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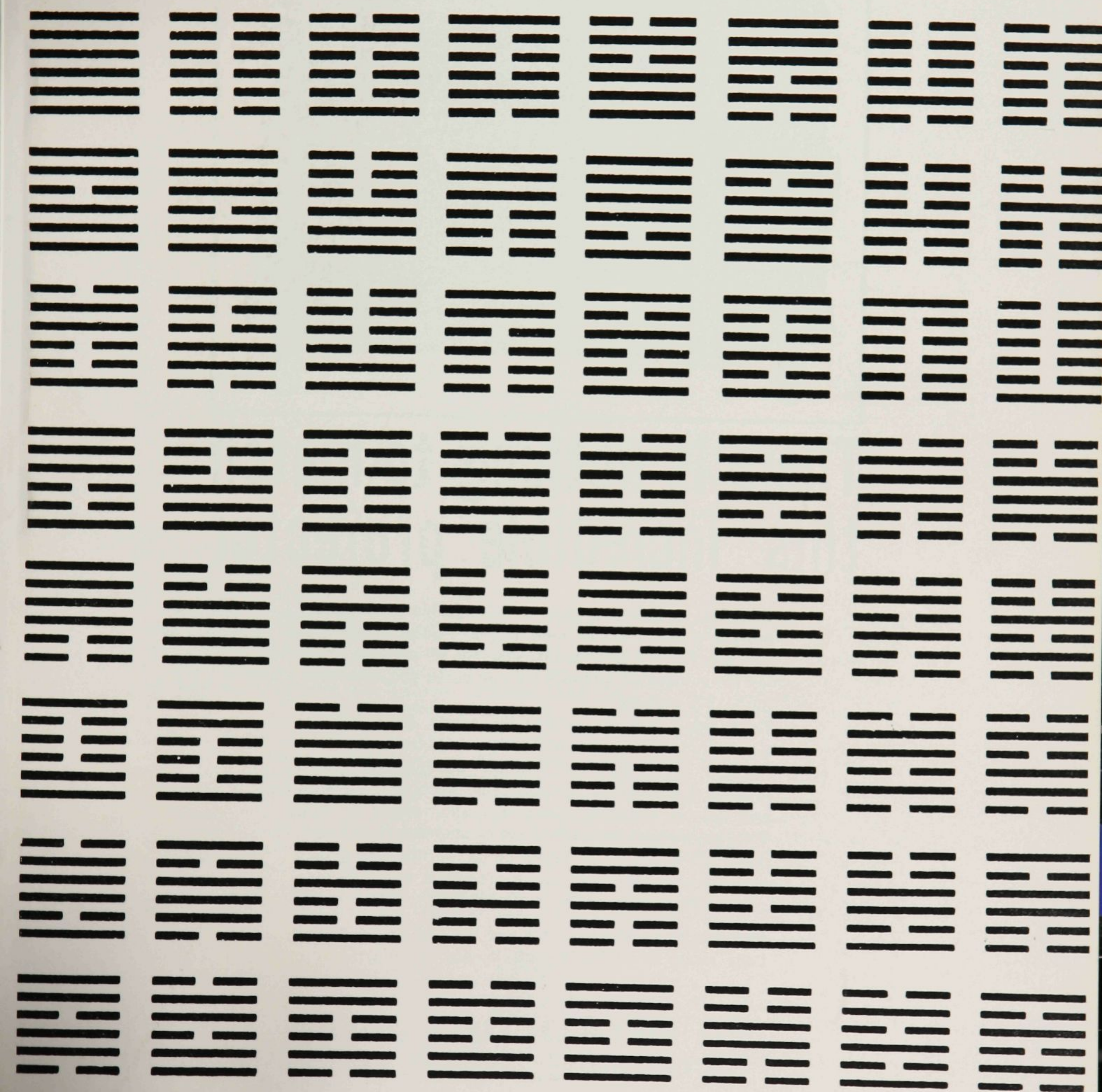

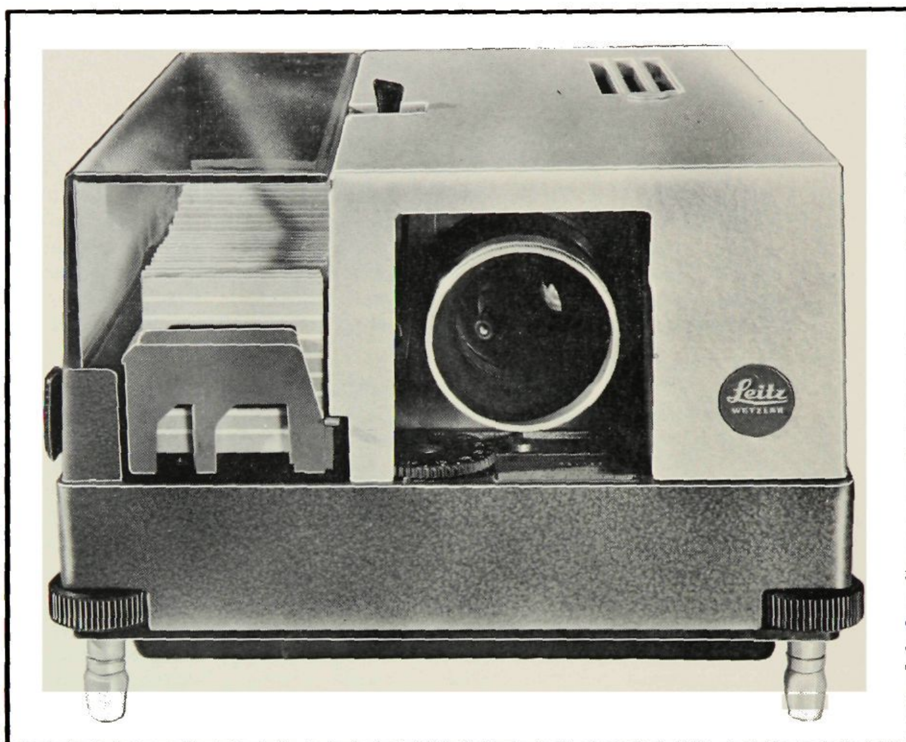

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Westerly is published quarterly by the University of Western Australia Press, with assistance from the Commonwealth Literary Fund. The opinions expressed in *Westerly* are those of individual contributors and not of any member of the above Committees.

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

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

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

University of Western Australia Press

Cover Illustration: Not a recent work by British Op-painter Bridget Riley, but the sixty-four hexagrams of the Chinese *I Ching* or *Book of Changes.* This work of divination, dating from the first millenium B.C., is sometimes employed by the American composer John Cage in the composition of his electronic music. (See: *I Ching*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1951; John Cage: *Silence*, Wesleyan University Press, 1961.)

T.H.G.

westerly

No. 3 of 1967

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Irene M. Summy

ANDERS

I ONCE HAD A boyfriend named Anders, the only boyfriend I ever had. The rest were lovers and husbands, all partly or wholly forgotten by now. But the memory of Anders has defied both space and time.

For five years he and I attended the same school, same class, and before that, for two years, another school. And all that time we were living on the same street within spitting distance of each other, and even occasionally played together. Yet Anders never noticed me, it seemed, until one day in the autumn of my 17th year, I came to school in a tight, knitted sweater.

I remember this distinctly, because I felt acutely embarrassed all day and decided never to wear that sweater again. But after school, as we were leaving, Anders came up to me and said: "By the way, I've tickets for the Royal Theatre next Saturday. Would you like to come?"

The play was "Pygmalion" and afterwards, walking home, we talked and talked, as if we'd never met before—which, of course, in a sense we hadn't.

The next two weeks were holidays and we spent a lot of time together, talking non-stop of books we had read, of films we had seen or wanted to see, of plays we liked or did not like, and of everything that had ever happened to us, since we were born. Sometimes in the evenings we would walk or bike to obscure little cinemas that showed old movies and afterwards, inevitably, with or without bikes, would walk home, because one could not discuss anything properly while pedalling or watching the traffic.

The first time Anders kissed me took me completely by surprise. We were discussing Moliere in a quiet park one morning, when suddenly he stopped and said: "Wait a minute." And then as I obediently halted, he bent down and somehow managed to touch my lips with his, though he quite forgot or perhaps did not know he was supposed to turn his head at a certain angle because of the noses. To be perfectly frank, it was not much of a kiss, more in the nature of an experiment, but Anders evidently was satisfied.

"All right, let's go," he said and added: "Where were we? Oh, yes, I remember now . . ." and continued with Moliere.

We were quite green in these matters (kissing, I mean, and all that . . .) I perhaps a bit more yellow having occasionally indulged in a bit of petting at parties without enjoying it very much. But with Anders it was quite different, and in time we became quite proficient at it.

Thus months went by, and I was already happily making plans for the future, our wedding, mutual home and children, when suddenly one day

Anders sort of en passant said: "My mother thinks we're seeing too much of each other."

Now obviously she was not in any position to make a valid judgment in the matter, but as it did not seem polite to disagree with her, I meekly consented that perhaps we did, and may be we should not, which Anders accepted without a single objection. So for quite some time we only met at school, and even there did not speak very much. Puzzled, but neither alarmed nor apprehensive, for true love lasts forever and tolerates no doubt, I continued to make plans and to tell my family and girlfriends about the films I was not seeing with Anders, and what we did and where we went, because I didn't want them to worry and wonder.

One day as I was launching another tale of a fictional date with Anders, my girlfriend with the kind of look that one reserves for the poor, the ailing and the dying, said very gently: "I think you ought to know that I went out with Anders last night."

The sky came crashing down and hit the pavement with a dull, terrible thud. "Oh, did you?" I said, thinking that of course it wasn't true, but knowing deep down that it was. I smiled, thought of something clever and appropriate to say and, failing, gave out a cheerful laughter and told a tattered joke, of which she was most appreciative. Possibly she had never heard it before, or had, but didn't want to hurt my feelings. A little later Anders joined us and wanted to share the joke.

And so—as I later wrote in a poem (during the next lesson between broken passages of "Buddenbrooks" painfully translated from German into Danish)—"We parted on laughing terms, while the sky lay weeping in the street."

There was a lot more in the poem, about the sun in his hazel eyes, true love and my heart being broken, bleeding and making the sky all purple, but the rest I can't remember.

In writing this, however, I was merely marking time, waiting for a line of exit, for I knew very well from the moment the sky hit the pavement, what I was going to do. Except I needed some sort of provocation, some sensible pretence and a positive blueprint for the future. But clearly, there was not enough room for Anders, his girl and me in the same class in the same school, in the same city—in fact in the same country.

The lesson dragged on with the teacher labouring hard to explain a poem (that needed no explanation at all, I thought) and making irrelevant comments about the poet's somewhat sordid past. Meanwhile I was pondering what to do, and where to do it.

I did have an aunt in America, but she being poor and always sending me such dreadful things for Christmas, was instantly dismissed. Where else could one go? I could not speak Spanish, which eliminated South America. Asia too was out. I did not care for Africa. That narrowed the field to New Zealand, which was cold, and Australia. Lots of Danes went to Australia and . . . what? Oh yes, farming, of course. Sheep, wheat and fruit.

I had a vivid pleasing picture of myself picking fruit under a never setting sun.

"Here," said the teacher with undiminished enthusiasm, though half the class was soundly asleep, ". . . the poet is obviously referring to the woman

who haunted his conscience. The squirrel crushed under the weight of the fallen tree . . . the tree meaning himself . . . his . . ."

"Nonsense," I said.

The teacher turned. "You perhaps have another interpretation to offer?" she enquired coldly.

"We're all of us squirrels . . ." I said, intending to elaborate along the lines of people hurting each other without even meaning to, but my thoughts were in Australia, wandering happily among rows of blooming fruit trees and bluntly refused to come back.

"Crushed . . ." I said vaguely.

"Crushed squirrels," the teacher recapitulated for the benefit of the class—and waited expectantly.

I left it at that. She obviously did not understand the poet's compassion with all mankind—what was the use of explaining? Rising, I put my books and belongings in my briefcase and exitted amidst stunned silence.

Walking down the stairs, never to return again, I felt nostalgic already for the smell of ink, dust and varnish and all the things that one associates with school. I passed the trees dripping leaves like coloured candles and might have wept. However, once outside the gate I tried to concentrate on Australia and my future, but my thoughts somehow had wearied of fruit trees and were treading gingerly and mournfully among the pieces of broken sky that still lay bleeding and weeping in the empty school yard behind the slowly closing gate.

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DRAWING CLASS

Drawing a line, I enclose this jug
or its twin in another space
from that in which I strive
to make jug seem more than jug.
Now it is less than more, or more
than just a line, but less
than jug. How can I ever pour
this love from space on to a plane
living a life within its name?

Or, giving a tree another life
from the life we both contain,
the life in death I form
is something more than death
and less than tree. Yet from us both
it draws more life than we
knew we could give. Calling for love,
the lifeless jug and tree remain
sentient still within a name.

ERIC IRVIN

WHO ONCE WAS LED

He does not wear your shoes.
Shoulders above you now
this friendly giant son
smiles as he humours you.

Watch the long years
down which you walk.
He does not walk your way.

Useless to chafe,
or triumph in
doors guarded with a lock.

Fear jostles pride
and love distaste
to see him pick with ease
locks you could never spring.

Once leading, you are left
without direction. Caught
in some new time-lock, you
look wonderingly on seas
he breasts to shores
a thousand megatons away.

ERIC IRVIN

Frank Moorhouse

HER MOTHER'S VISIT

The Third Story of Nature

SHE SAT CROSS-LEGGED on the bed, her thighs cradling the weight of her pregnancy. She had wanted to feel the weight from the day she knew she was pregnant. She'd wanted to feel pregnant. She did not have to imagine now.

"You'll have to keep the place cleaner than this when baby comes," said her mother, moving outside with a five-pin cluster of beer bottles—holding them away from her in a gesture of disassociation.

"You must admit that I've improved," she said, humouring her mother.

She watched her mother wipe her hands on her apron as she came inside. She watched her mother come across to her and she felt the hand on her face.

"You must look after yourself, Cindy—it's a critical time."

"Mother, I'm 26."

"In some ways you're still a child—now promise your poor old mother that you'll be good and keep the flat clean."

She almost nodded but her mother moved away from the uncertainty of answers. Pulling on her rubber gloves her mother began to clean the bath with a righteous energy.

"You could come home until after baby arrives. Father would love to have you home," her mother called, her voice hollowed by the resonance of the bath.

"That's out of the question."

Her mother refused to concede Roger the rights of a husband. In his casual way Roger didn't claim them and in the formal sense he wasn't a husband. What rights? The old trap again. The trap of looking for established patterns of rights and expectations. Established patterns were used by people whose relationships were too weak to generate their own living patterns. Or perhaps all human relationships were too weak to do this? Did they all require social patterns? Was it childish arrogance to think otherwise? Were social patterns congealed wisdom? Social patterns changed. And some people changed faster than social patterns. Some people were out of syncronisation. "Syncronise your watches."

"But sir, we have no watches."

Were you in the vanguard or simply impatiently running on ahead—to find yourself without society—isolated and scared.

"We just thought you might like to dear."

Her mother's fangs retreated into a chatting face.

"Sara and I walked out of a film for the first time for years, the other day. Hopelessly silly thing it was. I'm afraid I don't understand modern films."

"What was the film?"

"A thing called The Pink Pussy Cat."

"Oh—I'd heard it was funny."

"Believe me, don't waste your money."

Roger had said it was very funny and Jimmy had liked it.

Of course, just because you were married did not mean that you weren't having a living relationship. But people who married hampered themselves . . .

"Here dear—your eyes are younger than mine—what does it say on the label—two tablespoons to the gallon?"

"Yes—two tablespoons to the gallon—warm water."

. . . Relatives and acquaintances and society felt legally justified in applying all sorts of pressures to ensure that you conformed to their idea of marriage. And you tended to adopt their ideas from apathy. Because she and Roger were not married both their parents were generally discreet and circumspect and left them alone—with the occasional act of aggression. But these things didn't puzzle Roger. He didn't discuss things like this. He simply lived by his personal tenets. She didn't have tenets. She wished she did. She had only tentative wild ideas to live by—and sometimes they ran away from her.

"I'll do the toilet and then I must go."

"Don't bother mother, leave it—please."

"You make a cup of tea—that would be something useful."

Her mother would clean most of the flat, arranging books, dusting, organising the kitchen cupboards, throwing out old food from the refrigerator. But she would not touch the bed. The bed was a symbol of her daughter's defection. Periodically her mother did this. She made these cleaning attempts to retrieve her from the degradation of her runaway disorganised life—tried to pull her back onto the middle class boat. Her mother would buy her clothing from David Jones—clothes which were to serve as a guide, a uniform, and a correction to her daughter's deviant tastes. She would clean her flat and ask her to come home. She would give her personal advice which contained subtle coaxings to return to the principles of her upbringing.

She hauled herself from the bed and to the kitchen. I'm beginning to waddle, she thought.

"Next time I come I'll bring my new detergent, it's really excellent."

"Oh?"

"Father bought it from the factory. It's for industrial use. I use it around the house."

"Roger hates the smell of detergent."

"This has a lovely clean strong smell."

Her mother's virtue for cleanliness had become a violent, acidic thing. She turned on the kitchen tap and let the water run over her fingers, momentarily allied with the harmless cool water. She filled the kettle. One day her mother would find a detergent which would keep all things permanently and deeply clean and which would spiritually purify and her mother would bring it to her and wash out her life and bathe her in it. From then on she would never be able to again feel dirty or have a sweating f——. But at least then the soles of her feet would not be gritty after walking from the bath to the bed.

"You'll have to tell Roger to keep things clean—it's dreadfully important when you have a baby."

"He thinks we keep things too clean."

Once he had yelled at her, "don't try to impose your mother's sterilised existence on me."

"Yes, well we both know how funny he is about some things."

The kitchen alliance! Her mother had in one sentence taken her into the female alliance against men—mother and daughter—the female superiority of "understanding" their men.

God knows she sometimes wanted it—not against men—but to be in female alliance. To rest upon the certainty of female knowledge. To understand by female intuition. To have a set of female tasks and female skills to perform them. But that female alliance of mother and daughter belonged to the order and cleanliness and stability of the home she had left. At times she wanted that too. A home unchanged and clean for forty years—changed only by accumulated decoration of the basic theme. Sometimes she fantasied that she would surrender back. Her mother did not know how close she came at times to crying "oh mother" and flying back into her arms. But she did not. Did her mother want her back—an adult child—want back a wayward baby? She had no place back at her home, except as a visitor and then as an uneasy one. Her "place" always kept, was a sepulchre for them to regret at, not a refuge for her to go back to. She was supposed by now, according to the rules, to be in her own home, working daily to imitate the cleanliness and order which becomes stability when it has been maintained for twenty-five—or how many years equalled stability? Even then perhaps it threatened daily and one never knew stability. Her mother lived in a threatened world of headlines and newsflashes which said to her, "Morals are changing, prices are rising, workmanship is poor, fashions are incomprehensible, communists and trade unions run the country, community spirit is dead". Perhaps her mother daily feared that her prayers and polishing would not be enough to hold back the seeping chaos. Perhaps she was nibbled by a fear that others were not putting their scraps in the betidy bins—that others were not trying. Did she live with the feeling of failure.

"Father's having trouble at the factory—unions again."

"What's the men's problem?"

"It's not the men—it's their leaders—the men are decent enough. It's the leaders who make the trouble—only for them there wouldn't be strikes."

She could not reply. On subjects like this she choked with irritation. She didn't give a damn about trade unions, but when her mother attacked them she was swept to their defence. She could feel her breathing break rhythm. Her mind fumbled.

"The cost of living is always rising," she said, ineffectually, moving a cup and saucer in a sort of physical twitch.

"They make it rise—they send the prices soaring" her mother said, looking for a broom behind the door, "you'd think they'd wake up and see that high wages make the prices rise."

"There should be price control."

"No dear," her mother used her condescending voice, kept for statements she thought carried the wisdom of years, for eternal truths, "we had that during

the war and didn't make a scrap of difference—you have the black market then—human nature can't be changed."

No matter how calm she tried to be her mother's tone and her arguments made her heated. She sweated in an impotent silence. Why did she bother? Was it that she often felt herself attacked unjustly by her mother and therefore defended anyone attacked by her mother?

"Cindy dear—I've been telling you all your life to heat the teapot before you make the tea. Sometimes I think you just do it to annoy."

"I don't think that in summer it makes much difference mother, I really don't."

"It's the only way to get a good hot cup of tea."

Her baby would be born into a time when granddaughters would not understand their grandmothers. Already mothers and daughters were having difficulty. Perhaps we're creating an orphan generation—no parents and no god—where had she heard that—someone in the staffroom? She corrected herself—it was not the whole world that was alienated from its parents—only the teenagers and they for only a short time. They mostly fell back and went about imitating their parents. It was the intellectually rebellious and the neurotics who went on feeding and nursing their alienation—proceeding further in the direction away from their parents. But her daughter would be freer. Her daughter would be offered more alternatives with less censure. The following of strange paths would be easier for her and she would have a mother who—if she had not gone far along the strange paths—at least understood why some people did. Or did she understand? What was so great about nonconformity? What was great about independence? But her daughter would not have to live with the emotionally gruelling voice which said, "Do you really think you are doing a wise thing?" Again, perhaps this was a useful exercise—perhaps it had value to live with a question like that. Her problem was that her judgments were hooked to values she no longer held. This was something she could help her own daughter with. The freedom to develop her own values. She had been tormented about becoming a tutor at the university instead of marrying and setting up a home. She had been tormented about her sexual behaviour. Worse she had to pretend to herself that she had no conflicts. Middle class girls make poor rebels.

"You don't seem very happy dear—was it something I said?"

Was it something she said?

"Oh I'm fine—just thinking."

"I hope you're not worrying."

Oh no.

"You'd tell me—wouldn't you?"

Tell you!

"I'm very well and everything is fine." She held back her irritation and kissed her mother on the cheek.

They sat down with their cups of tea and her mother stirred hers too long. "I don't want you worrying—not at this time."

They chatted about her aunt and her brother. Her mother washed up the cups. Her mother talked about a road accident which had killed the son of one of her friends.

"The thing which upset me most was that he was so young."

The road accident had become a folk drama for her mother—and perhaps a morality play asking "Why do we have to die and why do some have to die young?" The road accident was the unpredictable terror in an otherwise predictable society. Everyone had their accident and their escape from death. It was the idea of chaos again. The road accident had the music of chaos—the screech, the smash, the tinkle, the groan, the stuck horn, the siren. The siren was the way we announced the conflict between order and disaster.

The stories were recorded in newspapers and in photographs and court cases and they said, "We were engulfed or we were nearly engulfed. The chaos caught us or nearly caught us. We died or we survived. We will go on and we will brave the risks."

Her mother was now standing in the room, her hands on her aproned hips surveying the work she had done.

"If you do a little every day you can keep it clean. When baby comes you'll have other things to worry about too, you know."

The baby would bring chaos if you weren't careful, you know. If it was not fought with order and hygiene it would cause life smash. Her mother often treated her as if she had been in a life accident. But she saw the threat of chaos too. Perhaps she would be dragged down into chaos by dirty nappies and crying in the night.

"Please think about what father wrote to you. If only for baby's sake. The little mite should have the protection of marriage—even if you don't want it."

"What protection is that?"

"Legal protection—just in case something happened."

"What legal protection?"

"Well dear I don't like broaching these things but we have to be practical. What for instance if Roger left you—I'm not saying he ever would—but there's nothing holding him, is there?"

Her mother had sat down close beside her and had assumed a businesslike voice. A for-your-own-good voice.

"There's me and baby—what more can there be?"

"But if you married there would be a legal obligation for him to stay."

"I resent that—and it sickens me." She was calmer now but emotionally aroused. "Laws don't hold people together—they may stay together in one house, technically, but who wants that? I wouldn't want that."

"Dear Cindy—you must be sensible—it's not only yourself anymore—there's another person to think of now."

"I am thinking of my baby—I want a real relationship—not a legal document—I don't want to be able to say to baby 'look Daddy's gone but we have this certificate and ten dollars a week from the court'." Her agitation made her get up, without reason, and wash her hands. But she still had a mental confidence.

"It's much nicer to have things done properly." Her mother's voice changed, softened, and the fangs withdrew. There was a religious idea driving her mother too, but this was not mentioned.

Her mother began rubbing at a stain on the kitchen wall.

Her mother's presence in the flat suddenly insulted her. She felt that she had been aggressed against. Her mother was not offering assistance, not reach-

ing out to her daughter. She was manipulating her. She had not accepted her as a person with her own values.

"I want you to leave, Mother."

It was sudden. She was suddenly cool.

Her mother stood shocked.

"I feel that you have come here to impose yourself upon me—you don't like me—you don't like my way of life—and you interfere. I don't feel I can resist you because I am tired and weak. Please go."

"Cindy—I was trying to help you."

"Please go—I don't want to fight with you."

"We've never fought Cindy dear—we've never."

"Please leave.

"You can't talk to me, your mother, like that." Her voice was bitter, nasty and strong.

She went over and picked up her mother's coat and hat. She handed them to her mother.

"Get out."

"This is deeply, deeply hurtful to me," her mother said. Her voice lowered, a prelude to crying. Another way of manipulating people.

She remained silent. Her mother dabbed at her eyes, gathered herself. She gave her daughter a strong hard kiss.

"We'll think of you—and when you need help come to us," her mother said, knifingly.

"Go, please."

Her mother left. She closed the door and bolted it. She felt freed. She trembled. She'd always been submissive. Today for the first time she had not been submissive. She listened to her mother clacking down the stairs. She thought of the hopelessly shattered links between the three generations which had been at the afternoon tea.

Roger would be home soon. Or would he? Would this be the night he would not come home—the night he would be with some other girl? She needed Roger not to get off with other girls now—while she was pregnant—not today after her mother's visit. Her conventional breeding cried for conventional comfort. At least a make-believe security. Sad. She needed to make-believe that she was as safe as her mother. She wanted to make-believe.

She sat in her middle-class clean flat and brushed her hair for Roger. I am frightened, mother, she thought, and I do fearfully wish there was a document which would guarantee love. And if you had asked one more time perhaps I would have gone home with you mother. Perhaps I would have gone home.

Interview by John Barnes

FRANK DALBY DAVISON

FRANK DALBY DAVISON IS, in the minds of most Australians, "the author of *Man-Shy*". This distinctive tale of a bush heifer, first published in 1931, has become one of the most widely read of Australian books. Since *Man-Shy* Frank Davison has published a small but varied amount of prose writing: *The Wells of Beersheba*, 1933, a narrative of the Light Horse in Palestine; *Children of the Dark People*, 1936, a story of aborigines written for children; *The Woman at the Mill*, 1940, short stories; *Dusty*, 1946, the tale of a part-dingo dog; as well as two books of travel. His collected stories appeared in 1964 under the title of *The Road to Yesterday*, but he has published no new book for twenty years. When interviewed on his farm, "Folding Hills", at Arthur's Creek in Victoria, in February this year, for an A.B.C. schools' programme in Western Australia, Frank Davison spoke about recent unpublished work as well as *Man-Shy*. *Westerly* is grateful to the Australian Broadcasting Commission for providing a transcript of the interview from which the extracts below are taken.

J.B.

[The interview began with a discussion about the sales of *Man-Shy*.]

J.B.: I wonder how many copies have been sold over the years since 1931?

F.D.: Well, it's run through twenty-six editions, and I would say that it's getting close to a quarter of a million copies.

J.B.: Which is a very large sale for an Australian author.

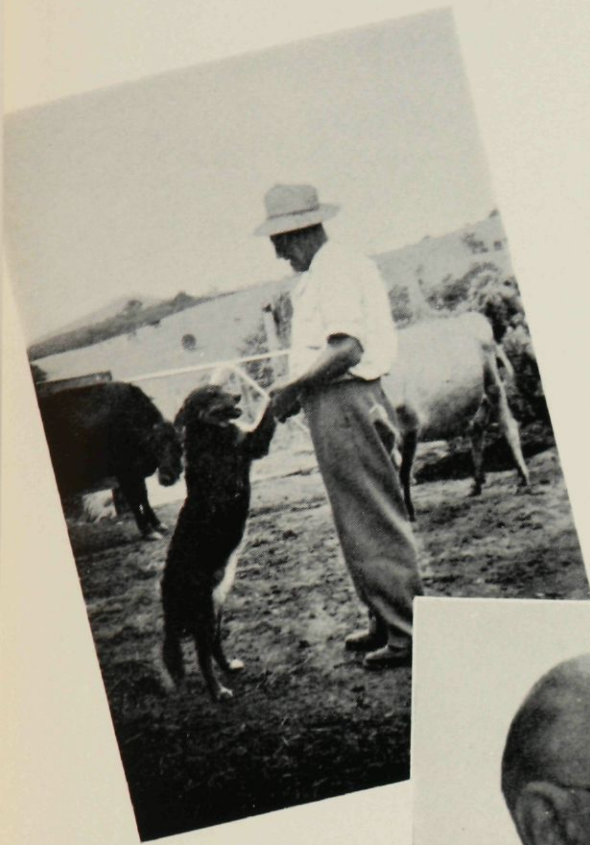
F.D.: Yes, it's a very happy fact for me.

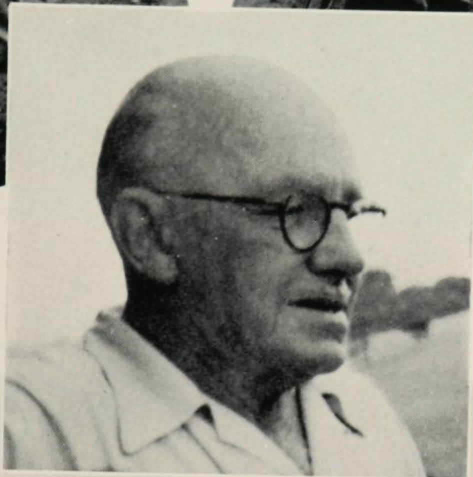
J.B.: Did Angus and Robertson publish the first edition?

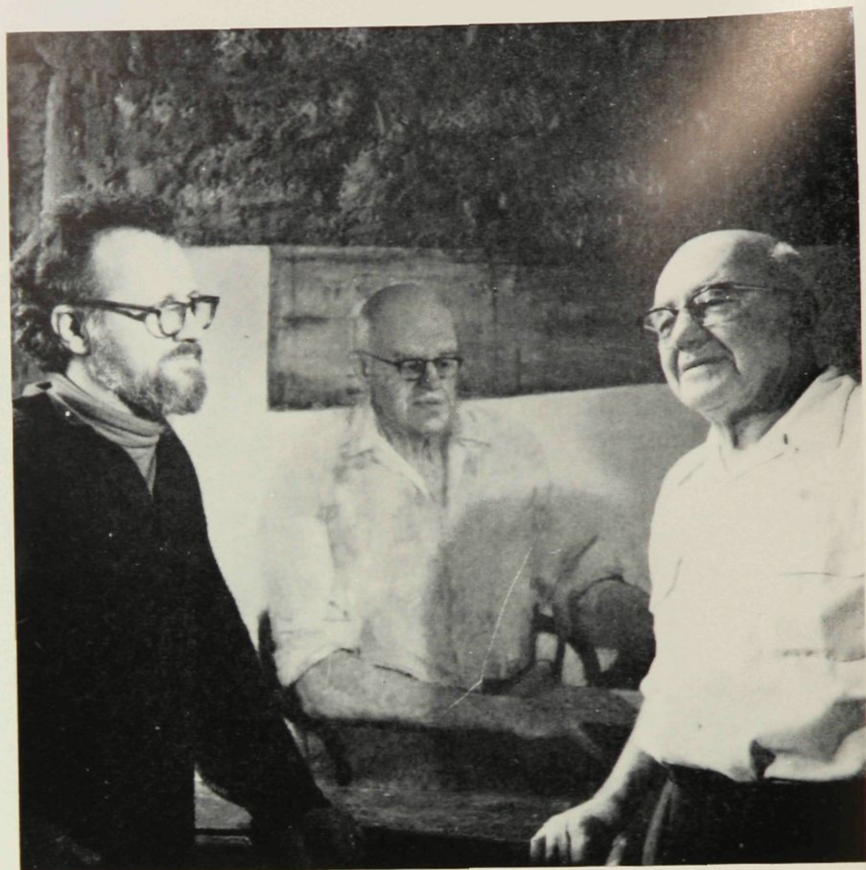
F.D.: No. The first edition . . . oh, that's quite a long story . . . it was published privately, during the Depression, and I hawked it from door to door in the suburbs of Sydney for sixpence a copy. Then it was awarded the medal of the Australian Literature Society for the best novel of the year, and Angus and Robertson took it on from that point.

J.B.: Why did you publish it yourself? How did that happen?

F.D.: Because no publisher would take it. No publisher at that time would have taken a story about a cow. They would say, "What's your book about?" "It's about a cow" "Well, we don't want to read about cows"; and nobody would look at it. The thing that went against it before it was published became a talking point after it was published. It's conversation that sells a book. People would say, "I've been reading an interesting book lately"







"What was it about?" "It's about a cow"; and that largely helped to sell it after it got started.

J.B.: Then you wrote the book sometime before 1931?

F.D.: Yes. My father was running a magazine in 1924 and he asked me to write so much a month for it. I undertook to do this, and there came a month when I had to think of some story to write. Following my usual practice in circumstances of that kind, I began casting back through my mind for some incident, something that had happened worth writing about. I recalled an incident when I was up in Queensland and I was out riding through the scrub looking for some cattle that I had lost; I stopped to roll a cigarette, and when I looked up, just a few yards away through the scrub, I saw looking at me, a most magnificent beast that didn't belong to me. That was the Red Heifer. A magnificent blood-red beast, with grey branching white horns with ebony tips, and great big eyes looking at me. I sat on my horse and she stood, watching, and then I moved, and suddenly she'd gone and all I could hear was the sound of this animal crashing through the scrub, bolting away from me. This image came before my mind, and I pondered on it a while. I knew about the scrubbers, this band to which she belonged, I'd seen their tracks in the scrub, and their tracks leading down from the ranges to water. I thought, there's a story there, and I thought: why not go back to the beginning, begin with the calf and carry it right through? That is what I did, and that is where the beginning of the book is, in the story of this calf, that developed into the Red Heifer.

J.B.: And you wrote the story in parts for your father's magazine, did you?

F.D.: Yes, I wrote it in four parts, at first. The first part was written rather factitiously; I was writing about a calf, and I was a cattleman and a cattleman takes a calf, well, as just a funny little fellow, and I wrote it rather factitiously. Then, as I got into the story, I thought to myself, "Look mate, you're on to something, you've got a story here"; and so I went ahead and began writing more seriously and became fully involved. Later when it became time to publish these four stories, out of the magazine, publish them in book form, I rewrote the earlier part in a more serious strain.

J.B.: I see. Now you look back on the book, Frank, now you look at the book as a whole, forgetting about your intentions, how do you interpret the story of the Red Heifer? Is it just a story of an animal, or is there some point in the story which you think is perhaps relevant to the readers?

F.D.: Well it's difficult to say how meaning creeps into a story. I was never one to deal in symbols. My idea is that anything a story means outside of its pure entertainment value should appear in the overtones of the writing. Looking back at that story, I can see now—I must have known instinctively at the time—but looking back now I can see that it's the story of an animal that learnt very early in life to value freedom above everything, and in the finish ended up as all creatures must, whether animal or human, who had

The photograph above left shows Clifton Pugh with Frank Davison and his recent portrait of Davison. Clifton Pugh has designed the cover for *The White Thorntree*, which was accepted for publication by the National Press, Melbourne, while *Westerly* was in the press. Other photographs were taken at "Folding Hills" by John Barnes in 1959.

those values, ended up possessing nothing else but freedom. I think that is really the essence of the story, and while I didn't write it with that intention in view, I must have known instinctively what I was about.

J.B.: You put a fair amount of yourself into the novel, in other words. Would that be true? Your own desire for freedom, your own love of being free?

F.D.: Well, perhaps it was an interpretation of my own situation at the time. Yes, there is a possibility that in some sense it was autobiographical. It could be possible.

[Frank Davidson then read and discussed passages from *Man-Shy* and "The Road to Yesterday", a short story.]

J.B.: Frank, I think that a story like "The Road to Yesterday" would tell me, even if I didn't know already, that you're a farmer or at least a man who loves all the work associated with farming. You're a farmer now, aren't you?—or a retired farmer, perhaps?

F.D.: Yes, a retired farmer now, but I've had three periods on the land. Once as a lad. I left school at the age of twelve and for the following three years I worked on farms in different parts of Victoria. That was until my father took his family, including myself, to America; and then after the First World War I had four years up in Western Queensland. Following that, I spent about twenty years in Sydney in business, in journalism, and then just towards the close of the Second World War I bought this property here at Arthur's Creek, which we named "Folding Hills", and started farming again. It's been something in my life . . . well, it got started early, and even during the years I was in the city I frequently thought of the farm and wanted to get back to the land.

J.B.: Yes, I don't think anyone reading your work would ever think of you as a city man, even though you spent twenty years in the city. Well now, Frank, how did you come to be a writer? You've done lots of things in your life; most of them seemed to have been associated with the land, with farming. How was it you came to be a writer?

F.D.: Well, I think writing and the land have been involved with my thoughts and ideas all my life. I don't really regard myself as a writer, I regard myself as a man who has written some fairly interesting work, work that others have found interesting, in the intervals of earning a living at just whatever turned up. There is a connection between the love of the land and a desire to write, in that there is no conflict between the two. For instance, if I were in the city, we'll take it that when I bought this property—it was at the close of the war—I had either to go into business or on to the land. Had I gone into business I would have been involved in selling something, not in selling soap because soap is good, but in selling Brown's soap in preference to Jones' soap, and I would not have been interested in that; in fact, I would have been distressed by it. When you come on to the land, you are producing an article for people to use, a good article, and it's not a question of trying to beat somebody else; you're simply doing something that is of value, and there's no conflict in that between writing or bathing or music; they are basic things.

J.B.: And you feel something the same way about writing: you are producing an article of value to people.

F.D.: I can at least hope that I am, and on the evidence, a number of people seem to have taken pleasure in what I'm writing; on the evidence, I have been successful.

J.B.: Well, could you say anything about how you started writing, how you began?

F.D.: Oh, I started as a small boy. In the years when I went to school—that was at the turn of the century—the school reader, the Old Royal Reader, was printed in England and had to deal wholly with English life, poetry about English life, stories of English life, and I kept thinking to myself, even as a child, even as a lad, that this was wrong, not so much wrong, but that the life around me, of my school mates and my father and his work, that, that too, should be written about. Then it so happened in about 1904 or 1905, when I was about twelve, somebody in the Education Department of Victoria had the bright idea of bringing out a monthly school paper of about sixteen pages, in which you read about growing maize down in Gippsland or you read short poems from Lindsay Gordon or Clarence Kendall, and there what I had been thinking was proved. The thing used to come out once a month, and you paid a penny for it; I would have read the lot of it within half hour after buying it. It was a great stimulus to me. I don't know the name of the man who thought of it, but he did a great service, I think, to Australian children of those years, and certainly prompted me or supported me in my idea that you look at the life around you and write about that.

J.B.: Well, that's been a fairly consistent attitude of yours, hasn't it? Throughout your writing life?

F.D.: Yes, it has been consistent, not obtrusive I hope, but it has been consistent.

J.B.: Now you're here in "Folding Hills" you've time to write. What have you been writing lately, Frank?

F.D.: Oh, I've been engaged on a very long novel entitled *The White Thorntree,* and you may think this rather a paradox, but it's set in the city and in Sydney which I haven't seen for twenty years. Yet again, when I went to write *Man-Shy* I looked back over things that had happened to me. I was then in Sydney and was looking back at my life in the bush; and now that I'm back in the country in Victoria, I look back on those twenty years I spent in Sydney and find in them the material for fiction.

J.B.: Time gives you a perspective.

F.D.: Yes, exactly.

J.B.: And have you finished *The White Thorntree?*

F.D.: Yes, I've finished it.

J.B.: But it's not yet published.

F.D.: No, I've not yet got a publisher for it. It's too large for any local publisher to take on, and I think I'll have to send it abroad, possibly to America.

J.B.: I see. And do you think this novel will change the view people have of you as a writer? I suppose at present people remember particularly *Man-Shy, Dusty* or *The Wells of Beersheba*. I suppose those are probably the three works that people think of when they hear your name. Do you feel that *The White Thorntree* will change the view people have of you as a writer?

F.D.: No, I don't think that for a minute. I've not gone outside myself. Anybody who read *Man-Shy*—say thirty years ago—picking up this new book would say that it's by the same author but has a different subject matter, and might even say that it has a basic theme.

J.B.: You feel that your work through the years has presented an essentially consistent view of life.

F.D.: I'm quite sure it has. *Man-Shy* dealt with an animal in the Queensland bush. *The White Thorntree* deals with people living in a city, and yet there's a close connection between the two.

J.B.: Despite the difference of subject matter?

F.D.: Yes, the new book is more complex. It deals with more complex subject matter, and therefore is more complex in itself, but I've not gone outside myself at any point.

J.B.: It's essentially the same man.

F.D.: The same man writing, yes.

J.B.: And what about the future, Frank? You have plans for future work?

F.D.: Yes, I have. I have now finished this long book which has taken me some years. What I would like to do is a book called "The Folding Hills". Simply the story of my life here with Marie, my wife, and our dog, Sheila. Simply a story, an autobiography, a simple story of country life and the small happenings of a farm and of the neighbourhood with, I hope, a little deeper feeling for the deeper things that happen, told in terms of their simple happenings, but proceeding out of deep feeling.

J.B.: You find living in the country a very satisfying experience?

F.D.: Yes, the most satisfying form of life I can think of. I mean, if I suddenly acquired, let us say, a million pounds, I would still stay at "Folding Hills" and be a farmer and writer.

J.B.: And I think Sheila will have a large part in the book, won't she?

F.D.: Sheila and Marie. It will be a book with two heroines who, oddly enough, won't be jealous of each other.

"The White Thorntree"

THE WHITE THORNTREE is, according to its author, "a novel of about 520,000 words—about 100 pages longer than the 'Mahony' trilogy". It was begun in 1946, just after the publication of 'Man-Shy', and has been Frank Davison's literary pre-occupation ever since. As yet no arrangements have been made for its publication.

FOREWORD

To put it briefly, my story deals with the predicament of a number of persons in a social culture—our own—in which, nothwithstanding the urgency of nature, there is no generally approved and openly arranged outlet for sexuality between the cradle and the marriage altar, and no endorsed and socially viable outlet for romantic proclivities between the marriage altar and the cemetery, nothwithstanding the known fact that the long time taken by children in growing up may easily outrun the currency of the springtime fancy to which their existence is owing.

These early and late restrictions upon natural impulse might appear to be happily acceptable to the greater part of the community, and could well be defended as constraints essential to the development of desirable personal character. They would certainly seem of value in a society in which the earning power necessary to engage in marriage is rarely reached before adulthood, and in which enduring parental relations are desirable for the welfare of children in their long journey toward maturity; but there is ample evidence that they constitute difficulties found by many persons someway irksome to endure, by some intolerable, and so damaging to character as to render our required mode of life impossible. Some of these—in adolescence or maturity—deliberately flout the conventions, either openly or furtively, while others, unable through ignorance to diagnose their difficulties as a conflict between their personal needs or desires and what is expected of them by society, just blunder painfully about, suffering their torment bewilderedly; and a significant proportion of both the dedicated rebels and the more fumbling types of social misfit eventually reach the junior courts, the reformatory establishments, the abortionist's chamber, the psychiatrist's couch, the morgue, or the criminal or divorce courts in a wide variety of sorrowful or scandalous capacities.

The unusual is contained within the customary, and my assumption—which scarcely needs arguing, I think—is that those persons who come to such ridiculous or tragic prominence are not to be thought of as over and apart from those of us who merely scan the news of them in the daily press, but as people through whom instincts known to us all have got out of hand and

come to distorted, exaggerated, or otherwise unhappy expression. I see people—men, women, adolescents, and children—as both beneficiaries and victims of the society to which they belong; and while I recognise that cultures are in constant process of modification, and that our own has undergone amazing changes within living memory, I would shrink from the responsibility of advocating this or that measure of current readjustment, and even more from seeking to point a moral. Advocacy is for the bold pamphleteer, moral exhortation for the earnest pulpiteer; your fictioneer is limited to exposition, contenting himself to tell a tale exploring the lives of a group of persons who interest him in situations which prod them into self-revealing activities—in the light by which he sees them and with what understanding he can call upon.

If an acceptable intention is needed to justify the nature and events of his story it can only be that for those for whom his subject has significance there is profit in honest investigation. My own view is that while man is by deep need a social being—and would have little more than brute existence without disciplined give-and-take among his fellows—none of the many forms of social organisation or patterns of sexual behaviour he has been driven to devise in his age-long search for personal happiness—in combination with collective viability—has ever offered more than approximate satisfaction of the complex and changing needs of every individual. Some measure of personal difficulty is therefore inherent in social living, and is the inescapable price of it. Changes in law or custom, however good and necessary as part of our communal evolution, inevitably give rise to new difficulties, for which *each* generation and *each* individual in it must attempt to find answers. It is from this thought in particular that my story takes off.

The present right of women, single or married, to earn money for themselves, together with the invention of neat and reliable contraceptives, and consequent new freedoms of thought, have given women options in experimental living undreamed of in more restricted times. The individual woman may have new concepts of herself, necessitating new concepts concerning her—so that these modern developments have obviously created—for men and women alike—as many problems as they have solved, and the consequences of new freedoms hold equally good for adolescents, whether of libertarian or disciplinarian inclination.

The White Thorntree is set in Sydney in the period between World Wars I and II. I have kept to the authentic feeling of that city in those years while not hesitating to scramble its suburban environs a little in the interests of fictional freedom, just as I have not scrupled to ignore public events or nudge them aside as often as they threatened to interfere with the flow of my narrative, nor have I paid more than the barest necessary attention to period fixings. In this I have assumed no more than the right granted a painter to liberty of design and freedom of palette in the interests of truth lurking behind fugitive appearances. My characters are mainly middle-class for the reason that middle-class domestic values and sexual mores would appear to be the dominating ones of our society—or of any foreseeable one. They are being increasingly adopted by the leaders of what are currently called the emergent nations; and they are certainly those of people of comparable position in modern Russia, where the family, as with us, is still the prime social unit, romantic attraction the approved basis of marriage, and marriage in early adulthood still widely

assumed to be a sufficient answer to the interest aroused in each other—from childhood to second childhood—by people of opposite sexes.

Like us, they leave adolescence to flounder along as best it can and, of necessity, overlook that even in an acceptably successful marriage boredom is a possibility, and sexuality may well come to seem little more than a rather stale routine.

F.D.D.

Vignettes from "The Folding Hills"

The six sketches printed below are part of a work now in progress, which will consist of "rural and literary recollections", over the period 1949 to 1957. The title is the name of Frank Davison's farm at Arthur's Creek in Victoria.

ONE OF THE FAMILY

I saved the life of a kangaroo recently: a big lonely old buck that had wandered down from his hiding place in the ranges.

It was Sunday morning, and I was giving the utility a wash down, when I noticed him grazing among the cattle on the little flat down-hill from the homestead.

At the sound of a car coming down the valley he crossed the road, clearing each of the two intervening fences as if he were airborne. He stood among the saplings and grass of the hillside, looking back.

I ws hoping that the occupants of the car hadn't noticed him; but it drew up and a weekend shooter got out, gun in hand. He took aim at the 'roo.

It was really none of my business, but I called out, "Why don't you leave him alone?"

My voice must have disturbed the shooter's aim. He missed. He looked round at me and called out with heavy sarcasm, "A pet of yours, is he?"

"One of the family," I answered with prompt mendacity. He hesitated, then got into his car and drove off.

The kangaroo had stood to the shot and shouting, but at the noise of the car grinding in low gears he made off. The last I saw of him he was crossing the grassy skyline with long, graceful bounds, headed back, I fondly hoped, for safer country.

THE GALAHS

We heard an unusual sound while at breakfast, and discovered eight galahs adorning the fence around the young orchard.

You'd have thought that an exotic creeper had sprouted and grown overnight, and was at that moment magically bursting into huge pink and pearly-grey flowers.

We rarely see galahs in the Lintonvale country. They were evidently on walkabout from the large flocks that drift like tenuous clouds through the red-gums along the Plenty River Road.

Their delight is in acrobatics. Some were climbing up and down the fence, beak-over-claw, others swung gaily head-down from the top wire, one was motionless on top of a fence-post as if he were in charge of the show, and they were muttering a galah-talk to each other all the time.

We hoped they would stay a while, and stood quietly to watch their small pageant of colour, movement, and design. But they saw us and became motionless. They held a brief consultation among themselves, then rose with their tints at full spread and winged off over the hills.

WOOD FOR THE BAKEHOUSE

They're cutting bakers' wood in the hills across the side road from our place —two cutters and a lorry driver.

All day there is a steady drumming of axes deep in the bush, and a curl of blue wood-smoke from the fire they keep going to boil their billies at smoke-o and lunch.

The creak of straining fibres as a tree is about to fall comes clearly to us across the little valley, and then the crash of the tree coming to earth.

The lorry, loaded with six tons of cut wood, has to reach the road by way of a trackless hillside as steep as the roof of a house. It is held back by low gears and hard braking, every scrap of metal making the valley echo with its protest against the weight behind it.

Marie and I watch its course with anxiety. The wood stands three feet higher than the back of the driver's cabin. If anything broke he would be buried under it.

He is a lad at the turn of his twenties, and takes the risks of his calling with disconcerting coolness. He grins and signals thumbs-up to us as his lorry lurches onto level going, and the highway to the bakehouses of Melbourne.

MAN AND DOG

It is nightfall, and time to turn the milked cows out into the main paddock. I go across to open the slip-rails, calling, "Come along, everybody!" in tones reminiscient of a military parade ground, while Sheila disappears into the gathering darkness to make sure I am obeyed.

The evening is still and clear. I see distantly the lights of a car coming over the downs from Yan Yean, hoof-beats from down on the road tell of a passing horseman while, from directly overhead, come the plangent voices of plover circling in to their nesting place.

From behind me come the cattle in obedience to a small drover as yet invisible to me. They pass out quietly, in single file, their breath sweet on the air and their big heads swinging like dark tongueless bells.

There should be twenty, but there are only eighteen. Sheila can't count, but she understands the situation when I again raise my voice. She once more disappears into the night and, within a minute, the two stragglers come in sight with a little dog trotting closely behind.

"You're a good dog," I tell her as I put up the rails. "The best dog in the district, if I'm any judge of things!"

Sheila's knowledge of English—though better than her arithmetic—is less than human, but she fully understands tones of praise and approval when she hears them. As we make our way houseward we celebrate the success of our task in a pretended boxing match, I gently cuffing her head, first on one side and then the other, she barking, growling, and leaping to seize my hand with a soft mouth whose teeth, when she wishes it, can crack a bone an inch thick. And so we come in shared fun and affection to the lighted kitchen, the close of day, and the meal Marie has ready for each of us.

SPEEDING THE SOIL

I have been nourishing the earth today; drifting back and forth across the green hillsides behind the phosphate spreader, with Kate's bay haunches swinging rhythmically before me and the smell of her sweat giving a healthy tang to the cool air.

Where our wheels pass the trefoil will be lush in due season, and the grazing cattle sleek and content.

We come and go between fence and fence with a rhythm as sure as the turn of the seasons.

It is a jewel of a day. The chill winds are temporarily stilled, and the grey clouds dispersed. The scattered homesteads, and the green hills that roll fold on fold to the foot of the misted ranges are basking luxuriantly under a mild winter sun.

There is time, now and then, to pause briefly; Kate for a well-earned breather, I to light a smoke and lift my eyes to the world about me.

The sun's arc is short at this season, and there is much ground to cover. It is not long before I gather up the reins, and on we go, each taken up with our thoughts.

Kate's are doubtless on the tub of feed that will come with sundown, and the clink of falling trace-chains, while I reflect contentedly upon my task.

There are many ways in which a man might be spending his time less satisfactorily than speeding the good earth towards a plentiful spring-time.

THE TWO JOHNNIES

Two schoolboys from Collingwood, both named Johnnie, spent a weekend camping and tramping in the Lintonvale country. At twilight on the Sunday they thumbed a lift in a truck.

The truck ran off the road near our place, and turned wheels-over-bonnet into the creek.

None of the seven passengers was injured or drowned, but in the upshot the two Johnnies had to spend the night with us, to be dried out, warmed, fed, and bedded. They came to the belated meal wrapped in blankets while their clothes dried before the fire.

They were much impressed that a mishap had given them the importance of needing rescue, and care for the night under a strange roof. The first shock had departed, and the reaction was wildly joyous; the table rang to the story of their hairbreadth escapes.

Not a detail of the accident but was explored for its element of slapstick humour or breathless suspense.

Even after Marie had sent them to bed in my pyjamas we could hear them congratulating each other on the eminently satisfactory conclusion to their weekend. They had also been scanning my bookshelves and discovered my identity.

I learned this when I went to bid them goodnight and remove the lamp. One of them called to me in a whisper hoarse with a sense of drama: "Hey, Mr Davison! You could make a story out of us!"

OLD WIVES' SONGS THREE

Many the man has danced
His way between my feet,
The sad old fierce and shabby dance
For man and his woman is fit.

Many the boy who measured
His manhood in my flesh;
The sad old fierce and shabby measure,
Its every inch I confess.

Many the elderly kinned
Close to a deep-dug throng:
The sad old fierce and shabby kin
Have their place in my song.

Boy, man, and the old man
I warmed to my body's fire—
The sadly fierce, the shabbily old,
Breathed falsehoods in my ear.

All, and again all, I have said
I shall go with, under ban.
Sad, old, fierce and shabby I have
Known turnabout in my man.

KENDRICK SMITHYMAN

from Wyndham

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ADVICE TO AN INTERPLANETARY VISITOR

When you find him,
that last citizen,
hiding wherever there is left to hide,
too timid to surface,
living on nuts or whatever was at hand
when the flash came
—be kind to him, comfort him,
break the news to him gently
that he is the sine qua non, the ultimate reason
for everything.

Let him walk where he will,
let him reassure himself with trees, yes, and the light
walking between them, let him listen
to waters conversing like children, the rain
telling its secular tears, let him lose himself
in what was, roaming
the city streets where wires hang
like ganglia, let him touch things
and remember. Soon enough
logic may cross his brow
like an evil shadow.

When you find him
—give him your alien kindness,
stroke him with feelers of love.

BRUCE DAWE

Patrick Hutchings

HERE, NOW, THINGS PRESENT

Ray Crooke's Landscapes

RAY CROOKE'S[1] recent exhibition at the Skinner Gallery in Perth had a double interest: Crooke made in this show, as he always does, an important contribution to '. . . the discovery and definition of Australia [which] will be a most fruitful and necessary artistic activity for a long time to come',[2] but the precise *mode* in which he made this contribution has a peculiar interest of its own.

The landscape concern expresses itself in a kind of sharp-focus realism which, though it has a naturalistic basis in the high, hard light of the Australian outback, goes beyond the purely representational into a new mode. Exact, precise, and hyper-realism are not merely kinds of realism, they are something more again; and to consider them merely as variations on a simply-conceived *mimesis* is to miss this something more, and to miss their point.

Crooke's paintings are full of the feeling of place and of the presence of things, and this is no doubt why Hillary Merrifield in her review of the exhibition compared them to Wyeth's:[3] one may agree with Miss Merrifield that there are grounds for this comparison, but stop a little short of it. Certainly:

> There is a dream-like, almost magical, quality about his landscapes, which are peopled by figures who seem to move in a trance, or are immobilised by loneliness.[4]

But neither the magic nor the technique is Wyeth's: they are on the same scale, but not at continguous points of it. Nevertheless, being on the same scale is the important thing.

Crooke paints in oil, not in tempera, and his focus is not by any means as exquisite as Wyeth's, but it *is* sharp, and for the same general kind of reason. Crooke is concerned to assert the being-here-now of objects: specifically of the few objects in a wide empty landscape. He is determined to squeeze the last ounce of being out of what is there in the great, blank, unwelcoming space.

Crooke's technique is less extreme, and less fine, than Wyeth's, but his problem is an even more pressing one: to assert the presence of human artifacts and habitations that have not only, as they have in America, a low temporal or historical density, but a low spatial one too. Americans are haunted by the comparative modernity of the culture of their continent: Australians share this concern, and have another one of their own, to assert human presence in these large spaces, inimical or indifferent to it.

Sharp focus as a means to what one might call ontological or perhaps existential assertion—one has in mind Heidegger's notion of being as the being-to-hand of what is—comes out pre-eminently in *Main Street, Normanton* (plate I), where the pub, seen from the shade of a verandah,[5] is etched, and burns itself on to the retina, against an almost intolerable light: the building and the light fight to dominate the *place*, and place is defined by this presence and this conflict.

This place is put on the map, literally and figuratively, by the small undistinguished group of buildings which give it all the human meaning it has.

The 'feel' of space is established, almost paradoxically, by the inexorable rush and convergence of the acute perspective of the verandah: and the picture is lit so that one looks out from the shade towards the little group of buildings which is all that stands between the viewer and a limitless horizon, whose flat tedium is still felt through this fragile screen. Even if one is not a painter, things are seen in such circumstances, very clearly: there is nothing else to look at.

Crooke looks particularly hard at all there is, and we may feel, standing in front of his canvas, a kind of tactile, kinaesthetic, involvement with the situation pictured: we could walk from the verandah to the pub, from the pub to the verandah, and there is nowhere else to go.

A preciosity of vision and of technique is quite in order here, where what there is in the landscape is precious little: precious, because there is so little of it.

The sharp focus can be less dramatic, and more 'classical', as in *Men on Beach* (plate V), where there is the sad, grave, grey self-containment that one finds quintessentially in Corot, but a little of the existential, ontological 'feel' is still there. And it is there quite highly developed in the background of the picture *Normanton* (plate VI), where the pub is asserted, as in *Main Street*, but set against a man on a horse, romantic, mythological, and ultimately out of Nolan: the horseman and the pub each have a different 'feel', and one's reaction to the picture tends to be equally ambivalent. But perhaps this distraction of emotion is intended.

Precision of vision can triumph even in a looser oil technique, as in *Croydon, Cape York* (plate IV), the point about this picture is essentially in its double focus, the landscape is panoramic and relatively hazily defined, while the little shanty and the tank are fixed, and firmly painted, and set in the centre of the ideal-observer's retina. This picture provides us, perhaps, with a suggestion for 'placing' Crooke more exactly in relation to the North American realists than does the Wyeth comparison: Crooke's *Croydon* has something of the double focus of Peter Hurd's[6] *Forgotten House*, or his *Ranch on the Pecos*. And Hurd, in general, provides a closer comparison, though his realism, both of vision and of technique—he is essentially a tempera painter—is more extreme and precise than Crooke's. Hurd is always closer to a pure hyper-realism than is Crooke, and his placing of objects in a landscape can sometimes generate surrealist overtones: Crooke's realism, and his placings, are always objective, but like Hurd's they are intentionally and intensionally assertive. *This is what is here.*

The softness of oil paint surfaces sometimes seems to make nonsense of the Wyeth and the Hurd comparisons, and by strict contrast with the North

American realists, precise and sharp-focused to the point of edginess, Crooke is still virtually a romantic realist trailing faint mists of impressionism. But an internal comparison within Crooke's *oeuvre*, between the Australian and the Fijian paintings in this exhibition, bears out the pointfulness of the American analogies. In the Fijian scenes looseness triumphs, and we get romantic, colourful, rather lush pictures, whose concern is decorative rather than existential. Fiji is someone else's country, and it can be simply picturesque where Australia, for Crooke, can not be.

This difference in the feeling, tone, technique and meaning of the picture, is highly instructive, and we have only to place side by side a Fijian scene, such as *Women in Taro Garden* (plate III) and an Australian one, here *Cape York Home* (Plate II) to see how differently the painter feels about the presence of objects and people in the two landscapes. Fiji is all a pattern of lush green leaves, with two tiny figures, themselves mere patterns, providing an accent in the top centre of a decorative composition: Australia is all empty space, and between the observer and the emptiness there lies an inadequate screen of straggly trees, meticulously painted, and a rough track leading to a house: before the house two tiny figures are placed assertively, posed as for a photograph: 'Look at us, we are here.' These people are not part of a pattern, they are the point of an affirmation: we are here, and the objects which give meaning to our being here and to which ultimately we give meaning, they are here too. The Australian figures reassure themselves about their own presence in a way in which the two quite detached Fijian women do not.

Crooke is using a basically realistic idiom, heightened in the direction of extreme or precise realism, not merely to add to the number of 'genuine hand-painted views of Australia'—that does not matter—but to make a comment, affective and painterly and by no means verbal, but a comment nevertheless, on the presence of the Australian in the thin, dry, inhospitable parts of his continent. Most of us don't live there at all of course, but between the places where we do live, there is often a great deal of that kind of place, and what is between and around our cities bears subtly but ineluctably on them, on how they feel, and how they are for us.

In Crooke's world the painterly idiom and the landscape concern come together in a whole vision, a 'view', of our being here, present, with things, in a landscape.

[1] Ray Crooke was born at Auburn, Victoria in 1922; served in the Army in the Second World War; studied art at Swinburne Technical College, Melbourne; he worked as an illustrator in Melbourne and Sydney, and later as a teacher; he lives in North Queensland. The Exhibition of twenty-two paintings at the Skinner Gallery, Perth, 15-25 August, 1967, was of Australian and Fijian landscapes.

[2] *Antipodean Vision*, Melbourne, Cheshire, 1962, cf the essay on Contemporary Australian Painting by Daniel Thomas, p. 23.

[3] 'Queensland Painter Captures the Outback', by Hillary Merrifield, *West Australian*, Wednesday, 16 August, 1967, p. 16.

[4] cf. Merrifield, loc. cit.

[5] cf. Merrifield, loc. cit.

[6] *Peter Hurd: a portrait sketch from life* by Paul Horgan, Austin, University of Texas Press, 1965, cf. plates pp. 44 and 48 (facing).

Main Street, Normanton, 9" x 12".
Oil on masonite.
Collection: Mr. R. K. Kornweibel.

Cape York, Home, 9" x 12".
Oil on masonite.
Collection: Mr. and Mrs. J. M. Gild.

Women in Taro Garden, 24" x 36".
Oil on masonite.
Collection: Mr. and Mrs. J. M. Gild.

Croydon, Cape York, 45" x 25".
Oil on masonite.
Collection: Mr. and Mrs. D. Paterson.

Men on Beach, 9" x 12".
Oil on masonite.
Collection: The Rev. Dean J. Bell.

Normanton, 18" x 12".
Oil on masonite.
Collection: Dr. and Mrs. Nugent.

Christina Beggs

A DIMINISHED SEVENTH

It must have been nearly half past eight by the time I got back to the apartment, and my ears were still beating. Not loudly. More like the continuous echo of a louder sound. It had been a smooth flight and the plane was pressurized. Yet the drumming was there, constant, melancholy, as if I was hearing the sound of the engines pounding far-off, as one hears the sea in a shell.

It was dark in the passage-way. I fumbled around in the bottom of my purse, then slipped the key in the lock and turned. There was no click and the door swung open silently. So the caretaker had oiled the hinge at last.

The apartment was cold and quiet. I switched on a light and took my suitcase into the bedroom, then went out to the kitchen to fix myself a drink. A good stiff one.

Everything was cramped and familiar. It was a small apartment and rather dull, all creamy white and elephants' breath. Yet I was fond of it in an offhand way. Home, now, and a refuge. Ever since the divorce . . .

The divorce was inevitable. Our marriage was a *concerto grosso* for two solo instruments and the orchestra of life. But we played so badly it had to end. No rhythm. No harmony. Sharp. Flat. A concerto of confusion in three movements—*lento, vivace, prestissimo.* Discord was the dominant chord. He hated music. Then came the end, the coda, the seventh year . . .

The brumm brum brumm continued in my ears, in time, out of time, syncopated, saturated with strange staccato sounds. Air travel can affect the ears. Everyone says so. Click and crackle going up and down. People can even go deaf! Don't be morbid. Brumm brum brumm.

I mixed myself a brandy-and-dry and wandered into the sitting-room to relax and drink it. The transistor was on the table beside me. I turned it on and twiddled the dial around for some music. But no station came through clearly. Just a tangled static of noise. Must get a new battery.

For years I had had a morbid fear of going deaf. *Mon idée fixe.* Even since my bad ear trouble. Ears are so important. The deaf are cut off from the world in a way in which the blind never are. They can't communicate anymore. Oh, if only this drumming would stop!

I took my glass back to the kitchen and put it on the ledge beside the sink. Then I turned to look for a knife behind me on the bench. But I felt something catch my sleeve. I spun back to see what it was, and there, smashed to a thousand pieces on the floor, was my brandy glass!

Strange. How very strange. I didn't hear a thing.

A cold knot deep in my stomach. Not a sound. I didn't hear a sound. Was it possible . . .

I looked quickly left to right around the room then rushed over to the kitchen door, grabbed it by its big brass handle, and slammed it shut.

Bang!

Yes, there was a bang, not piercing, but the sound did bounce off somewhere deep in my head, intermingled with the brumm brum brumm.

In my head. I heard it in my head! Perhaps that was the only place in which I had heard it. Imagination can play fearful tricks, and I did know the exact sound to expect. Could I only have heard the noise because I expected to hear it? In my head? Not through my ears at all?

I bent down to pick up the shattered remains of the brandy glass. Clink, clatter, swish with a cloth. Clunk in the rubbish tin. Yes, I heard it all. Or did I only hear it in my mind because I expected to hear it? Seven years married, and now alone . . .

Neurotic, he called me at the hearing. And maudlin. A maudlin maenad. How dare he! Incompatible indeed. He said I'd been seduced by sound. All sound, not just music. A kind of monomania . . .

But I definitely heard that door bang through the drumming in my ears. And if I listened hard I could hear other sounds, too. The traffic groaning away *sotto voce* in the distance; the tick of the clock next door in the sitting-room; the dim clack of my shoes on the kitchen floor, the harsh staccato cry of a wattle bird.

In the city? Nine o'clock at night?

I looked around. There was a picture of a wattle-bird on the calendar behind the door. In my head again. But I heard it as clear as a bell! What bell? Brumm brum brumm. I poured myself another drink then went back into the sitting-room to check on the gold clock on the mantle-piece. Three-thirty, it said . . .

The knot of fear tightened in my stomach. I was hearing too much. I *must* be going deaf.

Deaf? But I thought deafness meant hearing nothing. Yet if I listened hard I could hear whatever I wanted. Anything. Just by taking thought! An orchestra tuning up for a performance; the thunder of applause; someone chopping wood; the high-pitched jabber of a cocktail party; "Cocky wants a drink. scratch Cocky;" the squeal of tyres; the sea retching on the shore; a lone violin; "Here beginneth the second lesson . . ." I could hear anything. Just by taking thought! It was a new game for the deaf to play. See who can hear the most sounds. A crazy game. Instant noise. Ooze, froth, gurgle, fizz. A splendid game. Screech, snarl, twitter, coo. Brumm brum brumm. Don't panic. relax now. Try to relax . . .

I knew I should go straight to bed, take a pill, and sleep heavily till morning. Anything to escape this distorted half-world of unreality. But I was unable to move, mesmerized by the horror of it all; frozen in fear, listening to the thousand boundless resounding sounds pounding round my head. Hell is not fire and brimstone. It is infinite sound.

The beating in my head was growing louder and louder, vibrant, booming, in concord, discord, a total atonal toccata, fortissimo; a scale diminished, the

diminished seventh. A new game, oh horror, to play alone. And deaf. Have I gone mad? Brumm brum brumm. If only this beating would stop. My head will explode! Seven years together, a diminished seventh. And now stone deaf. Slam that door again and be certain. Slam it good and hard!

The door hung half-open in front of me, taunting, insolent. Minutes lept by, became hours and disappeared, as the panic began to harden and take hold; an icy fist clenching. No! No! No! Not me! Not *deaf*! Stone deaf! No! No! Stop looking at that door. Stop! Don't move. Be calm now, try to be calm . . .

With thunder in your ears?

Then something snapped. I lept up from the sofa, ran across to the door and slammed it shut.

Bang! In my head.

More panic. I grabbed a white china vase from the book-case and hurled it at the wall. Crash! In my head! The beating was booming louder and louder, BRUMM BRUM BRUMM. A china angel next from the mantle-piece, smashed on the floor; then an antique plate. I was rushing around the room grabbing, throwing, screaming, madness gaining momentum; an ash-tray and a candle-stick shattered on the floor; two glasses splintered, blood on my hands, diminished, demented; stop, beating! Stop! STOP!

Suddenly a new noise. From a great distance. It cut through my fit. Burr burr. Burr burr.

The telephone! Dear God, the telephone. I had forgotten all about it. I rushed over to the small round marble table which held the telephone. This, the supreme test. Panting. Terrified. "HULLO?"

"Oh, hello Paddy. Glad you're back. Good flight? . . . Hello? Are you there? . . . Is that you crying? . . . Paddy, why are you crying?"

THE TRIBE OF WHATEVER

And God denounced us;
wished he'd never made us;
relished his plans to wipe us out;
not only us, but every other
creeping flying creature too.
   Because the earth
was filled with violence,
He learned its terms
and practised violence upon it.
Logical enough for some.

But we came through—
a trifle damp, muddy to the eyebrows,
tired with swimming
all the way from Alice Springs
to the pinnacles of Ararat.
   We grumbled at the long delay
before the flood drained back
to manageable oceans,
and at the long walk home
we had then to brave.

Even so, we struck our camp,
dug the embers in, whistled up
our wives and dingoes,
and set out via Egypt,
Sumer, India,
   and round the borders
of the Chinese Empire
(someone gave us questionable maps).
The rumours of a landbridge
kept us going.

We found this new phenomenon
had halved the sea
and, though occasionally narrow as a dyke,
it held good all the way
to Weipa Mission.
   We'd returned from our escape
to bear the wrath of God
(by plague or by invasion)
and wrote our sign
      None may
      Open the
      Ark of
      Hope

RODNEY HALL

LEGEND

His mountain (marrow for the sky's bone)
kept for itself the mysteries of height.
No one had ever climbed so far, it seemed.

As a boy, he invented legends
for his descendants—how he was first
to scale the peak and know the never-known.

As a youth, he kissed his family
and zipped himself in mountaineering furs
until he looked more animal than human.

Then he climbed, the whole impossibility
of what he'd started teased his nerves
like death. And yet he climbed.

When he reached the final parapet of ice
and crawled triumphantly upon it,
his tears of disillusion began to melt the mountain.

RODNEY HALL

Graeme Kinross Smith

THE MAN FIGURE

THERE WAS A SHRIEK from further away among the tree-trunks, and then lonely, chopped, ancillary shouts, in the Asian way. A quick rattle of fire. That was the devil of it; you could never see.

There it was again, the small arms snarling, millions of leaves and branches muffling the sound, jumping on it to stifle any echo. The leaves above glistened and dripped a pat to the ground here and there. Pat. Sounds without sight, coming from the wastes of vegetation.

The thatch of the first couple of huts was sheer like silver where the high sun caught its wetness. The first group were obviously in the village now. They were probably probing the cooking pots already, kicking in screens, meeting the lip-biting blankness of women's faces and the slow, malicious shuffle of the old men, the proportioned brown chests of little children.

Jim shifted his boot off a white-fleshed root to even his balance as he squatted. The root rose stickily again from the wet, red earth. But his rifle nuzzled a tuft of coarse grass that didn't give with his weight, and its resistance rocked him gently back on his heels as he moved. So he set about making himself more at ease with gritted elaboration. First he put out a hand to steady, then leaned back on aching hams to disengage the rifle, and make sure that the pack sweated to his back was clear of the branches behind. He heaved to his feet, his eyes rising through the leaf layers like a lift frantically skipping floors. He felt a surge of the age-old stealth in his body as it straightened.

No sooner was he erect, than there was the polite cough of a mortar. Not far away either, somewhere in the shiny, see-nothing leaves and fronds to the right of the village. He crouched again, hams renewed, heart thumping. There must be a few of them there; more than anyone had thought. He shrugged his mouth to himself with resignation and fear. He thrust the rifle forward, checked that the catch was off, and nestled head and neck into the floppy forage cap. He waited.

The earth seemed to buck, and there was a flash of broad daylight just down the hill, not seventy-five yards away. The foliage rippled madly near it, twitched like a dancer's skirt, and then was still. Leaves toppled slowly past the soldier's face. It was not to be, his voice grated to him inside. Not routine. It was more than just a cache of rice this time. His mind revolted against it; the madness, the activity. But he knew from the past, and from thinking too much of the brown vulnerable children, and the bloody, ingenuous

legs of the dead. He knew the only answer was to embrace it, and hope. The trees and the shadows were too lonely otherwise. You had to open arms to it, in a swallow dive of fear, a committal from which there was no retraction.

God, what was happening? Shouts. There were more shouts and the quick bursts of small arms. There it was, the polite cough. And he was waiting for the shell again, waiting blind. He couldn't take the loneness of his job in those seconds of silence. The sudden absence of noise seemed to leave everything more vulnerable. If he could get closer? No, he couldn't. He was to close the gap. Pick off anything that moves, they told him. Pick it off.

There it was. Crump and bang afterwards, and the cringing of the jungle. The exploding shell, further away, seemed to keep more to itself this time. But surely the enemy would pull out now. One hut was already alight in the village, sending up a sluggish twist of smoke, as the drier walls started to catch. Surely they'd go. He stood up. The blood hammered in his stomach and crutch. Surely they'd go. He stood up, slowly, thinking of the enemy as he sometimes dreamed of him. A running figure, trim, with dogged economy of movement, running, coming, inexorable, face thrust forward. Sometimes in snatches of sleep he dreamed of smashing those faces, those ovals of threat. His mind turned the idea up to him now, but it wasn't as possible as it had seemed. No, he told himself, it couldn't be done. There wasn't the same feeling of impregnability while you destroyed. Not the same satisfaction as in a dream. There would always be at least one face to threaten, to come on.

So that when the foliage leaned and thrashed to his right, and the thrust-forward face appeared, he was not quite quick enough for his own individual enemy. He saw the head and shoulders come, saw the arms and rifle, saw the figure scrambling, panting, intent, close; and saw right into the circles of fear in the eyes of the young man as he fired at the exposed unready body. He felt the rifle pulse quickly with his shots, saw them punch the side of the shirt before his eyes, saw the slim man spun sideways, wrenched, but hunched over the flashes of fire coming from his hip. Then the enemy seemed to tear headlong into Jim's stomach, redly, his young face turned upward and there was the sound of a thousand tendons rending painfully, and red, and black, and the opening of white light, and Jim hurtled towards it, beyond it, carrying the man's face with him, reeling deep into blackness.

All the world was moaning. Slowly, deeply. Each new moan eclipsed the last with its dry, terrible, more deeply descending sound. The world seemed red and insistent around his head. And the voices were trying to persuade him, coming very close to his face, so that he could detect the soft click of the tongue in the whispers. Jim couldn't tell what they were so earnest about, the voices close to his ear. But the more they tried to make him accept it, the more firmly he refused, pursing his lips, drawing his head down and away from it. Away from that red insistent world that was not delirium, but reality. Down, away, straining; his throat was taut and trembling with the effort. The moaning, too, surged in again, full of little slow trills of self-pity and pain; the pain of his death wounds traced a picture of shrieking muscles, rent flesh, and dried blood, waiting to be cracked . . .

As he watched the lines of pain flush in his body, he thought he saw paper, and the ball-point of pain was there, biting into it deeply, making a trench.

Sometimes the red ball-point coloured the trench, and it was smooth. But here and there it missed. Oh God, it kept missing, digging the trench dry, off and on, off and on, rasping dry . . .

But no. He was doing the drawing, he was gouging the trench. His nose was running along, crossing the paper, and the paper became ground. His nose ran along the hardened summer clay and dug the trench painfully, his eyes following. Sometimes all ran smooth and red, as his eyes watched the handiwork. But then the softness of his nose struck stones, one after another, and then another. His nose hurt itself on them, became bloody, hit each one with an explosion—he saw arms and earth thrown up, and boughs wincing. It hit each one with a flaring red explosion of pain. The dry grass beside the trench smelt of dew on straw, and his nose bled, the pain explosions flared, and his body buoyed up in the air and glided small and helpless after his nose. His boots moved smoothly, and the trees slipped past them, above, like black cauliflowers against the sky. Still there was a throbbing, and flushes of pain in his side, as though a great cavern of decay was aching there. Perhaps he was rotting already, as the pain dulled. He felt detached from it, strangely, although it was always with him. Throb, throb it went, with an outbreak of red lines, but fewer explosions.

And then—out of it. He was gliding, nose bleeding smoothly and redly now. No stones. Just one trench of red, lubricated with blood, and smooth. No explosions; simply the line of deep blood in the trench, singing unbroken. A single red note, of pure pain. He felt serene. Raising his eyes, he looked up through a vase of thick glass to the sky. The trees clustered at the glass edge, waving at its rim. Looking down on him, they wavered, swayed, and reeled round a blue pool of sky.

But suddenly, the trees became fixed. He remembered now the morning, with a tinge of mist on the paddy. There he had buckled his pouches down on the rations. And the men of the company had walked off, single file, through the paddy, stepping into the grass, and into the trees. The men had drifted dangerward into the trees, weapons forward, approaching the village. Jim had prayed that this would be the last. He had prayed for home . . .

(The rim of the glass burned red again across his recollection. He was going again, losing himself in the pain, watching the red as it drew him back into the cycle.) But forcing himself to follow the red line, he found that he was watching for anything that moved, stepping through the trees, following the soft pad of leaves, just as he had in the morning. His rifle pointed from the hip, swivelling from his hip, its snug parts and breach and magazine glazed dully with use and efficiency. The gun was nice, and comforting, and nasty.

But differences struck him; it wasn't the same as it had been in the morning. The village, seen through the vegetation, seemed nearer and more dangerous, surrounded by the inhospitable green. He knew that it would require the utmost in stealth and cunning. He must pick off anything that moved. Sure enough, he found himself alone. The others had vanished. It was up to him, he realized, lonely. He pushed on, and found himself on the edge of the village clearing, where segments of sky broke through the trees; the sunlight washed across the thatch and the bamboo walls of the nearest hut. But strange, he told himself, it's evening light. That, too, was different. He faded into the undergrowth beside the pad, eyes alert for any movement. Don't break cover, don't break

cover, his voice repeated. The utmost in cunning, but don't break . . . his whole skin prickled as it did when he used to play hidey in the streets at home, and someone came near to finding him.

As he looked out, his eyes suddenly lighted on two children. He felt an uneasiness clutch him. Why hadn't he noticed them before? There they were, playing, with no attempt at concealment, heads together, and their small voices sounding reedy among the tree-trunks. They were singing slowly as they squatted on the side of a mound of earth. They were cupping the earth's dampness in their hands, compressing it into little spines which they planted methodically on the contours of the pile. He watched, delight and fascination growing. The children's tongues were working with happy concentration. The longer he watched, and the more the children's voices were lost in the golden light that sifted into the plantation, the more his mind settled and warmed. It was an unsought revelation, like looking up from a book to see the colour in the world.

Then someone was coming. A figure through the trees. It didn't make any sound, and the children played on. But the older one looked up. She smiled with delight and scrambled to her feet, spreading her arms towards the man who stepped into the light. He ran smiling a few paces, and scooped her against his shirt, his other arm gathering the little boy. Soundless. The children left their earth, and walked with the young man to the hut. And the watcher saw, as he passed, the face he had seen before, the eyes his fearful eyes had looked into. It was the young man he had killed. Jim watched, torn with a great relief, that almost made his knees buckle. The young man had come home. And there was the man's wife, a white presence shuffling from the hut, half bowing with happiness. She took his hand in hers as he steered the children forward, and came to his arms. Jim watched, his head waving with deep emotion. He stepped out to follow the little family, his heart warm and rested. He took two steps, but could go no further. There was a hand on his shoulder, and an unexplained clink of metal against metal. He turned, shrugging his shoulder away impatiently, and found himself looking into the blue eyes of the Captain. Behind, standing among the trees, faces expressionless, stood other men. The Captain said nothing. He simply shook his head in denial, turning his mouth down, and jerked a thumb over his shoulder to indicate the pad away from the village. His soundless movements had the air of absolute inevitability. Jim looked back to the village, and as he did so, the graven-faced soldiers began to move past on either side, guns at the ready, towards the first hut. Jim half-turned in puzzlement, seeking the Captain's face for an explanation. It carried a little twist of annoyance, he found. The Captain was put out, to see that Jim had noticed.

What were they going to do, the grim soldiers? A dread seized him. He tried to think, but all he could see was the tragic hopefulness of the little spines of earth on the mound where the children had played. He knew what the soldiers would do . . .

"I think I can break silence now," the Captain's voice broke in breezily. "Come home first though, and then I'll explain."

Jim, still carrying a queaziness of foreboding, fell into step with the Captain, and they started to walk back along the pad. But the track soon began to widen; Jim couldn't recall this part of it at all. Bewildered, he pushed on beside the Captain, who marched stolidly, blowing a bit. The trees moved

past their heads, and the pad widened, and suddenly they stepped on to concrete. Jim felt helpless as the surroundings played these tricks. He looked across. The Captain was smiling at him.

"You see," he said. "We're nearly there."

Now the concrete ran on, and the trees and the earth were gone. Jim found himself in a sunlit concrete street. As far as he could see, people peppered the footpaths. Houses of expensive brick peeped from the trees, and cars and delivery vans flitted past. The street seemed interminable, narrowing into hazy perspective. Walls of glass glinted along it, and cars were parked, tier on tier of grills and bumpers, in modern buildings of concrete and tile here and there.

They passed shops full of goods—bright enamel, and chrome, timing devices of shining ingenuity, whole windows of sweets and chocolates, panoramas of posed clothing, or shoes and silks, and cuff links.

"Now that we're home," the Captain was saying, reaching into the pocket of his tunic for cigarettes, "we'll be able to see things in perspective. Business is booming, isn't it!"

The Captain strutted on, shaking a cigarette from the pack, and clapping it into his mouth with a serious look. All traces of his previous uncertainty were gone. His lighter flared, and he pulled hard on the cigarette, creasing his brows earnestly with the sheer hard work of manliness, before he let the smoke trickle out and threw his head back to expel the last of it.

Still they passed shop fronts, where music spilled from loud-speakers. Still the Captain smoked, and his assured silence preyed on Jim's mind. If only he could make some sense of it all—but immediately he thought that, it did seem eminently sensible.

The cars purred past, dragging their reflections with them across the plate glass windows. Immaculate young men demonstrated machines to clusters of shoppers who stood as if in homage with the thrill of merchandise in their nostrils. Children clutching transistors burrowed among the adults.

"Ah," said the Captain. "It's good to be home."

But Jim said nothing. He looked at the concrete, the glass, the asphalt, but could see no soil. No wet earth, no bare earth rasped by dust, no cringing grass. But across the street, men wearing goggles drove yellow equipment in a patch of scarred earth. Jim's eyes seized on the one green tree growing there. Even as he watched, the blade of a machine struck the tree a blow. It staggered, inclined, and Jim felt sure that it would pass under the blade unscathed. But no; teeth coming behind crudely grabbed it, pulling its supple strength from the ground. Jim turned, sickened, to face a window full of artificial flowers, tastefully arranged. Here and there white wrought-iron announced itself. And beyond the flowers, deeper in the showroom, was a car. The richness of its exterior transmitted light and movement; its interior was delicately lit and leathered.

Jim's attention was taken by a bird, a mudlark, lost in this world of metal, gold and parquetry, confused, but still tiredly sallying at its reflection in the lustrous doors and hubcaps. As Jim watched, its efforts were growing feebler. Suddenly a man in a smart suit crept round the bonnet with a metal rod, and beat the bird cruelly to the floor. And then again he struck it, and again, into a broken fluttering and death.

Jim heaved away from the window. Shops and people reeled about him. His vision steadied again, and the nausea eased. The Captain was not there, he realized. He was alone in the street, which seemed now to be cleansed of shoppers and chrome. In this new simplicity Jim looked forward into the light, sweating and shaking. At first there was nothing but haze. But then, ah, thanks to Heaven, the distance began to shape itself into a skyline that he knew by heart. It was indeed home. What he could see was the church reflected in a mirage that looked just like the waters of the river, with shadows of evening slipping across them from the gardens. He was found. He rejoiced looking at the spindly branches of the bare trees. He could smell cooking and hear the rattle of trains.

Eyes burning at it, unblinking, not wanting to miss a second of its homeliness, he looked at the church. It stood sharper against the sky, as the haze left it. The sun began to gild the slopes of the steeple, and the edges of the water grew deep and gloomy in shadow. He was lifting his arms in joy to bless it, when an uncanny change came over the cathedral. Everything began to fall away from it, in puffs of dust. The water was gone, and still the puffs of dust spread, as if something had burst, and collapsed, and roused them. But the church now held Jim's attention. It lowered and rounded and changed, it squatted and settled.

It became—and he knew it straight away—it became the building that reared above the ruins of Hiroshima, the building with the charred dome. Jim covered his eyes in horror, but still he saw it, with the sun in its spars. His throat dried. He must not weep. He closed his eyes tighter, and swallowed. He could not weep; he would not . . .

He seemed to find himself again, but only with supreme effort this time. It seemed he glided through blackness, and was there, in the classroom, sitting among the other men, in the rows of chairs. He knew he was exhausted, that his breathing was loud and unsteady. He only wanted to sleep in safety, and forget. To forget in sleep. But a voice, like something coming out of his past, began to direct itself at him. It developed a head, and shoulders, and an arm, and one cold blue eye. It was the Captain, pointing his finger and sighting along his arm. Like a First World War recruiting poster, thought Jim, and felt pleased to have recognized it.

"You all know why we are here, gentlemen," the Captain was saying. "Re-orientation is vital for us all, if we are not to forget our objective. We must feel certain of our cause. But first . . . while we are all here . . . some operational reports. News from all sections is favourable, and the tenacious and brave work of the men in C section has done a lot today to bring us nearer to ultimate victory. The action was not without sacrifice, however . . . Sergeant Jim Pledger, who we have with us this twilight, was himself killed as he brought down one of the enemy on the outskirts of the village. He has every reason to be proud of his achievements since his arrival in this God-forsaken country."

Here, the seated troops guffawed, as the innuendo rang out. They lolled back again in their chairs to watch the Captain warming to his task. He stood gesticulating before the blackboard, his cigarette forgotten in the ashtray before him. Jim felt mounting unease at the Captain's tone, and tried to avoid the glances of the men to his left and right. He was dead, the Captain had

said, and the Captain was so sure of himself. Did that mean then, that the young man and his family . . . ? What did it mean? That he had fought, doubted and fought, and killed and suffered, pain-wracked, and yet had not escaped, was not to be able to forget?

"At the village today," the Captain recited, "twenty-five of the enemy were killed. And this evening we were fortunate enough to detect one of the enemy revisiting his village. Others who unfortunately failed to halt when he was fired on were also dealt with."

"Who gave us the right?" Jim found himself on his feet, catching his breath with concern and anger. "Isn't once enough? This is unjust, inhuman, treacherous . . ."

The Captain cut in cruelly, his eyes gone cold at this breach of morale.

"We have no room for that sort of stuff, Sergeant. We are fighting to maintain freedom." The Captain pulled himself up, and continued more quietly.

"Perhaps, Sergeant Pledger," he said now, in a brittle, angry tone, "perhaps you would care to step up here and explain your position." He winked broadly at the other men. "After all, we don't wish to bear down unnecessarily. Heaven knows, we allow everyone to have his opinions."

Jim turned to the blackboard, aware of the hostile appraisals of his back. He found that the ledge at the foot of the blackboard was thick with chalk dust. He felt in it for a piece of chalk, but none came to his fingers. He heard a titter from behind. His searching hand still found only dust. His purpose broken, he looked about with mounting concern. The men in the classroom noticed. A falsetto laugh rang out.

"Haa . . . haa . . . haa . . ."

Jim gritted his teeth to keep control, knowing that this was a battle he had already lost, the nauseating battle to keep thinking, to stay aware. All he asked was the chance to tell them what he knew. He scrambled for a piece of chalk, raising the dust, and found one. Seizing it, his throat rumbling with delight, he turned and printed across the blackness of the board:

"BAN KILLING."

And then he turned for effect to face them. He wet his lips to speak, but the words would not come. The faces before him wet their lips too, in mimicry, and waited, expressions poised for a new laugh, expectant. And then, as if they had known he had no argument, the wrinkles came on the faces, eyes crinkled, and all the soldiers surrendered to mirth again. They looked at Jim's face and laughed. They rolled in their seats, slapped their thighs and laughed. The Captain afforded himself a smile.

Jim's hands flew above his head and clasped in frustration and defeat. The odds were too great. There was no way out, no atonement, no escape. He yearned for a hiding-place as his eyes looked out, round with horror, on the class. The Captain motioned one of the men forward, and the laughing ceased. The soldier took Jim's arm and piloted him from the room, and out into the light.

And then, as though a decision had been taken, Jim found himself working with the others. Everyone was making battlements as fast as he could, digging, propping pieces of wood against each other. Jim was sweating as he dug. Some of the pieces of wood were grey with being out in the weather, and the ground was tough and clayey. But there was a horrible apprehension descend-

ing like the dark through the air, sifting into everything, making Jim's little conversations with the men working about him sound nervous and brittle. The enemy is coming, he is coming, and coming, ran Jim's mind. He knew there could be an attack at any moment. The evening was charged with their presence. They were massing, they were coming, and could be felt, even though they couldn't be seen. The Captain came along the battlements—there were some men lolling on the top of them, and others still digging, with transistors slung round their necks on green webbing—he came along the top in his full uniform, and suggested that the defences be moved forward.

"We'll show them we can fight against their bullets and their frankless shells," he sang as he strutted.

Oh God, an agony of fear. What if they were attacked and the battlements had only been moved half way? The pit of Jim's stomach had contracted, as tight as an orange. It was hard to breathe. His mouth was dry, and he kept swallowing on the emptiness of fear.

And then he could not think of it any longer. The others were firing, and looking out he could see figures in the distance. The enemy. They were there. He was in the midst of battle. He began to go through the actions of firing his gun, feverishly, screwing up his eyes with intense concentration. But he could not tell whether the gun was firing or not. There was black vapour stuttering out of the smokey eyes of the gas-ports, but the gun made no sound. He screwed his face up and looked out at the enemy.

Suddenly it was as if a hand was pushing him forward; he could feel it, at the small of his back. He was naked there, he gradually discovered, holding the gun, the gun of many parts. And coming towards him was a lone enemy. On he came, walking slowly, without any gun. He was naked, a simple man figure, walking with grace, and never turning his head. Jim looked along the battlements to see the reaction of the others. They stood there, their hands empty. They had run out of ammunition—and still the man came on, sometimes silhouetted completely against the pink evening sky when he reached the top of a rise in the ground. He still seemed distant, but Jim could read every line of his face. He was smiling.

Jim was sweating, fearful. The enemy came closer, never turning his head, smooth and naked. He was smiling.

The others looked at Jim, and at his gun, and implored him. Their looks said, "Come on, shoot him." They looked at him, urging, then at the approaching man, and stood waiting. Time was nearly gone. "Come on, shoot him . . . shoot him."

Jim aimed at the man figure, thinking of the squareness of his bare shoulders, and fired. He saw a hole and blood appear on the chest, and wondered sadly whether he had aimed correctly to hit the heart. The man began to fall, so slowly, his small toes making a scratching sound and stirring the dust as he began to topple with the relentless dignity of a tree. And his killer wished to rush to the man and resurrect him before his face reached the dust, but he could not move. He could hear the others along the battlements talking and joking again. But he, black with sadness, he could see no hope now. He had betrayed his awareness. The man's body hit the ground and settled, arms outflung. It lay still. No one else was watching.

But unexpectedly, the imminent line made by the ridges ahead was broken.

An enemy soldier rose into view, raised a gun, and fired. The bullet sang to Jim's heart, and stayed there. He could feel it spinning. Instantly he was overjoyed, glowing with warm thanksgiving. He spread his arms and blessed the enemy, and mouthings of gratitude tumbled from his lips. A smile came to his tired face, and he began to fall, slowly . . .

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KNEEL BEFORE THE FIRE

kneel before the fire
when papers burn
my love
curls into black ash
in flames
for that is how she signed
burning then and now

kneel before the fire
when letters burn
my life
floats up in charred bits
in wind
for these I have resigned
burning then and now

kneel before the fire
with eyes that burn
my search
stings through airy grey
in smoke
is this what I designed
burning then and now?

RICHARD FLANTZ

PHALLIC DANCERS, NEW GUINEA

They stare out towards the camera
that retains a certain malevolence,
though the dance has entered behind the lens
of their apprehension,
the stamping earth towers through them
and their feet have grown feathers.

The proud phallus coverings—
egg, cone or decorated gourd—
decree that they must deflect all identity;
at the ancient command their eyes
withdraw, appear to be closed;
and the camera records nothing.

The anthropologists take their biros
and make footnote comparisons
in small voices. In heated cinemas
groups of young students and furtive
single men watch and are silent.

THOMAS W. SHAPCOTT

SOLDIER CRABS

On the wet sand they moved in hundreds
merging together into shadow
that blurred beyond shape and out of colour
and as we approached we saw them burrow
quickly in droves to escape from us.
I scooped in the mangrove-rotted sand
and showed you a couple, blue and enamelled,
easily crushed in my boasting hand.

What were two among such numbers?
We ran together over the beach
with all the sky above our shoulders
throwing our shadows out of reach
and we laughed at the crabs to see them crouch
in their inch of sand from our approach.

THOMAS W. SHAPCOTT

Murray Bail

THE SILENCE

JOE TAPP, SMALL-EYED, hawk-nosed, squatted like an Aborigine or Arab or Red Indian.

His trousers were grey bags tucked in his boots. Like an overweight jockey. Only, he wore a fine white singlet, a grey hat tilted back. Between his fingers a cigarette rolled. He licked paper and lit it. He let smoke wander from his nose, through the hairs of his ears and head.

He was alone. His camp was a tiny patch on a huge landscape. The sun hovered above. Its heat cracking the ground white. Killing plants and grass, making trees black skeletons—good for firewood. Rabbit traps lay tangled, the tent, the tall white freezer, the petrol drums and garbage—all were scattered. Funny place for a camp. But Joe had been getting rabbits there, in the desert, for more than year. They were burrowed in the sandhills. They came out at night.

Joe was doing nothing in the middle of the day. He had flies resting on the back of his singlet. Briefly he looked at two ants, before squashing them. He inspected the mess on the hot ground. He kept squatting in the sun. Then, in the afternoon, far away, he heard the sound.

At first it could have been a fly. It was that sort of noise. Far away. Like a tiny aeroplane on a summer's night. Only this thing was labouring; changing gears. Joe knew it was the truck. He had been listening all day for it.

Up stood Joe. Boots squeaking above the whine of the truck. He climbed on a petrol drum. Over to the right, the truck was making a dust-storm against the sky.

He squatted down again. Nodding his head. Waiting for the man to arrive. He heard the truck bouncing up to him. Changing down a gear. The mud-guards rattled in his ear—when it suddenly swung across his vision. An old red truck with worn tyres, a spotted windscreen. The camp that was silent a few seconds ago was now flooded with noise. Two boots thudded the ground. A door slammed. Norm Treloar strode across, sunglasses bouncing on his nose. He had a friendly face. Wet sweat was all down his back.

"How'd you be?" he asked Joe.

"Not bad."

Joe realised Treloar talked too much. And he was startled by his voice that jumped across the air.

"Got much?" Treloar asked him.

"About three hundred pair maybe."

"Uh-huh."

Joe shifted his weight on his feet and wondered what else to say. Nothing.

They started throwing the shining rabbit carcasses from the freezer onto the truck. The frozen bodies clunked onto the tray. They filled the truck in half an hour.

"Well sport! Give us a cuppa and I'll be off. I'll have to get to Kelpowie before the buggers melt! Just got time for one cuppa."

Treloar drank two cups. He gulped and slurped, talked about the last race meeting. In the end he climbed back into the truck.

"Well! Must be off sport! Be seeing you in a fortnight. You got your juice didn't you? And your grub? Hey, and get us more than three hundred pair next time, will yuh?"

Grinned.

Joe in singlet and boots, nodded. The truck engine roared and vibrated the camp. Throbbing Joe's ears. It moved away. He listened to the engine moaning away, threading through the saltbush. Till far away the noise died on the air. His hairy ears echoed a while. The sky and the ground waited for Joe to move.

Joe's day started early. Out of the sleeping bag, the tent, before the light arrived. A crackling, wood-smelling fire. The billy bubbling as the sun came up. That was the life. The orange shadows spread through the camp and coloured the sky.

He went through the sandhills in a leather coat. Over his shoulder, an old brown wheatbag. He walked among the sandhills parting jaws of traps, twisting necks of rabbits, dropping them in a bag. The bag grew heavy on his shoulder. He dropped the bag back at camp. Went out with another. Filled three. Dropped them all back at camp. Flies buzzed the blood. While he trod back to the sandhills and set the traps again. He was hot when he finished. Off came his shirt. He wiped his neck, arms and face. Off came his boots. Black with thick leather laces. He emptied them of sand. On went the billy to the fire. It pleasantly bubbled. Black tea was poured. Drunk down. The sun burned hotter. On went his boots again. He lay back. Relaxed. Picked up the newspaper Norm Treloar had left. He dropped it in the fire. Lit a cigarette.

Those bags of rabbits sat in the sun. Those damned flies crawled all over the outside. Joe dragged the bags past his tent. Out came the first stiff rabbit. Pulled by his ears. Joe's knife dug in, slit upwards. Squish went the skin. Out flopped the guts. Joe did the three bags of rabbits. He threw good meat into the freezer. After that there was nothing to do. He usually poked round the camp.

Then night arrived, Joe built up the fire. He was inside his sleeping bag early. His leather coat his pillow. He slept soundly. Usually snoring, sometimes grunting.

Norm Treloar arrived a fortnight later. As usual. Joe heard the truck miles away. He wondered what Treloar would talk about next. Of course, he'd say, 'How'd you be?' Always did. What could you do about that? Nothing. Treloar

came in expecting him to talk. How'd you be? How'd you be? How'd you be? Treloar always talked. Any minute. The truck was very close. Rowdy bastard it was, it was deafening Joe.

It stopped.

"How'd you be?" asked Treloar.

Joe had been waiting for it. But the voice took him by surprise. It seemed to float in the air a second, before tearing into Joe. And the words, strange, didn't seem to match the moving mouth.

Joe looked at Treloar. Watched him talk.

"How many you get this time?" asked Treloar.

Joe didn't know what to say. He wanted to test his voice first. Started with some words inside his mouth. He opened his mouth.

"Three hundred?" Treloar asked.

Joe nodded.

"Say," said Treloar. "Did you get that rain last week?"

Joe shook his head.

The silence made Treloar look past the truck to the dust. The scenery was dead flat.

"Yeah, it's pretty bloody dry, isn't it?"

Joe kept watching him talk.

"Yeah it sure is bloody dry," Treloar repeated.

Now Joe wanted to load the truck. He didn't want Treloar's voice coming across at him. He wanted him to get moving. Sitting there, he found himself staring at the ground. That was better than looking at Treloar's eyes watching him. He became nervous that Treloar might ask another question and force him to use his voice. There was a strain. Joe felt the whole thing, the voices on the air, strange.

Again Treloar broke the silence. He cleared his throat, Uncrossed his boots, scrape, and stood upwards.

"Let's load up, eh?"

Joe helped the man, carefully.

After that, the voice jumped across to Joe:

"Look after yourself, sport; I'm off. Be seeing you in a fortnight."

His engine sent solid waves into the air into Joe. The bulky intruder departed. Silence returned to the camp. Carefully, Joe relaxed. The air was left for him and nothing confused his ears.

By himself he relaxed into another fortnight of trapping. Setting the traps, the campfire, sleeping, waking, clearing traps, skinning, eating. One day he chopped seven trees into firewood. Mostly after his morning's work though, he did nothing. He could squat in the silence for hours, and like it. Like an Aborigine. He could plan new places for traps. Thought about tackling kangaroo meat. He trapped some dingoes near his traps.

Abruptly this was interrupted; he was squatting in the sun when it happened. In his white singlet and grey hat. Lips slightly cracked and motionless. His eyes small and dark. Forehead unwrinkled. His hands brown, cut, carelessly dirty with black mottles and stunted fingers. That was Joe. He was scratching his nose when he heard the truck.

This time Joe jumped up. Maybe two miles away the truck was sending up a cloud. He could see it over there. Like a hurricane, coming closer. It

was Treloar of course. Joe had to think. He was only coming for the rabbits. But there was that noisy talk; useless. As the noise came closer Joe decided. He ran through the camp. Opened the door of the freezer. And ran in singlet and hat. Bow-legged trousers, a desperate little run. Into the sandhills and up. Till he reached a bush where his camp lay bunched below.

By now the truck was very near. No tracks. So it was weaving methodically. Its trail of dust stretched out behind. It entered Joe's camp. Revved up noisily. Stopped. A short uneasy silence before Treloar jumped out. Joe saw the door slam, heard the footsteps floating faintly upwards. Treloar was walking through the camp ready to say, How'd you be? He had to look in the tent. Look in the freezer. Joe could see him scratch his head. Treloar waited a few minutes, still looking. He strode back to the truck and pressed the loud wierd-sounding horn that travelled over the dunes and past Joe's impatient head. Treloar still waited. Sat on the steel bumper-bar and scratched his head. He then moved in and out of camp, looking for something. He waited some more. Then stared intently at the sandhills. Joe, crouching there, waited.

In the end Treloar started loading meat into the truck. He finished the job. And drove away.

The stretched-out land waited for the truck. When it was finally gone, the silence closed in again. Joe clambered down the hill. His camp—with its familiar, still objects—was back to normal. Now the desert-clear air was turning cold. It was time to check the traps in the sandhills. Joe had already decided about the sandhills: He was going to hide there whenever he heard what's-his-name coming. He couldn't stand being near the talking man. Joe decided.

THE LETTER

Today, I did not hear from you.
Perhaps you do not wish
to be with me again,
either in thought or person.
My heart is like a little stone.
It hurts to feel it so cold and heavy within me.

I am sitting where I can see the trees,
which only a month ago, were green.
From every bough, leaves are falling like birds.
The hills are cold. The wind, lonely.
Lamps that were once
flowers, have gone out under a dark, metallic sky.

. . . A feeling of transience
troubles the earth,
as my heart .
For a moment I cannot write.
I am remembering another season
when there was summer light and gold, touching new
flowers. When I was aware of so many things;
colours, sounds, textures,
a butterfly's wings . . .
when I was warm and radiant . . . to your touch, a sun
in its heaven of you.

O, my love. My love.

'"When you go Loti," said Aziyade, "I will die."'

JOAN MAS

THREE SMACKS AT EMPSON

Slowly the poison the whole blood stream fills.
It is not the effort nor the failure tires.
The waste remains, the waste remains and kills.

'Missing Dates'.

(i)

Slowly the poison the whole blood stream fills
gives way to dogs' rills
and then to slag hills.
But the rhythm succeeds if the waste rhyme kills.
I'd shudder to be a skin that shrills.

(ii)

But the poem takes off and provides real thrills.
Only you can argue the other way of course.
It's not so much the waste that kills
it is the effort, win or lose.
What gets you down is bit by bit
shredding of effort to the quick.
Like whistling away a tune
till what was once your favourite
no longer exists.
Or like whittling a stick
till suddenly your knife slips
and all you're left is cut to bone.

(iii)

It's not the waste that silts the blood.
What gets you down is not the dates
with poems or girls you've hardly missed.
It's not the weight of Chinese tombs
or the poisonous fumes from dogs or slag
that lie on you and slowly choke
like bilious meals you can't throw up.

It's not the fires you haven't lit
that torment you. It is your wit.
What burns a hole is not the waste.
It is word-play, the practised flip
of the coin of logic turns your stomach.
It's your dialectic does the trick.
It's the double-headed poem makes you sick.

W. T. ANDREWS

Owing to a typographical error in one line of W. T. Andrews' poem, in *Westerly* No. 2, the poem is printed again.

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Brian de Garis

ALFRED DEAKIN AND THE HISTORIANS

In the concluding paragraphs of his two volume biography of Alfred Deakin,[1] J. A. La Nauze briefly reviews the changing verdicts of historians about his subject. To the widespread impression of matchless oratory which Deakin left with his contemporaries, Walter Murdoch, writing a decade after Deakin's death, added a perceptive insight into the complexity of his mind, the literary and intellectual cast of his character. A decade later again, W. K. Hancock rounded out what was to become the accepted view of Deakin with an emphasis on his nationalism and his constructive contribution in the early years of the Commonwealth during which the guidelines of Australian politics and society were marked out.

This picture of Deakin remained broadly unchanged for twenty years, La Nauze argues, until challenged in the 1920's; by Manning Clark, for whom Deakin, with all his gifts, was at heart a provincial; and Hartley Grattan, who stressed that despite his protestation to the contrary, Deakin revelled in the endless shifts and stratagems of political life. "It is well that Deakin is being looked at with fresh eyes," La Nauze writes, and of course this trend towards re-assessment has been greatly stimulated by the publication of his own study. *Alfred Deakin. A Biography* has been welcomed with universal acclamation as perhaps the finest work of political history yet published in Australia, but reactions to Alfred Deakin the man and statesman have been more various.

The most extreme verdict to come to this reader's notice is that of F. K. Crowley, who after paying the conventional tributes to Deakin's public achievements avers that "Alfred Deakin, the man, stands guiltily before the public as the self-confessed Grand Master in the art of duplicity and double dealing . . .". (*Meanjin Quarterly*, 2-1966, pp. 220-3) The tone is provocative and doubtless a little tongue-in-cheek, but Crowley has some serious points to make about Deakin's compartmentalised life and ability to rationalise his actions. Not only did he keep his home life strictly separate from his public activities, but he also kept the "inner life" of writing and meditation which was more imoprtant to him than anything else, a closely guarded secret from his wife and family. Furthermore during almost the whole of his career in federal politics Deakin "engaged in clandestine political journalism" which if revealed "would have led to his immediate banishment from public life". Here Crowley refers of course to the weekly letters on Australian affairs which Deakin secretly contributed to the *Morning Post* even while in office at a fee of £500 *per annum*. La Nauze has established beyond question that Deakin did not misuse his double role but Crowley may be right in arguing that his reputation would have been ruined had the facts become known during his lifetime. Crowley also makes reference to what he calls the "gross opportunism" of Deakin's political career, and some apparent instances of conflict of interest and reversal of stance have also troubled other reviewers.

Geoffrey Sawer, for example, expresses more doubt than La Nauze would allow about Deakin's acceptance of a brief for the *Age* in

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[1] J. A. La Nauze, *Alfred Deakin. A Biography* 2 vols. Melbourne University Press, 1965. Pp. xiv + 695. $13.

the Speight libel case, as well as sharing Crowley's feelings about the *Morning Post* letters. (*Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 1-XII, 1966, pp. 120 - 22) G. C. Bolton draws attention to Deakin's failure to negotiate a coalition with Labour during 1904-8, his turning instead to the conservatives against whom he had been fighting through the whole of his political life, and his increasingly illiberal behaviour after the fusion. (*Australian Book Review*, 2 & 3-V, 1965-66, p. 32) Can Deakin's failing health be invoked to explain these puzzles, Bolton asks? Or does the answer lie deeper, in what D. M. MacCallum hesitantly suggests may "amount to a lack of integrity"? (*Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, 3-LII, 1966, pp. 241-7)

Another dimension of Deakin's makeup which Professor La Nauze has brought to the surface and which has engaged the interest of many reviewers is his religious life. As a young man Deakin flirted for a time with spiritualism; for most of his adult life he regularly found time for meditation and prayer of a somewhat mystical tinge; but he kept his religious speculation and devotion locked away in one of the hidden water-tight compartments of his life and showed no interest in orthodox Christianity. In Hartley Grattan's view Deakin's religious life appears to be the key to "any final understanding" of the man—but he adds that although La Nauze has made available much data on this subject, its significance is as yet insufficiently explored for that final understanding to be possible. (*Historical Studies*, 47-XII, 1966, pp. 450-54) The relationship between Deakin's religious life and his political career has also attracted some comment from Bruce Mansfield, who concludes that his "politics did not come out of his religion", and draws an interesting contrast between Deakin and Abraham Lincoln. (*Journal of Religious History*, 1-IV, 1966, pp. 77-9)

The other major concern of recent writers about Deakin has been the character and source of his liberalism. As A. F. Davies wrote after reading this biography, "'Deakinite Liberal' means less close up than it did at a distance". (*Overland*, 33, 1965-66, pp. 42-3) Professor La Nauze writes (p. 107) that "Victorial Liberalism as understood by Deakin and his contemporaries . . . was perhaps best defined concretely, in terms of the causes they had inherited or achieved by 1900". It is certainly true that when one thinks of Victorian Liberalism it is a list of men or of measures rather than of principles which comes to mind, but does this mean that these men had no common philosophy, no coherent body of principles on which they were united? La Nauze does not go quite so far as this but some of his critics come closer to it. Grattan, for example, suggests that the liberalism of Deakin and his colleagues was "not a definable ideology, nor even a vague *weltanschauung*, but a loosely related, loosely articulated assortment of prejudices about particular issues that had arisen from time to time in Victorian public affairs". He goes on to ask just how liberal Deakin's liberalism was, his own answer being that it "was located towards the left end of the conservative spectrum".

Such are some of the thoughts about Deakin which La Nauze has provoked in others, but what of his own contribution to that continuous re-assessment which he has invited? It may be said at once that it is a very substantial contribution. His two volumes add to Murdoch's sketch and the vignettes of other historians not merely further detail but whole new dimensions. The full gamut of Deakin's life is surveyed, though in contrast to Murdoch the main weight of the book falls after 1900.

In his preface the author expressly states that he has not concerned himself with all the detail of Deakin's career in colonial politics, and only a few readers will quarrel with that. The emphasis in the early years is naturally on the federal movement, though even here the account is very concise and sticks closely to Deakin's own role. It is scarcely possible to disagree with the author's conception of Deakin as a backstage conciliator seeking to harmonise the conflicting interests and ideas of leaders from other colonies, and as a propagandist "selling" federation to the A.N.A. and the *Age* and through them to the wider public. But although the steps by which Deakin became involved in the federal movement are related, his ardent enthusiasm for federation is not entirely explained. One does not question that it was "he who led the movement in that colony through the dark years after 1891" (p. 158), but why did he so devote himself to this lagging cause? Obviously his nationalism and his running battle with Downing St. had something to do with it, but in this period in Aus-

tralia the link between nationalism and movements for national unity cannot be taken for granted.

It is part of the traditional account of the federal movement that in the 1890's Deakin held aloof from office in Victoria in order to be free to forward the movement more effectively. La Nauze shows that his disengagement from politics was much more complicated than that and stemmed from a deep disillusion with life. On the evidence given it could be argued that his greater freedom to work for federation, though sincerely desired and vigorously exploited, was more a justification of that disengagement than its cause. Deakin's part in the framing of the Commonwealth Constitution is also a little puzzling. La Nauze skims lightly over the Federal Conventions, quoting Deakin's assessments of the other delegates and endorsing Deakin's claim that "sensing an atmosphere hostile to the Victorians he deliberately devoted himself to conciliation and the private smoothing of difficulties". (p. 168) An accurate description of Deakin's behaviour at the Conventions, yet it seems odd that such an able man and ardent federalist, a man moreover who fully planned the future Commonwealth public service before anyone else had begun to consider the need for one, should have contented himself with reconciling other people's ideas and contributed so few of his own. Most of the other leading delegates and many of the lesser lights insisted on imprinting one or two of their favourite hobby-horses on the constitution, but not Deakin. It is perhaps a measure of his practical approach to politics, surprising in one of such intellectual bent; he was prepared to acquiesce in provisions about which he was not entirely happy, in the belief that sensible men would be able to make things work satisfactorily if federation could once be achieved.

By 1901 federation had been achieved, and it fell to Deakin more than any other individual to make things work. La Nauze' account of his efforts to do so as a Commonwealth Minister and Prime Minister is much more detailed than the preceding chapters. We are able to see Deakin in all his guises, in the cabinet room and in the party caucus, in the House and on the hustings, administering his departments and attending imperial conferences, retreating from politics to the peace of his home, and retreating from his family to wrestle with doubt and despair in the loneliness of an increasingly tortured mind. Frequently the author allows Deakin to speak for himself through his speeches, letters and prayers. In most cases where dispute is possible the evidence for and against a particular interpretation or verdict is presented. The book moves at a leisurely pace, often breaking off the narrative of events to round out the picture of a particular facet of Deakin's life or work, but the total effect is gripping.

One of the few consistent threads which seems to have linked every phase of Deakin's career is his consciousness, or even self-consciousness, of his Australian nationality. Although La Nauze pours some cold water on the traditional story of Deakin the young colonial David going forth to the Colonial Conference of 1887 to slay the old imperial Goliath, Lord Salisbury, he emphasises Deakin's stormy relations with successive Imperial Governments. Unshakably British in his values, and a longstanding member of the Imperial Federation League, Deakin was nevertheless proud to be an Australian and determined that Australia's voice should be heard on any issue about which she chose to speak. The prejudice against the Colonial Office which he inherited from Higginbotham and Service he carried with him to the grave. Truly Deakin was the archetype of Hancock's "Independent Australian Briton" and in this respect at least, refreshingly uncomplicated and free from self-doubt.

By comparison with his nationalism, Deakin's devotion to protectionism seems colourless. From the time of his conversion by David Syme from a youthful attachment to free trade, Deakin faithfully followed the prevailing fiscal faith of his colony and in due course helped to make it the faith of the Commonwealth also. But protection was by no means the cornerstone of his political philosophy and had it not been the touchstone which distinguished between the pre-fusion parties it could almost have been described as irrelevant to his main pre-occupations. Even the New Protection of which Deakin spoke so often (and of which La Nauze gives a particularly clear outline) was not so much a coherent doctrine as a ramshackle collection of attitudes and *ad hoc* measures of legislation and arbitration.

The New Protection brings us back to the third unifying thread in Deakin's political life, his liberalism. Some comments on this by La Nauze and his reviewers have already been summarised and to these one personal impression may be added. Although Deakin was an intellectual his liberalism seems to have been in no sense theoretical or academic. It sprang rather from a generous heart and warm and broad sympathies, and manifested itself in very practical forms; the ideal was always subordinate to the possible. It is not only socialism that is "*sans doctrines*" in Australia.

Alfred Deakin was sceptical about historians and their assessments of individuals and this scepticism has clearly weighed upon the mind of his biographer. Professor La Nauze deplores any attempt to "pigeonhole" Deakin, and has scrupulously avoided doing so himself. He has met Deakin's challenge by charting as fully as possible the "endless variations of mood and temper, of credulity and scepticism, and the cross currents of influence" which shaped Deakin's life and work; he has depicted Deakin in all his complexity, eschewing simple answers and generalisations. His judgements are there but they are implicit judgements and scattered through the two volumes. He who would seek to understand Alfred Deakin should read and ponder every page.

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W. T. Andrews

ARCADY AND OTHER PLACES

by Vincent Buckley

The poems in the first two sections serve mainly to recall Mr Buckley's struggle to adjust himself following an Irish upbringing in Australia. It is above all these poems that raise the central issue regarding his achievement as a poet. As far as I can make out, the Holy Land of Ireland signifies for Mr. Buckley a remote Arcady which he more often than not visits in his imagination out of a faint puzzlement to know why his over-pious mother and his over-riotous father gave him so many shocks as a child. But few clear indications of this struggle having taken place remain in the actual poetry. In *Margins* VI, Mr Buckley quotes with evident approval Mallarme's description of poetry as the 'language of a state of crisis'. In Mr Buckley's decorous and controlled poems, there is only the recollection, almost in tranquillity, of a state of crisis which has long since passed. His characteristic tone is not self-satisfied, but it is usually fairly placid. Even at his most personal, Mr Buckley keeps poetry on its good behaviour, although he does manage to convey, disturbingly enough as far as the reader is concerned, the impression of an acutely felt dilemma which has perhaps been too easily settled—or set aside.

Yet Mr Buckley, although he was born in Australia, is still aware of himself as an Irishman, and he is still, despite the mental control which he has achieved in exile, an Irish poet. In *Puritan Poet Reel,* towards the end of the second section, Mr Buckley's original Irish self contrives to burst the bounds of his acquired self-restraint to give an exceptionally lively and vigorous account of his early difficulties. The poem, unusual for him, merits quoting in full because it re-lives a state of crisis, and comes close to revealing, in the form of an Irish reel, that Mr Buckley is not altogether happy about his chosen way of disciplining himself (cultivating a sense of ambiguity, 'simulating joy' in verse, making his life a 'model', and so on):

PURITAN POET REEL

Mother at her novenas
Until her knees are brown
And father non-conforming
All around the town:

What images have brought
(Ah delicate and dry)
The tear of ambiguity
To stand within my eye?

Have built my world around me
Where, private as a mole,
I guard the fiercer virtues
And mentally control

Wind squeezing the houses,
Knocking the hedges down,
And father non-conforming
All around the town?

Mother it was that promised me
Position in the town
And father raised his fist and swore
We'd lie on beds of down:

But who will keep the promises
They made me as a boy?
Writing my twenty lines a day,
And simulating joy,

I make my life a model
And keep my bowels clear,
But, muse blow hot or muse blow cold,
Over the fence I hear

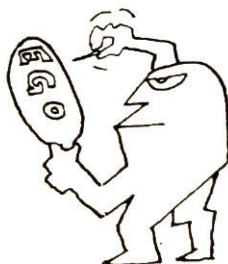
Mother at her rosary
Until her knees are brown
And father non-conforming
All around the town.

In form and tone, as well as in what is being said or implied, this poem differs from most of the more guarded and discreet poems in this well-wrought volume. For once, Mr Buckley's carefully prepared defences are down. Indeed,

it is possible to perceive quite clearly the personal sense of inadequacy which in the first place led to Mr Buckley's building of these defences around himself, and for what negative reasons he grew to prefer decorum in all things rather than zest.

Puritan Poet Reel thus provides the clue to why most of his other poems are *not* like this. Judging by most of these other poems, Mr Buckley has honestly come to believe in poetic decorum as a positive standard. This is regrettable. How treacherous a standard decorum may be is apparent, for instance, in poems such as Poem V belonging to the first section called *Stroke*. I must say, I find this, and some of the other scrupulously decorous death-bed poems, where Mr Buckley sets himself up as an objective *voyeur* of decay, more than slightly distasteful. The kind of thing I object to lies, for example, in the chilly over-fastidiousness of, 'If pain dulls, grief coarsens', and in his choosing to record the dying man's reliance upon kissing the Polish nurse goodnight. Such squeamish propriety argues a lack of consideration in Mr Buckley of all the human factors involved in such a situation. Ultimately, these hospital-poems are neither so decorous nor so realistic as they seem. It is almost as if Mr Buckley is unconsciously seizing the opportunity to work off an old emotional score.

If I am substantially right about this, there is a certain meanness involved in Mr Buckley's concept of decorum, and a certain lack of poetic generosity in the form of anatomizing realism which he employs. In any case, I cannot resist wishing that Mr Buckley were something more than an Irishman at a distance, and that circumstances permitted him to be more frankly an Irish poet. As it is, he is like some impossible Irish satellite sending out hesitant and jumbled signals for help to his lost native earth which he has more than half taught himself to despise. He is an Irish poet *manque*, whose decorously concealed original bent probably emerges best in his excellent *Versions of Catullus* occupying the third section of this miscellany. Why should Mr Buckley want to adapt Catullus to suit his needs? The answer is obvious. Where Catullus supplies the spirit (a spirit not far removed from the Irish spirit that Mr Buckley is sophisticatedly in search of), Mr Buckley can be trusted to supply the sobering technique which has made for these impressively stable renderings.



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Westerly No. 4 of 1967 will be devoted to writing and other aspects of life in Western Australia. Contributions are already to hand from a number of well-known local writers including T. A. G. Hungerford, G. M. Glaskin, Lyndall Hadow and Merv. Lilley. Other West Australian writers who would like to be considered for this issue are invited to send their contributions to the Editorial Committee, *Westerly*, Department of English, The University of Western Australia, Nedlands, by 31 October 1967. Payment will be made for all contributions used.

The West Australian Number of *Westerly* will be published early in December, 1967.

The issue containing the work of younger writers will appear in the first half of 1968. We would welcome stories, poems, criticism, general articles. An arbitrary age limit is not proposed, but by younger writers we are thinking of writers under twenty-five, or upwards to thirty. Writers may be published or not have any work yet in print. We would appreciate brief biographical material with contributions. The issue hopes to offer the feelings and opinions of younger people in the fields of fiction, criticism and appraisal of art, music, sociology—in short, to be in some way interpretative of this climate of opinion in its widest sense. If such opinion does not manifest itself sufficiently, and we are over optimistic, then contributions can still be considered for publication in the usual way.

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Manna and dates, in argosy transferr'd
From Fez; and spiced dainties, every one,
From silken Samarcand to cedar'd Lebanon.

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