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In Barbara York Main's story the title 'The Pyrophiles' has been adapted from the term pyrophilous as it refers to those endemic elements of the south-west W.A. vegetation (primarily of the wheatbelt) which are dependent on fire to regenerate.

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westerly

a quarterly review

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THE PYROPHILES

THE BOUGAINVILLEA

Someday it would crush the house. It sprawled over the cement floor and hung long thorny arms from the great tangle against the verandah posts. From the huge mass heaped on the roof, pieces would suddenly unravel and writhe and twist across the corrugated iron. Curved talons would hook beneath the edges of the iron sheets and prise them loose. The creeper would wedge thorns beneath the guttering and force it apart. The rich greenness of fleshy leaves would cast a glossy shroud over the decaying house; the purple of bloated flowers would manifest the final agony and passion of the farmstead. Someday the bougainvillea would destroy the house which supported it.

But not yet.

Not so long as the woman was there to push it back; not to cut or prune but just to push it back so that there was an admission of control and a measure of give and take. The woman thrust a pronged rod back amongst the main tangle, while the child standing beyond the fall of canes, put her hands behind her back and looked at the creeper.

"It is poisonous, you know. The bougainvillea is. Like lantana. It would kill a cow."

"Poisonous? Nonsense! Look, I will show you," and the woman plucked a purple flower and placed it on her tongue, chewing softly.

Aghast, the child watched, waiting for the woman to crumple on the gravel path.

"No! You will die!"

But the woman's eyes crinkled and laughed as she spat out the mush of purple flowers. She was as upright as ever. The child continued to regard the monstrous tangle with apprehension. The woman did not die, but anyone else would and the creeper would kill a cow. It just confirmed something. Something about the ageless woman with whom the child found something to share. Something which they discovered together in the garden—in the bougainvillea, the pedestals of roses, the Chinese jade plants and clumps of perennial statice, in draughts noised in the walls of the bough shed, and in the house in dark corners of the sitting room, the oak-wood chest and peacocks on the jardiniere in the fireplace.

"We must make a cup of tea, now, before you take the eggs home to your mother." The woman with a handful of maiden-hair fern trailed off along the long verandah and into the kitchen.

The kitchen was separate, a place in its own right. But under the main roof.

One wall opened through a door into a breeze-way, a great wide passage with coats and old hats and guns and lanterns hanging on the walls, and which opened at both ends through casement doors onto the verandah which ran around the whole house. Across the breeze-way and opposite the kitchen door, an archway hung with dark green curtains, led into the main hallway separating sitting room from bedrooms.

The woman moved amongst habits materialised in furniture and utensils: the long wooden table with a cutlery drawer in the side and the heavy turned legs, a cupboard made from kerosene cases, planed and French polished and supporting stacks of plates and cups (plain white with crenulated margins) the long sink bench under the west window, the wood stove with its iron kettle and urn, the flat irons on the hob and the great space above with the rails for airing clothes and behind, the black flue vanishing in the chimney gape with at the sides two tiny, fixed window-holes which let in the light and allowed a pin-hole view of the back verandah, the wood box, the screen of passion vine and the bough-shed just off the edge on one side, the bathroom and laundry the other. Above the fireplace was a copper preserving pan, casting a glow from its niche in the mantel alcove. All things old and worn and known by touch and use—wooden butter pats hanging at the end of the sink bench, the cream can in the corner, the tin tea caddy on the cupboard, reflected the warm copper light—while the gas stove, beyond the sanctum of the chimney space and various later intrusive bric-a-brac, sat awkwardly amongst the objects there by original rite. All these things gave meaning and continuity to her life. Each object was an activity, an occupation—although now with a growth of dust, they remained the vital props. People fell away through the years, but the years remained, each a bead, knotted to the one before in the long life-string of memory. It was the objects, the simple objects necessary to living which kept the thread of reverie intact.

The tin of eggs was no longer on the sink. The little girl had gone. The woman sat with her empty tea cup, alone with uncountable yesterdays, until she heard the car coming.

One would have thought the house abandoned except for the rattle of vine leaves. Framed in the ropes of the grape vines was a piquant face, staring out through enamel blue eyes.

“Your list, Jinny? The groceries. I’ll pick them up for you.”

The woman fingered the ovals of translucent grapes while exclaiming,

“List! Grocery list! Good Lord, I forgot about it. Yes. In a minute,” and trailed off inside again, softly humming. To hum, softly, was to ward off any undesirable encounters—it kept people at a distance, they could not penetrate what they could not understand.

“This garden! It’s a disgrace! The fruit trees haven’t been pruned for years. She should get the man to do something about them. And the weeds amongst those shrubs. And those odd bush plants—in the *garden*! Of course *some* people have a fetish now for growing native plants. But these have been let pop up themselves, all mixed up with the original garden. That shaggy sheoke hanging over the paddock fence too. It should be cut out—straggly, half dead thing. A willow would be nice there.”

The woman was back with a crumpled envelope.

“Is that all? Doesn’t look much for a week.”

“My niece will be over. She will get anything else I might need. Would you like some lemons?”

The car was gone.

“Of course she should be in a ‘home’. It’s ridiculous. Living alone like this. Odd visits from the grandchildren at weekends and her niece’s children at afternoons aren’t enough company. Cats and turkeys! Pff! And the garden—it’s an obsession. She should pull herself *out of it*. Go into town and have a nice little house—with a companion help of course. Or if she would take an interest in something *fresh*. Best thing of all if she would go down to the city and live with one of her daughters, or sister, perhaps. But really, she’s getting so *odd*, she ought to be in a ‘home’ really.”

Through the west window and door, across the verandah ranked with potted cacti and succulents, was the kitchen garden bounded by a curve of wormwood hedge in part and on the northerly side a brush fence. In the middle of the garden was an apricot tree. The woman moved amongst the withered stalks of cabbages and the shrivelled backbones of watermelon runners and cucumbers. Shrunken red tomatoes hung from dying trellises of leaves. A black cat snoozed in the rhubarb by the kitchen drain. In the shade of the fig tree, a derelict bee hive tipped. The vegetable garden was dead except for the herb patch, kept alive by the dripping tap.

Beyond the garden boundary, across the flat and up the long slope to the west, sun-paled stubble merged with the mirages into bare paddocks, a ridge of pines, and the timber on the horizon. The woman’s gaze contracted again to within the bounds of the wormwood hedge, the brush fence, the sheoke hanging over the paddock fence. She could hear the slow sad flapping of the palm fronds, the great tall Washington palm with the windmill top.

It was still and hot and dry and dust smudged the silver bloom of the wormwood hedge. Dust spotted the limp, yellowing leaves on the apricot tree. They fell on the hard, undug ground below. The ground which moved and opened for the yellow crocus flowers.

THE OAK-WOOD CHEST

It was all in the sea-chest.

When the young girl married her retired sea-captain her family was scandalised. But when he took her to Australia, to take up his ‘farm’ (a thousand acres of uncleared timber and scrub)—for the good of his health—they were further scandalised and the girl was ostracised until one by one sisters and brothers likewise ‘went out’ to settle.

In the deep drawers of the oak-wood chest the hurriedly bought raw materials for a trousseau had been packed. Reels of lace and ribbons, suit ‘fronts’ and bodices, folds of satin, crepe, silks, dress stiffenings and finest cottons sprang like spreading snow in mounds onto the mat so soon as a drawer was pulled open. The only explanation for their still pristine state after several decades was the loss of a sewing machine.

“The wagon bogged in a creek coming out from the rail head. Everything had to be unloaded and the sewing machine fell into the water and mud and got buried in the creek rubbish. I suppose it’s still there!” But she never did like sewing, the cutting and joining up. She preferred the greater possibilities of the uncut substance and would unfold and spread the undisciplined fabrics and coils of lace, would fold and unfold and roll. There were endless blouses, frocks or petticoats of unguessed magnificence in the uncut expanses of flimsy materials. Their fall and line changed with every whim and fashion. But if once cut and stitched their commitment was final.

The oak-wood chest stood in a corner of the sitting-room by the big casement door shadowed by the rampant bougainvillea. Secreted in the upper drawers were necklaces, cameos and jewelled brooches, watch chains and lockets, and photographs of great uncles and defunct aunts—strange stiff countenances staring out from beards and topknots. The little girl searched amongst these for some contact, or fingered the jewels to clinch some mystic bond, or burrowed in the fabrics of faded girlish hopes. Enswathed and draped she would view the extravaganza in the mirror panels of the dark, wooden mantel shelves. The woman too, would concede to childish fantasy, in trails of broderie anglais and eyelet lace.

The bougainvillea hurled deep green and mottled shadows into the sitting-room. It was full of shadows and half lights. There was the corner for the sea-chest, with the casement doors on one side; on the far wall a desk surmounted by shelves with leadlighted, stained glass doors—all colours, red and green and mauve—and filled with books and sea shells and on top of it all, a wooden-boxed chiming clock. The fireplace was flanked by two high, narrow casements with long heavy curtains. Pools of leaves filled the deep green leather chairs. In the fireplace was a china jardiniere around which peacocks strutted in endless march, to escape sometimes into the tremble of curtains until feathers and brocade became entangled in the kaleidoscope of muted purples and greens, shot with scarlet and yellow. There was one picture in the room—of a cottage with a walled garden—and bounded by a white oval frame in which it was forever spring. "It's not really as beautiful as that," would be the explanation, "the colours aren't really so bright. They would be mistier. And the cottage would be damp—mildew on the walls. Things are always better in pictures. It's a good thing to have pictures. They make you see the goodness in things."

In the mirror panels of the mantel, two ethereal figures moved in green pools of bougainvillea leaves and peacock feathers. The mirrors did not distinguish between a childish elfin old lady and a child aspiring to adulthood. Nor would a chance observer have cared to strip away the fantasy and pronounce on the sagacity of the old-young.

"Childish! Absolutely dippy! DRESSING UP—with the children. Now I ask you. It's the living alone. Gone to pieces completely since her husband died. And worse every year. But she never talks about him. She's forgotten him I'm sure. Forgets other people too, people she has known ever since she has been here, and mixes up the grandchildren and even that other family of her niece's children that she sees all the time. This living between the garden and the fowl yards and an empty house—it's no good. And she is *so* impractical and no sense of time. But DRESSING UP!"

But here in the pools of vine shadows profundities about life and people would be propounded. No one, at least none of the grandchildren in the city nor her niece's children nearby could remember the old man—he was just a moustachioed and bearded picture in the sea chest.

"But after Great-uncle died you still had all your children. Mothers are supposed to love their children most."

Shaking her head and spreading lace, the woman said softly,

"No. You love your husband first."

"But why? They say you should care for your children most because you look after them and bring them up, and you like them best."

Looking at the child, at the drifting of an ungrounded anchor of emotions, at the searching towards affection, she said quietly,

"Ah, no, you love your children, look after them and give what you can. But they grow their own ways and go when they are ready. You grow *with* your husband towards each other. You love him first." She rolled the reels of lace,

yard after yard of filigree and mesh, rolled up her private, secret life, her love and lonely grief, put a pin in it and dropped it in the drawer. There was nothing more to be said about human relationships. Clearly it was not for the comprehension of children and least of all for well-meaning "others".

THE BOUGH SHED

She would come in and find disorder, where cats had tussled on the table and knocked down a billy of eggs onto the hard packed floor, exclaiming,

"Ah, those blessed cats. The eggs! What a mess!" but without rancour and would immediately stoop to lift a bony, thin-furred creature, stroking its neck.

The brush walls (of the back fence, the bough shed) and the sheoke tree were all that had been left of the tamma and sheoke thickets near the homestead. The bough shed stood just off the verandah, just behind the screen of the passion fruit vine and adjacent to the laundry and wash room, joined across the roof to the main house roof. The shed was sheltered on the west by the great spreading fig tree, while lilacs dropped their fading leaves on the roof of the wash houses. On the wall of the verandah, to the side of the kitchen chimney wall was fixed a cage, for the singing canaries. Above the cage, from the rafters, hung the dusty lace of spider webs. Once a place of activity, of a burring milk separator and butter churn and a summer store for home-grown foods—it was surely the analogue of the 'cellar' of some other places. Along the benches would be lemons packed in kerosene tins of dry creek sand—one would burrow in the sand and come out with a lemon like a shrunken head, its rind dried to parchment but full of juice; boxes of eggs, individually greased with vaseline and stored for months—the final test before use was to place the eggs in a bucket of water—the 'floaters' snatched by children to be used for ammunition behind the woodheap at the back of the sheds; fliches of bacon would hang through the dry weather and bunches of herbs and onions; and in a corner—piles of pumpkins. An enormous Coolgardie safe or water cooler, large enough to hold a sheep, no longer fly-proof but still functional, had become a kind of cool-cupboard for eggs, apricots, figs and mulberries. Cobwebs spread like dust cloths from the remains of a cane lounge to the brush walls—of comfort now only to cats, whose bent forms could always be found amongst the holey cushions. And beneath it perhaps a snake.

It was a secret shadowy place, of string-slatted light, where life could end and begin for simple creatures—where a cat could brutalise a pigeon behind the cooler or drop her kittens in an old disused butter churn—like the lifeless cavern of a giant mollusc—where would writhe a disjointed coil of new born kittens. Where dust covered a boot last, some leaky bellows, a tangle of hurricane lanterns, enamel wash basins and billies, rotting water bags, remnants of a wooden mangle.

Resounding above the warning purr of the tabby cat and the hopeful squeakings of its kittens, draughts in the brush walls would become the whirring of milk separators and butter churns: and become a kind of homily addressed to cats, the canaries behind the passion vine and the turkeys scratching at the back of the shed where it abutted on the fence.

A CONGREGATION OF TURKEYS

Being early in the day, and in the winter-shadow of the house, the southern garden had a gloom about it. The muddy paths never seemed to dry out and the flower beds became a months' long bog. Clumps of freesias not yet in flower,

flattened against the cement rise of the verandah floor. The moist air was thick with the smell of jonquils. In the dampness and mist, arum lilies confirmed the dismal mood. Bleached flowers of the bougainvillea fell on the wet ground while its toothed runners raked its own discarded flowers and leaves into sodden heaps.

The woman pulled her pink-brown cardigan tight about her and left the shadow-side of the house to get the billy of wheat and the bucket of kitchen scraps. She trod on yellow lilac leaves, caught and stuck to the wet ground. Sheds and fowl huts were dark smudges in the grey wet film. She passed the children's derelict cubby—a hut of palm fronds supported amongst the native melaleuca bushes and passed on through the almond trees, their boughs gnarled and knotted and ravelled together, leafless. Farther down was the old orchard, of barren, half-dead stone-fruit trees, abandoned now to the ever-extending salt flat. She came then to the netted fences of the fowl yards. The wheat scattered and the scraps strewn amongst the scratching fowls and turkeys she stood and waited for the mist to evaporate. In the wake of its slow withdrawal, sheds and fowl huts and trees and smaller objects loomed forwards towards the woman. At her feet, the water dish for the fowls—her camp oven now a legless, lop-sided bowl and assuming the colour of the grey-brown earth.

A little farther away—veiled by the retracting mist—in and near the sheds was grouped the 'farm plant'. The stationary machines, in their enormity, appeared to be sleeping, or were dormant, as though pausing making ready to suddenly growl and lunge forward. They almost slunk back into the drifting mist—silent. Behind the film of mist they were again enormous, their outlines grotesque and without symmetry. They were mute, waiting only to be turned into life with a shattering sound that sent her hens and turkeys clucking and scattering. It was these things which had changed the countryside. And these things which alienated the children from participation and early involvement in the daily activity of the farms. These big, dangerous enormous things, with no feeling of their own and unresponsive to vital but undisciplined approaches of immature and untrained "little" people, were regarded with necessary awe and at a safe distance. Children were no longer part of the functioning of the farm countryside. Between the land and the children was this conglomeration of inanimate machines. Would they, in their impatience become indifferent, forsake it, abandon it to the ruthlessness of the machines or would they return as adults to manipulate the machines to the far reaching dictates of the landscape?

The woman remembered coppices and knots of mallee, big clumps of timber trees—necessary for animal shelter, and easily negotiable by team-drawn machines. But the copses and clumps of trees were ever-shrinking—they got in the way, and besides were easy now to remove. Small, scrub-edged paddocks had become engulfed in huge open expanses. Small, awkward spaces joined with one another to become big, workable areas and the little tangles of scrub succumbed. She looked at the machines, cold and sullen in the wet, early light. She recalled the neigh of horses and the stamp of hooves, muffled by morning mist.

On the far side of the fowl yards beyond their enclosing fences, stood two pepper trees, as graceful as Chinese willows—guarding between them a pair of gate posts, bleached grey and cinctured by long-since rusted and fallen rungs of wire, the frame lines of a fence, retracted now in coils beneath the trees. Stone arrangements, as symbolic as any prehistoric grouping, demarcated past garden beds, testifying as such through clumps of jonquils and the melancholy trumpets of arum lilies chafing against one another. Nothing else, not even a hearth slab. But the woman saw, blurred by mist, a hessian house with tin chimney and shivered again for the cold of innumerable winters.

Green paddocks spread out across the wide flat to the east and grey friezes

of trees and fence lines assumed their places, roads and tracks ran down into bands of mist hanging along the creek channels. A turkey brushed its impatience against the woman's skirt and pecked at her shoe buckle. The strut of a turkey became the proud march of a peacock, peacocks marching round and round the porcelain jardiniere, trapped in a brick-walled garden. The woman grew tall and assumed dignity and suddenly was as regal as a peahen, her long thin brown neck above her pink-brown skirt and cardigan, surmounted by a knot of twine—the tiny coronet of a majestic bird—on a tilted face lost in a miasma of what was and might have been with only the enamel blue eyes fixed on actuality—the congregation of turkeys scratching over the much turned ground. And now as she contracted and bunched within her skirt and cardigan, she was become a homely hen with its feathers fluffed.

She did not hear or see a car stop nor hear someone calling from the verandah.

“There she was, just standing there amongst a bunch of fowls and turkeys—fowls everywhere. Just standing there, talking and humming. And in those frumpish clothes, so slovenly, stockings rolled down at the ankles. It was embarrassing, just to see her!”

THE INVERTED IMAGE

By one of the casement doors (the one at the front and against which knocked the run-away-runners of bougainvillea in their unceasing scramble along the verandah rafters) hanging in its own stand, was a long oval mirror. In the mirror was a young woman, in a straight skirt and full sleeved blouse, misty blue, like cornflowers, or the wild bush *Dampiera*, and a long ruffle below the chin. She was brushing her hair, the long fine, silver threaded brown hair with the springiness in it. Long chintzy curtains and the green heaps of bougainvillea shadows darkened the golden wood of the wardrobe and the bed, the chair, the rugs on the floor. Slits of light from the casement doors grew in bands, vibrating with dust motes, fell in glassy pools amongst the greenness and the gloom—they could have been shafts of light breaking through the canopy of some bushy tangle. Thrown up from the green depths of the mirror was the fragile but lasting evidence of a shared privacy, in the wrought-iron bars and brass knobs of the bedhead and the threadbare white quilt, the brass handled drawers, the mats whose fabric was worn to strings of jute. So strong was the overhang of someone else's presence that the children, on presuming to enter the room, would stop in the doorway and withdraw—those iron bars reaching almost to the ceiling? A gate? Grownups' bedrooms unbolted or not, were closed to children!

From on top of the wardrobe in the far corner, stared the eyeless face of the plaster figurine—one of the few material admissions in the whole house of a reliance on a faith. Because of distance and circumstances there was little opportunity for advertisement of conviction—but silently in the shadowy house, to the woman, the plaster figurine and various half-exposed trinkets signified a continuity, and a permanence of some kind, in the face of changes. One thing led to another; a bush tract led to a farm, a farm downgraded to a wasteland; land and people aged and passed away but there is always a renewal, a revivification; the earth would break open and yield again, life would not end in age and death. Into the landscape the woman infused the half forgotten tenets and intrinsic theme of her given religion, distorted and exaggerated.

She coiled the rope of hair and pinned it in a knot at the back of her head and pressed a hat on top. She looked impeccable. From a drawer she pulled

out some old chamois gloves, as faded and spotted as bundles of weathered bark. Putting these on, she surveyed herself—dressed! One is not properly *dressed* without gloves. Through the bower of the bougainvillea she could see the car coming and went out through the long casements and stood on the verandah behind the leafless ropes of the grapevines, in view now of the car as it pulled up beyond the standard roses, the clumps of purple statice, the heap of jade.

“My goodness! What a sight! Just look at her—and those *gloves*. Did you ever see such a *freak!*”

THE AURORA AUSTRALIS

She came at night to the southern verandah and stood in the night's stillness to see beyond the gloom of the bougainvillea, across the ragged garden, hanging like a fire behind the black form of the sheoke tree, and the winter-torn vanes of the Washington palm, a cold and flaming sky. Faintly upward through the deepening redness, ran pale runners of light, white flames in the pervading glow. The threads of the sheoke bough quivered in the lambent light and all was dark and still and the redness and light and winter flame had gone and only the dark, white-star-spotted sky remained and against the wire fence, a quavering sheoke. The woman too, was evanescently red in the rush and ebb of light. In the cold glow of fireless flame her vision flared and faded. A last leaping into time of pale, reaching searchlights and then in the fall of light and foredoom, annulment in darkness. Annulment in the ashless dark, from which at last there rose a wavering beacon, brightening and rising into the sky like a growth, vital and groping upwards out of the dark earth.

A BANQUET HALL

In the gloominess of the hall, thin beams of light broke over the two figures bent at the jarrah table. One end of the hall was faintly lit with the coloured light falling through the stained glass panels of the great door and its fanlight; but this was dimmed again by a heavy green curtain's span. It was this space, that together with an enormous sideboard, the table filled with its hugeness. Beyond the green curtains was the breezeway into which opened the hall so that hall and breezeway were a great T passage dividing the house into three—the kitchen and washrooms at the back, the sitting-room and bedrooms at either side of the great hall. One end of the breezeway, past where hung the coats and hats, opened into the western light and the kitchen garden, the other end to the shadowy, latticed verandah of vines.

The whole floor of the hall was a green sward of patternless linoleum. The woman would wash it with skim milk, rinse it over with clear water, wipe it and rub it. But it was the final, almost ceremonial application of the bees' wax which gave it its own particular gloss. No new-fangled jars of polish thank you. Bees' wax was the acme of household polishes.

It was over the disarray spilled from the sewing basket that the child pondered, while at one end of the table the tawny head of the woman bent, intent on the polishing of piles of cutlery. Dipping a rag into a saucer of water and then into the little white box of pink powder she would rub the tarnish off the forks and spoons—she was as mistrustful of 'modern' liquid silver polishes as of 'synthetic' floor waxes. Why, it would dissolve the very monograms off the spoons,

or worse, reduce them completely. Stacked in the cupboard was a hoard of pink silver powder, of a brand unprocurable for years, enough to last a lifetime.

The child sorted cottons, mother-of-pearl buttons and bone buckles, socks and unended garments long since outgrown by an earlier generation of children, frayed hair ribbons, hair pins and hat pins and clasps brooches. She rolled the quandong stone beads, which decorated the open weave of the cane basket and lid. She aligned loose amber beads across the table and fingered a string of mother-of-pearl beads. The silver links were tarnished. They needed a polish too.

"This broken necklace. Will you please polish the silver bits?"

"Necklace? Ah, child!"

"Necklace! Isn't it a necklace?" Puzzled, she laid the broken chain of beads on the dark wood and noticed the silver cross—separate.

"It was one of the girl's. It broke one day when she was about your age. How long ago? I always meant to try and mend it. But I expect she has another, or maybe doesn't care any more."

"I thought it was a necklace."

The woman looked up, startled. Sighed and polished on. It was sad the way this family had drifted away—the children were infidels. Worse, they even went to those services with their father's family. The children had spoken of the services, like *meetings*, not *worshippings*.

"Not kneel in church! No? Good Lord, we would kneel if it were MUD!"

Ritualistic gestures were important and tied thought to ideal whether it was praying or polishing silver. The spoons and forks shone with all their innate splendour and lighted the dark room. The woman took them to the kitchen, washed them in a bowl on the table and rubbed them dry, rubbed them until they shone again, then wrapped bundles of them in calico oatmeal bags and placed them in a drawer of the enormous sideboard in the hall. Beneath the drawers, in the cupboard shelves were stacks of cornflower-patterned plates, cups and saucers. These, the woman would on occasions of impulse, lovingly hold and dust, wash and dry and set out on the great wide, polished table, on a damask cloth patterned with ferns and flowers. And to these would be added the full array of silver cutlery. The polished silver, the shining plates on the immaculate damask cloth, glowed and filled the darkened room until it throbbed with the grandeur of a banquet hall.

"Cranky! Absolutely! I called in to see her the other day and she had just set the table. For *twelve*! The whole dinner service. Good gracious, who are you expecting, I said? No one, she said. No one! Then why on earth is the table set? And she looked at me so *peculiarly* it was enough to unnerve you. Quite uncanny. Daft, you know. Poor thing, as I've always said she shouldn't live alone."

And now the silver put away, the child still fingering the mysteries of mother-of-pearl and silver links—the cupboard below the drawers was opened again for one of those encounters with crockery which passed as "spring cleaning". The woman brushed the flecks of dust and specks of mouse dirt from a plate and ran a finger round the frieze of pale blue flowers (the cornflowers of half forgotten fields where ran laneways deep with 'horse-tails' and deep, rank, green grasses of another land). The thin-knuckled fingers searched and caressed, while the flowers quivered and pulsed under the loving pressure. The plates were as immutable as flowers.

THE DECANTER

In the cold of late afternoon with the gusts of wind blustering across the paddocks and flats, sheep huddling against scant scrub—having fed the fowls and turkeys, disinterested though they were—the woman came back in the bleak wet morning to the house, hurriedly in the hastening front of a shower. The whole countryside and the farm nucleus of buildings was both wrapped and torn apart by the bleak, belligerent winter day. She walked around the house slamming windows prised open by the wind, straightening flower pots and all the time clutching at her clothes. The bougainvillea, at once a benison and a curse, swelled and caught with its pronged canes every wind-passed object, only to toss it free again.

A thin, sad crying fell across the garden from the wind-tossed and knotted strings of the sheoke boughs. On the verandah, in the alley between the kitchen chimney-wall and the bough shed, faintly through the dolorous lowing of the wind, she could hear the hollow, comfortless timbre of the great clock's chime. She forced open the kitchen door, and was drawn into the now gloomy room: her glance realised the lifeless ash in the cold stove. There was no warmth to stop the rare tears, frosting on her cheeks. But with cold fingers, blue and damp, she stoked up the fire and blew gently until the sparks rose from the trembling ash and the fire was alive again.

Rummaging for the tea caddy, amongst the piles of old calendars, handleless cups and biscuit barrels on the cupboard she knocked over the cut-glass sherry decanter. It was broken—but before. "Oh, I forgot, they broke it. That Christmas!" She held it up and noticed again the broken base—how it had been carelessly knocked and broken years ago. Why had she not thrown it out? Why have kept these old, cracked things? Why in fact had she continued to live on so long beyond the fullness of her life, when everything, all her material props seemed to have been shattered years since? But no, unlike the empty flask of the decanter, her life was still full, everything that ever happened, everything she had ever hoped, she still held in the wholeness of her self, in the richness of her memory bound to the old house. She ran her fingers in the grooves of glass and sat quietly at the table.

Through the misted kitchen window and west door, across the width of the verandah, she saw the wetness of winter pouring itself on paddock and garden. On the cold grey cement, the splash of roof-spilled rain swilled along the verandah and onto clumps of straggly, winter-bitten mint. Marooned in the loneliness of her house she gave in to the melancholy of isolation.

DUSK

For so long she had stood there—it could have been all day! or a lifetime—she was moulded to the damp ground, or from it. She could smell the freesias over by the pepper trees, the far side of the fowl yards and hear the fowls and turkeys, querulous, coming back through the yard gates in long gathering lines from out in the defunct orchard and from under the almond trees clouded with white blossom. There was a pecking and scratching at her feet for the customary grain.

It was so very still. The fowl huts, the pepper trees, the sheds and sheltering gimlets and salmon gums were stultified as if in a painting—they had always been there and would never change. The green paddock past the pepper trees, paled away into the grey salt flat and skeletal forest of dead tea-trees and York gums. Far up the slopes beyond, green crops darkened in the fading light. All

the sounds of the day—the fowls' clucking, the dog barking, a distant tractor, a truck on the road, a peewit's thin cry, the plovers' lonely plaint from the mud flats behind the sheds—chimed softly, each clear and separate, intoning the end of a winter day, the end of winter itself.

She stood fading with the pale light amongst the turkeys and fowls, in the midst of day's drowsiness. She stood wrapped in the all-pervading peace of dusk—in the serenity of a time-dimmed past running out with day's end. She stood in the quiet and serenity of life's dusk. Today's dusk darkening—the becoming of tomorrow's dawn.

WILDFLOWERS

"Ah, the violets are out." The woman's brown-flecked fingers moved deftly, like insects, amongst the stems of the leaves, hardly stirring the dark green mounds until the purple flowers were exposed—not ordinary little sweet scented violets, but large, and dark as night. They always won first prize in the local show. Unlike others who paid great attention to fancy vases, special flower scissors and all the appurtenances to floral arrangements and spent a day arranging and re-arranging a bouquet, the deep and purple violets would be pinched from the clump by strong nails and with a few leaves and perhaps a wisp of maiden-hair fern, would be deposited in an old, handcut wine glass. Undisciplined, except by love, flowers flourished in the sanctum of the wild garden, and surpassed those of other gardens subjected to a fierce routine of fertilisers and secateurs. Weeds would be pulled, and the ground turned, shrubs cut back—but as the need exposed itself, not according to the code of any Gardening Guide. Now, seeing the growth of barley grass tufts behind the violets the woman tugged at them and tossed them in a heap on the wet gravel path. This sort of gentle, spasmodic tugging was all that seemed necessary.

"That will be the mail." She brushed her hands on the old calico apron and without straightening it at the waist, nor pulling up her stockings still rolled like the anklets of some kinds of hen, she set off along the puddle-edged drive-way, beneath the dark heaps of the olive trees, to meet the mail. But it would already be in the drum under the hakeas at the road edge and the van gone by the time she reached the road.

She looked at the stiff pink envelope and read the bold, admonitory script: "Mrs Jinny Carlisle" etc.

It was from her widowed sister. She rarely wrote, but came sometimes for a few days, when she needed a rest. Was she coming now for a holiday? An upheaval in the house? She was so particular, house proud. But no. Her sister was full of commiseration for her, Jinny. Wasn't she considering at last coming to live in the city? She must be so lonely, and the upkeep of the old farmhouse was really too much and hardly worth it for one person, anyway. Why not leave it? Get a married couple in to live there, just to keep things in order a bit. It was time she got out. At her age she deserved a bit of comfort for all those years of hard work in the country—leave it now for the younger ones to worry about. She could stay with her for a few months and look around and get a "unit" for herself and find a "companion help".

Poor thing! She wants someone to stay with her while her daughter is overseas. Just can't bear being alone for five minutes and wants 'house company'. She crumpled up the letter and pushed it into the deep pocket of her apron, down amongst the clothes pegs, the shrivelled nasturtium seeds, the green glass

beads loosed from their broken string and the silver teaspoon picked up from the fowlyard where it had been dropped with the table scraps.

Long pink cones of flowers swayed amongst the leaves of the hakeas; everlasting and blowfly grasses rustled together amongst the wild oats. The woman noticed some donkey orchids under the straggly bushes. This afternoon she would walk over to see her niece, and the children. She would go along the back track, behind the sheds, through the strip of bush. It would be all flowers. Wild flowers, wind weeded. She had forgotten her sister and the letter.

The route was a foot track, narrow as an ant trail, from behind the sheds. The original pole-walled, brush and straw thatched sheds, rather rickety, still stood at the edge of a cluster of later constructions. Pigeons fluttered in and out the gaps—where bricks had crumbled away—of a mud walled shed, which in the season sheltered 'seed' wheat and super. The woman hurried past; many times she had watched snakes enter beneath the bag stacks—but never seen them come out. There were iron sheets and sad, termite-hollowed piles of logs where walls of earlier sheds had fallen in on themselves. Spokeless cart wheel rims and hubs, rusted tangles of plough shares, knotted chains, bottles, shells of bath tubs—lay in disarray beyond the sheds. Every day the farm-help passed them on his way from his cottage (the 'married quarters') amongst the kurrajong trees, to the homestead with the milk for the 'old lady', but dared not clear away the junk. The rubbish affected him, somehow, uncomfortably, but denied recognition. It was the feeling people get when passing old neglected graveyards—something for everyone's conscience and no-one's responsibility. He preferred not to see. Gnarled, lichen-cruste Cape lilac trees, loaded with blossom, dropped incessantly the mauve fragrant flowers onto the sorry rubble of yesterday; nasturtiums and wild oats concealed decay.

Behind the house and sheds, there ran a belt of timber and scrub. This enclosed strip, adjacent in part to a stand of straggly bush, was a never-used road site, and had taken on the role of a breakwind hedge. As such the woman always thought of it. It was along this bush strip, that she always walked when visiting her niece's family. The unmade 'road' ran for nearly a mile and was crossed about half way by a creek, and a salt bog after which it continued up the gentle slope and was fused again on the one side with a thicket of scrub abutting on the corner of her relatives' property and where their house stood. The path was well worn because for many years the woman had searched along it for the flowers she picked with pretensions of drying, even painting, like her sister, the other one, the art mistress at a city school. This hedge of bush was deeper, thicker and even thornier than any she had known as a child, but still, that is what it was, her old hedges bowered over deep-cut lanes—overgrown with a mass of trees and shrubs unknown to her childhood but understood now and through long years submitted to with the same humility and hope as to the infrequently glimpsed church altar. The narrow path was shaped according to the siting of shrubs and tussocks and trees; it was tortuous and without a vista. It enclosed as would a bent tunnel. When in this tunnel, the woman forgot the immediacy of time. The bush belt preserved the countryside in which she and her husband had settled.

Now she was hurrying down the tunnel, thorns of grevillea and sticky ladders of drosera catching at her clothes and rolled stockings. Hurrying, hurrying to find those other people who must also be here in the thickets, kept surely to harbour along with a lost landscape, shades of all losses. Along the tunnel and coming always suddenly to where light holed with hope the dark bush—but on looking out finding only today and the late afternoon and the expanse of paddocks tortured with wire and furrows and sheep. She would stare silently and slowly

withdraw, touching a wild iris or a purple orchid and hurry to the next searchlight of afternoon sun, as deceptive as the last. All along the windowed belt of bush she searched until near its other end, wearying, sat on the twig strewn ground and waited. In other years for her husband, she could conjure up a presence, but latterly, in a growing confusion with what was and is, the presence too had dimmed and become merely a suggestion. It was the bushes which remained immutable—a presence, not of people but of place. Outside the tight confines of house and garden and poultry yards (that domain immediately under her own control) the flowering bush supplanted everything, people, religion, memory.

Wandering back through the bushes, comforted by the soft thrumming calls of bronzewing pigeons, the woman, too, began to hum, a wordless humming. Communication for her was direct, and without a barrier of speech. Words were even an encumbrance. Contact with her world of flowers, animals and things, was vital and often silent or at most accompanied by a soft, rhythmic humming. The theme of her wordless humming was not to be developed, it was not destined to resound elsewhere, with the wild pigeon's claim, the defiance of fern and flower against the creep of weeds and paddocks' overflow of salt-silt. Not through her was it to echo outside, crying for the wild, wind-weeded thicket to hold to the ground its ritual and timeless rhythm. She would lapse into quietness and continue silently, absorbing the emanation of flowers and moss and lichen and turning inward always. Her understanding felt but never formed or voiced. Her joy turned in and was not transformed. Her destiny was to receive and hold alone, but not reshape in some communicable form. Absorption by the landscape, and her reciprocal embodiment—that was consummation. Nor, because of it did anything change. The wild things, the flowers, burst and withered in their time and yellowed ultimately with the tussock grasses; they would be renewed *in their own substance* again and again. It was not for the woman to alter things or give of what she received, not for her to transmute.

The wind, elegiac in the sheoke tree against the fence, would sound and subside. The woman heard and passed by into the yard.

In the kitchen the end of the day streamed in through the western window and door. The bleak sunlight falling across the paddock and the kitchen garden lighted up the still and quiet room; its dying flame glowed anew in the copper preserving pan. Faint scents of wormwood hedge, onions and nasturtiums drifted in. There were tired, frail sounds, on the wire door the bizzing of blowflies and from beyond, the lonely clapping of the palm fans.

The coals must be stoked and more mallee roots put on. The iron kettle, still warm, was soon singing softly. Moving about, getting a cup and saucer, milk and the silver teapot—the woman's humming and the kettle's soft singing became a kind of hymn, to the shelter and comfort of an embracing kitchen, its stove and worn accoutrements. The woman felt the high embossments on the warmed teapot and held each silver leg, lamenting the crooked sagged one. Ah, the careless housemaid, so long since, who had stood the pot on the hob, one leg carelessly touching the stove top—the old distress at finding the pot leaning ready to collapse on the hot stove, flared again—and she held it high to see it gleam in the falling sunlight and in the leaping fireglow. The kettle raised its lid with exultant song and the tea was made. And the woman too, gave sudden rare shape to her humming, revelling with the kettle in song.

When she stopped singing, the walls which had heard, gave it back—a thin, distant singing, of not one voice but many, the singing of all those other years, mingled with all the other voices. The stones of the thick, absorbent walls held

her whole life and the lives of those others who had shared it. And they gave it back unremittingly. The woman, the house, the garden, the plough-worn paddocks, the trees which cleated bush strips to open spaces, the little knots of left-over scrub which still flowered every spring—they were integrant. The soft bounce-back from the walls, the thick curtains in the hallway, the heavy furniture—lulled. Against the table she put her face and knew in its time-polished wood a ritual. It caressed her forehead like an altar rail. The kitchen table was a board for familial communion, where differences were absolved, where each member gave and received and something intermingled. To the woman the mysteries of human intercourse had become idealised, completed and severed, yet in their severance had become a continuous and lasting experience, as solid as religion.

From her verandah, shading her eyes against the last of the yellow light:
“I wonder why she isn’t here? She said she was coming this afternoon. Dawdling, I suppose. Or picking flowers. She forgets so easily—everything. I must send one of the children to look for her.”

The child set out along the path, from the other end, the light already failing and colour loosing from bushes and flowers. The tunnel was dark now, like a burrow. In a gap where the light fell through from outside, into a little clear patch, open on one side to the paddock, closed on the other by the bush, the child sank into a patch of everlastings, their petals still faintly pink and papery and scented. They stirred, or rather shuffled against one another. Their movements chafed the child’s arms and legs, chafed her soul until an awakening affection for this left-over piece of bush surged and demanded some fulfilment. To be swallowed up in the flowers and bushes was not enough. She must learn some way to state it anew, give it some outside substantiality, make ITSELF but apart from itself, so that it would be more than just IT, the bush and herself touching it, but something detached, its essence, to be witnessed by others. But this could not be done here, by dissolving amongst tussock grasses and flowers—even everlastings. It meant going away. She seized a handful of everlastings and pushed them deep into her pocket. A shadowless darkness swallowed up the broken pieces of light. A gentle thrumming of bronzewing pigeons mildly admonished. It was already cold.

QUEEN ANNE’S LACE

“There is that picture of an old cottage in her sitting room. It was her early home I believe. You’d think it was a palace the way she dotes on it. More like a hovel I’m sure. Shabby, tumble-down looking little place, all overgrown with creepers. A little stone place it looks and stuck almost right on the road in some old village—in the south of England somewhere—I forget just where. She always used to talk about going back some day and imagines the place still there. But of course it’s not. Those neighbours over on the north road, they looked for it when abroad a few years ago. She had asked them to go and look up some people there. But they say it and the whole row of cottages had been demolished for Council houses. They didn’t dare tell her though for fear she’d be so upset. The picture though, she had someone make from a little snapshot, years ago. In the depression there was some travelling fellow going about the country getting photos from people and making tinted enlargements and framing them. And charging some fantastic price. I believe her husband was furious but there you are. Some people are so sentimental about the oddest things.”

On the wall opposite the fireplace and the narrow casement doors—the picture hung in its white oval frame— so that always within the frame of another place, the sun's last fire became ensnared in a garden of English flowers. Mist and dampness dried away and greyness unfolded into hollyhocks and scrambling roses. Here, in the frame, trapped in the light of another land, the garden court was always in full flower, it was always spring and the peacocks always strutting. The garden's effulgence overflowed and fell beyond the oval polished frame and the casement doors and past the rampant bougainvillea to the unordered beds of snapdragons, wallflowers, mignonette, violets, cinerarias, stocks, and in their season chrysanthemums—and the standard roses (“Fancy trying to grow standard roses here, it's ridiculous, in the summers we have. It's just a sort of showing off. Anyway of course they couldn't be expected to do any good here!”). But they did; until their flat stiff tops flowered into basins of solid packed roses sitting atop their proud unbending pedestals. (“The fowl manure, probably, that's what keeps them going, although you would think it was too rich for roses, wouldn't you?”). But velvet and scented roses and fowl manure and the trusting cluck of hens and the scrape of turkey wings on the hard ground were all linked in the life of the woman for whom no one thing was isolated into its ugly or sordid element.

And there she would be, housework forgotten, immersed in flowers; shoulder high hollyhocks and clumps of Granny's bonnets which she would pluck and peer into and smile as though recognising some face in the frill of petals. Before the graceful towers of Queen Anne's Lace she stopped to spread and weave her fingers—crocheting the pattern of the flowers—centre mats for the table, the oak-wood chest, the black lacquer Duchess dressing table in the spare bedroom, the deal cupboards in the kitchen, the desk top in the sitting room, the old box cupboard in the bathroom, trimmings for curtains in a cottage window—where, wherever else there was a surface inviting a flower's replica in lace.

“And such a hopeless housewife. Hopeless! Why, good heavens, when I called today you could see that not even the bed was made. But she was always like that. Just left all the chores if she didn't feel like doing them. Always in the garden, poking around. Or staring at flowers.”

THE GROVE OF PINES

From the kitchen window, the sun set in the grove of pines on the mid-distance ridge. It was the end of the day for the woman, and a permanent beginning. It was here that the dray had stopped on their first day out from the railhead and where they had stayed until moving down to the cleared parts where the house was built. The place of their first camp—no house, just a hessian shack—had never been cleared. They stood, the pines, like pines everywhere, funereal torches—on the stony, broken ridge, shrouding the site of the first camp, this now a latter day kitchen-midden safeguarding rusted camp oven, iron pots, broken china, and a curing ground for 'amethyst' glass. Jonquils sprouted and withered in rings of stones. A clump of arum lilies raised waxen cups year after year and defied time and decay.

She would walk sometimes to be alone amongst the pines. Amongst the leaning trunks she would walk on the grey plaques of lichens. Surrounded by the ragged, bushy cones she would walk into the sepulchral hollows of the breakaway. From here she could look down across the paddocks to the homestead roofs, to its thin surrounding timber, to the belts of thickets which were road sites, the occasional clumps of scrub which swelled up out of the bare

paddocks. The pines were a shrine to the old, unfarmed landscape and to the first camp—the beginning of the farm-formed sweep of countryside. The wind lifted up out of the dips and flats below and funnelled up and over the stony ridge, so that always in the pines, the all-abiding pines, there was a wind-wrung rhapsody, rising and falling with the mellow ring of hidden bell birds.

It could not be for the woman looking again from her kitchen window, across the vegetable garden and the wormwood hedge, up the long slope, to see on the mid-distant ridge a bare and stony rise and no pines. But looking far out, all to be seen was a rumpiled line of prostrate trees and a bulldozer scrambling, monster-like along the ridge, scrambling and toppling.

“I did hear that there was an accident on that block where the young fellow was clearing. The old lady of course never wanted it cleared—used to pick flowers there or something—but her niece’s husband (you know he had her sign away most of the land to the other side of the family, a few years ago, said they’d support her as long as she lived and just left her with the few hundred acres around the old homestead—of course he had to give something to her daughters in town but it meant he had control of the land at least)—well he was all for a bit more land to put down to pasture—a waste he always reckoned, those scruffy native pines. Of course it’s rocky but alright for grazing. Well he’s finished now poor fellow. It just shows you though—foolhardy of course, driving along the top of a ridge like that. Goodness knows what’ll happen now. I expect the niece will leave and get the children into school in the city at last and lease the whole place perhaps. Maybe then she’ll be able to put the old lady in a home at last. I must say she has always been closer to her than the poor thing’s own daughters, since they have always been so far away after they left the country and got married. Ridiculous for her to stay—should have left years ago—living like a dippy hermit.”

But she stayed. She stayed and would walk sometimes still, at the end of the day, across the stony ridge and see the stumps of pines, distorted and grimacing, and the drift of earth half-hiding an iron pot and a chip of glass. The wind was no longer a rhapsody in an enfolding forest, but a dirge in the dry hollows of rock. In continuing years, from tubers in sheltered crannies amongst the rocks, only the arum lilies would raise their sad, taunting trumpets.

THE COPPER PAN

The Christmas bushes in the gully between the great hummocks of out-cropping granite, were ablaze with golden flowers. Picking a spray of the dust scented flowers the woman thought of the end of the year, of summer, of ripe fruit, of a tree laden with apricots, of making jam and provisioning for another winter. But the people for whom she toiled were gone, the work structure of the farm was so changed that she had no contact with it—yet the long established patterns remained and in the framework of her earlier active life she would still live, oblivious that the reason for the habits had gone, that the purpose of the activity was gone. Surrounded still by the familiar cues she would act accordingly—in the early mornings, the middays, the slow quiet afternoons, the long tranquil dusks and the deep nights. Each day would be opened afresh by the pale light flooding over the eastern paddocks and the near salt flat; by light throwing the shadow of vines across the casement doors; by the scratching of the bougainvillea runners on the roof and the faint hiss in the sheoke tree;

by disturbance from the fowlyards, the impatience of fowls, turkeys, the cats rubbing on the kitchen flywire doors. She would come into the dark hall where the stained glass of the side panels and fan window above the door were faintly illuminated. The glow of red and green and amethyst fell in a familiar pattern of stepping stones leading across the green floor to the kitchen. There, everything would be the same—the huge table at which she now nearly always sat alone, the great fireplace framing the old stove with the new gas one beside it (outside the chimney alcove) the long low cupboard of polished boxes, the sink bench with its window and the west door looking out on the kitchen garden where the whirligig top of the palm eternally rattled its carton fronds, and beyond over the low ridge and up the long rise to the line of timber. The cats would be scratching on the wire door.

It was summer. Full, hot, dry summer, ripe with apricots. She would pick buckets of them and in the dusty bough shed, pip them and crack the stones for kernels to add to the fruit. She would hear the plop of figs, bursting along their ribbed seams as they dropped on the ground outside and spilled their freckled pith for the foraging ants. She would fill the gleaming copper preserving pan and make jam—pounds and pounds of jam—enough for a dozen people for a year.

And so she would stoke up the wood stove (a wood fire is better for jam, you can regulate the heat better) and all morning she would be coming and going, stirring and adding sugar over the steaming pan. In the late afternoon with the westerning light falling across the withered kitchen garden—and casting the ground beneath the apricot tree into a dark pool of shadow—and into the kitchen onto the rows and rows of jars along the table—golden jam absorbing the last of the day's light and glowing like fire. The woman, wearied by her work, sat down at the table to slip the seals on the bottles.

“How stupid can you be! Fancy making all that jam, all those rows of bottles I saw on the table. *Who* is there to eat it I asked her. Ah, she said, it's the making of the thing that matters, not the doing away with it! Quite daft these days, I'm sure. Making jam—for heaven's sake! But she doesn't seem to realise *everyone* has gone now. That workman they have had with them for years is leaving now the harvesting is finished and the carting all done. Says he won't come back not even to help put the crop in on the niece's place. Like everyone else he says it's no use, what with quotas on our seeding acreages and all the over-production, there's no future for wheat. And anyway the ground is so poor now on a lot of their place—they've lost a lot to salt and some of the paddocks are dreadfully washed.”

THE SHEOKE TREE

The iron roof drooped closer and closer to the ground, pressed down by the summer sky.

The fowl tins were filled with water; the yard gates left open so that the turkeys and fowls could leave the barren scratched ground and hot iron sheds to find shade under the native tea-trees and the green almond trees and scratch amongst the sticks of the derelict orchard. The woman watered the gardens along the verandah edges, and sprayed the pots and baskets of ferns under the palm tree, the tiers of cacti and succulents on the west verandah. In the kitchen garden she hosed the ground around the tomato bushes, cucumbers and water melons. The hose was left running on the ground under the sprawling fig tree, inside the ring of wood ash—the dry moat to trap the ants. The grey, wormwood hedge

was dry and acrid scented. A wind from the north-east was strengthening and shifting. Dust blew across the paddocks and shrouded stubble slope and salt flat. Timber trees along the western rise showed hazily through the brown dust. High-up, dead fans on the Washington palm slapped and strained. The woman left the kitchen garden to stand in the shade of the sheoke tree—the sentinel of all her endeavours. Its usual soft murmuring of foliage had become an angry hissing. The long threads of branchlets tangled into brooms and swept the litter of needles on the ground and piled it against the wire fence.

The sheoke grew in the fire-break but its old boughs spread wide and drooped close to the ground. Although the safety strip was newly ploughed, grass grown in the shade of the tree itself, in the shelter of the long strings of foliage, had withered. The dry blades stirred uneasily in the hot wind; the hot directing wind of a stubble fire. The woman ran and pulled the spurting hose across the green lawn, through the rose standards, the statice clumps, across the gravel path, over the shrubs and over the pink, waxen beaks of unopened easter lilies. But the sheoke was beyond the garden. It had escaped the nurture of man. Nor had it been watered along with the shrubs and fence-enclosed flowers. It had sprung from a seed of the torn out bush and had grown, flourished and would die, according to its own ritual, which too, it would impose on the farm-wearied ground. Edged against the tilth of paddocks, ragged hedges of wodjil and palings of timber would persist. Although kneaded by man, the landscape would endure.

The hose would not reach. The woman rushing up, recoiled as the tree drew into the eddy about its own shade, a funnel of fire and was consumed.

“Of course she was stupid to have gone so near the fire. Goodness only knows why she did. They said the burns turned septic. After that there was no hope.”

The house would seem to have shrunk, sorrowing beneath its burden of bougainvillea. The bougainvillea's toothed canes raked the iron roof, the dusty, leaf-littered verandah floor, the ash covered path. There was a measure of care and mock solicitude in its endless sweeping. It would watch over, even from within its slow, smothering weight. Palm fans ached at their dry joints, folded and clapped against the trunk. A congregation of turkeys, forgotten and unfed, found their way into the garden and scraped their wings along the verandah behind the ropes of grape-vines, the loops heavy with chandeliers of burst and souring Ladies' Fingers. The yellow falling leaves of the apricot tree spattered the ground and the hard, undug ground opened again for the yellow spears of crocus flowers that clumped and yearned at the mellow autumn days. At the back of the house the brush fence leaned outward toward the grey mirages slipping upward from the salt flats, over farm-worn slopes—impoverished even in their seeming plenteousness.

All up and down the slopes of summer-stale stubble and dry-creek-pleated paddocks, the ground opened. Over all this low and spreading countryside of tired, farm-worn ground and depauperate bush, fell the yawn of autumn winds. There fell with the fall of the wind, the seeds of the sheoke.

It is said in that part of the country that an autumn burn is a good burn.

A STORY OF THE DEATH OF A SPACEMAN

I

I tried to lay down
drinking Coke at the ballpark.
Then we went to the beach.
Drenched by a wave,
I ran crying to my father
who blamed the moon
to quieten my despair.
We moved to Nebraska
where I grew up
pursuing the sciences

Aged thirteen,
I made love to Louise.
My experience was limited
until I graduated, Ivy League.
Then I really lived:
Helena Carter, Fraulein Lubholz.
But during my doctorate
I gave up the javelin,
came back to Louise,
wrote her poetry
I since have burned.

II

His hardwood cue waving,
a spinning white ball
as the black disappears,

those three faces, solemn, green
as baize ruffled by a careless hand:
victor faces vanquished

after the ritual of the game.
But will they remember the mastery
and a black ball down?

sometimes / I wish I sang rock and roll
or composed folk
music / in dank cellars / but how
easier I do / these other things
sitting / reading / Homer
in the Penguin translation
wishing / to lay
down

He is alone beyond moons to seek out his mission.
But he is shuddering; like some mad runner,
lost in a weird and totally different place,
who has smashed himself through a solid wall
to find he has missed the track of his race
that only the running has mattered, above all.
The man sleepwalks away in the metal of his art
where quiet and rigid disciplines tear him apart.

is cold; my blood rivers / tributaries
under my skin; makes a statistic; another? is it? no
not any more: / but there (my god) a flame wavers. / there!
and I sweat so! aware /
this thing (total Environment) is useless (sweating piss) /
and seeing flames of ice; / a sky of nothing; burning;
spiderglare / shadows thrust out: STING; ! this poison /
disintegrating (me) outside of that (L.E.M.); I reach out
like a gloved span/body encased) all, away; afar into
strangeness (disorientation) and/hearing that ping!
ping; meteorites swarm; horizon rolling jagged echoes; jags
my body;
remember Nebraska? & /
childhood (long ago); a woman; candy;
all that before/the science
of this;
there had been a strange beach;
long ago; & forgotten; these
words beat against my eyes (like sand
on that shore) /

VII

so man becomes coloured (after
total skin failure ((with the totality
of beyond (((being absolution (((in
the absolute sense

I move; without definition; un /
like those darts of sand / glowing; stars fired
from a twelve gauge universe; tendrils;
the meteoriteconsciousness; spinning whiteglow balls
launched by some cue; unmotivated; profoundly accurate;
for these / this presence / those mystical
gods (playthings of children)
manipulate & for what & for whom
flames sweep through

but I had always sought truth / knowing
the sleight of
& nothing
can exist &

the fictions
repeat repeatrepeatre-
peat*instantaneous*fictions
from nursery til*these exotics
*through fantasy*not seeing what
*is not to be seen*unseen the riot
-ous patterns*multicoloured recur-
ing*that this is*known geometric
-ally*unconnectable*expanding&
contracting*patterned*fiction
ally represented in solid
-ity as a mandala
as a man-

I try to lay down
seeking darkness
this fifteenth day of the synodic month

VIII

Wee little Clover
won't you move over,
you have run
too much for fun
and now it's time we should

hey diddle diddle
a cat and a fiddle

JOHN BLAY

'i' is	the poet	as man
	the poet	
beach is	the poet	as sand
flight is	the poet	as bird
sentence is	the poet	as word
ripple is	the poet	as water
	the poet	
pain is	the poet	as torture
mi estas	la poeto	tiel homo
	la poeto	
marbordo	la poeto	teil sablo
la flugo	la poeto	teil birdo
le frazo	la poeto	teil vorto
ondeto	la poeto	teil akvo
	la poeto	
doloro estas	la poeto	teil turgmentago

SHELTON LEA

Mr. DUBCEK, August the 21st, 1969

Where have you gone, Alexander?
Who's your comrade now?
Have a samovar of tea with Mr Khrushchev,
In his lonely country cottage.
Have a barbecue with Lyndon Johnson,
In his Texan hideaway.
Alexander the Great sat down and wept
Because he'd run out of games to play.
Garibaldi the Red they sent back home
To sit on his ass in the village.
But where have you gone, Mr Dubcek?
Who's your friend in the overcoat?
Is your smile across your neck?
We're forgetting, we're forgetting
Where your hair receded to.
Do those flowers they gave you float?
Or will they dredge the netting,
With those spit-and-polished tanks,
That all the crows proceeded to?
And shall we give you thanks,
Alexander the Comrade, wherever you cried,
That your kingdom grows and grows?
Not in this world of Mr Nixon,
Whose smile is polished and tried,
But in our rubber hearts.
Where have you gone, Alexander?

DAVID BALL

LETTER TO BRUCE BEAVER

Dear Bruce,

the afterwards of poets hurt, days
on a limb catching at flies for sustenance
(pick out their wings, legs—eyes are a delicacy),
waiting to wonder, without any wondering at all,
while the moon in the afternoon sky indifferently
surprises the sun, draws up her tides, and erodes
our ruck-about bed-grassing country with an image,
taunting us. Perfection is entirely repetitive, a circle.
We were rings that will outlive us, but all the man
chafes on a tight finger: I saw a ring
belonged to Shelley, once—no one would wear it,
worn to imperfection by his hand.
So to identity: that is the poem. All worth remembering
is, at most, a relic of jewel boxes; something for others
to be dainty in, or unfashionable. And I think of all
the Libraries, crammed with paper turning to boards, trunks,
fetishes and masks—so many of us have spoken
only fonts and galleys of letters, arranging type faces
(that we called the very gods of our villages with).
There is, in all conscience, little enough to hope for.
But if we have held our hands in a cup of
this moment now enough sudden with wonder distending and
everywhere
then we have worn the ring on our finger
and rubbed flesh and gold together
and after
may even be gathering song fall and summer there
though the brightness hurts, breaks off, orbits
in all the dust circles
burning our throat nose eyes features
and we do not have—not really—to remember
hemispheres
bending over us
everywhere.

THOMAS W. SHAPCOTT

THE ONE FLOWER

The front door opens: quick, decisive.
A single woman moves upon the step,
scissors glitter in her hand,
the perfume of a single flower
has called her to the garden.

How shall it be told—her growth
in country where it seldom rains,
her childhood in a riverbed of dust,
her life at breaking-point against the land?—
or now her dying in the world of vegetation
with that treasured lily
waving unshamed its flag of truce
a signal for the body of her need?

Besides, the flower wasn't truly hers
out there: anyone could see it and admire.
She knew she must be more assertive,
call it her own, and by possession
declare her long-delayed surrender.

Click. And she wipes her scissors
the sap bleeds on her wrinkled hand.

*After forty years of drought
the desert river flows.
It opens fingers seven miles across,
grasps the channel
closes round that stem
and holds for one brief time
the flower of a single ocean.*

The flow is stopped; her rush of feeling
withers to a dribble. Soon the flower must wilt.
She knows this is as far
as she will ever move.
Insupportable, her memories trap her
just in their globe of amber.

RODNEY HALL

For Jimmy Woods/Conflict and

This is how it goes: a yo-yo up down, come on baby
who said light my fly

There are iron pants and fists
splintering in mirrors reflecting selves—the yo-yo
come on baby set the splinters this is rage.

Where are you snowman with ice-slip-feet sliding,
the snowball into canyons this is how it grooves and slides,
this is where the mirrors are

Come on baby light my latch I'm sliding
ice fire into what—moving round the string
it's a yo-yo generation.

Jimmy Woods in hell and conflict—
up down I am balled on a string:
where are you baby to dig in skin

Who said it was the pepsi generation: a film I saw,
and light my iron pants you lolly kiss you black ball on a cord
winning spinning, where are you spinning jerking
in knee caps up down, silly girl you circle round

Yo-yos, string, lifting mirrors—
light a fire cut the string
come into conflict and use

VICKI VIIDIKAS

BEACH POEM

I remember green waves that jumped and boomed,
banged the bright yellow sand and sent
the beach—shells, pebbles and weed scraps—
exploding into the air.

Chaotic gulls
fought in the hot sky
for what the waves flung up,
and dolphins danced.

Now I am older.
The beach and sky are grey
and the waves
only wish
and whimper in the cold.

Perhaps the colors of the past were brighter,
but perhaps
it is the weather today.

HAL COLEBATCH

THE ONE-EYED TEDDY BEAR

Some time ago, by chance, I met a man who had once been my father, or one of my fathers, I should say. Like thousands of others in this age I've had a somewhat muddled childhood, scarred by broken marriage vows, divorces and untimely deaths. Who bore me or conceived me has been forgotten, or perhaps never known. Like a penny I passed from hand to hand, sometimes was dropped in the general confusion and joyfully found by someone to whom I didn't belong. The faces around me kept changing, but the names remained the same. The king is dead. Long live the king. The queen has abdicated. God bless the queen.

So this man who had once been my father, was one of many. His reign began . . . I don't know when, but ended when I was nine. We had not met since then, for almost ten years, and I could scarcely remember him, though he remembered me. His wife, who had once been one of my mothers, had recently died and left me a gold watch, he said. Because of this it was decided I should spend a weekend at his house, where he now lived with an older sister. There might be other things among his wife's belongings that I might wish to keep.

When I arrived late in the afternoon, his sister had gone to a Church Fete and would not be home until late. Just as well, I thought, for as I recalled I'd never liked Aunt Polly, a gaunt-faced spinster with a virtuous whine in her voice. Once she had caught me stealing and slapped my fingers with a ruler, which made her hover like a demon among my memories.

The man who had once been my father spoke with nostalgia about the past, and I began to feel a little like a nine year old. Together we waded through a trunk full of memories, lovingly preserved by him and his wife. In bits and pieces my distant childhood re-emerged, depicted in gay drawings of big fat suns and sea-blue skies with odd-shaped clouds. I could not remember ever having seen these, but they bore my name, printed in bold, self-conscious letters. There were other drawings too, of six-legged animals with happy human faces, fairy tale flowers and houses with smiling windows and hospitable doors.

Underneath the folder with drawings now appeared layers of dresses, jumpers, boots and party shoes (patent leather with silver buckles—chop a heel and chop a toe, the prince would never find me)—and even a notebook with poems.

The sun is yellow,
the roof is red,
a big black dog
sleeps under my bed.

Finally on the bottom of the trunk we came across a one-armed, one-eyed teddy bear, which I held in my lap, while the man who'd once been my father and now had no name (what does one call a has-been father?) talked of things I'd forgotten, and things I'd never known.

A stranger to myself, I thought, as gradually this younger I began to take possession of the room. How strange the table must have looked—how tall the ceiling. And was this rug the one that I—or she—had crawled on once? It was, he said. It had served as an ocean and a magic carpet. On it I had travelled to all corners of the world, and even to the stars. I'd danced with a bear and spoken to a lion, but couldn't remember it at all. Once a stork had taken me to Egypt on his back and dropped me in the sea, where a viking picked me up. I listened intrigued to this world I'd lost.

Meanwhile it grew dark. I was staying for the night, and when he suggested I should share the double bed the way I used to as a child, it somehow didn't seem wrong. After all he *had* once been my father; he obviously yearned for the child I'd been, and to decline would destroy the illusion he had struggled all evening to create. When the future is closed, and the present is barren, what has one left but the past? What he asked was so little. Should I, who had forgotten and never loved as he, deny his wish as I easily could under the guise of conventions, and thus defile his dream by unspoken insinuations? I too, after all, had been lonely at times, had known the longing for a cuddle, for innocent and sex-less affection so difficult to find as one matures. But as I undressed and donned a nightgown, which had belonged to his wife who had once been my mother, I began to feel slightly uneasy about the whole affair. My body was that of a woman. The child he so wanted was dead. Yet, it was too late now to withdraw. Each step, each act commits us down a given path.

Embarrassed, still holding the one-eyed teddy bear, I slipped beneath the covers. His arm came out and pulled me close, and in the moment of contact with his body, I knew I had made a mistake. What could I do? How without hurting us both beyond repair could I escape? The path was winding. I had not seen what lay around the corner. To now retreat would damn us both beyond redemption and eternally destroy all innocence.

The man was breathing fast and loudly, almost sobbing in my ear. I put my arms around him, wanting to ease his pain, his aching loneliness, to answer perhaps a different need of my own. We all seek forgiveness. Perhaps if I accepted and showed I understood, he might break like a child. Since the child in me was dead, he might seek me as a mother. Was this a sin . . . a crime . . . to reach out and accept, embrace the unforgivable, hoping perhaps for God to intervene?

I do not know, but I tried. A futile gesture. The man in him was stronger than the child, or the mother in me too weak, too young and inexperienced. And now I was weeping. We cried together and lay there destroyed among the ruins of his fairy tale, when suddenly the door went up, the lights came on, and in the doorway stood a tall, gaunt woman with greying hair in a crown on her head. My fingers burned where she had slapped them with a ruler, and my mouth remembered the acid taste of hatred. She stood there, frozen, with one hand on the light switch, and a look of terror on her face. How she was suffering. The pain made her pale lips bleed and slashed her cheeks and forehead with a thousand jagged lines. We stared at each other in thundering silence, she at the door, annihilated, we in the bed, father and child, both dead, beyond revival and salvation. The blankets had slipped to the floor, and his hand was on my breast. And then Aunt Polly put both hands to her mouth and screamed.

Somehow I managed to get dressed and escaped, forgetting the watch and my umbrella, but holding in my arms the one-eyed teddy bear. It had rained and was still raining. I scarcely noticed it, but walked. My hair grew wet, I felt it clinging

to my cheeks and little drops of rain fell down my back. The night was dark, only the street lamps were still on, dancing all over the pavement and swimming like goldfish in black pools of sorrow. People were asleep. The earth was spinning in space, and soon the sun would rise. Nothing at all had changed. The world was exactly the same. But all the kings had died, the queens were gone, and the kingdom of heaven had bolted its gates.

THE DICTATOR

After the forest of fists
And genocidal applause,
After the thunderclap of brass
And sleek garrulity of guns,
After the transcendental climax
(The shot seed of the super-sex)
Comes the thick wad of silence,
The muffling sleep of sense,
Where, deep in the folds of the brain,
Drunk with potency
(Your woman came),
It is you and you alone,
Master of flabby flesh and brittle bone,
When you know you are God, and not insane.

BEETHOVEN

The half-mad Hun, solecist and gargoyle
Who played for Counts and sweet unmusical girls.
Moon-face, mauled by pox, pimple and dead boil,
Who found more in beauty than scents and pearls.
He lived like a sow, or giant caterwaul,
Slagged on Persian carpets, threw soup, and pissed
In urns at concerts, deaf to the crowd's call,
Their hunger for a lovable artist.

They laughed behind his back, coquette and snob,
And led him on with chatter, pout and wink,
While he bashed out sonatas on the brink,
Transcending sex, confabulating God,
Each note extracted from lymph, brain and dirt.
Art is not nice; the work, the heart, the hurt.

JACK HIBBERD

AN ISLAND STORY: VARIATIONS ON AN OLD THEME

for
A. D. Hope

'It little profits that an idle king . . .'

—Alfred Lord Tennyson

I tell you, Jack, it was the sort of set-up
A man would give his right ball for a piece of—
Wrecked on this island, see, and no-one there
But this fantastic bird, stacked like Bardot
And Burton rolled in one; with piles of loot,
And a luxury weekender—all to herself.
The blind bloke in the bar was telling me
It happened to a mate of his. You couldn't say
How old she was—but on the nest each night
She'd make you feel as randy as a colt
Let loose for the first time in a paddock full
Of mares in heat. Some women are like that.
And some blokes—Christ! They never seem to know
When they're well-off. This tin-arsed character
Hasn't been there six months before he starts
To fidget, gets to grizzling in his beer
About the wife and kids, and how it's years
Since he's been home. Natural enough in some
Ways I suppose. But, talk of luck! This sheila
Turns out to be a really decent sort—
She has a little weep, up in the scrub,
Then, when she sees he means it, helps him fix
His rotten boat and patch his sail. She packs
His lunch, throws in a bottle of rum for luck,
And sends him on his way. He staggers home
Eventually—and Jesus! What a mess!
The house is full of urgers sniffing round
His poor old lady like a pack of dogs
—Milkmen, the Mayor, the H.P. boys, the man
Who comes to read the meter (she must be
A bit of all right, too, the blind man says,
This same old lady). You can guess the rest—
His wandering mate takes one quick butcher's, then
Goes through the homestead like a dose of salts,
Clears out the bludgers, gives his loving wife
A touch of the big stick, and everything
Is apples. 'Nothing like the quiet life,'
He says—so each weekend he mows the lawn,
Keeps mother happy, slips down to the pub
For a couple of beers—What's that? You know the bloke?
The chap who bought your boat? Well, Jack, I'll bet
My other bollick that's one thing the wife
Will be the last to hear of. It's your shout.

R. F. BRISSENDEN

WAITING ROOM

They hang in some crevice of light,
still wearing the masks they have chosen.
The world contracts to this room.
An old man sits and stares
at a drug-house calendar,
a view of a tropic beach,
as if it might solve existence.
A child with a comic frowns,
absorbed in fantasy
while his mother beside him hears
his illness grinding its teeth in the dark.

The Sister, brisk and white
as a seagull, carries in flowers,
then turns her scavenging eye
on a fallen match, a wisp of thread.

A woman sighs for the pain
so fastened on to her body
that she cannot think but through it.
Some read, pursuing lost meanings
that fade in the gutters of print,
and some raise their eyes to the flowers'
pale pinks and thorny greens.
But all sit locked apart
assured of their secret possession
that will change them, or be changed,
as one by one they are called away.
It is dangerous to hope.
Stirred by a draught from the closing door
cut flowers shake their pitiless heads.

T. F. KLINE

LETTER TO L. F. WURM

Dear Sir: Whenever I think of you
I recall my mother's description
of how whenever you purchased a suit
you had every trace of the creases
ironed out of the trouser-legs
so no man you talked to
might be embarrassed
that he wore an old one.

You should see us nowadays
after all these years of progress
and loving our neighbours:
forever having our pants pressed
to look like bought yesterday,
saving us the extreme shame
of letting Mr and Mrs Jones imagine
we cannot afford to visit a tailor.

I wonder if you were here now
would you do the same.
And I remain, respectful of your memory,
your hard-up and unmet grandson.

IAN MUDIE

SPLEEN

LES FLEURS DU MAL LXXVII

I'm like a king whose land drowns under cold
Perpetual rain: a poor rich boy grown old
Through suffering the wise fools of his court.
His dogs make better company—but sport
Now bores him too: hawking, play, the hunt,
The dying crowds shot down for him in front
Of his own balcony, the grotesque song
Mouthed by his jester; nothing can please him long.
His great armorial bed's become a tomb
Haunted by those bright courtesans for whom
All princes move like stallions; but their art
Can't stir his pallid lust or touch his heart.
The alchemist who makes his gold can not
Purge those cruel impurities which rot
His soul. Tyrants in Rome warmed their old age
With baths of blood; but slaughter won't assuage
His skeletal ache, or rouse fresh blood to fill
Veins clogged with Lethe's water, green and chill.

R. F. BRISSENDEN

POETRY AND THE INDONESIAN REVOLUTION

The Verse of Rivai Apin and Taufiq Ismail

During the Indonesian Revolution against the Dutch of 1945 to 1949, and again in the student demonstrations of early 1966 against the Sukarno regime, a number of Indonesian poets won immediate public recognition for their treatment of contemporary political themes. I want here to discuss the work of one representative poet from each period, of Rivai Apin of the literary "generation of 1945" and Taufiq Ismail of the "generation of '66":

Of the two, Rivai Apin is undoubtedly the better poet, despite the apparent brevity of his output (I have been able to collect fifteen poems). The American critic, Burton Raffel, has described his verse as being among the most intellectual ever written by an Indonesian. Taufiq Ismail is the more concrete in his descriptions of political conflict, and the more committed in his evaluation of it.

Rivai Apin was born on the 30th August 1927, in the Sumatran town of Padang Pandjang. He has been at various times a student of law at the University of Indonesia, a black-marketeer, and a police-assistant: most of his working life, however, has been spent editing literary magazines. (He is reputed to have exercised great influence on the Indonesian literary scene this way.) After 1955, he edited the magazine *Zaman Baru* (New Era) for the communist cultural organization Lekra: his present imprisonment stems from this.

Like the verse of his mentor, the young anarchist poet Chairil Anwar, Apin's writing is free verse, often in long loosely organized lines, with more attention to compact, difficult meaning than to form. Unlike Anwar's verse,

where each line stands as a separate, distinct meaningful unit, the dynamic flow of Apin's verse often carries the reader excitedly through the poem, before he has time to pause and consider the value of each individual section and phrase. His choice of topic ranges from the personal, nihilistic description of his own intensely felt loneliness, his inability to see anything at present existing as valuable, his confusion in an age when "God is not and man is silent"; to, more often, confident assertion of the inevitable triumph of the Revolution when

Stone of defeat upon stone of defeat
Shall form a monument
on which we will carve victory

These themes meet in his best verse, that in which he is forced to decide on his own status in relationship to the Revolution: "From Two as yet Unfinished Worlds" (*Dari Dua Dunia Jang Belum Sudah*) and "Pass by the Day, Penetrate the Night" (*Melalui Siang Menembus Malam*).

"From Two as yet Unfinished Worlds" was published at the beginning of January 1949, and describes the poet's reaction to the capture of Jogjakarta, the revolutionary capital and the Indonesian leaders, Sukarno, Hatta and Sjahrir, which happened in December. The poem is in four sections. The first, set in the morning, propels the poet and reader into a confused urban environment of civilians and soldiers, flesh and gunmetal, a turmoil of activity paralleling the turmoil of his own response to the fall of the capital:

The morning I heard the news
 I went out into the streets
 People selling things, and those going to
 work, kept to the edges
 Fast cars, heavy with soldiers, and sullen
 tanks
 There were some on patrol, in twos, armed,
 Space between everything, yet filled!
 All frozen into one:
 Men, machines, and the sky, each had its
 worth.

From this confusion, the poet moves to discussion with friends:

I went to friends, talked, the contents of the
 conversations precipitated into the gloom
 The news: Jogja had fallen, Maguwo . . .
 'Karno captured
 Hatta, Sjahrir . . .
 We kept talking, or went from friend to
 friend . . .
 We discussed, considered, and looked at
 the possibilities
 All from one word and all for one word.
 The word of course is freedom (*merdeka*).

The poem now closes in upon the poet further, describing his situation as a student, living away from home, preparing himself for a now uncertain future:

That evening I went home, full of the news
 and possibilities
 At home I was greeted by my unfinished
 self:
 open books, some unread and some which
 by now should
 have been finished,
 but it was for this I left father and brother
 And then I remembered I had only eaten
 once that day
 —their cooking-pot had always been open
 to me—and I left my old self
 in the grave-like space dug in the dark by
 the light of the lamp.

Rejection of self does not mean total commitment to the revolution yet. The poem *Broken Bridge (Djembatan Patah)* describes the poet "afraid in the grip of night / as branches brush against my roof / As I listen to the heavy breathing of the night / The croak of crickets and the barking of dogs". In "Two Worlds", the terror of night returns, men are captured and a decision is required:

But that night there were stampings, boots
 against the thick wall of darkness
 And when they were gone I heard the wailing
 of women,

wives and mothers
 There was no need to be told some had
 been taken
 I could only press my head against the
 board of the table
 Disturbed by the world which had as yet no
 resting place but which pursues into a
 world which has not yet come.

The other poem, "Pass by the Day, Penetrate the Night", is a more abstract presentation of the same problem of commitment, a longer poem and a good deal more symbolic. Raffel describes it as a powerful but not quite coherent kind of T. S. Eliot "wasteland", without Eliot's greatness. (Eliot's poem was well-known in Indonesia at the time: as Raffel confesses he cannot find his way in Apin's poem, his comment is hasty.) The poem, like so many of Apin's, begins in a situation of potential fertility:

Before girls mature
 Before leaves green and flowers colour
 fragrantly
 set in harsh sterility:
 The dry season has arisen
 and blows and scatters
 the dry breath of death
 in which "the heart of man . . . is a broken
 rock, barren of hope". The launching-point for the poem is the announcement of the revolution:

Truth happiness in primal explosion
 Truth acknowledged by the heart
 but broken by thought . . .

A choice is placed before each man between:
 the ordinary human being and the extraordinary man
 Both are the son of man
 Determined by a few hours
 "in the beginning is the deed"

But whichever choice is taken, "man cannot slip away, he must be honest with himself". The easier choice is that of the ordinary man, he who "asks a guarantee for his life", refuses to participate in the struggle, and the poet admits:

This life which nears before us is
 so beautiful, so attractive and full of temptation

but:
 Following such a direction
 brings forgetfulness and 'glory'
 proves fear . . .

The choice of the extraordinary man is paradoxical. He searches for the "final dream" and the "final song", yet both are never ending: life for him is attractive as it is to the ordinary man, yet to choose the revolution is to choose death, at the least, to become a fugitive, persecuted even by the ordinary man who "comes whipping at his wounds". His future, driven as he is to extremes, is:

No end of loneliness, no end of rejection
No end of self-defence . . .

But it also includes:

. . . the strength to stand on the foundations

The rebirth of the revolutionary is in terms of traditional folk-lore, but the direction of his life is in terms of the Eliotic archetype, towards fertility and the ocean. Having made his choice, "counted all lives, reckoned all deaths / he can only grasp at values / the eternal sea which knows no limits / on which ships, lives commerce", redemption comes in a muted image:

He has immersed himself in
the blue, the honesty of the sea with its
storms and glassiness
the source of all which lives
a crater sending forth all strength
And girls in all beauty after the storm
Shall emerge from the crystal blue sea.

The poetry of Taufiq Ismail, written in encouragement of the student anti-Sukarno demonstration of January to March 1966, and dedicated to the "martyrs of the University and High School Students' Action Fronts, who fell to earth establishing Righteousness and Truth", is prevented, by its very public nature, from attaining the complexity, the introverted hesitancy and the abstractness of Apin's verse. (I will not discuss here the personal verse of his only partially-published collection *White Clouds in Summer (Awan Putih Musim Kemarau)* which is not particularly impressive.)

The role of people's poet is partly a matter of literary taste, Taufiq's favorite poets are Yevtushenko, Whitman and Frost, and partly a matter of biography, Taufiq's father was an editor of radical newspapers in the thirties and forties, he himself was heavily reviled after his graduation in veterinary science in 1963 for his part in an "art for art's sake" Cultural Manifesto, banned by Sukarno in 1964.

The verse in Taufiq's two collections, *Tyr-*

rany (tirani) and *Fort (Benteng)*, February and March respectively, is simple direct rhetoric, based on the explication of various concrete homely images and contemporary scenes, particularly the funeral of the medical student Arief Rachman. The poem "6:30 a.m." is a good example:

In the centre of Harmoni district
On an advertising bill-board
(Castell Watches)
Is written: "The World of Today
Needs the Exact Time."
Behind the morning sky
River Wall and barbed wire
The guards wait. In the palace
Castell Watches
Say to all who pass by
"The World of Today
Needs the Exact Time".

Time, even to a European reader, is obviously out of joint, in this poem where students and military wait. To the Indonesian who sees time "as a succession of not necessarily interrelated but self-contained situations, periods or times, each with its own characteristics, demands and problems, to which one should adjust, and opportunities which one should utilise", the poem has deeper, and more traditional meanings.

For Taufiq, in his verse, is actually concerned to outline a metaphysic in traditional terms which may legitimate this rebellion, and there are two principles to the metaphysic. The first is, as Clifford Geertz noted (in his study *Islam Observed*) a correlative of the fact that "after 1960 the doctrine that the welfare of a nation proceeds from the excellence of its capital, the excellence of its capital from the brilliance of its elite, and the brilliance of its elite from the spirituality of its ruler, emerged in full force in Indonesia". The poverty and decline of Indonesian welfare must therefore be due to the decline in its ruler and his elite, a moral decline, the regeneration of Indonesia must, therefore, proceed from the cleansing of that elite:

. . . Today we deliver
To be hung on the gibbet of Justice
Those who spread poisonous slander and
evil lies
For so many years
They who planned a thousand giant palaces
Bought worthless things abroad
Took thousands and millions of gold coins

For themselves, in foreign banks
They who committed adultery openly
And betrayed the honour of womanhood, of
our mothers . . .

From "Thursday Morning" (*Kemis Pagi*)

The other premise is that the present agitation is, in some way, a re-enactment and a 'setting back on the right rails' of the 1945 Revolution: this too ensures its legitimacy. "The Reflections of an Old Guerilla Fighter"

(*Refleksi seorang pedjuang tua*) closes:

The spiral of history has led us to this
moment
There is no tyrant
Who would dare stand in the middle of the
road, with hand up
And shout: Stop!
There is not. And if there were
He could not
Because today's struggle
Is a struggle of conscience
Never have we felt such tight unity
Unless it were 20 years ago.

Arief is described as having twenty-one wounds; in "From the Mother of a Demonstrator" (*Dari Ibu Seorang Demonstran*) the mother cries as she sends her children off to the demonstration, thinking proudly of their father killed in the earlier struggle. Taufiq has a somewhat melodramatic predilection for the sufferings of motherhood and the innocence of youth (and notes the Freudian, the harshness of the male authoritarian society leaders). He is not adverse to sentimentalising the 'people' either. In two poems, "Ode for a Truck Driver" (*Oda bagi Seorang Supir Truck*) and a "Fruit Sellers Words to his Wife" (*Seorang*

Tukang Rambutan kepada Isterinja), old men recollect with dreamy delight how the students rewarded their various kindnesses with, in the first case, smiles, and, in the other, cheers. "I cried, mum, really cried," the fruit seller tells his wife, "never in my whole life have people been so honestly grateful to one of 'the little people' like myself". In both cases the figure is that of a servant gratified. Otherwise, the people are only "silhouettes", as a number of poems express it, hungry and homeless, but completely external to the students concerns, no matter what their rhetoric. Rendra, who is a Javanese poet, and who also wrote a number of poems in support of the "generation of '66", noted in one (*Prostitutes of Djakarta, Unite!*) that:

Their revolution was a revolution of gods
A revolution by gods
has never produced
many jobs
for the ordinary people—

Taufiq's revolt of the children of the bourgeois, as students of higher education in Indonesia invariably are, offers little.

Riva Apin's verse, then, sees the 1945 Revolution as a regeneration of the country in terms of patterns of symbolic fertility, which are recognisably European, but which demand a personal response and effort from each citizen: Taufiq, twenty-one years later, uses themes which are more traditionally Indonesian, but which are also highly superficial and class-bound. He does not involve us in his struggle nor are its benefits immediately obvious. Apin's verse transcends the 1945 to 1949 struggle. Taufiq's has only historical value already.

REVIEWS

Cyril Pearl. *Dublin in Bloomtime*: (Angus and Robertson, 1969), 85 pp. \$4.75.

Australian journalist and social historian Cyril Pearl has compiled a contemporary record of Dublin that will be a useful companion volume for the reader of *Ulysses*. Since the novel's first publication in Paris, 1922, many of Joyce's admirers have tried to convey the "fabric", the "essence" or the "spirit" of Dublin, with photographs, illustrations and commentaries. The best known of these, Patricia Hutchins¹ and William York Tindall², present a static, depopulated city and their comments, tinged with nostalgia and admiration, lack force. Pearl has used contemporary photographs (from the National Library of Ireland) and newspaper and parliamentary reports to suggest forcefully the social conditions and atmosphere of advertising salesman Bloom's Dublin.

Inevitably, this book draws attention to the documentary qualities of *Ulysses* at the expense of its formal or literary qualities. As a companion volume therefore, it must play second fiddle to a commentary on the novel like Harry Blamire's *The Bloomsday Book*. Nevertheless, in the present state of the Joyce industry, controlled by literary professionals, the emphasis of *Dublin in Bloomtime* is salutary, for it reminds us of Joyce's strenuous fidelity to detail, that almost comical need for accuracy which led him to write from his self-imposed exile in Europe to ask an aunt to measure the height of the fence at No. 7 Eccles Street, so that he could correctly describe his hero's drunken supervision of this obstacle early in the morning of June 17, 1904.

Although no radically new reading of *Ulysses* will emerge from this publication (thank goodness, there are enough "interpretations" already), the general reader will appreciate being provided with many of the visual cues that set Leopold Bloom's imagination going. For instance, the statue of Tom Moore wagging his finger above a public lavatory has one searching for a suitable

¹ see *James Joyce's Dublin* (1950)

² see *The Joyce Country* (1960)

inscription almost before Bloom's response is remembered: "They did right to put him up over a urinal: meeting of the waters:" Similarly, the picture of Glasnevin cemetery gives weight to the description of Bloom at Paddy Dignam's funeral: "Mr Bloom walked unheeded along his grave by saddened angels, crosses, broken pillars, family vaults, stone hopes praying with upcast eyes, old Ireland's hearts and hands." To see the cemetery is to appreciate the aptness of the description. Pictures of open-topped double-decker trams remind the reader of *Ulysses* of a typically expressive documentation of detail: "Before Nelson's pillar, trams slowed, shunted, changed trolley, started for Blackrock, Kingstown and Dalkey, Clonskea, Rothgar and Terenure, Palmerston Park and Upper Rathmines, Sandymount Green, Rathmines, Ringsend and Sandymount Tower, Harold's Cross." Excellent photographs reproduce bustling city streets that could scarcely be imagined following the disappearance of trams in Dublin in 1949 and the blowing up of Nelson's Pillar in 1966. The pictures reinforce both the actuality and something of the poetry of Joyce's descriptions.

Inter-linking commentary in *Dublin in Bloomtime* is crisp and lively and is broken up in McLuhan-esque fashion by ads for pubs, whisky, bicycle tyres, women's fashions. In a time when the mini-skirt draws attention to a woman's legs, it is interesting to find a Dublin newspaper of 1904 including the following advertisement:

THE BUST

When well developed is woman's greatest adornment. It's so indicative too, of good breeding, and other charming attributes that no lady lacking these traits can afford to be indifferent to this. To those thin of bust through sickness and other causation, Dr Brown's specific "Ogilato" will be a great boon. It will positively develop the bust from six to eight inches in one month; this we guarantee.

Better supporting evidence of Molly Bloom's widely admired attributes would be difficult to uncover.

The organization of this book is such that it builds up a series of sharp impressions. Correspondences, as in *Ulysses* itself, are mainly left to the reader. It is a pity, therefore, that the obvious unifying device of a contemporary

map of Dublin is not provided, for the pleasure of those who would like to follow Bloom's wanderings spatially as well as in other dimensions. Despite this shortcoming, *Dublin in Bloomtime* should help to further popularize the novel that inspired its production.

BRUCE BENNETT

Webb, Francis. *Collected Poems*. Sydney, Angus and Robertson, 1969. xiv, 354 p. \$4.95.

Hall, Rodney. *The Autobiography of a Gorgon and Other Poems*. Melbourne, Cheshire, 1968. 38 p. \$2.50.

Hall, Rodney. *The Law of Karma*. Canberra, A.N.U. Press, 1968. 91 p. \$2.75.

Simpson, R. A. *After the Assassination*. Brisbane, Jacaranda Press, 1968. 49 p. \$3.50.

McDonald, Nan. *Selected Poems*. Sydney, Angus and Robertson, 1969. 87 p. \$2.75.

Flantz, Richard. *Promises*. Brisbane, Jacaranda Press, 1968. 42 p. \$3.00.

Miller, Duncan. *Down from My Hills*. Summer Hill, N.S.W., The Writers' Press, 1968. 70 p. \$2.50.

Thwaites, Michael. *Poems of War and Peace*. Melbourne, Cheshire, 1968. 62 p. \$1.95.

Martin, David. *The Idealist*. Brisbane, Jacaranda Press, 1968. 29 p. \$1.50.

Goode, Cyril. *Horizontal Gothic*. Sydney, Wentworth Press, 1968. 47 p. \$3.00.

Hedley, Wilma. *Identity*. Sydney, Realist, 1968. 64 p. \$2.25.

Darien, Peter. *Ecliptic*. Summit, N.J. Masterwork Press, 1969. 73 p. \$2.00 (US).

Haig, Ross. *Rickshaw and Other Poems*. London, Outposts Publications, 1967. 20 p. 5s.

Nathan, Fred'rick Lewis. *Various Verse*. Brisbane, Park Enterprises, 1968. 40 p.

Faced with this juggernaut of creativity, some lines by the folk rock team of Simon and Garfunkel recur:

Tangled in the fallen vines
Pickin' up the punch lines
I've just been fakin' it
Not really makin' it

Who is fakin' and who's makin' these days? The reviewer has to flounder heretically, in league with the forces of negation and destruction, against a mystique which currently insists

that anything "created" is somehow sacrosanct. Not only created but *seen* to be created. I have nothing against children inscribing *haiku* to idealistic teachers bent on alleviating the rod's past excesses (children, like some poets, sense fairly acutely the kind of creation expected of them); I'm even prepared to see Euterpe put into therapeutic harness for the social scientists to breathe more easily. But is it impious to wish for some discrimination on the part of publishers as to where lies the balance between raw experience and art? Who is going to recognize the difference between linguistic finesse and logorrhea, distinguish real complexity from disorder, the expression of deep feeling from hysteria?

Sanctified by print, primed with tendentious blurbs (often doing less than justice to the writer), launched in natty little jackets adorned with gyres and discs, these twiggytomes thump into editorial offices through the land demanding judgment. Heave a few cultish 'shards' onto the page, invoke a little foetid spirituality (preferably via the east), intone 'womb' and 'orgasm' at least once, entitle your collection *Ecliptic* (though it have no bearing on the matter within), have a crack at 'mandarin stylists' and, boy, you're a 'seer', a 'visionary'. If these manoeuvres fail, you can always play around with the typography. With what *must* be unconscious irony, one blurb assures that '. . . you will be struck by the physical appearance of some of the verse. Your eyes are wrenched from here to there. Your mind is wrenched from this to that.' Indeed. If you're still sufficiently in one piece after this show of violence you may become dimly aware of a terrible vagueness, a hollow residue of unrealized images, unclimbed arguments, a heavy fog of po-faced solemnity, the feverish histrionic strut and fret of atrophied romanticism.

Where, you wail, is the wit, the humour, the self-deflation of an Auden, the range and scope of current American verse? What has become of Eliot's proviso that external facts should 'terminate in sensory experience'? Without this, images are merely precise little pictures and the poems little frames, receptacles of high-minded intention at best, and pretentious private myth and mumble at the other end of the scale. Somewhere in the middle stand those poems which appear to spring from some intense personal experience only to limp onward as faulty vehicles

for the expression of feelings intended to resonate with 'universal significance'. The creative impulse is impotent if there is no disciplining craftsmanship moving alongside to guide and shape the personal feeling from which the impulse initially sprang. A donnish platitude perhaps, but worth an extra rub when one realizes how rarely there appears a writer gifted and skilful enough to surmount those 'dry' patches, the bane of every truly creative artist.

Rancorous limbering-up out of the way (critics also know what's expected of them in knocker country), it is with pleasure and a sense of privilege that one is asked to review the *Collected Poems* of Francis Webb. This volume is a confirmation of Sir Herbert Read's prefatory eulogy: 'From the beginning Francis Webb has sought that "so tender voyaging line of truth", single-mindedly, and with a somewhat disconcerting unawareness of the fashionable poetry of his time.' A maker rising from the tangled vines, he has moved from the rather urgent and elaborate prophetic utterance of his early period (1942-1948), sometimes couched in fairly inflexible metrics, through to the rich, sombre, unyielding integrity of the *Socrates* poems of 1961 and *Eyre All Alone* from the same collection. Despite the early feverishness and occasional over-explicitness ("jammed/ Edgeways like sardines on this damned/ Insignificant little planet:"), there has always been a flinty core to his romantic surges as in "This Runner" with its energy and immediacy:

This runner on his final lap
Sucks wildly for elusive air;
Space is a vortex, time's a gap,
Seconds are shells that hiss and flare
Between red mist and cool white day
Four hundred throttling yards away.

His rich Leichhardt sequence (1952), besides its virtue as mythopoeic model for all those who seek to invest the embattled explorer with symbolic significance, already foreshadows the more tragic, pared-down intensity of imagery in "Eyre All Alone". In the 'First Expedition' segment of "Leichhardt in Theatre" when the little band first sight the sea

They talked as gulls talk, or the year-long
Colloquy of spray and sand.
As fish or bird they fled
Seaward from the dissolving beak of land;
The sea's arms raised them, and breasts fed,
And the caress of the sea

Flowed all about them, or touched with lips
a wing.

one feels a kind of tough serenity, quite a contrast with the stunning fierce surrealist rush of eloquence and verbal dash in "The Sea" section of "Eyre"

Corsage of maiden Bight would cleave to
you,
And cliffs, tall jealous knighthood, glowering
over
Surf-bunches of your breast afloat in bells.
Old cranky carillons creak skyward, duly
hover.
And you murmur as a flight of syllables
The résumé, steep and voluble, of the gulls.

The more personal confessional poems come across directly and, often, painfully. In "Back Street in Calcutta" the theme of the artist preying on suffering from a safe distance and the ensuing moral comment is made most movingly

In all your agonies O spare compassion
For me, the well lined and articulate fool
Who knows he tears you, stretched so still,
to live.
Tormented flesh that is my flesh, forgive!
And lap around my deathbed like a pool
That starving I may make a true, final
confession.

Here is a mature tragic vision. Treasure it.

I find myself not quite easy with Rodney Hall's poetry, accomplished though it undoubtedly is. Like a hopeful spectator at a fireworks display in suspect weather, I wait for the Roman candles to sizzle but, beyond the occasional short burst of ignition, they never quite come up to expectation. The right *words* are there, the creative daemon *angst* is satisfactorily loosed to war with mortal responsibilities, the themes are poetically impeccable, there are no sentimental lapses but neither are there any really rousing moments that excite with the shock of recognition that makes one inescapably sure that "this is how it is". It's all a bit small and self-conscious, a kind of sensitive prose current which never quite resonates. For example, in the 'Foreword' to "The Autobiography of a Gorgon", subtitled "a progression", we get

My secrets grew in childhood, gained
at puberty their voice,
offered my adult life fulfilment
beyond the common choice.

I found divinity in art.
Compelled to serve by stone
as votary, I taught the world
to dread my eyes my pain.

There is something strained about this, something that limits the connotations of "pain" so that one becomes witness to an attitude struck rather than to any intensely-felt anguish on the part of the Gorgon/Artist. It becomes merely scrupulous argument, fine-etched but chilly—like the Gorgon metaphor itself, an indication of the poet's careful humanist distance from warmth and folly. In *The Law of Karma* he superimposes the Hindu doctrine of soul transmigration onto an historical sequence in which man progressively debases his human functions as a moral being. Beginning with a holy ascetic guru figure who starts the whole grim cycle by rejecting those to whom he preaches humility, it ends with the Nazi bestiality in Auschwitz. There is quiet irony and some telling effects in these segments ("the myriad birds of Venice break to air/ screeching their grief, their triumph and their fear"), but the tone becomes a little monotonously well-mannered and close to the dullness of a catalogue after a while. When he does surface to describe overt cruelty and violence, to make a larger gesture, as in the Nazi section, the irony tips over into the didactic and one feels the poet is clobbering both himself and the reader to raise the temperature. It's a pity it took him so long to reach a very fine amalgam of impulse and image in the very last stanza:

The land was dead, miles of it on miles,
pulped of growth by tank, bomb, shell.
Not a living person left in sight,
nothing there to spoil the peace
except where factory and camp
offered a spout of blood, man aflame,
fountaining smoke that clotted, bunched,
hung like a wrinkled brain above.

Although the themes of R. A. Simpson's poems in *After the Assassination* range from the personal and domestic to greater social concerns, it is the former note which serves him best. In the short monologue, "Napoleon at St Helena", in seeking to focus on the warp of power and conflicting human needs in the person of the emperor, his perspective (usually clear) blurs and, instead of dramatic conflict, we get a solemn monolithic utterance from a static mouth:

My life is burning,
But triumph will come the day they take
the embers
And scatter them in France to seed a
legend,
Regardless of dull tyranny and rage.

Simpson clearly fears the compromising grand gesture, feels cut off from an exhilaration sensed but never fully experienced as when in "A View of Middle Age" he speaks of the circumscribed world of routine that claims his outward comprehension yet allows him only to "view Eden through a wall":

The attitudes I tend
Take on flaccidity
When matched with blood and fire
That riot on a cross:
Days could easily come
When I may look the liar.

It's a comfortable ambiguity—one feels he's pretty safe even if temporarily disquieted. I like the spare personal details brought in almost diffidently in a self-mocking vein, especially in those poems relating to the uncertainties of parenthood and the consciousness of mortality within domestic confines. In "Visit to the Museum"

My children leave me for a leopard;
I'm suddenly aware
Of a room where dead friends stand
Encased for only me to view.
I drown through glass to them
Till rescued by a shout.

This has a fresh, engaging poignancy without self-indulgence, a kind of delicate rueful honesty: the icebergs are around all right but vibrating discreetly.

Nan McDonald's *Selected Poems* also belong to the quiet regions where prate and posture are defeated. Not a big voice but powerful in its truthfulness and simplicity. Nature rests easily here, a tranquil unforced presence

But here is the road, and its white curve
lying calm
And perfect on the tawny breast of the land
As she had waited all her centuries
For this one thing, that her beauty might be
fulfilled.
No love is in vain at last. Who will understand
How my spirit kneels, seeing her with such
grace
Receive the dusty footprints of our race?

There is strong delight in sun, shadow, light and water, a warm yet melancholy temperament. Very occasionally her pantheism skirts the sentimental—one has to be extra self-critical with confessional stuff—as in “Transmigration”

My body is a dull thing
And a weariness to me
And here perhaps I could leave it
By the sweet sea rosemary,
Long and still in the sunny grass
While my soul as a bird went free.

It takes skill and nerve to be able to speak of a bird’s “wild and lovely cry” these days without facing the charge of trite gush, of falling back on tired romantic props, and she manages to avoid this by unobtrusive metrical control and emotional reining-in at exactly the right moments. Even her more overtly religious poems, potentially embarrassing in their simplistic fervour, have a poised personal authority which convinces even if her natural reticence forbids too deep an excavation of despair’s rich seams.

Richard Flantz’s *Promises* remain little more than the title suggests, for the moment anyway. Chaotic, glib and gimmicky

Word worldlessly over worried sleepless-
ness
Where innocence is lost and incense burns
And spoken sounds swim senselessly
Through smokesmiled leers peering at leers
Peering at leers peering for response
Where innocence is lost and incense burns
Over barely buried fears.

—lots of alliteration (“No Lyricflowing Liltling Lines”); a fair wad of romantic agony, but it will be interesting to see where his obvious linguistic sensitivity takes him once the dust settles.

Duncan Miller’s poems are fairly pedestrian and workmanlike although he has the odd quirky moment as in “After the Play”

The night of the play is past; quietly moves
Cleopatra, bearing coffee, with cakes
Appears Enobarbus; the repast makes
For amiable talk as the players, calm as
doves,
Thread their paths among us.

Michael Thwaites’ *Poems of War and Peace* are conventionally decent elegiac pieces with universals looming large. The contents of *Horizontal Gothic*, *Identity*, and *The Idealist* share the old defensive (and sometimes offensive) parochial taint, sometimes varied and lively but more often than not merely bathetic.

David Martin’s fling in couplets is irony at its most ham-fisted and definitely unfunny; couplets are treacherous bedfellows at any time and better men have been known to nod while justifying the ways of God to man. *Ecliptic* contains a lot of glancing spur-of-the-moment observations not worth the making. It also comes complete with an amazingly inflated introduction by the author of which I could make no sense. Sample: “It is useful to insulate and fortify our most vulnerable positions with simile and comparison with myths. These imperishable materials have been used since ancient times and still serve as fast and satisfying channels for our determination.” Peter Sellers doing his Mr Bannerjee stint couldn’t be more inscrutable. Fred’rick Nathan’s verse consists of a series of congealed ‘poetic’ attitudes (“I curse this dream that forms my words and spills them to my future shame!”) *Rickshaw* is a collection of cute whimsicalities for a five-minute train ride.

FAY ZWICKY

vietnam
catalyst infector of the dead bog
of modern man.
bleed wounds and bright balloons
to lighten up the fog
of the deads last dying breath
one
ray of spring sun
strikes the winter heart
and eyes snow down to sow the fields
with seedling propaganda
that grows into the flowers EAST and WEST
best
we leave alone
the floating children cut in half by reason
and the royal barge of motherhood
we'll bombard with broken atoms
ripe children
stunted by the bruise of earth
we'll spread
as compost heaps
to rot with birth
on top of future mutants.

SHELTON LEA

*"Property is the fruit of labour.
Property is desirable.
It is a positive good in the world."*

Abraham Lincoln,
25 March 1864.

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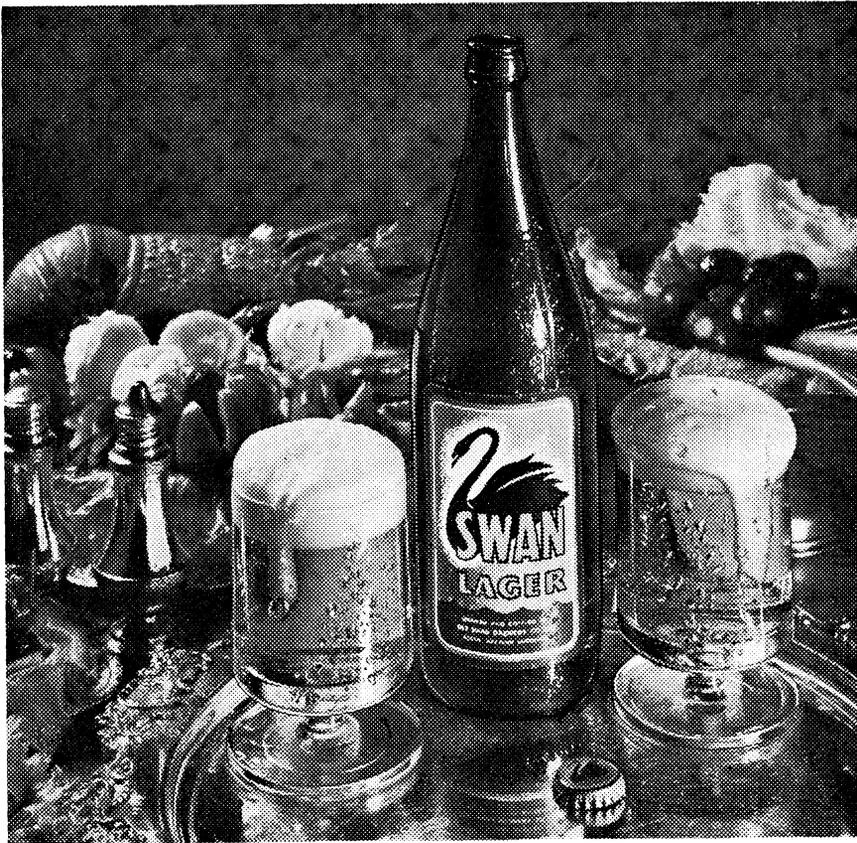
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