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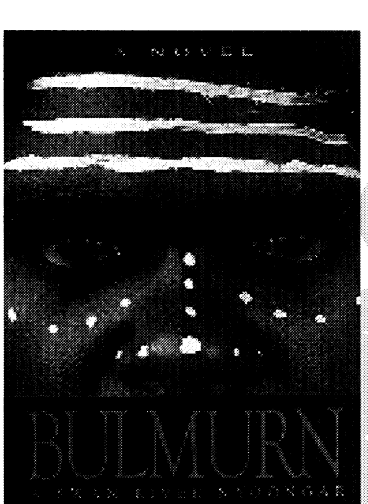

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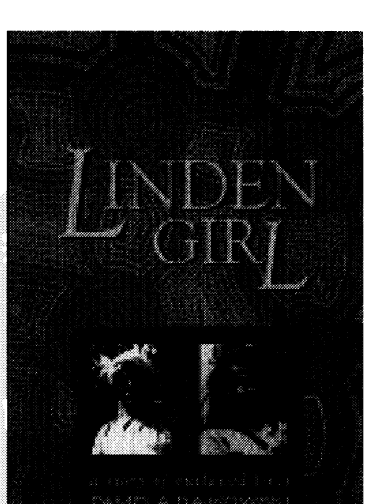

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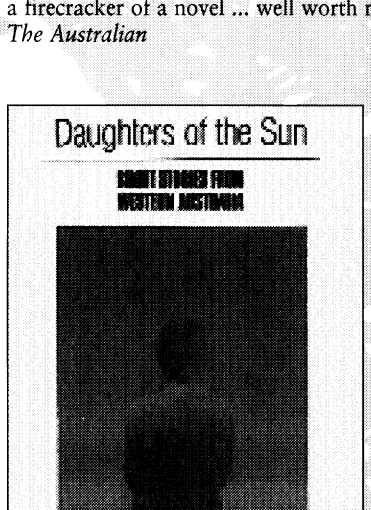

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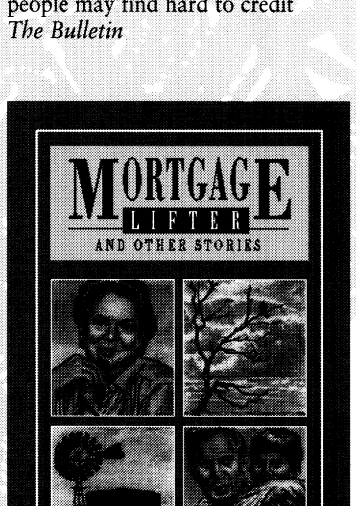

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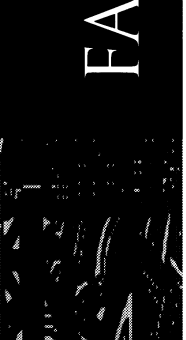

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Special Issue 1996

Australian Jewish Writing
Westerly no 4 Summer 1996

The final issue of *Westerly* for each year is a special one devoted to a selected theme or concept. For the Summer (December) issue of 1996 or 5758 by the Jewish calendar, the theme will be Australian Jewish Writing.

Stories and poems concerning any aspect of Jewish life and thought, past or present, are welcome. *Westerly* is also interested in articles, or personal reminiscences which deal with Jewish/Australian experience. It is in the personal sense of what it means to be Jewish in Australia that *Westerly's* present interest lies, though the more formal academic kind of paper would also be of interest.

Contributions welcome

WESTERLY

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Three *Westerly* Indexes 1956-77, 1978-83 and 1984-8, are available at $5.00 each from the above address.

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Australian War-Time Voices
Editorial Comments

AUSTRALIAN WAR-TIME VOICES is *Westerly's* special fourth issue for 1995. It takes up a theme that has become familiar in Australia in 1995 through a range of 'Australia Remembers' projects and events, the theme of the fifty-years-ago ending of the Second World War. That fifty years' anniversary and the meanings it has been given have themselves already provided a fertile arena for comment and response. The remembering for example is not limited in much of the commentary that has taken place around 'Australia Remembers' to that one conflict, but to all those that Australians have been part of, not excluding what is now more widely and publicly recognised as the conflict that marked the European invasion and settlement of the Australian continent. *Westerly's* concern in this issue therefore has been not so much to simply remember, important as that may be, as to establish an eclectic and creative critique of and commentary on war through a range of voices — poetic and scholarly; in reminiscence and riposte — situated in both the past and the present and in diverse and sometimes adverse relationship to war-time and its consequences. So the necessarily limiting and confining category of national remembering and its politics is expanded here through the layerings of those voices. It is in those layerings and the intersections they allow that differing perceptions may occur and debate arise. 'Australian War-Time Voices' recognises the significance of such debate as well as the importance of those differences, of which *Westerly* is part.

ALAN SEYMOUR

Came The Dawn

"But what do you think" — asked a fellow-guest at a Nedlands dinner party early in '95 — "when you return to your home town to find a politician from one major party coming out of jail and, twenty-four hours later, a politician from another major party going in?" My answer: "But I always knew it was the Wild West." That gathering voiced a nicely bemused, self-critical view of the West. West Australians seem more usually, and regrettably, defensive about West Australia. Many, mainly the young, are quick to proclaim how backward it is. (I felt that too at their age, with much more justification then, I think.) Others forever belt you about the head with the black swan and blanch at the slightest hint of criticism or indeed at any comment less than an unconditional rave. Constant enthusiasm for the — naturally — "marvellous climate" is obligatory, as it is for the "lovely clean streets" of Perth (no argument there after the scruff of Major's London), for the "delicious fresh fruit" (which always comes from "up north", the standard reply to any attempt to trace a precise point of origin), for the "magnificent beaches", OK, you win, and for the "world-class" athletes, swimmers and, above all, footballers whose current achievements you are supposed to know and to be well-nigh hysterically excited about. An admission that, having lived more than a quarter of a century at the other end of the world, you have not closely followed their exploits — and in any case are not especially interested — is greeted by what I now think of as the quintessentially West Australian reaction, a startlement of the eyes conveying a fine blend of disbelief, bewilderment and contempt.

And so one works out strategies for teasing the natives. On a shiny autumn afternoon here, when challenged by the now inevitable question, where else on earth could such weather be found, I resist the temptation to list Provence, Puglia, Aegean Turkey, Sydney, even London (I do understand Doris Lessing's recent autobiographical confession that on arriving from South Africa she fell in love with London's mellow summer and autumn afternoon light and yes, I do know what it can be like the rest of the year) and instead offer puzzled praise that West Australians survive so well in such an unhealthy climate. *Unhealthy?* The response is shocked. *With this beautiful weather?* Beautiful weather, yes, but dangerous climate. All this sunlight! Almost the highest incidence of skin cancer in the world. No answer. Do not deny, gentle reader, an embattled expatriate his simple pleasures.

But it is impossible not to feel, most of the time here, relaxed, healthy and happy.

Too much sun probably is hazardous but how good it makes one feel. Perth is an easy city to live in and to like and most of the changes made since my time seem to me improvements. But that does not mean that I cloaked my brain and critical faculties on arriving at the airport. During the ham-fisted didactic expatriate Oz-identity arguments in the film version of "Hotel Sorrento" (which I suspect were the fault of the screenplay rather than the original play) when Dick (John Hargreaves) attacked the recently returned writer for making adverse and dated judgments on a "new" Australia of which she knew nothing I longed to hear her blast in return: "Just getting my own back after years of Australian visitors telling me all that is wrong with Britain and the Brits within five minutes of stepping off the plane."

It is one of my regular gripes. I know what is wrong with England or I think I do and at least my opinion is based on day-by-day year-by-year decade-by-decade suffering at the hands of the bastards. (Not entirely true. Professionally I have learned a lot and done a lot in television drama. I have a comfortable London house, a pleasant social life, the constant stimulus of London theatre and some warm friendships.) It is, obviously, a human trait to compare where we are now with what we have last come from, especially if the last place we have come from is our home. But we don't know a place until we have not simply holidayed but lived and worked in it, and with living and working experience of five countries over the last few decades — and that includes return working visits to Australia — I'll be damned if I'm going to muzzle myself when local self-satisfaction seems almost to go out of its way to provoke, shall we say, a robust response.

The Australian-British relationship, an old dog which had died, is relevant again because of the republic issue. When it began to surface a few years ago I realised that I must have been a republican before the term was ever used here. A brother-in-law of mine was one of the old-fashioned school: "Royalty? They all oughta be stood up against a wall and shot." Of a fairly pacific temperament I am not so absolute; abdication would suffice. Even that is not necessary in our case. We just have to cut free. And why not? We are over twenty-one. What disfigures the argument for me is the knee-jerk anti-Brit stance which dismisses not only Her Maj but everything emanating from that tight little island as totally irrelevant, wet and worthless. That attitude surfaces even in the most sophisticated Australian circles and is surely counter-productive. We should be able to engage with anybody — and a head in the sand leaves other parts of the anatomy vulnerably exposed.

Australians used to be noted for their laconic modesty. Repeatedly nowadays the local patriotism is so loud and insistent that it is little more than outright chauvinism — and that is usually a sign, despite the boasts and claims, of deep unease. Why? The first thought that comes to mind is hardly new. The cult of 'health' brings its own corruptions. Sydneysiders are often accused of blatant hedonism but compared to West Australians they are monks. An outdoor culture leaves little time, energy or inclination for introspection — and to the proposition that 'the unexamined life is not worth living' a large proportion of Westralians would give, I think, an old-fashioned raspberry. And yet, as so often in life's checks and balances, what they reject may be what they need.

For instance, in a discussion of Perth's great restaurant culture, a young relative theorised that it was thriving because in Perth there was — 'nothing else to do'. When working in London this young man, a one-time surfie now settling into the milder pleasures of golf, had gone with us a number of times to the theatre and

enjoyed it in an intelligent, canny, discriminating fashion. He had gone to the theatre sometimes in Perth and he now vowed he'd try it more often on returning. He doesn't, while complaining that there is nothing to do.

Expecting him to be enticed by 'Fragments from an Unfinished Opera', 'Raw' or the mini-opera 'Giles, is That You?' may be unreasonable but at that time in Perth there were also 'Shadow Boxing', 'That Eye the Sky', 'My Fair Lady' and 'Shimada' and three of these four dealt with aspects of West Australian life which surely would have been of interest to him and his current shrewd and sensible lady. Mightn't the kind of examination of national or local life found in these plays help bring to the surface some of the unresolved dilemmas or dissatisfactions one sometimes senses below their apparent unflappability? — the arts, that is, performing their traditional role, fostering discussion, helping to define an audience's sense of itself in the context of its own society.

What does impress here is the range of unanticipated activity. That Australian universities long since have established their own publishing houses was known to me — I am on their mailing lists — but surprising is the number of small, independent presses which have sprung up. There is a publisher at Kalamunda, for God's sake! Modest in scale they may be but in the face of today's reality, the giant, impersonal international publishing forces resulting from the conglomerate power plays of the cut-throat '80s, the best hope for many of us — as writers and readers — may well lie with smaller, more locally based houses able and importantly, wanting to provide an outlet for the regional and local voice.

An interesting current development is the reaction against the great suburban sprawl and the beginning of a move back towards city living. Some of the outer suburbs with their enormously wide roads and grass 'verges' as wide as the Nullarbor Plain setting houses back even farther apart from each other, suggest a total abandonment of any attempt at or desire for a sense of community. And yet the weekly local papers of so many suburban areas indicate a vigorous community spirit, protesting against wrong-headed unecological initiatives, upbraiding politicians for broken promises and emphasising — in local endeavours — co-operation as against the eternal competitiveness of business and sport. The added surprise is some local papers' regular, serious and intelligent coverage of the arts, their criticism often more informed and better-written than that in the state or national press. (In range of subject matter and quality of journalism most local papers here are far in advance of their counterparts in London.) The first impression, that suburban lives are atomised, all sense of community long gone, must be deceptive. And yet the sense persists of unarticulated need.

My own long-buried needs have surfaced. This is, after all, the place of my childhood and adolescence. Streets, districts, even place-names resonate deeply in my psyche. The changes can be electrifying. James Street was, in my youth, a virtual slum. On Saturday afternoons a group of us from Patch or Rep would have our weekend drink at the beloved long-lost Esplanade Hotel, the only hotel in the whole wide world, a magnificent old lady once told me, whose linen Melba, on tour, would use rather than her own — which her entourage always carried with her. After drinks in the Snake Pit (its '30s-style cocktail bar) we'd pile into cars and drive over the Horseshoe Bridge to Lamberti's, about the only restaurant in the James Street area then. We felt really cosmopolitan eating our roast chicken, rubbed generously with *olive oil and garlic* — a heady mix in 1948 — and quaffing beakers of very rough red.

I stand on what was once Foy and Gibsons' side of the Terrace looking to where, in the middle of the road, there stood the superstructure of a gents' underground loo with its intricate silvered, almost Parisian, ironwork railings and entrance arch. But where exactly on the far side was the stairway to the basement office and studio of Station 6PM at which, for two exciting years, I was, God wot, the youngest radio announcer in Western Australia! Most disconcertingly of all, I am taken by relatives down to Malcolm Street, East Fremantle and try to disentangle a sudden and unnerving mystery. Building work is going on, old houses being revamped or maybe demolished. In the '70s my niece drove me down and the two houses our family had lived in (successively, that is, not simultaneously) were intact. A long sloping street (the world looked lopsided to me from the start), it had a good mix of fairly handsome middle-class and lower-middle-class residences and more modest working-class rented houses, in which latter category were ours.

The big place at the bottom of the street was owned by the Sumptons. On that day in the 1970s niece Anna's car moved slowly past our houses and down the hill and pulled up for me to look at the big house, its lawn and garden seeming just as they had in my childhood. A white-haired lady was working in the strip of garden along the front fence. I said "I think that's Mrs Sumpton!", jumped out and hurried over to ask her. Indeed she was and her face and voice told me she was before she confirmed it. I introduced myself and asked if she remembered me. She repeated the name, said: "Why, yes, you were the little boy next door" — and looked suddenly disconcerted by this tall, long-haired, bearded and be-jeaned apparition. (Well, I said it was the '70s, I have not been for years in any of the three latter categories.) Mrs Sumpton didn't ask where I lived or what I had done in the meantime, I was busy asking her about her daughters (Betty who had been in my class at East Fremantle Bubs and Beryl, the older one who'd bullied me) and suddenly remembered the youngest, born just at that time, my time there: Joybells! — the only person in the whole of this longish life whom I have come across with that remarkable name.

The point of this tiny suburban encounter was its quality of innocence. After all that I had witnessed and experienced in my personal life and the conflicts and crises observed in the umpteen countries visited, here was continuity, here was constancy, here was, oddly and illogically, reassurance. But this time, this year, '95, I gazed from the car in utter perplexity. We had moved to the second house because it was cheaper, had lived first at 19 and then shifted across a lane to 15, the houses so numbered because *behind* 19 was 17, a tramcar shack occupied by the rent collector, a man named, or at least called, Dulcie McGuire. Number 15 was distinctive because it had a Norfolk pine in the middle of the front lawn. 19 was now unrecognisable, tarted up, painted differently and with a new arrangement of verandah and facade. But the real mystifier was 15. The house now bearing that number was *two* houses down from 19 and it was 17, the one in between, that still had the rather scraggy-looking Norfolk pine. In my memory there was the lane and only one house between our first place and the Sumptons'. But these two lower houses were identical and looked the same age and the pine tree stood before the right one but the wrong number. I kept muttering at my puzzled relatives: "But I know we were in 15 and 15 was next door to the Sumptons' because in the backyard at 15 we had a figtree and when I climbed it I looked straight down into the Sumptons', I'm sure I did."

We drove away, nutting it out. Dulcie's tramcar had been demolished, the number 17 transferred to the house across the lane and 15 given to the lower house

which must be new. Yet it was clearly the same style and age as 17. The mystery was unsolved and tantalises me even now. It was alarmingly like that famous sequence in Resnais' 1963 film 'Muriel' in which residents of Boulogne sitting in a café reminisced about this corner of their city as it had been before the bombing of the Second World War. Said one: "The *tabac* was here, where we're sitting now", said another: "Oh no, the *tabac* was around the corner, where we are now used to be the hairdresser's." A third: "No no, the hairdresser's was one block down." They argued on, the solid stones of their past dissolving into a haze of nostalgic miscalculation.

Set against the ups and downs of a whole life the glimpse of those East Fremantle houses could hardly be more trivial. It resounds in the mind because the incident pulled a mat out from under what had seemed to be my safest possession, the memory of my childhood.

These weeks and months here have brought a sense of a city and a community so changed as to be, in many parts, unrecognisable, a society maybe split and atomised, maybe not, too soon to say, but a society, it seemed to me, in need of healing rituals, secular rituals carrying no overload of factional conflict such as the orthodox religions now seemed to demand. A minority find satisfaction in theatre or in music, rituals which send us out, not feverish to destroy those whose beliefs do not chime with ours but, at best, renewed, rejoicing in understanding a little more about our fellow humans — and at the least, after, say, a cheery, unpretentious musical, exhilarated by the artists' skills and our ageless human pleasure in song and dance. A minority, yes. But the majority? Ritual in modern Western life is scarce and I did not even know that I was looking for it.

And then, in mid-April, my mate and I made a decision. For the first time in forty years we'd be in Perth on Anzac Day and felt the desire to do something we'd never done in this city. And so with a sister keen to share the experience we got up at 4am and by 5.20 were on our way to King's Park for the Dawn Service.

As we approached along the road bordering one bushland side of the park the sight of other cars, tail-lights moving slowly ahead of us in the dark, gave me an odd shiver, a sudden memory of old movies about Klan meetings, cars moving out of town and towards the nocturnal gathering place. We took a right into the main entrance and prowled along the narrow road, the left side already ribboned with early-arrived and snugly parked vehicles. Off to the right we found space in a parking bay and in only a few paces joined the crowd semi-circling the war memorial.

This, I'd always felt, must be about the most impressive position in the whole of Australia for the Anzac Day observance. King's Park has a unique place in Perth people's iconography and on each return is a spot I always want to visit, day or night, for its grand panorama, not only, below to the left, of the city skyline which these days has sprouted dragon's teeth, but especially for the great sweep of river below and the low hills beyond. The War Memorial, a simple obelisk on a wide square base, stands right at the edge of the hill. It was floodlit which accentuated the black void behind it, a string of dim yellow and blue street lights threading through suburbs on the far side too insubstantial to relieve the darkness. I gradually became aware, in that darkness, that hundreds of far from sinister or Klanlike people stood about us or between us and the cenotaph.

The mood was patient and quiet. Scraps of unrelated conversations: "She never wanted to come and then one year she did but it was too much for her." "Uncle said

Of course he's not too young, he's got to learn about these things." And the longest which went something close to this. "Oh but what got me, when Harry was in France he made a point of going to the part where the battles took place in the First War and every village had its own little memorial with all the countries and all the men who'd died there and there was his grandfather's name and just before sunset some of the villagers came and put little bunches of flowers on the memorial and at the cafe opposite the bloke said yes, they did that almost every day even after all these years and not just for their own men, for all the foreign dead too because their families couldn't, being so far away. And Harry said he was that moved. You know, so far from home." No-one in her group spoke for a moment and then a man said: "And Harry's not a sook, either."

At about 5.40 the floodlighting on the memorial suddenly snapped off. The obelisk, "that" (as someone called one in foreign parts) "accusing finger pointing at the sky", was a black silhouette against, we now realised, the very first traces of light above the distant hills. And we understood what a haunting site it is from which to experience The Day. A deep, quiet voice, gently amplified, read — very well — a brief history of the Gallipoli campaign and how it had happened there on a remote Turkish beach and cliff. And then — nothing. Something like half an hour went by and a few thousand of us stood there waiting. Later that day we would hear that at Gallipoli itself the Turkish and Australian authorities between them had messed up the official 80th anniversary observances with a long hiatus as veterans and other visitors waited for the top brass to arrive. And with us no voice, no music. Nothing. Except that the pale light came up behind the hills and soon — where before had been only blackness — cast its glow upon the great expanse of river way below us. (Uncannily one was reminded of those men facing a dawn rising behind black heights, though in their case intimidatingly close not distant and the water in between immediately in front of them.) Gradually the sky — in true Westralian fashion totally cloudless *of course* — paled from lemon almost to white. The river shone like silk. A muffled drumbeat was heard as the first veterans slow-marched in to take their place at the memorial. The proceedings had begun.

Again, though, nothing happened and for a very long time. The rising light behind the memorial revealed the silhouettes of figures moving from one side of the plinth to the other for many minutes and in silence. We assumed that they must be placing wreaths and would like to have known who was represented. A discreet commentary would have helped. But ceremonies in reality are not as portrayed in theatre and films: discrete, irritant-excluding, perfect. People in the crowd talked, babies cried and no-one seemed able to pacify them. And at the only moment when an official did launch into a speech on the historic deeds some sensitive soul decided to drive away on his motorbike and nothing else could be heard. And then the truly Australian thing happened.

In the surrounding trees kookaburras began their low warbling chuckle and progressed to the usual raucous laughter, taken up by scores of others all about and adding, from then on, its own sardonic commentary to the proceedings. The 'cannon' salute — one bang — sounded high-pitched and hollow. The Last Post as always evoked a few gentle tears — and yet it seemed to me, as it often does in recent years, to be played deadpan without feeling. (I had decided that I must be imagining this and glamorising my memories of ceremonies past but, in one of the TV shows on the 50th anniversary of the end of World War 2 in Europe, a clip from a newsreel of that

time revealed it played with just the right amount of expressiveness to convey, without sentimentality, its terrible sense of loss.)

In fact, the whole ceremony activated the producer-director in me, I wanted to get my hands on it and fill in the blanks. Amplification of the only two spoken sections was so low as to be barely audible beyond the first few rows. There was no music. One didn't expect Mahler but I wouldn't have minded a band playing something suitably muted. At least the lack of hymns meant that the ceremony stood free of religious dogma and practice. I have always disliked blood sacrifice, however courageous, receiving the blessing of the church.

But maybe I was wrong to view it all as a production in need of a better sense of presentation. In a letter to the morning newspaper a woman who had been in the gathering at King's Park wrote to protest at even the small amount of amplification there was. Those present wanted, she felt, only to go there, to be there, to feel their private feelings merge with those of others around them as they, in the sturdy old phrase, paid their respects — and not to have what she obviously perceived as the slick mechanics of show-biz and the media disfiguring the occasion. Not for the first time my professional instincts proved inferior to those of the public.

At the end that morning the old boys quietly, to one soft drumbeat, moved rather than marched away. Even in the official speech there had been none of what we used to call war-mongering. But however low-key the ceremony it was the demeanour of the crowd that I took away from the experience. In grief, or in many cases simply to make their gesture of acknowledgment to those who bore the load of struggle and death as coming later we have not, they conveyed a sense of gravity, of dignity, above all, of community — but thoughtful, serious, not mindless as so many mass gatherings can be.

A long time ago I wrote a play on this day and its significance. In the 1950s we lived in a modest flat in one of Sydney's then decidedly unfashionable Western suburbs. Anzac Day meant only one thing to me: it was a holiday. I helped to run a small opera company, its singers part-professional part amateur; the holiday meant that the latter were free to squeeze in an extra rehearsal. I took the train into town, came up at Bebarfald's corner opposite the Town Hall and, startled by the press of the crowd gathered to watch the march, managed to squeeze through to a side street not on its route and so free of massed bodies. On the way home some hours later the Mums and kids were wisely absent, the streets dotted with groups of drunken men. I thought nothing of this but from the train on the return journey every street visible seemed to have its share of wild, uninhibited activity. From Summer Hill station along its main shopping street and up into Smith Street I ran — or rather walked — the gauntlet of groups in various stages of what we might now call alcohol abuse and in moods from the ebullient to the ferociously aggressive. I was young, skinny, bespectacled and studious-looking and was glad to get home. Many ways to rationalise it: as something akin to those ceremonies (in Ireland? New Orleans?) where the approach to the cemetery is sombre but after the funeral comes the celebration: or as an inevitable and forgivable release of feelings in those buttoned-up, tight-minded, ultra-conformist '50s. And yet ... there still seemed something disturbing about it for amid the good-natured tipsy revels was a nasty vein of resentful and vindictive violence. Why? The street images of that day stayed in my mind, something simmered and a few years later I wrote that simple, innocent little play.

I was attacked in Parliament, surely by someone who had not seen or read the

piece, as "unpatriotic, subversive, a Communist". The play was chosen by the Drama Committee of the first-ever Adelaide Festival as the Festival's official Australian play but then banned by the good burghers of Adelaide who ran the Festival Board. It was taken up by a small drama group headed by director Jean Marshall, without whose courage (and it took courage in those Cold War days to mount any criticism of Our Side) the play might never have been heard of. Some of them told me years later that the whole of the opening performance they'd been on edge half-expecting the hall to be attacked by indignant patriots. The performance took place immediately after the Festival — with no perceptible damage to the moral fibre of the South Australian population. The first professional production took place in Sydney the following year, opening on April 26th, the 25th itself having been thought too provoking. The dress rehearsal was held the day before, i.e. on Anzac Day with celebrants fighting and vomiting in the alley between the Palace Theatre and Adams' Hotel. We had a phonecall to say that someone had planted a bomb in the theatre. The police cleared the place, searched, there was no bomb, it was a hoax. Critics were divided but the public seemed to recognise themselves and their families in the play and took the debate in their stride. When the MTC did it, John Sumner, with his usual chutzpah, invited some RSL representatives, including Gallipoli veterans, to the first night. They remarked to me after the show that they'd been 'done well by'. Two years later it was a set text in many Australian schools. The subversive had become a tiny part of the Establishment. I decided it would have been more honourable to be a thorn in its side. I went to London for its production there but meanwhile a television play of mine had been banned by the ABC and, fed up, I stayed on in London — especially as that same television play was sold by my agent within three weeks of my arrival and was on British screens within a few months. I have not thought of these things for years but being in Perth in April brought them all back.

Did I learn anything from the Anzac Day observance? If there had been any lingering trace of Hughie in me it would have been melted away, surely, by the experience of the silent crowd at dawn on that hill above the river. Do I then recant? Were the clock turned back would I or would I not write that play? No prizes for guessing the answer.

TANYA DALZIELL

'Make Bombs Not Cakes': *The Australian Women's Weekly* Souvenir Tribute to the War Effort

To mark the fiftieth year commemorating the end of the Second World War, the March 1995 issue of *The Australian Women's Weekly* has produced a sixteen page souvenir tribute which aims to acknowledge the varied roles and efforts of women during the war. Until recently, women's experiences of war had been all but silenced by masculinist narratives, and thus it is important to acknowledge the achievements and protests of women as civilians and as members of the armed forces. However, as a letter by Mrs H.E. Fox published in the magazine in 1941 and reprinted in the supplement warns, "Souveniring is one of the pettiest forms of theft at any time".[1] Whereas Mrs H.E. Fox was concerned with contemptuous women who stole caps and grabbed buttons from the heads and uniforms of young servicemen, my concern is in part with the fragments of visual and written texts, snatched from history, collected as collage, and presented as souvenir.

The souvenir offers itself as representative of the concerns held by *The Australian Women's Weekly* during the Second World War. It presents images and discourses of femininity that were constructed, circulated, consumed and contested during the war years when the magazine played a significant part in advocating and mobilising particular behaviours, values and subject positions for women in the social world. If a distinction between 'the text' and 'the social world' is at all possible, it is at the intersections of these notions that my concerns lie. At such sites the conflicts and conflations between discursive representations of femininity and women's social experiences emerge. This may be even more apparent to the contemporary reader of the souvenir than to those women for whom the content was originally intended. That it is not to say that the readers of the magazine during the war were any less aware of these contentions; indeed women negotiated them daily. Rather, I suggest that is necessary to consider both contemporary readings of the souvenir as well as the historical context in which women read and responded to the magazine during the war.

The magazine promoted the importance of women's participation in the war

1. *The Australian Women's Weekly* (*AWW*), March 1995, 91.

effort and prescribed their 'appropriate' roles which shifted in accordance with labour demands. An article written for the souvenir recalls the magazine's influential status and authority during the war:

> As Australia's premier women's magazine, respected and trusted by a readership which even then numbered more than a million, *The Women's Weekly* was in a position of power and responsibility. ... There were heartwarming features about patriotically large families (including one memorable clan which consisted of 16 children), Victoria Cross winners, Land Army girls and the increasing number of women joining the army, navy and airforce.[2]

Magazine covers, advertisements, photographs, fashion advice, poetry, recipes and letters to the editor are reproduced in the souvenir alongside contemporary articles, editorials and interviews which celebrate the efforts of women on 'the homefront'. The souvenir subscribes to what Susan Sheridan has identified as the magazine's "time-honoured practice of claiming and valuing the separate space reserved for women by patriarchy."[3] While a space specifically concerned with the experiences and desires of women is an appealing proposition, it is also highly problematic. The 'separate space' embraced by the magazine is located within a masculinist discourse and is inhabited by a patriarchal image of an ideal heterosexual woman which is pervasive throughout the pages of the souvenir. The cover from a July 1940 issue reproduced in the supplement is illustrative of this model of femininity. It depicts a thin-waisted, full lipped, young, white, middle-class, married woman wearing a crisp apron and preparing a presumably delicious dessert, despite wartime rationing. This social fiction obscures the complex interactions of gender, class, sexuality and race that are at work in the image and throughout the souvenir.

Thus despite the claim made by the news and features editor of the magazine that the tribute is presented mainly through the texts of the wartime editors,[4] the supplement is not simply an 'innocent' offering of history. It is the product of a present perspective on a past which involves a selection process that implicitly practices exclusion, denial and silence. The souvenir avoids a self-critical revisiting of the magazine's own influential socio-historical position during the war as "supporter of the family unit and the role women played in keeping the home fires burning";[5] however I would resist reading the supplement as an unproblematic example of what Linda Hutcheon has identified as a "nostalgic return".[6] Hutcheon defines this 'return' as a negative component of a binary which privileges its positive term as "a critical revisiting, an ironic dialogue with the past of both art and society."[7] A reader of the 'nostalgic' or sentimental text is positioned as a passive consumer, while the text itself is seen to be reflective, unsophisticated and naive. However, as Sheridan argues: "Nostalgia involves desire, loss, longing, and a certain pleasure as well as pain in those emotions ... [t]he desire to revisit our own pasts."[8] This notion of

2. Pat McDermott, 'We answered the call...' *AWW*, 82.
3. Susan Sheridan, 'Reading the *Women's Weekly*: Feminism, femininity and popular culture' in Barbara Caine and Rosemary Pringle (eds), *Transitions: New Australian Feminisms*, Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1995, 93.
4. Jerry Fetherston, 'Still on active service' *AWW*, March 1995, 80.
5. *AWW*, 80.
6. Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Faction*, London: Routledge, 1991, 4.
7. Hutcheon, 4.
8. Sheridan, 99.

nostalgia is empowering in its recognition of the reader as an active social entity and complicates Hutcheon's definition by positing a volatile relation between pain and pleasure that threatens to conflate the binary structure upon which Hutcheon's thought is founded. Considering the gendered cultural status of *The Australian Women's Weekly* as a women's magazine, and its powerful position in a so-called 'mass culture' which is conventionally characterised by its passive, 'feminine' consumers,[9] to accept the souvenir as a 'nostalgic return' in Hutcheon's sense of the term may reinforce such discourses rather than challenge the assumptions upon which they are constructed as Sheridan suggests.

Significantly, the preface to the souvenir is situated outside of the supplement. It includes a message to *The Australian Women's Weekly* from the Minister for Veteran Affairs, Con Sciacca, thanking the magazine for contributing to the nine million dollar 'Australia Remembers: 1945-1995'. This government funded project programme incorporates many forms of media which are identifiable as part of the project by the wreath-like logo depicting a returning soldier embraced by his family. Jerry Fetherston, the coordinator of the project, also welcomes the cooperation between the federal government and the magazine to produce the supplement. I believe it is important to acknowledge the history shared between the magazine and the government, as this relation has had far-reaching implications for women. In her study of women's magazines in England Cynthia White has observed:

> The Government, realizing the importance of the women's magazines as channels of communication through which instructions and announcements could be broadcast to women all over the country, maintained a close liaison with their editorial staffs.[10]

In this country, *The Australian Women's Weekly* has been one of the largest circulating magazines since its advent in 1933. With an average weekly circulation of over half a million by 1941,[11] this powerful magazine enjoyed a large and dedicated female readership during the Second World War.[12] It sponsored a policy of full support for the war and was quick to condemn dissenters. Selected editorials reproduced in the supplement suggest that the magazine encouraged women to enlist with "the second line of defence [as] the majority [of women] serve best in keeping the family cheerful and happy, in keeping the doors of the home bolted and barred against uncertainty, panic or nerves".[13] During the early years of the war the magazine reinforced the importance of women's family responsibilities by reproducing persuasive images of attractive women mindful of carrying out their domestic duties. An article in the souvenir notes that "well-groomed women were seen to be morale boosters, their femininity and vulnerability an incentive to menfolk to defend our shores."[14] Attention to toilette, culinary skills and sensible economic management were seen to contribute to the war effort.

9. See Andreas Huyssen, 'Mass Culture as Woman: Modernism's Other' in *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986.
10. Cynthia L. White, *Women's Magazines, 1693-1968*, London: Michael Joseph, 1970, 123.
11. Andree Wright, *'The Australian Women's Weekly:* Depression and the War Years; Romance and Reality', *Refractory Girl*, no. 3, Winter 1973, 9.
12. Both Cynthia White and Andree Wright have noted the sense of community and friendship that was forged between women's magazines and their readers. See Wright, 9 and White, 124.
13. *AWW*, 82.
14. *AWW*, 93.

The souvenir depicts women knitting socks for soldiers and making camouflage capes for children during the first years of the conflict in particular, highlighting the emphasis *The Australian Women's Weekly* placed on the needs of family and nation over the desires of its female readers. These discursive representations of femininity constructed certain behaviours and values that the female reader was invited to identify with:

> "Guns before gewgaws. Planes before pleating. Sweeping victories before sweeping skirts...so you're going to do without that evening dress and you're going to share up those yards of material with two other women and a child. Isn't that okay by you? Of course, it is!"[15]

During this time women began to volunteer their labour to a large number of relief organisations and as the war continued, *The Australian Women's Weekly* played a significant role in encouraging more women to enlist with the armed services and various volunteer groups. The value of this community work has often remained unacknowledged by official histories of the war effort: women's contributions were seen to be mere extensions of their domestic skills and 'natural' feminine qualities. However as Anne Summers argues, some volunteer work undertaken by women involved learning and applying new skills and knowledges. In October 1942 for example, the Australian Women's Land Army was formed with the purpose of building a battalion of mobile rural workers,[16] but while many women saw such collectives as offering them differing and exciting experiences (and indeed some of them did), their labour potentials were engaged by patriotic sentiments which called for women to work for little or no wage.

Recruiting posters for the Australian Women's Army Service reproduced in the souvenir originally appeared in the magazine telling women that 'You can do a REAL job — A MAN'S JOB!'[17] While this discourse encouraged women to enlist, it also served to devalue their domestic work. The magazine also sponsored a government initiative that required women to enter into factory work under the Manpower (sic) Regulations of 1942,[18] overlooking the large numbers of lower middle-class and working-class women who had been engaged in paid employment prior to the war. The cover of one issue published originally in 1943 and reprinted in the supplement called on women to 'Make Bombs Not Cakes'.[19] It exemplifies the ways the magazine's discursive position shifted in accordance with the official government policy of the time. In the social world, women employed in traditionally male-dominated industries and services doing 'real jobs' did not earn the same wages as men. Women recruited for active service during the Second World War for instance, were employed in both traditional and non-traditional occupations yet they received lower ranks and wages than men. Further, these women were not entitled to the dependants' allowance granted to men serving in the armed forces,[20] highlighting the common assumption that women were dependent on a male wage as a principal source of income. Women were not recognised by officiate discourses as possible

15. *AWW*, 93. Original reference not identified in the text.
16. Anne Summers, *Damned Whores and God's Police*, Ringwood: Penguin, 1994, 461.
17. Recruiting Poster, *AWW*, 88.
18. See Summers, 463-464 for her analysis of the paternalistic patrols and controls carried out by police on these young women.
19. *AWW*, 89.
20. Summers, 459.

primary providers of financial support for family and kin, and their economic and social autonomy was denied.

The magazine's promotion of opportunities and experiences for women outside of the home can be seen as a response to a popular attitude of the period that saw women in the social world wanting to contribute more to the war effort than socks. However, as Andree Wright argues, another influential factor must also be considered. Edward Theodore, the chairman of *The Australian Women's Weekly*, was installed as Director General of the Allied Works Council in February 1942. This Council was created to assist in solving the problem of labour shortage experienced by industry. In this capacity, the body worked closely with other government departments and committees that were responsible for the control and dispense of labour and capital. One month following Theodore's appointment, Frank Packer, then Managing Director of *The Australian Women's Weekly*, was assigned as Theodore's Aid. Wright asserts that the immediate involvement of these men in labour mobility reforms would have intensified their recognition of paid employment for women as essential for the Australian economy during the war.[21] Moreover, it would not be surprising if the interests and ideologies of the government council and the magazine directorate, which both men served, were in constant conversation, whether intentionally or not.

While the mobilisation of labour under the National Securities Act of January 1942 offered new social and economic opportunities for many women,[22] these advances were not seen as an explicit challenge to the gendered division of labour that characterised Australian society. The 'private sphere' was still seen to be the appropriate domain for women and when the war was over, it was expected that women would leave their newly found employment (and the economic and social advantages it may have offered them), and willingly return to their 'proper' place - the home.[23] As the visual texts in the souvenir show, *The Australian Women's Weekly* promoted this ideal as the end of the war approached. The image of a confident woman with a welder in her hand that had once appeared on the cover of the magazine in 1943 was exchanged for the popular figures of the returned soldier and his young bride in 1945. Advertising served to identify women with an increasing consumerism which would come to characterise later generations of women.[24] During the years of restriction, advertising had consoled its customers with the knowledge that the troops were benefiting from their collective sacrifice. However as the end of the war drew near, foodstuffs were pledged by advertisers and a domestic haven was promised to returning soldiers by *The Australian Women's Weekly*. The editorial below was originally published on August 25, 1945 and it is reproduced in the supplement:

> His riches are being restored to him...children's laughter and the sight of a small, sleepy head upon a pillow...an armchair by the fire and clean sheets...tea in the kitchen and a woman's tenderness no longer edged by unspoken fears [...] This redirection of all our minds is the first great blessing of peace.[25]

21. Wright, 12.
22. See Summers, 460 for further discussion.
23. Summers quotes John Curtin from an interview in *The Australian Women's Weekly*, 14 August 1943, 10, as saying: 'most women will ultimately be absorbed into the home.' Ibid., (1994), 465.
24. Sheridan, 99.
25. *AWW*, 96.

These widely circulated gender assumptions were employed by reconstructionist policies and reinforced by conservative institutional discourses. Ideally, women's labour was to be demobilised and the ideology of family was to be promoted. *The Australian Women's Weekly* had an average weekly distribution of 650,000 by 1945,[26] and assisted in promoting such principles. Textual and visual representations of feminine behaviours and values urged the magazine's female readers to return to what was assumed to be their pre-war occupation of maternal homemaker in some post-war patriarchal utopia. What is important to note here is the way the supplement faithfully reproduces the image and idea popularised by *The Australian Women's Weekly* that women were content in performing home duties, at the exclusion of other subject positions experienced by women in the social world. As Shirley Sampson argues, this notion has been a consistent theme within the pages of the magazine:

> It's not that working women don't exist at all in the pages of the *Australian Women's Weekly*, but they exist ONLY as wives and mothers and housekeepers. They are not portrayed as active and independent units in an economic system [...] The image of the role of women is of home duties as central.[27]

In the social world, women did not necessarily accept these very real pressures.[28] Working-class women in particular continued to participate in the labour workforce after the war, as they had prior to it, especially during the Depression. The new knowledges and skills gained from active involvement in the armed forces and in industry also encouraged some women to challenge the discursive formations that relegated women to the domestic realm. However their political and cultural agitations were undertaken in a highly conservative post-war period preoccupied with patriarchal reconstruction rather than feminist deconstruction, and thus their efforts were all but silenced.

The front page of the souvenir reproduces the image of a woman originally published as the cover of the magazine issued on the 13th of September, 1941. It is at once the most disturbing yet revealing in the supplement. Almost grotesquely erotic, the woman is positioned on a dark background, her head thrown backwards, her scarlet lips parted and her arms thrust above her head, her palms cupped. Her facial expression combines pleasure and agony. Her naked torso is consumed by flame and fire, and a plane formation frames her body as small shadowy figures of soldiers occupy the foreground. This figure heightens the ambiguity of women's position in the textual history of *The Australian Women's Weekly* and in its subsequent presentation in the souvenir. While her presence suggests the magazine's central concern with women, she is constructed as an object of the male gaze and symbolically constrained by the phallic flight-paths of the planes that trace her body.

These textual and visual representations of women in the souvenir may be seen to map the changing discourses of femininity circulated by *The Australian Women's Weekly* during the Second World War. While the souvenir resists 'a critical revisiting' of its content, it implicitly opens up a space in which the textual history of the maga-

26. Wright, 9.
27. Shirley Sampson, '*The Australian Women's Weekly* Today', *Refractory Girl*, no. 3, Winter 1973, 14.
28. Summers, 466.

zine, with its gaps and absences, can be actively read in conjunction with feminist historical accounts of women's protests and contributions to the war effort. It is through such readings that we may begin to understand the complex relationships between the discursive representations and social experiences of those women who negotiated these gendered constructions daily in the face of war.

Cover details *The Australian Women's Weekly*, September 13, 1941. As reproduced in *The Australian Women's Weekly* Souvenir Tribute, March 1995.

ALAN ALEXANDER

The Tale Of Kieu

There was a war and then you came
padding out of the aftermath
a small, dark, fit man
always smiling, courteous
serving the chicken, beef and rice.
Regarding your fate, I cannot say
since you passed out of touch before
a main encounter could take place.
Once, I read The Tale Of Kieu,
your people's classic, in which a girl
sells herself, a concubine
to save her own; and though
ill-used in the hollows of life,
maintains her sense of honour
to be at last at the starting-place
united with family and betrothed.
It is said The Tale Of Kieu
like a shadow winged
is known in lines by the hundred
to those members etched within.
But today, no lord in his field nearby
came in, building traditional woe
but an exuvial, stranger dragon
his slough in the burst border,
fact on a late screen.
Vietnamese, wherever you are
swimming the rivers back to source,
sewing the garment of your country
force with ideology,
force behind his stalking horse
took us to the nadir.
The child lacking proper bone
displayed by a grieving nurse
the tot with little brain
gave us our nightcap,
our own Twentieth Century.

RITA TOGNINI

My Father's War

(i)
Prelude
September 1939

Larches turn coppery
storms bivouac over the lake
snow begins its skirmishes
to the tree-line.

Maize, rye, a little barley
are harvested
grapes picked and pressed
animals moved from high pastures
to lower ground
apples cachéd in attics
corn cobs hung under eaves to dry.

Autumn
Here, as elsewhere,
the season holds
within its Maginot line
armed to repel
winter's advance.

(ii)
Albania — 19 March 1940

The feast of Saint Joseph. An army
in retreat, carrying its wounded
in country blighted by rain, cold and mud.

Someone gave him food, small green
plums, he thought. He tasted,
expecting a sweet transparency,
but dense, sour, salty flesh filled his mouth.

It was some time
before he could relish
the taste of an olive.

(iii)
Malaria Ward, Skopje

The malaria ward, like his valley, was long and narrow.
Its walls rose darkly, like mountains.
Rows of beds faced each other like the valley's villages.

Each morning the sun gilded the bed, his village.
Delirious, he called to cattle grazing in uplands.
Comrades in distant beds lowed faintly their replies.

The doctor knew his valley, talked of its spires,
the dialogue of bells that shaped the days.

He survived.

(iv)
Railway Station, Larissa

The troop train moved out.
A loaf of bread was thrown.

A pack of children
set upon it like dogs.

A shot
dispersed all but one,
who lay still
and neither whined nor moved.

(v)
Athens

He saw the Acropolis
and a German soldier
face the firing squad.

Führer, Volk and Vaterland
had been the soldier's cry.

Keine Kinder und meine Frau
were his last words.

(vi)
Crete

He came to the island
knowing nothing.
Palaces, kings
and labyrinth
were beyond his imagining.

Each day he dug trenches.
Each day Stukas came.
Each day bombs fell.
He knew, each day,
a trench might be his grave.

Grateful for small things:
half an orange from a guard,
a friend calling his name,
the soft trench soil,
as Stukas flew in
bombs exploded
the island burned.

He witnessed the minotaur's return.
Disguised in crisp, white
field marshal's uniform
the creature stepped from a seaplane
a smile on its mouth
a glow of cruelty in its eyes.

In dreams he sees
the parachutes float down,
balloons from the ceiling
of a dance hall
after a party:
pink and violet
black and yellow
deadly white.

(vii)
My Mother's War

She was neither woman nor child
at the beginning
a girl on a bike
who raced the wind down mountain roads
a girl landlocked by peaks
who sat at attic windows
trying to imagine the sea.

She was a woman with child
at the end
a woman on foot
on a mountain road
who heard a plane
saw it bank, turn,
fly towards her, strafing the hillside,
who threw herself to the ground
rolled down the slope
clutching her bag like a lover
who lay face-down in the snow
alive.

ZENON PIRGA

Polish Uncle

Drink. Drink. "Nazdrowie" is the toast over and over.
Memories polished with vodka, bitter-sweet, burning.
Old war songs, the soldier's stories advance
Across his plains unrelenting, a restless army.
Blitzkriegs, cavalry, communist treachery, prison, Siberia,
Sikorski, the Polish First Army, the long march from the Urals
To the streets of Berlin. Terror, hunger, blood and glory
Swirl about the displaced heart mourning a dispossessed home
In the east. But there is no going back.
He walks cobbled streets; sleeps in a house built by strangers.

The medallion he holds, recognition of his travail,
Rankles the soul. This plug to cover the void;
This coin to pay the cost he can neither cast away
Nor clench tight enough to redeem the true price paid.
"Nazdrowie". Good health companions drink and sing.
Tales flow from him bitter-sweet and deep.
Odysseys diverge, converge in words emerging from the dark.
His voice wavers as he sings breaking icons in the tones.
His moist eyes gaze over fields where wheat and forest
Stretch to the sky, and he marching, marching.

ANDREW BURKE

Anzac Day March, The Mateship and All

Again our son marches for Skin,
his great grandfather on
his mother's side, in the Anzac Day parade.
I don't want to tell him about
the kitchen commando, the drunk waster.
He marches for an ideal and
an innate sense of Aussie mateship. They're
true enough. His mother and I
watch the parade, have a coffee
during the speeches. Our son is
a born leader, doing the right thing
since he was tiny. We have marched
to a different drummer ...

After the march we drive home,
my wife enthusiastically recalling
old codgers on parade. Young Aussie males
cop her scorn more often than not ...
It's definitely on her mother's side, only
infant males and old men get the nod ...
We arrive home and turn footy on TV.
I see the son of a park drunk playing
for the opposition, wearing a black armband.
His dad was unwell last time I saw him —
I held him up to shower in a detox centre,
then shaved his cratered face. He was
losing a battle in 'Nam. The next day
we watched footy on TV. He leant forward,
'That's my boy, in the pocket.'
'Yeh?' I was impressed, 'Ya want me
to find 'im, tell 'im you're here?' 'Nah,
we're worlds apart, he wouldn't wanna know.'

These gladiators are heroes of peacetime.
The unarmed combats are in the bars
and kitchens where the umpires look
the other way and nobody wins.
'Did ya see that?!' my son yells, amazed.
I've got to say I didn't see anything,
wrapped up in my own tales of mortality,
a park drunk's son kicking two goals in
the first quarter, the commentators
proclaiming 'a new lease of life'.

Skin never met the boy who marches for him,
never saw him ruck in Sunday footy, or
open the bowling against the breeze. Skin
was a real bastard when it suited him,
an Ocker of the old school, but
who's to judge ... Let he who is
without sin, I say, and leave it at that.

DESMOND GRAHAM

Like Submariners

Like submariners who may be
men with a mission sweating it out
in cubicles just big enough to fall down in
when the carbon hisses through the tubes
or glint toothed murderers, gripping the periscope
to spot unwary merchantmen waddling
through beam seas, with a cargo of pignuts,
steam coal and cheap tin trays, *Achtung*
hissed through the mouthpiece and the torpedo
slipping out swift as a sheath knife
through dark: like the characters on Conqueror
thrilled a bit in their piece of surgery, taking out
with the old riot of limbs and screaming
what every boy knew, the Belgrano,
and the silence that followed, schoolboys
who had hit the goose with the boulder
and knew now they could only run.

JEAN LANG

Who only stand and wait: Extracts from *The Land Of Was*

Born in 1912, Jean Lang achieved prominence as a writer, artist, teacher and long time worker for the development of the arts in Western Australia — particularly through the Fellowship of Australian Writers. The following extracts from her unpublished autobiography, The Land of Was, *provide a glimpse into women's experience of Perth in wartime, a story seldom told.*

* * *

Winter 1939 brought a widespread epidemic of mumps. On the other side of the world international troubles were foreshadowing another world war. An Italo-German Alliance had already been signed. In Warsaw recent Anglo-Polish Military Talks concluded with an agreement for mutual resistance to aggression. It seemed only a matter of days even hours, before (as I wrote later)

> War like a maddened beast broke loose
> and over all like death, thundered through still skies.

Late in the evening of 3 September 1939, I sat alone reading beside a radio cabinet. Suddenly the voice of Robert Menzies, Prime Minister of Australia, boomed out. Germany had invaded Poland. Great Britain the mother nation of the British Commonwealth had declared war on Germany and because of this, Australia was also at war.

Yesterday seemed so far away and tomorrow yet to be born. My head was spinning with the vastness of it. Strangely in a big empty house I did not feel alone.

Abyssinia, Austria and now Poland had been invaded. All next day and the next and the next, the radio talked at top speed but how much real news was coming through and how soon would events affect the lives and security of Australians?

Recruitment began in earnest for defence forces that had been allowed to dwindle to a skeleton in the crippling years of the Depression. Volunteers for military service enlisted as an infantry division known as the 'Second Australian Imperial Force', for the duration of the war and twelve months thereafter, or until lawfully discharged.' The five home divisions of the Australian Army were on war footing,

the sixth was to meet the new emergency overseas.

That year Christmas coincided with their pre-embarkment leave. Early in January 1940 Australia's new army of khaki-clad young men, company after company, marched through the same crowded Sydney streets as their AIF counterparts had done almost forty years before. A week later, with an impressive looking convoy, they were anchored between Rottnest Island and Fremantle, their last homeland port of call.

I will always remember that day. A little crowd — some with cameras — moved freely on the hill above Leighton Beach. I wondered how many of my school friends would be in that contingent.

The small permanent force was to stay put and was not eligible to join the AIF. Would they be labelled chocolate soldiers wherever they went? 'They also serve who only stand and wait' — cold comfort indeed for men like Court, my fiance, in the Permanent Force who expected to be the first to see action overseas.

Unarmed volunteer civilian guards who sheltered each night under bridges and in odd places around Fremantle, needed hot drinks and sandwiches to sustain them. This was the immediate responsibility of Court who was now the Quartermaster at Artillery Barracks. How shockingly unprepared the Defence Department was at this time.

* * *

Come what may, Court and I decided to get married. Banns were called at a city church on three consecutive Sundays according to law but neither of us was there to hear them read. To be called a bachelor seemed fair enough for a man but to be called a spinster conjured up visions of a crusty attic-ridden old maid; I was twenty six and Court three years older, then considered an acceptable age for marriage.

Quartermasters were usually single and lived in the Barracks. Special permission, slow in coming, was required for marriage. Army pay of one hundred and fifty pounds a year ($300) seemed inadequate although there were some who said that two could live as cheaply as one. Accommodation of any sort was scarce. Even a bedsitter with use of bathroom and kitchen stove was considered a find.

Suddenly the way was clear for our marriage plans to go ahead. Father, in Perth to attend a conference, consented to perform a private ceremony at a suburban church chosen to avoid uninvited weeping women who always found something to weep about at weddings — and stickybeaks. Our family always drew a sharp line between real friends of our own choosing and tolerated acquaintances. A sort of snobbery no doubt, but one tempered with sincerity.

In Geraldton, three hundred and fifty miles north, Mother and May toasted the bridal pair at four o'clock on 7 March 1940 after May had come in from school.

If my only sister could not be my bridesmaid then I would do without one. Court therefore would have to do without a best man. He would have to dig down in the top pocket of his military jacket to locate the ring. After all a marriage was a contract between two people and nobody else really mattered.

Standing at the kerb outside the church was a smart little red sports car borrowed from one of the barrack-room boys. In the strong afternoon sea breeze the ten-minute-old bride held her cartwheel hat with both hands. That and a street length white linen dress with embroidered collar and flared skirt, had been bought

with so many clothing coupons torn from my precious ration book, as well as money.

Ten or so wedding guests drank a toast in a big house on the Claremont hill overlooking Freshwater Bay. Afterwards there was Granny Knight to visit at her home in Claremont. She had seen many brides in her time but never one dressed as I was — a dress far too short and a hat worn at an angle likely to fly off at any tick of the clock. Little Granny who had been a widow for more than half her ninety odd years, suddenly amazed everyone by jumping up from the rocking chair and tugging at my hat to straighten it.

Helen Crowe my sister-in-law was waiting at the door of our first home — two furnished rooms in a house in Mosman Bay. Did she think she was the proverbial mother-in-law issuing one instruction after another and when, I wondered, would she make up her mind to go home?

I had planned the first day of the rest of my life. I would slip out to the kitchen, cook breakfast and bring it in on a tray and then ... without warning the bridal bedroom door swung open. In came the landlady and plonked down her offering of two plates of curry on toast that looked like a leftover from last night's dinner, before making her exit, as sudden and dramatic as her entry.

More shocks were to come. A request for a front door key or one for our rented rooms was refused. No furniture pictures or ornaments were to be rearranged. The landlady wanted her tenants to feel they were part of her family. This was her excuse.

On the second night of Court's three day leave, he saw that the thick curtain covering the small high window opening on to the side enclosed veranda where the landlady slept, was trembling as if resisting a draught. He felt for the glass pane but it was missing. Would we have to talk in whispers to avoid eavesdropping?

All too soon he went back to Barracks until his next leave. I decided to teach myself Morse Code and practised on Court's dummy key. "Was she a spy? With a husband in the army too!" I heard a neighbour remark. Everyone in wartime was suspect, especially Jehovah's Witnesses. Was I one of those? I laughed when I was challenged but a few weeks later I discovered the truth. The landlady *was* one of those.

* * *

Some relief came when a friend recommended us as tenants to an old couple living near the ocean. Two unfurnished rooms and use of kitchen stove at less than half our present rental, meant that we could possess a few pieces of furniture to call our own. When Robert Courthope arrived on 4 December 1940, he was bathed in a large enamel basin on the shared kitchen table after it had been cleared of breakfast dishes. He thrived on breast milk and put on weight according to the scales at the Infant Health Centre. He seemed contented enough although I grew thinner as the months passed. Living in such cramped conditions was a day-to-day existence but so were the times and who could foretell how long the war would last and what would be the outcome?

Piece by piece in quick succession Germany overran Europe. After Dunkirk, Italy intervened to support Germany. France fell. Britain then stood alone. A restless Japan, making provocative threats, acquired the use of air bases in Indo-China.

Convoys continued to leave Fremantle. Sometimes I saw ships at anchor as I pushed the pram up the hill for the baby's daily outing.

To all but a few the nineteenth day of November 1941 came and went like any other but a few days later when Fremantle Naval Headquarters reported that HMAS *Sydney* was overdue, RAAF planes searched north over the Indian Ocean without success. News of her loss with all hands off Carnarvon in an encounter with the *Kormorah*, a disguised German raider, was kept secret at first by Canberra but filtered through.

RAAF planes sighted lifeboats. A whaler from the *Kormoran* was taken in tow by the *Centaur*, a coastal cargo and passenger ship. When the survivors complained of being cramped they were transferred to two lifeboats and the whaler was hoisted aboard. But why were there no survivors from the *Sydney*? Had they been machine-gunned in their lifeboats before the *Kormoran* scuttled itself?

Survivors walked down the gangway at Fremantle fully dressed and neatly shaved although they had been at sea for many days. Many carried kitbags and suitcases. All were tight-lipped. Perhaps it was the first time they had seen Australian soldiers in battle dress. "Some cringed expecting to be struck in anger", Court told me that night. As one of the guard he felt sure that the whole nasty business had been well rehearsed. He said no more.

Posters on railway stations or wrapped around street lightpoles, shouted their timely warning to civilians. The enemy listens. DON'T TALK. Another asked 'Is your journey really necessary?'

On one of my afternoon walks with my baby, I found that an empty brick house in Rosser Street Cottesloe, about twenty years old, was for sale. I calculated that I could rake up just enough savings to cover the deposit. With a good supply of clothes and linen in my 'glory box', I knew I could make do with the barest essentials. After much persuasion, Court agreed. As it was wartime the agent insisted that the transaction and title deeds were made in my name. I sold everything I could do without except my books, music and paints and took out three mortgages. Somehow I would meet the payments on time.

The house with wide French windows to ceiling height had no curtains, the jarrah floors no covering. The wood stove in the kitchen — silver-frosted to disguise rust and missing parts — had no chimney, but it was a place to call home.

We moved in on 6 December 1941. Robert's shank broth and sago custard were cooked on a small fire that needed constant stoking, in a large open fireplace in a room next to the kitchen.

Two days later following an attack on Pearl Harbour, John Curtin made a late broadcast from Canberra.

I did not have a radio but next day I read about in *The West Australian*. "Men and Women of Australia, we are at war with Japan", the report read. Briefly describing events of the day he outlined measures "decided on quickly but in no atmosphere of panic. One thing remains,' he said 'and on it depends our very lives. That thing is the co-operation, the strength and will-power of you, the people. Without it we are indeed lost... The call is to you, for your courage, your physical and mental ability, your inflexible determination that we, as a nation of free people shall survive.... WE SHALL HOLD THIS COUNTRY."

It was a new experience to live in a house without other adults and I wondered how I would manage at night. In the dark empty silent house I often heard the

unmistakable assurance of the still small voice.

That evening Japan attacked the Malay Peninsula. Two days later the British battle cruisers H.M.S. *Repulse* and H.M.S. *Prince of Wales* were sunk off the east coast of Malaya. Daily the danger of invasion came closer.

"They'll be coming up the beach when they come", the postman said. "The barb-wire entanglements won't stop them." The shoreline was reefbound but air raids, incendiary bombs and paratroopers were a possibility.

Searchlights swept the night sky. Volunteer air raid wardens patrolled the streets to check for any chinks of light that could assist the enemy. Like other housewives I pasted sheets of brown paper blackened with paint over fixed windows. Extra wide black Italian cloth — one of the few materials available in shops — was made up into blinds with ample overlay at edges. On exit doors, these cloth blinds — rolled up during the day — had fixed battens top and bottom to prevent them from being blown about at night. Long conical shades on indoor lights shed only a dim downward beam, quite useless for reading, knitting or studying.

It was early to bed and early to rise for mother and baby son because I had no clock or radio nor were any for sale in the stock-depleted shops. Even writing paper, envelopes, toilet paper, elastic, pins and needles were unobtainable. But safety pins for some unaccountable reason were plentiful and made a good substitute for pegs on washing day.

Zig-zag trenches were being dug on street verges. A next door neighbour built a board lined air raid shelter in the backyard, like an underground room, and invited me to share it. Others fled to 'safe' country areas leaving empty houses in most streets. Everyone carried an Identity Card to be shown on demand. Petrol was rationed. Some cars had gas producers that burnt charcoal hitched behind them. All had masked lights and a large white square patch painted on the back.

IF THE ENEMY COMES STAND FIRM CARRY ON the people were told. With its defence grossly inadequate the nation united as never before, its war effort far beyond the limitations of political parties.

Court was on Rottnest Island six miles west of Cottesloe Beach. At the command post some ex-naval guns could together engage a battleship. If this happened, or in an air raid, I comforted myself with the thought that he would not be far away. I packed a small case with nappies, a large tin of Lactogen, some bread rusks, a bunny rug and a torch and left them at the end of the lobby where the architraves of three doorways set close together, should give us some protection. Should I be hurriedly evacuated, I could carry the case with one arm and the baby on the other.

* * *

Japanese bombs, the first to fall on Australian soil, hit Darwin on 19 February 1942 four days after the Fall of Singapore. Then it was Broome's turn. Wyndham, Derby and Katherine followed. More bombs fell on Darwin. John Curtin in Canberra issued a clear-cut statement that shook the British Empire and left the enemy in no doubt about its meaning. The Pacific struggle was not to be treated as subordinate to the general conflict. "Without any inhibitions of any kind, I make it quite clear", he said "that Australia looks to America, free of any pangs as to our traditional links of kinship with the United Kingdom."

General Douglas Macarthur's arrival in Australia to be Supreme Commander at

John Curtin's invitation gave Australians new hope and confidence. General Blamey, Commander in Chief of the Australian Military Forces, was placed in command of the Allied Land Forces in the South West Pacific Area. American troops arrived in large numbers. In some circles it was said that they were 'overpaid oversexed and overhere' but in reality people looked upon them as timely defenders.

Day after day went by without any exchange of adult conversation. Goodmornings and goodafternoonings — and a smile — were cheerful enough as a greeting for someone walking in the opposite direction. But before long I found that baby talk — a sort of noun-verb lingo — had taken over my vocabulary. I would have to do something about it.

A number of my poems were published in *The Western Mail* at a payment of two pence (1 c.) a line. Two pence would buy a postage stamp, a sheep's head to make broth, or a bunch of carrots, all expendable. Proceeds from a whole poem would buy a book, a lasting thing and this I often did.

* * *

Bobby was talking fluently now and great company for me. Court was soon to go overseas — where nobody knew. Would he embark before the birth of our second child? We hoped for a daughter.

On the afternoon of 24 August 1944, because it was difficult to get a bus or a taxi — or even an ambulance — I walked with Bobby about a mile up the Stirling Highway hill to Doctor Rockett's surgery and sat waiting my turn. The waiting room was full. Most doctors were in military service. Almost single-handed Doctor Rockett covered the area from Cottesloe to Fremantle.

Pains, yes I had pains but there was so much to do first, I told him. Immediately he rang for Father who had saved enough petrol from his meagre monthly ration for such an occasion. Luckily he was at home. By the time he had cranked the car and covered the distance I had walked home, removed the washing from the line and was waiting for him with Bobby and the cases.

It was a twenty minute drive to King Edward Memorial Hospital. Anne arrived a few minutes later, as if to oblige, without any fuss. Court saw her briefly before embarkation. Would he come back from overseas to share our new responsibility?

There were more than a million Australians in uniform, almost one in seven. The mists of futurity that Joseph Furphy once joked about were indeed the mists of uncertainty. Women were still being man-powered. On the other hand, men were not classed as being woman-powered. They all had a part to play in the war effort on the home front, even housewives like me with the care of small children.

In spare time I designed posters for the War Art Council. 'Buy War Saving Certificates. Help the Men behind the Guns' was one message. Another suggested that the war effort could be helped by growing vegetables in suburban backyards. These were exhibited in Perth but because of wartime printing restrictions were not distributed.

A district survey of empty accommodation in houses was made and I was obliged to let half the house at a Government controlled rental. I hated the idea of sharing my home but had to comply. A young recently discharged veteran of the war in the Middle East came with his bride and a large dog that had the run of the whole house. More than once it knocked me off my feet and frightened the new

baby. This man displayed his own war souvenirs. To get to the front door I had to step over a German battle helmet riddled with bullet holes. He drank heavily and would roll home late at night.

I knew that I could not be turned out into the street as long as my mortgage payments were met on time, but what I didn't know was that I could not legally get rid of this undesirable tenant. I approached Legal Aid, but because it would be a case of a soldier's wife acting to evict a soldier and his wife, they could not appear for me in court.

A friend who worked for an estate agent came to my rescue with a typed copy of a legally-worded, official-looking, routine eviction notice. When the postman asked the tenant to sign for the receipt of a long brown registered envelope, the man demanded to know why. "Silly woman," he said. "We live under the same roof so why didn't she just hand it to me?"

Next day by chance or by God, whatever you believe, Irwin Crowe one of Court's brothers about to be discharged from military service in New Guinea, was home on leave and made a surprise visit. The sight of an A.I.F. officer in uniform who introduced himself only by surname — the same as mine — and spoke in a stern but quiet voice, startled the man and kept him guessing. Would the bluff work?

On the tenth day when the notice was to take effect, I arrived home at about five o'clock after an all-day visit to my parents on the far side of Perth, and found long scratch marks across the floorboards of the front veranda as if something heavy had been dragged over it in a hurry. I hosed down rude and crude words chalked along the red cement path. Perhaps the man had relieved his feelings in this way. Inside the rooms were locked and a peek through the keyhole showed them to be empty. Tomorrow for safety's sake I would get new locks fitted.

I wrote regularly to Court although I never knew exactly where he was. A standard printed reply gave no details of movements. Only *I am well, I am not well* and the like, to be ticked off and signed with love. One afternoon I arrived at the front gate of a friend's house to find that the telegraph boy had preceded me with bad news. 'Killed in action' in cold type devastated my friend. I tried to comfort her but felt helpless. The fear that it could someday happen to me was always in my mind.

Before daybreak on 5 July 1945, John Curtin died in his sleep. He had pushed himself physically to the limit. Never again would I meet him walking his dog Spot from his home in Jarrad Street to Napoleon Street on a simple errand — to purchase a pound of butter with coupons or a loaf of bread at Peter Macalister's grocery shop. The man that Macarthur referred to as 'The heart and soul of Australia' never found it necessary to have a bodyguard, even in London or Washington.

On the following Sunday I took the children to see the array of flowers and wreaths that completely covered the footpath outside Horace Green's local funeral establishment only a few hundred yards from John Curtin's home. Many of them had been made by Madge Payne the florist next door. It was unusual for burials to be conducted on Sundays but this one was of national importance.

I had almost returned home when a sleek black car with a gun-carriage behind carrying a flag-draped coffin, drove up Rosser Street and down the next to position itself in front of John Curtin's house. The man who had risen to the highest place in the land had come back to the place he always regarded as home.

That afternoon thousands of people stood along the route to Karrakatta Cemetery to pay respect. Police motorcyclists led the way, followed by a line of cars three

miles long.

The sudden termination of the six year old war came a month later. Court was at Morotai in the Halmaheras where, at a surrender ceremony, Japanese soldiers threw swords on to a central pile. Australian soldiers cast lots. Court won his right to claim one, not as a weapon but as a souvenir.

Men were being 'demobbed'. From islands north of Australia they filtered back to their homes. It was then when 'peace broke out' that Court transferred to the Army Education Service in Morotai. Now he was free to write long letters home full of day to day events.

I looked forward to the postman arriving at the door with bulky parcels containing presents that Court had made for us between nightly patrols in almost impenetrable jungle. A stitched solid leather schoolbag for Bobby was embossed with a design of a war plane flying over a field where yoked oxen pulled a hand plough. A brown suede shopping bag for me was large enough to hold everything I could buy when food restrictions were lifted. I wondered at his patience and skill when I saw the enormous zipper, the inside seams all double stitched by hand and the short but strong beautifully thong-bound handles that would support a weight more than I could possibly carry.

I waited anxiously for his return. Weeks and months went by. Anne was crawling but not on hands and knees. One leg was tucked beneath her bottom the other moved rapidly across the floor like the claw of a giant crab to pull her along at a great rate and leave her arms free to move about. Bobby had started school. Court would never know their baby years nor did they know him.

The sun that crept across the autumn sky by day dipped its heat into the India Ocean but there was still enough light for me to hand water the front garden. This was the time I had to myself with the children already in bed.

I saw a tall figure turn the corner and cross the street. I did not recognise Court until he spoke. He looked so much older and thinner. The face underneath his slouch hat was atabrined yellow. He unshouldered his kitbag and dumped it on the path. A kiss, a hug and the hose I was holding squirted water all over the wall. Suddenly the world felt different. When he entered the house in darkness, I reached up inside the back door for the light switch. The black-out days had gone for ever I hoped.

I put on the kettle. There was so much talking to do but words did not come easily.

JEFF DOYLE

Missing in Action?
War 'Through Women's Eyes'

What follows is in part a review of an exhibition at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra. But preceding the review proper, I offer some brief observations and opinions on war and gender arising out of both the exhibition and its broader cultural embedding before and during the 1995 'Australia Remembers' year. The exhibition discussed is: 'Through Women's Eyes: Australian women artists and war 1914-1918' at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 30 July 1994 — 30 June 1995, and thereafter in Brisbane. But first ...

VP Day is Now — 15 August, 1995

On the VP day anniversary, after the long broadcasts of the Brisbane Parades, speeches and interviews, the ABC devoted an hour to the results of secondary school research projects funded by the 'Australia Remembers' guiding institutions — mostly the Department of Veterans Affairs. The students presented summary views and the TV coverage made it clear that these were typical responses. Indeed, the broadcast validated them. My concern is not with the children's work, nor with the pedagogics of the exercise but with the implications of how the 'research' treated its subjects. Some students had gone to great lengths to understand the technologies of World War 2, some of the battles, the ubiquitous homefront concerns of 1945 (more of this below), and some had focussed on the people. Speaking as typical, one young female student observed the nature of her research time with her subject — a woman whose husband had been killed in World War 2 — reading letters, looking at photos, talking of course. The student's research result offered a curious sense of the undertaking. It was not that she had developed an understanding of the subject's experience of anxiety, of various kinds of loss, of grief, even of recovery. It was more that the student had herself now developed an experience of the very events.

The distance is surely not an accident. It was not a mediated experience she spoke of; it was of having shared an experience. She spoke the language of the interactive video game — World War 2 had been transformed into a simulated environment which the game player could enter and experience for themselves. It seems to me that much of the 'Australia Remembers' year offers just such a large scale simulation. And moreover, through the invitation to be interactive many of the year's

events begged self validation of the very process of their appropriation of the lives of others as grist to the mill of 'here and now'. It has been a year of highly acquisitive gestures, highly normalising, indeed utterly conservative. Some may consider this honouring, some may consider it remembering. It seems transforming to me; not into ethical memorising but into a commodity for owning. It makes too much of World War 2 (and by implication other wars) safe, and by extension removes the corporeality of death and suffering from all participants by making it all equally available.

Through Women's Eyes?

That this gesture of appropriation occurred between two women is not an accident. For it speaks to a major concern about the 1995 remembering — the sense that in the main women are still missing from the representations of war, certainly missing in and from the action — the areas of performance in the tellingly termed theatres of war. True, large numbers of women marched in all the parades, and acknowledgement of participation in the services and on the 'homefront' was and is still demonstrated in all of the guides, programs and exhibition catalogues published. And it isn't true to say, as it might once have been possible, that these women's roles are consigned to areas of cultural value somewhat more minor than that of the active 'male' theatres. Or so it seems. Indeed the very revaluation might in itself produce the most disturbing effect.

Why? For a start there's something wrong with that levelling safety effect. Undoubtedly, the generally pro-war aura of the remembered 1945/1995 is disturbing by itself. But here's the rub. At the risk of being essentialist, repositioning women's experience of war as no longer in the minor key is not necessarily to identify it as newly and separately validated. Rather it is possible to see the act of repositioning as another gesture of the appropriation of war and its cultural aura (however gendered) into that commodity structure of the simulation. In this way women's war is still 'missing in action' — now it's threatened with being just another part of the over-arching cultural experience.

The exhibition 'Through Women's Eyes: Australian women artists and war 1914-1994' challenges this gesture and presents dissenting voices. Contained within its own boundaries the exhibition charts an interesting history of the ways in which Australian women artists have responded to war: eighty-nine works ranging from sketches, prints, posters, and paintings to a number of small sculptural installations filled the small back gallery at the Australian War Memorial. The works themselves are of uneven quality though none is weak. Indeed many are quite striking — both skilfully executed and beautiful pieces by recognised artists. Apart from the natural pleasure of seeing good works well displayed, the more important value of the exhibition lies in the argument it mounts. And here congratulations are due to the staff — most warmly to its curator, Lola Wilkins. Her short introduction to the exhibition catalogue makes a succinct but strong case that the chief intention of the exhibition was to redress a balance; this was the first exhibition solely of women's art at the AWM.

The exhibition sets out a chronological sweep of the eighty years of Australia at war and the ways women artists have responded. As Wilkins observes, such a compact exhibition cannot be exhaustive, but the selection works well. The task set

Hilda Rix Nicholas, *A Mother of France*, c.1914, oil on canvas 72.6 x 60.2 cm.
(Courtesy Australian War Memorial (3281).)

by the curators were as Wilkins outlines to pose a few questions. What motivated women to artistic depiction of war? What are their themes? Do women see war differently? and (a variation), Is women's art different? The first two might be seen as versions of the essentialist question, and the second pair as a version of trying to define *peinture feminine.* Sensibly, Wilkins leaves the answering of those questions to the structural effect of viewing the works of art in sequence.

Generalisations pose difficulties, but the eighty-year span does unfold the tendency of art to move from realism and varieties of modernism through to the more 'adventurous' post-modern and collage effects of the last decades. The painterly effects are paralleled by a gradual emergence of women's art as more politically motivated. They indicate a movement away from essentialist themes of the early part of the century, towards a more intellectually posed notion of political and artistic subjectivity. It's a broad overview and easily challenged by looking at the same paintings from another perspective; so perhaps a few examples may help my case.

Hilda Rix Nicholas' powerful painting *Mother of France* (c. 1914) concentrates on grieving and suffering, motivated, Wilkins suggests, by her own family losses. This is then a traditional female response. The same may be said of Vida Lahey's *Rejoicing and Remembrance* (1918), posing within one frame the pleasure of war's end and the remembrance of the losses it occasioned. The appeal is to strong emotions strongly depicted. Rightly, Wilkins argues that both of these paintings and others would counter the notion that women's art in the 1910-1920 period was soft, decorative and hence trivial. In an essay published in the *Journal of the AWM* Wilkin's supports this view when she cites Nicholas' *A Man* (1921) as a "boldly painted work where the figure of the Australian soldier dominates the canvas and embodies strength, steadfastness and resolution, his weapon at the ready" (50). True, it is a strong, bold painting, but in every way it projects the world view not of a feminist response, or of something different from what the male artists were offering, but of a continued allegiance to the masculine value markers. Wilkins herself does it with that (it's surely ironic?) "weapon at the ready". In this sense World War 1 women remained missing from the action.

In World War 2 women had insisted on more involvement. Economic considerations forced that hand as well and total war saw significant changes. The themes shifted and active women in near front-line situations are now often the subjects of the paintings. There are some genuinely exciting works here. Nora Heysen's work is just the most outstanding among many others. Putting her *Transport Driver* (1945) against Nicholas' *A Man* demonstrates the shifting paradigms nicely. Much of what Wilkins observes of the Nicholas could apply to Heysen's driver, sans weapon, although she does have a truck! Heroism has shifted or rather broadened its gender capacities. Different and new kinds of heroism are evident also in Sybil Craig's modernist depictions of munitions work. The lively, interesting surfaces of works such as *Impression* (1945) or the various depictions of factories at Maribyrnong and their workers (such as *No 1 Projectile Shop, Maribyrnong* (1945), *Working on a Le Blond Shell-boring machine* (1945)) convey some of that sense of liberation from constraint — a liberation which characterised the lives of many women in World War 2.

Of course women at work weren't accepted all that easily. Dora Hawthorne's *Potential Absentee* (1945) consists of a triptych-like group of images showing the difficulties of women trying to balance their still perceived 'natural' roles in the home

with the new work. I want to pose this one against Albert Tucker's well known night time horror landscapes of the war; landscapes replete with good-time girls and random nasty sex — by way of contrasting the types of women available for depiction at that time. Hawthorne's painting seems to me a stark countering of that easy locking away of women as promiscuous sexual predators, upon which so much of male war imagery relies. That a kind of freeing up of sexual activity was also enhanced by World War 2 can't be denied, but it's rarely a positive image; mostly it's turned to the 'needs' of sexually starved men. In a perverse sense, it seems to me to be the counter or flip side to the over emphatic grieving of World War 1's depictions, or to the equally limiting view of women waiting for *his* return. Both represent women as passive. Hawthorne's image by contrast frees those lines of thinking.

And while the Vietnam images from Mandy Martin (*Vietnam*, 1975)), and Antoinette Starkiewicz (*Pieta*, 1971)) among others, announce a determinedly liberated politics, the subject matter takes a swift turn back to the passive — imagining women and children as victims. The same seems true of the responses to the Gulf War, though a slight shift in subject matter broadens the scope — in general it is now refugees (ungendered) which provide the imagery. Of course to be a refugee is essentially to negate the possibility of being a combatant and to rob the image of some kind of masculinity. But perversely, even these images validate the masculine as the necessary presence within war. Wrong, aggressive, even evil, the masculine is still the lurking strong image.

Only Gay Hawkes' post-modern-style sculptures seem to question the nature of military power by daring to poke something like black comic fun at the pretensions of warring males. Her soldier on horseback (*Off to the Gulf*, 1990) is a boy's toy made from junky bits of wood, wire and other 'waste material' — a 3-D cartoon capturing the gung-ho tone with which the Gulf was sold to the West — a figure at once recalling the Light Horse and John Wayne's 7th Cavalry melding with Wagnerian valkyries (shades of Colonel Kilgore from *Apocalypse Now* are invoked). It's a crazy, terrifying toy.

That trend to politicisation initiated in the ironically liberating effects for women of World War 2 war work seems diminished in the Cold War and in the responses to the various so-called little wars which followed Korea. But with the exception of Hawkes', little of the post-1950s art on show demonstrates anything new or innovatively feminist in its images, despite its often aggressively anti-war stance.

In seeking to provide a different view, to balance the traditionally masculinist depiction of warfare, 'Through Women's Eyes' is constrained by the narrative its own documents present as innovative, as redressing an imbalance. But the exhibition is made more interesting by its willingness to parade contradictions. In being denied access to the front line, women artists in World War 1 relied initially on conservative and mostly essentialist depictions of women in war as passive, as waiting, as grief bearers. As World War 2 brought broader definitions of the nature of the front line, so too heroic action and other masculinist characteristics and attributes of war imagery were forced to adapt, and female passivity and male glory were alike jostled by new images that redefined heroic action for both sexes. By contrast post-World War 2 art at times seems to have renegotiated the territories of World War 1, as women's art once again seems fixated on suffering and passivity. So too its anti-war stance seems little more than predictable, both in its repertoire of images, however focussed on Asian, African, or Gulf icons, and its vocabularies of

outrage that hardly exceed those of Lindsay's demonic 'huns' from World War 1.

It seems that in rejecting those newly defined World War 2 notions of heroism, women's art was subsumed into a broader movement in which all aspects of war are rejected. In that sense all anti-war art from the post-1950s is feminist, since it rejects a whole vocabulary of essential masculinist values. No wonder there was a need for an exhibition to re-balance the standard Australian War Memorial collection. 'Through Women's Eyes' might indeed have been a much bigger 'good thing' were the whole not so deeply embedded in the wider social context of the 'Australia Remembers' year. As the VP day television history showed, the popular media has little notion that there were roles for women beyond the focus of loss and suffering. In that context, the Australian War Memorial's small balancing act, its exhibition-as-narrative, opened up the whole question of that engendering of warfare, and established at last one location in 1944-95 where women were not 'missing in action'.

Nora Heysen, *Transport driver (Aircraftswoman Florence Miles)*,1945,
oil on canvas 66.6 x 81.8 cm. (Courtesy Australian War Memorial (24393).)

ROSANNE DINGLI

The Most Fortunate Children

World War Two in Malta — an unforeseeable end

The orchard in the grounds of the palace of the Marquis in Naxxar was sealed off. From the high parapet of the forecourt at Parisio Palace, the children could see the Marquis's men harvest sacksful of oranges.

There were about forty children of different ages, from barely walking toddlers to adolescents of fourteen. And among them, of course, the four children from Spinola.

One of the easiest games for such a large crowd of children was Hide-and-Seek, because it had no complicated rules. If any of the youngsters forgot what to do they were easy prey for the Seeker, and the game ended quickly. It was always fun.

The four Spinola children were surprised that autumn, to be told they could not stay in the family home any more. Or for a while at least. War had been declared. It was dangerous on the coast, even in bays as serene and picturesque and seemingly harmless as Spinola. They would be taken to the Marquis's Palace, where they would be safe.

"There is a war on," said Emma, the mother. "We are evacuees. Would we ever have imagined this, to be evacuees?" She helped the maids fold children's clothes, becoming more a hindrance than a help when she stood in the middle of the great nursery and wrung her hands. Everyone milled round her large frame; maids, husband and all the children, the smallest of whom, Carmen, was only five and the most inquisitive.

"Are we really going to the Palace? Will we really have only two rooms? Will Pheny and Livy and Juanita really not go to school any more?"

"Shh. Yes, come now. We are all going in the car. Where is your hat?" Someone screwed a felt hat on her little head and bundled Carmen into the back of the big black Chevrolet.It was the only one of its kind on the island, and soon there would be no more petrol available to drive it.

The other three children and two maids left no room for her to sit. She finally perched on Livy's lap, looking back out of the car's rear window as the big house and Spinola Bay retreated into the distance.

"Will we still see the sea?"

"Don't squirm," complained Livy, who, as only brother and the eldest, had the right to issue adult like behests to all the sisters.

Arriving at the palace in Naxxar presented more surprises. There were dozens of people already there; families disgorging from cars and vans. There were cabs with nervous horses, and a big green bus from Sliema with all the aunts. No one had told the Spinola children they were going to have to share the palace with everyone else they had ever known.

"All the aunties!" Juanita remembered Christmasses and feast days. Money and presents and boiled sweets in tiny paper bags. Brown wooden pencils and square lined notebooks on which to form her letters and draw pictures of boats and fish. She was the middle child and the quietest, always making way for Livy, the oldest and wisest; Carmen, the tiniest and most spoilt; and Pheny the second and most competitive child who was sure God had made some mistake in making her a girl.

The rooms they were assigned were large, with high ceilings and ornate cornices and chandeliers. Emma burst into tears when she saw the low window sills and tree tops three storeys below.

"My children will all fall to their deaths!"

"Emma, there is a war on. Bombs are going to fall from the sky. No one will fall out of windows." Rosario, whom everyone called Zas — but whose wife called him Luz — was nothing if not patient. He turned his large wife from the window so she could look at the mass of bags and boxes, crates and hampers that stood in the middle of the outer room. There was such a lot to be done.

Of course, children did fall out of windows, and much more. The first time it happened, it was the boy Livy, but luckily it was from a storey below the one where he lived with his family. It was another Hide-and-Seek game, but for boys only. Thirteen or so of them scattered in the palace grounds, whooping wildly like indians they had seen flickering greyly in films. Livy slipped inside through a side door and made it unseen to the rooms of the Carbonaro family on the second floor. No one saw him as he climbed the sill and walked out onto the ledge, but his small falling body was glimpsed by a gardener from the orchard.

"Falling boy! Falling boy!" the man cried in stunted English, imitating what he thought to be emergency language he heard from British soldiers garrisoned outside Naxxar. Everyone rose to the occasion, one of the older men even donning an ARP helmet as he ran.

Livy was rescued from the soft density of an oleander bush whose white flowers crushed to brown and smelled sickly, like almonds.

"You fell into a poisonous tree," said Juanita, looking at her brave brother in wonder.

"And Mama fainted," said Pheny. Mama was always fainting. When they told her Rommel was in North Africa it took a while to rouse her and face the fact there were four hundred miles of Mediterranean that separated her from the desert, and the entire Allied Forces to protect her and her children.

Every day, the Marquis's men came round the rooms, treading softly in the wide corridors, which had become public areas since all the evacuated families took up residence at the palace. They knocked as softly as they could on each ornate door and waited. A servant or mother would open to receive oranges from the gardener's hands. One each for every child in the family. When the oranges started to dwindle, in early summer, they had plums and loquats, handed out in all manner of receptacle.

There was little meat. Occasionally, men would be sent out to Naxxar to buy the entire carcase of a sheep or a calf, and the families would have a great meeting. Each mother held a large platter and would take to her rooms a section of meat and offal. Of course it would disappear very quickly, as consumption had to happen within a few days or the meat would turn.

Vegetables were abundant the first year. The older boys were rounded up to hoe and pull carrots and otherwise expend extra energy that came from being cooped up in close quarters with their families. They became adept at tying onions and turnips in small sheaves, and selecting potatoes with eyes, for the next planting.

"I am going to be a farmer when I grow up," Livy announced one evening.

Emma's eyes brimmed over. "See, Luz, what this war is doing? Not only do we hear bombs and artillery, and see soldiers marching past our very gates, but our children change before our very eyes."

"They are the most fortunate children on the island, Em," said Zas. "They eat well and have room to grow. Remember what we know about the families in Valletta and the three cities."

Emma nodded and wiped her tears.

"And you, young man, will do no such thing. Tell your mother you will be at the bank, adding up rows of figures!" It was part joke and part mandate, and although he shrugged and did as he was told to comfort his anxious mother, little did Livy know the truth and prophesy of his father's words.

Parisio Palace was immense, thick walls shutting out the world and all that was happening in it. Destroyers limped into the Grand Harbour, Messchersmidts droned over the islands and Beaufort guns rumbled from Fort Ricasoli and Delimara Point. Little affected the children at Naxxar. Their parents looked upward even when indoors as the low rumble of distant planes or gunfire could be heard, but the youngsters kept on eating or writing their lessons with no concern.

They were herded together, laughing and shuffling when the air raid alarm went off; more and more frequently now, its scream piercing the night. Babies bundled in blankets were held in arms, together with valuables like jewellery and leather cases the insides of which no child had ever seen.

Everyone descended into the shelter excavated early by the Marquis's men. It was deep under the palace; deeper than the wine cellar which was so familiar now, as all children had hidden there often enough during games. But it was not allowed for them to hide in the air raid shelter. Locked during most days, it was at night that they all filed in, children drowsy and irritable from being woken suddenly.

They sat on wooden benches and lay on forms ranged along the sides of a long low tunnel whose loose earth sides were sometimes dry and powdery and made the children sneeze, and sometimes damp and clammy, making mothers worry about rheumatism and pneumonia.

Someone would start saying the Rosary as soon as everybody was settled, and the night would pass slowly, to the sniffles and snuffles of the youngest and trumpeting snores of the oldest.

The little child Carmen was teased and humoured, allowed in most simple games by the older children because she got left behind quickly and would soon run

away crying to be comforted by a maid. But Pheny was one of the ringleaders, rough and ready as any of the boys.

"I want short hair," she announced one morning. "I can't play properly with long plaits. And they take ages to do in the morning. And I hate snarls and tangles."

Emma was horrified. "Girls don't have short hair."

"In films they do." The girl was thinking of the blonde with black eyes, whose long neck and cropped hairstyle she admired in a recent film.

"See what happens? Films, war... Luz, what is to become of our children?"

Zas prevented further tears by saying their daughter would soon grow out of her tomboyish phase, but he could not help a smile and a wink in Pheny's direction as she shot off to play trains with the boys. As it happened, Pheny did get her crop, but not quite as she hoped it would happen.

Morning fruit was eaten and the children had sat at makeshift lessons, scribbling obediently and longing to be set free into the gardens.

They whooped as they scattered at a run, organising games as they darted around flowerbeds and tree trunks.

"Joseph is it! Joseph is the seeker. All the rest of us — hide!" The order went out and forty or so little bodies sprinted away in all directions, Pheny among the fastest to disappear.

But they would not find her today. She had found a new hiding place, an excellent cubby no child had discovered yet. It was an ancient toilet, a small room with an almost invisible door under a mass of oleander branches to one side of the stone shed where gardeners kept rakes and sacks of lime.

The door was a bit stiff, but Pheny pushed until she could slip in, jamming it back behind her. It was not very dark, because the fanlight from the door was missing, but dust and cobwebs filled the small space, greying the ancient funnel-shaped toilet bowl whose lid had ages ago fallen drunkenly to one side, warped and flaked and riddled with woodworm.

Pheny did not allow herself to be frightened: it was sissy to be scared. Was she not the bravest of them all? When bombs whistled overhead she hardly winced. When they heard the approaching drone of Italian planes, she would smile and urge the others to think of the Royal Airforce planes out at Hal- Far and Luqa airstrips. But a little shiver went up the back of her neck as she swept away a large cobweb so she could crouch in a corner.

"They'll never find me here." Her eyes just above the old bowl, she looked inside and was immediately petrified by what she saw. A massive black spider clung to the side of the inside of the toilet. Pheny froze, unable to scream or move. "They'll never find me here." It became a desperate thought.

Would no one rescue her, pull her from that place and kill the monstrous thing? Why had she never admitted her terror of spiders?

She dared not look again into the bowl, but she was immobile, dreading the black thing would crawl out and get her.

She heard loud whoops from the garden. Laughs and wails and children shouting her name.

"Come out, come out, wherever you are," they sang.

And soon, "Hey, Pheny — the game is over. Come out!" The tone had changed, and children were calling for adults to say Pheny had disappeared.

Emma was in a state. "She has been kidnapped by the enemy. Held for ransom.

We must raise the white flag. Surrender!"

It was getting dark before the gardener found her, crouched stiff and terrified, babbling about a big black spider that would get her, forgetting to be brave and crying 'like a girl'.

Two days later, Pheny was still silent. Emma kept her inside, soothing her with stories and trying to dispel the thoughts of spiders. She put her daughter to sleep with a lamp by her side, and rose to her cries at night.

"It was an awful shock. We have never seen her like this. She was such a terrible tomboy." Zas was more worried than he showed. Pheny would usually have been out of a state in a few hours.

A doctor was brought in on the fourth day. "Has no one looked at this girl's head?" he asked gently, parting Pheny's hair to show pimples and boils all over her scalp.

Emma was once more in tears. "This war is making victims of us all," she cried.

Doctor and husband consoled her, comparing her fate and her family's with that of more unfortunate souls who did not have the Marquis's palace to escape to.

"There are children who have boils from malnutrition, Em. This is nothing serious. They are hives brought on by stress."

So Pheny sat up straight on a kitchen chair in the yard while Emma clipped her hair close. Hot flannels were applied to her scalp to suppress infection, and she was soon running around as brightly as ever.

"Oh dear!" exclaimed her mother. "She is even more naughty than before."

"Yes, but I think somehow we shall always be able to find her." Zas sat back on the cane garden chair and looked around him. The children had grown. They had been in the palace well over a year. Was there no end in sight to this war?

The previous night they had prayed in the air raid shelter. The Marquis himself had made a rare appearance in the morning, shaking the men's hands and bowing shyly to the women.

"Zas," the small nobleman said, inclining his head to indicate he wanted a private conversation with the man from Spinola. "This whole business is going to take much longer than any of us ever thought. Some say it is going to take years more than the Great War. They are now conscripting older men ... and younger men. The craters at the airport have to be filled in between flights. The bombings are constant. Valletta is all but obliterated."

The men fell into silence, nodding their heads and craning their necks to listen when they heard distant anti- aircraft guns. The wail of the siren did not take them by surprise. Together with the gardener and his men, they herded the families once more into the long low tunnel, prepared for a long uncomfortable day of apprehension and disorder.

That night, Rosario had a dream. It was remarkably vivid and believable, except for the cloaked figure of Saint Joseph, who beckoned to him. "The bank in Valletta — the Marquis's bank — it is going to be bombed in the night." And Rosario saw a vision of rubble, on the crest of which the strongroom of the bank appeared, its doors blown open by the blast. It was empty, only a few shreds of metal and other debris inside.

Waking confused but remembering every detail of the dream, Zas formed a resolve, with a detailed plan to match his dread. Men with wheelbarrows were summoned from all over — from as far away as Rabat. They assembled in a day,

eager to listen to what the man from Spinola had to say. They were all old — some disabled, as all the fit individuals were now manning guns and radar posts along the coast and at airports — and all had found a wheeled conveyance of some sort. There were wooden vegetable carts, wheelbarrows, children's billy carts and old wicker prams.

Under Rosario's instructions, the great convoy began. From the bank in Valletta, all securities, bullion, cash, ledgers and documents were placed in crates and boxes and carted by whatever means to a destination the men only knew when they got there. The long motley snake of wheeled conveyances and the men that pushed them were a strange sight through the bombed and ravaged streets of the island. They walked and pushed, almost in silence, for the entire day, hardly understanding what it was they were transporting.

"We are bound for Mriehel," said one veteran to another, as they wheeled their carts under the sun.

"How do you know?"

"Look — that is the aqueduct. They are taking us to the brewery."

"Well — no finer place for us to finish this task," said the companion, wiping sweat from his brow.

It was true. The brewery, after all, was another of the Marquis's properties, built far inland and looking for all the world like an innocuous school or hospital from the air. The men filed in slowly, now with long intervals between cart and wheelbarrow, pram and trolley. After dark, the convoy trailed still, under the light of paraffin torches lit for them by women along the way.

By midnight, all the bank's assets, documents and records were safely stowed in empty vats and whatever other space could be provided. With a sigh of relief, Rosario surveyed the day's work. "I may be horribly wrong, and all this work may have been for nothing."

"I am pleased with your foresight, Zas. Better safe than sorry." The Marquis's small frame was almost unnoticable in the strange crowd of dishevelled men. "Let's give all these valiant souls some beer to take home and a sovereign for their efforts."

There was a cheer as the men received their payment. It was well spent. There was hardly a week of interval before a cry went up that the Marquis's bank in Valletta had been bombed.

"You should see it, sir!" panted the messenger who came to the palace with the news. "I could not believe my own eyes. The whole place is a mass of rubble — huge blocks of stone thrown up like playing cards... and the strongroom lying on top with its doors flung open like a church!"

In the chapel, on his knees, Zas looked sideways at his wife. Her head was bowed in appreciation for something she hardly understood, and her lips mumbled thanks to Saint Joseph.

"Perhaps this means the end of it all, Em," he said quietly, his hushed sentence filling the silent chapel like a speech.

Emma looked up as if from sleep. "Oh, Luz — I was praying for an end, you know. But a certain kind of end. Do you think it is wrong to ask for a good end for our children?"

They did not know it, but as she spoke, Churchill too was speaking from London. He spoke of fighting, striving until the end. Perhaps the statesman himself could not foresee what kind of end it would be.

JOE O'SULLIVAN

Jassim: Kurdish Champion

War labels its participants exactly and arbitrarily, allowing no shades of grey. A person is either an enemy or a friend, a conscript or a volunteer, a freedom fighter or a terrorist; the list is endless. My story is about a comrade in arms who was labelled 'hero' by his men and 'deserter' by the authorities. That man was Rab Khamshi (leader of fifty) Mirza Fazzula, No. 1 Paratroop Company, RAF Levies, Iraq, known to his fellow Kurds as Jassim.

In 1944 I joined this paratroop unit, then operating as a commando in the Balkans where it had distinguished itself and was even admitted to that esoteric group known as the 'funnies', those eccentric units which the British specialise in, and cherish. Popski's Private Army and Colonel David Stirling's Special Boat Service were just two amongst many which raided the Dalmatian Coast to link up with the Serb, Croatian and Bosnian resistance fighters of Yugoslavia. We introduced into this polyglot assembly the ancient races of Assyrians and Kurds, wearing parachute wings, jaunty red berets with crossed silver daggers, and flaunting the Kurdish/ Assyrian 'khunjar' in scabbards at our sides. If nothing else we added colour to an already variegated assembly that was destined to make Bari, on the East coast of Italy, a rich lode of legend and derring-do for post-war memoirs.

Under the system then in force, each unit had a British and a Kurdish or Assyrian officer. This was necessary because few British officers spoke the language of their soldiers and had to rely on their indigenous counterparts to convey orders to the men. This added another dimension to the fog of war that envelopes all fighting units in combat; in my later military career I insisted that all British officers spoke at least one of the languages of their soldiers, but that is another story.

Unlike the average Kurd, who tends to stockiness, Mirza was slight and finely boned, a legacy of some Persian ancestor, and his intelligent brown eyes looked appraisingly at me when he introduced himself on that October day at Gioa del Colle, the unit's Italian base.

"Rab Khamshi Mirza Fazzulah, sir. Your Kurdish platoon commander."

"I know nothing about Kurds, Mirza," I replied, "tell me something about them."

"That will take many years, sir, and I hope that you and I remain together for a long time those so that I can tell you about my people. But, please sir," he added; "Call me Jassim."

Later, I learned that 'Jassim' is the Kurdish word for 'Champion' and is given to

those who have displayed some signal act of bravery in war or in hunting. It is a rare honour but, as I was to discover, Jassim was a rare person. In the months that followed he told me about the Kurds. How they were descendants of the Medes; how, secure in their mountain fastness they had never bothered to become a nation state and had co-existed with whatever power happened to dominate the region. The last great power in the years preceding World War 1 was the Ottoman empire, and when President Wilson's Fourteen Points proclaimed that all subject races of that empire should have self-determination, the Kurds wasted no time in declaring the independent Republic of Kurdistan. This had been ratified by the Treaty of Sevres but was rescinded at the Treaty of Versailles through the machinations of Winston Churchill and his adviser, Lawrence of Arabia. Emir Faisal of Hedjaz, Lawrence's ally in the desert war against the Turks, had recently been expelled by the French from the throne of Syria and was now the British nominee to rule the newly-created Kingdom of Iraq. This nation's frontiers embraced Kurdistan, the oil-rich portion, hence the chicanery leading to its establishment.

From 1922 until the outbreak of the Second World War, the Kurds fought the Iraqis and their British protectors but gained little except a reputation as fierce fighters. The advent of the war brought about a change in Kurdish tactics and they determined to use it as an opportunity to gain independence or at least autonomy. In 1941, a usurping Iraq government invited the Germans to establish a base in Iraq. The British and Assyrians forestalled this move, which would have been a disaster for the Allied cause, and the Kurds joined them in operations against the common enemy. Kurdish soldiers became part of the Allied war machine and had high hopes of being rewarded for their loyalty. Although I tried to warn Mirza about not putting his trust in politicians, especially where oil was involved, he shared these high hopes. "We will have a Kurdish Peoples' Republic," he explained, "just like the one in Azerbaijan which Stalin has established. And I shall be a general."

Jassim was with me when I made my first parachute jump. "You must go first," he explained, "and then you will be called Jassim by my people. They will accept you as a leader." So, knees knocking and eyes closed, I led my 'stick' of thirty fledgling parachutists through the door of a Dakota. When we landed, Jassim helped me stow my parachute and as we walked back to the recovery truck, he asked, "How much extra do you get paid for being a parachutist?" "Nothing," I replied, "the RAF doesn't recognise any extra skill payments." He looked at me with pity, "Nothing? You should go with the Serbs and the Croats. They are bloody fools also. I'm going with the Americans. They get $5 a day extra." Then he burst out laughing, "I am only joking, sir. You are a brave man even if you are a fool, and the Kurds love brave fools."

Our respect and affection for each other strengthened in the months that followed. Side by side we fought our way up the steep slopes of Mount Sarande to cut off the Germans in Albania trying to shorten their lines of withdrawal; side by side we linked up with the partisans and heard lurid tales of fratricide which, I must admit, I did not quite believe — then. During those months of dreary waiting, interspersed with periods of rare excitement, I found out why Jassim had earned his sobriquet. He was not only brave but he was skilful. (Soldiers mistrust heroes but will follow those with battle skills.) Jassim knew where the enemy was and where they were likely to be; he was a deadly shot, cool in even the hottest fight, and the Kurdish soldiers trusted him, and through him, they trusted me. Like millions of

other young men, our world was bounded by war — the war which we thought would never end. But end it did, and we were withdrawn to our home base, the massive RAF station in Iraq, called Habbaniya by the British and, Sinn El Dibban, 'the place of the flies' by the Arabs. With peace came the tasks of peace. My unit was sent into Kurdistan, Jassim's homeland. There we patrolled the Turkish and Iranian frontiers, and conducted not very serious military manoeuvres, but mostly we stalked ibex and mouflon and shot chikor partridges on the great Pirmam Dagh massif and talked about what we would do when we were demobilised. I learned some Kurdish, most of it from many hours sipping arak with the elders as they regaled me with tales of their history and their culture. Jassim and I grew even closer, if that were possible, but I sensed something was troubling him so I welcomed his suggestion of a three-day hunting trek. We could talk without being interrupted by the other members of his tribe.

"We will hunt the snow leopard" he announced as he led me on a day's march to the edge of the snow line. Still the high peaks beckoned until at last we reached the mountain slopes overlooking Rowanduz Gorge, the traditional invasion route from the East. The Mongols had marched through there, so had the Assyrians, the Persians and, yes, the Greeks. When Jassim had finished telling me all of this, he dared me to look over the brink and said, "You speak Greek don't you? I remember you read the maps for us in Athens." I nodded. "I would like you to see what's written on that rock down there. I will hold you." Cautiously, I edged my way to the tip of the chasm, Jassim clasping me around the knees. Below me, I could see a rock with lettering carved on it.

"What does it say?" asked Jassim.

I peered further over the edge into the shadows. "It says Iskander," I said.

"Alexander."

"There you are" said Jassim. "I have often heard that Alexander the Great was defeated here by the Kurds and had to make his way to India via Afghanistan. That's proof."

I should have guessed then that Jassim's thoughts were turning northwards.

Next day we reached snow leopard country and followed one spoor all of one long day. Once, I thought I saw a great cat moving sinuously through the snow and I was glad when Jassim said it was a wolf, as I had no wish to kill such a beautiful creature. Just to be one of the few people who had ever seen a snow leopard was enough. On our return to the campsite I made preparations for the evening meal while Jassim disappeared for his regular hour of meditation. At last, when the hare stew was bubbling away, and it was time for our pre-prandial arak, I walked towards the stream tumbling into the chasm and called Jassim.

"Over here, Joe," he replied.

It was the first time he had ever called me anything but "Sir" and it confirmed my foreboding that something was troubling him. I climbed to where he sat, gazing at the northern frontier where Iraq, Turkey and Iran joined hands. I let him speak. "Joe," he said, "I must go to my people. Tomorrow I leave for Azerbaijan. I know I'll be classed a deserter but that doesn't matter. It's you I'm thinking of. You'll get into trouble."

I shrugged. "Jassim, we've been through a lot together. I'll be sorry to see you go but I understand. Now come and have some dinner." That night we sat up late around the campfire and talked of trivial affairs, as people sometimes will when

matters of great moment are troubling them, and it seemed that I had only just fallen asleep when I felt a gentle hand on my shoulder.

"Joe. Now I go." Jassim had changed from uniform into Kurdish clothes: a black and white checked turban, his tribal khafiyah, a brightly coloured waistcoat, and a scarlet cummerbund, the colour of the airborne forces beret, which held his khunjar. He wore white embroidered stockings and on his feet, sandals soled with a piece of Dunlop tyre, ideal for running and climbing over rocks. He carried a Schmeisser sub-machine gun, his trophy from the Battle of Sarande, and looked the complete Kurdish warrior, 'the fierce Kurmanji' of Kipling's times.

"Wait," I said, "take this," handing him my Colt 45 pistol and four full magazines. "You'll need it."

"Joe, Joe," he said softly, "always I think of you."

He said nothing more, nor did I. For a long time I watched him lope along the track going north, towards Russia and Azerbaijan, to the Kurdish Peoples' Republic. I watched him until he disappeared around the corner of the great rock dominating the entrance to the gorge. I saw him once more, faintly outlined against the snow, and then I saw him no more.

Years later I visited the Public Records Office at Kew, where records since the 11th century of all British government departments are stored. I looked up the Operations Records Book of my old unit and was saddened to come across the entry, 'Rab Khamshi Mirza Fazzulah. Deserter. To be discharged with ignominy if recaptured.'

Jassim, I am glad to say, was never recaptured. He became mukhtar — tribal head — of a Kurdish community in Azerbaijan. I heard of him occasionally, but not since the break-up of the Soviet Union and the outbreak of war between Armenia and Azerbaijan. I would like to think that he is still Jassim, leading the fight for his Kurdish people.

STEVE BUNK

Was the Consul a Spy?

When World War I broke out, all subjects of the German Empire living in Australia were required to register at police stations. Many German-Australians were quick to declare loyalty to their new homeland but as the deaths of Australian soldiers mounted (eventually reaching about 60,000, the highest per capita of any nation in the war), tolerance to anyone of German extraction waned. Despite calls for reason by some politicians and other officials, the public often shunned or denounced people of German background, as the distinctions formerly made between Germans and German-Australians disappeared.

German newspapers were shut down, German place names removed from Australian maps and German clubs regarded as centres of espionage. In Western Australia, the public temper was so nervous by 1915 that, one night, houses and offices of Fremantle residents were stoned simply because their occupants were thought to be of Germanic origin.

An alleged ringleader of enemy agents in WA was the aristocratic consul for Germany and consular agent for Italy, Carl Peter Ludwig Ratazzi. Born in Austria and a naturalised British subject, he was considered by some to be a good Australian, but others contended that maps and classified documents which could aid Germany were hidden behind a trap door in the attic of the Fremantle consulate. No hidden papers were ever found in the building, and the mystery of Ratazzi's loyalties remains unsolved. Yet his story reveals much about reactions in Australia to the war.

Ratazzi belonged to that imperialistic period at the turn of the century when many European countries were looking to settle new worlds, to establish their own colonies within the colonies. At the same time, Australian immigration agents were wooing migrants from the German Empire, because of their reputation as good workers. But Germany began to worry that Australia in particular was undermining the culture, soul and national strength of German migrants.[1] It disapproved of this perceived threat to its young people at a time when the upper and middle classes were eager to exert ever-wider control on the affairs of the world.

Ratazzi's family, related to a Prime Minister of Italy, was among Italian immigrants valued by the Austrian Empire for their administrative skills. In 1889, at age

1. Jurgen Tampke and Colin Doxford, *Australia Wilkommen: A History of the Germans in Australia*, Sydney: New South Wales University Press, 1990.

23 he moved to Sydney and started an import-export business with a partner. Three years later, while in New York City on business, he married Kathi Phillipine. The couple toured Europe, returned to Sydney in 1893 and eventually had four children.

Many German migrants were being lured to Western Australia to work on the railroads and farms, and by the time Ratazzi moved from Sydney to Fremantle late in1900 to become WA agent for the Norddeutscher Lloyd shipping line — which had been selected in 1885 as the Imperial Postal Steamship Service to East Asia and Australia — the state's population of German origin was rivalled in numbers only by the Yugoslavs.

Norddeutscher Lloyd received German subsidies for delivering the mail, and the agent in each Australian city was a likely choice to be made consul for the Empire. As such, he was expected to maintain a standard of dress and conduct befitting the representative of a great European power when he went about his official business of forging contacts with politicians, officials and other influential members of Australian society. A studio photograph of Ratazzi published in a 1912 book shows the braided jacket, medal pinned on the chest and starched, high collar of extreme formality.[2]

The only detailed description of the consul comes from a 1905 book by one "Truthful Thomas".[3] In the book's foreword, Thomas gives a taste of his cheeky style when he writes, "It occurred to me that it would be refreshing to the general public, after a surfeit of heavy, dull, statistical biographies of local notabilities and non-entities (the latter largely preponderating) ... to come across short and crisp character sketches of prominent denizens of the State — those whose names are in our mouths every day."

The volume includes 296 sketches, by no means all flattering. Here's what Thomas thought of Ratazzi:

> Is a German but does not inherit the physical attributes of the race, being more like an Italian in appearance. Short in stature, he stoops in his walk, and looks shorter than he is. A man of warm impulses, he is generous, hospitable and hot-tempered. Entertains in a style which is that of the man of good taste. He has a natural aptitude for sleight-of-hand conjuring and other parlour tricks, and can beguile away an hour of his guests' time so pleasantly that it appears but a few minutes.
>
> Being a man of excitable temperament, he uses all those aids to argument such as the shrugging of shoulders and outstretched hands. As Imperial German Consul he has had to deal with intricate questions, but in every case has come out with flying colors, his natural shrewdness and common sense guiding him to correct conclusions every time.
>
> Is agent for the ND Lloyd's SS Co, and that the line has grown in popularity is as much due to his courtesy and affability as to the splendid service itself. Is a good-looking man, and shows his loyalty to the Kaiser by brushing his moustache as much upwards as it will go. Is a man of culture, and is highly educated.

Ratazzi's brushed-up moustache, evident in his portrait, might indeed have been a fashionable indicator of his feelings for the German emperor, Wilhelm II. Yet, Wilhelm II was of Prussian stock and Ratazzi was born in the Austrian city of Frank-

2. J.S. Battye, ed., *Cyclopedia of Western Australia*, Cyclopedia Company of Perth, 1912.
3. Truthful Thomas, *Through the Spy Glass: Short Sketches of Well-known Westralians as Others See Them*, Perth, Pietermautzburg and Durban: Praagh and Lloyd, 1905.

furt am Main, capital of the then-German Confederation, in 1865, when Austria and Prussia were vying for the confederation's leadership. The following year, Prussia won the Seven Weeks' War against Austria, annexed Frankfurt and kicked its vanquished foe out of the confederation. In 1867, Austria gave its rebellious Hungarian subjects internal autonomy in forming Austria-Hungary. Four years later, the German Confederation became the German Reich or Empire.

In 1879, Austria-Hungary and Germany patched up their differences enough to forge a military alliance designed to protect each other in the event of aggression by Russia. Archduke Francis Ferdinand, first in line to succeed Francis Joseph as emperor of Austria-Hungary, was assassinated in 1914. Austria-Hungary blamed Serbia, and declared war, which aroused the anger of Russia, France and Great Britain. An opportunistic Germany declared war on its old foes France and Russia, obliging Austria-Hungary to come to Germany's aid under the terms of their military alliance. Thus, World War I began.

To whom, then, did Ratazzi believe he owed first allegiance? To the Italy of his forefathers, a good part of which was owned by the Austrian Empire in the first half of the 18th century? To the Austria of his birth, ruled by the House of Hapsburg? To the German Reich which had arisen when he was only six years old and to which his home city now belonged? Or to Australia, where he had lived, worked and pledged allegiance for most of his adult life?

He was already a British subject when he established a German club at Fremantle in 1901. Four years later, he was appointed Justice of the Peace by the WA Government. In 1910, he was made a Knight Officer of Italy for his services as that country's consular agent.

In 1914, Ratazzi was deposed from both his consular posts, the shipping line's vessels were seized by the government and his office windows smashed by Australian loyalists. His eldest child, Maria, painted a stressful picture in a letter she wrote to a friend in Germany in January of 1915:[4] "My dear Papa has had to suffer much through this war; because his whole business has been thrown to the ground, he was compelled to discharge his whole staff and to close the office. At the outbreak of the war, we passed a disagreeable time here, our house was searched from top to bottom by the military authorities, my room also was searched through whilst I lay ill in bed, the same day also the office.

"Shortly before the fall of Antwerp, the large windows of the Consulate were smashed in and it was most fortunate that at the time Papa sat not at his desk, for glass splinters might have killed him. We gladly bear the roughnesses of the people here, as long as nothing happens to our dear Carlo."

Maria and Carlo were the two eldest of the four Ratazzi children. Both were born in Sydney, she in 1893 and he three years later, and both had spent six years in Europe for their education, but Carlo was now serving in the Imperial German Army. "Last month we received a letter from Carlo dated 27 September and this was the first news from him since four months," Maria wrote. "My dear parents are very distressed that he should have chosen such a dangerous metier and we can only hope and pray that God may protect him."

One of the prime movers in Australia against people of Germanic origin was a group called the All British Association (ABA), founded in May of 1915 and described in an Australian Military Intelligence Department report as "a body of persons who conducted a campaign against all persons of German origin here

4. Letter to Mrs Fritz Stengel Shubert, Perth, Military Intelligence Archives file no. PF 195.

regardless of Justice or Reason."[5] Fremantle historical researcher Bill Latter wrote a paper[6] on this group's role in anti-German riots on August 23, 1915, which were dubbed by writer Xavier Herbert, "the night of the stones".[7]

Latter reports the unrest that day was sparked by the good news that Russia had defeated Germany in a naval battle on the Bering Sea's Gulf of Riga. The ABA decided to hold a celebration that evening at a pub owned by one of its members. Speeches and drinking ensued, and it wasn't long before two Australian-German shopkeepers were harassed by the crowd. The couple locked themselves inside their premises but the mob began stoning the windows. When police arrived and made two arrests, the crowd then started hurling missiles at the prisoners and officers, badly injuring one sergeant.

Ignoring other police, some of the mob then attacked a hotel owned by a Russian who the vandals insisted on believing was a German. Ironically, the man had earlier been celebrating with friends over Germany's defeat by Russia in the sea battle. Part of the mob then rushed to another hotel, stoning its windows as well. Four private homes also were stoned, including the Ratazzi house. At about 1am, every window fronting the street was smashed while the crowd abused the Ratazzis, who were huddled inside.

Latter's research shows that deliberate provocation by the ABA rather than a spontaneous uprising was the likely cause of the night of the stones. "It was an extremist group which perceived its role to include public agitation, propagating the cause of the Mother Country in its just war against Germany and its allies,"[8] he wrote. "It is beyond belief that the individual groups could have split spontaneously to independently attack different targets so far apart without there was some knowledgeable guidance."[9]

In September of 1915, Ratazzi wrote to his son Carlo a letter which was sent via Switzerland. Strict rules had been imposed on correspondence with enemy countries, including that such letters had to be sent first to a neutral country. They could not refer to trade, business, politics or the war situation and could not contain money except under licence from the Censor or Attorney-General. Ratazzi's letter was upbeat, mentioning nothing of the night of the stones. Instead, it expressed thanks to God that his son was well and told some family news. His only admission of trouble was in the sadly heartening sentence, "Times are bad here but the harvest promises to be a good one."[10]

Ratazzi gave one small detail of the war in his short letter, saying the family had heard from friends overseas "the joyful news that you had received your I Class, causing us much pleasure, we congratulate you and are proud." He closed, "Sorry we are not allowed to send you something, but you must take the will for the deed."

At the end of February, 1916, the ABA reported correctly that Carlo Ratazzi had been decorated with an Iron Cross by the German Army. "We ask again why Mr Ratazzi is not interned?" an ABA letter to Military Intelligence said. "Is he less dangerous than an Austrian wood cutter?"[11] The Censor suppressed newspaper reports of Ratazzi's subsequent arrest, but military records show he was transferred

5. W.S. Latter, ed., *Military Intelligence Archives in Western Australia During the First World War: A Synopsis*, Perth, Centre for Western Australian History, UWA, 1992.
6. W.S. Latter, "The Night of the Stones: the Anti-German Riots in Fremantle 1915", unpublished research paper, 1992.
7. Xavier Herbert, *Disturbing Element*, Melbourne: F.W. Cheshire, 1963.
8. "The Night of the Stones", 5-6.
9. "The Night of the Stones", 12-13.
10. Letter dated 28 September, 1915, Military Intelligence Archives file no. PF 221.
11. The letter's signature, by the ABA secretary, is illegible. Military Intelligence Archives file no. CF 17/1/18.

on March 4 from Fremantle Barracks to a detention camp at Trial Bay, NSW.[12]

In November, Maria Ratazzi applied to a Major Corbett of Military Intelligence for permission to visit her father, who she said "has been in a very bad state of health of late."[13] Indeed, deaths from pneumonic plagues in the harsh and often unsanitary camps were not uncommon. There also were reports of prisoners being shot. But the gentry were usually separated from the rank and file of detainees, making their lot somewhat easier.

Maria's letter showed the high societal position of the Ratazzis when she extended personal greetings from her mother to Major Corbett and congratulated him on a promotion. Even more tellingly, she wrote, "I have also two notices from Sir John Forrest saying that I have permission to see Father." Sir John was WA's first premier and an important figure in the first federal parliament; Maria's pass to see her father was soon issued.

Ratazzi's internment in NSW didn't end the family's strife; Jessie Laughton of the All British Association saw to that. Laughton, who reported a number of people for suspicious activities, explained her actions in one letter: "I have sons fighting and others doing their duty for the country and think it my duty to forward on these facts to the authorities."[14]

People who had worked for Ratazzi or visited his home or office were reported. However, investigations by Military Intelligence often showed such allegations to be groundless. This was likewise true of Laughton's insistence that secret maps were hidden above a manhole in the ceiling of one of the consulate rooms. Several searches were made of the premises, all fruitless.

Nevertheless, Ratazzi was a prisoner of war and by mid-1918, he was fighting to avoid deportation. Major Corbett wrote to the Military Intelligence Director in Melbourne, "I have a request as to L. Ratazzi who was German Consul here, his people represent that he is anxious to remain in Australia."[15] The Department of Defence replied that the British Government had not signalled an intention to change its existing policy.

A mid-1919 record of internees who did not desire repatriation included Ratazzi's name. The remarks column said, "Dependants do not desire to go. They suggest that Internee, being Naturalised British Subject (not denaturalised) not subject deportation."[16] Mrs Ratazzi's name was on another list of Germans which indicated that her repatriation was "doubtful". But in the end, the whole family went to Germany.

"Ratazzi should never have been interned, because he was naturalised before the war," Bill Latter says. "He did not want to go back to Germany and he really didn't have to. His wife didn't want to go either. For some reason, the files in NSW do not reveal what happened, but there must have been some pressure put upon him to depart." [17]

Ratazzi left Australia in 1920, followed about a year later by his wife and children. But he died a broken man on January 25, 1925. Later that year, his widow returned with her daughter Maria to visit Western Australia. Newspaper accounts show they were welcomed at a reception held by friends, including the mayor's wife.

12. Military Intelligence Archives file no. 4/14/29.
13. Letter dated 11 November 1916, Military Intelligence Archives file no. 1/2/137.
14. Letter dated 20 June, 1916, Military Intelligence Archives file no. 13/1/13.
15. Military Intelligence Archives file no. 4/14/29.
16. Military Intelligence Archives file no. 4/14/29.
17. Personal interview, 21 November, 1994.

In a sense, Ratazzi's guilt or innocence as a spy is less interesting than what his experience reveals about human nature in time of war. Stereotyping of "the enemy" was extended in Australia to everyone perceived to have Germanic heritage, regardless of their contribution to this country. With Australians dying in large numbers overseas, cool logic at home withered beside the heat of angry hearts.

This is part of a work in progress of research into the stories of historic Fremantle buildings.

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LEE STUPART

T, O, Triangle, W, P, O

I walked down the long jetty of the harbour at Rhodes. I was looking for a boat to take me to Halki, a small island north of Rhodes. I had spoken to the harbourmaster and he had written the name of a likely boat on a slip of paper. I memorised it. ΤοΔwpo, T, O, Triangle, W, P, O. At that time, I could not speak Greek.

I felt that I should have understood the letters. I felt that I should have understood them instinctively. I had visited Greece three times before this trip. I feel comfortable in Greece, and I wish I could tell you exactly why I feel this way. Why does a househunter fall in love with a particular house? What links a particular woman to a particular man? What makes a friend a soulmate?

I can tell you that when I read that Beckett's Molloy had killed the Aegean in himself, I understood that Molloy would die in a darkening wasteland. I can also tell you that when I sit outside in the West Australian midsummer twilight I often remember an evening when I walked with my family to an ancient ampitheatre on the outskirts of the town of Kos. A touring company of drama students from the university of Athens was billed to mime a selection of stories from Ovid that evening. I watched the players but I was thinking about the people who might have sat where I was sitting. How many people had sat on this stone slab? What images had come to their minds as they watched the play in the round below? I put my arm around my younger son's shoulders and drew him close to me.
—Two thousand years ago a boy like you sat exactly where you are sitting and watched the play you are watching, I said.
My son stood up, turned around and started at the marble slab where he had been sitting.
My husband leaned over.
—What's George doing? he asked.
—Looking for ghosts, I said.

I had come down to the harbour at Rhodes in the early evening when the boats return to shore. The jetty is almost one kilometre long and set high above the water. As I walked over the wooden slats I could look down into the boats moored side by side down the length of the jetty. I remembered the tabby cat that walks every

evening along the top of the row of backyard fences in my street in Subiaco. I knew that when I returned home and saw the cat I would remember walking down the jetty on Rhodes.

I saw an old man scrubbing the pale grey boards of the deck of his boat. Pale grey water full of fish scales ran out of holes on the side of the boat. I walked on and saw three men sitting on coils of rope. They talked and drank red wine out of green unlabelled bottles. On the next boat the tackle was neatly packed for the following day and boxes of bait stood on the jetty, ready for loading.

I like watching people. My family call it staring. But I was wearing a pair of wrap-around sunglasses and I walked slowly without stopping. No one seemed to notice me watching them. I had to keep on saying the name of the boat to myself so that I would remember to check each boat. I was almost at the end of the jetty before I saw the name on the boat. T, O, Triangle, W, P, O.
—Excuse me, I said. Such mean words, so polite. I took off the glasses and smiled, trying to say more than the words.
—Ya sas. Ti kanies, the fisherman said.
I had to ask if he spoke English.
—Sure, he said, but little.
—Please read this. It is a Greek letter, I said. I pulled the letter out of my pouch. I had written the letter in Perth and had it translated into Greek.

Dear friend, the letter read,
My name is Helen Mitchell. I am 37 years old. My father, Roland Mitchell, was a bomber pilot for the RAF during World War II. On the 23rd October 1943, the Germans shot him down near Halki. He was wounded but survived the crash. Fishermen from Halki pulled the bullet out of my father's chest with a pair of pliers.

The islanders wanted to row him to freedom in Turkey but the Germans had seen the rescue. They radioed the island and warned that every islander would be shot if my father was not on the quay in the morning.

My father was in hospital for three months and then spent two years as a prisoner-of-war in Stalagluft 3, near Sagan.

My father returned to South Africa after the war and married my mother in 1946. He has four children and seven grandchildren and is a fit and happy man.

I want to go to Halki to se if I can find anyone who remembers helping my father.

The fisherman read the letter. He looked up at me. He stretched up to grasp my hand.
—Kala, he said, and helped me down into the boat. He told me that his name was Angelo.

I had a black and white photograph of my father as a young pilot in uniform. I took

the photograph out of my bag and gave it to Angelo. I wished that the photograph was coloured, or that I had the words to show that my father's six-inch handlebar moustache had been copper red.

The fisherman showed me a small cabin where I could sit when we sailed.
—You are lonely? he asked, and made a show of peering around for other people that might have accompanied me.
—No, I said, I don't think so. I have a husband and two young sons. They are in the taverna.
—Poli kala! he said, Tomorrow. Morning, and he held up his fingers and thumb.
—Five o'clock, I said, thank you. I turned to leave.
Angelo put his arm around me to guide me over the ropes and then jumped out of the boat to stretch a hand down to help me up onto the jetty.
—I keep this? he asked. He was holding up the letter and photograph.
—Certainly, I said. I walked down the jetty, and then stopped and looked back. Angelo was reading the letter to seven men.

I woke up at four the next morning and quietly packed our bag. I did not know how long we would be away from our lodgings but in Greece, in July, a bathing suit, two T-shirts, a pair of shorts and a towel are all you need to see you through to October.

I set the small open copper kettle on the primus stove and threw in a spoon of finely ground coffee when the water was boiling. I switched off the flame and carried the half cup of thick black unsweetened coffee out onto the balcony.

I could see the jetty through a gap in the whitewashed houses, but I could not distinguish the boat that would take us to Halki. Angelo had not asked why I wanted to find the men on Halki. When I had told my friends in Perth about my plans most had asked me why I wanted to find the men and what would I ask of them or say to them when I did find them. I had found that I had no ready answer.

When I was alone and thought about my friends' questions, the only response that came to my mind was the memory of the wardrobe that stood in my father's dressingroom in the house where we lived until I was twelve years old.

My father's wardrobe was large and black and had three doors. Inside, the wardrobe was lined with tan coloured camphor wood. Two doors opened onto hanging space. Hanging in the space were two charcoal suits, two pinstriped suits, one dark grey suit, a navy blue blazer, two pairs of grey flannels, one pair of slate coloured corduroy trousers and a black dinner suit. At the bottom of the wardrobe, in a neat row, were two pairs of black leather shoes, one pair of suede casuals and a pair of golf spikes. I thought the suits looked like hanging shadows of my father, and the black to grey row never changed until he went to Spain.

When my father went to Spain on holiday, he bought a scarlet suede waistcoat. I never saw him wear the waistcoat, but it hung in the wardrobe and glowed between the suits.

Behind the third door were five drawers and a shelf. In the drawers were neat piles of white cotton underwear and tightly rolled balls of dark coloured socks. On the shelf was a bottle of Vitalis hair oil, a brush with a comb stuck into the bristles and a leather stud box. On the side of the shelf my father had stuck the greetings cards off his birthday presents. At the very back of the shelf was a large shoebox.

At the bottom of this box, under old golfballs and chipped wooden tees, was the diary my father kept in the prisoner-of-war camp. When my father took my mother out at night and I saw that our nanny was dozing as she sat beside her radio in the kitchen, I would go through to my father's dressingroom to read his diary. On the first page my father had written, in ruled capital letters,

I CRIED WHEN I HAD NO BOOTS
THEN I SAW A MAN WITH NO FEET

I do not remember how many times I opened up the diary flat on the floor and stared at those words. I do remember that I always meant to read every entry in the diary but I never read further than the first page. Then I would close the diary, put it back at the bottom of the box and cover it carefully with the golfballs and old chipped tees. I would push the box past the hairbrush to the back of the shelf and I would shut the wardrobe door. I would also close the dressingroom door as I left.

This I remembered again as I stood on the balcony in the dawn in Rhodes and swallowed the last mouthful of bitter black coffee. Then I went indoors to wake my family. We dressed, picked up the bag and went down to the jetty to sail with Angelo.

First we sailed with the current to Simi. Three storey mansions crumbled into the island's shoreline. A small naval ship pumped water into the reservoir of the dry island. Angelo told us that in the nineteenth century, Simi's people had been prosperous. They had been master boatbuilders, using timber from nearby Turkey.
—And now? I asked.
—No boats. No trees, Angelo said.
We unloaded three large baskets and went to sit on the waterfront to eat small bowls of fresh shellfish. That night we slept in a room behind the grocer's shop.

The next day we sailed to Halki.

A man with a wad of white cottonwool in an eyeless socket met the boat. Three old women jostled forward to pick up my sons and cuddle them. I learned later that most of the young islanders had left Halki to find work on Rhodes or on the mainland. We walked with the white-eyed man and three old women to the wooden tables and odd chairs set out on the quayside.

Other islanders watched as we sat down. Angelo was talking to the three old women and as he spoke others stood closer to our table. A wrinkled unshaven man took my elder son from one woman's lap. He sat my son down on a straightbacked wooden

chair. The man put a crumb of bread on the boy's head and then he held a finger to his own lips. My son sat still and straight. A gull flew down and perched on his head to peck at the crumb.
—I can feel his feet scratching my head, my son said. He laughed and rolled his eyes upwards, trying to see the bird on his head. The bird flew away. The old man ran his hand over my son's head and then filled my glass and his with resinated wine. We drank and chewed on octopus tentacles that had been grilled over hot coals in the small brazier nearby.
Angelo never stopped talking.

—Angelo, what do they say? I asked.
Angelo held up his hand.
—Wait, he said.
One of the three old women stood up with my younger son asleep in her arms.
—Ela, she said, and we followed her to her home.

In the morning the old woman gave us melon that smelled of honey. We bought two long loaves of bread, and the boys pulled the soft elastic dough out of the hard crusts and ate while it was warm. We walked over the hill behind the houses to a small beach. Small silver fish swarmed away from our legs as we waded through bands of varying hues of blue. I stood knee deep in the warm water and looked out to sea. Reflections from the steep rocks threw sheets of bronze over the dark blue. I remembered the wonder I had felt when I saw, soon after my marriage to an Australian man, this sea which I called Aegean on the Perth side of Rottnest island. The sea I call Aegean has its own colour, layers, Greek sounds and my father.

Each morning we had breakfast with the old woman whose name we learned was Maria. Then we would go to the small beach and in the evening we would return to sit with the islanders on the quay and wait for the boats to come in.

Three days later, at ten in the morning, the man with the cottonwool in his eye came running to the house.
—Ela! Ela! he said.
We went down to the quay and saw Angelo's boat come into the harbour. The boat drew up alongside the grey stone and Angelo stepped out with a well-built balding man.

—O Petros, Angelo said to me, with his hand on the back of the balding man.
I repeated the name. Petros. I held out my hand. Petros knew how to act. He took hold of my hand in both of his hands. He spoke loud words to me and then to the people gathered behind me. He shouted to the man with cottonwool in his eye. The man brought a chair and placed it behind me. Petros pushed me down gently onto the chair. He stood my husband behind the chair and patted the ground on each side of the chair motioning to my sons that they should sit down on each side of me. The islanders gathered around us. Angelo stood to one side in front of us, the audience.

—Petros is going to tell us, Angelo said.

Petros walked to the edge of the quay. He stood with his back to us. Then he turned and the play began. Petros shaded his eyes and looked to the steep rocks to our left. He started to speak, Greek words, but I knew the story and you too know the story now. Petros drew his hand, palm down, slowly sideways through the air. The Baltimores that the RAF boys called two fan, four place, low level destruction ships. Petros made a steady, low, throbbing noise. The beat of radial engines. Then Petros walked to an iron stanchion. He settled himself down and began to row. The fishermen. Petros looked up to the steep rocks to look at the Allied bombers. He cast his line. Then he looked to the rocks again and turned his head slowly as he watched the planes fly over the harbour.

Suddenly Petros stood up and threw his hands up to the sun and screamed. My sons pressed close to my legs. Messerschmidts. BF109E's. Petros crouched down and covered his head with his arms. His body shook. Gunfire and an explosion. *No pain yet. Just the sea rushing up to the cockpit window.* Petros lifted his head slowly. He looked around. He shouted and sat down again on the iron stanchion and rowed. He stood up and leaned over, and strained as he lifted. *The blood running down the tanned chest.* Petros took off his jacket and laid it down with care. Then he sat down and rowed with fast strokes. He put down the oars and picked up the jacket in both arms. Petros started to walk down the quay. He looked back, and we stood up and followed him.

Pain now, with the jolting steps. Petros walked along the shore to the ruined school building.

We stood among the stones as he laid the jacket down. He felt in his pocket and then scissored his forefinger and middle finger. He bent down and pulled with the scissoring fingers. The pliers. Pushing into the open chest. Closing around the steel bullet and pulling. Petros held up his hand, victorious. Then he pulled a handkerchief out of his pocket. He wiped the stone protruding from the jacket. Cold sweat. Petros stopped and stared at the stone. He turned to look straight at me and stroked out sideways from under his nose. The six-inch handlebar moustache. Petros looked around and snatched a red shawl from a woman's shoulders.

—Rosso! he shouted. He held the shawl under his nose.
I clapped until my hands were stinging.
—Bravo! the islanders shouted.

But then Petros froze. He listened. The cackle of the radio. Petros whispered and the islanders drew closer. Petros' shoulders slumped. He knelt beside the jacket. No one spoke. The long night. *No ouzo, only bitter black coffee.* Petros looked up at the sky. Dawn. He stood up and picked up the jacket and started to walk to the quay. He did not look back. We followed him and watched as he cast the jacket into the sea from the edge of the quay.

We waited as Petros stood with his back to us. What would he do when he turned around? Petros turned quickly. He was smiling and talking at great speed. He

walked towards us and took my hand and drew me forward and then around to face the islanders. He returned to fetch my sons and stood them one on each side of me. Then Petros took a pole and fished the jacket out of the sea and hung it, dripping with salt water, over my shoulders.

The islanders clapped and shouted. They came forward and gathered us up and we walked in procession down the quay and along the shore to the stonepaved waterfront of the taverna where bottles of cold retsina stood on the tables.

Soon after I returned to my home in Perth I started to learn Greek. In lesson five, The Birthday Party, of my text book *Come to Greek*, I found the word ΤοΔωρο Τ, Ο, Triangle, W, P, O, that I learnt to pronounce as *taw thawraw*, and to translate as the gift, or present.

GEOFF PAGE

Reuben and Sarah
for H.S.

Reuben and Sarah
by God's good luck and desperation
more or less in equal parts

escape the fate of their relations
the small clear eyes of bureaucrats
the psychopaths who know their Bach

and swing around by sea
the belly of the world.
Far south, they work and wait it out

following the news
the great campaigns across the steppes
the storming into coastal fields

and young enough each night and aching
they dream the lists of Genesis
savouring the names.

But how could one
begin a child
and give it to the guns?

The relatives they see in dreams
by experts on the ways of trains
are herded into smoke.

And so they live
their long restraint
until one night, a southern August

alive with sirens, bells and shouts
a high surge in the street beside them
they know the tight blue

eyes are beaten
and finally the rising sun
and on a bed with frost outside

are free tonight
at last to bring
their children to this world.

STEPHEN LACEY

The Spoils Of War

Les is sitting in the corner
drinking sherry again
on the red lounge
It's been a while
since he brought home
the Kokoda carvings
and he doesn't want to talk about it.

We still have the wooden crocodile
The missing mother-of-pearl teeth
shiny slithers of white
hidden in the matchbox under my bed
penknife dentistry

There's the sword on the wall
I wasn't allowed to touch.
My schoolmates said it had chopped off
a soldier's head
the steel curved like a smug mouth
we checked it for blood.

In the bottom drawer is a photo of Les
a barbed sepia vision
of him in khaki mood
hands on hips
beyond the wire
his uniform
ridiculously large
he smiles like a blade.

ADRIAN CAESAR

At the Grave of Wilfred Owen

France. Essential November.
We drive through belts of rain
heading for battlefields
and Owen's grave at Ors
where on another wintry day
he died fording the canal
over which we drive so easily
into the lifeless town
tainted grey.

At noon the place is vacant
as if it died with him,
and in some perpetual drizzling dawn
the ghosts of old soldiers
mingle with townsfolk
weeping for their loss.
I post such sentiment Air Mail
whilst my companion
regrets a lack of film.

No cameras at the graveside then
to click memorials into place
only the curious floral tribute
from an admirer in the U.S.A.,
and ruminative cows in a field
chewing to the chimes
of the town-hall clock
as if to mock
shambolic ritual.

But what I hadn't counted on,
mustering defences,
were all the others
Private Duckworth, Private Topping
names with Lancashire accents
aged nineteen, fading, who had no time
to reflect how they were killers
before buried reality became
smoothed stones of myth.

Painless it's this I mourn for.
Wilfred has his say
constellated in the canon's mouth
the others did not, could not, cannot.
All they have is this
grim silence in the rain,
stared at by tourists
of agony their's was one shot
I'm glad we missed.

LAWRENCE BOURKE

April 25
from Blood and Iron

Four F 111s in cross formation
'punch a hole' through the Brisbane morning.
The noise of my lawn mower is annihilated
by that of the engines. The mower coughs and dies.
Among the insurgent grass the suburban guerilla —
in army surplus t-shirt and pants — retreats
to watch the eye of the jets glow red as they rise
over the business centre and the Anzac Day Parade.

I recall the TV saying iron is life, meaning
the charge to the heart from the 'big budget items'
that screech overhead to fill streets with the boom
of fatherlands as power assumes form and uniform
and distinctions become crosses, a crank handle
turning the globe into mud the colour of fire
and remember the mower needs attention: the symbolism
is flaking off: whatever is iron is also rust.

Returning
from Blood and Iron

Boots clattering down the gangplank
having come to the edge
of the map and sea-routes
stand in dole queues then drift
away singly upcountry.

Offloading on the dock a country
in light like nowhere else.
A trolley rumbles across the quay.
And into the sea. A wharfee
watches it go and shrugs.

A man with one leg and a lottery
interrupts the lovers' reunion:
everyone can win. In their eyes
the wilderness blooms with roses.
Their name becomes the road

where a house abandons its orchard
to thistle, a chimney, an old axle,
to the auditor who prefers Saturdays
at rugby or Sunday a beer and winding up
His Master's Voice.

Statues of politicians haul the city
from the sea crawling beneath them,
imposing their tirade of going forward
like a scared man who leaves town.
The pigeons stand above them.

MILLICENT C BORGES

Portrait of a Girl, 1942

Based on the Jan Lukas photograph of Vendulka Vogelova, taken a few hours before the young girl was transported to a concentration camp.

I am the mirror for one who speaks;
these fresh gaps are wind in the linden trees,
cotton flowers of life. A mirror is not much
for all of us, but if we listen for reflection,

the clear twin face of a groan behind the looking glass,
we hear the cat's hair sounds of all people
grumbling in the same manner about the air
the food the earth the sidewalk.

I am the mirror for all the world's silence,
and the ones who slipped through without drawing
blood, whose suicides number nothing next
to vast doors too tall to reach heaven, locked
forever, whose breaking takes generations,
sometimes, dull copper paint on the back of a lake.

I am the mirror for one who is trembling
like a child who has seen too much, eyes
hard olive pits. I think about how life
cracks when the vanity glass overturns
our hands. Sharp pints in bars. Uneven edges
of ale. Crisp indignities of foam.

I am the mirror for all who choose
not to speak. I crack
in the dark. I shine in the snow.

Ciscenje Prostora (ethnic cleansing)

This woman does not know he
carries the devil's four poster bed
in his palm, clutching it like promised
money: Bosnia, Croatia, Serbia, home.

She can't predict the hour
he will climb the steps,
his boots scraping the stone,
his steps following her mother's.

She only knows that the rebel tanks,
with nudes plastered to their sides,
are rolling through her town, shaking houses
like wind, carving up the patterns of the land.

She knows not to stare back
when he finds her, hiding behind a clay
pot. When his soldier's eyes become her
life, more understandable than her or me or any
pronoun she whispers out between no and help,
she shuts her eyes, imagining winter.

He tries the rug of her family's house
with the slant of his hips, dragging
her shoulders along behind him.

Her skin beneath his, now
this skin that he uses for the rhythm
of bodies, now pushed up against
a wall, this skin he now needs, this drumming beat,
this having nothing to lose.

Serbia, Bosnia, Croatia; the countries undulate
together while he dances the dance of the basilisk
thighs marching, marching.

Even little sounds, like birds overhead,
encourage him to go on, to spit, to breathe
three generations of her surrender into his lungs.

Then, silence.
Lost territories, rebels, food, clothing, shelter,
she thinks not of peace, but of surviving
the winter, of outlasting the enemy.

ALAN GOULD

A Gravitational Pull*

By far the bulk of what I have written, both in fiction and poetry, concerns the tensions of peacetime rather than wartime. But I must acknowledge that I return to the subject of war, particularly World War 2, rather like one of those comets on an elliptic cycle, drawn in to close orbit by a strong gravitational field then flicked away by its own momentum into space until momentum slows and the pull of gravity re-asserts itself.

That is to say, I have written about war because the events of war have moved me. I must therefore face the discomfiting fact that this means I have found the circumstances of war attractive. Let me not evade the issue by saying that I have found them attractive *as* a poet or *as* a novelist. I was moved by the stories and imagery of war way back in my childhood long before the business of being an author entangled me, and I suspect I would have been attracted to these things had I never written a word but gone into bricklaying or hotel management instead.

Furthermore, the weapons and accoutrements of war had a numinous hold on my imagination which may be lessening only now as I pass beyond eligibility for the warrior class. Though if I was to walk into a room where there was a .303 rifle leaning against a wall, I could not trust myself not to be magnetised by its presence, to pick it up and handle it, work through its oiled bolt action, sight down the barrel and adjust the sight mechanism, charmed by the smooth, compact integrity of the instrument, while talking about world peace to the other people in the room. For my mature, reflective mind prefers peace. I have watched the combatants of Bosnia, Lebanon, Nagorno Kharabash, loosing off at each other, and have felt disgust, not envy. I have looked at the Time-Life photo of the little Vietnamese girl, the napalm burns on her arm wadded in thick bandages, her face screwed up in diabolic agony, and have yearned for the power to reverse her misery. O yes, I prefer peace, if it is possible for anyone who has never been at war to say that.

As we have seen from the recent D Day commemorations, one of the common, and most obvious features of wars is that they continue to get talked about long after they have finished; and talked about not only by those who took part, but by those who were born too late to have taken part. For every war there is a generation of participants, and a generation who missed participation but for whom THE WAR,

* This article was first given as a paper at the 1994 conference of the Association for the Study of Australian Literature.

be it the Trojan or World War 2, forms an integral part of their mental horizon, a horizon of events which are tantalizingly close, but always just beyond reach.

With the trivial exceptions of having lived in Singapore during Confrontasi with its curfews, its newspaper photos of dead Indonesian guerrillas being brought in, slung on poles like bagged game, and later, of having run the gauntlet of checkpoints and several bomb scares during a few days in Northern Ireland in 1973, I have never been caught up in the tide of war. Like many of my generation, however, I swam for forty years in the backwash of World War 2.

What do I mean by this backwash? I was born in 1949 and my first recollections cut in at what I estimate to be early 1952. Like Jeb, the hero of my novel *To The Burning City*, I can just recall knowing that a George VI was King, and that then he was dead, that a Winston Churchill was the prime minister, that there was rationing applied to sweets and chocolate for which my mother had a rationing card. My own father was in the British Army, so as we moved from garrison to garrison; Northern Ireland, England, Germany, Singapore; I was accustomed to the military imagery of that very militarised post-war Europe. The British army uniforms, called battle-dress, were identical with those worn on D Day; 303 rifle, Bren gun and Webley revolver were still in use, and in each of the Army quarters we occupied during the 1950's and early 1960's, I always knew the top cupboard where my father's wartime revolver and ammunition pouch were hidden. These things were umbilicals attaching my life to a time prior to my existence.

My father's first posting to Germany was in the late 1950's, and in coming to Rheindahlen, or JHQ BAOR, NorthAG and 2nd TAF, to give the garrison its official acrostics, even at nine years old, I was as much aware of having arrived in a Zone as a foreign country. Dominating the garrison skyline was the massive JHQ building itself with its flags and parade ground. It looked like a long currant loaf and was called, laconically, the Kremlin. Once a year or so it would be defended against hypothetical attack from the 'Ruskies' by German troops in British Army uniforms who, with a patient anxiety, would try to shoo us children away from their gunpits.

"Give us a feel of your bren gun, mate."

"Weg! Bitte, weg! Weg!"

This may have been a cold war, but it heated a child's imagination readily enough. Perhaps under the spell of such a pervasive military atmosphere, our play was all warfare. With the neighbouring German farm-boys we feuded incessantly, nicknaming them after the size of army trucks according to their relative burliness, Ten Tonner, Seven Tonner, Five Tonner, down to the shrimplike Half Tonner. The first-named was built like a silo. He had a slab head you could toboggan down and this would flush a benzine-red at our yells of "We won the war/In nineteen forty four" or our insults, "Dummkopf! Sheiserkopf". Once he ran me down and I experienced at close proximity a countenance literally *working* with menace. The small eyes blazed in that massive head, the huge fist shook and his torrent of abuse told me things about my character and the honour of England that it was just as well I could not translate. But eventually he put me down, impressed, but unhurt.

Not that I or my playmates needed a real bogey to dare and frighten ourselves with as we wargamed, dressed in bits and pieces of authentic army webbing, prowling those same woods and fields the American 9th Army had crossed in March 1945. The yell of 'Stukas!' could send us diving for cover as one of us would imitate the howl of these once-dreaded crook-winged dive-bombers and the rest would

pop-pop-pop with wooden firearms. Ours was a vicarious kind of dread, of course, gleaned from films like 'Dunkirk' or the newsreel documentaries of aerial bombardment we had seen at the garrison cinemas. But it was one sign that the *idea* of World War 2 had lost none of its hold on the imaginations of adult or child, British or German, despite the fact that hostilities had been over for fourteen years or so. There were the physical reminders of the conflict, parks of derelict tanks, demolished pill-boxes heaped like broken cake on the road to Aachen, and the concrete anti-tank 'teeth' across broad fields on the Belgian border, eerily white against green under a stormlit sky, like the jawbones of some colossal shark.

There were our toys and reading matter. Plastic soldiers, clockwork tanks in which some flint mechanism allowed them to blaze away across the loungeroom carpet, kit plastic aeroplanes with moveable ailerons and retractable undercarriage that were the simulacra in miniature of the warplanes of 1939-45. There were comic books called 'War temps', temps because they cost tenpence, which came out, four per month, and contained, more often than not, stories that were psychologically credible rather than heroic from different theatres of World War 2. In black and white, of course. The War for us was profoundly a black and white experience.

And there was the readiness of our fathers and their German counterparts when they chance-met in restaurants or shops, to turn conversation back to The War. It was not, so far as I was able to judge at nine, a case of proving anything, or giving vent to unresolved animosities. Indeed, it was not morbid at all. Rather it was as if The War were a centre of intensity in their lives which required to be shared, not so much as a form of release from those vivid years, but as a recognition of its centrifugal force on their lives. As a boy, sitting at the end of the table listening to these exchanges in halting German or halting English, the war came to have a peculiar status in my imagination. At one level it seemed to form a dark dividing-line in time through which grownups had passed, and this fact marked an essential difference between adult and child. At another level the war was vividly real and fascinating to me, because its paraphernalia, the comics and toys, the memorabilia, and the prevalence of military imagery throughout the length and breadth of Cold War Europe, seemed to keep the war years permanently in focus. In the history of humankind, has any war ever had such powerful and multifarious means of re-enactment in the imaginations of the post-war world?

When I turned twenty in 1969, I was offered a war. Vietnam. I declined it. With such a military matrix to my early experiences, this might surprise you. It surprised me. I can only conclude that, in the face of the reasons against waging that particular war, all the vivid phantasmagoria and its attendant ethos just described suspended its impact, on my moral choices at least.

Twenty five years on from those moral choices, I'm confident I opposed Vietnam because I believed the war was an ill cause, and not because I was a coward and traitor, which were the terms used to revile us by the pavement onlookers of those early anti-war demonstrations. But I remember being still sufficiently under the long shadow of World War 2 for that albeit mindless scorn to have sometimes stung me to the quick. After all, my childhood and teenage ambition had been to become a soldier. In the end I spent time in prison for refusing to do so.

But then the peace movement I was a part of was, in some of its elements, a highly belligerent one. We 'occupied', we stormed barricades, marched under banners, chanted with the unison of a Zulu impi; we fought street-battles with

police, and watched these things happening in far more dramatic form at Berkeley and Kent State Universities, in Paris and Tokyo streets. Our rhetoric was often thinly disguised wartime stuff, 'campaigns,' 'waging the struggle', 'United Front', 'smashing the National Service Act' or whatever.

Two things led me to withdraw from all that militant activity as the '70's progressed. I had found the vitriol directed at anyone deemed to be 'the enemy' increasingly unjust, arbitrary, and offensive. And I was alarmed by the observation that the militancy of which I had been a part seemed to double its numbers after Whitlam's 1972 victory when censorship, arrest, jail-terms and threats to one's career prospects were no longer a risk of dissent. My withdrawal was into the business of writing, poetry at first, and later fiction. Later still, I began to read non-fictional war literature again, John Keegan, Martin Middlebrook's and Don Charlwood's accounts of the air war. I found them moving, and at the same time I found them familiar. They combined with all that childhood phantasmagoria, but in a chemistry that had found, I think, a way of reconciling childhood's instinctive interest in such things with the adult requirement to engage with the subject of war in a way that was as morally alert and imaginatively sympathetic as possible. The result has been several poems and the novel *To The Burning City*, whose subject is very much the backwash of war.

Despite the achievement of Stephen Crane and my own belief that a resourceful and sensitive imagination can create a credible likeness of experiences that an author has never personally undergone, I am wary of depicting combat experience directly. My own experience, for instance, does not include being either the agent or the victim of aerial bombardment. I have never strained my eyes into the murk of The Atlantic watching for the trail of a U Boat's torpedo. Being brought up in the back-wash of World War 2, however, what I *have* experienced is being told about these things by others for whom they are firsthand experiences. My instinct, therefore, is to recognise this filter in my narrative, not as a defence of my right to describe war experience, but as a means of making that experience more authentic by giving it a characteristic voice. Thus it is Hengelow the participant who describes, I think most persuasively, the actualities of the bomber offensive over German cities in *To The Burning City;* not Jeb, the hero, or the anonymous narrator who are born in the post-war, and I have some interaction regarding the right to talk about the war between the participant, Hengelow, and the non-participant, Mallory, whose fascination for the 'welter' of this war is in contrast to Hengelow's contact with it. Similarly, in my poem, 'Their Finest Hour' it is an anonymous seaman not an omniscient narrator who describes the experience of being on a trans-Atlantic convoy. When I write about war, I find myself reflexively wanting this filter of a dramatic voice and context, for it creates the right relationship between my interest in war experience, my awareness that such experience *does* belong to me by virtue of its having been handed on to me as one of the main narrative legacies of my time, and yet for all that, it is not quite properly mine.

Wars are, I have discovered, a highly charged area of discourse. Occasionally I have been invited to speak or write on the subject of what it was like to have been a part of the anti-war movement in the 1960's and 70's. In doing so, I have always tried to present the topic as I recall my experience of it, and this has sometimes led me to a critique, particularly of the manners of our militancy, rather than the focus of it. Reactions to my presentations filter back to me. "Another radical recants", was one

that I heard, and "Some people think you're becoming a bit of a fascist, Alan", was another amiable remark passed to me.

Should such things make me wonder? I think not. For I was able to put my attraction to the subject of war to the test recently. In my latest novel, *Close Ups*, there is a character, Rikki, who is a Vietnam veteran. In researching a background for him, I read a great deal and became interested in the experience of Australian troops in Vietnam, just those fellows I had once campaigned so fervently to bring home.

Then a month or so ago, I heard an attempt to revitalise the argument for the ANZUS involvement in Vietnam. This argument was delivered as part of a history seminar to senior private school students and was two-pronged. Firstly, it ran, Australia's essential strategic interests of the time were served by fighting alongside the US in an Asian war, as though causing havoc in someone else's country did not come into such an equation. The Polish Corridor and the Invasion of Kuwait were claimed as essential strategic interests, I recall. Secondly it was argued that Cold War conditions made the Vietnam War historically inevitable. Again, glib nonsense; history is dialectical, a choice existed *at the time*, the anti-war movement was its mouthpiece, as were many western governments.

But my point is this. I was made indignant by this line of discourse, as you can see, but I was also a little relieved that I could still feel such spontaneous moral outrage on an issue which is now old, relieved that I can say, yes, I do prefer peace, but relieved mostly perhaps, because I had assured myself I was able to make the distinction clearly between the validity of argument regarding war, and the validity of experience regarding war.

ADRIAN CAESAR

'Kitch' and Imperialism: The *Anzac Book* Re-Visited

The 'Anzac Legend' is generally regarded as a myth of nationalist assertion. On the 25th April 1915 Australian troops are said to have 'proved themselves' in battle and therefore proved Australia as a nation. Furthermore, the legend suggests, this martial prowess was the result of characteristics specific to Australians. And so the myth is one which moves easily between character traits to nationalist pride. What is much less discussed, I think, is the way in which the Anzac legend served British Imperialism through two world wars, and has more recently been used to validate and console Australians for participation in the Vietnam War. My subject in this essay, however, is *The Anzac Book* which recent scholarship suggests has been a leading text in the formation of the Anzac Legend. In my view, this nationalistic emphasis produces a distortion which elides the political complexity of the text, and the way it operates as propaganda for Empire. But let me begin at the beginning with a few words about the inception, production, and initial reception of *The Anzac Book,* before going on to review more recent readings of the book, and finally moving to my own reactions to its contents.

The Anzac Book had its beginnings on 12 November 1915 at the instigation of Major Stephen Butler, a British intelligence officer. The following day, a committee was formed on Gallipoli to oversee the production of a publication the contents of which would be "short poems and stories, pictures, jokes, illustrated and otherwise, topical advertisements, skits, limericks, cartoons and the ANZAC alphabet".[1] A circular was sent to all units at Anzac appealing for such contributions. The editor was to be C.E.W. Bean.

At first the publication was referred to as an 'Annual', but on 13th November the committee rejected this word as too suggestive of a prolonged campaign, and so the word 'magazine' was preferred. Sometime between the collection of the material, and the final preparation of copy for the printer, the title became *The Anzac Book.* These shifts in the title have been used to suggest that the publication was conceived prior to the decision to evacuate Gallipoli. But Denis Winter argues convincingly that Butler's instigation of the project was taken in full knowledge of this plan, and there is some evidence to suggest that Bean knew from the beginning that he was

1. 14.11.1915, Circular to all units.C805/2 in AIF Publications Box 1(Australian War Memorial).

editing a commemorative volume, rather than a periodical celebrating an ongoing campaign.[2] Certainly in the circular calling for contributions, he urged the men to "do their best" to make the publication "a souvenir which time will make increasingly valued." By December 8, the closing date for contributions, about one hundred and fifty individuals had offered their work for inclusion. As preparations for a withdrawal from the peninsula were made, editing of the manuscripts was begun. This work was finished on Imbros after the evacuation, and the book was finally published in England by Cassells in May 1916. By September over 104,000 copies had been sold — the book was manifestly a popular success.[3]

It was reviewed enthusiastically in both England and Australia, in terms which placed equal stress upon nationalism and empire. If, as Winter suggests, *The Anzac book* was planned as British propaganda under the influence of Wellington House, it certainly succeeded. At a time when the relationship between Australia and Britain was necessarily under strain due to the casualties sustained upon Gallipoli, *The Anzac Book* made its appearance to reviews which spoke as much of loyalty to empire as they did of Australian nationalism. In Australian and English reviews alike, the book was not only recognised as the embodiment of the 'Spirit of Anzac', but also as a record of the Anzacs' "splendid service for the Empire". The book is described as "a souvenir for the Empire", one that "should be read and treasured in homes throughout the Empire". One English reviewer went so far as to suggest that "*The Anzac Book* must be bought by every lover of the fair 'demi-England's (Henley's phrase) beyond the unsevering seas'."[4] That the book was so enthusiastically received in London suggests that its nationalism was not perceived as in conflict with imperial sentiment.

In recent accounts of *The Anzac Book,* however, stress has been laid upon its nationalism. David Kent in an influential article, and Robin Gerster in his impressive study *Big Noting,* both make major claims in this connection. Kent argues that the image of the Anzac that has come down in the popular imagination "was first presented in 1916 in *The Anzac Book* " and that C.E.W. Bean, as the editor, was primarily responsible for making this image part of the national consciousness. Kent also asserts that the "characteristic forms of behaviour and attitude which became the mainspring of the 'Anzac Legend' were first revealed in the *Anzac Book*".[5] Gerster, in agreement with this, refers to *The Anzac Book* as "the archetypal Australian Soldier's book" and says that it represents a "radical shift in literary tastes, martially speaking, from the meekly colonial to the stridently nationalistic." Gerster further contends that *The Anzac Book* is "something of a manifesto which sets out a thesis of Australian heroism"; it is "the first real unveiling of the 'official' literary portrait of the digger".[6]

On reading the text then, we might expect to encounter grim humour, deep chauvinism, and boastful machismo. But this was not my experience. Rather I was surprised by the heterogeneity of the contents and the complex political implications of these. No unified portrait of 'the digger' emerges. Instead there are several different 'Anzacs' separated from each other by differences of geographical origin,

2. D. Winter, The Anzac Book: A re-appraisal, *Journal of the Australian War Memorial,* No.16, April 1990, 58-61.
3. D. Kent, *The Anzac Book* and the Anzac Legend: C.E.W.Bean as Editor and Image-Maker, *Historical Studies,* Vol.21, April 1985, 388-390.
4. Australian War Memorial MS.1316. Reviews are quoted from *The Herald,* June 27 1916, *Daily Telegraph,* June 17 1916, *Sunday Times,* May 30, 1916, *The Referee,* May 28 1916 and *Morning Post,* May 29 1916.
5. Kent, 376-378.
6. R.Gerster, *Big Noting:The Heroic Theme in Australian War Writing,*1987, 15,29.

class and sensibility. In the tensions between these alternative portraits we might discern difficulties that threaten the very notion of a unified national type. Furthermore, the book is particularly illuminating as a demonstration of the way in which potentially subversive, nationalistic ideas could be contained, and used in the cause of empire.

The front cover illustration foregrounds a soldier with bandaged head against a Union Jack. There is nothing here to identify the soldier as belonging to Australia or New Zealand. The distinctive slouch hat is missing. It is only the book's title that leads us to 'Anzac'. The frontispiece too, subordinates Australian and New Zealand troops to the Empire. Two soldiers hold the Australian and New Zealand flags under a banner which proclaims them to be members of the 'Australian and New Zealand Army Corps'. But all this is surmounted by a Union Jack, and at the bottom of the picture is an inscription which reads: "The Australian and New Zealand troops have indeed proved themselves worthy sons of the Empire." It is signed 'George R.I'. From the beginning then, the Australian and New Zealand achievement is legitimised, contextualised and appropriated by the British Empire.

Inside the book are drawings, cartoons and photographs, but like the prose and poetry these do not figure the archetypal 'Anzac' in any uncomplicated or unequivocal way. Many of the drawings, for instance, are deliberately designed to ironically deflate ideas about the 'happy warrior'. Under the 'Editor's Note' on page xv, a cartoon demonstrates the difference between 'The Ideal' and 'The Real'. The 'Ideal' shows the Anzac soldier, head up, rifle and bayonet ready for action. The 'Real' is an image of a soldier on fatigue duty, stooped, over-burdened, and miserable.

Although there are no graphics which depict the fighting, there are several which dwell upon the boredom and discomfort of life on the peninsula. In drawings like 'The Hopeless Dawn', 'The Never-Ending Chase', and 'Our Reptile Contemporary' heroic, or even stoical attitudes are as absent as the slouch hat which is usually ubiquitous in the iconography of the digger. These are representations of boredom, misery, and in the case of 'Our Reptile Contemporary' of being let down by one's colleagues. In the latter the whole question of mateship is implicitly questioned. It is interesting to note in this connection that most of the drawings in the Anzac Book figure the soldier on his own.

There are two portraits in the book, one entitled 'At the landing, and here ever since' which is, perhaps, an Australian,[7] and 'Kitch' which by its title we know is not. It is interesting to compare these drawings. Both have the subject grinning and smoking. Both wear flat caps. The only difference is that the one we might take to be Australian is more battered, has a more rugged jaw and is slightly less formal than his English counterpart. This perhaps attests to the myth of the 'casual', 'tough' Australian, but both portraits suggest cheerfulness and nonchalance. Kitch's rubicund nose even suggests that he might be more enamoured of drink than his Australasian counterpart.

A couple of cartoons play on the laconic humour of the digger in relation to the officer class. In one of these the officer seems to be English as opposed to 'Australasian', but in the other it is difficult to say whether it is class or nationality that is being satirised. Nationalism is, however, unequivocally present where four alternative

7. When I covered the caption and showed this drawing to my fifth generation Australian wife and asked her to guess the nationality of the soldier depicted, her response was that he looked 'Turkish'!

cover designs for *The Anzac Book* are reproduced.[8] Significantly, all of these are far more stridently Australian than the design Bean chose for the cover. This is more evidence of the subordination of nation to empire in the text.

One of the most extraordinary sketches in the book occurs opposite a poem entitled 'Our Fathers' (15). This full page drawing figures a sailing ship at anchor in a bay, and men in Elizabethan costume carrying their goods and chattels ashore. The caption under the drawing, taken from the poem, reads 'Wandering spirits, seeking lands unknown,/Such were our fathers, stout hearts unafraid'. The interesting thing about this is that it reaches further back, beyond the colonisation of Australia, to celebrate the British tradition of conquest and empire. The poem ends 'Shades of our fathers, hear our faith confessed/We shall defend your Empire or be slain'.

From a total of one hundred and seventy pages with eighty-four written contributions, I can find only five pieces that indisputably contribute to the 'Anzac Legend'. Two of these are poems by men who were not at Gallipoli, and both are openly boastful of the Anzac's prowess without any analysis of *why* the Australasian soldier should be such a gifted fighter. 'The Trojan War 1915'[9] is more concerned to assert that "Upon the ancient Dardanelles/New peoples write-in blood-their name" than to dwell upon the specific attributes which make the soldier heroic. Similarly, the British detective writer Edgar Wallace's 'Anzacs' is a declaration of fame rather than a description of *why* or *how* the Anzacs deserve such celebration. Denis Winter has noted that Wallace was working for the British Department of Defence at Wellington House "writing literate propaganda"[10] during the war; like the first celebrations of the Anzacs which were written by Englishmen, this poem is further evidence that the British had an interest in supplying Australia with a consolatory myth which would justify and assuage its losses.

Neither of these poems, however, seem to me to convey the image of the Anzac soldier as suggested by Gerster and Kent. Rather he is to be found in the prose pieces 'Anzac Types' and 'The Raid on London'. The first 'Anzac type' is 'Wallaby Joe' and as this title implies, here is the myth writ indisputably large. Joe is the "typical bushman". He is tall and lean, but "strong as a piece of hickory". He has "laconic" speech, is a great horseman, a dead shot, is usually "sentimental as a steam roller", has "endless amounts of initiative" and is extremely efficient. The other 'type' is a 'Dag' from the city who speaks in working class argot, whose "initiative" expresses itself in petty thievery, who mistakes an Indian donkey for a Turk, and who jibs at authority.

'Bill', the principal character of 'The Raid on London', is more like 'Wallaby Joe' than the 'Dag'. 'Private Bill Kangaroo' is a "lanky, sawny bushman": who on the outbreak of war "saddled his brumby, and rode for the nearest town". He is described in London as "the strolling soldier of the South" who cares nothing for class distinction, is a good drinker, generous to a fault, and under pressure of a Zeppelin raid takes cool and calm command of the situation. Here then is the evidence for Gerster and Kent's assertions. But if we contextualise these passages in terms of *The Anzac Book* as a whole, a rather different and fascinating picture emerges. Let us return to 'Anzac Types'. There is a third such portrait entitled 'Bobbie

8. C.E.W. Bean (ed), *The Anzac Book*, 1916, 1975, 59. All further references to *The Anzac Book* paginated in the text.
9. This poem first appeared in *The Bulletin* and was submitted to Bean by someone at Gallipoli.
10. Winter, 60.

of the New Army' written by 'Tentmate' of the 11th London Regiment. Here we are presented with a portrait of an English junior officer who is "the ever-smiling embodiment of breezy youth; the spirit of cheerfulness; the Beau Brummel of the trenches". He is said to have gone through thick and thin with a smile on his face and never a scratch. He is an inspiration to his fellow soldiers and but for his "smile in adversity ... many of his brave boys would have given up". All this is written without discernible irony. In the second half of the portrait, 'Bobbie' is elevated to the command of a company, and continues to be inspirational until "nature" is said to have taken its course, and Bobbie is evacuated to hospital with an unspecified sickness. The piece ends with its writer insisting upon how much Bobbie is missed, imagining the devastating effects Bobbie is having on the nurses, and finally remarking the consolations that Bobbie's chocolate, tinned fruit and cigarettes are providing for those of his brother officers left behind. There may be some irony in the conclusion, but on the whole we are given a very positive portrait of an English officer who ironically has several characteristics which are said to be typical of the ANZAC.

This is not the only contribution to *The Anzac Book* made by an English officer. 'The Anzac Home — And a Contrast' by E. Cadogan of the 1/1 Suffolk Yeomanry describes a dug-out in the Dardanelles compared with the writer's memories of home. The latter are given in some detail and if Cadogan had not already mentioned his brother officers, we would be able to infer his class-status (and therefore likely rank) from passages like this wherein the writer takes us back 'home':

> Thick curtains hide away the melancholy November London atmosphere. Sweet-smelling logs crackle cheerily on the hearth; a reading lamp by my side sheds subdued lustre on the immediate vicinity of my chair. My servant glides into the room noiselessly over the soft carpet, and places the evening paper at my side. I choose a cigar from my case and light it, and then I am perfectly content. . . (42)

The writer is arrested from this reverie by "Wake-up, old chap — three o'clock. Your turn for the trenches." There is very little of strident Australian nationalism here — much less the Anzac legend. The same may be said of the poem 'To My Bath' by H.H.U. of the Northamptonshire Regiment, in which the writer has a nostalgic reverie about having a bath at home compared with the rigours of Gallipoli.

As these remarks suggest, *The Anzac Book* is to my mind much less stridently Australian than Gerster's or Kent's account would suggest. Not only do Englishmen contribute, but also the New Zealanders, habitually written out of 'Anzac' by more recent Australian commentators, are represented. Similarly the Indian presence at Gallipoli is acknowledged in a tribute to the Indian Mule Corps, and in one of the 'Anzac Alphabets' contributed by 'Ubique' of the 21st Indian Mtn. Battalion.

The centrepiece of *The Anzac Book* is a twenty-four page account of the campaign edited from Sir Ian Hamilton's Dispatches. This is by far the longest piece of writing in the book, and is couched in the turgid style of pseudo-objective, military-historical reportage. It is extremely boring. Nevertheless it reinforces my argument in so far as it does not, I think, conform to propaganda on behalf of a particular Australian 'Anzac type'. As befits an article entitled 'The Story of Anzac' much of these twenty-four pages are devoted to Australian and New Zealand operations, but there is also

Frontpiece *The Anzac Book*, 1916

"Kitch" drawn with an Iodine Brush by
C. Leyshon-White, *The Anzac Book.*

mention of the British Naval Division, the Lancashire Fusilier Brigade, the French, and the Indians. In the final encomium to his troops, Hamilton mentions the Anzacs like this:

> So I bid them all farewell with a special God-speed to the campaigners who have served with me right through from the terrible yet most glorious earlier days — the incomparable 29th Division; the young veterans of the Naval Division; the ever victorious Australians and New Zealanders; the stout East Lancs, and my own brave fellow-countrymen of the Lowland Division of Scotland (95).

Now although this might make us wonder at the insouciance with which Hamilton can attribute 'victory' to the Australians and New Zealanders, what it does not seem to me to do is to pander to the myth that the Australians were the only, or the greatest fighters at Gallipoli. The 29th Division, said here to be "incomparable", was made up of regular English and Irish Battalions.

There is more of this kind of thing in the reproduction of four pages of 'Special A.& N.Z.A.C orders'. Of course all these are deeply congratulatory. Why wouldn't they be, most of them having been issued while the campaign was still underway? They are clearly designed with morale in mind. But even so, here again the Australians are not distinguished above their comrades from other countries. In the order about the August battles for instance, the Anzacs are thanked for their "gallantry and achievement" along with the Maoris (interestingly separated by Major Braithwaite from the ANZAC) Sikhs, Gurkhas, and the new troops of the 10th and 13th Divisions from the Old Country. Similarly, in congratulating the troops on their evacuation of the peninsula (the most successful part of the campaign by a long way) Major Lyndon Bell remarks:

> During the past months the troops of Great Britain and Ireland, Australia and New Zealand, Newfoundland and India fighting side by side, have invariably proved their superiority over the enemy. . . (153)

What I am suggesting here is that *The Anzac Book* very definitely and deliberately places the Australian soldier within the context of empire. And reading the book today this seems to me far more striking than any "strident nationalism".

Other aspects of the prose contributions also do not conform to the expectations aroused by previous critics. Class differences, for instance, sometimes threaten to fracture the idea of the egalitarian 'Anzac'. In an article entitled 'Glimpses of Anzac' Hector Dinning speaks of consorting with "old college chums" and having "the boarding school home-hamper" superseded by parcels to the front from home, whilst also ventriloquising the working-class speech of other soldiers. And if we turn to some of the poems we find a sensitivity and a sentimentality which is quite alien to both 'bushman' and 'dag', and more in tune with Dinning's 'college chums'. Humour, when it is present at all, strikes me as boyish, rather than tough and sardonic. Certainly there is little to identify as definitively 'Australian'. David Kent has argued that "anything unpleasant which could not be treated humorously" was excluded from *The Anzac Book*.: "[T]hose contributions which dwelt on the dangers of combat". Fear, cowardice, personal grief, "the brutality, the suffering, the waste of

life, and the dehumanising effects of warfare" are all, according to Kent, edited out of *The Anzac Book.*[11] But in some of the contributions I found a surprising willingness to intimate some of the unpleasant realities of the fighting.

In 'The Landing', for instance, which following the prefatory material is the first piece in the book, despite its adventure yarn tonality and the comic strip depiction of sound (Se-ee-e-e. . . .bang. . .swish!.) there is also the following description:

> A bullet had passed through the biceps of his left arm, missed his chest by an inch, passed through the right forearm, and finally struck the lad between him and me a bruising blow on the wrist. . . . he was bleeding freely. All the time shrapnel was hailing down on us. "Oh-h!" comes from directly behind me, and, looking around, I see poor little Lieutenant B-, of C Company, has been badly wounded. From both hips to his ankles blood is oozing through pants and puttees, and he painfully drags himself to the rear. With every pull he moans cruelly. (3-4)

The writer goes on to describe how he himself is wounded and evacuated to a hospital ship, and does not fail to mention the large numbers of others who were also afflicted. That the piece ends with the vainglorious machismo, "I would not have missed it for all the money in the world", does not, in my view, entirely eradicate the sense that the fighting has had its costs, that Australian and New Zealand troops are not always indefatigable, and that not all of them are stoical, wry, and cracking hardy when they are wounded.

Similarly 'Glimpses of Anzac' begins by reviling monotony, and goes on to speak of being shelled:

> The work of enemy shell behind the actual trenches is peculiarly horrible. Men are struck down suddenly and unmercifully where there is no heat of battle. A man dies more easily in the charge. Here he is wounded mortally unloading a cart, drawing water for his unit, directing a mule convoy. He may lose a limb or his life when off duty — merely returning from a bathe or washing a shirt (18).

The writer goes on to describe a burial party, and how sometimes a shell will land amongst them. He also describes a sabbath service remarking that the "address is short and shorn of cant. This is no place for canting formula. Realty is very grim all round. There is a furtive under-watchfulness against shrapnel". This seems to me to speak of fear and tension. The piece goes on to detail other discomforts to do with lice and food shortage. That it concludes with a description of what consoles the troops (tobacco, mail, parcels from home) does not in my view negate the fact that 'Glimpses of Anzac' does not give a picture of conventional heroics.

Apart from the two poems alluded to earlier, the other contributions to *The Anzac Book* in verse also deviate significantly from a concern with heroics and 'the archetypal Australian soldier'. There are thirty-nine poems or verses in *The Anzac Book.* Very few of these have any lasting literary merit, or display distinctively 'Australian' features. It could be argued that the elegiac poems and those of Romantic reverie display in their expression of sorrow, regret, love and nostalgia

11. Kent, 381-2.

characteristics of sensibility which clearly contravene the 'Anzac myth'. They are also indistinguishable from hundreds of poems containing similar sentiments in similar language that were written and published in England during the war. The last stanza of 'The Graves of Gallipoli' is exemplary. The poem has registered the deaths of English and Australian soldiers, comparing both to classical heroes. It concludes like this:

> This be their epitaph. "Traveller, south or west,
> Go, say at home we heard the trumpet call,
> And answered. Now beside the sea we rest.
> Our end was happy if our country thrives:
> Much was demanded. Lo! our store was small—
> That which we had we gave — it was our lives" (25).

Approximately one third of the poems are humorous in intention. Much of the humour is lugubrious or coy and reminds me of late adolescent schoolboy efforts. Apart from a narrative poem entitled 'How I won the V.C.', I can find little among these verses that would support the claim that they are the repository of a particularly distinctive, laconic or sardonic temper. A couple of poems in vernacular dialect could derive from C.J. Dennis, but they could equally be said to derive from Kipling. And 'How I won the V.C.' is interesting in that it deliberately aims its irony at both newspaper and popular accounts of 'heroism'.

The poem is sub-titled "The sort of thing we must expect to hear when the war is ended". The writer, in an ironic, first person narrative describes how, having survived "thirty-two shots" through his trousers and "nine shrapnel balls" through his coat, he goes on to conquer a trench full of Turks by lobbing them a couple of cans of *Fray Bentos*. The enemy eats this, and consequently dies of thirst. To paraphrase the poem like this is to do it something of an injustice, and I can recommend a full reading, for it manages to make fun of every aspect of what we now know as 'The Anzac Legend'. It directs its irony at boastfulness, at mateship, at the famous disregard for authority, at the ability to sustain extraordinary wounds whilst remaining completely phlegmatic, at the sensationalising of fighting ability, and at Australian disregard for 'honour or glory'. In order then to argue that this nevertheless *belongs* to the legend one has to argue that its ironic humour is characteristic, and that self-deprecation is also a means of self-aggrandisement.

Further removed from the legend and its conventional poems of elegy and consolation, are 'Killed in Action', 'The Caveman', 'Grey Smoke' and 'The Price'. Although these are uneven in their technical qualities, they are all rather interesting in that they render negative aspects of the Gallipoli experience in surprising ways. Although there is sentimentality in these verses, there is also, in my view, a recognition of the brutality, suffering and loss that Kent contends is absent from the book. 'The Price' — the best poem in *The Anzac Book* — is worth quoting in full as it speaks for itself:

> Dead figures writhe and beckon in my dream;
> Wild eyes look into mine;
> While I bewildered, watch the bloody stream
> With misty eyes ashine.

It rends my heart, and I am nothing loath
To have the murder cease.
Horror it is and carnage, yet are both
Part of the price of peace (104).

Apart from the half-hearted cliche of the last line, I find this remarkable. The opening stanza prefigures famous poems by both Sassoon and Owen wherein they speak of their tormented dreams engendered by the killing. The writer here is also willing to speak of the violence in terms of "murder", thereby moving beyond military cliche and euphemism. In direct contradiction of Kent's argument, the writer refers directly to the "horror" and "carnage". All this is hardly redeemed by the final clause.

What then, finally, are we to make of *The Anzac Book?* It seems to me that if it is true that it was so important in producing and disseminating the Anzac myth, then this was because aspects of the myth were already in place, and the book was already being read in that frame of reference. There was a predisposition to look for the type of the Anzac and find him there. A similar process is, I think, certainly at work in contemporary critics and historians. The difference may be that the reception of *The Anzac Book* in 1916 perceived therein a different quality of nationalism than our contemporaries find there. What I think my re-reading of the text suggests is that the nationalism in the book, the myth of the Anzac hero, is both subordinated to and contained by imperialism. I do not think that in 1916 there was any general awareness of a tension between nation and empire. Even the nationalist Anzac, Private Bill, in the 'Raid on London' concludes his story dedicating his nationalist self to the cause with more vigour because he has visited London. The story concludes with the protagonist swearing that at the end of the war he will return to England and "toast it in a big, big, toast."

More recent historians and literary-historians have dwelt upon the nationalist aspects of the Anzac myth, some to celebrate these, others to deplore them — but they all seem to me to exaggerate its presence in *The Anzac Book.* This also leads them to ignore other aspects of the text. Interestingly they tend to conflate the different images of the Australian soldier in order to provide a unitary idea of the 'Anzac'. The classical hero, the bushman, the dag, college chums and dinkum cobbers are collapsed into a single figure thus erasing confounding contradictions from the national type.

What the *Anzac Book* offers us is an example of the subordination of Australia to empire, and the cost of that subordination. It could be argued that we are still paying the price. In the present debate about the Republic and the flag, it is, I think, Australia's participation in two world conflicts as a member of the British Empire that prompts in some a sentimental and emotional attachment which would keep us constitutionally subordinated to Britain, long after that relationship is either helpful or desirable.

BRIAN WILLIS

Restriction and Control of Aborigines in Western Australia during World War Two[1]

Whom shall I fear? : Of whom shall I be afraid?'
Psalm 27.1

Although Aboriginal enlistment in the Armed Forces was not encouraged during the early years of World War 2, many Aboriginal people in Western Australia did enlist. At the same time Aborigines were making an invaluable contribution to the war effort as civilians, labouring on the construction and maintenance of aerodromes and other defence installations. When war came to the North-West coast early in 1942, these people were involved in the rescue of distressed airmen, seafarers and civilian refugees. They guided reconnaissance patrols and coastal surveillance vessels in a region where inadequate maps and charts made local knowledge essential to the success of each mission. Yet panic and misinformation followed the first raids on Darwin in February of 1942 and those in the following month on Broome and other North-West towns,[2] and the Aboriginal population came to be regarded by many as a security risk.[3]

The idea that Western Australia's indigenous people may have been willing or even eager to collaborate with an enemy was not a new one. *The Australian Crisis*, published some thirty years earlier, had predicted a Japanese invasion of northern Australia and argued that by the offer of "presents of tobacco, silver, arms, and especially liquor ... the natives might be seduced from their present loyalty" to assist Japa-

1. Note: I have kept the language of the documents as it appeared in the originals, recognising that terms used to refer to indigenous Australians then are absolutely inappropriate now, in order to convey accurately those contemporary racial prejudices.
2. P. Hasluck, *Australia in the War of 1939-1945: The Government and the People 1942-45*, Canberra, 1970, 141-7. See also A. Powell, *The Shadow's Edge*, Carlton, Vic., 1988, Ch. 3 and *The West Australian*, March 4 , 7, 1942.
3. See WASA ACC 993 919/42. Letter O.I.C. Native Hospital Pt. Hedland to Commissioner of Native Affairs, May 30, 1942; WASA ACC 993 592/43, Memorandum Commissioner of Native Affairs to Hon. Minister for the North-West, July 16, 1942; "Attitude of Aborigines" in *Sydney Morning Herald*, March 11, 1942, 8e; J. Edwards, "The War behind the War" in *National Times*, January 30 - February 4 1978, 9; Letter Deputy Director of Security for W.A. to Commissioner of Native Affairs, June 20, 1942; AA (Vic) MP729/6, Letter Director of Military Intelligence to Army L.O., Security Service Canberra, July 3, 1942; *et al.*

nese invaders.[4] While there had been quite extensive contact between Aborigines and Japanese pearlers throughout northern Australia since the late 19th century, there is no evidence of the establishment of other than ephemeral links between the two groups.[5] Yet unfounded assumptions of a treacherous link between Aborigines and the Japanese crystallised again in the atmosphere of fear and uncertainty in 1942. This distrust contributed to the barriers placed on Aboriginal enlistment in the Services. It was also used as a dubious justification for the imposition of a level of control and restriction on Aboriginal people in WA that was more appropriate to "enemy aliens".[6]

From early in 1942 until the end of 1943 the lives of the State's Aborigines became enmeshed in the often competing objectives of the Commissioner of Native Affairs and those of military authorities, whose reservations regarding the 'loyalty' of the Aborigines made them anxious to exclude Aboriginal people from strategic locations. They were also keen to maintain the principle, with reservations, that the enlistment of Aborigines into the Services was "neither necessary nor desirable".[7] At the same time, the statutory responsibility of the Commissioner of Native Affairs was to protect the interests of the Aboriginal people; a responsibility all too frequently subordinated to the will of the Minister, A.A.M. Coverley, who supported settlers' rather than Aboriginals' interests.[8]

In the first year of the war concern for the social and political deprivation suffered by Aborigines had been generated in response to Allied propaganda decrying the Nazi concept of an Aryan master race. There was some recognition of the inconsistencies between expressions of solicitude for the oppressed peoples of Europe and almost total indifference to Australia's own oppressed indigenous population.[9] However, reason quickly gave way to irrationality. A letter to the Editor of the *Sydney Morning Herald* warned that Japanese infiltrators, by garnishing their faces with burnt cork, could readily pass themselves off as Aborigines! The writer asserted that by the use of smoke signals, Aborigines could give "good information to a Jap [sic] reconnaissance plane up to one hundred miles off the coast of Broome, Wyndham or Darwin".[10]

Such blatant racism was expressed in remarkably similar terms to those of *The Australian Crisis*. A government official at Port Hedland wrote to the Commissioner of Native Affairs: "there is no secret about it the majority [of Aborigines] openly state that if the Japs [sic] come they would get a better deal than they have had in the past".[11] After completing a tour of military posts in the North-West, an Army Chaplain recommended that in the event of an invasion all coastal Aborigines should be taken inland since their allegiance could be bought for a stick of tobacco. He commented further that "[t]hey have been told for years that the Jap [sic] is their

4. C.H. Kirmess, *The Australian Crisis*, Melbourne, 1909,209.
5. N. Bartlett, *The Pearl Seekers*, Melbourne, 1954, 280.
6. "Enemy Aliens": Persons of a nationality of any of the countries (Axis) with which Britain and Australia were at war.
7. AA (Vic) MP508 275/750/1310, Military Board memorandum, to Director of Recruiting all States, May 6, 1940.
8. J. Wilson, "The Pilbara Aboriginal Social Movement: An Outline of its Background and Significance" in R.M. & C.H. Berndt (Eds.), *Aborigines of the West: Their Past & Their Present*, Nedlands, 1980, 157; WAPD 76: 454 and 83:2163, cited in. Biskup, *Not Slaves Not Citizens*, St.Lucia, 1973, 86 , 178; and A. Markus, *Racism and the Australian Working Class*, Neutral Bay, 1978, 143.
9. R.A. Hall, "Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders in the Second World War", *Working Paper No. 121*, The Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, 1987, 51-2 and P. Biskup, *Not Slaves Not Citizens*, St. Lucia, 1973, 197-8.
10. *Sydney Morning Herald*, March 11, 1942.
11. WASA ACC 993 919/42. Letter O.I.C. Native Hospital Pt. Hedland to Commissioner of Native Affairs, May 30, 1942.

friend, and that he will one day save them from the white man who has taken their country".[12] At least this perception acknowledged the dispossession Aboriginal people had suffered. So infectious however was the prevailing racist paranoia that an allegedly subversive statement by an individual Aboriginal was sufficient to arouse wide community disquiet.

Following one such statement "by a local native", the Kojonup District Road Board discussed "the question of segregating natives should an enemy landing eventuate".[13] The matter was referred to the local parliamentary member and in turn to the Department of Native Affairs and the Police Department.[14] This and several other reports of individuals expressing what were labelled 'subversive' sentiments very soon attracted the attention of the Commonwealth Security Service in Perth.[15] So seriously did the Security Service regard these reports that its Deputy Director, H.D. Moseley wrote:

> The possibility of natives becoming subversive in the event of invasion by means of bribery or propaganda cannot be overlooked. Their knowledge of bushcraft, topography, etc. would undoubtedly be of great value to the enemy.[16]

In putting this view, Moseley acknowledged the "undoubted" military value of the Aborigines but was, like most, blind to the positive contribution that their unique skills could make to units such as a proposed Native Auxiliary Corps in the Kimberley.[17] The United States of America's military intelligence also shared the belief that Aborigines in Western Australia "would be of inestimable value to the enemy" and that "the enemy would have little difficulty in soliciting many of these people because they have been influenced by communist and anti-capitalist propaganda for many years".[18] The value of Aboriginal bushcraft and local knowledge to the enemy is a recurrent theme in comments by military and government officials as well as private citizens. However, little formal consideration was given, or action taken, to use this highly skilled and valuable military resource.

The first enforced removal of Aborigines in wartime followed the early attacks on Broome in March and April 1942, when "the townsite of Broome was declared a prohibited area for natives not in lawful employment".[19] The town's Aboriginal population, some 300 persons, was evacuated to Beagle Bay where the Lutheran Mission had been taken over by the Army Intelligence Branch in 1940 after the German missionaries were interned.[20] By 1944 selected persons, particularly married couples, were permitted to return to Broome to take up employment.[21]

12. AWM 54 177/2/3. Confidential report by Chaplain C.L. Bulbeck to H.Q. 3 Aust. Corps, November 2, 1942.
13. WASA ACC 993 4/42. Letter from Secretary Kojonup District Road Board to Hon. H.L. Roche, M.L.C., Perth, May 4, 1942.
14. WASA ACC 993 4/42. Letter Kojonup District Road Board to Hon. H.L. Roche, MLC, May 4, 1942 and Letter Commissioner of Native Affairs to Commissioner of Police, May 11, 1942.
15. Biskup, 209-10 quotes five other recorded cases.
16. WASA ACC 993 592/43. Letter Deputy Director of Security for W.A. to Commissioner of Native Affairs, June 20, 1942.
17. The raising of a Native Auxiliary Corps in the Kimberley was proposed early in 1942 but rejected by the General Officer Commanding in Western Australia. See "Longmore Papers", WASA ACC 993 1298A '158.
18. J. Edwards, 'The War behind the War' in *National Times*, 30 January - 4 February, 1978, 9.
19. Annual Report of the Commissioner of Native Affairs for the Year Ended 30 June, 1945, 7.
20. WASA ACC 993 365/44. Letter Commissioner of Native Affairs to Professor Elkin, April 11, 1944. and Biskup, 197. Paradoxically the nearby Lutheran Mission at Lombadina continued to operate relatively undisturbed.
21. Annual Report of the Commissioner of Native Affairs for the Year Ended 30 June, 1944, 6.

In December 1941, the State Government had taken "very forceful action ... to bring about the employment of all natives ... to ensure the supply of farm labour" in the 'Midlands' region. In a letter to the Minister for the North-West, the then Commissioner of Native Affairs, F.I. Bray, acknowledged that this action "amount[s] to forced labour", but that such compulsion was "justified ... in view of the national crisis".[22] In a surprisingly frank admission, Bray conceded that "elsewhere, except in Germany, I doubt whether methods such as these have been adopted".[23] But worse was to follow for the State's Aborigines.

Early in June 1942, the Army's Western Command initiated a unilateral policy of rigid control of the movement of all Aborigines in the area of WA south of Geraldton, within 160 kms of the coast.[24] An Army unit, the 'Special Mobile Force' (S.M.F.) stationed at Moora, assumed almost total control of the lives of Aborigines within the extensive 'Midlands' region. The Moore River Native Settlement (M.R.N.S.) became a virtual internment camp for unemployed Aborigines and those of "indolent habits or some other unsatisfactory trait",[25] and the lives of the inmates were regulated by a set of extremely restrictive "Rules for M.R.N.S."[26] Personnel from the S.M.F. were stationed at the M.R.N.S. to enforce the Army instructions.[27] In addition, members of the Army's Field Security Service routinely visited the M.R.N.S. and the other "Native Control Permit Stations".[28] Local Army policy clearly reflected the view that Aborigines were likely to be "subversive in the event of invasion" and should be regarded as "possible potential enemies".[29]

While conceding the primacy of "the safety of the Military situation between Wannamal and Mingenew", Commissioner Bray vigorously contested the restrictions imposed by the S.M.F., both on Aborigines within the Moore River Settlement and those in the Army's designated 'control area'. He noted that the restrictions would create "disaffection and discord ... especially in those whose integrity and loyalty have not been questioned". Among other harsh Army restrictions were those which denied Aboriginal 'outworkers' the right to visit their families at Moore River at weekends and on holidays. Without some relaxation of the Army rules, Bray said the Settlement would be "a sort of internment camp" for Aborigines.[30] But his justifiable concern for the affected Aborigines was overlaid by a greater concern for the rural employers of Aboriginal labour. Bray emphasised the need to make "native labour available freely to the rural industry" since "[N]ationally they [rural employers] have the responsibility of continuing their rural industries, and they must have labour to carry on their pursuits".[31]

Fear appears to have grown to obsession as the strategic situation in the near north continued to deteriorate. By mid July 1942, the Army had formulated a plan for the "Evacuation and Military Control of Natives in Coastal Areas south of

22. WASA ACC 993 4/42. Letter Commissioner of Native Affairs to the Minister for the North-West, March 26, 1942.
23. WASA ACC 993 4/42. Letter Commissioner of Native Affairs to the Minister for the North-West, March 26, 1943.
24. WASA ACC 993 592/43. Letter Deputy Director of Security for W.A. to Commissioner of Native Affairs, June 20, 1942 and Letter Cmsr of Native Affairs to Deputy Director of Security for W.A., June 24, 1942.
25. WASA ACC 993 592/43. Letter Commissioner of Native Affairs to Deputy Director General of Manpower, July 28, 1943.
26. WASA ACC 993 592/43 folio 15.
27. WASA ACC 993 592/43. Letter Commissioner of Native Affairs to HQ 3 Aust. Corps, July 14, 1942.
28. AWM 52 9/5/10. Unit "P", Field Security Service (AIF), Intelligence Summary, February and March 1943.
29. WASA ACC 993 592/43. Letter Commissioner of Native Affairs to Protector of Natives Three Springs, June 27, 1942 and Letter Deputy Director of Security for W.A. to Commissioner or Native Affairs, June 20, 1942.
30. WASA ACC 993 592/43. Letter Commissioner of Native Affairs Bray to H.Q. 3rd Australian Corps, July 14, 1942.
31. WASA ACC 993 592/43. Letter Commissioner of Native Affairs to HQ 3 Aust. Corps, July 14, 1942.

Northampton" and was actively seeking information "concerning subversive activities among natives".[32] Questions regarding the "loyalty of Aborigines" reached Prime Ministerial level; an excerpt from a Military Intelligence Summary was referred by the Prime Minister, John Curtin, to the Minister for the Army. It was reported that:

> natives and half-castes in the Mulleva [sic], Yalgoo, Mount Magnet, Cue, Bigbell [sic], Reedy, Meekatharra, Wiluna Areas are definitely sympathetic to the enemy. ... it is considered that they would be prepared to help the enemy. It has been common talk among the natives that when the Japs come they would be boss. Strong anti-ally feeling was first aroused when all rifles were impressed.[33]

Curtin advised the Minister that the matter should be discussed with the appropriate State Government Authorities in Perth, who "would be able to ascertain more accurately than would otherwise be practicable, the real attitude of the aborigines [sic]."[34]

In August 1942, notwithstanding the Prime Minister's apparent reservations about the report and without recourse to the Department of Native Affairs, the Army issued a further directive for the control of all Aborigines within an area extending some one hundred kilometers north of Geraldton, from the coast eastwards to the railway line between Mullewa, Goomalling and Northam, then as far south as a line from Clackline to Midland Junction thence to Trigg Island. In that part of the area north of Dongara, all unemployed Aborigines were required to report to the local police officer "who will be responsible to the Military" for their "conduct and custody... on the reserves retained for the purpose". Unemployed Aborigines in the area south of Dongara were to "reside at the Moore River Native Settlement". Those employed were to "be confined to the employer's property during the term of their employment".[35] Just one week after the issue of this directive, the Army (W. Aust. L of C Area) advised Allied Land Forces Headquarters that "the control of natives in the north-west area of this State, viz. from Geraldton to Derby, is now being made the subject of a close investigation by this HQ".[36] All Aborigines from the age of fourteen would be issued with Military Permits, rigidly limiting their rights and movements. Colour coded for security, the Permits would be either red or black, to indicate whether the holder was believed to be "subversive" or "trustworthy".[37]

Commissioner Bray recommended a "suspended enrolment scheme" whereby Aborigines could be enrolled by the Army, suspended from call-up and allowed to work within their own district. Such nominal enrolment would, he considered, "link-up" the Aboriginal workforce with the Army in a spirit of cooperation and goodwill. Bray argued again that the effect of the Army's approach would be to separate the Aboriginal people from the national war effort; it remained unsaid that "a suspended enrolment scheme" would also serve rural-pastoral interests.[38] In a less restrained letter to the Commissioner of Police some time later, Bray accurately described the

32. WASA ACC 993 592/43. Letter Deputy Director of Security W.A. to Commissioner of Native Affairs, July 16, 1942.
33. AA (Vic.) MP729/6. Memorandum P.M. Curtin to Hon. F.M. Forde, Minister for the Army, July 24, 1942.
34. AA (Vic.) MP729/6. Letter HQ Allied Land Forces to HQ W.A. L of C, August 12, 1942.
35. WASA ACC 993 592/43. Letter G.S.I. W. W.A. L of C Area to Commissioner of Native Affairs, August. 19, 1942.
36. AA (Vic) MP729/6. Confidential memorandum Comd'r W.A. L of C Area to Allied Land Forces Headquarters, Melbourne, August 26, 1942.
37. WASA ACC 993 592222/43 folio 41, Second Schedule of By Laws and Orders, Part 1.
38. WASA ACC 993 592/43. Letter Commissioner of Native Affairs to G.S.I. W.A. L of C Area, August 21, 1942.

Army's instructions as "thoughtless in preparation ... irksome in character ... [and] the effect of the instructions [is] to harass the natives and to turn them against us in our efforts as a nation".[39]

By mid 1942 the number of military personnel in Port Hedland was increasing and "the possibilities of cohabitation between these men and the half caste women residing at the 'One Mile'" became an issue of concern for both the civil and military authorities.[40] The Army's Area Commander, Lieut. Col. Gibson, anticipated problems arising from such sexual contacts as well as from the presence of "coloured people [being] on the coast in any number". To minimise the likelihood of such contacts and to maintain security, the Army sought to have the town declared a 'Prohibited Area' and the Aboriginal population moved to Poondinah, a site thirty two kilometers from Port Hedland, previously occupied but at which there were no buildings or shelter.[41] Bray stated that the planned removal of the Aborigines from the town was "not economically feasible" and that any such action would proceed only if the Army was "prepared to pay for it".[42] Lieut. Col. Gibson repeated his request to Commissioner Bray for the removal of the "half-caste population back to [a] camp previously occupied in [the] hills".[43] In his response to Gibson, Bray suggested that the Army's proposal was "not so much a military question but a matter of intercourse of soldiers with natives." Therefore he considered that the problem should be controlled by the Army. It should issue "orders warning troops against prejudicial conduct with natives and native women".[44]

Strong opposition to the Army's proposal also came from the Euralian Association, an organisation formed in the 1930s and based in Port Hedland. The Association's objective was "the improvement of the status of the half-castes in the Port Hedland District". Most of the Association's members belonged to the Anti-Fascist League while many were also members of the Australian Workers' Union (A.W.U.).[45] In an apparent effort to substantiate the case for the removal of Aborigines from the Port Hedland townsite, the Army's Security Branch undertook enquiries into the activities of the Euralian Association and the Anti-Fascist League.[46] Don McLeod, a non-Aboriginal man and long-time advocate for Aboriginal rights, was a leading figure in the Anti-Fascist League and had close connections with the Euralian Association.[47] He was a frequent adversary of the Department of Native Affairs on 'justice and rights' issues and at odds with the Military Security Service regarding Aboriginal loyalty.[48] McLeod discounted the likelihood of Aboriginal support for the Japanese, "and had even gone to the extent of planning guerilla activities with the aid of the natives should the invaders arrive".[49] Yet both Bray and the Military Secu-

39. WASA ACC 993 592/43. Letter Commissioner of Native Affairs to Commissioner of Police, November 5, 1942.
40. WASA ACC 993 919/42. Letter Protector of Natives Pt. Hedland to Commissioner of Native Affairs, June 2, 1942.
41. WASA ACC 993 919/42. Letter O.I.C. Native Hospital Pt. Hedland to Commissioner of Native Affairs, May 30, 1942.
42. ACC 993 919/42. Letter Commissioner of Native Affairs to Protector of Natives, Pt. Hedland, June 4, 1942 and Letter Commissioner of Native Affairs to O.I.C. Native Hospital Pt. Hedland, June 15, 1942.
43. WASA ACC 993 919/42. Telegram Lieut. Col. Gibson to Commissioner of Native Affairs, June 16, 1942.
44. WASA ACC 993 919/42. Telegram Commissioner of Native Affairs to Lieut. Col. Gibson, June 16, 1942.
45. WASA ACC 993 460/43. "Tyranny within the Law: Justice and Aborigines". Copy of an article written by D.W. McLeod of Marble Bar for the Anti-Fascist journal *Sentinel* and WASA ACC 993 796/43. Letter Commissioner of Native Affairs to Deputy Director of Security for W.A., August 12, 1943.
46. WASA ACC 993 796/43. Letter Deputy Director of Security for W.A. to Commissioner of Native Affairs, August 4, 1943 and Letter Commissioner of Native Affairs to Deputy Director of Security for W.A., August 12, 1943.
47. J. Wilson, *Authority and Leadership in a 'New Style' Australian Aboriginal Community: Pindan, Western Australia*, M.A. Thesis, U.W.A., 1961, 41.
48. M. Hess, "Black and Red: The Pilbara Pastoral Workers' Strike, 1946" in *Aboriginal History*, 1994, 18:1, 68-71.

rity Service connected the Anti-Fascist League with ideas inimical to the national war effort,[50] and Bray also linked the Anti-Fascist League with the A.W.U. and, by extension, the Euralian Association.[51]

Meanwhile reports continued to reach Bray of "the general deterioration of the local situation in respect to association between soldiers and native women".[52] To forestall "a drastic [military] direction for a complete removal of all natives from the vicinity of the townsite", Bray recommended to the Minister on October 12, 1942, that a 'prohibited area' extending to a radius of three miles be declared to exclude Aboriginal people. Those Aborigines deemed to be of "good conduct" would be issued with passes to enable them to remain in the area.[53] On October 22, 1942, the Official Proclamation declared that:

> All the land comprised within a circle having a radius of three miles from the north corner of the Port Hedland Post Office Reserve, Lot 17, ... to be an area in which it shall be unlawful for natives not in lawful employment to be or remain.[54]

Although the 'half-caste' members of the Euralian Association, with the support of the A.W.U., decided against accepting a "Native Pass", the group finally conceded to the imposition.[55]

A last indignity was to be heaped upon the Aborigines of Port Hedland. Representations were made to the Minister for the Army by the local M.L.A.,William Hegney, on behalf of "a number of half-castes who had been members of the Port Hedland Volunteer Defence Corps (V.D.C.) but [who] were later refused permission to continue".[56] In response, the military authorities said that the decision had been made on the "considered opinion of the North-West populace" as well as that of Military Intelligence.[57]

In March 1943, the Army formalised plans for the "Evacuation and Military Control of Natives in Coastal Area south of Northampton". In the event of an invasion, the Army determined that all Aborigines between Northampton and Gingin "must be removed". It was estimated that some 1200 persons would be involved! The plan called for their "collection and escort" by the V.D.C. assisted by Police Officers to nominated assembly points, then to be transported by rail or road to Goomalling, and finally to be "removed by rail to Malcolm" (some 220 kms north of Kalgoorlie) under V.D.C. escort.[58] At the same time the Army was actively consid-

49. J. Wilson, *Authority and Leadership in a 'New Style' Australian Aboriginal Community: Pindan, Western Australia.* M.A. Thesis, U.W.A., 1961, 40.
50. WASA ACC 993 796/43. Letter Commissioner of Native Affairs to Deputy Director of Security for W.A., August 12, 1943 and Letter Commissioner of Native Affairs to Commissioner of Police, October 22, 1943
51. WASA ACC 993 796/43. Memorandum Commissioner of Native Affairs to Minister for the North-West, September 17, 1943.
52. WASA ACC 993 919/42. Letter O.I.C. Native Hospital Pt. Hedland to Commissioner of Native Affairs, October 2, 1942 and Letter Commissioner of Native Affairs to O.I.C. Native Hospital Pt. Hedland, October 9, 1942.
53. ACC 993 919/42. Memorandum Commissioner of Native Affairs to Minister for the North-West, October 12, 1942.
54. *Government Gazette, W.A.*, October 30, 1942.
55. WASA ACC 993 919/42. Letter O.I.C. Dept. of Native Affairs Pt. Hedland to Commissioner of Native Affairs, December 22, 1942.
56. AA (Vic.) MP742/1 286/1/96. Letter W. Hegney, MLA to H.V. Johnson, MHR, August 26, 1943, and letter H.V. Johnson, MHR, to W. Hegney, MLA, August 28, 1943.
57. AA (Vic.) MP742/1 286/1/96. Letter Commander W.A. L of C Area to HQ Allied Land Forces, Melbourne, October 30, 1943.
58. WASA ACC 993 592/43 folios 68 and 69, Orders reference 'Protected and Controlled Area (Natives and Coastal) for the area south of 26 deg. S.

ering "the removal of nomadic aged and infirm natives from the North-West Coastal areas from Carnarvon to Derby and from a distance inland of approx. 100 miles". These Aborigines, believed by the Army to number approximately 250, would be removed to "prepared ration stations" in the hinterland. Aborigines in employment were excluded from the plan.[59] Bray responded to this evacuation plan by pointing out the impracticability of the scheme which he estimated could involve as many as 1000 people who would need to be "confined under the most rigid internment conditions".[60]

Because this plan left employed Aborigines undisturbed except in the event of an invasion, Bray, free of his usual concern for the maintenance of Aboriginal pastoral labour, argued that if its purpose was to exercise control over the movements of Aborigines, the plan had no logic. He noted that if the old and infirm were considered likely to be of assistance to an invader landing on the coast then he saw no less risk with Aborigines employed on the 'runs'. Since the 'tribal' country of these people extended no great distance inland, Bray considered that "the value of coastal natives as guides would be slight to an invasion force". Furthermore he believed that Aborigines so removed would not remain at depots or feeding stations "unless they were detained under compound conditions". He suggested that "from a commonsense standpoint" no such action should be taken since there is the possibility of "a greater risk with renegade whites".[61] One such alleged 'renegade white', Henry Herbert Colvin of the Onslow District had been reported earlier by Bray to the Military Security Service but no action had been taken.[62]

However, the Army was determined to proceed with the planned evacuation, claiming "strong requests" from the Area Commandant, North-West and the Commanding Officer, North-West Battalion V.D.C., "for the immediate removal of unemployed, aged and infirm natives from the coastal areas". These requests were said to have been "unanimously expressed" by members of the V.D.C. "which, incidentally, includes the greater majority of the male population of the NORTH-WEST". A total of 4,082 aged, infirm, nomadic and unemployed Aborigines between Shark Bay and Derby would "be moved at once back from the coast to points at least 100 to 150 miles", where they would be congregated at "feeding stations". All Aborigines working on pastoral stations were to be registered and "not be allowed to move from [the particular] Station without a permit from the Station owner or manager".[63] The plan also called for all employed Aborigines to be removed to the 'feeding stations' in the event of an enemy invasion.

The Army's response to Bray's objections to the proposal depended on a highly questionable rationale which demonstrated the influence of the 'pastoral' membership of the V.D.C.:

> If inland feeding centres are established now, natives who are in employment at the present time could be sent there in the case of enemy invasion, and their chance of being available after the war for labour in

59. WASA ACC 993 102/43. Letter G.S.I., W.A. L of C to Commissioner of Native Affairs, January 14, 1943.
60. WASA ACC 993 102/43. Memorandum Commissioner of Native Affairs to Minister for the North-West, January. 21, 1943.
61. WASA ACC 993 102/43. Letter Commissioner of Native Affairs to G.S.I. W.A. L of C, January 23. 1943.
62. WASA ACC 993 102/43. Memorandum Commissioner of Native Affairs to Minister for the North-West, January 21, 1943.
63. WASA ACC 993 102/43. Letter Brigadier Commanding W.A. L of C Area to Commissioner of Native Affairs, March 29, 1943.

> the NORTH-WEST would then be much brighter. If these feeding stations are not established now, or at a future date, then if there is an invasion, there is every chance that practically all natives would be liquidated by the enemy before they left these shores. The labour problem, after the war, would then be most difficult.[64]

Just why the Japanese would want to liquidate their supposed sympathisers is obscure. However, the Army persisted with its plan to evacuate Aborigines to "Controlled Camping Areas" inland, and a Draft Plan was prepared which designated the 'controlled areas' to which the Aboriginal evacuees were to be confined, most of them in inaccessible parts of the area.[65]

The 'Plan' assumed the cooperation of the Department of Native Affairs and the Police Department. Bray now referred the matter to the Commissioner of Police, D. Hunter, for his comment.[66] He too considered the Army's Draft Plan unworkable: "it would be impossible to hold natives in any of the Controlled Areas should any of the natives become obsessed with the urge to return to his tribal country". Commissioner Hunter considered that if the Army proceeded with their proposal, the only possibility of confining the coastal Aborigines would be "to establish internment camps with armed guards". Even if they were interned "inside barbed wire", the Police Commissioner expressed grave doubts of holding the Aboriginal 'evacuees'.[67]

Bray responded at great length to the Army's Plan, pointing out the heavy expenditure required, questioning the numbers of Aboriginal people involved, making clear the naive assumptions on which it was based and supporting his views with the comments of the Police Commissioner. He also questioned the Army's presumption of Aboriginal disloyalty, warning that the planned restrictions on this group of people would engender the same resentment as had resulted from the Army's 'control' in the Midlands region. To proceed with the scheme would, he said, "be an unhappy event for us since we desperately need friends". In conclusion Bray referred to "crudeness" in the Army's dealings with the Aborigines in the Midlands, and warned that there should be no "nigger hunting ... [and] Army personnel should not be armed".[68]

By the end of 1943 an invasion of Australia no longer seemed likely and the Army suspended its control and restriction of Aborigines provided for under National Security Regulations.[69] However, plans for the control and restriction of Aborigines by the Military were not formally cancelled until the war's end.[70]

From December of 1941 until the end of 1943, the Aborigines of Western Australia were forced to endure an extraordinary level of intervention, restriction and control. Superimposed on the oppressive provisions of the '1936 Native Administration Act' were the powers exercised under the National Security Regulations by military and wartime quasi-military authorities. In their implementation of the 'Act', Coverley, the parliamentary Minister and Commissioner Bray showed a greater

64. WASA ACC 993 102/43. Letter Brigadier Commanding W. A. L of C Area to Commissioner of Native Affairs, March 29, 1943.
65. WASA ACC 993 102/43 'Secret' Draft Plan for the evacuation of natives from North-West Coastal Areas to controlled camping areas inland.
66. WASA ACC 993 102/43. Letter Commissioner of Native Affairs to Commissioner of Police, April 2, 1943.
67. WASA ACC 993 102/43. Letter Commissioner of Police to Commissioner of Native Affairs, April 7, 1943.
68. WASA ACC 993 102/43. Letter Commissioner of Native Affairs to Commanding Officer W.A. L of C Area, April 10, 1943.
69. WASA ACC 993 592/43. Letter W.A. L of C Area to Commissioner of Native Affairs, August 20, 1943.
70. R.A. Hall, *The Black Diggers*, Sydney, 1989, 127.

inclination to protect pastoral interests than to advance the welfare of Aboriginals.[71] Many of those exercising a range of wartime emergency powers showed a low regard for Aborigines and held grave doubts as to their 'loyalty'.

This assessment of Aboriginal 'loyalty' is indicative of the pre-war relationship which existed between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians, and which stemmed principally from an unstated acknowledgement of the past history of exploitation and repression of Aboriginal people. This created a belief among the 'white' population that a Japanese invasion would provide Aborigines with the opportunity to exact a reprisal on their colonisers. A reasoned fear of a Japanese invasion was transformed into an unreasoned fear of Aboriginal intention, yet there is no evidence to suggest that any Aboriginal people took any action to frustrate the nation's war effort.[72]

In his Annual Report for the year ended June 30, 1944, The Commissioner of Native Affairs, F.I. Bray wrote:

> At least the natives have not suffered by the vicissitudes of the war. Many white people have suffered grievously by the war, but this is not so with the natives.[73]

This was a final hypocrisy, but it reflected the view of a great many non-Aboriginal Australians at that time, one which recorded history has yet done little to redress.

71. Coverley was said to have "earned a reputation for supporting settlers' interests rather than those of Aborigines". See J. Wilson, "The Pilbara Aboriginal Social Movement: An Outline of its Background and Significance" in R.M. & C.H. Berndt (eds.), *Aborigines of the West: Their Past and Their Present*, Nedlands, 1980, 15 *et al.* Bray considered the Aborigines to be "considerably indolent, lazy and slothful": Annual Report of the Commissioner of Native Affairs, 1940 and and was prepared to organise what "in effect .. . amount[s] to forced labour" and institute a programme of "corrective disciplinary treatment" at Departmental Settlements for "indolents": WASA ACC 993 4/42. Letter Commissioner of Native Affairs to Minister for the North-West, March 26, 1942, *et al.*
72. R.A. Hall, *The Black Diggers*, Sydney, 1989,133.
73. Annual Report of the Commissioner of Native Affairs, Year end 30th June, 1944, 5.

REVIEWS

Nicolette Stasko, ***Black Night with Windows.*** Angus & Robertson $16.95; **John Kinsella,** ***The Silo: A Pastoral Symphony,*** Fremantle Arts Centre Press $16.95; **Alec Choate,** ***Mind in Need of a Desert,*** Fremantle Arts Centre Press $16.95; **Michael Sharkey,** ***Strange Journey: Poems.*** Kardoorair Press, $8.00.

Nicolette Stasko's *Black Night with Windows* is poetry in the European tradition: warm rather than cool, allusive, not afraid to show emotion — unlike some contemporary Australian poetry. As well, some of the poems here have that *frisson* that makes the hairs on the back of your neck stand up, that gives you that moment of recognition that falls like a memory or a dream. Of course, not all of the poetry in Nicolette Stasko's collection will do that for you — not all the poetry in *anybody's* collection will do that for you; but there are enough poems here that do, that keep you looking for the next one.

Her themes are mainly domestic as in poems like 'Pickling the Chillies' and 'Kaiseki', or personal like those touching on her relationship with her sister; or they deal with the world of art. Gauguin and Brueghel are touched upon, and there's a memorable series of poems based on van Gogh — the 'Sun Upon Sun' series, some of which she adapted from his letters. Her interest in the Impressionists is not surprising, for it seems to me that as a poet she is very much an Impressionist herself, gaining her impact from acutely observed, sensuous details, often approached tangentially. The first poem in the book sets the tone:

> ...always in shadow
> I love the oyster
> and the turtle
> the great depths
> of the ocean
> the heaving movement
> of its moon
> my darkness is abundance...

In a poem like 'Making Beds/Passing the Thunderstorm' she combines the domestic and the passionate with an admirable lightness of touch.

There's often a sense of wonder in her poems which comes both of a deep empathy and a close observation. See for instance, 'The Heron' or 'Galah Sunday':

> while above
> oak trees
> still rusty
> with remnants of leaves
> are crowned
> in an abundance of galahs
> bending every topmost branch
> a moment's
> tapestry or naïf picked out
> on white.

Sometimes she breathes new life into a metaphor, such as that of life as a journey in 'Passengers'. This is one of a number of poems dealing with transience, a sense of the fragility of life which can be seen, for instance, in 'The Walk', 'Mutton Birds' or 'First Lies', where she is left

> with only
> the impossibility
> of words
> beginnings
> of the lie
> we live the rest
> of our lives by

In poems such as 'Table' or 'Things fall Apart' objects such as photographs or tables provide the starting point for the consideration of family or other history. Sometimes her observations are almost epiphanies:

> a child running
> along the clean curves
> of the beach
> white froth
> flicking her ankles
> the glimpse of a lyrebird
> disappearing
> into the ferns
> by the side of the road
> ('The Murmuring of Many Tongues')

Stasko does not display a wide range of voices

or tones in this collection; there's a poem in the style of Ian Abdulla; there's a light satire set in Rome ('Pietas'). Most of the poems, however, are sensuous, impressionistic, contemplative. And affirmative. Her last note is

> a woman named Elizabeth
> (called to from below)
> leans
> from an open window
> saying, 'Yes oh yes!'

If Stasko takes her starting point from art, John Kinsella, so the introduction claims, takes his from music. The introduction tells us that in 'using Beethoven's 6th Symphony as the framework for the collection, he explores the music of an Australian rural landscape...' I must confess that I found that statement rather misleading, for although Kinsella's poetry has considerable strengths, I would not put musicality high among them, especially if compared, for instance, to Stasko.

What it does share with the Pastoral, perhaps, is a sense of portraying the land in words, as Beethoven did in music. Also, perhaps, the fact that we are conscious of the art, indeed, sometimes of the artifice. This is poetry of brittle and glittering surfaces, rural poetry at its sharpest. Sometimes, indeed, it hurts your eyes to look. This is modernist, rather than romantic poetry; there is little in the way of Beethoven's melodious surfaces.

But then, what Kinsella is doing is providing us with a hard-edged view of life in the bush. It is a harsh life portrayed here, taking its toll of the land and those who live on it, and off it. This is the strength of the poetry: it provides us with a realistic perspective on the harshness, the cruelty of the rural life

> Rosellas gather about the grain offerings
> and the torn bodies of the fallen. Wood smoke
> hustles a magpie lark out of an uncharacteristic
> torpor. A crow hangs low and watches intently.
>
> Observing the rites of passage a regent
> parrot plunges into the dead eyes of a semi... (101)

As that quotation suggests, there is often in these poems a concern with the environment, most noticeably in the second section of the book. As well, we often get the sense of being able to see the same scene through two or more different perspectives, two different ways of seeing the world, as in poems such as in 'The Hay King's Recalcitrant Daughter' or 'Sculpting a Poem from the Landscape's Painting'.

Alongside the realism of the portrayal, however, goes a delight in the possibilities of language. Of the four poets considered here, Kinsella's is linguistically the most adventurous, the most memorable:

> The river smells winter-fresh, rain-cleared.
> She-oaks needle the banks.
>
> A heron eyes me curiously. I move into the region
> of the chat overcome by its own song.
>
> Pigeons emerge from the pylons of a bridge. Swans
> tack towards snag islands — cairns of eucalypt. (44)

As those lines show, Kinsella's delight in language provides a necessary antidote to the starkness of some of the scenes he describes, and enables a sense of celebration to emerge, though perhaps not all that often.

Occasionally, the language leads him into thickets of syntax difficult to find your way through, as for example, in parts of 'The Fire Mist' or 'The Sea of Tranquility'. Sometimes, though, the language seems to be not so much opaque as providing a distancing, almost an alienating effect, as in a poem such as 'The Sinking Sand'. And perhaps because of the linguistic playfulness, just occasionally I get a sense of the of the poetry as exercise: 'What can I write about fog?'. Nevertheless, it is the power of the language that makes this book, gives it its undoubted strength, its ability to explore, to disturb and occasionally to celebrate:

> Silence is the storm song tautly wound,
> when the grey shrike-thrush drinks
> the echoes of the honeyeater's call. (93)

Alec Choate's *Mind in Need of a Desert* is not so much poetry that explores the world as it is poetry that tells us the way the world is — what it looks like, how it behaves, what its significance is. Often he ends his poems by telling you the meaning of the scene he has described to you:

> Only slowly ... do we understand
> ... that this fragile remnant
> of rainforest is calling
> us back to Gondwanaland. (22)

Or this, from the end of 'Custodians no Longer'

> If, as it seems to us, they do not care,
> a half-wrecked car, a rifle, some cigarettes,
> skirts, overalls, and headgear
> merge into a rubbish art that fits their loss.

In his poem 'Perfection' he writes, "Always remember that perfection implies/some kind of conclusion". In this sense, Choate is often striving for perfection, but the result is that sometimes he seems almost to be explaining what the poem has been about, and at other times he comes close to moralising.

The strongest section in the book is undoubtedly the title section. The poetry here is vivid and strong, and we do get here the sense of the writer exploring himself as much as the desert. Poems such as 'The Track', 'Spinifex in Flower', 'Poverty Bush' are very fine poems indeed. The image of seeds in the desert, in the poem 'Survival' provides the theme for the book as a whole:

> we, who have learned to question
> our lives and their values
> can take heart
> from this will to survive,
> can see why we wander
> in need of a desert.

The Prince Regent River section also contains some fine poems, well observed, with often quite sensuous evocations of the landscape. The middle section I am not so convinced by. Though there are some fine poems, particularly those dealing with his wartime experiences, there are also some fairly slight pieces here. Occasionally, too, his sentences get very long and involved. The language of some of these poems seem rather bland, especially after reading Kinsella: Choate is not nearly so adventurous. He has, however, developed his own form of the sonnet, with a regular if unusual rhyme scheme which nevertheless works very effectively to tie the two parts of the poem together.

Fremantle Arts Centre Press is to be congratulated on the presentation of these two books: they are both very handsome, with over a hundred pages of good paper, well bound and with very striking covers. A pleasure to pick up and open, which helps reconcile the reader to the price.

Michael Sharkey's *Strange Journey* is much less ambitious in terms of size, presentation — and scope. This thirty-two page volume is one of 250 signed copies. It contained poems taken from three previous books taken from the period 1984-91, 'plus a few newer poems'. Since the book contains just twenty-two poems, it suggests that Sharkey is not a particularly prolific poet. Not that brevity is necessarily a fault; Choate's book in particular would have been stronger if a few of the poems from the middle section had been omitted.

The poetry we do have in *Strange Journey* tends to the ironical. Sharkey delights in the jokes life seems to play on us:

> Why, when I've been praying for a night
> alone and undisturbed
> with you am I so tired now you lie
> beside me, scented,
> eager, naked? This is someone's joke:
> the wine is drugged,
> or else the gods have given me exactly
> what I asked,
> an evening with you in my bed
> where nothing's up.
> (From 'A Greek Anthology')

or jokes on others, such as Ophelia ('Fall of a Flapper'). Many of the poems are slight and playful, like 'The Reattachment' or 'Rent'. Only occasionally, as in 'The Commonwealth

of Loss' dealing with Anzac Day, or the ecological concerns of 'Missing: Fears Are Held' does the poetry take on a sharper edge of satire. A piece such as 'Poem for Wilton' looks more soberly at existence:

> when will we sit down and talk
> of poems once again, and drink
> cool white wine in the mist
> that beads the glass, without
> a word of what has passed,
> before the trap is sprung at last?

Most often, though, it is slight, light-hearted poetry: 'Tears are what bodies dispense with/ When life is a joke.' (27) There are many jokes in this slim volume; but there's just enough of an edge here to keep the reader interested.

Ron Pretty

Geoffrey Dutton, *Out in the Open: An Autobiography.* St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1994, $39.95; ***New and Selected Poems.*** Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1993.

Geoffrey Dutton's autobiography *Out in the Open* is prefaced by a quotation from Montaigne which might serve as a banner to almost all autobiographers: "I speake truth, not my belly-full, but as much as I dare: and I dare the more, the more I grow into yeares ... I excuse me not unto my selfe". Montaigne has been a little-noticed influence on many Australian writers, but no writer has had greater all-round involvement in Australian literature during the last seventy years than Geoffrey Dutton. Dutton has led a rich, complicated life, both as a person and as a writer — partly because he has been a poet, novelist and historian but also an editor, critic, literary journalist, publisher and founder of publishing houses, organiser of literary festivals, founder of the modern Australian Republican movement. It would be hard to compile an exhaustive list. In detailing, or sometimes just mentioning, the events of his life, and his current perspective on them, Dutton strikes all the notes implied by Montaigne: *Out in the Open* confesses a great deal but also keeps a certain amount hidden, without self-indulgence and, one suspects, a good deal of refusal to "excuse me ... unto my selfe".

The book has been somewhat controversial because of Dutton's descriptions of numerous extra-marital affairs. Dutton makes no secret of their importance to his life or, as he sees it, to the continuation of his marriage to Ninette Trott. The author declares, "For a writer, especially for a poet, both sex and love can open the door to life" (419), and the book certainly portrays sex and love as fundamental to Dutton's writing and his sense of himself. "Life", as Dutton uses the word, has something of Bergson's vitalism, and *Out in the Open* is a book written in praise of "imagination, the spirit, humour" over against "Reason, Restraint and Responsibility" (387). This would probably not seem such an urgent battle to many Australians now, and in conducting it, Dutton shows himself to be a person of his period -- as we all, of course, are. But one reason for our different attitude is the work of Dutton himself. Yet, in the tone and content of his life-story Dutton conveys the modesty that he has in person; he portrays himself as "stoical-passive" (462) -- a common Australian, and in many ways admirable, stance towards the world. With the passivity, which creates a number of problems in his private life and his financial affairs, comes a good deal of Keatsian negative capability, which serves him well as a writer. Dutton at one point describes humility as "perhaps the greatest virtue" (381) and it provides him with a vantage point to savage the egotism of people such as Patrick White.

Out in the Open would be worth reading for its depiction of Dutton's relationship with, and judgements on, Patrick White alone but it has many other virtues. A life so crowded with incident and relationships with so many notable figures in modern literature and art could hardly fail to be interesting. Dutton's autobiography furnishes mini-portraits of C S

Lewis (a counter-balance to the gentle one of *Shadowlands*), Roy Campbell, Richard Aldington, H D, A Norman Jeffares, Evelyn Waugh, Vita Sackville-West and Harold Nicolson, Lawrence Durrell, Wole Soyinka, Robert Lowell, Randall Jarrell, Allen Lane, Yevtushenko...; and in Australia, Hans Heysen, Clifton Pugh, Russell Drysdale, Lawrence Daws, Robert Hughes, Kenneth Slessor, David Campbell, W G K Duncan (the model for Jonathan Crowe in *For Love Alone*), Rohan Rivett, Jean Battersby, Barry Humphries, Norman Lindsay, Judith Wright... the list could go on and on. If it is overwhelmingly male, that reflects the tenor of the times. It would be easy to make flippant remarks about such a list, and occasionally the writers and painters in Britain have a touch of Bloomsbury arty-fartiness about them, but there's nothing of idle gossip in Dutton's depictions. These are the circles in which he has, fairly 'naturally', moved. Dutton says that "the 1950s and early 1960s were a season for solitaries in the arts" (301) but clearly he hasn't often been one himself!

Dutton's contribution to Australian literature and culture has been enormous. Always a proponent of Modernism, the range of his own published work is astonishing; amongst it is not only the poetry which he declares his first love but *White on Black*, which drew attention to representations of Aborigines in art, and the first novel about European migrants to Australia (*The Mortal and the Marble*). Dutton taught the first course on Australian literature in the UK; he served on the first Australia Council; he was a key figure in founding *Australian Letters, Australian Book Review*, Penguin Australia and Sun Books, as well as the *Bulletin* and *Australian* Literary Supplements; he was the first person to publish Peter Carey, published Donald Horne's *The Lucky Country* (persuading Horne to change the draft title, *An Anatomy of Australia*), *The Tyranny of Distance* and Patrick White's plays. Dutton was a courageous publisher as well as an insightful one His anecdotes about these activities make *Out in the Open* a work of Australian cultural history as well as an autobiography.

Growing up in a house that was more like a library, museum and art gallery combined than a home, Dutton has a quality unusual amongst Australians — a strong sense of history. It is this that helped make him a Modernist and a Republican. Modernist, not Postmodernist: late in the book Dutton declares that "I should have looked clearly at what I really was" (459) and "I myself still had a long way to go in becoming myself" (460). Dutton believes in an essential sense of self, and his autobiography is the saga of discovering what that is, found eventually through his marriage to Robin Lucas. But crucial to that whole process is his sense of Australia. "To come to terms with one's own country", he declares, "is the same as coming to terms with oneself, a battle of discovery" (192). He has an acute awareness of a (not yet extinct) Australia in which "an open mind" is "thought to denote an absence of principle" (489). Dutton unequivocally sides with those who display "a zest for life" (494), regarding a "capacity for sheer pleasure, an instinct for fun" as "essential to most writers and artists" (254). This leads him, I think, to overvalue some larrikins and bohemian behaviour in general, but also provides features such as the superb lampoon of Patrick White in angry mode: "Patrick had been rumbling for some time and I thought it would not be long before he blew up like one of those geysers in Rotorua or Yosemite that from time to time wake up and spew steam and mud" (441). Would that Sid Nolan had lived to read this! Dutton has an apparently effortless prose style and his feeling for the land is everywhere apparent: "we would go to remote areas, especially of the Flinders Ranges, up faint, dust-lifting tracks over the bony hills and down into a valley with a running creek in all that dryness" (405).

Some of his judgements — for example, on Patrick White, or on the danger of universities to novelists — are fascinating, while a very small number — such as his acceptance

of one Frank Maughan's statement, "'There are two sorts of people in the world, ... those with soul and those without'" (107) — strike me as absolute tosh. Dutton has led such a rich life that the 528 pages of *Out in the Open* aren't really enough to cover it. Amongst those things in the "belly-full" of truths not spoken are elements of his inner life, particularly as regards his children, about whom he is consciously reticent ("I believe their stories are their own" [225]), and his first wife, Ninette, who is present as a kind of ghost in much of the book. *Out in the Open* is an admirable book about an admirable person, with some superb photographs, but Dutton's daring is not total.

Dutton's *New and Selected Poems* is, from one point of view, an alternative biography, with perhaps more of his inner life revealed. There is a continuity between the two books, with poems such as 'The Prison' and 'Georgian Wine' clearly recounting experiences described in the autobiography. 'A Finished Gentleman' is itself a survey of his own life, at least until the late 1960s, with Dutton reflecting on his squattocracy upbringing and asking, "what did it give me, to be an Austro-english gentleman?" The answers are to be found in the book as a whole, a selection in which 'New Poems' provide almost a third of the contents.

Reading the early poems, one can see why. These sometimes sound inflated to contemporary ears, straining for meaning ("The body / Was entered, as will is seldom, by the soul" [4]). The poems become more relaxed the closer they get to the present, and to read the book from front to back is to receive a survey of the tones and techniques of Australian poetry from the 1940s to the 1990s. Although I was a little surprised by the extent to which English Renaissance poets have influenced Dutton's work, on the whole the attitudes expressed in the poetry are consistent with those in the prose. The marvellous 'An Australian Childhood' and 'Thoughts, Home from Abroad' are two of many poems which see the self very much in relation to the nation, and many of the poems display Dutton's sensitivity to Australian nature and landscape. The most complicated relationship detailed in *Out in the Open* is that of Dutton's with his mother. A more favourable, and in many ways more moving, view of her is provided in the elegy 'The Smallest Sprout', which includes some of Dutton's most thoughtful lines:

> Love's most heroic response is to the 3 am despair...
> Walking away from light one's shrinking shadow on the wall
> Grows more nearly what one is, till it becomes
> Nothing at all. Death eats what the self has left.

Dutton also shows himself to be an excellent satirist, as when considering academics, gazing "with Eliot's skinny pity" or 'Our Leisured Ladies' — "those who are not what they seem, / Or worse, seem what they are" (99). The poems provide a largely Romantic view of nature and of humans too, with critical attitudes to human structures sometimes too easily assumed and with a feeling, expressed for example in 'No Time for Words', that sex gets us close to nature, to the core of things. That modern Romantic, D H Lawrence, hovers behind many of the poems. Dutton is decidedly against wowser Australia and for those who "would walk a mile beyond the rules" (186). The non-satiric poems are at their best when they keep their meanings embodied in images, expressing a "Freedom gone as soon as defined". In a finely modulated closing poem, 'Little Testament', Dutton wishes: "may the untidiness of the wise / Loosen lives done up too tight" (226). This poetic will and testament of the optimist Geoffrey Dutton leaves us a legacy vastly different to Dr Swift's!

Dennis Haskell

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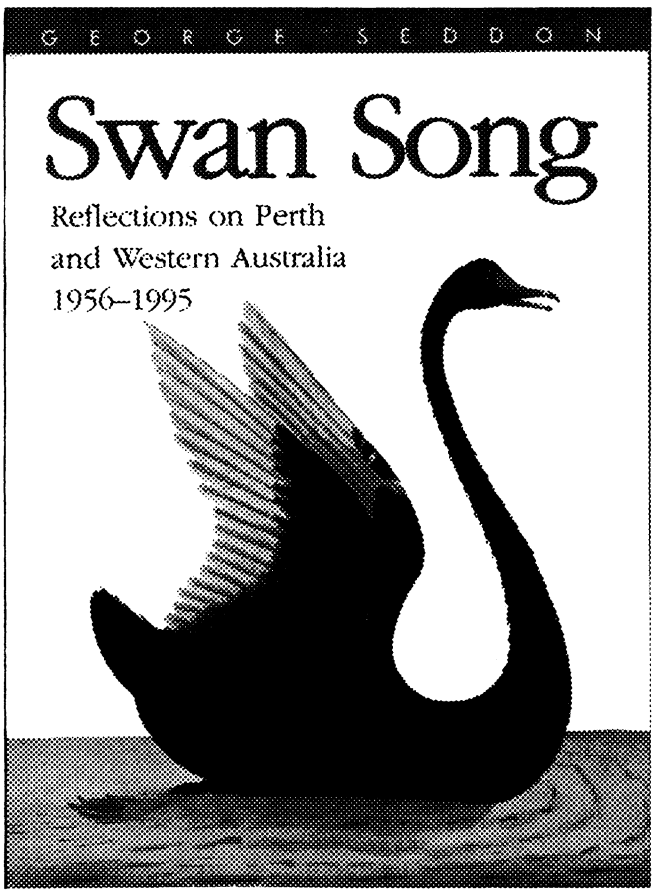

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