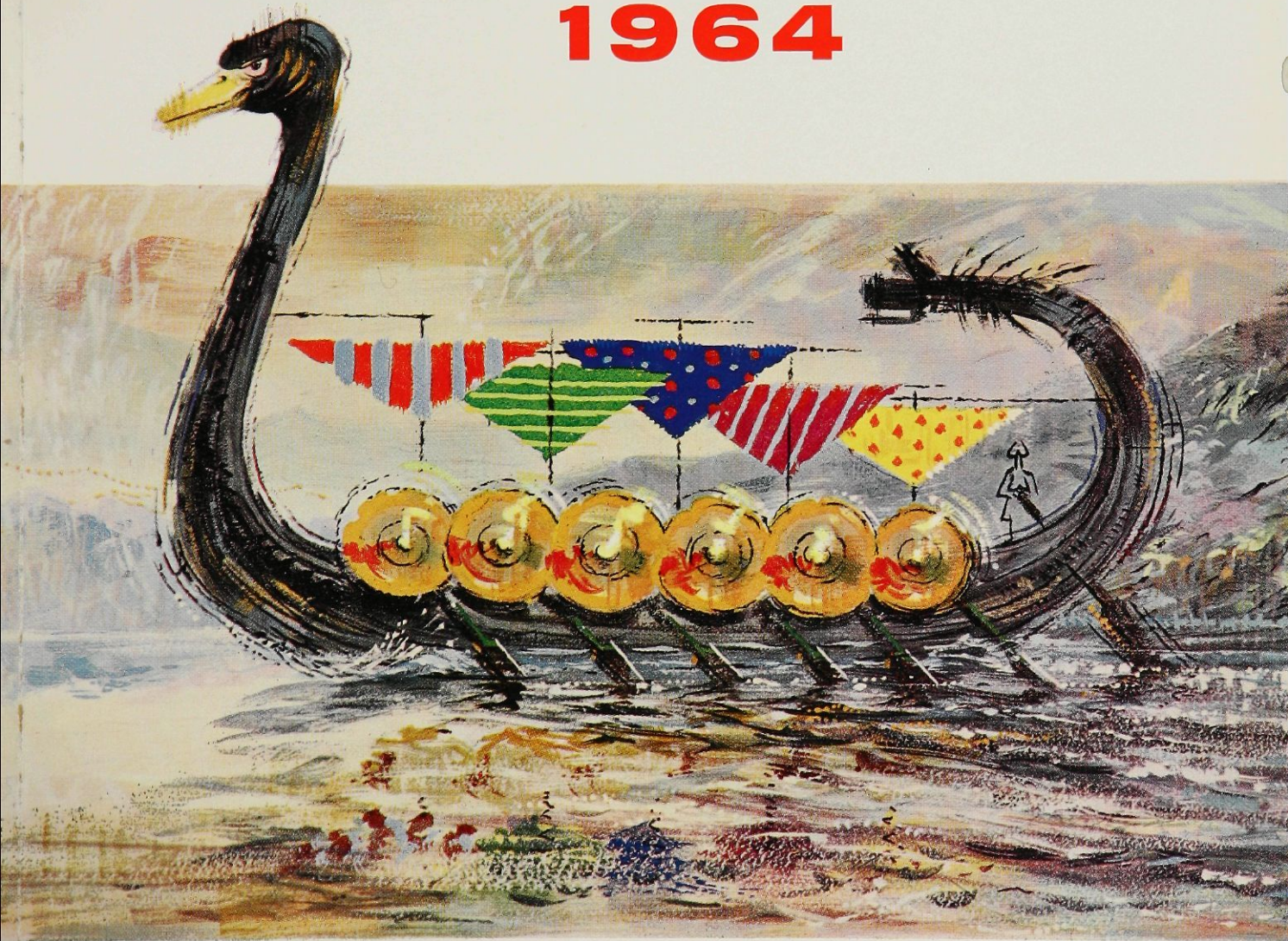
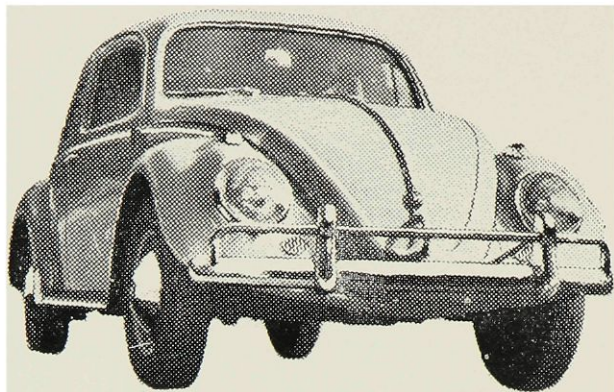


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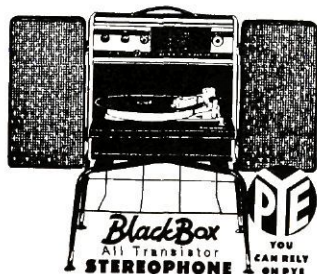
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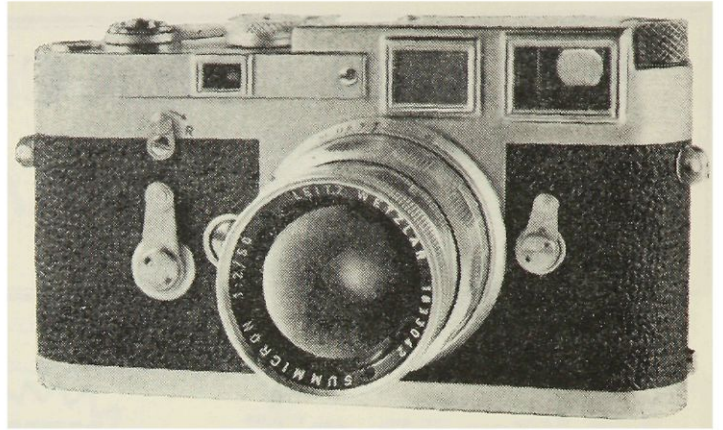
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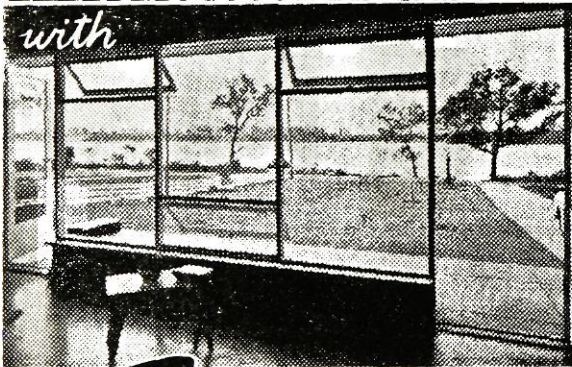
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# westerly

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assistant editor CLARE BOOTH

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## *Editorial*

There are symptoms of a journal's approaching demise; lateness of appearance, an emaciated look, symptoms too common in Australian literary history. This issue is late. It is smaller than usual. Its contents are overwhelmingly, unusually original creative material. In apologising for the lateness and smallness of size, we must reassure readers that *Westerly* is far from decline; future issues will appear on time and be, if anything, larger than the usual 100 pages.

At the time of applications for a Commonwealth Literary Fund Grant, editorial attention had unfortunately to be turned to the financial future of the journal. We received a Commonwealth grant of £250 a year for the next three years, but until the student Arts Union of the University of Western Australia indicated that they would continue to support *Westerly* we were unable to plan forward on any reasonable basis. Material of good quality was becoming increasingly difficult to obtain without paying for it, and the Editorial Board, the Management Committee, and the University Press had to consider ways and means not only to continue publication—that seemed certain enough—but to continue publication of an increasingly improved journal under the financial stresses that *Westerly* and, indeed, all such literary journals in Australia, labour. It has been resolved that *Westerly* will pay for all contributions, and that the entire Literary Fund grant be used to finance the payments.

Beginning with this issue *Westerly* will pay for all contributions on acceptance. There will be no increase in the price of the journal but from the next issue, No. 3 of 1964, there will be a charge to cover cost of postage of copies. This charge will only apply to future subscriptions and renewals.

Some years ago when the editor of *Australian Letters*, Max Harris, similarly announced that he would use the grant obtained by his journal to pay writers, he also declared that nobody owes, or should owe, the literary quarterlies a living. They should be able to pay for themselves he implied. Such a statement from an editor of long experience, of wide literary connections, made hard reading to those of us in Western Australia who were then struggling to keep *Westerly* afloat with student support only.

Western Australia, a State where huge sums are freely spent on the provision of sporting facilities and swimming pools, is also a State where the purchase of a sculpture by Henry Moore can provoke, as it did a few months ago, the most bitter controversy as to the wisdom, or folly, of the expenditure. The Western Australian attitude to literature, to the creative artist, is generally one of the most complete indifference. One Lord Mayoral candidate (not elected) recently considered that the Perth City Council's indifference to culture was the fault of the cultural bodies themselves, for unlike the sporting bodies he said, they took no notice of councillors and did not provide them with complimentary tickets.

It is in an atmosphere of the massive indifference typified by the instances above that *Westerly* must survive—as it will. “Keep culture out of it,” a local columnist stated at the time of the Commonwealth Games in Perth. Indeed, if it were not for the fact that the good critics who write for the one daily in Perth which carries criticism continually resist the one-sentence-a-paragraph, ten-words-to-the-sentence style of Western Australian journalism—a style which the average West Australian is supposed to want—no discussion at any level at all in the papers would deny space to Perth's athletes and footballers.

*Westerly* has a larger number of its sales outside the State of its origin than within. It is, as far as we know, the first journal of its kind to establish itself in Western Australia and pay for its material. In such indifferent Western Australian soil we hope *Westerly* will begin to flourish.

## THE PIONEERS

I am camped above the Fitzroy River Crossing,  
under the spreading, white-limbed river-gums.  
This evening, gathering fire-wood, I find  
that I am walking over, and walking through,  
graves and headstones lost in the dust and grass.  
A red, protruding boulder is inscribed,  
"James Lennon. Prospector. Died 14-9-08".  
I stand there with the firewood under my arm,  
wondering at this prospector, dead  
before my birth. A voice is speaking to me  
out of the dust. "It was a wild country  
when first I came here. I searched for gold.  
The aborigines were wild. They walked about,  
dragging their long spears, gripped between  
their toes, through the grass. A black woman  
was my mate. I did not understand her,  
yet she eased the loneliness and terrors  
that were mine. I lie here under the stars,  
under the burning suns. The rains seep down  
and cool my bones. You, who are alive,  
who see the stars, the sun, the river and the white  
limbed trees, who hear the harsh crescendoes  
of the screaming cockatoos, you stand beside  
my grave, and wonder at this grave, and that grave.  
You search for poetry. Some search for wealth,  
or love, or fame. Some leave children behind them.  
Some leave books, or poems, that they may  
live on in the minds of the living. It is all  
meaningless. You, who stand beside my grave  
listening to the whispered speech of the dead,  
your words may be remembered, or forgotten  
when you are dead. You will not know nor care,  
as I do not now care, nor yet remember  
if ever I found gold, or love, or fame."

It is a name written on a sandstone boulder  
above the Fitzroy River Crossing. The golden  
hair of my fire is leaping up and flowing  
on the wind. Summoned out of the darkness,  
the muscle-rippling torsos of the trees  
stand with their white limbs, like forked lightning,  
out-flung against the stars. Turn in. Lie down.  
Those other sleepers will not trouble you,  
those pioneers are sleeping in the mother-  
earth. Her blanket covers them from the cold  
stars, the merciless suns of the days and years.

*ROLAND ROBINSON*

## PIANOS ON THE BEACH

Musical histories devoted to a particular country concern themselves with its musical traditions, its folk-music, its composers, the racial or national trends in its music, its outstanding performers and the organisation of its musical activities.

What of all this can the Western Australian story offer? Virtually nothing. To a European musicologist the notion of a whole book being written on music in Western Australia would appear comical.

No doubt the Western Australian story has differed little, if at all, from the pattern to be found in many another British pioneering community where circumstances and conditions were approximately similar. There is nothing unique in the Western Australian story. Nevertheless, it seemed to me that West Australians at least—and in particular West Australians interested in music—should be given the opportunity of reading it. Facts buried hitherto in unpublished letters, in diaries, in old newspaper files should be assembled and made accessible in convenient form; and because I felt that this undertaking<sup>1</sup> (the first of its kind) should be as full and thorough as I could make it, for the record's sake, I do not apologise for the inclusion of many details which must be adjudged trivial were one to apply the measuring-stick of artistic values. But to do that would be to miss the point entirely. I have used every fact, however small, which seemed to me to throw light on the musical tastes, resources and interests of these pioneers, or to add a touch of colour to the picture.

### I

JANE ELIZA CURRIE, the wife of Admiral Mark John Currie, R.N., to whom in her diary she endearingly refers as "my Marco" or "my own Marco", noted under date of July 8, 1829: "Left Parmelia and dined at the Governor's"; and on July 10: "A grand dinner to the Governor, etc., by officers of Sulphur—30 sat down—dancing, music and cards till 2 o'clock."

Mrs. Currie had arrived at Swan River in the transport Parmelia a few weeks earlier with the first band of colonists for this wild, new land which would be known as Western Australia. HMS Sulphur carried a detachment of soldiers detailed for their protection. By proclamation the colony came officially into being on June 18.

The convivial evening of three weeks later which Mrs. Currie noted in her diary deserves mention here, for it provides the first recorded mention of music in any form in Western Australia.

---

<sup>1</sup>The writer has almost completed his researches into music in Western Australia during the first fifty years of settlement.

Some of the first colonists brought pianos with them to the Swan River settlement in 1829, as well, doubtless, as other, handier musical instruments. Some of these pianos met a melancholy fate. Captain Marshall Macdermott, an army officer who had retired after service in the Napoleonic wars and who landed with his musically gifted wife in 1830, described in a memoir printed long afterwards how "less fortunate predecessors at an earlier period" had to resort to tents, and their furniture, "including . . . grand pianos (some of them afterwards gutted to make cupboards, etc), lay exposed to all weathers on the beach."

Mr. and Mrs. James Purkis, who arrived in February, 1830—that is, some eight months after the founding of the colony—landed on the open sea-beach between the modern North Fremantle and Cottesloe, and for nearly two months lived there in tents, which were surrounded by packing cases containing their furniture and provisions. The Purkis's little girl, then seven or eight, told her own daughter in later years that the settlers, although on a sandy, wind-swept beach, "managed to have some pleasure as they had a piano."<sup>2</sup>

In the quotation from Marshall Macdermott, the readers' attention may have been arrested particularly by the reference to "grand pianos". It is neither a slip nor an error of ignorance. Mr. George Fletcher Moore noted in his journal under date of January 27, 1832: "Called on the Meareses [Sic] and helped to put up their grand piano in its place, and was promised some music for my pains"; and a year later we find him "at Mr. Leake's, and enjoyed the grand piano which Mrs. Leake, who had recently arrived, had brought with her."

In Europe the term "grand piano" was in general use already in the last years of the 18th Century. These were horizontal instruments, but in 1795 an English maker named Stodart took out a patent for an "upright grand". This is described in Arthur Loesser's book "Men, Women and Pianos" as "a regular grand piano set up vertically on a stand, but inserted into a rectangular cupboard . . . The entire structure could be opened or closed from the front by a couple of large doors."

Perhaps it was an instrument of this type to which Captain Macdermott's reference ("some of them afterwards gutted to make cupboards") applied. Upright grands, Loesser says, were generally sold for about 10 to 15 per cent more than the horizontal grands. They remained in good demand until about 1830. It would be an error, of course, to imagine that those early grand pianos in Western Australian resembled the giant instruments seen in the modern concert hall.

When Mr. Moore enjoyed hearing Mrs. Leake's grand piano, two natives who had come to Perth from King George's Sound (Albany) were allowed to listen. Mr. Moore says they were "greatly delighted with the music; they danced the kangaroo dance and did everything in their power to show that they were pleased and grateful . . . 'tank you, mem, very pretty'." But we are not told what music Mrs. Leake played.

Already in September, 1833, the colony being four years old, the following

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<sup>2</sup>Statement by Mrs. Edward Shenton based on the reminiscences of her mother, Mrs. Purkis. Paper read to the W.A. Historical Society, April, 1926.

advertisement appeared in "The Perth Gazette": "Piano-Fortes tuned at £6/6/- per annum. Charlie Gillingham begs to acquaint the public that he will tune pianos at the above charge by the year." This is fairly good evidence of the existence in Perth and Fremantle then of at least a number of pianos. Twelve years later, in October, 1845, the editor of the "Gazette" wrote, in the course of some sententious moralisings about cultural influences, "In every house you find a piano"; but we must take that with a grain of salt. Even if he meant—as doubtless he did—only the houses of "the gentry" one hesitates to accept the statement literally.

The glimpses still discoverable through the mists of time of the men and women who played those pianos or in other ways found refreshment in music are few, though sometimes momentarily vivid. Two individuals, one a man, one a woman, stand out in the records that remain of the colony's first decade.

"Here am I at Fremantle", George Fletcher Moore wrote in his diary on a June day in 1831, "after having spent the evening at the house of Mr. Leake, in company with Mr. and Mrs. Macdermott, who have lately arrived; we had some airs sweetly played on the pianoforte by Mrs. Macdermott, most of the music from Don Giovanni, which was a treat here."

That entry establishes Mr. Moore as man of some taste. Also, it is the only reference I have come across, in records of the colony's first fifteen years, to a composer or composition of enduring worth. (I record the fact with no censorious intention.)

Mr. Moore, an Irishman of good education, mental vigour, and the lively temperament of so many of his race, came from Dublin. He was prominent in the affairs of the young colony. He went on exploratory journeys, interested himself in the natives and their language, before long was a member of the Legislative Council and the Executive Council, and was appointed Judge-Advocate. He had an appreciation of poetry and music, was a facile versifier, a flautist and a singer.

Mr. Moore found the Leake home and the friends he met there congenial. Only two days after his first diary entry appears a second: "I spent a few hours agreeably at Mr. Leake's, where Mrs. Macdermott again gratified us with some excellent music on the pianoforte, with a flute accompaniment."

No composer or composition named, unfortunately. Possibly that flute "accompaniment" was provided by Mr. Moore himself, but it seems that just then his own instrument was out of action. "I want a flute badly," he wrote in a letter about a year later, "mine was broken on the passage; and this day, when I took up one which an itinerant schoolmaster left in my kitchen, I found that my fingers had lost their wonted familiarity with it."

It is a temptation to link this reference to a flute-owning itinerant schoolmaster with an advertisement which appeared three and a half years afterwards (January, 1836) in the colony's weekly newspaper, "The Perth Gazette and Western Australian Journal". This read: "R. Reilly begs to inform the inhabitants of Perth and Fremantle that he has commenced a school for the tuition of a few pupils on the flute".

This emphasis on the flute will surprise no-one familiar with the course of our musical history in its social aspect. The instrument was enormously popular

in England from the latter part of the 18th Century to the middle of the 19th. The late Dr. Percy Scholes remarks in "The Oxford Companion to Music" that "if any collection of 18th or early 19th Century family portraits be examined, one or two male members of the family of that period are likely to be found pictured with a flute in their hands . . . Whole operas and oratorios were 'arranged' for flute solo."

Apart from this, it is obvious that for a music-lover intending to migrate to a land where cultural amenities had as yet hardly a foothold, a flute would be a particularly convenient instrument to take. One likes to think that it served often, in its gentle way, to ease and soothe nervous stresses in a barbarous land.

The fact remains that, whether or not thus comfortingly employed, or more practically, as support for a singer or accompaniment to the dance, flutes are mentioned fairly often—much more than violins—in the scanty records of those early days. As late as the 1850's we find Alfred Hawes Stone<sup>3</sup> (who, like George Fletcher Moore, was a man of the law) noting in his diary various occasions on which he played his flute. A fellow-enthusiast was Mr. Hammersley, who owned several flutes. "They are all French and very fine ones," says connoisseur Stone. "I like them much better than the English. They produce a very easy tune and are very sweet in their tone."

How long Mr. Moore was deprived of his own flute we do not know, but before long he had a piano of his own. When a ship arrived from England in those days it was the practice of the "Perth Gazette" to publish a list of the goods she had brought. Citizens would read, for instance, "Three packages and two casks for J. Smith"—and one wonders whether sometimes these disclosures might not be a little embarrassing to the party concerned. At all events, a list published on April 26, 1834, included a piano for G. F. Moore.

Long afterwards, when Mr. Moore published his diary, he included some verses of his own entitled "Western Australia for Me". They proclaim the advantages of life in the new land and in their bouncy, cheerful way are no better or worse than the general run of such patriotic effusions, turned out by the score in every age and country and soon forgotten. In this case, however, a certain historic interest can be claimed for the piece, as the first of its kind in this part of the world and—if the author's own statement be accepted—as giving impetus, if not birth, to the designation "Western Australia".

Mr. Moore designed his verses to be sung to the old Irish tune of "Ballinamona Oro", and they were in fact sung by him, he tells us, "at the first ball given by the Governor, Sir James Stirling, in Perth". Each verse ended with the line "Western Australia for me", and the author adds with some complacency, "I dare not say that I christened the colony, but certainly after the above song the name of Western Australia was adopted."

For the small community of "ladies and gentlemen" in the new colony by the Swan the occasional balls and other diversions given by the Governor were, of course, the outstanding events of the social calendar. We get a brief

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<sup>3</sup>Alfred Hawes Stone arrived in 1829. In the following year he was Clerk of the Peace and eventually became Registrar of the Supreme Court. He died in 1873, aged 72.



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glimpse—thanks to Mr. Moore—of a Governor's ball given on September 2, 1831, which was "kept up with the greatest spirit until six in the morning, and the dancing almost without interval—contredances, quadrilles, Spanish dances and gallopades."

Without doubt Mr. Moore threw himself with enthusiasm into all the social amusements which came his way, but it is clear too that he was susceptible to the beauty of nature and had an ear for her music. "I have been favoured with two songs from birds like thrushes", he notes in August, 1831. "The notes are not much varied, but seem rather a repetition of something corresponding with these words: 'Come with me and let us make a nest, ah, DO!'; to which the other seems to reply 'No indeed I shan't, at least with YOU!'—the last note accented". A day or so later he writes: "I have a song in my mind, suggested by that of a bird's notes; and if I can get my flute mended, shall set it for you."

Another diary entry (July, 1833) runs: "The shepherd has sent in word that if I buy a set of bells for him he will stay with me. I have bought twenty sweet, musical, regularly tuned bells, with straps and buckles, at three shillings each . . . It is delightful to hear them on a fine evening."

That one can well believe. The Arcadian vision conjured up is as unexpected as it is charming. Where, one wonders, could Mr. Moore buy 20 "regularly tuned bells" so soon after the colony's beginnings? Did he import them specially?

Another musical pleasure makes him take up his pen in December, 1843. "The sound of a clarinet is something new in this colony", he writes. "One of these reapers has brought one with him and is now delighting the kitchen audience with 'Ye banks and braes'."

An itinerant schoolmaster with a flute; a shepherd who delighted in the music of bells; a reaper who played folksongs on a clarinet; and those piano-playing wives of the gentry, collaborating harmoniously with Mr. Moore in the moments that could be snatched from the tasks of home-making in this new land: it is not an imposing tally, perhaps, but in the circumstances it is not altogether negligible.

## II

IN THE SOUTH-WESTERN CORNER of Western Australia about this time, the sons and daughters of a clergyman who had died in England some years earlier were striving to establish themselves. Soon the name of Busselton would be given officially to the settlement near which the third home of the Bussell family in Western Australia was being built. They had landed first at Augusta, then moved some twelve miles up the Blackwood River to a romantic forest-girt spot to which they gave the name of "the Adelphi". Romantic no doubt, but, as they soon discovered, a heart-breaking proposition for the agriculturalist, faced with intractable soil and tall timber.

So when in the early hours of one morning fire broke out and destroyed the Adelphi and a good deal of its contents, it was decided not to rebuild there but to move some fifty miles north to the flats of the Vasse River, near the future Busselton.

The youngest of the girls, Bessie,<sup>4</sup> was the only one at the Adelphi when the fire was discovered. Writing later the same morning to her sister Fanny at Augusta she told how her brothers Alfred and Lenox pulled out her piano, and that her music was safe, though "the piano got very hot after it was out."

This was in November, 1833. Most of the Bussells were indefatigable writers of long letters and keepers of diaries and journals, and in large part these have been preserved. Numbers of references make clear that Bessie was the musician of the family, and the piano was hers.

Writing to Bessie of the new family home, Cattle Chosen, at the Vasse, Brother Lenox tells her: "We shall hear your piano in affection . . . It will be a great pleasure to hear again the sound of your voice and harpsichord. It is the only one we have heard in any degree of perfection since we left England." And when, two years later, sister Fanny is describing Cattle Chosen in a letter to her beloved cousin Capel in England, she records, when the sitting-room is reached: "The piano occupies its place under the window."

(It will have been noticed that Lenox speaks of a "harpsichord". There is no evidence that Bessie possessed such an instrument—which, of course, differs in the principle of its tone-production and in its sound from the piano. Certainly Lenox should have written "piano".)

Bessie the musician had had a heart-shaking moment when she arrived from England with Fanny, in January, 1833, to join her brothers who had come out in advance. At Fremantle they went ashore and Bessie, Fanny records, sent back to the ship for her "music and portfolio" to be brought ashore in the captain's longboat. The longboat capsized on the bar. Consternation! "All Bessie's dear songs" had apparently gone to the bottom. What a relief when it was discovered that brother Lenox, entrusted with the commission, had forgotten it, and the "dear songs" remained safely on board.

Bessie Bussell, then, was singer as well as pianist, and we would like to know what music she played and sang. In a letter to the family at Augusta in November, 1835, she wrote: "At the Governor's bivouac John (her eldest brother) said, 'Now Bessie, sing *Fleuve de Tage*. This is the last time you will see the Blackwood.'" Bessie adds: "I did not sing it."

I have not been able to trace either words or music of this song about the river Tagus, or its origin; but long after I first read Bessie Bussell's letter, and purely by chance, I came upon a reference to it in a most unexpected quarter.

In Chapter 21 of his "Vanity Fair" the novelist Thackeray makes one of his female characters offer to sing *Fleuve du Tage*, and he says that the song was then . . . which is to say, the year of Waterloo, 1815 . . . "in the height of fashion".

In 1815 the Peninsular War had not long ended. Perhaps it is not too fanciful to suggest that possibly *Fleuve du Tage* reached English drawing-

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<sup>4</sup>Bessie (Elizabeth) Bussell arrived in Western Australia with her brother Lenox and sister Fanny in 1833. John Garrett Bussell, the eldest brother and leader of the family migration, had arrived with his brothers Charles, Vernon and Alfred in 1830. The last to arrive—in 1834—were the mother, Mrs. Bussell, and Mary Bussell. Bessie Bussell married Henry Ommaney in 1839. They returned in 1847 to England, where she died.

rooms (and eventually a corner of Western Australia) as a result of the interest taken in England in the Iberian peninsula, where for years British soldiers had lived and fought.

Apart from *Fleuve du Tage* only one of the songs mentioned in the Bussell papers is known to me. That is not surprising. The titles make it fairly clear that Bessie and the others favoured ballads, probably extremely sentimental songs which were current in genteel English circles at that time, and which have long since been forgotten.

In the year of the Governor's bivouac by the Blackwood, Bessie had written to cousin Capel in England asking her to tell someone referred to as "Georgie" "how grateful we are to her for the music she has copied for me. As to the musical annual Lady Stuart sent me, I think it must be superior to any that have hitherto appeared, as it contains nothing that is not pretty. 'We have lived and loved together' is sung and re-sung but we never tire of it. 'Old Ocean is Calm' promises, however, to be no less a favourite. Since we have dismissed Emma (a servant) I have little time to learn new music but an evening seldom passes without the sound of my dear piano."

I don't think it is unfair to suggest that one phrase in that letter tells us a lot. The book "contains nothing that is not pretty", says Bessie. "Prettiness", one feels, is for her the prime virtue, and to call a song "pretty" the highest compliment she can pay it.

The solitary song in Bessie's repertoire that is more than a title to me is mentioned in her diary on May 25, 1837, when her thoughts were much on "dear Fanny", whose birthday it was. "I have been singing over and over again", says Bessie, "one of her favourites, 'Go where glory waits thee' . . . I sang it the night she went away, and now again after her long absence it seems yet more appropriate." The song that so haunted Bessie is one of the collections of Irish folk-songs which became widely known when provided with new words by the poet Tom Moore.

Into her diary at Cattle Chosen at that time Bessie put very conscientiously a record of her daily domestic doings . . . for instance, the amount of butter made, and the Stilton cheeses (sometimes successful, sometimes not) . . . interspersed with jottings on trouble with the natives, which occasionally involved violence and bloodshed. She did not find, she wrote to cousin Capel, "that any of us enjoy the elegancies of life at all the less from turning our hand to anything in the course of the day, for when evening comes round and all our duties are over I open the piano with, I think, much more pleasure than I ever did in England, and all are ready to join in the chorus, and then perhaps turn from the piano to admire the often-looked-at-picture . . ."

Indeed, though Bessie was the musician of the family, they all found enjoyment in music when the brief opportunity for relaxation came in their crowded, vigorous lives of pioneering. Perhaps there were, scattered through the young colony, other pioneering families in which the refreshment of music had a similarly important place, of whom we know nothing because they were not diarists and prolific letter-writers . . . or at least left no such memorials to posterity. One wonders.

In a letter to England dated, 1833, Fanny pictures the family at the Adelphi

“drawn in our usual circle round the fire, listening to Bessie, who was singing to us ‘The Knights of the Golden Crest.’” The same indefatigable correspondent, speaking of Bessie’s singing some two years later, says: “Our piano has borne all its vicissitudes wonderfully and it is a constant source of interest and amusement. There is one song we always call ‘Uncle John’s’, and indeed it would please us much could we see him again in his comfortable chair leaning back and listening to it.”

Sometimes, we may surmise, Bessie sang to an audience of her family and friends in the open, without her piano. Was it on such occasions that she used the tuning-fork which Captain Toby (a good friend of the family) writes to say (in July, 1835) he has sent her from Fremantle? On the other hand, it may well be that this practical girl was able to keep her own piano in tune. (In 1843, according to the “Gazette”, the ship Lady Gray brought to the colony a cargo which included “pianos, tuning hammers, forks, wire and covered strings, and music”; also some accordions.)

When the fire occurred at the Adelphi, Bessie Bussell’s piano was given temporary accommodation at the Augusta home of Georgiana Molloy, wife of Captain Molloy, who had come from England with the first Bussell settlers in 1830 in the ship Warrior. Bessie notes in her journal one January day in 1834 (some two months after the fire): “Last night after tea Mrs. Molloy proposed that we should turn out the table and have a dance. I played alternately with Mrs. Molloy, and we all danced, waltzed and sang. Biscuits, melons and wine were handed round and we were very merry.”

Mrs. Molloy may not have been quite the musical enthusiast Bessie Bussell was but she told one of her correspondents how much the temporary possession of the piano meant to her. “You may well conceive my gladness at this acquisition as I have not heard the sound of music for four years.” It seems that her hopes of having a piano of her own were never realised. She had written to a sister in England in November, 1832: “I have sent for a piano from the Cape, and I hope to send you some most beautiful and melodious airs from a Mrs. Smith, a Spanish lady who plays divinely on the guitar and is the wife of Colonel Smith, late of the Rifles.”

A year later the piano from the Cape obviously has not arrived, nor had it, we conclude, nearly seven years later; for in a letter written in June, 1840, from their second home, at the Vasse, Mrs. Molloy said: “The children will be quite delighted with the mouth organ. It is called a sort of organ-piano united; it is like a worktable in appearance and, being a wind instrument, has the advantage of not getting out of tune. This the children often dance to and at dear Augusta I used to take it out on the grass plot and play till late by moonlight.”

Three years later Georgiana Molloy died.

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Gay in the saddle once,  
my hero whose wrists have  
lost their golden fur; whose  
eyes now match the green of  
faded leaves, once rode for  
sheep.

And who will ask him how  
it was to feel his bulk on  
a stiff saddle, a raw horse  
under his thighs and cymbals  
of wind crashing in the gums?  
With the paddocks surly, fretting  
up rusty soot for his nose to  
catechize?

Straightbacked all the day,  
my hero whose skin has gone  
slacker than milk; whose thick  
fingers rasp tobacco into thongs  
of retrospect, once kept the burnt  
land's secrets tight and clever  
in his chest where now, they gather  
weight, thicken and bend his aching  
back.

*GRIFFITH WATKINS*

## THE DISCOVERY

MULLIGAN LOOKED at the sun. Pushing five, still stinking hot. Make this the last. He swirled the pan deftly, watched the light stuff spill over the lip. Despite his tiredness he felt the familiar thrill, there with each pan, more intense with the last of the day. The same question formed: would this be the one to show promise of more than grub-stakes? He laughed at himself bitterly: always it was next pan, next day, next week, next, next. Couldn't give up, might miss by one. Fever. More dog-in-the-manger than fever, frightened of missing out, of leaving it for the next bloke. He shook the heavy stuff from the groove, picked it over, put in the bottle the few pieces that showed colour. Rose, stretched his aching back, picked up his coat and billy.

"Come on!"

The spaniel bounded forward, quivering, eager for the rough caress. He too stretched, then trotted after Mulligan along the track they'd worn from hut to creek.

"Wonder what's our luck."

The dog closed up, right on Mulligan's heels as he left the track and pushed through a curtain of scrub into a rough clearing. From here a network of narrow pads ran down through the scrub to the creek. Across one a rabbit lay, still warm.

"Bloody bunny! Ain't there no wallaby left?"

The dog looked askance at Mulligan's tone. He frisked about, urging Mulligan to hurry, tasting the rabbit, hearing the crunch of the bones. Mulligan freed the mangled leg, re-set the trap, broke a bough and brushed the earth, picked up billy, coat and rabbit.

"Bunny bloody stew."

The dog ignored him, indifferent to the vegetables Mulligan had grown against odds, fighting the bracken fern, netting out rabbit and wallaby, wombat and bandicoot, covering against birds the young plants and seeds, cursing the quartz as he dug drains from the creek, cursing the size of roo dung as he gathered it for fertilizer. Determined not to rot in the fossickers' rut of damper, bacon and tea, he had stuck at it grimly, succeeding at last in raising potatoes and carrots, pumpkins and parsnips, onions and silver beet, concentrating on crops he could store, or that, like the beet, replenished itself as he broke it leaf by leaf.

The sun was low when they reached the hut, but its light lay warm and gold on the pool Mulligan had scooped from the creek where it turned behind the hut. Mulligan lit the fire, left ready set as always, skinned and washed

the rabbit, tossed some to the dog. Put the rest in the stew billy with water and salt, added potato, carrot and onion, and hung it on the fire.

Then he stripped naked, draping his work clothes on a box before the fire, took soap and towel and trotted to the pool, grumbling as he went at the sinking sun.

"Burns you to a cinder when you've got to work, then hides behind the hill when you want a bloody bath."

He stood on the moss at the edge of the pool, sluicing and soaping in readiness for his bath. A kookaburra laughed harshly nearby, and Mulligan scowled up, touchy in his nakedness.

"Laugh, you bastard, laugh."

He gammoned to aim a gun, then plunged into the pool, splashing and blowing until his bones began to numb. He sprang out, rubbed himself vigorously, then ran to the hut, the fire burning his skin as he pulled on his spare set of clothes.

He shook the stew billy, got plate and knife and fork. Mixed flour in a tin with water and salt, kneading the dough to a small flat loaf. The fire had burned down to a mound of glowing coals. Mulligan scooped a hole, dropped in the dough, covered it with coals. Put on the tea billy, got mug and sugar and tea. When the water boiled he prised off the lid and threw in the tea, lifted off the billy and tapped it with a stick. Raised the lid of the stew billy and prodded with his fork. The savoury smell of stew filled the hut. Mulligan tipped it on his plate and drew up his box to the fire.

The spaniel crept in and sat quiet, watching Mulligan eat. Mulligan ate on, pretending not to see him. At last the dog, anxious at the speed with which the stew was disappearing, growled softly, then louder.

"What's the matter with you? Had yours, didn't you? And I thought you didn't like stew?"

The dog's eyes dumbly appealed.

"Bloody glutton! Here!"

Mulligan tossed meat through the doorway. The dog streaked after it. Mulligan swallowed the rest of his stew, poured a mug of tea, and while it cooled scraped the coals from the damper. He looked at it critically, then lifted it out and set it to cool on the hearth.

Tea over, Mulligan felt the nightly craving for a smoke. To combat it, he turned his thought to home. Home. That was what was wrong with this life: he had no home. A dog in place of family. The change had been forced on him—mill closed, jobs non-existent. He'd sworn never to accept the dole. Work or starve, that was his motto. So he'd gone fossicking.

Fossicking had drawn him since the time he'd spent his holidays scratching for osmiridium at Black Creek. It had been a hard row, but he'd slaved to make it pay, enough to keep the home going, educate the kids. Yes, he'd battled it through. But a man missed his family. One day he'd strike it rich, make a packet, then head for home. Till then, he must make do with memory.

Milly: what would Milly be doing? Queer to think that day by day as he went to the creek and panned the gravel and sand, other people in other places were going about their business, each wrapped apart in his own thoughts, his own ambitions, troubles, pleasure, pain . . . Milly would probably

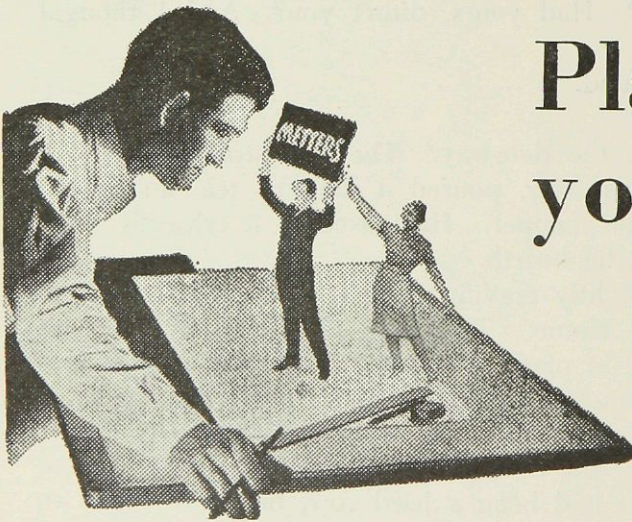
be by the wireless, a pile of darning beside her, high as the seat of her chair. Wherever Milly was, there was mending; it was a family joke. A good wife, Milly, hard-working, steady, never one to gad about, putting the kids first, starving herself in the hard days so that they had enough. Good-looker, too—or had been; it was now so long since he'd seen her that he couldn't call her face to mind. It was there, tantalising, just beyond his vision, he could feel it, see details, the tilt of the nose, the set of the eyes, but the whole face refused to come into focus.

He shook his head, turned his thoughts to Beryl. Dancing, no doubt. Always a lively one, Beryl. Or at the pictures with a beau. Always plenty of boys when Beryl was about. Good-looking kid, and smart as they come. Kid? Struth! She'd be, no, yes, twenty-seven this June! God, how the years slipped by. Wonder she wasn't married. Perhaps she was. But no, they'd have let him know, somehow.

Then Rod—Rod must be twenty-three. A man. Need no help now to assemble his bike. He'd have a car. But they'd had some fun on the old bikes, off early on a Sunday, lunch in their knapsacks, more like two cobbers than father and son. Fishing the lake and river, shooting for rabbit and roo, picking watercress or mushrooms to take home for tea. And further back still, when Rod was a little boy, the kites he'd made him, cross, bowie and boxie, and they'd held them together on top of Sky Hill against the tug of the westerly wind, sending up messages, watching them buck and dive.

Yes, that's what was missing. Family outings, evenings round the fire. The sharing of pleasure and sorrow. The sense of family.

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A coal fell from the fire. Mulligan jerked awake, poked the coals together. Lit a candle, and read for a time from the Bible, the only book he had, and from which he drew unlimited satisfaction, not knowing or wondering why.

Before he went to bed, Mulligan stood for a while in the doorway of the hut, looking out at the hills, listening to noises of the night: the cry of a mopoke, the creaking of trees, the thump of a wallaby's tail, the southing of leaves in the wind.

Mulligan woke, refreshed from a nine-hour sleep. He put a match to the fire, pulled on his clothes, and sluiced his hands and face. The sun was already warm, the air still with the promise of heat. High in a tree by the creek a magpie sang to the sun.

Mulligan cooked some oats, ate them with a spoonful of his precious condensed milk. The dog watched him.

"All right, all right, don't get impatient. There'll be bunny for you down the track.

Over the coals Mulligan grilled two rashers of bacon, carefully catching the fat to spread on the damper for lunch. He washed up, put out the fire, re-set it, put his lunch in the billy.

"Come on!"

The dog ran ahead, eager for the promised rabbit. Mulligan walked evenly, refusing to be hurried, the sun warm on his bare head, the billy swinging from his hand.

The dog barked excitedly. Mulligan looked up. A long fawn shape streaked up the bank, followed close by the dog. A hare! Make a nice change for the pot. Laughing at himself for a fool, Mulligan ran through the bracken, up the bank after the dog.

At the top he stopped, panting for breath. Of hare or dog there was no sign. He turned. Behind lay the dollshouse hut, below him and closer the winding creek showed silver between the wattles. Mulligan felt a sudden impulse to toss a stone in the creek. He stopped and put out his hand as the spaniel broke from the fern.

"What—?"

The dog stared at Mulligan as Mulligan, stooped, stared at the stone, as if he too were stone. A nugget, Mulligan whispered, a bloody great nugget, a nugget the size of my fist. I'm seeing things, gone mad, shouldn't stoop at my age, or rush up a bank like a bull. He straightened, looked away, tearing his gaze from the ground. Then suddenly looked again. Still there. Damn near solid gold. Was he dreaming? Make sure. He swung to the dog.

"Boxer!"

The dog crouched low, worried at Mulligan's mood. Mulligan walked a few unsteady steps, then whipped back wildly, scared of losing the spot.

"Reall"

He dropped to his knees, picked up the nugget, weighing, assessing, whispering to himself.

"Must be worth—"

He got to his feet, the nugget heavy in his hand, and stared unseeing out over the creek.

He could go back. No need now to scratch and pan. Go back to comfort, his family, the city.

Instead of the expected elation, Mulligan felt flat. His mind ran now on what he would leave: the hut, the fire, the savoury stew. The pool, cold, clear, that washed away fatigue. The garden, won with sweat, choked again with fern; the birds, trees, space, the blessed silence. The dog.

He looked at the dog. The dog looked back, thumped the earth with his tail, whined. Good company, faithful, quiet. Milly, for all her good points, could not keep quiet for a second; her tongue went on and on about everything, about nothing. And Beryl and Rod, what a pair to bicker, snapping and snarling whenever they met; and never satisfied, wanting this, wishing that.

"You want to go back?"

The dog barked sharply once.

"Why? Don't you want company?" A mate? Think, now, think! What's there here for you in the end but loneliness and old age? I reckon we better go back."

The dog growled disagreement.

"All right, then, we won't. But if we stay, what do we do with this? Can't run into town and cash it, and then come back. There'd be hundreds pouring out here, and bang'd go our peace. We could hide it in the hut, I suppose, and cash it when we wish. No, you're right, it'd spoil it all, we'd know it was there, be thinking of it all the time, know that we needn't work, a couple of fakes."

He stood distracted, the nugget in his hand. A kookaburra lighted above his head, and laughed its scorn at the madman and his dog.

"You again! "I'll make you laugh!"

Mulligan hurled the nugget, the bird flapped and squawked in alarm, the nugget fell full in the creek. Feeling it gone, Mulligan felt wonderfully free, he threw up his arms, shouted loud in relief.

"Gone and a bloody good riddance!"

A thought struck him, he turned to the dog.

"What say we celebrate? We haven't had a holiday since I don't know when. How about we go round the Hump after roo?"

The dog yelped its joy, raced madly round and round, galloped away, turning to coax Mulligan on.

"All right, all right. Don't go stupid. No sense in rushing off. We have to go back to the hut. Got to get the gun, haven't we?"

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## ROCK CLIMBERS

Cold cliff, still eagle, the valley down  
Under mapped small: here we, and the clouds, climb  
This wall, upthrust so long ago that time  
Is a text-book. There is a fall—the ground

Smashing—on every finger'd ledge; a death  
Each toe'd out chip. This ancient frenzy records  
A million years, only to burn on boards  
Our scrabbling crying bouncing final breath.

The top: a cold-lipped kiss, numbed embrace  
And wind, cloaking us in ice. But not love:  
Perhaps a laugh the long-year'd rocks that prove  
Us can never hear. The wind smears a trace

Of our kiss upon them, a band of stone  
Rich-coloured, but yet richer in our mind;  
A kiss rainbow'd on the cloud-bowl'd sky, lined  
With a huge horizon. And all her blown

Hair knots the wind round my mind, her iced lips  
Chill me with raindrops, her shivering clasp  
Holds tight this immense view to my eyes, gasp  
Of her jerking lungs is the air's cold that whips

My skin white. But not love: the god who threw  
This mountain up to the eagle's air, cleft  
It lightly for our one slip, has been left  
Chagrined once more: our kiss is to knife him through.

RAY SINCLAIR-WOOD

## TIDAL RIVER

The thrust of our city riverwise runs  
where buildings, lights, are a fragile skin.  
Through the covert hush of mud it strains  
and deep in its body an urgent tide  
butts from the sea to inland refuge  
or (tired of bucolia, bored with suburbs,  
weary from dead reflection of commerce)  
swings back to an ocean's dialectic.

Somewhere a force within city men  
punches against the careful stone  
of reputation. In secret they envy  
the river's courage to double backward,  
challenge its former conduct, renounce  
the religious appeal of its own persuasions.

*RODNEY HALL*

## LONELY GIRL GATHERING JELLYFISH

A child gathers her bucket full of eyes  
along the swollen shore, traps all she can discover  
and sees the colours waiting in her gritty prize;

she swings them through the sea and lifts unescaping  
the fluctuant hypnosis their tears cover—  
vulnerable, flayed retinas of sea, scraping

at her mind, sing all the sea to her.  
The drifting purple drags in her eyes like a trawl  
and she squats round the bucket; her eyes cannot stir

from the oblate pale quivering of eyes asking  
for the deep consistent chill of the sea they crawl  
and the warm millimetres at the top where they lay basking . . .

They beckon her through the deep sights under the calm  
to the place where colours fade in the ancient sprawl  
of black weight the sun will never warm.

Beyond the reach of light it is all devouring:  
on broken miracles nuclei blur and maul,  
on colours properly nameless, on successions of sunken kings . . .

The sea flows through her like a thick disease,  
the furrowed sun bends closer to the small  
still figure hunched round centuries between her knees;

she is thin and shivers on the dancing beach,  
the straight-offering sun, her eyes on the eyes—  
a first communion makes that kind of breach

in sense, the sea-change can demand no less.  
Cold branches all her veins, her goosefleshed thighs  
merge into scales like her coarse bathing-dress;

she slips into the shallows, tipping the pail  
so that the eyes slide down with her and expand  
into the undertow, seeking the core of a gale

where she will call her more resistant kind  
out of that aerial dazzle chafed with sand  
to the old variant sea where nothing can be blind.

NORMAN TALBOT

## DOCKYARD NIGHT SONG

Ah! my love's life is patterned drab all day,  
His temple of the night is bed and board,  
Where we two keep the bitter world at bay.  
There I will kiss his lips and call him lord.

What is he lord of with his gladstone bag,  
The whistle that has taught his lips to sing?  
The hands that thicken, and the hand in his,  
Create a temporal David, stone and sling.

The chimneys black against the singing wires,  
The footsteps echoing behind the rain,  
All cry, walk softly in this heavy place,  
For many men will come this way again.

The hollows in the pavements mark the years,  
The sirens tremble in creation's wail,  
Oh! hold me tight against the driving dark,  
What are we lords of that we dare not fail?

*DOROTHY HEWETT*

## THE GIRL IN EVERY PORT

Her body is for them  
A ready cleat,  
Perpetually avid, poised to capture  
The halyard's rod-like rapture  
In worn songs wild and sweet!

Awaits them, still and gleaming,  
An anchored ship,  
To move with soft dementing motion  
When for the darkening ocean  
She lets her mooring slip:

In nights of mad desire  
A spindrift sail,  
Yielding the belly of her passion  
To forces she can fashion  
In stallions of the gale.

But when all's done, she is  
The indifferent sea  
That parting for them in a wave  
Takes back the space it gave  
As if they'd ceased to be.

*ROBERT CLARK*

## THE STREAMERS

THE STREAMERS clung about the open door. Torn wet lengths, turning to dismal pulp, lay curled against the loose jambs so that their blurred colours made a sickly pattern on the timber. Cathy stood there passively, watching the turbulence of the storm, as the door secured only at its handle by the frayed loop of rope swung back and forth on protesting hinges.

"I'll not shut it yet," she thought. Merely to shut it would be useless: only the drawing of the strong bolt would hold it against this wind. "I'll not bolt it yet."

The boys had long since gone to bed, Jamie reluctant and tearful, Pete resigned and unsmiling. Today Jamie had been four; today his father had promised to be back. The child was growing more and more like Ted, with the same crisp hair and soft, blunt features, the same charm that was so endearing and with it the same irresoluteness that made it all seem a torment. Only Pete was like herself, pale and dark-eyed and the eyes knowing and direct. It's a wise child that knows his own father, she had heard. Yet it had been Pete who had suggested the decorations earlier in the afternoon. "Let's hang up the streamers," he'd said. It was one of those pure gestures before a child learns bitterness. So they had brought out the streamers and hung them about the little house, as they did for special occasions.

But Ted had not come. It was not for herself that she minded; surely it was not for herself. But she stood there now at the door staring hopelessly through the rain-lashed night as though it was her own immense loneliness that cried out to him in the storm. It was strange. She had not thought, until now, that she was lonely. His absences she had always accepted without questioning; life had made her too practical for heartbreak. At this moment she merely knew that he had promised to come and that he was not here.

Her thin frock blew suddenly against her, spattering her with big cold drops of rain that soaked through and stung her skin. She shivered. Her breasts became chilled under the damp cotton fabric. At last, unhurriedly, her feet drew back, but still she did not bolt the door. From across the small brown kitchen a long belly of streamers swung out their faded greens and yellows toward her, like the gaudy and tattered sails of a broken galleon, and the wind moaned without end through the narrow cracks in the walls. It occurred to her only then that the streamers had a pathetic appearance. Beneath them, earlier in the evening, the children had eaten their party tea with subdued enthusiasm. It was never the same without their father.

Calmness was part of her nature. She might once have tried to hold him, this man who was not her husband, as one cherishes most those things which are not legally theirs. He had never believed in marriage; he regarded it as an unnecessary bond designed to tie a man down helplessly forever. As though the world held any bond, legal or otherwise, that could tie down a man like Ted. There was no bond at all for the likes of him, she mused, not even her blind and simple devotion. She supposed there were not many women who would have taken him back, as she did, time after time, but it was not her way to brood upon injustices or to plot and scheme as some women might. Hers was a primitive acceptance; only another woman such as herself might have understood it.

Her thoughts kept running. "It's no use my sitting up. If he comes, he'll come . . ." She walked the few paces to the bedroom, pausing a moment to pull the thin covers over the sleeping boys.

The house was an old one set well back in the acre or two of land that had once been a chicken farm. It made her life at once both private and apart. The bedroom was so bare of colour that the faded chintz bedspread seemed an intruding flame. Without urgency, Cathy began to strip. She eased the damp frock over her head and spread it to dry on the back of the chair. Then she pulled off the slip that clung to her body with casual and practiced movement. It was a nylon slip; it would be dry by morning. When he had given it to her several Christmases ago and she had thought it the prettiest garment she had ever owned. It had delighted her to wear it at special times and to strip before him and feel herself admired and desirable. Now the lace had become ragged and the straps had broken and been mended many times.

It hung palely from her hand as she stood there in her bra and panties staring through the cold pane of the window at the wet black night beyond. There was no need to draw the blind in this place so far removed from the world to which she scarcely felt she belonged. She was naked when she turned her head to look back unblinkingly over her shoulder at the reflection in the bleak oval of the mirror. Her thighs stood out white and substantial. "You've a good pair of hips on you, girlie," he used to say, and would draw her fiercely across his knee until she felt his hard legs pressing into her flesh and she would begin to tremble.

Well, those same hips had carried his children and borne them in love and pain. There were women tied to worse men than Ted, and for life, too, and forever complaining that they couldn't be free. "When you're tired of me," he'd often said, "you'll have no cause to worry. Just slam the door shut and draw the bolt and I'll not break it down." She had listened to the words often, the words . . . but not their meaning. Now the meaning seemed to come to her with stark clarity. She wondered about it. Of course, men had no sense of responsibility toward their children. Everyone knew that. Children were the playthings of a woman, her burden and her comfort, and at a price no man knew.

She continued to stand there nakedly. Cathy had always been a practical woman, not given to doing things without reason. Yet something she could not quite grasp and understand made her stay there, chilled and unclad in the thin moonlight, her arms folded loosely across her breasts in the innate and age-old gesture of modesty. She had never learned to flaunt her body.



The bed, when at last she climbed in, seemed too vast for her. More and more frequently of late she had slept alone, and had done so unprotestingly, but now the night filled her with unaccustomed restlessness and she yearned for the comfort and nearness of a known body. "Ted," she murmured, and was ashamed. "Ted . . ." And wept.

Quietly, briefly . . . and then she was calm. She knew she must never reproach him, never question his comings and goings, but accept the hard fierce love he gave her with neither expectation nor demand. Once, when she had been very young, she had let her cautious dreams include hands that touched softly and eyes that looked down with affection and tenderness. But she had not thought of these things now for a long time, finding satisfaction instead in his hard strength. His very force, in a way, excited her. She despised weak men. And what had she to offer? What had she ever had? A sharp, pale face, strongly-boned, a figure sturdy and firmly-fleshed, not one to bewitch and enchant and yet not without a certain degree of grace, either, and a dignity that held her head high in a community where this was her only defence.

Words of love had never come easily to her; she was not given to casual endearments. This was why the words she now heard herself moan startled her consciousness. "I want you, Ted . . . I want you." She became aware suddenly of the silence of the room; her words like echoes confronted and shocked her. Then, with immense relief, she listened again to the engulfing downpour of the storm.

It was with a strange exhaustion that she turned wearily over on her back, her arms flung out across the sheets and her palms touching the emptiness where he should have been. The rim of her window glistened. It seemed to her that many nights, weeks and months had gone by since he had been home. The bed, this bed, would creak when he sat upon it. He would drop down heavily to take off his boots and she would wait, watching him. One boot would drop, a muffled thud, then another. And finally, in one slow lumbering movement, his huge shoulders would roll across toward her and she would be held without breath against him. As always, she would murmur protestingly "Aren't you going to get undressed?" "Later," he'd say. "Later."

Her lips moved against the empty darkness. She heard Jamie stir and moan in his sleep. A dream? She waited a long moment but he did not call out again. There was only the beating of the storm and the moan of the still-protesting hinges and the angry bang bang banging of the door.

"When you're tired of me, just bolt the lock. I'll not break it down." And he would not, either. That she knew. Why should he? There was nothing left now but his tired indifference and the occasional brief flare-ups of his passion. Perhaps, now, that was the way he wanted it . . . a bolted door that he need not enter.

But it had been Jamie's birthday and he had not come; Jamie, whom at least he loved. Not Pete with the knowing eyes. Knowing his father. His coming home would have been such a little thing, really, but Ted had never cared for little things. He was always so big in every way. His shoulders were big, his laugh, his passion, his temper, his neglect. Even the ghost that now haunted the small house was big and persistent.

She was tired, tired of the waiting, the endless, endless waiting. "I could

be strong," she reasoned, "without him." She had not thought of it like that before; now she was surprised by her own vision. "I could be strong, and at peace. Happy. Not in the same way, I know, with the loving and the worrying, with the brief times of excitement and joy and laughter, and the long times of anticipation and remembering. But we could all be happy in the end. And at peace."

Without having become fully aware of it, she had made her decision. Now she no longer felt sadness. She had decided, and that was that. Slipping out of bed, she went to the kitchen and looked around. The streamers were bright flames in the darkness. Her flag of defiance. Without hesitation she walked to the door and drew it shut and bolted it against the night and against all things. The lank wet papers flapped against her eyes; they hung about the doorway in a sodden pulp and fell to the floor in small sad heaps. Only those ones strung out across the room still billowed bravely and hopefully through the long hours.

It had all taken her but a few minutes but she felt chilled through again. She lay awake, unable to sleep. The window shook in angry spasms and the rain lashed across it in short sharp furious bursts. "I'll make a cup of tea," she thought. "I'll have a slice of Jamie's cake." They had cut the cake earlier, at tea time, but with little joy. Three slices, not four.

Back in the kitchen she turned on the wireless, finding she could no longer bear the pressure of silence. The late news had already begun as she sat at the table with her fingers wrapped tightly about the warm cup. She listened without interest; just the sound of the voice was enough. Then the local announcer began his roundup of items covering the district and familiar names and places began to intrude into her consciousness.

Suddenly her face was lifted, her eyes became wary and alert and her hand grasping the half-empty cup remained poised in the air. It was Connor's Creek the man was talking about, *this* Connor's Creek, where she lived now. And a man had been killed. A man whose name they could not give had been killed not far from this very house when the car he had been driving was struck by another. Her hands dropped to the table. "Ted," she whispered. Then her fingers pressed against her mouth in shock and disbelief. "No, not Ted. Of course not him. Why should I imagine it might be him?" There would have been dozens crossing the bridge at Connor's Creek, even on a night like this. But who had it been? The name was being withheld until the next of kin had been notified. Some woman would doubtless weep tonight, but it would not be her. It was silly to get worked up like this and to imagine that it might have been Ted. She must be feeling particularly touchy. Well, she'd not let him hurt her like that, not any more, him in the arms of another woman most likely and her sitting alone at the dawn of a new life. He'd not hurt her now.

Whom would they notify? Next of kin . . . was that her? Would they count her in such a category? She did not know. Next of kin; he had none. They'd not come to her, though she was known all about as Ted's wife . . . or Ted's woman.

She sat there a long time, her pale, firm body drooping like a heavy flower whose petals have begun to fall, and then she went back to the crumpled bed. She did glance back, just once, briefly, toward the bolted door. But she left it

as it was; there could be no turning back now. She would not weep for him, alive or dead. Instead she began to smile, at her weakness, at her strength, she did not know or care. But she felt curiously free.

Looking at herself objectively, she felt she had not aged so badly. Facing her image in the mirror again, her white-fleshed body shapely still under the loose nightie, she began to take stock of herself. Her breasts were firm, her waist supple, her arms curved ready for loving. There were other men, weren't there? Ones who would give her their name, too, and even her children a name. Yet, it was true, though she had never let herself believe it. The world was full of other men, and wasn't she young enough and strong enough to be their companions? "And aren't I young enough and strong enough to do without them?" The thought came to her sharply, the thought that she could face the world alone and unafraid. She would never take him back now, not even if he came begging and knocking at the door. "I'll not break it down," he'd said. Not ever.

She had lain half-drowsing, lost in dreams of waking and of sleep, for a long time when she heard the first faint sound of the car. At least she thought it was a car; it was hard to tell in a storm and would have been impossible for her to determine whose it might be. The most familiar of cars would have come and gone, the noise drowned by the unceasing drumming of the rain. After a while she began to struggle against sleep, to wonder was it news of Ted's death, some man a policeman perhaps, was bringing to her. Or was it Ted himself, delayed, apologetic, coming to them on this bitter night? Her ears strained for some familiar note in the pattern of sound, but she could not even be certain whether or not it had, indeed, been a truck or car close by. For some unfathomed reason, she felt unable to move. Was it wrong of her to lie there waiting? Was it stupid of her to be afraid? Cathy did not even know why she was afraid, or of what; was it of his being alive? Was it of his death? There was no answer, no answer anywhere.

Then she imagined that she heard a cry, a human cry, or the cry of a twisted tree or bent, splintered timber. At first she was sure it was Ted, and then she was just as sure it was not. She was not sure that it had been anything. One cry, and no more . . . what was a woman supposed to do about that, alone in a house with two small children and no one beside her? But she knew that it had not been fear of physical hurt that had stopped her from going to the door. It had been of another, deeper pain.

In her weariness and unrest, surely she was imagining all this? The possibility of his even having been near Connor's Creek tonight was so remote it was almost laughable. But if she had sent him away, and on this terrible night . . . She lay there, frozen with strange emotions and, after a while, began to cry, not quietly this time but with long shuddering sobs that shook her whole being.

At long last peace came to her, a tranquillity she had never before known. There were no longer yesterdays and todays, but only tomorrows stretching endlessly before her. She lay staring through the night like a blind person or as someone hauled half-drowned and insensible from a flood. Yes, she was drowning, drowning, drowning in a deep and wonderful sleep . . .

In the kitchen, the streamers snapped suddenly and fluttered like small dead things to the floor. But nothing had been lost.

## TWO POEMS

### I.

At last—lifted, lost, in love,  
I follow him through the thinned  
gold of palm-tree forests.  
Proud and free, he is like a dark-skinned  
animal. He waves an invisible  
tail, seeks scented wind.

When he kisses me, he bites.  
In the happiness of pain  
his mouth inflicts, wanting passionately,  
I give myself to him again and again.

### II.

Do not trespass.  
This is private ground.  
And only he may know  
wild places he has found.  
It is not odd

a man should choose  
to walk his ways alone,  
in a country that is  
essentially his own,  
with God.

JOAN MAS

## TWO POEMS ON COMMUNICATION

### *Single Attempt at Communication*

What does it mean, this spaniel's howling  
into a wet street, a neglecting afternoon?  
Potent, a cry of the unbegetting,  
meaning the barrenness of the moon.  
This absurd, inarticulate greeting,  
to no-one, for nobody listens,  
to all, since all of them stare.

Language, like blown paper rustles  
for a windy instant, subsides into gutters.  
All mind cries thus for fear of space  
and slinks forgotten to an appointed place;  
not understood, nor others either,  
for lack of heart, a forgotten member.

### *Another Attempt*

So I, crouched in my odd and modern position  
of indisposition to love,  
face you across the hopscotch square  
of a definite indifference to move.  
The steps that you might make to me  
will be absurd and strange  
and a dozen inviolate squares will blur  
before you or I shall change.

But come to me,  
ignoring my odd and imposed position  
and I shall advance to you, unbidden.  
We might meet with a burst of laughter  
where  
our own inhibition's forgiven.

WILLIAM BUNBURY

## CRUCIFIXION

Committed now, what language can you cry  
to free our iron that's rusting through your hands?  
In the dimension of belief today  
has long been promised us, your hammered wounds  
are bread and wine, we delve at them to hear  
only what our salt tongues are waiting for  
impatiently: a gesture against fear,  
a formula avoiding death. Thick air  
catches your breath. The last may not be said.  
Out in the dark your cry is lost. We fill  
our rooms with lights and, singing, undismayed,  
already planning April festivals,  
we pardon you, clutching at the Word  
to shield us, cunningly as animals.

*THOMAS W. SHAPCOTT*

# AFTER THE ASSASSINATION

## I

### *Dead Leader to Citizens*

Perhaps you thought I'd be a skeleton  
But a week is hardly time to lose the flesh  
And show a talking skull just to impress.  
Compelled, yet not content with this disguise,  
I hope you see the man beyond. My death  
Allows pale honesty which should convince.  
Though what I've killed is murderous to me,  
The stark prerogative of ghosts is truth.

I served. I humped your faults and guilt. I raged,  
Yet never knew I was abhorred so much.  
Your malice was involuntary. Before  
My death I learnt a leader has one use:  
He is a mule on which you load your hate.  
When fully packed he sags and proves you right.

## II

### *The Dead Leader's Wife*

His propaganda face stuck to a wall  
Is how the people understood my husband.  
Children wrote their names across his mouth  
And storms ripped down a word or hand.  
I understood the pulse, the blood and pain,  
And now see more than walls stripped of posters.

So much is grief, regret and impotence  
Where once two hands gave jagged nights endurance.  
I cannot weep. My tears are imbecile  
And leave my husband murdered by his friends  
Who made him write his tangled signature  
From day to day on their demands of paper  
Till subtle poison filled him with its duty.  
I know that boredom is the birth of death.

## III

### *Assassin to Citizens*

I'm so involved with innocence and death—  
His death and mine, my innocence and his.  
My story first. I'll go back to my childhood,  
The days of disbelief on mountain slopes.  
Upon my back, out-starring clouds and sky  
With passion, power and insincerity,  
I only understood the vacuous.

When twenty, walking through a hospital,  
I saw a child almost a skeleton.  
An infant's suffering disproves so much;  
A dying child can never mirror God,  
And yet disease and innocence may cause  
An anarchist: her death designed my strength,  
And from my murder you can make a realm.

## IV

### *A Citizen*

And so they talk to me, the hypocrites  
Who murder and are murdered for a cause.  
Some praise or blame the sea of citizens  
Who stand in squares and worship balconies.  
Some use my small despairs and impotence  
To breed their thunder, lightning overhead.  
And some prefer a flash of martyrdom  
With gestures, words and sighs, but never unseen.

Their tragedies demand a monument.  
The dead and dying are incapable  
Of sanguine stone; and so they halter me.  
I'm left to celebrate their principles  
Through sweat until we have a monolith  
Without a face and meaning pomp and power.

R. A. SIMPSON

## LOST PROPERTY OFFICE

May I have those back, please?  
Yes, those! The glittering years,  
The diamond hours of youth.  
My property no longer? I'll come back.  
I'll ask again to-morrow.

A waste of time? Perhaps  
Some day you'll change your mind  
And hand them back. It's cold!  
They forecast snow. Well, I'll come back.  
I'll ask again to-morrow.

Be careful of the steps?  
Sir, once I danced and ran.  
These feet moved through the clouds.  
But thank you. Thank you. I'll come back  
And ask again to-morrow.

*KEVIN E. COLLOPY*

## LIFE AFTER DEATH

GEORGE BROUGHT THE car to a halt, and sat for quite a long while thinking how depressed he felt; how morbid the situation was; how unwilling he was as a matter of course to be dragged into this sort of thing.

In front of his car was Cec's Volkswagen. Already Cec and his wife were beginning to climb out. Very shortly George would have to follow them.

"What are you waiting for? Christmas?"

"Actually, I'm not *waiting* for anything," he told Shirley, a touch of the laconic in his tone. "I'm just feeling more than normally indolent today."

He did not know why he did not wish to tell Shirley how he felt. She, he knew, looked forward to this visit with avid expectation, as she looked forward to every visit everywhere, from cocktail do to cemetery rites and ash sprinklings. She was a furnace which thrived on every kind of rubbish, burning tastelessly and greedily, and which sent up—to him—a formless, musky smelling smoke of pointless, gluttonous delight. It was her inexhaustible fund of surprise and enjoyment that had first attracted him. But now he found her manner naive, gauche and extraverted. He suffered anticipatory embarrassment before every social occasion. But in fact George possessed a peculiarly fragile social sensibility. It was easily injured, and once the skin of it was broken, it healed only with great difficulty.

Today, especially, he was out of sorts. His temper could easily go today, and sadly, that is what just must not happen. Today he must control his temper at all costs. Yes, and Shirl was just a little bit too eager to get out to Cec. She invited them over to their place on her own initiative just a little too often, and it certainly wasn't because she was so enamoured of Margaret. No fear, George thought. It's Cec she likes. He's like her in many ways, of course. A bit of a hysteric, bit of an extravert.

Shirley was leaning forward in the seat, her hand upon the doorhandle, looking at him with a bright, quizzical, distantly amused stare: This mannerism annoyed George all the more greatly because he knew that she had copied it from him.

"Come on."

"I suppose I must," he said sullenly.

"What, are you so unwilling to do such a little favour for a close friend who needs your help?"

"What little favours are *you* willing to do for a close friend who needs help?"

The innuendo, as usual, passed her by without striking.

"I'm obviously a damn sight more willing to help him today!"

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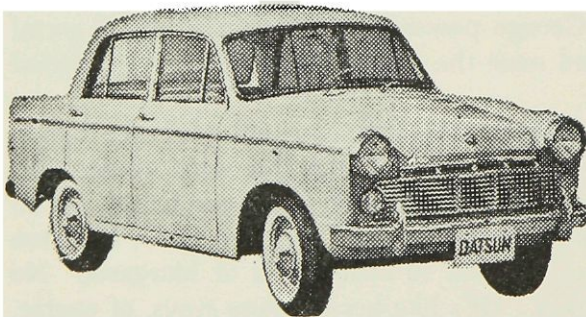
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"Hell, Shirl, there's usually more than one possible interpretation to an act of behaviour, you know."

"So?" she asked ironically.

George saw that she had closed down her little mind for the day. It was futile to labour the dispute. Anyway, Cec had come over to their car and had bent down gently to their open window.

"Just having one final quarrel with the little wife before I got out, Cec," George said, smiling. "I was reluctant to break the magic spell—you know, eye of rat, heart of frog, all the components of my little wife's temperament."

Cec laughed his gay cackle as if he did not have a trouble in the world. And though nothing could really sully Shirley's pleasurable anticipation of this visit, she said with some asperity: "You beast! He never lets a chance go by to take me down in public, Cec, have you noticed that?"

"I'm glad I'm not married to the old bugger," Cec said, and gave his sexy cackle.

George got spritely out of the car and cried: "Yes, but I am, and I've just got to put up with her!"

"Thanks, sweetie," Shirley said, lost as usual for repartee.

They stood round in a circle, the four of them, radiating warmth and friendship towards each other as a quite conscious effort, each trying to veil, out of reticence and an uneasy concern for the sensibilities of the others, the matter that had brought them here.

Cec felt it incumbent upon him to break this aura of delicate restraint that hung over them.

"I'm sorry to have dragged you here today, George," he apologised. "I wouldn't have, only there was no-one else, and the lawyers were saying this was very urgent."

You liar, George thought. I bet you pitched onto us first. Unwillingly he smoothed away the chagrin that was beginning to grow on his face and said: "Yes, of course I understand. Delighted to be able to help, even though I wish it was in something a little more pleasant for you."

Cec looked as if he was about to bow in appreciation of this piece of goodwill. Margaret however, said and showed nothing. A woman of irrefragable calm, he thought enviously, using the phrase he had once used in a moment of lucky inspiration when discussing her with Shirley. He wished he could remain as cool before insincerity, and he had an uncomfortable feeling that she saw clean through his blandishing reply to Cec.

He had never seen Cec so serious for such a long period of time. It rather brought home to one the magnitude of Cec's anxiety.

Cec swallowed and turned slowly and formally to each of them.

"I suppose we'd better be getting on in then," he said gravely. A pall fell over the group, even apparently over Shirley.

Cec and Margaret went ahead. Shirley grasped George's sleeve and whispered: "Poor Cec, he's really taking it hard. How awful it is for him."

Unreasonably, George felt a sudden resentment against Cec for having a justified claim to grief and misery, and what was more to the point, a justifiable claim on Shirley's sympathy. He took the tough line and whispered back: "It's even tougher for his dad." Let's get things into perspective, he thought grimly.

SHIRLEY SCRUTINISED HIS PROFILE until she was confident that he was not being facetious. Facetiousness came so naturally to George. She used to think that he was really quite callous sometimes. But once George, in a moment of unwary self-revelation, told her that his facetiousness was a disguise for the trait of sloppy sentimentality he had hated in himself as a child, a trait that had brought him much unhappiness. She supposed that this was why George and Cec liked each other. George was facetious, though often cruelly so, and Cec was a comic. But Cec's humorousness, she thought, has no malice. It's a big-hearted sort of humour. Like Cec. Gentle and silly, just a buffoon, just a happy child.

However she decided that in this instance George was not being facetious. He really did mean that it was harder for Cec's father than it was for Cec. Of course, she could see that in a way, but wasn't it worse for those who knew everything, and were helpless, and who had to live through it and try to forget about it afterwards? She felt sorry for Cec's future. How would he ever get over it? Wouldn't it affect his interior designing? How could he worry about the trivialities of other people's taste in decorating after losing his father. She herself would be quite shattered by such a blow. Shirley was glad that her own parents were a couple of tough and durable old goats. Old goats! That was George's term for them. How insidiously George's phrases slipped onto her tongue.

THEY FOUND THEMSELVES WALKING with funereal solemnity down a maze of gloomy corridors in the repatriation hospital. Long, gloomy stone corridors, with wards at widely spaced intervals like long cells. The grounds of the hospital were impersonally neat and the lawns featureless. All was very depressing. All conspired to create an atmosphere of hopelessness and death.

Leaving Shirley, George strode rapidly and caught up with the other couple.

"My god, if I was ill, putting me in this place would be sufficient to finish me off."

"Dreadful, isn't it," Margaret said, and George was very disappointed when she immediately dropped back to join Shirley. He found himself alone with Cec, a situation he had been hoping to avoid. He walked on in silence thinking about Margaret for a few seconds. He liked her a great deal, and often wondered

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if he could make her, though to date he had never had the nerve to make a pass. She seemed a resilient girl, even tough, but he could not see even so how she endured the endless music-hall comedy of Cec's life. A commonsense quality of her endeared her to George. If Shirl had a little of that to salt the tail of her birdlike frivolousness and superficiality, he might not have to be so continually ironic in his handling of her. George felt he could be more natural with Margaret than with his own wife. How like a boat set adrift every marriage was, he told himself wryly. How one settled down to make the most of one's fellow captives.

"How's work?" he asked Cec.

"Oh, fine thanks. I'm doing very nicely. The senior partners are toeing the line, jumping to it when I promulgate an instruction."

"They know a good thing when they're on to it."

"That's funny, that's what they keep shouting as they chase me round the desk!"

Cec's automatic cackle sounded maniacally overloud, and he cut it short. Their steps clattered in the stony silence of the corridors. They met no-one. George found himself smiling and shaking his head gently, watching his feet. Irrepressible Cecil. Nothing was sacred. Nothing was serious, even today. Such a contrast to his old man. Old Ferris had always lived as if he was being personally dogged by the avenging fates. Recrimination and complaint had been staples of his monologues—he never indulged in two-way conversation. And now . . . now the fates had struck . . . now he should be happy, George thought contemptuously. Cancer.

Nobody moved in the dead hospital. All was white, silent, stony, sepulchral. The hospital itself seemed to have grown like a tumour, spreading with identical endless units of itself across the inert, powerless lawns. The silence of the hospital drew down around George's ears like a helmet. Cec seemed to be speaking from a distance, talking through liniment. George felt that he was shrinking to a tiny size, dwindling into some perfectly silent ether.

"Yes, everything's fine," he heard the muffled but complacent voice of Cec saying.

A glance into a couple of wards showed aseptically white sheeted metal beds, standing on tall steel legs; upon the tops of these beds the patients seemed marooned, as if rigorously and severely prepared for a dignified martial funeral. Only the faces of the inmates showed above the sheets, and there was no sound from them.

I feel that I am a dead man myself, George thought, feeling his fright at the thought as a distant, soft subterranean shifting. Have I ever been alive?

He put his feet down a little harder as he walked. The louder claps began to dispell the dissociated state. He turned his mind deliberately to old Ferris. Old Ferris had got his unjust deserts all right. Just what he wanted. He should be happy. All his dire prognostications had come to pass.

"Cec, you've gone too far!" Shirley's gay voice sounded oddly in this place, like a child playing among wreaths. George was instantly piqued that she had called to Cec and not to him. This annoyance brought him back with a wrench to his old self.

They returned impassively and went through a swinging door. As it

swished back behind them on its automatic spring return, George had an involuntary image of the reaper swinging his scythe.

Seeing the nurse was a relief. She moved confidentially towards them, instinctively singling out Cec though they had not met before.

"How is he, nurse?"

The nurse looked soberly at Cec's shirt button and said: "I'm afraid, sir, that he hasn't got long."

"How long?"

"The doctor is afraid that he might leave us tonight."

Cec swallowed audibly and looked terribly upset. George thought for a moment that he might break down. He moved up closer; the man friend, the silent helper, quietly and resourcefully sympathetic.

"How did he take the news?" Margaret asked briskly.

The nurse shrugged.

"He took it very well indeed, actually."

Nervously they went into the ward. George and Shirley had met Mr. Ferris several times. They had never liked him. George thought him a selfish, gloomy, opinionated, cantankerous and sometimes downright aggressive old man. On the last occasion old man Ferris had held forth cynically upon the impossibility of ever achieving social change, a standpoint George had found infuriating. He felt personally aggrieved in his capacity as a social worker.

Going now into the ward to see the same man dying, he had mixed feelings. He was still hostile towards the old man, but at the same time he was a professional sympathizer, and the well practised humane response was difficult to suppress. He noted himself thinking: poor old bastard, a phrase that adroitly captured both sorts of attitude towards old Ferris.

He was sitting propped up in the bed. Clearly this was a special treat because of the visit. Upon the white sheet two large, gaunt sunburned hands lay as if nerveless, with that stillness peculiar to the hands of very old men. He was emaciated. The visitors seemed to see every individual bone in his hands and face. Worse, he smiled at them like a genial death's head as they approached the bed.

They could not help peering, however discreetly, for marks of the cancer that was killing him, but there was nothing to see. Just a starved old man.

"Well, it's a party," Mr. Ferris said in a surprisingly robust voice. Cec and Margaret kissed him, which George found slightly repulsive. He wondered if he could do the same in a similar situation.

"How are you, dad?" Margaret asked.

"Well love, I'd be quite happy if it weren't for the orange juice. Heh!

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Here's a sweet little girl." He stared at Shirley who blushed. "Now, what's my son doing, bringing pretty lasses to tempt me when I'm laid up here in bed. Ah, you wait till I'm up, I'll give you a little fright. I'll chase you round the bed." He began to cough weakly at the joke. Cec moved over and placed a gentle, restraining hand on his shoulder.

"Don't get too excited, dad," he said. "It's not good for you."

It was indeed fascinating to conjecture how close to death this old man might be. George stared at him thinking; How bloody ghastly, the old boy's on his last legs and he still can't forget about the animal side of things. He's as bad as his son. Got only one thing on the mind. Suddenly he saw Cec there in bed instead of old Mr. Ferris. Cec haggard with the cancer that was eating him, Cec making his stupid poltroon's jokes on the deathbed. George wanted to see Old man Ferris die. He had never seen a death before. But also he was afraid to see him die. He was afraid of some nameless effect it might have on him. Simultaneously he wanted to stay and depart.

"Dad, we've got to get through a little business. That's why I brought George and Shirley along, as witnesses."

Mr. Ferris looked good-humouredly at his son.

"The will is it?"

"It's just a formality, dad. The lawyer said we'd better do it now, or we'd only have to do it later, and I had the chance of bringing George and Shirl along today."

Cec took out a pen and pushed it into the old man's rigid hand.

"Can you sign?"

Mr. Ferris' face contracted with the effort of sending a message to his hand, but nothing happened. Cec picked his father's hand up.

"It's very important you sign yourself," he said loudly. "If you don't the will will be null and void."

"It's my writing hand that's worst," Mr. Ferris said. He winked a wrinkled, papery eyelid slowly and significantly at Shirley. "I wouldn't be much good for a girl in a close clinch now, would I?" he asked her. Shirley froze and smiled back only with great difficulty. George understood her resentment. In her lifeview the old fellow should be gently, irrevocably, sadly resigned to his fate, composing himself with dignity for the end. The frolicsome, boyishly cheeky manner of his seemed downright indecent to her. She was a believer in conventional behaviour, despite her gift for putting her foot in the going pitfall. Everyone should display the appropriate demeanour for each occasion of life. That was her creed. To depart from this wilfully was quite unpardonable.

Gripping his wrist with his left hand, Mr. Ferris laboriously guided the pen to the paper, and described a very shaky signature.

"Excellent, dad," Cec shouted. "Now George, Shirl, I'd like you to witness this signature. Sign over here. And here."

They signed. And then there was nothing to do. There was no further reason for them to be there. If they stayed it would seem conspicuously as if they were waiting for the old man's demise. Only the old man did not seem to see that. He gazed at them expectantly, as if waiting for the next trick. George shifted from foot to foot, eager to be out of the ward now that the old man was not to die within the duration of their legitimate visit. Shirley arranged matters in her handbag, keeping her eyes well away from the old man's.

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*Ballet*

"The antiquated ant's aunt ain't animated."

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"Parquet - - - Par - - kay," she murmured, "Beechwood, imported, lovely."

"DOUGLAS FLOORCOVERINGS quote free," she added, "so they should too, phone 24 4349 and see."

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Cec made a little more desultory conversation with his father, but his heart was not in it. Eventually, he said brightly: "Well, dad . . ." and trailed off.

"You're not going already!"

"I'm afraid . . ."

"What! Going, and taking away this sweet little lady!" The cajoling seemed grotesque and jarred on all of them.

"Yes, dad, I'm sorry," Cec said, "but George is very busy today."

George flinched as the responsibility came to rest at his feet, and thought a few unpleasant thoughts about Cec.

"Well, cheerio then," the old man said. "I'll be seeing you tomorrow then Cec, will I?" He had never sounded so gay before.

Outside the swinging doors, Cec blew up the nursing sister for not giving his father the orange juice. The nurse weakly tried to argue, but this maddened Cec, and though it was unlike him to do so, he yelled: "What the hell harm can it do him now?" The nurse flushed, and Cec strode past her, brushing her with his shoulder.

They were a long time returning to the hospital gates. Cec was white, and walked with his arms stiffly by his side. George hurried along beside him, and the girls followed.

When they reached the hospital gates the porter came from his little lodge and tapped Cec on his shoulder, asking his identity.

"I'm sorry sir, apparently the patient has just passed away. Would you please go back."

Without saying anything, Cec ran back into the hospital, but at the first corridor he stopped a moment and leaned against the wall as if overcome.

Margaret stared after him.

"This is a bitter blow to Cec," she said. "I never liked the old man myself, but Cec idolised him since his mum died. As his dad got sicker, Cec got more and more miserable."

"But I've never known," George protested, "a man as comic as Cec is all the time—*especially* lately."

"I tell you," Margaret said emphatically, "the sadder he gets, the funnier he gets, but only in public. Christ, you ought to live with him. He's just like his father, really. Something is always just about to go drastically wrong. Yes, a real comedian in public my Cec is. Everybody loves him. It makes living with him a stunning contrast."

Shirley listened with shock to the vitriolic outburst. She was very close to weeping with pain and dismay at the ruthless denouement.

Margaret laughed bitterly and said something more original and striking than George would have credited her with thinking up: "I'm saving up all my laughter for the funeral. He should be a real scream there!"

CEC RETURNED walking slowly. At about twenty or twenty five feet from them he stopped stock still and gazed, blubbering at the lips like an infant. Looking at him Shirley wondered how he was ever going to be able to laugh and be silly again. She was terribly moved. Cec's fine, sensitive grey eyes were, she noticed, looking past them, not at them. Somehow his absurd snappy crewcut and his cigarette and sports outfit were a cry to her for help. She began to move towards him, thinking that it was time *somebody* made the gesture, and

that that somebody should have been Margaret. After that disgraceful little display, however, she no longer had the right to console the poor boy.

But oddly, seeing Shirley coming, Cec began to walk away, describing an elaborately large semicircle around them, as if to convey an extravagant snub. Shirley stopped and watched him go.

"Oh, poor Cec!" she said suddenly, her coloratura voice thrilling with all the altruistic emotions. Abruptly she set off after him.

"Poor Cec. Poor Cec," Margaret mimicked her in a hard voice. Her face was set with hatred. "Poor Cec. That's what life is like with poor Cec. Play acting. Demanding attention. Wanting to be babied. Poor Cec lives in a bog of emotion. Do you know, George, that Cec can do only two things. He can be daft and wet, joking without a stop, enough to drive anyone out of their wits, or he can be sad. Very very sad. Nothing in between, George. Oh, imagine, he creates over nothing at all. Imagine how pathetic he is going to be after something like this, his dad dying."

GEORGE LOOKED AT HER, admiration and sexual acquisitiveness swelling in his throat. He liked her stern, practical face, her severe dress, the aristocratic fall of her shining dark hair to her shoulders. He could not avoid comparing her with Shirley—Shirley with the teenage clothes, her gushing talk, her lack of discrimination, her chubby, winsome, squashy looking face, her labile emotions—he could not help thinking how satisfying it would be to try his blows and cuts against such a clear, hard and supple target as Margaret. What I need, George thought, is an antagonist in my marriage. I am sick of just having a victim. Margaret would never be a victim. George saw that he wanted strong women, even if they were not clever.

"It looks like Cec is getting his sympathy from Shirley," he said evenly, subtly conveying to her his negative feelings towards both Cec and Shirley.

There is something stark and revealing and sharp about a death, he thought, that cuts through the flimflam, all the social ornamentation of a relationship between people. You become a little more basic, a little more true to your pristine self, the primitive in you. It's a stark scene for simple happenings.

Somehow the old man seemed a sacrificial victim, his blood still warm, still perhaps faintly circulating, sacrificed so as to quicken the lives of the witnesses, to make them more aware of themselves, and of their physical lives. George suddenly felt exultantly alive, and it was because of old man Ferris' death. And just as suddenly he understood, as he never had before, one of the major principles behind the Roman arena; the cleansing ecstasy of sadism, the need to establish the final value of just being alive. Old Ferris had died that he might live—it seemed supremely just. George vaguely wondered where pity and sympathy had gone. Had he ever experienced these strange hot-house sentiments, the awkward and complicated efflorescences of an effete judaic civilization?

Margaret turned and looked blandly at him, and they both smiled together as if they had heard the same soundless joke. George took her arm. They began to walk out towards the cars. As they walked, he ran his index finger up and down the soft but firm, exciting flesh of her inner forearm.

"Ah yes, he's getting plenty of that good old sympathy," she said, and George finally knew that they were both kindled by the same flame.

## MAN LOST

Warm and damp the mountain breathed  
beneath its rug of foliage,  
a sickly body sponged by morning  
and swathed in antiseptic cloud,  
flecked with coughed-up blood at sundown.

That night the lost man dreamed of home  
heard his bedridden uncle laugh  
—who hadn't laughed for many years—  
and he woke, still hearing that shocking noise  
in the landslide breaking high above him.

*RODNEY HALL*

## FOR THE CITY

Sydney, I've suddenly realised,  
No-one has dedicated poems to you,  
To the thin pines at Bondi and the fat  
Moreton Bay figs at Rushcutters', the Manly  
lamps and fish-shops on Sunday holidays.  
I've thought about it often, on the ferry  
Moving out slowly from the wharf beyond  
The headlands, with the crowd laughing and leaning  
Big-armed on the gunwales.  
And I've watched the land move past,  
Blacker than night, windows  
Like plunged stars on the hills,  
And water, water  
Lapping, lapping.

For years nothing moved here; the city lay  
Blanketed by remoteness, now they pull  
The sandstone tombs down, and the golden towers  
Grab at the blue; behind those glassy curtains  
Move the slim people, far above,  
Dark faced, stone eyed, laughing.  
On summer evenings  
Shirts black with sweat, lids heavy with fatigue  
They tick on boats to beaches where the baths  
Glow green, cockroaches scuttle, the body wins.

There is a poetry in it, walking in trunks  
In the night wind cool from the ocean's thrashing  
To dive in the green, do laps, feel the dragging  
Of trunks on the loins, dark muscles swelling  
As you leave the water for a beer.  
I don't know why it isn't celebrated.  
Poets are perhaps elsewhere.

And they don't see the palms that stride the hills  
With singed parasols, or graves falling  
On cliffs where the ground has slid, spilling skulls;  
Eroded moon-cliffs down by sad Maroubra,  
Coogee cliffs, where men with beards and bodies  
Big as mammoths live frozen in icy caves.

Where is the poetry of tossed sails?  
Crowded blue and red and gold on the breast of morning  
And the surfers riding on their boards of glass?  
See it at night and the moon like a scimitar  
Gulls stilled, and building crews dispersed, the wind  
Up from the south, and the crests white by Harbord,  
And feel the city strike you like a sword.

*CHARLES HIGHAM*

## KAREN

**A**LL NIGHT I have thought about Karen and the first time we met, a meeting which in a sense determined our relationship.

I was eight years old, when a throat operation permanently damaged father's voice and put an end to his operatic career. Shortly afterwards we sold our home in the suburbs and went to live in Copenhagen in a district that smelled of chimney smoke, garbage and cabbage.

Our flat, a shabby two-room affair with gaudy flowered wall paper and dark linoleum floors, was on the second floor above a dingy coffee shop, halfway down a lone, grey street that fronted the harbour and in the back adjoined a factory. A few scrawny trees lined the pier and lent a certain, provincial charm to the street. The traffic there was slight, but every hour on the hour, with amazing punctuality, a streetcar rounded the corner and rattled to a halt outside the coffee shop.

On the day we moved in, I sat on the stoop and watched the husky, big-handed men who alternately carried and dragged our furniture across the street and up the stairs. The men swore at each other and left behind a familiar, mingled smell of beer and perspiration which made me feel secure. But soon their van drove off, and I was lonesome again, yearning for company. When the noon whistle blew at the factory I looked at my watch, grandfather's really, which mother had lent me for the day. The watch was right, and I carefully returned it to my pocket just as a streetcar rounded the corner.

Before the car had stopped a girl jumped off and thumbed her nose at the conductor who shook his fist at her. She crossed the street and came slowly towards me, swinging her schoolbag in the air.

The girl was older than I, but smaller. She had long, thin legs, scarred knees and limpid eyes which were neither blue nor grey, but somewhere in between. Her voice, when she spoke was throaty and slightly breathless, not from running but from some inner excitement, that never seemed to leave her.

"You just moved in," she said, not asking, and shifted a piece of gum from one cheek to the other.

I nodded.

"I've lived here all my life," she volunteered, the gum in her mouth punc-

tuating every word, "since I was born, you know, right behind the coffee shop. That's mother's. She runs it, I mean. Father has his own business, window-washing. Of course, they aren't my real parents. My real mother is an actress," she lied and passed the back of one hand under her nose. "I'm going to be an actress too. My name's Karen . . . Karen Steen with two e's. What's yours?"

"Fox . . . Torben Fox."

"I know what that means. That's English, you know. Are you English?"

I shook my head. "Mother's Australian. She was born there."

She put her schoolbag down and spat out the wad of gum. "Where?"

"In Australia."

"Where's that?"

I frowned, trying to remember. "In Africa . . . no, Asia, I think."

"You're lying. You don't even know where it is."

"But mother was. Honest she was born in Australia."

"I don't believe you. I bet you can't even speak Australian, can you?"

"No", I admitted.

She gave a scornful little snort. "My grandfather was born in Germany," she announced, "and I can speak German. Schafen Sie wohl, essen Sie kohl."

"What does that mean?"

"Sleep well and eat coal . . . or cabbage, I can't remember which. It's just a saying."

I looked at her doubtfully as she sat down on the steps, tucking in her skirt and hugging her knees.

"You know . . ." she put her head to one side and appraised me critically. "You look like a *raev*—that's what fox means, did you know?"

I shook my head.

"Well you do. It's your hair, I think, the colour, and your nose, especially your nose. Father says that I'm very observant. My real father's a writer, you know. Maybe I'll be a writer too. Are you alone?"

"What do you mean—alone?"

She sighed. "Do you have any sisters or brothers?"

"No, do you?"

"Nope." She had a funny profile, I thought. The chin went in and the nose turned up. "I think it means cabbage," she said.

"What? What means cabbage?"

"Kohl. Essen Sie kohl. Eat cabbage. Nobody eats coal, do they?"

"I guess not." I sat down beside her. "Why aren't you in school?"

"I'm sick. I've a terrible stomach-ache. The nurse sent me home."

"Does it hurt much?"

"Of course not silly." She looked at me from the corners of her eyes. "We had a test in arithmetic. So I didn't want to take it, so I got a stomach-ache, see?"

"You mean you lied?"

"I mean I got a stomach-ache. Don't speak so loudly."

"Why not?" I whispered.

"Because I don't want mother to know."

"Know what?"

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"That I'm home, stupid. Guess whom I saw this morning?"

"Who?"

"Whom," she corrected. "Jesus".

"How do you know it was Jesus?" I asked after a thoughtful pause.

"He'd a halo round his head, that's how. Who else would it be, stupid?"

"Don't call me stupid."

"Stupid," she said.

We sat for a moment in hostile silence. "What did he do?" I asked at last, not really caring but anxious to make friends.

"Give me ten øre, and I'll tell you all about it."

"I haven't got ten øre. I only have a brand new to-krone. Mother got it for me in the bank as a birthday present."

Her eyes lit up. "You got a to-krone?"

"But I can't give you that," I protested, horrified. "Mother wouldn't let me."

"All right." She jumped to her feet and stood—cross-armed—and pouted. "Don't give it to me then. Who cares about a silly old to-krone? I just thought you'd like to hear what Jesus said to me. After all it isn't every day that somebody speaks to Jesus. I might get into the papers and everything."

My fingers clutching the to-krone came into contact with grandfather's watch. "You wanna see something?" I asked hopefully.

"What?"

I brought out the watch and dangled it before her eyes.

"Let me hold it," she demanded, partially mollified.

Reluctantly I let her have it. "It's a grown up watch," I boasted, "very expensive. Please be careful with it."

"Oh, I will," she promised. "I certainly will." She raised her hand a little higher and suddenly spread out her fingers. Slowly, very slowly it seemed, the watch fell to the ground. I stared disbelievingly at the shattered pieces of glass.

"It broke", I whimpered, still not quite believing what I had seen. "The glass is broken."

"Of course it is," said Karen in a loud, clear voice. "You should've been more careful."

For a second, indignation took my breath away. "Me?" I gasped. "It was you who did it. You did it on purpose."

Karen widened her eyes. "I did it? You must be kidding. What would I do that for?" She sounded so genuinely, so incredibly astounded that briefly I wondered if someone else had dropped the watch.

Then, from above, before my confusion had passed, I heard my mother speaking: "Torben," she said, "what happened to the watch?"

I looked up and saw her leaning out of the window. "It wasn't me," I wailed. "It was her who broke it. She did it, honest, I saw it."

Karen too was looking up at mother. "How do you do, *Fru* Fox," she said and curtsied. "Torben was just showing me his watch and it slipped from his fingers. He really couldn't help it, you know."

"That's not true," I yelled. "She did it. Mom. She dropped it. It wasn't me at all."

"Stop shouting," said mother severely. "Come up right away." She closed the window and Karen bent to pick up the watch.

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"It's still ticking," she reassured me and, smiling sweetly said in a low, meaningful voice: "You should've given me the to-krone, you know." Handing me the watch she strolled off, swinging her schoolbag in the air.

". . . But Torben," said mother, when I tried to describe the incident. "That's silly, love. Why should she do such a thing? What possible reason could she have? Give me just one good reason." Kneeling before me mother searched my face with her dark, almost violet eyes. Behind her towered my father, his face all pink between the freckles. "Don't pamper him, Leslie," he said and she rose swiftly to her feet again.

"We might have believed you," said mother, "if she'd done it by accident . . . but to say that she did it on purpose . . . really Torben, it just doesn't make sense."

It didn't . . . I knew it didn't, and precisely because I could not explain it, I suddenly felt guilty. I blushed, my hands grew damp, my heart began to pound against my ribs, and without willing it I heard myself confessing that I had lied about Karen. It was I who had broken the watch.

My parents were elated. They beamed at each other and father, still stern in the face but smiling with his eyes, patted my head, while mother hugged me leaving traces of her perfume in my nostrils.

"Whatever you do," said father, "never be afraid to tell the truth."

The rest of his words passed me by. I was thinking of Karen, of how she had deceived my mother, of her long thin fingers holding the chain of grandfather's watch, of the smile in her limpid eyes—and all my anger towards her drowned in admiration. I could barely wait to see her again.

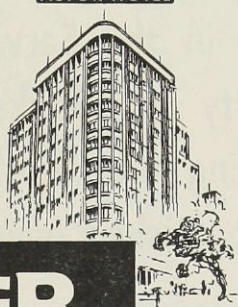
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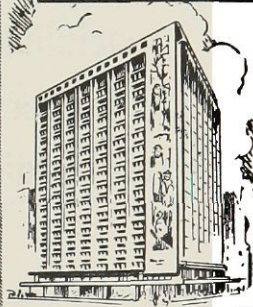
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A series of five lectures will be given in Lecture Room III in the new Arts building at the University of Western Australia.

**September 1, 3, 8, 10, 14**

8 P.M.

ADMISSION FREE



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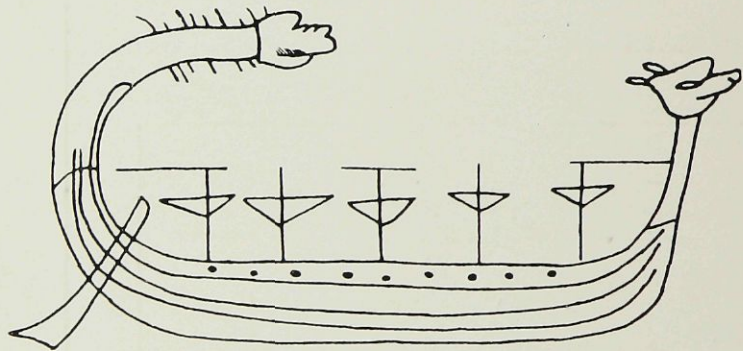
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*From an inscribed piece of wood (early 13th century) excavated at Bergen*