

Grateful acknowledgment is made to the following individuals for their advice and assistance in the preparation of this issue: Bonnie R. Crown (Asian Literature Society, New York); Paul Engle and Hualing Nieh Engle (International Writing Program, University of Iowa); Daniel Weissbort (*Modern Poetry in Translation*); P. Lal (Writers Workshop, Calcutta); R. Parthasarathy (Oxford University Press, Delhi); Rainer Schulte (University of Texas at Dallas); Merril Yule (University of Queensland Press).

Thanks are also due to the following for their kind permission to use material from the works indicated:

East African Publishing House, Nairobi, Kenya, for Jose Craveirinha "Mamparra M'Gaiza" from Margaret Dickinson *When Bullets Begin to Flower*; Okot p'Bitek "The Woman With Whom I Share My Husband", *Song of Lawino*; and [for the extract printed here from Ayi Kwei Armah *Two Thousand Seasons*] Heinemann Educational Books Ltd., London: Taban lo Liyong "heres something ive always wanted to talk about", from *Another Nigger Dead*; David Rubadiri: "Stanley Meets Mutesa", from (ed) David Cook, *Origin East Africa*; and Ngugi wa Thiong'o "The Mubenzi Tribesmen", from *Secret Lives*.

Mundus Artium, A Journal of International Literature and the Arts, published by the International Poetry Forum, Pittsburgh, at the University of Texas at Dallas, for Abd al-wahab at-Bayyati "Lorca Elegies"; Mahmoud Darwish "Memoirs of Everyday Sorrow"; Nazar Qabbani "You Want"; Sameeh at-Qasim "Feast" and "And Then"; Unsi al-Haj "Is This You or The Table". These poems originally appeared in the Special Arabic Issue, edited by Samuel Hazo, published in 1977.

Oxford University Press, Delhi, for R. Parathasarathy "As a Man Approaches Thirty", from *Rough Passage*.

University of California Press, Berkeley, for Albert Adib "Fidelity"; Badr Shakir al-Sayyab "For I am A Stranger"; Nazar Qabbani "What Value Has a People Whose Tongue is Tied?"; and Unsi al-Haj "Dialogue", from Mounah A. Khouri and Hamid Algar *An Anthology of Modern Arabic Poetry*.

University of Queensland Press, for the extract published here as "The Grasscutters", from Kiran Nagarkar *Seven Sixes are Fortythree* (in press).

Woodrose Publications, Singapore, for Chandran Nair "Some Day Ivy, The Snow Will Seem Happy Again", from *After the Hard Hours This Rain*.

Writers Workshop, Calcutta, for Keki N. Daruwalla "Curfew" and "The Epileptic", from *Under Orion*.

Fremantle Arts Centre Press for poems 'Volcanic Lake' and 'Mahatma Gandhi' by Alec Choate from *Gifts Upon the Water*, 1978.

The Age newspaper, Melbourne, for Bruce Dawe's poem 'Flight 250 to Perth'.

All short stories and poems are fictional and have no reference to any actual person, living or dead, unless otherwise indicated.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

ABD AL-WAHAB AL-BAYYATI was born in Iraq, 1926. He has published more than ten collections of poetry.

ABDUL HADI: Prolific Indonesian poet. Early work available in English translation in *Arjuna in Meditation* (Writers Workshop, Calcutta).

ALBERT ADIB: Born in Mexico, Adib lived and studied in Mexico for several years, before moving to Lebanon. Founder of Al-Adib review, he is one of the pioneers of the free verse movement.

HAMID ALGAR is the author of *Religion and State in Iran*, 1785–1906 and *Mirza Malkum Khan*.

SW. ANAND HARIDAS is Dean of the School of Human Communication and Senior Lecturer in Southeast Asian Studies at Murdoch University. As Harry Aveling, he has translated many books of Indonesian and Malay books into English.

ANGKARN KALAYANAPONGSE: Contemporary Thai poet, much influenced by Buddhism and traditional Thai civilisation.

AYI KWEI ARMAH: Born 1939, Takoardi, Khana. Studied at Achimota, Harvard and Columbia. Has been called "the major prose stylist of the second generation of Anglophone African writers". Wrote *Two Thousand Seasons* (1973) while living in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania. Also author of *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1968), *Fragments* (1969) and *Why Are We So Blest?* (1972).

BADR SHAKIR AL-SAYYAB. Before his death in London, 1964, al-Sayyab wrote feverishly, throughout a long illness, poem after poem, building a reputation based on such books as *The Rain Lullaby*, *The Submerged Temple*, and others, as the most profound Arab poet to hit the literary scene after the second world war.

SARGON BOULUS lives presently in San Francisco. He was formerly on the staff of two leading literary Arabic journals, *Shi'r* and *Mawaqif*. In addition to his own poetry and fiction, he has published numerous translations of contemporary Arabic poetry.

CHANDRAN NAIR: Born in South India; educated and lives in Singapore. Author of *Once The Horseman and Other Poems* and *After the Hard Hours This Rain*.

ALEC CHOATE: Born 1915 in England but lived most of his life in Western Australia. His book of poems *Gifts Upon the Water* contains wartime poems set in Southeast Asia and peacetime poems of the same area.

JOSE CRAVEIRINHA: Born 1922, Lourenco Marques, Mozambique. Poet, journalist and outspoken critic of the colonial regime. FRELIMO supporter.

KEKI DARUWALLA. Born 1937. Author of *Under Orion* and *Apparition in April* (both Writers Workshop, Calcutta); *Crossing of Rivers* (Oxford University Press, Delhi).

MAHMOUD DARWISH is one of the most significant Palestinian poets and writers. This selection is only part of a novel of the same title. Adnan Haydar is presently at the Middle East Center at the University of Pennsylvania.

BRUCE DAWE is one of Australia's best known poets. He teaches at Darling Downs College of Advanced Education, Toowoomba. His collected poems were published recently: *Sometimes Gladness* (1978).

MARGARET DICKINSON: Editor and translator, *When Bullets Begin To Flower: Poems of Resistance* (1972).

EE TIANG HONG: Malaysia's leading poet in English; now lives in Perth, Western Australia. Author of *I of the Many Faces*, *Lines from Hawaii* and *Myths for a Wilderness*.

GERALDINE HENG: Author of *White Dreams*. Journalist; graduate of the Department of English, University of Singapore.

TABAN LO LIYONG: Born 1939, northern Uganda. Educated in Uganda and USA (University of Iowa). Critic, essayist, poet, short story writer and lecturer. Provocative and controversial author. Has published, amongst others, *Fixions* (1962), *The Last Word* (1969), *Frantz Fanon's Uneven Ribs* (1971) and *Another Nigger Dead: Poems* (1972).

MONTRI UMAVIJANI: Lecturer at Thammasat University, Thailand. He has extensively translated from English into Thai, including the work of Frost, Eliot, Stevens and Lowell. Dr Montri was recently a participant in the International Writing Program at the University of Iowa.

MOUNAH A. KHOURI is the author of *Poetry and the Making of Modern Egypt*. Both Mounah A. Khouri and Hamid Algar teach in the Department of Near Eastern Languages, University of California, Berkeley.

ANDREW LANSDOWN is a Perth student whose poems and prose have appeared in Australian literary magazines.

RICHARD LEAVER is a tutor in Political Science at Flinders University, South Australia.

KIRAN NAGARKAR—Prominent Marathi novelist, lives in Bombay. *Seven Sixes are Forty-Three*, translated by Shubha Slee, is currently being published by the Asian and Pacific Writing Series of the University of Queensland Press.

NAZAR QABBANI. Born in Syria, 1923, Qabbani was active in the diplomatic service for a long time. Among his books, *You Are Mine*, *Childhood of a Breast*, *Fatah*, *Guerilla Posters on Israel Walls*.

R. PARTHASARATHY: Born 1934, educated in Bombay and Leeds University. Editor of *Ten Twentieth-Century Indian Poets* (Oxford University Press, Delhi); author of *Rough Passage* (OUP).

OKOT P'BITEK: Born 1931, Gulu, north Uganda. He has played football for Uganda and read Education at Bristol, Law at Aberystwyth and Social Anthropology at Oxford. Hailed as the most exciting new figure in the current East African poetic renaissance. Apart from *Song of Lawino* (1966), an innovative and influential work, he has published *Song of Ocol* (1970) and *Two Songs* (1971).

DAVID RUBADIRI: Born 1930, Nyasaland (now Malawi). Poet, broadcaster and Malawi's first Ambassador to the United States and to the United Nations. His poetry has been widely anthologised and there is also a novel, *No Bride Price* (1967).

W. S. RENDRA: Major Indonesian poet and dramatist. Recently imprisoned for six months for his "pamphlet poems", protesting declining living conditions in Indonesia.

SAMEEH AL-QASIM, along with Mahmud Darweesh, al-Qasim is one of the most promising young poets to come out of Palestine. After the June 1967 war, his book, *The Thunder Bird*, came out in Beirut.

SHUBHA SLEE—Born in Bombay. Journalist and translator; at one time assisted with *Aspects*.

SUTARDJI CALZOUM BACHRI: Anarchist Indonesian poet. Attended International Writers Workshop at the University of Iowa in 1977. Currently drying-out.

S. SUTRO: Graduate student at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

PRAMOEDYA ANANTA TOER: Born 1926. Indonesia's leading prose-writer. Still held as a prisoner-of-conscience on Buru Island, East Indonesia (first imprisoned 1965).

UNSI AL-HAJ. Born in Lebanon, 1937, al-Haj works as a journalist with *Al-Nahar* newspaper. His books include: *Never: The Severed Head*; *The Past of Coming Days*; *What did you Make with Gold, What did You do With the Rose*. He has translated Michaud, Breton, and Arrabal.

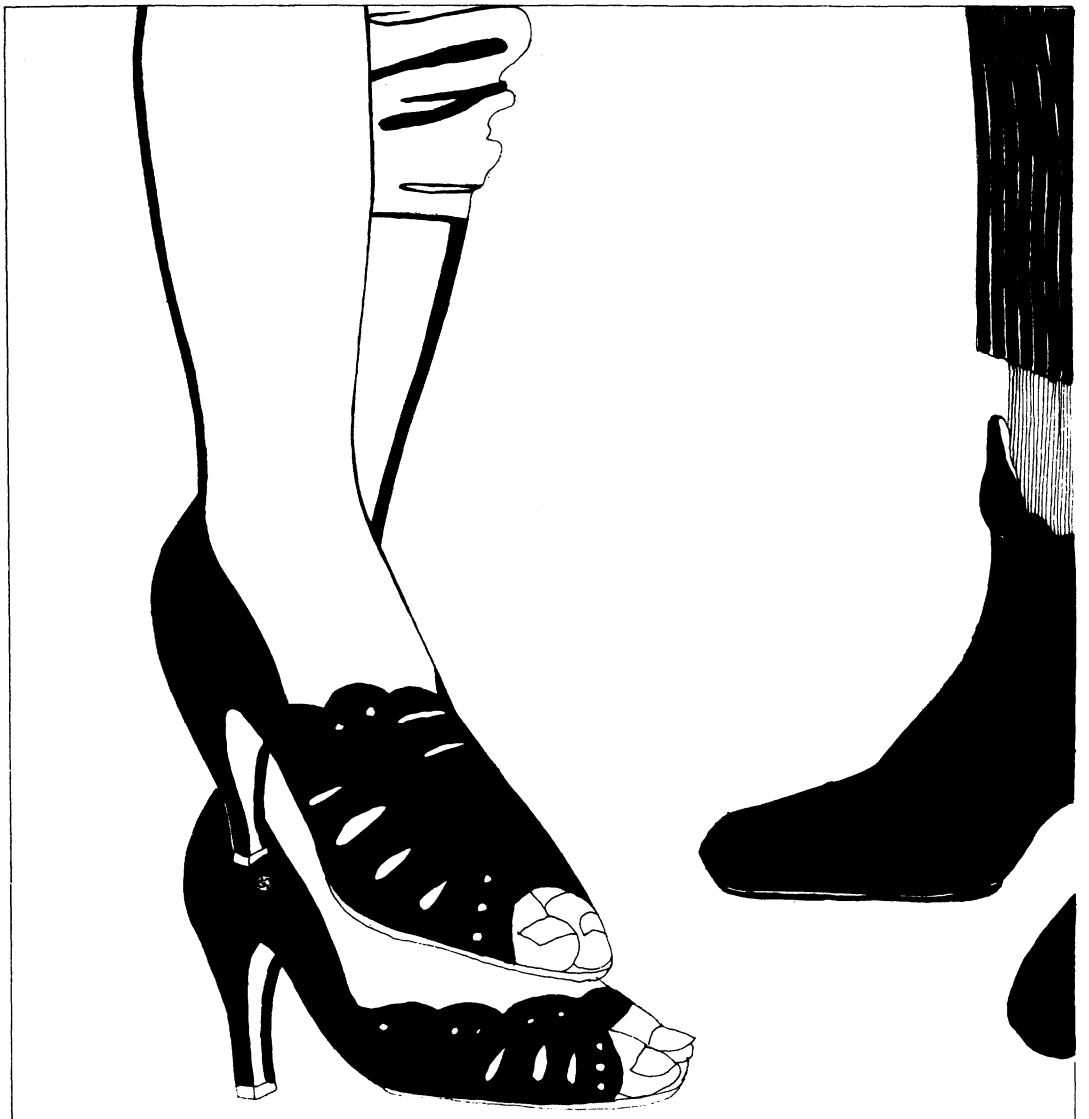
NGUGI WA THIONG'O: Novelist, critic, short story writer and lecturer at the University of Nairobi; born 1938, Limuru, Kenya, and educated at Makerere and the University of Leeds. The most prolific and well-known author in East Africa. Recently detained under Kenyan Government internal security regulations. Works include *The River Between* (1965), *A Grain of Wheat* (1967), *Secret Lives* (1975), with Micere Mugo, *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* (1976), and the controversial novel *Petals of Blood*.

TERRY TREDREA is a librarian in Perth. His poems and prose have appeared in literary magazines and he won a prize for short fiction in the *Westerly* literary competition 1979.

HUGH WEBB: Wrote his Ph.D. dissertation on modern African literature. Tutor at Murdoch University, where he lectures in the area of African literature.

U WIN PE: Prominent translator of Classical Burmese poetry; a number of his translations appeared in the Southeast Asian Issue of *Westerly*, December 1976.

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



NEW POETRY

Box N110 Grosvenor St. P.O., SYDNEY. N.S.W. 2000
NEW POETRY IS PUBLISHED FOUR TIMES A YEAR

SUBSCRIPTIONS
Annual subscription $16.00
O/seas individuals $18.00
O/seas institutions $24.00

WHAT'S GOING ON DOWN UNDER?
A LITERARY FEET.

WAY'79

WESTERN AUSTRALIA 150th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS 1979

Tertiary Education Committee

Sesquicentenary Celebrations Series of Books

14 DISTINCTIVE BOOKS COVERING A RANGE OF TOPICS ON WESTERN AUSTRALIAN DEVELOPMENT

Immigrants in Western Australia, Johnston, Ruth, Ed.
Westralian Portraits, Hunt, Lyall, Ed.
Environment and Science, O'Brien, Brian, Ed.
Western Landscapes, Gentilli, J., Ed.
Aborigines of the West: Their Past and Their Present, Berndt, R. and M., Eds
The Beginning: European Discovery and Early Settlement, Appleyard, R. T. and Manford, Toby
The Literature of Western Australia, Bennett, Bruce, Ed.
Mining in Western Australia, Prider, Rex T., Ed.
Education in Western Australia, Neal, W. D. Ed.
Essays in Western Australian Politics, Pervan, Ralph, F. and Sharman, C., Eds
Western Towns and Buildings, White, John, Ed.
A History of Commerce and Industry, Firkins, Peter C., Ed.
Westralian Voices: Documents in Social History, Aveling, Marian, Ed.
Agriculture in Western Australia, Burvill, G., Ed.

ORDER FROM YOUR USUAL BOOKSELLER

Published by
UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA PRESS
Nedlands, Western Australia 6009

Available in the eastern states from
MELBOURNE UNIVERSITY PRESS, CARLTON, VICTORIA