

# WESTERLY

Scenes de la Vie Militaire — — L. R. Burrows

Aboriginal Art — — — — R. M. Berndt

Stories

Poems

Book Reviews

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1962

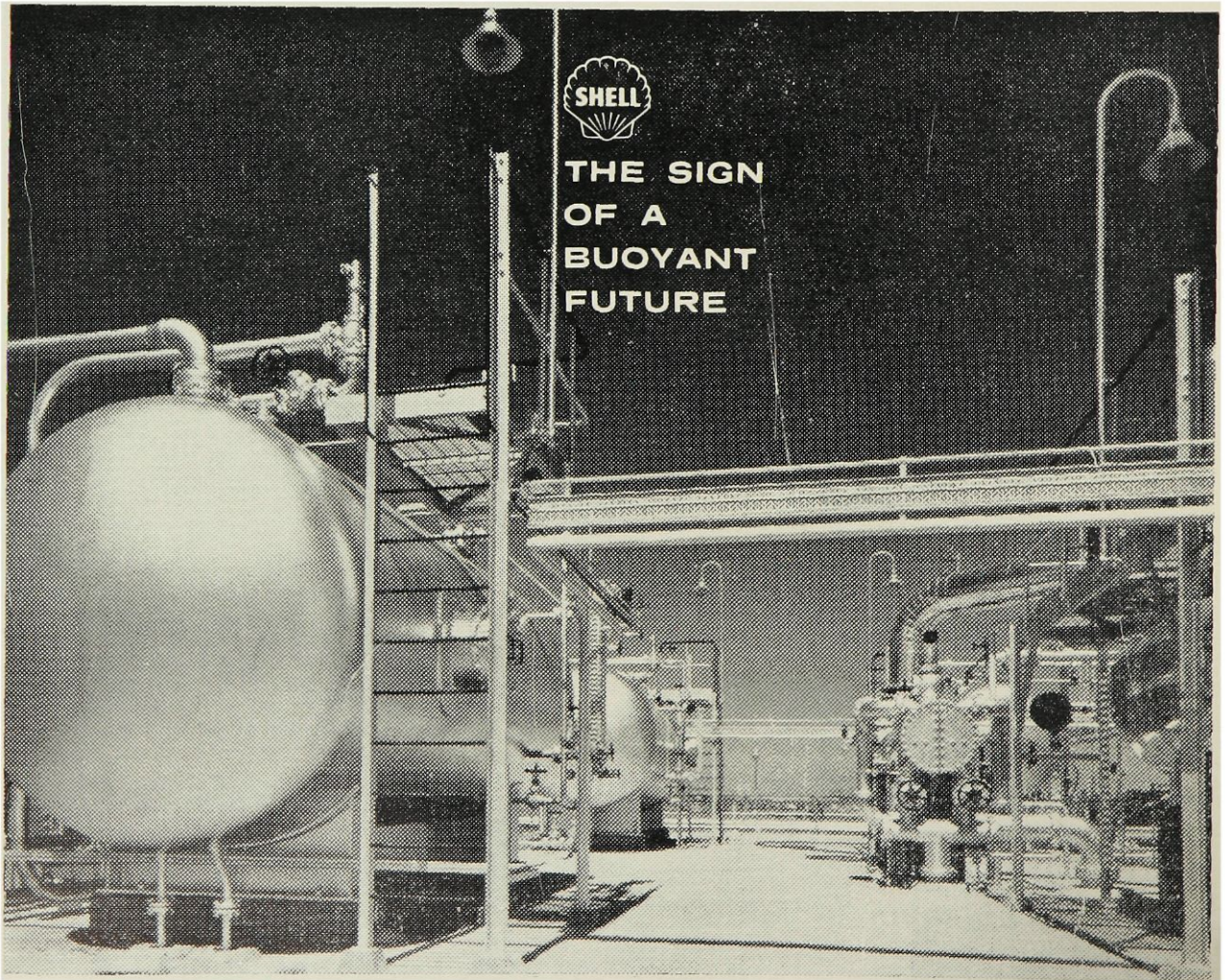
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previously imported — to be produced in Australia. Shell's continuing expansion programme, of course, means additional supplies of quality petroleum products made in Australia.



# WESTERLY

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## Of Interest To Subscribers

When the Commonwealth Government decided not to act on their advisory board's recommendation to give "Westerly" a grant to help it to become a quarterly on the grounds that it was not at the time a quarterly, the Arts Union decided to eliminate this ground for objection as soon as possible. It is a distinct possibility that as from next year Westerly will appear four times a year.

Meanwhile in 1962, with the emphasis upon the Commonwealth Games in November/December, it was decided to take advantage of our non-quarterly status and not align our publication dates with the University academic year as heretofore. This then is the first for 1962. The second and third will appear just prior to the Games. We shall combine them into one healthy volume for which the price will be 5/-. This will mean that subscribers at 6/- a year will receive the benefit.

In taking this step of nearly trebling our usual size we have no intention of producing another Tourist's guide—in this case to the Australian literary scene—but we shall endeavour however to obtain articles, stories and poems from as many of the leading Australian literary figures as possible. Copies of the Games issue will be posted to subscribers as usual free of postage charge.

# Scenes de la Vie Militaire

L. R. Burrows

EVELYN WAUGH'S latest novel, *Unconditional Surrender* (Chapman and Hall, 1961), is subtitled "The Conclusion of *Men at Arms* and *Officers and Gentlemen*". With it he brings to completion his Crouchback trilogy of war-time experience.

At the beginning of *Men at Arms* it is August, 1939, and Guy Crouchback is 35 years old. The Crouchbacks are a family of old-established Catholic gentry in reduced circumstances. Guy is a romantic, "spiritually crippled and socially isolated, numbed and desiccated by previous misfortune". Eight years ago he was deserted by his wife, Virginia, and has since lived miserable and lonely in the family villa in Italy, "set apart from his fellows by his own deep wound, that unstaunched, internal draining away of life and love . . . deprived of the loyalties which should have sustained him". The announcement of the Russian-German alliance shocks him from his self-regarding apathy; at last there is a cause that claims his allegiance; "eight years of shame and loneliness were ended". "The enemy at last was plain in view, huge and hateful, all disguise cast off. It was the Modern Age in arms. Whatever the outcome there was a place for him in that battle." Before leaving for England, Guy pays a symbolic visit to the tomb of Roger of Waybroke, a Knight Crusader who never reached the Crusade but fell in a local battle in Italy. He touches the "sword of honour", still bright, and says, "Sir Roger, pray for me and for our endangered kingdom."

After some initial difficulties Guy obtains

a commission in the Royal Corps of Halberdiers, and *Men at Arms* describes the early months of training that culminate, for Guy, in a fantastic raid at Dakar. The book is dominated by two remarkable warriors; Apthorpe, a fellow junior-officer, the only one of the new recruits who "looks like a soldier," "burly, tanned, moustached, primed with a rich vocabulary of military terms"; and Brigadier Ritchie-Hook, a ferocious, piratical cyclops whose demonic obsession is "biffing the enemy". Apthorpe is a superb comic character, and his battle with the brigadier over the possession of the thunderbox (a portable chemical closet) is hilarious. Apthorpe is defeated (biffed with a bomb in the rears) but Apthorpe was bogus any way, an old pretender, and in the end, as he lies ill in West Africa, he is killed off unintentionally by Guy himself with the surreptitious gift of a bottle of whiskey. The consequences of this, and of Guy's participation in the irresponsible raid instigated by murderous Ritchie-Hook, leads to Guy's being sent back in disgrace to England.

In *Officers and Gentlemen* Guy is transferred to the Commandos, trains with them on the Island of Mugg, and goes off with them to Crete. After the fall of Crete, he manages to escape in a small boat steered by a "queer" (in all senses) N.C.O. named Ludovic. In this volume, more sombre in tone than *Men at Arms*, Guy's illusion that he is assisting humbly in a noble cause are painfully deflated; the loss of honour comes bitterly home to him in the conduct of a new friend, Ivor Claire, whom Guy has seen as

"the fine flower of them all . . . quintessential England", but who, in the chaos of defeat on Crete, deserts his men. Worse, Claire's cowardice is hushed up by influential friends both civil and military. But the disintegration into dishonour of the Holy War is even more strikingly dramatized in the panic disintegration of a Brigade-Major, Fido Hound, who also deserts and is murdered by a fellow-deserter, Ludovic. Russia, the arch-enemy, has now become a gallant ally; and in England itself the Modern World is as rampant as ever—witness the Trimmer Affair. Trimmer chucked out of the Halberdiers, is an ex-hairdresser, a cad, a man of dubious social origins, who enjoys a fevered weekend with Guy's former wife before being pushed into a small Commando raid arranged for publicity purposes to boost morale. He behaves ingloriously but is presented as a national hero: "The upper classes are on the secret list. We want heroes of the people, to or for the people." He is then sent to make public appearances throughout the country, and Virginia, against her wishes, is sent with him to keep him in good heart. No wonder that Guy feels in despair that "he was back after less than two years' pilgrimage in a Holy Land of illusion in the old ambiguous world where priests were spies and gallant friends proved traitors and his country was led into blundering dishonour."

*Unconditional Surrender*, as one might expect "completes the disillusionment of the hero": Book One ("State Sword") opens with a description of the crowds paying homage in Westminster Abbey to a sword "made at the King's command as a gift to 'the steel-hearted people of Stalingrad,'" an ironic and symbolic contrast to the opening scene of *Men at Arms* where Guy had visited the "sword of honour" and dedicated himself to the Holy War. After a couple of blank years of "soldiering on" with the Halberdiers in Britain, he is sent to a parachute-jumping school commanded by Ludovic who, fearful of Guy's knowledge of the crimes in Crete, incarcerates himself in an absurd and sinister fashion that excites suspicions of madness and then, though Guy has injured himself and been reported as "too old", highly recommends him for immediate employment, pondering the while on Uriah the Hittite. So Guy is flown out to Yugoslavia, where he is attached to the British mission aiding the communist partisans. Mr.

Waugh has a savage field-day with the bumbles, blunders, and horrors of military and political practices and malpractices in Jugoslavia; and Guy Crouchback, baffled and angry, comes to the "consummation" of his crusade.

A dull, dry, negative figure in the two previous volumes, this innocently romantic and reticent gentleman has proved an excellent foil for all the monstrous opportunism, treachery, chicanery, and plain stupidity of the British Army (officer types) and of the war in general. In this volume, where he is less involved in public military affairs. Guy's private and spiritual life quickens and comes positively to the fore. His father Gervase (who personifies, in Mr. Waugh's intention, "the abiding values which co-existed with and survived all the political clap-trap") dies, leaving his son a valuable sum of money and a more valuable morsel of religious wisdom that serves him henceforth as a touchstone of right behaviour: "Quantitative judgments don't apply. If only one soul was saved, that is full compensation." His father's funeral service brings Guy to a realisation of his spiritual apathy, and he prays that God will show him what service he may do and help him to do it. The chance arrives when Virginia entreats him to marry her. Knowing she is with child by Trimmer, Guy consents to the marriage for the sake of the unborn child's soul. It is his "first positively unselfish action". He says, "Here was something most unwelcome, put into my hands; something . . . beyond the call of duty"; not the normal behaviour of an officer and gentleman; something they'll laugh about in Bellamy's". Later on, in Yugoslavia, Guy is likewise chiefly concerned with endeavours to evacuate a crowd of displaced Jews, concerned, that is, with an "act of mercy", a positive personal striving after good works. This act of charity and compassion is only partly, and after much frustration, successful; and his friendly interest in one Jewish couple results only in their condemnation by a People's Court. It is a bitter "consummation".

Moreover, Guy is brought to recognise and acknowledge his own complicity in the guilt of war, to set his earlier patriotic idealism at a baser valuation. The Jewess he tries in vain to help says to him: "It is too simple to say that only the Nazis wanted war. These

communists wanted it too. It was the only way in which they could come to power. Many of my people wanted it . . . It seems to me there was a will to war, a death wish, everywhere. Even good men thought their private honour would be satisfied by war. They could assert their manhood by killing and being killed. They would accept hardships in recompense for having been selfish and lazy. Danger justified privilege. I know Italians . . . who felt like this. Were there none in England?" "God forgive me," says Guy. "I was one of them."

If *Unconditional Surrender*, then, completes a disillusionment, it also initiates a quickening and development of self-awareness and the virtues of the contrite and compassionate heart. This development is not startling either in degree or kind. It would have been startling false to Guy's nature to make it so, and Mr. Waugh present it quietly and convincingly, neither sentimentalizing nor shrilly overemphasizing. (One might compare the nostalgic "lushness" and shrill overemphasis in the treatment of religious matters in *Brideshead Revisited*.) The appropriate effect, in any case, must be that of

How far that little candle throws his  
beams,  
So shines a good deed in a naughty  
world.

It is perhaps necessary to point out that Shakespeare is saying here that a good deed does not throw its beams very far in a naughty world; it is a *little* candle. Yet even a tiny beacon of light plays its small part in dispelling night's blear-all black.

(Ironically, no doubt, Guy's due reward for his virtue is not entirely postponed to the hereafter. Virginia is killed by a flying-bomb, and our concluding glimpse of Guy in 1951 shows him happily married and procreative, fatter and thriving, settled in the ancestral Lesser House as his father had hoped. As his brother-in-law says, "not without a small, clear note of resentment": "Things have turned out very conveniently for Guy.")

Though the ferocious and/or hilarious comedy of Mr. Waugh is not as prominent in this last volume as in the earlier two, it not absent. We are given the ironic success of the grotesque Ludovic with his massy, lush, bad novel, *The Death Wish*; and the fitting

end of the grotesque and decrepit Ritchie-Hook, who is killed when indulging in a final spot of single-handed biffing of the enemy. There is one scene in particular of delicious humour, when Guy's Uncle Peregrine, a simple, almost virginal old bore, takes the good-time girl Virginia out to dinner and is brought to confess that he had hoped Virginia was intent on seducing him. The contrast between Peregrine's slyly innocent primness and the unvarnished directness of Virginia's responses and vocabulary is excellently comic.

One's first impressions are that the Crouchback trilogy is probably Mr. Waugh's best performance so far; it is certainly his most ambitious and best sustained novel. Objections could, of course, be raised. Mr. Waugh's outlook is sharply limited in some directions, as is well known by now. Perhaps, the social limitations arouse the most dissatisfaction in many breasts. The objection here would not be that this account of the war is confined to, in V. S. Pritchett's witty phrase, "a Who's Who of our National Peril." Waugh after all is scathingly critical of many of his officers and gentlemen, and there is little of the smug, let's-play-public-school-soldiers juvenility that marred *Put Out More Flags*. The objection would rather indicate the grotesque ugliness of prejudice that is responsible for the characterization of Trimmer as Modern Common Man and that offers no counterbalancing example of a less obnoxious type. There is some justice in this objection, I think. Waugh can biff his bugbears as maliciously and unfairly as any one-eyed brigadier; and one-eyed is, as Crouchback is fond of remarking, the mot juste.

The familiar objections to Waugh's political and religious limitations cannot be so easily made with this trilogy. True, communism may seem to be too facilely equated with evil; but in partial qualification one may say that guilt and evil are not exclusively reserved for Uncle Joe's children, as Uncle Crouchback recognises. As for the Catholicism, I doubt that one could reasonably complain of "institutionalism" here: Guy's religious lessons may also be understood and approved by "humanists".

Mr. Waugh has, thank God, turned away from the vercharged "poetic" style and feelings of *Brideshead*; cultivated his inimitable gifts for comedy, whether satirical, grotesque,

or humorous; and chastened into a more effective restraint his "seriousness" has meant for Waugh a defiant defence, and championship of his "loyalties" to an upperclass, to a church, and to a past time; and the championship has been detrimental, in many critics' view, to a satisfactory artistic detachment. Crouchback, clearly, is a Waugh man; the loyalties he has been deprived of and seeks in battle are Waugh's loyalties. But Crouchback, the "crippled" romantic, although given his creator's war experiences, is sufficiently differentiated from him in other ways; and it is not, in any case, embarrassingly over-championed, is treated with some detachment, with sufficient "coldness". Waugh has learned from the mistakes of *Brideshead*. There is surely a self-directed irony in the comment on Ludovic's *The Death Wish*: "Half a dozen other English writers, averting themselves sickly from privations of war and apprehensions of the social consequences of the peace, were even then (1944) . . . composing . . . books which would turn from the drab alleys of the thirties into the odorous gardens of a

recent past transformed and illuminated by *disordered* memory and imagination."

"These novels," one reviewer has asserted, "are as near faultless as it is possible for novels to be." Incompetent to press such a claim, I would say that they are indeed extremely well-written within their due limitations. There are brilliant scenes and brilliant sequences, contrived and executed with great skill; powerfully effective in the economy and pace of their narration; continually revealing Waugh's unerring eye for detail and unerring ear for dialogue; sharp and crisp in their laconic understatement. The trilogy as a whole, one senses again and again, has an overall intricacy and harmony of structure that is dense with ironic and symbolic cross-reference. I heartily recommend Mr. Waugh for the D.S.O. (War Artists).

P.S.: There are, it will interest the curious or pedantic to know, two slight errors of "continuity" in *Unconditional Surrender*: Ivor Claire becomes Clare, and, more strikingly, Mr. Elderbury has changed into Mr. Elderberry.

## STUDENTS

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# Magi

Charles Higham

Here they found treasures, deep  
In the throttling roots of trees;  
Skulls with emeralds  
And hollow eyes that weep  
Tears of dark amethysts;  
Hands like the claws of birds  
Empty, but in their clutch  
Those golden, studded sherds.

The three were wanderers,  
Worshipping kings who fell  
Thrust down below those aspens,  
Nuzzled by bitter curs.  
Crammed in their mouths like stones  
They cram in vampire jaws,  
The rubies, sapphires, pearls,  
Stifle these emperors.

We know them in our blood:  
Heaped in their golden pride  
That came to homage Him.  
But though they bent and cried  
Nothing could stop the flood  
Of life's conupiscence.  
Until the end they knew  
That all save passion, died.

Carols and hymns relate  
The coming of these kings.  
Kneeling, abasing their pride,  
Humble with crown and plate  
Before the manger laid.  
Now these and the tyrants too  
Lie in the shifting earth:  
I hold their blazing rings.

# Custody

Lloyd Davies

THEY stood in the gardens outside the pillared entrance to the Court.

A firewheel tree cascaded scarlet blossoms through its glossy leaves, unnoticed by them.

The wife, triumphant and effusive, was thanking her solicitor in a voice intended for the other two. The nods of his greying head and his smile shared her success; but his subdued answers implied (as much as was proper) that her obvious elation was not altogether in good taste.

She left him with a final two handed elbow-shake and a "so there" grin in the direction of the others. A woman friend joined her, exclaiming "Darling". They embraced and, arm and arm, dot-dotted away up the path, a victory roll to their departing bottoms.

Phillip waited decorously apart while the husband and young Stephens chewed over their defeat, drawing circles in the gravel with their shoes, pocketing and unpocketing their hands.

When they had parted with a hand-clasp and a commiserating smile he walked over to Stephens who stood vacantly thumbing his file, the husband's worry still heavy on his forehead.

"Feel like an adjournment George?"

Stephens brightened.

"Sounds like a good law to me, Phil."

"You know I feel pretty sorry for my bloke."

Stephens frowned at the golden ripples in the glass he abstractedly fingered on the counter in quick movements to and fro.

"He's pretty keen on those kids and you've got to admit she never gave him much of a spin," he continued.

"You don't want to get too wrapped up in your client George. It doesn't do them any good you know."

"Oh but you've got to stick up for them," said Stephens.

"Yes you've got to do that all right. But never get identified. It leaves you unprepared for the other side.

"Litigants are never objective. And *you've* got to be. For their sake you just can't afford to let them sweep you along on their torrent of righteous indignation.

"They're never so righteous and indignant as in these Custody cases. They forget the fundamental thing, the welfare and happiness of the child. The kid just becomes a piece of emotional property, a prize to be won or lost.

"I remember one case that taught me a lot of lessons.

"Let's call 'em Mr. and Mrs. Smith—just to be original—Percy and Mary.

"It was in about my third year of practice when the wife came to me. She was a lovely looking woman. In her late twenties, dark hair cut across the forehead in the fashion that the Duchess of York had then just made so popular. She had large 'please help me' eyes.

"There was a pathetic sweetness about her that tried to compete with her bitterness. But it never had a hope. Her mother came with her on all her interviews and made sure the bitterness stayed constant. Any soft hearted tendency to 'understand Percy's point of view' was firmly rebuked.

"The mother was a tall imperious old girl, her face perpetually pouted in an expression of outrage as though her next sentence was always going to be 'How dare he?'

"Together they built up a pretty grim outline of Percy's villany. Surely no one but an utter bastard would have left a loving attractive young wife, a sweet little daughter who idolised him, not to mention the beautiful riverside home the old lady had let them share with her rent free. And it wasn't as though she ever interfered like some mother-in-laws do.

"All just to go and live with some little

minx of a thing who'd made up to him at the Department. In short the usual two-dimensional picture of an undefended action.

"Mary sued simply for Judicial Separation. The old lady jumped on me when I suggested that a divorce be preferable.

"What and leave him free to marry that woman? Mary doesn't want to marry again. She has her child and she's never cared for the other business'.

"The Judge was inclined to pick a bit when he heard that Percy had been put out on the grass for the past eighteen months. Still it was a clear cut case of adultery and he had to grant her decree.

"Percy got hit to leg over maintenance. We argued successfully that the old lady's money—and she had stacks of it—shouldn't be taken into account in assessing maintenance. So while in fact Mary and the child lived in comfort in the family home Percy still got soaked for half his Civil Service pay per fortnight.

"When the custody case came up they opposed him even having access.

"They used to bring the child, Eileen, with them to my office. She was a little pigtailed thing of about eight. Her grandmother used to punctuate the interviews with 'He broke your poor little heart didn't he darling? You never want to see him again do you sweetheart?'

"The child would look up with wet grey eyes and mumble 'Yes' and 'No' behind a chewed handkerchief, look down again and sniff.

"Mary was under a terrific emotional strain. The effect of it was to make her more bitter. Perhaps it was just with the effort of steeling herself for the fight.

"Percy got his order for access for what good it was to him. After all there is a limit to how often you can call to pick up a kid that kicks and screams 'Don't let him take me' with two women calling out 'brute' and the neighbours looking on.

"About a year later it bubbled up again. This time it was over Percy's car.

"When he cleared out, Percy had left it with his wife—along with the joint bank account and everything else except his clothes. Never argued about a thing. Mary and her mother went on treating the car as their own.

"One evening the old lady left it parked

bang outside the door of the bar where Percy was having a few drinks after work.

"You can guess what happened when Percy came out. Even I couldn't help smiling at his account of it in the subsequent litigation.

"It was a stifling hot evening', he said, 'and the thought of going home in the bus had almost spoilt the taste of the beer. And then suddenly there was the car right in front of me.'

"I remembered I still had an ignition key on my key ring so I said well, why not, it's my car?'

"That's just how he told it too. The judge was on his side from the start. It was obvious he was vastly amused by the whole thing and Percy played right up to him.

"Mind you I wasn't prepared for Percy. I'd never seen him before. I only knew him from my instructions and from his affidavits which as you know never convey any sense of character except perhaps that of the practitioner who prepares them.

"I had always imagined Percy as a mean-faced shifty little man. In fact he was tall, well built, suntanned with a terrific sense of dry humour that flickered in his grey eyes, twitched in the lines around his mouth and seemed almost to taunt in his slow ironic drawn.

"He had that complete frankness that Judges go for in a big way.

"He admitted to me under cross examination 'Yes I probably would have handed it back too if they hadn't called in the police and tried to get me arrested for car stealing'.

"But before I could pounce, His Honour interrupted 'But after that you insisted on standing on your rights eh?' with that bland smile of his and little lift of the eyebrows—you know.

"As long as your Honour agrees they *are* my rights' and they exchanged a grin that just about made me fold up my brief there and then.

"Down we went of course and from then on Mary's bitterness became absolute.

"It was only a one-day action and the costs weren't very high, they could have paid them out of house-keeping. But they had a better idea.

"Mary sold her rings—or at any rate advertised them for sale. Then little Eileen was enjoined to cut the advertisement out of

the paper and pin it to a letter written in her childish copybook handwriting:—

“Dear Daddy,

Look what you have brought us to; to pay your costs’.

“When this got back to me, in a stiff note from his solicitor, I was very nearly rude to her. It was a good thing I wasn’t however, as the old lady died not long after and we got a great deal more business both from the estate and from Percy’s application for reduction in maintenance which followed Mrs. Smith’s accession to the family wealth.

“The estate took some years to wind up and I saw quite a bit of both mother and daughter.

“I noticed how more and more Mrs. Smith tended to centre her whole life around the child. I noticed too, as the girl grew up, signs of revolt against her mother’s domination. This of course really matured when Eileen went to the University.

For those who care to look for them, there are numerous heresies to be embraced at our centres of higher learning (although fortunately in most cases the flirtation is only temporary). Rejection of Parents—even of Parent’s wealth—is not uncommon. At that particular time (just after this last war) it was the thing.

“But I doubt if these things would have profoundly influenced young Eileen had it not been for her mother’s attitude to that other feature of University life, co-education.

“I had to point out to Mrs. Smith several times that I could not write solicitor’s letters to people merely because their sons had kept Eileen out late at night. When the girl finally fell really in love with a young ex-serviceman and talked about marriage it was the end.

“Mary Smith called on the lad’s parents and abused them; she stopped Eileen’s allowance and wrote to the University disclaiming responsibility for further fees. I was given instructions to draw a codicil to her will leaving everything to the Dog’s Home in the event of her daughter marrying.

“I had seen all this coming some time in advance. However, I was not prepared for the next development.

“Eileen called at my office one day not with her mother but with Percy her father.

“I think you know my daughter Mr. Reid. She’s living with me now, for the time being’

Percy grinned with one side of his mouth and stuck out his jaw.

“I thought we’d better check that she’s old enough to do so without me getting slung in for contempt of Court’.

“I told him he had better ask his own solicitor about that, pretending I didn’t know he’d only come to gloat.

“Well, as her family solicitor, perhaps you can re-assure her that my consent is enough for her to get married on, whatever her mother says’?

“Then he became serious.

“Actually, Mr. Reid, I did think it was only proper that you ought to have a bit of a yarn to her about what she’s doing. If you’ll excuse me I’ll leave you do it’.

“When he’d gone I asked Eileen to tell me about it. With an outpouring of aggrieved resentment she told me of her mother’s hysterical rages, how she had railed against ‘That nasty young man’ his ‘common parents’, the reproaches of ‘after all I’ve done for you’, threats of ‘not a penny of my money’, that went on and on until they corroded and snapped the last bonds of love and duty.

“It was when she described her eventual meeting with her father and his mistress that she really became vehement.

“‘After all those years of hearing about ‘Your wicked father and that little whore’ to go and live with them and find out what they really were. Dad so cheerful and full of fun I’d always dimly remembered he was. And June. She’s a really beautiful person. I never knew what love was until I saw them together. Do you know they’ve never had kids because Mummy wouldn’t let them get married and they thought it would be wrong to have children who would be illegitimate?’

“‘I’ll never forgive Mummy for lying to me about them. It’s no good you telling me I ought to try and make it up with her. I won’t ever!’

“And she hasn’t ever. I tried the practical approach first. I pointed out that she risked losing quite a considerable family fortune.

“‘I don’t want her lousy money. It destroyed her. It’s not going to buy me. Let her leave it to her stinking old dogs’.

“I tried, tactfully, to point out that there was much that her mother had in fact done for her; her upbringing, her education.

“All she’s ever given me is hate. Hate for the two sweetest people I’ve ever met. She’s going to get all that back too. With interest’.

“Which she has.

“Eileen now has three children, but Mary Smith has never seen them. She called at Eileen’s house (a nice little brick and tile war-service job) not long after the first one was born. Eileen refused to let her see the baby and ordered her off the place.

“June the de-facto wife who was never

a mother for fear of handing on her shame is now a devoted de-facto grandmother.

“Whether they ever will become reconciled depends, I suppose, on how deeply the mother’s iron, so to speak, has entered the daughter’s soul. If not, those derelict dogs are going to be wealthy animals, provided the solicitor for the Smith estate can find his way around the Testator’s Family Maintenance Act. I’m glad I no longer act for Mrs. Smith. It’ll be some headache.”

---

## When Trees Were Swords

Griffith Watkins

When trees were swords,  
Wounding the gallows of the sun,  
He rode a man’s shadow  
Out of the midday’s love,  
Though a boy’s wonder  
Packed his head and guts.  
From the eclipse of his straight shoulders,  
The earth rang out  
In jumbled caramels of mirth,  
His eyes plucking blue from the sky  
And his heart a heaving song  
That did not want for breath.  
Under those burning skies  
He would invest the bush with wrath,  
His bland face mirroring belief,  
His shining forehead honing  
The amazed gum-wind down,  
Where trees were swords unendingly,  
His youth a blazing crown.

# The Return

William Grono

**H**E TRUDGED along the hard, blue road that led—and had been leading for many miles and days—towards Coolgardie.

He was sweating. The sun, huge in the afternoon sky, blazed far ahead of him. But, for the past few miles, he'd been unaware of the heat, the road, the occasional car roaring past, even the throbbing in his head. He had been staring intently at the bush.

The anonymous bush: red earth dulled by its cover of black ironstone gravel; tufts of dead grass; blue-bush, saltbush and snap-and-rattle; untidy mallee; dull-green gimlet trees bronze in the hot light; a few mullock dumps; all merging into a vast grey sea of bush which spread to a remote horizon beneath the delicate blue of the sky. And, as he walked he stared intently, almost pleadingly, at the bush. It was the country of his childhood.

Fifty-eight years ago after his mother had died, he had run away from home—ending a strenuous childhood—and had never returned. Nor had he seen his father or brother again. (Once, in France, he'd heard that his brother was in a nearby unit. He hadn't been able to visit him then and had learned later that his brother had been killed.) His father, too, must have died years ago, but he didn't know when. During those fifty-eight years he'd tramped and worked throughout the south-west of the state. He had wandered haphazardly from job to job—farms, timber mills, road gangs—sometimes staying weeks, sometimes years. He had drunk, fought, played football, loved, and had, on the whole, enjoyed a simple life of gregarious, and at times, lonely, pleasures. A life rarely disturbed by regrets or memories.

He had been surprised, therefore, when, a few months ago, his mind had suddenly been invaded by a succession of vague and apparently meaningless images, from a forgotten past—a tethered goat, a pair of muddy boots, some yellow flowers against a rusted fence, a black poppet-head (that stark

symbol of the goldfields), and, most persistent of all, a hand lighting a lamp. These obscure crepuscular visitors insinuated themselves into his mind and lingered there, continually drifting in and out of his consciousness like moths. But, if he tried to catch on as one flickered past, to examine it, to pin a meaning to it (What flowers? Whose hand?), it would elude him and flutter back into the dark of his mind.

They increasingly perplexed the mind they inhabited, so fragmentary were they, so detached from all associations. He became obsessed by them. He slept less and worked badly. So badly, in fact, that when he told the boss that he wanted "to go up to the goldfields for a couple of weeks", the boss had paid him straight away, and then, even though it was apple-picking time, had told him not to worry about coming back.

So now, after a lifetime spent among cool forests and populated hills, he was staggering, tired and sick, searching for the remains of an old gold-mining settlement, for the survivors of a long-distant past. Remains that probably don't exist, he told himself. Or, if they do, how—since they would then be existing outside the bounds of his own uncertain memory—would he recognise them? Feelings of doubt and futility swept over him again. Perhaps those strange, fugitive images had not been memories of his childhood but had been illogical creations of his own imagination. He felt desperate. I shouldn't have come, he thought. I shouldn't have come. His eyes searched the bush for some hint, some re-assurance. The bush, was immense in its indifference.

Suddenly, in a glare of corrugated iron; Coolgardie was before him. The road had climbed a slight rise and there, surrounded by its fabled gold-bearing hills, was Coolgardie, stunned in the bright heat of the afternoon. He moved into the warm shade of a salmon gum and rested. The road, though, didn't falter; it swept down and on straight through the seemingly dead town

with its weatherboard houses, crumbling sandstone buildings, listless pepper trees and rusty fences; on past the scarred hills and grey slime dumps and into the bush again as it sped towards Kalgoorlie. A few bone-white goats were treading delicately across one of the parched hills.

It meant nothing to him, this dying town, except that he'd come too far. It can't be far back, he thought and he turned to retrace his steps along the road.

The sun moved closer. Its rays slanted down onto his white-stubbed face, and the road reverberated with heat. I should have brought a hat, he told himself, I should have bought a hat. And then he was annoyed to realize that the words were repeating themselves, were inanelly accompanying his heavy steps. I should have brought a hat. I should have brought a hat. He stopped and wiped some sweat from the corners of his eyes and stared about him.

I must keep going, he thought, I can rest after. Anyway, it can't be far now.

He hadn't been walking for long when his eyes were caught by a glimpse, a gash of yellow in the bush. His aching legs hurried forward. A car, black and glittering, swerved to a halt and a voice, heavy with condescension, called, "Do you want a lift mate?" But he was off the road now, pushing through the scrub, a wire fence, bushes that plucked at his clothes: skirting the old workings, dumps and costeens, through another fence, and on, the bleached grass cracking underfoot, until he could clearly see, across a stretch of old alluvial ground, the tree, an autumnal poplar, rich with golden leaves.

He paused for a moment, breathless, his heart wild, his throat burning with the effort of quick breathing; and then, moved forward again. The tree stood serene and immobile in the hot still air as he crossed the broken ground. As he approached he saw the reason for its survival; it was growing by the side of an earth dam.

Reaching the tree it pleased him that underneath it a pool of grass, a kind of soft buffalo-grass, and dappled shade. He slipped off his swag and waterbag, and sat down. The air seemed cooler and thicker here. He felt happy, almost refreshed. After a while he untied his pannikin and got to his feet. He leant a moment against the tree, and then carefully climbed up the loose side of the dam.

It was a fairly big dam but the water was lower than he'd expected. On the other side a boy in a striped shirt was playing at the edge, digging in the mud like a busy wasp. The old man stumbled down to the water, the baked crust of the bank crunching under his feet. He stooped and filled his pannikin but the water was too hot to drink. He tipped it out slowly, enjoying the sound as it trickled back. He stood there awhile and watched the boy who didn't seem to have noticed him. Then he slowly reclinced the slope and looked around.

Away from him stretched the barren acres of an abandoned gold-field; drab heaps of sun-scorched earth that sprawled haphazardly to the edge of the approaching bush. Scattered here and there were some dusty pepper trees—survivors of a vanished generation. On the far side, against the sky, stood the poppet-head of a deserted mine and squatting beneath it, like the husk of some decayed animal, was the now decrepit driving-shed. It was the only building in sight. He could not see where the boy lived.

He heard a cry and turned. The boy, he saw had raised his arm and was waving. The old man half-waved tiredly and turned away. At that moment a stone hit the water a few yards away. He turned but the boy had clambered up the bank and was already disappearing down the other side. Exaggerated laughter floated back across the disturbed water.

His head was throbbing again. It's the sun, he thought. I must get out of the sun. He took a step, stumbled down the bank, and fell headlong into the tree. He lay where he had fallen, quite still.

Violent stripes of gold and green light—harsh dry particles in his mouth—a dark roar of blood—his cheek pierced by a sharp pain: it took him some time to realize that he was lying with his face in the dirt, staring at some blades of grass. He vaguely wondered how long he had been there. His body ached; all his bones seemed to have jolted out of place by the fall. Then, fighting back the fatigue he slowly and painfully pushed himself over and into a half-sitting, half-reclining position against the tree. He uncorked the waterbag and took a long drink.

He could only see, from where he sat, the brown earth of the dam and the light-blue sky. But he didn't care. Now that his quest had failed; had been doomed to failure from

the start. This plundered land could tell him nothing. And even if it could, even if it had been his birth place and these dumps and pepper trees had been the silent companions of his childhood and this very tree had been planted by his own mother, it still meant nothing. He was a lifetime too late. Any meaning they might have held for him had gradually been lost over the intervening years: people had died or gone away, houses and shacks had been pulled down and shifted, dumps had eroded, and his own memories had faded and died. Nothing remained the same, he felt, except the sun and the bush.

A feeling of loneliness enveloped him as he thought of the vanished people who had once lived and loved and worked here, the dead generations of men—his mother, brother and father among them.

He settled down further in the grass, resting his head on the swag, and closed his eyes. I'll rest now, he thought, camp here tonight, and tomorrow, tomorrow morning, I'll start out on the way back. He tried to think of the farm he'd left a few days before

(black-and-white cows in a green paddock, blue smoke rising in a valley) but his mind returned again and again to the monotonous bush, the straggling rust-coloured heaps of waste, the blazing trees.

He looked up. A slight wind, presage of the approaching cold, moved thinly through the tree. Some leaves twitched and a few broke off. He watched them drift down. One landed on his knee. Another fell in his hair. And a third on his cheek. He felt too tired to brush them off and soon he fell asleep.

With abrupt ferocity a willy-willy whirled across the desolate ground tearing at everything in its erratic course, whisking dust and twigs and withered bits of grass far into the air, frantically shaking and whipping the sinuous foliage of the pepper trees, exploding the poplar like a golden firework—and then, suddenly, it was gone. All was quiet again. But, for a long time after the wind had passed, the leaves and scraps and dust filtered down through the red air, falling gently on the trees, the grass, the dam, the earth, and on the exhausted body of the old man.

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# March Through Perth

Dorothy Hewett

*With fixed bayonets in the wheat windy summer,  
I saw you march like leaves and confetti strewn  
Among the stone armed windows full of people;  
And the clapping crested, trembled like a flummox of confetti  
Lost in the bayonets, lost in the long slouched arm  
And shoulder, the hand and the glint,  
Passing like long silver grass frozen without tears.*

*And my tears unshed on my eyelashes press like a pain  
Under the spike of bayonets, flashed and transmitted  
To the opposite side of the street, street and arms swinging,  
And the bright orange boots; but no one clapped  
Loud enough, we have forgotten how to clap,  
To scream or shout or cry out.  
We stand, sometimes we smile self consciously,  
Sometimes we shift our feet and the heat  
Is part of our blood, as it has always been part of it.*

*Shy, insecure, not believing much, we watch.  
We like the men to be tall, we like the bushmen  
Brown and long, that pleases us; other things,  
The broken-off twist of streamer, the band playing  
"Waltzing Matilda", but I cried.  
I saw you coming towards me, smiling and out of place,  
Like a face in a forest of shining spear grass,  
Your strange elusive face in planes and segments  
Of emotion, and I was reminded of Christ among spears.  
And the shuffle of feet, and the long climbing shoulder,  
Men in unison, only your face detached  
And strange, your mouth lifted at the corners.  
And a hush went over the whole summer,  
"Another good boy has gone into the sea."*

# Aboriginal Art

Some thoughts upon the subject inspired by C. P. MOUNTFORD'S  
ABORIGINAL ART in the "Arts in Australia" series, 1961. Langmans; p.p. 1-32,  
Illustrated.

Dr. R. M. Berndt

This small and well-illustrated booklet on Australian Aboriginal art is a welcome addition to the growing body of literature on this topic. From the point of view of the general public, its value rests on the representativeness of the photographs, some of which have hitherto been available only in more expensive editions. Anthropologically, or for the student of comparative art, its usefulness is limited. The text (or annotations) is too brief and, in my view, oversimplified. It suffers from being primarily descriptive, without an attempt being made to place the works of art it discusses on their social and cultural perspective. I know, of course, that as far as Western European art generally is concerned, the argument runs that to appreciate the productions of particular artists, to understand what they are attempting to say, involves on one hand personal interpretation (that is, an artist is said to be expressing himself, individually, although in doing so he conforms broadly to the dictates of a particular School), and on the other the provision of a label attached to such a work leaving the way open to the viewer to "work it out for himself". The fact that the work of Western European artists is influenced by their own social and cultural environment, and that they can never get too far away from this if they want to sell their products, or at least create something meaningful to themselves or to others, is often lost sight of. In any case, we can take this social and cultural background as partially given; after all, it is our own—or part of our own, or belongs to part of our tradition.

When the focus of our attention shifts to an alien situation, there are two things we can do. We can look at the designs, and perhaps in doing so find them pleasing or displeasing as the case may be. Much depends on whether they conform to our own canons of aesthetic taste. If we are fortunate we are told, as in the booklet under review, that such designs mean certain things—that it is not simply a matter of identification, but that, in addition, they have certain associations. Whether this will serve as an aid to aesthetic appreciation is another matter. But if we go further, and want to understand such production, it is necessary to consider the function of art in that particular society—the place of the artist, for instance, or the question of style. It is in these directions that the present booklet is deficient. Nevertheless, this is a good introductory study, and we could hardly expect to find such a good coverage in a volume of this size.

Mr. Mountford, however, starts off on the wrong foot when he states that Aboriginal art is of interest to overseas students because ". . . it is only in Australia that one can observe the art of a living stone-age man . . ." (p. 3). The inference is that by studying Aboriginal art we obtain, in some oblique fashion, a greater understanding of Palaeolithic art. This is misleading. Aboriginal art is not comparable to "stone age" or "primitive" art (pp. 4, 5 and 13); except for the work of people who are now extinct or dispersed through alien intrusion, or perhaps as in the case of some rock paintings and engravings of which present-day Aborigines have no

knowledge, it is a living, contemporary art. It is produced by people possessing a culture different to our own—having their own standards, their own style(s). Much of it is highly sophisticated art. However, lack of good technical equipment has been a limiting factor right through the ages. The genius of Aboriginal art is the extent to which individual artists have triumphed over the restrictive nature of their tools.

It is true, as Mr. Mountford says (p. 3), that all Australian Aborigines "practise a similar way of life as simple hunters and food-gatherers . . ."; but it is also important to remember that upon this seemingly common basis a wide range of different cultural expressions has developed, and these are associated with varying art styles. For instance, there were probably over 500 separate "tribes", as social and cultural units, scattered over this Continent at the time of initial European settlement; and although each did not have a distinctive form of art, a number of "art areas" can be distinguished. Mr. Mountford also indicates that "long isolation" (p. 3), from other peoples has left Aboriginal art uninfluenced by external sources. But from what we know today, the Aborigines were in contact with "outside" groups; and this is particularly the case in Arnhem Land, Cape York Peninsula, possibly Bathurst and Melville Islands, and perhaps the northern Kimberleys.

Most certainly Aboriginal art is different to our own, but it is a mis-statement to say (of this, or any art) that "the subjects of their art are beyond the realms of our knowledge; their symbolism is unlike anything we possess . . ." (p. 4). If it is understood by the people who create it, it can also be understood by anthropologists, or by others who try seriously to explore it. Of course, where the people have completely disappeared, leaving as tangible evidence of their presence in the country carvings, engravings, and paintings without adequate clues which would "explain" them, then information about these is not recoverable—we can only speculate on their meaning and significance.

A few further points need comment. Contrary to Mr. Mountford's information X-ray art often depicts human and spirit beings (p. 4); also, the Mimi spirits are the subject of many myths and pseudo-historical ac-

counts, and in some cases these tell of their association with contemporary human beings. Human hair brushes are also used generally in Arnhem Land for painting on sheets of bark; while "ground painting" (p. 10) is carried out ritually as far north as the Wave Hill district. The Kangaroo-man, called by Mr. Mountford Kandarik (Gandagi), was responsible for taking over the ubar ritual and the special drum from women who (according to several myth versions) originally possessed these (p. 15). And the painted designs on Queensland shields (p. 24) should not be thought of as resembling a "coat of arms"; they were selected by artists for their mythological significance and to emphasise their close connection with the physical and natural environment. Finally, the Panaramittee "crocodile" (p. 30) has been variously interpreted—in one version it is a magical stick made up of a criss-crossing of strings and not, as it appears to be, the head of a sea-going crocodile.

One other question concerns the evaluation of "static" and "dynamic" art. To Mr. Mountford the X-ray drawings of western Arnhem Land are "essentially a static art" (p. 7) while the Mimi art shows "a strong sense of action." I find it difficult to categorize in this way. True enough, in Mimi art figures are drawn in movement (small figures hunting, running and dancing and so on), while in X-ray art the figures are bolder and more detailed in treatment, and there are not so many separate figures incorporated in a group. There are obvious stylistic differences, as well as differences in subject. But if we speak in aesthetic terms, we do not necessarily use such labels as "static" or "dynamic" (or "action") to refer to a contrast of subject matter. I would suggest that it is rather a question of line and of treatment; a still life study can be said to have "movement", a running figure may be "static".

Mr. Mountford has been studying Aboriginal art since before 1928. From that time until the present he has published many articles and several books, and has become a recognised authority on his subject. Over the years he has focused his attention almost solely in that direction; and he has been responsible, perhaps more than any other ethnologist, for communicating his enthusiasm to members of the general public and for making available to them a very large body of

outstanding Aboriginal art productions. The debt we owe him, in this respect, is considerable.

Whether traditional Aboriginal art will eventually make an impact on the development of "white" Australian art is yet to be seen. Up to date its influence has been negligible—except in its debased form, in the shape of commercially produced items for the tourist market. A major barrier to its acceptance has been its divorce from its own social and cultural complex. All art is symbolic in one way or another; and all great art (and there is much of Aboriginal art that is great) has something to say to its patrons and to its viewers; it must have mean-

ing, and is a form of language. Living Aboriginal art has all this, and does all this, in its traditional setting. If it is to have meaning for us, as Australians, we must learn its language.

The few points of criticism I have made should not detract from the worthwhileness of Mr. Mountford's booklet, nor should they deter those who are really interested in Aboriginal art. While this can never, in a personal sense, become our own art, it is being increasingly recognized as part of our national heritage. It is pertinent to remember that our interest in Aboriginal art has increased in inverse proportion to the disappearance of traditional Aboriginal life!

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## The Friend

Some lovers, by benevolent moons, are graced  
With the kind benedictions of the sacramental  
Stars; their love splashed silvery  
And dolphin-joyous on the slow-paced  
Pulse of their love's gentle,  
Tideless mystery.

Some, from the tumescent heat,  
Pluck with Promethean fingers  
Their exultation in the chorused loins:  
Torn by a blood-chained beat  
That, thickening lingers  
Until death unjoins.

This man clasped only the cold  
"Thank you"; cherished the turned  
Away embarrassment. This tempered friend  
Dared the worthiest's grip; and stood, old,  
And alone, and yearned  
That God would give him end.

M. COLLINS.

## World At Bay

Like a submarine that's drunk,  
the herring shot from root to trunk,  
branches barking at its fins,  
tipping up the balance of its scales,  
till seeing red, in gloom, a purple wine,  
fear turned it to a porcupine  
that swallowed its own tail  
on trackless tides to roll and wail  
with eyes red neons streaming  
too brimful for seeing.

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# Reef

Charles Higham

The bitter weather rusts  
Those iron palings where  
Rags, bones and bits of tin  
Lie heaped beside the bin  
Of scooped-out rock and sand.  
Birds howl in the air  
Like scraps of paper tossed  
From the back maw of the sky:  
An anchor juts from the soil.

Easily, the rusted nib  
Scratches the symbols down:  
The ruin of days and years,  
Eyes brimmed with savage tears;  
You know the empty truck.  
Rust ruins every crown.  
Poets all cry together  
The sorrow of things that pass,  
And watch their poems die.

Crumple the paper up,  
Out on the reef the storm  
Breaks, cracks to a spear of moon.  
Surfers comb out and turn  
Crying, towards the beach  
Where arms are dark and warm.  
End threnodies and go  
Out where you know the body,  
Home where the tongue rejoices.

# Autumn Into Winter

Griffith Watkins

Setting himself afloat  
Over anxious autumn's gear,  
Who shall undo the creaking seas,  
At this season of the year?

Through whooping-wet-winded  
Tenements of crest and trough,  
My warm-marrowsed men,  
Hollow tunnels with their cough;  
Under the cross of mast  
And pitching horizon,  
Coiling their lives on the hook's hard line,  
Eyes and lips sealed in the wind's raw whine.

All is one season to eye and tail,  
Lying on their levels below,  
Dreaming of pot and hook  
Beneath the waves' exploding tow:  
Until the bond is made;  
And brown hands haul the price  
The pain insists upon  
Into the new kingdom come.  
And so, blunt winter,  
Tired of sacrifice,  
Grinds the white sky down,  
Taking the singing  
From my salt-kept boys' strong fingers,  
Growling for them against the breakwater's shine  
Where their hearts are held tight  
By the sea's green vine.

# The Culvert

Kathleen Anderson

"I'LL CUT your throat you swine!" She heard the quick scuffle of feet in the kitchen, the voices rising in hate, the clash of the knife as it hit the table and bounced onto the floor. She heard her mother's sob as the old man snapped her against the wall, heard her mother collapse to the floor, screaming abuse. The drawer of the kitchenette shut on the butcher's knife; somewhere a rooster crowed. It was late . . . nearly time to get up she thought. Then the sobbing stopped, her mother dragged past into the front room, slamming the door behind her. The key turned in the lock, the spare mattress thumped as it hit the floor.

"You can find someone else to warm your bed for you from now on." There was silence then. The girl dozed.

The alarm went off. Half past five, and her mother would be stirring to light the fire. She'd just lie there for a few minutes to keep out of the way, then get dressed to go for the cows. She shivered under the thin blankets, snatching the last bit of warmth before plucking up courage to put her feet onto the cold boards. Another frost this morning. She could see it through the window, thick and white, crusting the grass, but it would soon steam away when the sun showed over the far ridge and caught the ice in his long, warm fingers. How she loved to watch the clouds cling with last desperate hope to the hollows between the rolling hills, before they, too, were plucked from their hiding places and sent chasing to the sky. It was a game between them, she knew, and the sun always won.

The plunge was made at last. She stood, dragging on her pants and dress, hopping from one foot to the other in some useless

attempt to keep them from the cold, not thinking of the walk through the frosty grass that reached past her ankles. Her jumper was last on, and she took time to do up the safety pins. It had once been her mother's and was much too large, but it was all she had. Reluctantly she turned the handle and crept into the kitchen. Her mother stood by the stove, leaning her head on her arm, and her arm on the mantelpiece. In one hand she held a potholder, with the other she flipped fat lifelessly over the eggs in the pan. The girl waited uncertainly; the woman did not look up.

"Want anything to eat?"

"No-o. I mean . . . no thank you," she added quickly, suddenly looking forward to the frosty walk. She never did have breakfast. She was too scared father would come in for his, then she would be trapped; it was always best to keep out of his way, especially after they'd been rowing.

"Starve then. Starve to death for all I care. I should never have had you in the first place." Her mother's voice rose, then broke. "You were only forced on me anyway. But don't worry! There won't be any more where you came from." Her mother's crying followed her as she hurried around the side of the house, milk bucket in one hand and a tin full of water to wash Mary's teats, in the other. It slopped down the side of her dress, and she gave a little moan as the cold cotton clung to her leg.

Most mornings she liked to stand for a minute or two at the front of the house and look out across the mile upon mile of hills rolling away to the distant horizon; see the giant salmon gums swelling to the sky; see the creek through the trees, winding along till

it reached the road near the gate where she caught the school bus, and rushed under the culvert there. Her country. The country she was part of; the country she loved with the dull, unknowing passion of a person who can be sure that her country is the only thing in the world which will love her in return. She was bound to it, and it was her only friend. Most mornings, but not this morning, as she was already running late.

Down the hill from the house she went. Mary was in the front paddock, probably at the far end. Why didn't the old devil come up to be milked? The Camerons' cows did. Lily Cameron said so. And the Camerons' had a shed to milk in when it rained, and Lily had two big brothers to help her. Her bare feet cut a green track through the crusty whiteness. Goodness it hurt; she'd try not to think about it. Her father said nothing hurt if you told yourself often enough that it didn't. Maybe that would work when she was bigger.

She put the bucket and water out of harm's way behind the strainer post and reached up to undo the gate that led into the front paddock. The loop was tight, too tight. She jerked at it, ignoring the pain. Fear lent desperation to her efforts. It was getting late. She mustn't be late, she'd miss the bus. One last, sobbing wrench, the loop let go, the gate fell with a crash of frosty wire at her feet. She'd leave it open to save time, and glanced quickly around to see no one was in sight. Mary wasn't too far away, so there'd be plenty of time to bring her through and worry about struggling to do up the gate afterwards. She forgot her father's warnings, forgot his threats, forgot everything, as she picked her way among the stones hidden in the frost. It wouldn't take a minute.

She heard him scream from the top of the hill. Her heart bucked with fear. He came panting through the open gate, bellowing as he ran, unbuckling his belt in his stride. Her stricken eyes saw them, hurrying with eager bleats to join the ewes, a dozen of them or more, their long bags bouncing between their hind legs in their haste. Frantic, she moved to stop them. Too late, her father was on her, seizing her hand, flailing her in his rage. She gasped with pain and fear. The belt rose and fell. It struck into her back, her bottom, her legs. No tears, I won't

cry. I won't. He can't make me cry. She was kicking in the frost now, past caring, past pain, past tears. The belt rose and fell. "Bawl, you little beast, bawl!" He grunted with the effort. "I'll make you howl for mercy." She threw up her arm to protect her head, and a long red bruise went from shoulder to elbow.

Mary's flank was soft and warm. She buried her head there, sniffing back the tears. Long white streams hit the side of the bucket, making squeaky noises, while her stiffening fingers, numb from pain and cold, tried to hurry. She musn't miss the bus, as that only meant another thrashing, and she couldn't stand another on top of the swelling weals. Why did her parents hate her so? Lily Cameron's father never hit her. Besides, she tried to hard to please. If they only knew how much she loved them, maybe they'd be kinder sometimes. In future she must try harder to be good. The froth crept up the side of the bucket, too slowly it seemed, but only a few more squeezes and Mary would be finished.

Her lunch lay wrapped in newspaper on the kitchen table, and she scooped it up as she ran through the door, down the hill, past where her father was hunting the ewes and rams with his dogs, and on towards the road gate to the school bus. She didn't have a chance. She saw the white top of the bus through the trees. It didn't even stop. Still she ran, not believing, not daring to . . .

The bus driver would have pulled up behind that clump of jam trees, and she couldn't see it from where she was. Faster her stubby legs moved. The bus would wait. She couldn't stand another thrashing. Not today.

The road wound silent among the trees, still dusty where the bus had passed. A magpie called his drowsy call, and the little creek bubbled under the culvert. She stood staring down the road, half expecting the bus to come back for her. She sat down to wait. She waited a long time, her lunch still clutched in her grubby hand.

Then she knew the bus wouldn't be coming back after all, but she wouldn't go home. She'd wait there under the culvert until the bus came back in the afternoon, and go home as though nothing had happened, get home at the usual time, and mother and father

would suspect nothing. She was hungry. Just one sandwich, then she'd wrap her lunch up again and hide the rest in a space between the beams under the culvert, where it would keep cool till lunchtime, and the butter wouldn't melt. Jam again. She choked back another snuffle. Why couldn't she have fish paste or meat or something, and be like the other kids for a change. The sandwiches were wrapped up, still untouched, her hunger suddenly gone, and she ducked her head as she searched under the culvert for a hiding place. There was one, and the newspaper package went in, as far as she could push it. Something brushed her fingers in the dark. Bending down she washed her hands in the creek. She'd play cars in the sand with some flat stones, until the sun told her it was time for dinner. She shivered. She'd changed her wet clothes before she'd left the house, and the sun was warm now, but still she shivered.

This one's a Ford, this one's a Chev, and this one's an Austin like the Camerons'. She bent over her cars and the world was lost to her dream. She shouldn't feel sick. Maybe it was the sun, as she was hot now. She'd climb the bank and lie under the trees for a while, then she'd feel better. Another shiver. She felt very sick now. She sat on the grass, rubbing her hand against her dress. It was itching . . . probably where father had hit her.

Mother would know what to do. Mother would give her something to make her feel better. Mother would put her to bed and she wouldn't be sick any more. That was it! She'd go home to mother, and father wouldn't belt her for missing the bus if he knew how sick she was. She cried a little with the pain. It wouldn't take long to walk home, then mother could make her well . . . not long . . .

They found her a couple of hundred yards up the track, her legs doubled under her chest with pain, her tears dried in dirty patches on her cheeks, one hand stretched out and clawed around a tuft of grass, her face turned towards home. She'd been on her way home, home to mother and father.

In the darkness of the culvert a shiny black body spun a new nest for the eggs bloating her red-striped abdomen.

## Two Poems by D. H. Henderson

### Eucla

*Struck in carlight see the house of sand  
Lies crouching. We are overland,  
And Lords of the Dunes.  
Ours the scribbled names upon the walls,  
Ours among the thousand scrawls,  
Signatures among the ruins—  
Less than Pyramids, but kinder camping  
grounds  
For wanderers: the echoing sounds  
That convolute about the land—  
Caught with the myriad scalpel grains  
Sift the house-shell's: eye holes stare  
across the plains,  
Pale ribs slow drowning in the slack of sand.*

### Baptism

*When faith of old and strong parental love  
Did lead, not sensing sin before the Holy  
Dove:*

*We brought on, nuturing nature's seed—  
Which from commingled lust did breed,  
Saw out of love's irony the paradox revealed,  
Our son in Holy Church most safely sealed.*

*His infant soul, erect from sullen apathy,  
Touched by the man who gave his life to  
God—*

*Bewailed the solemn moment with an instant  
cry—*

*"Our rose enfoliate, the hungry sod,  
Knows well his earthly nourishment  
Needs no such fine embellish-  
ment"—*

*Yet later pray, his soul awakened, bold,  
May taste his God, and join the heavenly fold.*

# BOOKS

## Selected Poems

Kenneth Mackenzie.  
(*Angus & Robertson, 25/-*)

**K**ENNETH MACKENZIE was born in Perth in 1913 and left this state for New South Wales where he wrote two books of poetry and various novels. He worked as a journalist in Sydney, but after the war he lived principally at Kurrajong, an orchard district. He was drowned near Goulburn in 1955.

It is because Douglas Stewart believes him to be "a poet of the first quality" that he has gratefully edited this collection of his poetry. In his introduction Stewart comments on his sensitivity and his sensuousness.

Mackenzie's early poems are most often hymns of praise to the sexual act with both its physical and mystical appeal. His later poems show how, with the same zest, he attacked a life of simplicity on an orchard, and accepted his children as the unconscious windfalls of his youthful desire. Finally, he approached the last shudder of death with the same elemental wonder.

The physical marvel of existence and the beauty of nature that made up this poetic life was chronicled with an impressive variety of verse forms—from the restraint of the sonnet and the couplet to the sensuous splendour of the blank verse of his long poems. Of this, Stewart says,

"But what those of us who wrote verse ourselves chiefly admired in Mackenzie, for poets like other tradesmen tend to talk shop and leave the raptures for more

private moments, was his exceptional command of technique . . ."

One feels that the coupling of technique and sensitivity should create great poetry, (as is with Donne) but in Mackenzie's case I cannot agree. It is not enough to master technique, nor to experience the harshest ecstasies of privacy, and to retail these in a speedily recognised diction of moons and beach white sands for love, or the skulls and birds and spiders of death as Mackenzie has done for the majority of his verse. One must comment on the universal from the uniqueness of particular experience with all the originality one can muster.

When one reads the refined vagaries of Hugh McCrae, the litterateur, who tried to emulate Shandy and Boswell, one realises that Mackenzie would obviously have appealed to writers of his generation of Australian literary bohemianism, for Mackenzie has the grace of finely turned verse, but he lacks the blunter truth of later times.

P. W. JEFFERY.

## Christians and Poets

"Masters in Israel": Vincent Buckley. Published Angus & Robertson. Price 17/6.

"Socrates and other Poems": Francis Webb. Published Angus & Robertson. Price 16/-.

Both published with the assistance of the Commonwealth Literary Fund.

**B**OTH Buckley and Webb are friends, and in fact we are given to believe in Buckley's *IMPROMPTU FOR FRANCIS WEBB* that they are concerned with the same ends. But this friendship and common Catholic outlook should not obscure the

fact that they are very different in their technique and effect.

Christian and poets—poets and Christian, both Buckley and Webb regard their role as existential and vocational towards that final and divine end, when all men will be "Masters in Israel". But because Buckley enquires far more deeply into his own life's purpose than Webb, I consider him the superior poet, despite the occasional pyrotechnical phrase or subject of Webb's poetry.

Life is a Christian stewardship to Buckley and accordingly his poetry reveals that in every moment of existence there is the necessity of the divine end—all situations and roles are occasions for Christian witness, precept and action. His poems *LATE TUTORIAL, READING TO MY SICK DAUGHTER, TO PRAISE A WIFE, and WALKING IN IRELAND* are as much incidents shaping and affected by his life as they are witnesses to the divine contentions that must be resolved as far as possible during his life on earth.

*TO PRAISE A WIFE* is concerned with the physical and often unreasoning nature of sexual relationships as opposed to the divine purpose of the individual personality which is to save its soul. Like Donne he asks that the human anger of thighs be laid aside for the purity of twin souls conversing in the quietness of space, but with the important difference in that Donne is romanticising earthly love into its own divinity, whereas Buckley wants the souls separate, yet mutually respecting each other, in the greater love of and for God. But Buckley is truly human and realises that this is paradisaical and that earthly love has its own elevating mystery, when he says:

". . . . . *The smart  
And swarming of the blood's  
no text*

*For the brash display of words."*

and again,

*"See you become my soul, my  
flesh, my eyes,  
Beauty in passion reconciled:  
And then my field, and then my  
harvest-world."*

Unashamed, and often emphatic of his role as a poet, he discusses as Yeats before him the very branch, trunk and roots of his art and its purpose in such poems as LATE TUTORIAL and IMPROMPTU FOR FRANCIS WEBB. The tutor contemplates the dying shade of afternoon and tries to ensnare it in words, until his pupils come

*"To teach me something of  
my destiny;  
That love's not pity, words are  
not mine alone,  
And all are twined on the great  
central tree."*

Their timid guesses and unreasoned trust in his words make him want to tear down the unmentionable wall of pain that conceals their desire for learning, and to reveal to them their need and his role,

*"O man is sick, and suffering  
from the world,  
And I must go to him, my  
poetry  
Lighting his image as a ring of  
fire,  
The terrible and only means . . .*

he has. But he knows that such truth would be too blinding and so he contents himself with homilies to avoid the embarrassment of such a revelation.

In IMPROMPTU FOR FRANCIS WEBB he repeats the problem, that "there is nothing here they will understand", but he insists that he and Webb

*". . . . . cannot cease  
Visioning an age without barrier  
or taint."*

for this is their Christian duty and poetic vocation. Poetry has to be beaten down to the divine end of instruction and spiritual delight;

*"Rhyme must serve, and the  
twisted heart limp after,  
Unwinding its own and every-  
thing's long coil."*

He affirms that,  
*"Each poem, too, is solar to  
the world of man and time, and  
will be raging soon.*

*Even if the heart die, some few  
will see it*

*At midnight flaring like the  
pitch of noon."*

thereby providing the Christian witness that he and Webb must offer if they take their art seriously.

Buckley invites comparison with Yeats for both are concerned with the symbolic meanings of poetry and of Ireland, but their resolution is quite different, for Yeats is romantic in his solution whereas Buckley analyses all external happenings by the logic of the inner, intellectual soul. Yeats often drifts off into the midst of myth for he fearlessly accepts the fury and mire of his human self, but Buckley as in WALKING IN IRELAND or SINN FEIN: 1957 rejects the blood's impulse, fired by archetypal tale, as irrational. Intuition is not enough for Buckley, he refuses to be a rhapsode mouthing the rhythms and rhymes of his race. As a result, his poetry is rigid and concise, for he would like to make only statements of the absolute truth. Because of this, his writing becomes paradoxical when he cannot resolve an intuition into an exact statement. He does not use the paradox as an arresting poetical invention, but as the necessary adjunct to his analytical method—to truthfully state his quandary, when no absolute statement can be made.

Impressive in his sincerity, Buckley's concise control comes from his immolating faith, and his forays into the intricacies of human relationships illuminate life's supernatural significance. His poetic approach is as consistent as

his faith, and his only uncertainty is the paradox of the earthly mystery. Webb, on the other hand, lacks this consistency and makes me wonder whether he is yet established in his faith and approach.

Unlike Buckley who often writes from life and tries to wrest the divine meaning from occurrences in nature or history, Webb often uses the mask to give us an imposed, but seemingly implicit truth within the character or incident that he selects. The mask is a terrifying audacity, for the poet must convince us with it that what he says is no counterfeit thing but an actuality. Again it has the freedom of free ranging time, line and external thought, as in EYRE ALL ALONE, where he selects the solitude of that explorer's march, to create the effect of the soul's journey. But such freedom has its own consistencies and I found it hard to accept that Eyre is metaphysic in his thirst as in the section WATER, or that his bitter trek nudged him past the "sands of Exodus". Eyre is an actuality whose personal diary was in Webb's own words "infinitely more dramatic that this poem can pretend to be" but Webb sees "his journey as suggestive of another that is common to us all." Now either Webb is talking to us about a thing we know well, or Eyre is telling us of a journey unique to himself, and I found it unconvincing that Eyre's actual struggle through the dessert was similar to my spiritual journey, for I confused the Eyre that I know from my history book with the Eyre that Webb asked me to imagine. If Webb had posited the title as "ALL ALONE" without specific reference or given me an archetypal or symbolic Voss, I could easily have accepted the invention of journey and the validity of the mask of the stumbling explorer.

Yet when Webb adopts the

mask successfully as in *THE BRAIN WASHERS*, he brilliantly succeeds in providing the poetic corollary of Buckley's *IN TIME OF THE HUNGARIAN MARTYRDOM*. Both poets, I feel, were inspired by the trial of Cardinal Mindszenty and his purported confession. Buckley takes this historical Cardinal and intellectually affirms him as the ever recurring martyrdom of the Church through history. Webb is, however, more intuitive, and stepping clear of the actual incident and time creates the mask of the archetypal priest, who will always be persecuted by the anti-clericals, until he confesses to the abominations that they feel it necessary to hear. The priest, as the poem itself, rises in the impressive logic of his sanity and strength, until the suspense of his persecution snaps his earthly self into a convulsive jerkiness of confession. Though the priest monotonously reiterates an external monologue, Webb shows us that he is listening to an even more consistent refrain—the overwhelming silence of God's eternal acceptance.

It is this unevenness of Webb's poetic purpose and control, which makes me disregard his brilliant phrasemaking and Buckley's statement that they are equal witnesses. Yet if Webb could either dominate his mask so convincingly as to make me believe his imposed truths, or when the masks themselves have sufficient focus and force to create the universal truth out of their own essence, he will have taken Buckley's warning:

*"Old friend, be careful: Words  
would become our home  
And cosset us, till one dark day  
we find them  
Dwindled to ash, or rigid as the  
tomb."*

and I will accept him equally with Buckley as true Christian and poet; true poet and Christian.

P. W. JEFFERY.

## Gurge and Heave

This Vital Flesh  
William Baylebridge.  
(*Angus & Robertson, 42/-*)

*Pulse-quickenning wine, we pour  
our charge in song:*

*Into the red-filled chalice of  
this verse*

*We empty it; look! how it lures  
to taste!*

*This resolute physic doth appal  
or raise*

*Low bosoms, this vein—mad-  
dening fire,*

*Sucked in, compels to mightier  
proofs the strong.*

*Drink, ye with hearts, deep  
from the burning bowl!*

*See! even now we lift it to  
your lips*

*With iron hand, strong potion  
for the strong.*

'To rouse the entrammelled fit from beds of ease / on our gruff horn we blow these messages,' explains William Baylebridge in his Prologue to *The New Life*. Some horn, some message. One readily imagines the fit, started from their beds of ease and extricating themselves from their trammels (fishing-nets? fetters? tresses of a woman's hair?), shaking muzzy heads over the terms of this invitation to a "sacramental" drinking-party. **Pulse-quickenning** wine is emptied into red-filled chalices: how can this be? How can you pour wine into chalices already full? And what is this "red"? We'll leave that for a moment: the resultant fluid, whatever it is, "lures to taste". It has clearly, though, been doctored since it is now described as a physic that is resolute—resolute in that, presumably, the red stuff (some medicinal powder) has now **dissolved** (late Middle English, but B is given to archaisms). This physic has strange properties.

Taken by women (so I interpret) it either braces or relaxes their low bosoms, either uplifts or dejects—one is reminded of Alice's adventures with her little bottles of physic, and how she never knew whether she would dwindle or expand. With men (the strong), provided they **suck in** this vein-maddening fire, it has a uniform effect and sends them raging for more and more potent liquors, "mightier proofs"—brandy, no doubt (80 proof), Scotch Whisky (86.8 proof), and finally the demon itself, gin (94.4 proof).

The bowl is burning, really burning, for it needs an iron hand to lift it (perhaps a velvet glove, too): mulled claret is it? flaming brandy? rum punch? By this time who cares or knows?

That red powder: it must, I think, be an aphrodisiac of some kind, possibly dried red-back spider finely ground. It maddens men's veins, and in some women (notoriously kittle cattle) has an astringent and elevating effect on a familiar erogenous zone. Images of brassiere and brasserie are cleverly conjoined. And a further message from Mr. Baylebridge provides additional evidence, for after a number of similar calls to toping (Come, Life's elect! / Feel broader for this draught— / Drink till you split or till / You put your utmost on!—note the witty pun in "broader", "more like a **broad**") there follows, at an appropriate interval, a number of calls to tugging. **Husbandry**, for example.

*Hast a full share of generous  
grain,*

*And sou'st thus? Plant, and  
plant again!*

*Let fertile land*

*Not fallow stand;*

*Nor the god's gift, not lightly  
given, profane!*

*Hast a fit clarion?*

And so on. But perhaps **Fit Marriage Sacred** is better.

*Holy, ever holy, be  
 The staff of this humanity!  
 It flowers not in the myriad  
 seed  
 That drops from the consenting  
 weed—  
 That ne'er shall serve it, nor  
 despise  
 With impotence to fertilise.  
 O art thou strong in sight and  
 thew?  
 Thy seed it asks, and largely  
 too.  
 Give greatly, or a worse mis-  
 carriage  
 Must thou answer for to mar-  
 riage.  
 Holy, ever holy be  
 The staff of this humanity!*

There are some difficult problems of interpretation here—in lines three to six especially—but I must not linger on them. Still, one should remark the word **miscarriage**, so wonderfully appropriate, in its context; and it is important to pick up the implications of “strong in sight and thew”. This is no vulgar orgy, and one is warned off indiscriminate fertilisation. One must, in planting one’s seed, be fit oneself and have a sufficiently penetrative vision to recognise a fit piece of fertile land. For Mr. Baylebridge is a engenist, and will countenance the filling of sound vessels from virile loins (to use his own phraseology) only in the sacred interests of creative evolution. He abhors “impure excess” and bids man beware of women who are “patrons of sterile peace” an dare “keen to sap thy knees”. Fit women, too, must be strong in sight and thew:

*Since weakling are to perish,  
 wives,  
 To save their labour and their  
 lives,  
 Will keep their tillage clean,  
 and freed  
 From planters of degenerate  
 seed.  
 “Projection fit is what? To*

breed . . .”: that is the point (hast a fit projection?). To breed for the super-race and the super-state, when children

*State-fathered, too, would know  
 no taint condition  
 In any scrupulous supposition.*

As the old song says, the subjects interesting but the rhymes is mighty tough—and the poetic language, we may add, less excitingly pregnant than the message.

Mr. Baylebridge is in this volume very much the philosopher—poet, as he explains in his Preface, concerned with man not as an individual but “as grouped into nations” and, even more, “as a part of the life-force”. “How squalid is this world of man’s! how dull!” he exclaims in a poem on poetry.

*Breath lapses into prose. Rebel!  
 Life now in terms of its exalted  
 ten,  
 Till faith—as only thus she  
 can—  
 Restored, shall find the next  
 ascent for Man.*

Some of the clarion-calls to the next decade we have already glanced at. The opening poems of **This Vital Flesh** offer a panoptic view of man’s ascent so far—his ascent from “primal ooze”.

*From universal throes, immense  
 Past the accmpt of reeling  
 sense,  
 By primal forces space that  
 cleave  
 In their ungripped velocities,  
 Through cataclysmic gurge and  
 heave  
 Outmatching Chaos . . . . .  
 Through æons of suchlike cata-  
 clysmic images the earth labours  
 until “I . . . . .  
 Was worked, whole into flesh  
 at last.”*

Enfin Balyebridge vint, climbing upon “the shoulders of all time”, and bearing his banner with the strange device, **Excelsior**. The **Life Force** is our refuge and

strength, our spur, our consolation our immortality.

*Uncredulous babel! why fret?  
 Why squirm and lour?  
 Come, niceness quit!  
 Wholesome the milk flows yet  
 That ne'er ran sour  
 Nor shall for ever—  
 Though it run  
 Through an eternity of nipples  
 on . . . . .*

The milky way of eternal tittle: what more could one want? For “Death is not”: the lamp of life passes from hand to hand in a never-ending relay-race to the resounding cheers of “Play up, play up, and play the game!” Not Newbold’s game, of course, but the old game—“tilling some potential womb”.

Now, you can call this sort of thing “philosophy” if you like—I wouldn’t want to, and I can’t imagine any professional philosopher wanting to. But the truly relevant point to make is that it is very poor poetry. Much of **This Vital Flesh** is just tedious didactic doggered, “gurge and heave”, where language is handled clumsily, imprecisely, and unimaginatively. “Philosophy” becomes operative in poetry only when “it is tried on the pulses”, when it is imaginative experience, felt life. To do Baylebridge justice, he sees this clearly as a matter of theory. In his notes to this volume he speaks of a poem as being “the symbol of a significant experience” and emphasises that “the poet’s sense of language . . . vividly liberates, for its effect on imagination, some meaning beyond the first meaning it bears . . . . . communicates the peculiar character of the author’s experience with the most penetrating vigour, the finest definition, and the subtlest detail.” Agreed; but it is just these qualities I find conspicuously lacking in Baylebridge’s poetry, and I have attempted to indicate these lacks in my brief analysis

and quotations. For one final example I offer Art's Potency:

*Art can rear, its attestation  
whole,  
Temples for the questing soul;  
In the clay whose travail yet is  
not  
This soul, to urge it, art can  
plot.*

Can one really find here "penetrating vigour, the finest definition, and the subtlest detail"? How fine and penetrating is the metaphor of rearing temples? What exactly—or even inexactly—do the last two lines communicate? Despite his theories (better expressed in his prose than in his verse) Baylebridge's "significant experience" never takes on "vital flesh".

Yet Baylebridge has been rather highly praised. One need not take seriously the reviews in the daily press—the *Sydney Morning Herald* which classed him with Blake, Shelley, and Tennyson; the *Sunday Times* (Perth) which thought "this book is extraordinary". But the academics have taken him on his own terms: Professor Howarth regards him "as a prophet-poet, writing to convey a vision" and carrying on "the great traditions of English literature". C. Hartley Grattan says "Baylebridge stands high among the poets of his native Australia, the three or four of the first rank". T. Inglis Moore chose Baylebridge as one of his *Six Australian Poets* and calls him remarkable. H. M. Green gives Baylebridge 14 pages of discussion in *A History of English Literature*, though Green's estimate is lower than those previously quoted. Judith Wright has published a lecture on Baylebridge's thought! All this seems strange and critically inept to me, for Baylebridge hardly begins to exist as a poet. (I'm glad to find that a less academic critic, Douglas Stewart, is of much the same opinion.) If I were to assume for a moment the prophet's

mantle, I would prophesy gloomily that in the near future, when Professors of Australian Literature have got themselves and their research students going, we are doomed to see a number of theses on Baylebridge's thought; his debt to Shakespeare, Blake and Shelley; his love-life; and whatever else can be dredged up. That will be "excelsior" indeed. Personally, as I have already obeyed one of Baylebridge's injunctions while reading his verses ("I laugh in your navel"), I shall with light-some heart follow his further advice:

*From all that springs from  
super-fatulence, keep off!*

I advise my readers to do the same.

L. R. BURROWS.

## In A Dark Glass

The Story of  
Paul Edmond Strezelecki.  
H. M. E. Heney.

(Angus & Robertson, 45/-)

PAUL EDMOND STREZELECKI, bogus Count but bona fide Knight, explorer, scientist and adventurer, has long occupied a minor but romantic niche in Australian history. Passing years and historical research have gradually whittled down the importance of his achievements, but the name of Strezelecki has continued to hold its romantic aura. Now a new and very full story of the man has removed even this; Strezelecki is revealed as a vain exhibitionist, who by continuous if slight distortion of the truth created an elaborate facade, which with the passing years became the only real man.

It is not uncommon to find

biographies which consciously or unconsciously inflate the importance of their subject, or attempt to show him in a favourable light; often the biographers of great men can afford to paint them "warts and all" and the humanity thus revealed leaves their greatness the more stirring. But in this case Miss Heney has methodically laid bare a petty and unattractive soul, and at the same time diminished the already minor significance of his work—leaving us with what? To her, the new image seen "in a glass darkly" is a "less admirable, but much more humanly pitiful figure"; to many others he may seem scarcely worthy of admiration or pity.

The pages and pages of somewhat repetitive detail through which the "Polish Count" is inch by inch exposed, become more understandable when seen in the light of previous work on Strezelecki. The favourable if mysterious image of the man which was accepted by most of his contemporaries, was for years perpetuated by biographers. And of these there have been an inordinately large number, in both Polish and English, for a man of his stature, so that the Strezelecki name has been kept before the world. Among Poles in particular he has been presented as a distinguished expatriate, until he has become something of a legend. It is perhaps this cumulative distortion that prompted Miss Heney to her painstaking and bluntly honest study. If the result sometimes resembles a very large scholarly stick being used to beat a very small historical dog, then perhaps that is inevitable.

And a scholarly piece of work this handsomely produced volume certainly is: fully footnoted, thoroughly indexed, and with an exhaustive bibliography. The authoress was peculiarly well placed for her task, as she has been able to study both the Polish and

English sources in the original, and spent many years gathering and assimilating her material. Her biography must be accepted as thoroughly definitive. Apart from its historical value, "In a Dark Glass" will also attract some readers simply as a nineteenth century biography, although a little more lightness of touch would have made it more readable.

What can finally be said of Paul Edmond Strezelecki? In the field of Australia exploration he may stand as one of the earliest (but not as he long sought to claim, the first) explorers, and also the namer, of the Gippsland; and as the conqueror and namer of Mt. Kosciusko—probably the only native peak of which most Australians could call to mind the name. In the field of science Strezelecki's "Physical Description of New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land" is now almost forgotten except by scientific antiquarians, but its sections on Tasmanian geology were not superseded for many years; his early advocacy of irrigation schemes was sound, and although his claims to be the discoverer of Gold in Australia were meaningless, he may well have been one of the many who knew of its existence before Hargreaves.

The ready acceptance which his glib tongue, suave manner, and aristocratic pretensions won in Australia throw an interesting light on early colonial society. In the small and overwhelmingly Anglo-Saxon community there was something delightfully exotic about a European name, even to the educated Franklins. Later in his life, Strezelecki received something of the recognition he had always craved—acceptance by fellow scientists, an honorary degree, and a genuine title. But if his name lives in the minds of Australians it is likely to be through the more permanent memorials, the host of mountain peaks and

ranges, rivers and streams in various parts of the continent, named to honour the legend of "The Count".

B. K. de GARIS.

## The Great Bust

By J. T. Lang (410 pp., illust. index. Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1962).\*

**D**URING ITS brief history the Australian political Labour movement has thrown up more than a score of brilliant leaders. But many have kicked away the ladder of their ascent. Having risen on the backs of the workers, they have been corrupted by power and prestige and have ended their days as wealthy or titled "scabs", the toadies of the rich. The galaxy of ex-Labour rogues is impressive—Holman, Hughes, Scaddan, Pearce and Lyons to name but a few. Most of them found the discipline of trade union democracy when transplanted into Parliament too galling. Most of them found that the Labour movement was merciless in its punishment of leaders who would not be led by the rank and file or who tried to change its character and its direction in their own interests. Then there were other Labour leaders who were so obsessed with a missionary zeal to implement the Movement's platform that they failed to realise that the political organisation depended upon the community at large and not only on trade unions for an electoral mandate. These, perhaps, have caused the greatest damage. Amongst them were J. B. Chifley—Australia's

\*This review by courtesy THE CRITIC, W.A.

wartime Treasurer and post-war leader—and J. T. Lang—the belligerent pre-war Premier of New South Wales. They had much in common. Both believed that the secret of political power was the manipulation of money. Both believed that the free enterprise trading banks were the wicked agents of their political opponents. Both men believed that they only needed to control the banks in order to be able to refashion Australia society in the interests of the Labour movement. In the ultimate neither were successful and both were wrong. The Australian voters decisively rejected the proposal to nationalise the private trading banks; and it was also shown that the control of banking could be achieved without resort to such a drastic expedient. There was, however, a most important contrast between the policies of the two men. Chifley stood firm on the party's platform of national unification, even if it meant the subordination of State Labour leaders. J. T. Lang, representing the oldest, the largest and the wealthiest of the six States, was a federalist of the old school, believing that the federal compact was a static agreement providing for the mutual protection of the Commonwealth and State governments.

Lang's most recently published book of memoirs, which deals mainly with the Depression of the nineteen thirties, shows how he fought a lone battle to preserve some measure of financial independence for the States against the rapidly increasing power of the Federal Government. His book also shows that his fight (and how he relished a fight!) was too late, and that he mistook a temporary economic disaster for a political mandate; "The Great Bust" broke every government in Australia, Labour and Nationalists alike. Lang shared a common political experience with most of his op-

Your rendezvous for  
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ponents in having been returned to power to cure an unemployment problem that nobody could cure, and having been defeated for the same reason. The electors were indeed as merciless as Lang, though Lang would have it that they were also ignorant. However, Lang's book is a monument to his own ignorance, or deliberate unwillingness to face up to a rapidly changing situation. The financial autonomy of the States began to decline as soon as the first federal parliament met in Melbourne in 1901. Financial responsibility for the war of 1914-18 accelerated the process, and the Financial Agreement of 1927 (which was written into the Constitution by a referendum which Lang unsuccessfully opposed) sealed the financial fate of the States; if they had any autonomy left it was certainly gone by the end of the war of 1939-45. Lang refused to accept this progression. He would not agree to the financial unification of Australia and seemed to believe that New South Wales could remain within the Federation and yet misbehave itself to the detriment of the other six governments when it chose to do so. Lang was wrong in fact and wrong in tactics, and he was mistaken in thinking that the Commonwealth Constitution was unenforceable. He was mistaken in thinking that he could get the support of the Labour movement to defy the power of the Commonwealth. He was also wrong in thinking that the people of New South Wales would support him. In the end he was rejected by both the Labour movement and the electors of New South Wales. Since then he has been very bitter and highly vocal, and has spent much of his time and energy justifying his politics, abusing his enemies and cataloguing the villains of Australian politics. **The Great Bust** is his most successful book on all three counts. It is in-

formative, argumentative and entertaining. It has a wide canvas on which are painted in several dimensions the usurers, loan-mongers, economics professors, absentee creditors, parish pump-tories, Canberra-corrupted unionists, anti-Labour judges, political pimps and the frightened and gutless Labour leaders who together shared public affairs with J. T. Lang during the inter-war years. The book cannot be excelled for its candid comments on the nation's leaders and for the way in which the one pure, uncorruptible, visionary leader of the Australian Labour movement stood head and shoulders above the morass of gullible and degenerate place-seeking politicians! Labour

and non-Labour alike—Bruce, Page, Gibson, Nie-Meyer, Lyons and Scullon—Lang paints them as a galaxy of guilty men who preferred to protect the bond holders rather than feed the starving unemployed. If this book is to be read as an explanation of the complexities of Australian financial and political history during the nineteen-twenties and 'thirties, then it should be taken in small doses with great care. But if it is to be read for an insight into the mind of one of Labour's greatest and most mistaken leaders then it is a priceless volume. Australian political autobiographies are extraordinarily scarce. Lang's book is a gem.

F. K. CROWLEY.

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