

westerly

a quarterly review price one dollar registered at gpo perth for transmission by post as a periodical
—Category 'B'

STORIES, POEMS, REVIEWS, ARTICLES

westerly

a quarterly review

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE: *Bruce Bennett, Peter Cowan, Patrick Hutchings,
Leonard Jolley, Margot Luke.*

ADVISORY COMMITTEE: *Professor Mervyn Austin, Mary Durack,
Professor Allan Edwards.*

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

Correspondence should be addressed to the Editorial Committee, *Westerly*, Department of English, University of Western Australia, Nedlands, Western Australia 6009 (telephone 80 3838). Unsolicited manuscripts not accompanied by a stamped self-addressed envelope will not be returned. All manuscripts must show the name and address of the sender and should be typed (double-spaced) on one side of the paper only. Whilst every care is taken of manuscripts, the Editorial Committee can take no final responsibility for their return; contributors are consequently urged to retain copies of all work submitted. Minimum rates for contributions—poems \$7.00; prose pieces \$7.00; reviews, articles \$15.00; short stories \$30.00. It is stressed that these are minimum rates, based on the fact that very brief contributions in any field are acceptable. In practice the Committee aims to pay more, and will discuss payment where required.

Subscriptions: \$4.00 per annum, plus postage (Australia 40c, Overseas 80c per annum). Single copies mailed: \$1.10. Subscriptions should be made payable to *Westerly*, and sent to The Bursar, University of Western Australia, Nedlands, Western Australia, 6009.

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

westerly

No. 2, June, 1974

CONTENTS

PROSE

The Trap	5	M. RABBONE
We Love You, Fluffy Date	14	BARRY LOWE
An Essay on Style	16	CHRIS HEMENSLEY
Number Nine	19	PETER LOFTUS

POETRY

ROBERT C. BOYCE	RICHARD KIYA-HINIDZA
JOHN M. WRIGHT	ROBERT KENCH
GRAHAM JACKSON	ALAMGIR HASHMI
GREGORY CAMPBELL	D. M. DE SILVA
VIV KITSON	ROBERT YEO
IAN MUDIE	OOI BOO ENG
ALAN ALEXANDER	HAGIWARA SAKUTARO
STEFANIE BENNET	DUDLEY DE SOUZA

ARTICLES

Bernadette Devlin and the Tradition of Irish Political Heroines	33	MARIAN B. MCLEOD
Of Castles and Censorship Between Two Worlds	45	VERONICA BRADY
	69	HAL COLEBATCH

BOOKS

Labor Pains—Cecil Edwards	71	HAL COLEBATCH
---------------------------	----	---------------

Line drawings by students of the Art Department, Perth Technical College.



M. RABBONE

The Trap

Nancy sat heated in the corner of the cold-old room. She wrenched her pleated hands against her dress and gnashed her teeth tightly. Sam was just staring. She knew Sam was staring.

The new house.

Suddenly: Nancy had to sneeze. She put her fingers around her nose, but the sneeze burst her fingers open and she heard the gusty phlegm fly from her throat. It thudded onto Sam's neck and cold head. He writhed a little, found a cloth somewhere and—Nancy sat still, on the chair—dragged the yellow green paste off his skin. Shivered and shook his head quickly. Nancy sat still, on the chair. Sam went back to staring.

The new house. Nancy was thinking about the new house. The anger in her was knotted at her throat and Sam only stared. She scraped the inside of her throat. Slightly. But Sam was dead: sitting there in the chair and staring.

“Sammy?”

“Sammy.”

“Sammy, I'm sorry about everything.”

He died in the chair. Nancy sat in her chair until it was morning and the body snapped and slumped to the floor. She didn't scream. Because her throat was still knotted. Knotted knotted and knotted. Knotted. Her lips were glued together and she touched them to open them. Pulling her feet from under the chair, making them stand for her, going to the old door, wooden, it had eyes, Nancy saw eyes.

“Mrs Gallini.”

It was loud.

“Mrs Gallini I want you to come here something Mrs Gallini Mrs Gallini Mrs Gallini I said something come here Mrs GALLINI!”

After,

the black men carried the blackened body outside. Down the path they went. Munch-munch. The olives on the trees by the gate rustled and rustled. One of the black men said—damn—as his hand slipped. The olives in olive trees rustled.

Outside too, behind the door, Mrs Gallini was saying to Mr Gallini: “Terrible shame. I said terrible shame. Tomorrow they were going to move to their new house tomorrow. Everything was ready for them to move tomorrow.”

Inside,

where Nancy stood against the wall: the pointed bones of her back piercing against the old wall. She said: "I'm sorry" through her rotted teeth. I'm sorry. Clenched her hands and for her unburst tears she fiercely whispered: "I'll pull that house down. I'll kill that house. I'll kill that house. Kill! kill! kill . . .!"

Then after the phone call, Jim and Bob came: their stomachs churning as they walked up the steps of the old house, because of the body. Sighs, inner, when they saw that the body had been taken away, sighs. Jim and Bob had been talking in the car. Obviously. When they walked into the old house, the air gushed out at them and slapped their faces with a hot reality. Because Nancy sat depleted in the corner on the chair, and she was looking at the floor near the empty chair. Jim touched Bob's thigh across the space between them. And Nancy looked up from the old floor. "I'm staying here. I don't want to move to the new house. I don't want to go there." It seemed to Jim that she was mumbling and: "Mum. Come home with me."

After a few days, Rose said to Jim: "I've been talking to her. She says she's going to move to the new house now. She says she wants to move." And Jim said: "Good."

The new house had been ready before Sam died. Jim and Bob had furnished it for their father and mother. Proud furnished. —After all, it's the least we can do for our old parents.—Because Nancy and Sam were old now. Furnished proud. The proud carpet. Wall to wall. Rose coloured for all the years spent in the rotting-old-wood-streaked-rain-soaked-old-house-of-a-house. Wall to wall and rose coloured.

That's why Sam died: the rose coloured wall to wall. But—No. I'll kill this house. I'll hate it, Sam. Sam. Sam. Sammy. Sammy. Sam. Sam. Yes, kill, kill.—

But the dirty dishes on the table and the limping leg and sagging hip, now, after the inevitable break, falling across the rose coloured wall to wall, falling falling, yes, the empty dirty dishes. Jim always looked at them on Wednesday nights. So that when December came, Mary was packed into a suitcase, grey and hidden, and deposited on the rose coloured wall to wall.

Then, when Jim and Rose were gone, Mary and Nancy looked at each other.

"Mary." Nancy's old, predictable voice.

The television in the corner at the far end of the room was laughing loudly. When the others left, Nancy was left standing at the door, holding on the handle, and Mary got left with the t.v. As if she had been watching it. Mary!

"Mary. Thankyou for coming to stay with me, Mary. You're going to stay for the holidays?"

(Jim had told her at least ten times.) Mary, inside, thought—O Mary, do we have to say yes to her, do we have to?—"Yes."

"Good good good." Nancy relaxed on the soft chair. Then: "It'll be good having you here. You don't come to visit me when the rest of your family do. O yes, I know you've got all that schoolwork, being such an intelligent girl. I know. But I'm glad I'll be seeing you for a while. I'm glad." And Nancy relaxed now.

"I'm tired." Mary's young unpredictable voice.

Nancy looked and said: "Yes. Well Jim put your bag in the room, didn't he?" Nod. Nod again in case she hadn't seen in the light darkness. "Yes. Yes. Goodnight then, Mary."

"Goodnight."

Mary went into the room and sat on the new bed. Took off her shoes and ran her toes heavily across the carpet. She turned off the bright light and undressed in the dark. Pealed off. Throwing all her clothes on the floor. Under the sheet and thin

summer blanket. Under. Under. Until. But then surfacing (in the dark) again. And lying still, she heard nothing. Nancy had switched off the t.v. She heard the tap. Then it stopped. A soft flick of a light switch. The soft thump of Nancy's old feet along the thick carpet in the passage.—Carpet everywhere, Mary, and this is the first time we or anyone have slept in this room. It's new, and not old like Sam's death has become to us. We listen now to the sounds in this house and we hate it because we don't want to be here. But we were forced, weren't we? Our cousin, Jenny, was away on holidays and we were the only ones left who could wash the dishes without breaking them. We, Mary, we are forced everywhere. We are never left alone like we want to be. We are owned by others. We are owned by the death of an unknown grandfather, by the guilt of an unknown father, and by the panting of an old woman as she struggles to undress herself on the other side of these new, new, new, untried walls. And now suddenly we think of Bert.

—When we were kids we watched Bert wake up every morning, from across the street, and lie in his bed for a while, always, and think. Bert was known to be a thinker. That's why we left him alone. We thought him too strange to be seen with and his ideas too radical to be listened to. That was our mistake. Because Bert showed us all.

—He just got up one morning and ran screaming outside, shouting God all over our back fence. From our window, when we heard him, we saw the empty bed across the sea-street-sea.

—Bert! Bert! we shouted Bert! Bert!

—But down near the briar patch he was sticking his head in to the swamp and gulping the black water up in to his twitching body. He seemed to be in a terribly urgent hurry.

—We ran up behind the briar patch—he was strange—and watched through the briar and our morning hair. Bert swam, bloated, through the screen of hair and slid over the reed-tips to the bit of island.

—We watched him.

—He, bloated, tried to climb the mountain. At last, bloated, he sat up on the island.

—And he just sat.

—Therefore we went home and watched from our window and the bed—did we really expect he would come back—was empty every morning.

—So back we went after a few days. Because, though he was strange, we were curious, being in the curiosity stage. And we all know, now, what that did to the cat. Behind the patch of briar again, we watched Bert. Towards mid-day he slid sadly back in to the water and slid sadly back to the briar patch and—we following—slid sadly back in to his wall-less house across the sea from us. Meanwhile, the island drowned quickly in the black water and the mountain tip, sinking fast, gave us a look we couldn't stand, all of a sudden.

—But going back, we found we had missed the train.

—Too late, we muttered, pushing our hair back.

—And Bert, we decided then, was utterly strange: sneaking away to his island and screaming at us as if we were murdering him. And after deciding, we didn't worry about it too much, because anyway, Bert had always been strange, not building walls around his house, for instance.

—Now, we know Bert and what made him run, because we have been tortured with his life. Now we know why he opened his understanding to us and when we didn't enter, how he discovered his infinitely greater beauty and ran away to share it with himself; how, on a mountain, he found he couldn't spurn that black water around him, because he was a droplet belonging in it. And that was why he slid sadly back to us.—

"I fried some bacon and an egg for you. Mary."
"Yes. Thankyou."

Helping wash the grey-brown lino on the kitchen floor and washing and drying the plates and knives and forks and spoons and dishes and hating and hating and hating muttering yes muttering yes. On Wednesday night, her father came and he kissed Nancy and looked at Mary. He left the brown wrinkled paper bag on the table. After the unwrapping, the orange oranges spilled out. Mary put them in the fridge. She wiped the table. And Nancy was saying: "Don't worry, don't worry about it now, Mary, we'll do it in the morning, tomorrow, tomorrow, Mary, you go and sit down and watch t.v." Mary finished and said: "Yes."

She put her hand on Nancy's shoulder as Nancy struggled across the grey brown floor and in to the big soft chair in the next room. Mary switched on the t.v. and sat down.

"Get my, will you get my other glasses, Mary, please."

Mary went to the window sill in the kitchen.

"I can't find them. Where are they?"

"On the window sill, Mary."

"No."

"O."

Nancy turned and: window sill window sill window sill table window f:

"Mary, they're on top of the fridge!"

"Yes."

"Thankyou." Nancy said, and she took her glasses and looked through them, brought up a piece of her apron and rubbed at her lenses with her crooked fingers.

"What's on the t.v., Mary?"

"I don't know." Then: "A film."

"Yes. Is it old?" Nancy put on her other glasses. "Yes, it looks old, doesn't it? O! I know him. What's his name, Mary, what's his name?"

"Humphrey Bogart."

"Yes, that's him. Yes." Nancy remembered now. Then very suddenly she was angry: "No! No! that's not him! How do you know who it is? It's not him. It's, it's Errol Flynn!" Nancy was twitching with anger. Mary just sat. The film rolled on and then suddenly it flickered a little and the sound stopped. A deep voice: "We apologize for this interruption in transmission. The fault is not in your set and we will return to the program as soon as the fault has been corrected." Music music music rolled out from the screen music music music.

"I'm tired. Nan." Then:

"Goodnight, Nan."

"Goodnight." Nancy answered slowly.

—We called her Nan, Mary. That's what we used to call her when we were little kids; when we laughed at Bert with our ignorance; before we were truly born; before we stopped visiting, and Nancy and Sam became only a conversation that floated in and out of us over dinners. And it was then we started to hate them—everyone—for all their ignorance. We tried to make them understand us, didn't we, Mary, we really tried. But they only wanted us to be like them and they tried to stop us from being different. Only it made us retreat more, and now, the only way they can make us do what they want is to force us. So just now we called her Nan again. Did we pity her? Didn't we? O well, so we fell into the trap. Her old, bitter, pitied age. Right now she hates us and doesn't want us to think we're helping her in any way. She is proud. Like this huge, filled house, bursting with synthetic pride, she hates. She is old and we are young. In years anyway.—

Nancy, alone, still heated with anger, smiled thin with revenge, bitter, as she thought of how the years had destroyed even Charlie's eternal bounce and the beautiful beauty of all those exposed women.—Some of them, like Rudolph, are even dead,—she triumphed.

On Saturday, Mary put all the dirty clothes she could find in to the washing machine and nearly spun them to shreds. Nancy, her anger abated because of the utter futility of having any, sat on the bench in the laundry and watched her and told her at least five times where and what the knobs were for this and that. This way she felt her force.—I am showing Mary something. She couldn't do it without me.—And she became thoroughly pleasant in her feeling of power. Mary said little. And carried the dripping clothes out of the laundry to the clothes line. Over the pailings, the neighbours were hanging their washed clothes. Mary watched. Endless underwear dripping and whirling around on the rotary clothes line, sending strains of unrinsed detergent down in to the bit of backyard lawn.—Saturday morning and across the backyards of countless homes, countless rotary clothes lines are set in motion, da-dum!—

Shortly after the washing was finished Mary's uncle Bob came with his pregnant wife and batch of living living children. Mary went to her room. Whenever anyone came Mary went to her room. And shut the door. Because if she had stayed she would have had to say something. So she went to her room and lay on the bed and listened to nothing. Only sometimes she lost concentration and laughter floated in, and quickly out, of her mind. Lying there, she became thirsty after a while. After another while she went to the bathroom, down at the end of the corridor, and drank out of her hands, splashing droplets of water all over her face. She wiped her hand across her mouth and then shook the water off it and slid it across and against her dress. When she walked out of the bathroom she didn't hear any voices from the kitchen so she went in. Nancy was standing at the sink, washing some cups with one hand under the running water and the other clutched at the side of the sink, holding her up.

Mary said: "I'll do that Nan. You sit down."

After a moment Nancy: "Yes, all right, Mary."

She sat down and Mary cleared the table and put all the cups in to the hot water. She heard the television in the next room. Bob's children had left it on and Mary, relieved, was relieved. Suddenly Mary thought she heard Nancy saying something, but she couldn't hear over the noise of the cups. She turned around and Nancy was saying: "and they were sorry not to see you before they went."

"Yes." Mary turned back to the cups. And when they were all washed, she left them on the sink to dry.

"There's some more coffee in the pot if you want some, Mary. And some biscuits, there, in the cupboard, near the fridge."

Mary sat down with the biscuits and the coffee:

"I'll leave the cups to dry overnight."

"Yes. That's the best thing. We'll put them away in the morning."

Nancy took off her glasses and began wiping them with her apron. Mary heard herself munching on the biscuit and wished she hadn't taken it. She took the spoon and stirred the settled sugar at the bottom of the cup, vigorously, so that Nancy wouldn't hear her munching.

"Why are you different? Mary."

Mary's mouth was full. So she didn't say anything.

"Mary, you're different from all my other grandchildren. Why aren't you like your cousin Jenny: she's very bright and always out with her friends. You know. I can't imagine why you're so different. Jim was never like you when he was a boy,

young. Nor Rose your mother, I suspect. Mary, you should be more outgoing. Why didn't you stay here and talk to your uncle?"

—There they go again, Mary, thinking we want to be like them. They can't imagine that we don't want to be like them. They can't imagine that we might want to be alone. And different.—

"Mary."

"Yes. I don't know."

"Jim tells me you're always in your room."

"Yes."

"What do you do?"

"I like it there. It's my house."—Yes, Mary, it's our house. It's got a window to let the air in and a door to let the people in—the window is always open and the door is always shut.—

"Yes, but what do you do in there? Do you think all the time? You know, it's bad to do that, very bad. Some people go mad with thinking too much."—Do you hear that, Mary, some people go mad with thinking too much. Like Bert, they mean, with his god.—

"I had a friend once who taught me all about music and so I listen to music."

"Music. Do you like music, Mary?"

"Yes." Then: "I think so."

"Myself, I've never understood it enough to like it."

Silent silence.

"I wrote a story once, too."

"You did? A story? What about?"

"I can't remember now, but it was long, very long. And I tore it up when I finished it,"—and we felt nothing, did we? We sat there and tore it up and never tried again. Because it couldn't be written in another way, gentler. It was a failure because it was perfect and true. And nothing, nothing, ever comes that perfect. So its perfectness made it imperfect.—

Fidgety silence.

"I'll be going home in a few days, Nan." Then: "School starts in another two weeks and I."

"But Mary, that's another two weeks away. You can stay for another week at least and then go home, can't you?"

—O!—

"I want to go home, Nan."

"All right then. But you can stay if you want to. I would like you, I would like you to stay a little longer."

"I want to go home."

After a moment: "Well then, O! your uncle brought some oranges for me tonight. They're up there in the cupboard in the brown bag. You take them home with you when you go because I've still got the ones your father, Jim, brought for me. You take them with you, all right? You take them with you."

"Yes. Thankyou Nan."

So a few days later Mary left the house. And when Nancy turned away from the front gate and saw the huge house she hated, tears sprang out from under her eyelids and she cried. She went inside and cried at her kitchen table. When she tried to stop, she couldn't. It seemed she was crying for all the times she had forced herself not to. It was as if she had been tortured for hour after hour, day after day and year after year without giving in, and then one day, just because they used no torture for the day, she broke down and gave in. If it was a Frenchman, he would say: "C'est la vie." But Frenchmen, there are none. She didn't know why she cried.

It wasn't that she loved Mary and was grieving at losing her, because she didn't. But Mary had come and stayed and now was gone. Looking for a scapegoat on which to throw her anger, she found only the house and went to the nearest wall and thumped it, spewing out all her frustration, until she fell down on the floor, her body exhausted, but her anger unrelieved.

On Wednesday night, as usual, Jim and Rose and their three youngest, young children, as usual, went to Nancys carrying brown paper bags and silent angers, extinguished for the hour or two, and then to be erupted again back on the road to home, back in the car. Mary, of course and as usual, in her room. Thinking of this last year at school and then:—What are we going to do, Mary? It's suited us just fine till now, going to school, but we can't do that for ever and we have to get away from here or we'll continue dying. Where is our unborn dream? Where are our halls full of dreamy-eyed lovers? Or our inspiration to live. Dream—we haven't got the strength or feeling to come in search of you. Motivation. So you'll have to come and find us. We just have no feeling on which to move you. Our true birth, to them, has seemed tragic. But we can't move from here back to there and we don't want to. Like Bert. Only he was going the other way. We are going to die because there's nothing in us that they want. And they are going to let us fade away.—

Bang bang bang.

“Yes?”

“Dad. Can I come in?”

Mary quickly opened the door.

“Mary, uh, Nan said to ask you if you would like to go and live with her for the whole of the school year she says it'll be easier to get to school from there you know and you can come here for the holidays you know she said she wants you and your mother and me think you should go. If you want to. It'll be easier to get to school and you'll see us when we come on Wednesdays.”

“No. I don't want to. No.”

“But, Mary, uh, all right Mary. Yes. Well then. Uh, Nan said to ring Jenny and ask her then. But she did say to ask you first. You'll ring Jenny and ask her? Yes.”

And that was not the end of that.

Mary left her room and greeted the black phone, grasping it and squeezing it.—The phone number. Yes. Right then, here goes.—

“Is that Jenny?”—But of course.—

“Yes?”

“Mary.”

“Mary? Mary. Yes, Mary?”

Nan said to ask you if you would like to go and live at her house for this year. And go to school. You know.”

“Yes! Yes.” She shouted at someone, her hand over the mouthpiece. But Mary heard the voices.

“Mary? Are you there? Yes. Tell Nan yes. I'll do anything to get away from this joint. And dad. You know how it is with fathers. Always telling you not to stay out late et cetera et cetera et cetera. You know how it is. I spose it'll be ok living with her. I mean, she's too old, gee, it'll be just right . . .”

Clack!

“Did she say yes?” Rose asked.

“Yes.”—Yes yes yes yes yes et cetera et cetera.—

“Well, that's nice of Jenny, isn't it? I mean, she'll have to give up some things and she doesn't seem to mind. I mean, going to live with an old woman won't be any picnic.”

Mary moved away.

“Mary, while you’re there, ring Nan would you? and tell her that Jenny will be coming to live with her.”

“No.”—No no no no no no.—“I don’t want to.”

Mary went in to her room and shut the door.—Hey! hey! we fell in to the trap once before, Mary, and pitied her. Are we now falling in again with sorrow?

Mary was sitting in the school library one day when Nancy took the bottle of blue kero from the laundry and emptied it on to the rose coloured wall to wall. She took a match from the kitchen and struck it and threw it gently on to the keroed rose coloured wall to wall. VU-ump! vu-ump! Nancy sat down on the proud lounge room chair and waited. About an hour later, Mary thought she heard her name and Jenny’s being called over the p.a. When she looked up she saw that everyone was looking at her so she got up and walked to the staff room, thinking nothing.

When she knocked:

“Where’s Jenny?”

Mary would have liked to shrug her shoulders but:

“I don’t know.”

“There’s a phone call. You better take it.”

“Mary?”

“Yes?”

“Mary, uh, Mary. Mary. Mary.”

“Yes. Dad.”

“Mary Nan she has burned the house down she just took a match and burned the house down I’m sorry Mary I’m I’m sorry I’m crying my mother Mary Nan I’m at the hospital Jen Jenny Nan took all Jenny’s things and clothes and clothes and put them outside and then she burned the house down she burned they’re doing everything to save her she’s burned the neighbours pulled her out but burnt she was the neighbour everything they can to save her tell Jenny you better come both everything to save her everything everything my mother.”

Clack.

Jenny.

“Nan burned the house. She’s in the hospital.”

“O no! is she all right?”

“They’re doing everything to save her.”

“O God I hope they do, I hope they save her.”

—SHE DOESN’T WANT TO BE SAVED! But

“My things! my clothes! have they all been burned?”

“Nan took all your things outside before.”

—because of a neighbour

whose family wore endless underwear—

“Really? that’s great!”

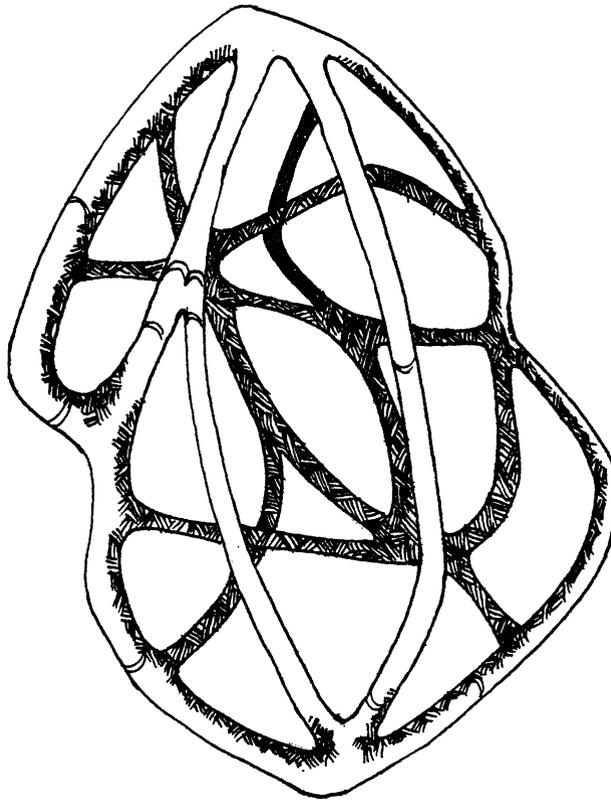
Smack!

Mary clenched her hand to stop it from stinging. Jenny’s red face was whimpering: What did you slap me for?”

But Mary became suddenly calm. Her calmness was as sudden as her outburst. All she felt was the red red stinging in her hand. Then walking away.—We are always beaten aren’t we? By the ways things are and the way nobody can change anything in a significant way. But we haven’t fallen in to Bert’s trap, have we? Bert loved. Utterly. God. Us. Bert thought he was wanted and left himself open for offers. But nobody wanted what he gave. Have we fallen in to the trap? No. We’ve only got ourselves and our truth and our unresponse to them. To them, we are ugly and they are beautiful. They certainly have the numbers, don’t they, Mary?

And that's what counts. The numbers: "Generally speaking . . .", "The majority seem to agree . . .", "A large proportion. . ." And that makes us wrong and them right. So we suppose, we have to give in sometimes and join them. Because we'll never beat them.—

Then—O I hate myself.—



BARRY LOWE

We Love You, Fluffy Date

A woman. Stooped shoulders, straggly hair and wide eyes. In dim light she passes by, her dress pastey and ripped open. She stops, her arms hanging limply at her sides. Before her stillness becomes embarrassing she moves on and picks up something from the ground. It's a skull. She looks at it. A shriek, a cackle spiralling through the air like invisible strands of spaghetti. She remains unmoved as though unhearing. —Whenever you shut a human being out of the world, he will, for better or worse, build one of his own.

She stops as though she has heard. She looks up.

—In the beginning and the end there was darkness and no light.

She looks down as if remembering.

—And there will be a gnashing of teeth.

A soft sobbing shakes her frame.

—If you ever feel ashamed of loving you will never love completely.

She kneels and cradles the skull in her arms. She picks her nose and wipes her fingers on her dress, she drops the skull, not noticing. She stands and walks away.

—Primary sores, sometimes called chancres, may appear elsewhere than on the genitals.

She scratches.

—I dreamed that the child was swinging. The rope had strangled it but the faster I ran the closer it seemed to swing to me. It was leering horribly and then suddenly the rope snapped and the hideous limp child fell on me. I brushed it away but it wouldn't go and then.

She paces arms by her side.

—The dogs had torn her face off. She was a mess. There was hardly anything worth burying.

Woman lies down. Lights dimming.

—The staff and patients of this clinic would like to take this opportunity to welcome you here at the same time expressing regret that events made it necessary for you to seek care.

Woman starts, she is shivering. Foetal position.

—If we tape razor blades to your fingers you can scratch my back with them and we can make love in the blood.

A minister and a doctor have arrived and are standing over the woman.

—It looks rather hopeless. It's best that she be restrained so that she can harm neither herself nor the other patients.

—AFTER THIS I LOOKED AND BEHOLD A DOOR WAS OPENED IN heaven; AND THE FIRST VOICE WHICH I HEARD WAS AS IT WERE OF A TRUMPET TALKING WITH ME WHICH SAID, COME UP HITHER, AND I WILL SHOW THEE THINGS WHICH MUST HEREAFTER. AND IMMEDIATELY I WAS IN THE spirit, AND BEHOLD, A THRONE WAS

SET IN heaven, AND one SAT ON THE THRONE. AND he SAT AND WAS TO LOOK UPON LIKE A JASPER.

As the minister continues the woman is awakened and constrained in a strait jacket. —AND A SARDINE STONE; AND THERE WAS A RAINBOW ABOUT THE THRONE IN SIGHT LIKE UNTO AN EMERALD. AND ROUND ABOUT THE THRONE WERE FOUR AND TWENTY SEATS: AND UPON THE SEATS I SAW FOUR AND TWENTY ELDERS SITTING; CLOTHED IN WHITE RAIMENT, AND THEY HAD ON THEIR HEADS CROWNS OF GOLD.

The woman is standing.

—Do you have anything to say to the minister before you go?

—WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE ENFOLDED INTO THE CHURCH MY CHILD? PREPARE YOURSELF FOR BAPTISM.

The doctor forces her to kneel in front of the minister.

—BY THE POWER THAT IS VESTED IN ME THROUGH THE lord god I HEREBY BAPTISE YOU. IN THE NAME OF THE father, THE son, THE holy ghost.

He unzips his fly and urinates on the woman.

—THAT'S ABOUT ALL WE CAN DO FOR HER AT THE MOMENT.

They go off leaving the woman. She stands, confused and wanders about knocking the skull with her foot. She stares down at it.

—If the doctor wishes to offer guidance he should never pass judgment. Whether he puts his judgment into words, or keeps them to himself, makes not the slightest difference.

Doctor and minister exit.

—Depressed we take an overdose of sleeping pills, nerve tablets, etc.

Woman paces.

—They were led to the scaffold in the old barrack square (hushed). About two hours before noon the two were suspended by ropes under their armpits. A regiment was drawn up and given the order to fire.

The woman walks to the door.

—And there was hail mingled with fire and blood.

Woman bangs her head against the door softly but urgently.

—The sea was turned to blood and all the creatures in it died.

She is banging louder.

—and the smoke rose like smoke from a great furnace and the sun and the earth were darkened by the smoke in the shaft.

Woman bangs on the door.

—then over the earth, out of the smoke, came locusts, a buzzing horde that pierced the sky and rent the heavens.

Woman thumps.

—He was stark naked and almost cold, stretched out across the bed. His clothes were pulled off, his jaw fallen, and his eyes open in a most frightful posture.

—Leprosy is a strictly human disease, animals are particularly immune.

—And they marched them into the squares and immediately sealed off each of the exits. As they huddled together the snipers opened fire. The people panicked and fled only to be impaled on the barbed wire. Those that remained huddled closer and died silently.

Woman has sunk to the floor.

“Let me in please. Please let me in.”

All is darkness. The sound of heartbeats banging.

“Please let me in.”

Heartbeats continue.

CHRIS HEMENSLEY

An Essay on Style

My Aunt powdered her face & set herself for the Outside World. It rained whenever we went to Town. My Aunt & i—my Aunt before, i think, i called her Lydia (how rude, said my mother, she is your *Aunt*), settled in the red leather seats of the double-decker bus, Number Five (5), the red bus (the Corporation). It rained we had an umbrella, we shopped for chicory & aubergines at the Continental Shop & for herbs & special purgatives at the Health shop. The smell of powder & posh feel of fur on cheek & chin—the smell of omnibus leather, of perfume & powder (Aunt) in the rain on high-heels in the High Street—Mayes below Bar (geography with Norman Bar-Gate as hub, the castle the suits of armour & do you know there are children of the town who have never seen inside? My father treated us to a visit at least once. He spoke with the keeper. “Isnt it marvellous” or “isnt it amazing how—” is the tenor of his public monologues. He loves to talk.¹ Hear my mother’s different voices: to boast to the neighbours of his refinement, knowledge & gentility: to beat him about the head with charges of ‘pedant’ & “you should have been a priest, *then* you could have talked & read *all day*”). Red & black is my Aunt’s attire. The 50s. She is the only close relative without blue eyes.²

My Aunt crossed her heart. She placed my hand “there”. Do you feel anything? (Not *that* you dirty-minded—you would take advantage of your sick aunty? Englizie all the same—cold-blooded . . .)—She spat on her fingers (a pretended tt-tt-) & said corny-corny. She succeeded in keeping jealous wives from the door. They were all superstitious. Tales of blackberries & birthmarks, venereal diseases & spiders-webs. I dont rightly recall which caused what? Witch is the word. Bad woman—prostikhos—hissed with more tt-tt & signs of the cross.

This is the way the thread lives. I begin with my Aunt. Anywhere. There must have been other times but this time i recall as “the only time i went out with my aunt and uncle together” to an entertainment, Peter Greene as Robin Hood at the Ritz over the hill & faraway for children under ten in the good old 50s. At least my uncle could drink a whole beer then. He went over himself with a quart-jug to

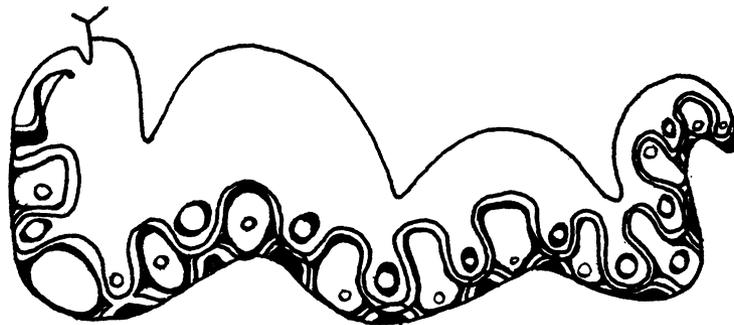
¹ In my father’s book work-mates are called colleagues. In his reportage. A colleague of mine died. Who used to work with us, i saw in the Esso magazine he passed away last month, poor devil. Keeps greyhounds (no——) is building his own boat: wouldn’t you like to help me build our own boat and sail it around the world? Baptism with Final Selection on a tributary of the River Itchen—Itchen or Test, check it up (you boys should know it—local geography—this or that side of the River): the County is divided quite definately: schools and public transport—difference quite definately in the bearing of the children of County and the majority from Borough (the Corporation)—never to follow hounds. . .

² But she has the bluest of eyes, said the Writer’s wife: subterranean grottoes of memorable blue. Has she? said the Writer—i thought they were brown. I must have forgotten. Anyway—it is proper that i say she hasnt in this place. I might correct it elsewhere.

that strangest of all the rooms in the public-house—the Bottle & Jug—which a woman filled for him with draught bitter ale. He bought packets of crisps as well. The pub is much the same as the barbers-shop. There is a spittoon runs round the bar — all four walls. Men snort snott & blow phlegm into it. It is an art. Len the Barber asks, how's your father? Well, i say. I saw Jim the other day, he said—yesterday. & tells the story which Jim repeats today. Had yer haircut? Yes, i say. Did he tell you about your old man? Stoppit Jimmy, said my Aunt, he's the boy's father, blood is thicker than water, you English (make me sick) will never understand. Len says yer ole man comes in & asks for a haircut. Which one? Len says. & yer ole man tells him this flippin story of how five years ago he was losin it but now after rubbin in treacle or summat (Smaes Hair Restorer, i said) he's grown enough to have it cut again! Of course we all laughed! Poor, my Aunt said, really he's a decent man. Silence at that point. We die for it to be filled with television gunfire or a fight in an upstairs flat. But this isnt the 50s any longer. Thats the way the thread dies. That was an early 60.

Lost in story. The face of Silliman, a fatty at eleven, from a rough district, whose brothers rode with Moggy's brothers, an association of cow-horn bikies. Silliman had a limp but managed soccer & cricket, a wicket-keeper & number eleven bat, of the block & foreward push variety, always out against the straight ball. Silliman at twenty-five a solid middle-order batsman on the municipal park. Push & run, his off-stump well guarded & never a chance of a snick to the wickie. Eventually run-out thru a silly call from his opposite number, he settled on the bench in the pavilion with his clubmates & attended the inevitable procession of the tail from pavilion to wicket & back again, with ritual hand-clapping & downcast eyes. He glanced back at me, a stranger at the back of the pavilion, remembering my face? trying to place me. I dreamt him facing up to my impeccable length, my right-arm leg-spinners wearing my third finger raw. His countenance filling the distance between the oceans. I ponder—is this England or Australia? He fronts up in the story—left knee & left elbow forward & the bat scraping dust as he blocks the delivery. He steps back & twirls his bat. He turns his back on me. His face fills Australia. I limp from the story (the dream?) convinced that Silliman's gleaming whites & fresh scrubbed demeanour spell contentment. He watches me off the boundary as he claps the last man in & out, the other team's victory. He stows the years of our difference in his cricket-bag murmuring "who".

From *Down Under*, a novel in preparation.





PETER LOFTUS

Number Nine

Fleming woke suddenly, straight into the light. He could hear someone screaming. He turned his neck on the pillow, and set his head stiff, coming down on the sound. A short, high yelp, in pain, then a high screaming that climbed against the walls of the corridor, and shut off, snap, and a soft voice trailing a long way down past his door. The women above often made noises like that. Any time of the day. He could often see them from the lawn, on the balcony above, drifting past in the sunlight with their hands clamped on their foreheads, or crouched against the wall behind the iron railing, turned in on it, whispering to themselves.

Outside the light on the lawn spread out and burned. The dry grass crackled on the pathway, the sun made a great fireball in the gum trees. The flowering gum near the laundry, with its long streamers of leaves, broke up slowly into strips of light like metal, and the small red buds high up in the crown of the tree flashed like smoked glass. The corridor outside his room stretched in white curves, one folded into the other, down to the end. He tried not to think of the day. Anything served as a subject. The woman who woke him. Did she wake him? Or was he pitched into the morning light on the last notes of other sounds?

His door opened. Its cream slab swung away from the wall. 'Good morning, Mr. Fleming. It's a beautiful morning.' He slid a big tray onto the bed. Fleming could see it, level with his eye, glittering on the white sheet. He had never seen this man before. The man leaned over the right side of the bed, and stirred something with his hidden hand. Fleming could hear the faint rustle of water.

'Would you like a shave?' But he didn't wait for Fleming's answer. He had it worked out before he put the question. He dipped into the small silver bowl, and brought up a shaving brush which steamed a little in his clean white fist. The first touch of the warm, soapy liquid felt like frost on Fleming's neck.

'You know you are having treatment this morning?' he asked Fleming very softly, as if the question was a necessary obscenity. He stroked the side of Fleming's jaw with the brush, then hauled it up and down his face swiftly, turning the lather in. Fleming lay stiffly under the cover of sunlight. There was light everywhere, armfuls of it, leaking in through the window. The man's fingernails moved like blades past Fleming's eyes. He got up and moved away. Fleming could hear somebody shuffling slowly past the door. The weeks had given him the hearing of a deer. Fleming could feel the crust of sweat between his toes, at the other end of the bed. He could hear now the man in his room slapping a razor against a strap, somewhere on the dark side of the window pane.

When the man had gone, and the door was closed again on the corridor, Fleming put his head back under the sheet, coiled into the damp heat of the bed as far as he could go, trying to shut out the knives of sunlight. But they shifted and oscillated across the room, weaving under the ceiling, until the room was like the observation cell in an aquarium, where the big fish glide in bubbles.

They were taken out early, before the others lined up for breakfast. Fleming could hear the clatter of plates, the shouts of the kitchen maids in the big room at the far end of the corridor. The big nurse, the Dutchman, came with them, to take them across the courtyard, through the gate, over the dry lawn, to the treatment block. There were four of them from their ward, Fleming, the red farmer with his hands in his pockets, an old woman from upstairs in a wheelchair, and Frank, the little Italian who'd come a week before in the police car. They were all wearing dressing gowns and slippers. The dutchman pushed the wheelchair, his head bent down as he lifted it clear of the step, and the farmer trudged along behind with his head down, his red neck shivering. Fleming felt very tired, but his skin was fresh, tight, scraped dry after the shave.

The Dutchman took them over the lawn, across the concrete path, into the long lobby of the treatment block. They waited as the queue built up. At the centre of the lobby there was a reception desk. A man in a white jacket stood there with a nurse, and they directed the queue as it drifted past. The Dutchman parked the old lady near the wall, and went up to the desk. The man in the white jacket looked at them briefly, and nodded to the Dutchman. He put his elbows down on the desk, and planted one finger firmly on the side of his nose. From another corridor on their right a stream of men shuffled out past the desk. They were all in dressing gowns, but underneath some wore odd scraps of pyjamas. They all had the peculiar dead faces of the lost, their eyes floating, their jaws kept down, stooped, the bone slanted away from the pain behind the eyes, trying to prop it up, or get away from it.

From the other side of the desk a ragged line of women were directed into the depths of the block, somewhere into separate rooms Fleming couldn't see. He looked at the floor. He didn't want to see. The farmer drooped heavily onto the leather bench next to the wall. He sighed. He took one hand from his pocket and rubbed it across his scrubbed cheek. Fleming could hear the white bristles of his skin grate like the crust of a stale vegetable. The Dutchman came back and spread his wrists on the chrome handles of the wheelchair. Frank, the tiny Italian who spent his first night in the ward begging frantically in scraps of English for a phone so he could apologise to the policeman who brought him in, stood bewildered by the bench, looking around with wide eyes at the queue straggling past. He had nearly pulverised his brother-in-law with a cheeseboard. The Dutchman put a hand on his shoulder, and motioned to Fleming at the same time. He pointed to the line of men going past the desk, moving down the hidden corridor into some unseen section of the block.

'You can go now. Up that way.' He wheeled the old lady away. The wheels of the chair hissed on the green linoleum squares.

They moved into the corridor. The farmer got to his feet and looked at Fleming. 'Where the hell do they want us now?' he mumbled. He stabbed at his baggy pockets, and stumped off like an elderly bear, looking for a place to get out of the rain.

Frank walked in front of Fleming, looking around all the time, maybe for someone to help him, to get him out of whatever was coming. There were about twenty men spread out down the corridor, some with their hands in front of their dressing gown cords, some with their heads down, and one big, childish fellow at the far end sucking on something between his teeth.

They looked like a herd of ghosts picked up from some forgotten disaster.

At the end of the corridor they were separated by an orderly who shoved Frank

gently in one direction, sending him down the line to a waiting room, and motioned to the others to keep going. Frank tottered off with a last wild look backwards. Fleming could feel the buds of sweat between his toes again. His heart wobbled in the stiff cage of his ribs. Somewhere in the white tunnel a room was waiting for them.

The orderly looked down at Fleming. His eyes were solemn, official. He hadn't time to be kind. Fleming took a risk and stepped forward. He didn't care now where he was going.

'Wait a minute.'

The orderly was forced to grab him a little too roughly on the high point of his shoulder. Fleming stood still, cold at the touch. He could see the orderly didn't like having to be rough. He wanted to keep the game as cordial as possible, the tactics cool. He had a paper sheet he was trying to check as they shambled up. He stared at it for a minute, and then said slowly.

'Number nine. In there. OK?'

Fleming could hear the thick feet of the farmer, and the grating of his bristles behind him. Number nine. OK. Who cares.

It was a wide room with a big window on one side. The window had a sheet or something tied across the glass, but the sun still blazed behind it, throwing flares of sunlight across the walls. Fleming could see the beds. Four of them, with big white screens at the side of each one. For a moment they looked like four nuns in white robes sitting hunched at each bed, waiting for them.

Suddenly Fleming was scared.

He held down a violent urge to turn around and walk back fast down the hall and catch a bus.

He turned and found the farmer breathing behind him. He still had his hands in his pockets. His red face was like the crust of a prawn, those big king prawns that they boil in little pots on the beach, their tiny white eyes go dry and hard like drops of wax.

His big loose ears flapped at him.

'In there?' He thrusts his neck out, in the direction of the door.

He followed Fleming in, a big red bear without a bush.

They weren't given much time to think. At first. There were two figures in white cruising up towards them from the bottom end of the corridor. They stepped in over the threshold and glanced at them. Their eyes were like metal reflectors. They had a piece of paper, and a metal tray. The first one, whose hair was very thick and black, waved his hand.

'On the bed.' His order is like the sound of a melon being cut.

The last man of the group wandered in behind them. It was the Pianist, a boy of nineteen who had personality disintegration, and who played the piano day and night in the canteen, brilliant flashing music from some inexhaustible melody in his head. He had wide experience of the treatment. He knew where to go. He stepped through the doorway, and climbed up onto the first bed, the one nearest the door, carefully positioning his head on the pillow.

There were four of them now, all in. The farmer, Fleming, the Pianist, and a very old man already there, lying on the last bed near the window. The two white figures had to turn him around, to get his head into the middle of the room, at the centre of the wheel.

Fleming noticed the circle the beds made. They were turned in, the bedheads coming to a point in the centre of the room, like thick white spokes.

Fleming lay down on his bed. The white sheet felt like steel under his back.

Then he had to get up again to take off his dressing gown. The two men worked on them, quickly, going from one to the other with quick little speeches.

'Any false teeth? Can we have them please. Keep your arms still.'

They came to Fleming last. He could see the black hair of the first one cruise suddenly over his forehead like a shutter.

They worked fast at the side of the bed. One of them pulled his legs down straight on the sheet, drew the feet together, walked round again, and came to his left arm. The other one was busy with the tray. Fleming's left arm drooped over the bed, his hand almost touching the floor. He could hear the farmer grumbling in the background. They asked him to clench his fist, open and shut, hard, in and out, until a vein came up for the needle. His hand felt cold and weak, like a piece of damp mud. They held his arm tight, and the short brass needle slid into the thin crust of his skin. They taped it down to his wrist, strapping it into place. Then they went out.

They lay on their rosette of sheets, their hands almost coming together in the centre. The screens spread out from this point like shelters in a street.

Outside in the corridor the last groups of men drifted into their rooms to lie and wait.

A great silent flux settled in the block.

Fleming's skin itched near the needle, in the tiny puckered slit where it waited, sly as a leech. He held his head tight, straight in line with the bed, staring at the ceiling overhead. Its white, continuous plane offered such a field of blankness that it was almost comforting.

The farmer was irritable.

'Jesus! They take their bloody time, don't they?'

There was fear as well as vexation in his voice.

The old man coughed. The bubble of mucous in his throat alarmed Fleming. Somehow it indicated the definite limit of the ceiling. There is always a point where something else has to happen.

From outside, somewhere deeper in the maze of white walls that slid straight past their room, someone started yelling, very loud, urgent.

'Pleesa no! No! No! Plee-sa no!'

The voice dragged itself through the vowels of the unfamiliar language in a pathetic moan, but in the silence of the block it was as loud as any cry in the dark.

Fleming felt the skin under his eyes getting hot.

The farmer whispered in a thick voice.

'Jesus. Who's that?'

It was Frank, the Italian. They listened. It had gone. The cry had shut off, died away.

Fleming concentrated on the area of terrible calm above his head, the faint contours of plaster. The Pianist turned on his bed.

'Would anyone like to change places? I'll be first.'

His bed, Fleming recalled, was nearest the door.

There was a spasm of silence in the room.

The farmer lifted his right arm above his head, almost waved.

'It's alright, mate.'

Fleming, fighting with the rising heat of his skin, turned his head slightly, an inch, towards the window. The sunlight flashed on the drapes hiding the glass. There was a small dark point above the window, in the corner of the ceiling.

He trained his eye on it. It was a web, a dry circle of silk hair. In its centre there was a fly, a blue husk with a shred of wing tissue on its shoulder. The left over scrap of life glittered in the sunlight like perspex. Fleming stared at it until it started to spread in his mind. The blue shell of the fly's body grew until he couldn't see past it, until he knew that even if he dared turn his head to right or left of the strict parallel line of the orderlies' commands, he wouldn't be able to escape the spread of the fly's hulk, its enormous shadow overhead.

They could hear the trolley in the corridor. A slight swish of rubber wheels, the discreet footsteps of the medical staff. Gradually, as the thing worked its way through the block, from one room to another, a profound stillness settled in the building. The squad of silent men followed the trolley from room to room, coming closer and closer, left a pall of silence behind them in each separate cell of the building, like a team shutting the covers, one by one, after an epidemic, some disaster that must remain anonymous.

The farmer turned heavily on his bed. The boy near the door said calmly to him, 'You'll lose your needle.'

The farmer grunted at him.

'Bugger the needle. Where the hell are they?'

Fleming listened to the flutter of his blood, under the shadow that now engulfed him. The trolley slid into the room. He could hear the smooth tremor of its wheels, the faint creak of chrome. His heart flapped under the thick knob of bone in the perfect centre of his breast.

If I die now, he had time to breathe to himself, if I die now.

The scrap of insect wing flashed like a star.

An arm took him by the ankle, he could feel the professional contact of dry skin, the weight of strange breathing, the slightest stab of cold metal in his wrist, a terrible lunge of blood through the bottom of his head, his jaw was undermined by some immense pressure that took him down through the floor of the room, and a hatchet of electric wire cut a crease of stars through the rim of his eyes. The shadow of the fly fell on him without a sound, from a great height outside.

He found himself in the sun at the end of the lobby. A line of dullfaced men trooped past, one by one, emerging like moths from their rooms.

The farmer drifted up, rubbing his jaw. His face was like a split red leaf.

He whispered fiercely into Fleming's eyes.

'Listen. When are they gonna see us?'

Fleming smiled. His skin parted reluctantly from the summit of his teeth.

'They've been, I suppose.'

The farmer growled, puzzled, his eyes screwed up like slots.

'What?'

Fleming stepped unsteadily towards the door, aware of the terrible unfamiliarity of his own voice, and its penetrating sweetness.

GRAHAM JACKSON

Country Town

Here let us sleep, country town,
on our electric blankets
spread in a fogged valley
on a still night in winter:

here our bare religion
still covers the gumtree hills
and gives us security—

here on the valley side
where we cling to slopes worn smooth
and slippery in the past,
before we knew we loved them.

Here let us sleep and dream,
where the light of the present
reflects in the fogged river
its colorful neon signs,

the red and yellow Shell signs
of the highway arched over
the water we must cross

in a dream of the future,
before the electric night
shortcircuits sleep and shocks us
with another vision.

My Father

My father, who worked for Drug Houses of Australia,
has just retired.

He worked for fortysomething years so close to fifty
it makes no difference,

drove his company car around northern Victoria
and southern NSW

for almost half those years and never took a day off
on sick leave.

My father, who worked for Drug Houses of Australia,
remembers such things

as dead spanish flies in a jar, leeches in a jar,
opium in a jar,

while I myself have seen more recently efedrine,
benzedrine, methedrine,

all in silver foil and all of which I despise—
but not

my father, who worked for Drug Houses of Australia.
I respect

my father because he did until his retirement
what he chose to do,

and for this reason I have chosen to write poetry
uncomplainingly

and without a day off on sick leave for fifty years—
just like

my father, who worked for Drug Houses of Australia
before he retired.

GREGORY CAMPBELL

A Pool of Mirrors

where she undresses there drama be
in the quick or the vast or the changing of a sudden
flash of touchless horizon
like a boat of dreams
between the candy and the sweat

a parachute of hung smoke the sky
that fills above a dangling earth
(they say its going down but slowly to be sure)
or maybe like these children
who fly their kites of parachutes
a toy floating on a string unwound
hand-held
between the breathing finger and the breathless dome
of the thousand strings that wind
at Normandy this one at least

the beach a close shore now mid-morning
flossily flap
the arms of bathers and bunting bright
in lines between signs
strung overhead
jutting from the flak of potato stone
woven 'midst circles of yesterday's moats
and playful rocks of a tumbled chateau
umbrellas wheel in multi-coloured
mushrooms of today's shadow

so there they slumber coloured feet
on that camera-click of pastel beach
like a table daintily set
a stage for a curtain to raise
a waiting-hall a twilight call
poised between the coming scene
the sun that roars through opening doors
what do you see, bouncing beach-ball,
but a shore gently kissed by waves?

a line of explorers follow the tide
the yacht turns heavy on its side
the fish that forgot to swim
lays gasping
like the chest of the boy who clutches the prize
and somewhere grins the moon

VIV KITSON

For Gretchen: A Song on Parting

Because I have not forgotten you,
and my hands can still trace
the crushed lilies of/on your face,
do not turn to me with the bloated clouds
that lave me with their birth of rain
today.

Thirsting, the trees praise upwards.
I wilt/
perhaps.
in the bitter salt taste of your tears.

IAN MUDIE

World Without Birds

It was only today
(while three white-plumed honeyeaters
feasted among the nectar-heavy blossoms
of the scarlet bottle-brush,
a wagtail called loudly
from the twelve-foot sapling above,
and a pair of crows
went cawing across the sky)
that I thought
of the enormous emptiness
of a world without birds
—songless,
silent,
dead.

Silence Before Dawn

Here in this moonlit garden
suddenly the wagtail
sleepless under the bright sky
shattering the frost-like silence
with a sudden tinkle
of glass-like melody.

Then, distantly,
a succession of small waves
smashing down to a suck of sound
on the empty beach.

Soon it will be time
for the pre-dawn jet-plane to pass over
and rip the final quietness
from this moon-bright night.

ALAN ALEXANDER

Words for Joe

What happened to you,
You crafty old weathercock,
With your cranky outpourings of country wisdom?
I thought you would have known better than that,
Remembering your tobacco-stained laugh
As I climbed up to meet you on top of the stack,
And your uneasy look as I worked on
With blisters until tea came, and the big tree
Blocking the mountain span
Under the pitchforks stabbing in the sun;
What happened to the man
Living carelessly in the seedhouse
On the side of a hill,
With his egg and bit of bacon,
And well-timed spit
Sizzling with local scandal
On the mouthpiece of the fire?
What's up, Joe?
They have taken out your bed,
And your biscuit tin of Sunday cake,
And flung your boots on the far ditch,
While I remain,—the college boy you mocked,—
To lend you life the weather has dismissed,
To help you curse the winter and the rain.

ROBERT C. BOYCE

Kickback

the good face
placed earnestly
on every misfortune
except his own
is no mask

for the traitor's eye
plucked lustily
from the mirror-image
hide

simultaneously

without notice

Snapshot

The first step confidently taken
The second accidentally broke his fall.
So quietly the eyes
Filled with blood
The mouth with unreason.

STEFANIE BENNETT

Age

I stand beneath a solitary arch,
Shock-pink, wrinkle-wrapped. Tend
Unseen bats in an unseen belfry:
The age of mad and deadly darlings.

We could spice the broth's deeds if
Remembering wasn't a soiled copybook,
Rip the petal from the love-flower
And murder all indelibles

—But that, my lovelies, would smear
Hopes and reliable safety: 'I love me
Who I am not; let it be.'
Odd is an act. We have always been

Thru hoop, fire, elemental tragedy.
Just draw the curtain, quickly. Quickly!

JOHN M. WRIGHT

“It’s Harder for a Rich Man to Enter
the Kingdom of Heaven . . .”

Already we own two cars
proudly and might have bought a house
last month for a thousand down
and fifteen years to pay
—it’s a good time to buy,
my brother-in-law’s house
doubled its value in eighteen months
and I wouldn’t mind driving *his* car,
the sleek civilised savagery
of a white Alfa-Romeo
held on my leash
like a hundred and twenty
mile per hour poodle,
flashed in Toorak streets

last month we laughed
at the pomp of a Toorak wedding
and tried to imagine the minister
risking “it’s harder-for-the-rich-man”
as his groomed words
thudded through church;
—fifty wealthy people
padded into pews

unlike them we vote Labor
try to avoid cliches
and cultivate mice in our cupboards,
but would never object to more money
—twenty-three years old in Melbourne
we dither
between deference and defiance.

MARIAN B. McLEOD

Bernadette Devlin and the Tradition of Irish Political Heroines

The proliferating and seemingly endemic hostilities in Northern Ireland have drawn from journalists and academics a substantial body of commentary and analysis on the causes and cures of the "Irish question." One cannot read accounts of the recent crisis in Ulster without encountering the name of Bernadette Devlin. Indeed, her career developed as rapidly and startlingly as the civil unrest in her native Ulster, until she became, in the words of Sara Davidson writing in *Harper's Magazine*, "a symbol of Catholic militancy, socialism, youth, Irish nationalism, and the struggle for worldwide human rights."¹

Appraising the poise and ability Miss Devlin displayed as a speaker in the civil rights movement, Loudon Seth, who accompanied her during her 1969 American tour, said that Bernadette Devlin attracted attention during her campaign for Parliament "because of her speaking ability and her guts. . . . Bernadette stood out in terms of charisma. It became obvious to us all that she related to a mass audience."² Her followers idolized her, declaring her to be "St. Bernadette", "St. Joan of Arc", "The Maid of Bogside", "The Saint of Tyrone".³ While Miss Devlin refused these pious titles and the religious leadership attached to them—"fancy titles" she calls them in her autobiography⁴—her rejection did not dispel the mystique that surrounded her during her early parliamentary career and was reinforced for her followers by the fact that in the violence in Derry on August 12, 1969, she emerged unscathed from the barricades.

The adulation of Miss Devlin's followers was hardly shared by her Unionist opponents, who called her "Fidel Castro in a mini-skirt".⁵ And some of her fellow parliamentarians said that she was "such a silly little girl" that she did not deserve to be heard, and sarcastically suggested that she settle problems in Ulster before presuming to speak on domestic affairs in the United Kingdom.⁶

Such admonitions, of course, are merely fatuous when one realizes the complexity of the troubles in Ulster and the intractable hostility on both sides. The history of Ireland suggests that there is apparently nothing new in the hatred and deep divisions that exist in Ulster today. The development of Ireland—in particular Northern Ireland—has followed a colonialist pattern marked by invasion, confiscation and exile, government from a foreign capitol, embattled landlords and embittered natives. Battling Catholics and Protestants in Ulster today are keenly aware of the historical developments in their long-standing feud. They speak of the Rising of 1798 and the Battle of the Boyne in 1690 as if these events were current. Without doubt the events in their history have drawn rigid lines within the Irish community, and these events are invoked today as a means of marking the separate identities of the two groups.

The numerous processions held by each side to mark its special dates serve effectively to dramatize the differences between the two sides and are traditionally the occasions for confrontations between the two groups. Bernadette Devlin provides a description of the processions held by each side, Protestant Orangemen and Catholic Nationalists:

All over Northern Ireland on July 12, branches of the Orange Order march off some three or four miles to a field where a meeting is held. . . . Respective leaders of the organization start wallowing to the knees in Papish blood. . . . Having blasphemed their fellow Christians, they do another Christian stomp home again, get drunk, sing Orange songs, and take in the Union Jack to be put away till next year. Next day Protestant speaks to Catholic again and community relations are back to normal. It's the same thing, but in reverse, when it comes round to the 1916 commemoration day, or to the fifteenth of August. . . . The Nationalists, the Catholic Tories of Northern Ireland, keep it as their day and sing anti-Orange songs.⁷

The Ulster parades seem to have changed little from the nineteenth century, when a government inquiry following the Belfast riots of 1857 had this to say of the role of the Orange Order:

The Orange system seems to us to have no other practical result than as a means of keeping up the Orange festivals, and celebrating them, leading as they do to violence, outrage, religious animosities, hatred between classes, and too often, bloodshed and loss of life.⁸

A more recent assessment of the usefulness of the parades comes from two researchers in conflict theory, R. S. P. Elliot and John Hickie, who express the opinion that the traditional parades are a valuable means of letting off steam in a situation where each side depends on each other to keep the peace, but harmonious co-existence is precarious. In their estimation, the confrontation coming from the parades 'probably plays a part in damping down hostility within the community'.⁹

The differences in Ulster society are not only rooted in history and dramatized by the activities of extremist groups on each side, but are kept alive and passed on by means of the segregated school system. Describing how the schools have been used to demarcate social and cultural differences, Bernadette Devlin writes of her own schooling:

We learned Irish history. People who went to Protestant schools learned British history. We were all learning the same things, the same events, the same period of time, but the interpretations we were given were very different. At the State school they teach that the Act of Union was brought about to help strengthen the trade agreements between England and Ireland. We were taught that it was a malicious attempt to bleed Ireland dry of her linen industry, which was affecting English cotton. We learned our Irish history from *Fallon's Irish History Aids*, Fallon's being a publishing firm in Southern Ireland. Now the Ministry of Education had issued a memorandum saying that *Fallon's Irish History Aids* were not to be used in schools, because they were no more than sedition and treason in the name of history. On a point of principle, *all* our books were published by Fallon's. When the Ministry wrote in to complain, Mother Benignus wrote back in Irish, just to make another point clear.¹⁰

Political parties and the two major churches likewise contribute to the divisiveness and lack of communication between Catholic and Protestant. Neither church officially subscribes to discriminatory practices, but church members—Protestant Unionists and Catholic Nationalists alike—habitually knowingly mistake each other's point of view. In Miss Devlin's opinion, the political parties have used religion "to divide and rule the working class".¹¹ The result of such division along religious lines, she says, is that the working people of both sides are "polarized by

the ploy into their religious sects, and set against each other. . . . [They] have not been able to combine and fight politically for their real interests".¹² The churches, Devlin charges, have not acted energetically to oppose such discrimination and to improve the lot of their ordinary members, but have been content to preserve the *status quo*. In her opinion, the Catholic Church is not seeking any change, but is acting in an essentially conservative fashion, content to defend its own influence. She states:

Among the best traitors Ireland has ever had, Mother Church ranks at the very top, a massive obstacle in the path to equality and freedom. She has been a force for conservatism, not on the basis of preserving Catholic doctrine or preventing the corruption of her children, but simply to ward off threats to her own security and influence.

. . . .
When the Church sees the initiative against injustice being taken by somebody else, she becomes afraid that her influence is slipping and condemns the initiative as trouble-making with which no good Catholic should have anything to do.¹³

Thus, Ulster society is a community divided and in conflict. While day-to-day contact between the two groups usually proceeds without open animosity, each side is defensive and suspicious toward the other, and there is a careful preservation of group identity. In the words of Elliot and Hickie, Northern Ireland exhibits a situation where "two communities eventually end up needing their mutual opposition in order to maintain their own values and beliefs about themselves".¹⁴

Commenting on the mingled animosity and forced interdependence of the two groups, Bernadette Devlin observes that the effect of such forces on the average Ulsterman is to dampen his initiative for change, to make him suspicious of any attempt to rock the boat. Ulster, she says, is saddled with

a medieval mentality that is being dragged painfully into the eighteenth century by some forward-looking people. Anyone who belongs to the twentieth century, politically or in any other way, is a revolutionary. . . . Everyone knows there are ills in our society, but if you have a job you content yourself with it and mind your own business. No criticism, no urge to go out and make progress can be afforded because these might disturb the delicate balance of the peace. Just how delicate this balance is was proved in 1968 when the civil-rights movement's demand for simple justice sent the country up in flames.¹⁵

Miss Devlin is not remarkable for her intellectual orientation to the Ulster situation: "I'm not a Socialist because of high-flown intellectual theorizing," she says, in recognition of the fact that experience not theory shaped her views.¹⁶ Yet professors Elliot and Hickie of The London School of Economics substantially concur in her analysis when they describe Ulster in the following terms:

Thus the two communities, loaded with a long history of mutual opposition, are also faced with a situation where there is a very low level of information flowing between them. . . . There are rules which govern the day to day relationships between the two sides, but should there be any substantial shift in the social balance, or should anything happen to upset those rules, then there is every reason to be pessimistic about the future of such a society. . . . It was just such a breakdown of the rules between the two communities which led to the violence which erupted in 1969. . . .¹⁷

The divisiveness of Ulster society, which is its chief characteristic, is a central concept to be kept in mind in examining the rhetoric of Bernadette Devlin. Her speaking served to dramatize the separate identity of the "have-nots" in her society, in much the same way as the speaking of Land Leaguers and republican nationalists early in the century kept the identity of the native Irish distinct from that of the

Ascendancy. And, as was true of earlier Irish speakers, her rhetoric is basically nonsectarian, even though those whose betterment she sought were primarily Catholic. Within the limits of this paper there is not time to explore all the ramifications of the Northern Ireland situation, but I will briefly develop two additional observations which may shed some light on Miss Devlin's speaking: that the customary place of women in Ireland is in the home, and that there is at the same time a strong cultural continuity of feminine activism in Irish politics. In sum, I would contend in the first place that it is possible to demonstrate that Bernadette Devlin's rhetoric, while nonsectarian, nonetheless functioned to emphasize the separate aspirations of Catholics in Ulster society, insofar as they can be identified as those who stood to gain most by the reforms she advocated. Second, her dramatic and controversial role was not anomalous, but accords fully with the traditions of Irish history and culture. Finally, it is possible to show that inasmuch as her rhetoric is socialist in outlook, it is entirely in the mainstream of Irish oratory.

Perhaps no country is more consistently portrayed as a male-oriented society than is Ireland. The following passage by Edith Coxhead, taken from her book on Irish heroines of the Easter Rising, succinctly expresses this familiar stereotype: "Ireland, more than most, is a man's country. . . . The majority [of women], diffident and apathetic, seem to have acquiesced."¹⁸ And the women's editor of *The Irish Times*, commenting on the failure of women generally to achieve a recognized place in public affairs, points out that "the only recognized status for women in Ireland is motherhood. It is not considered to be feminine to be interested in politics, trade unions, or anything controversial"¹⁹ Another writer, Martin Wallace, supports these views, adding that Irish women are "often exploited as wage earners, neglected as companions"²⁰

Developing more fully the theme that women's place in Ireland is in the home, Ethna Viney, a sociologist, cites the hard conditions of women in rural Ireland, who are little more than drudges:

Their voice in the affairs of the parish, county or country, is nil. . . . The mature, adult woman has a specific place in the community and she knows it and keeps to it. This is, briefly, at home, looking after her husband, house and family. When she makes a public appearance, she is expected to be as self-effacing as possible. . . . Generally she will take no part in discussions on politics or social or religious questions, when there are outsiders present. . . .

She will vote the same way as her husband votes, unless she is particularly strong-willed. Then she will vote the same way as her father voted.²¹

And this view of the place of women in Irish society is reinforced by the studies of anthropologists Conrad Arensberg and Solon T. Kimball in their book *Family and Community in Ireland*, wherein they report that "house and family are the central interest for the woman".²² While the woman is not excluded from male company, her "being of the company does not seem to stem the flow of talk in the slightest. She remains silent or is ignored so long as their talk deals with the world of men's interest".²³ Although the authors' reference in this case is particularly to women in rural Ireland, they point out that urban mores are merely a variation on essentially the same theme. In the case of the shopkeeper's wife (such as Bernadette Devlin's grandmother), Arensberg and Kimball write that "although in fact the wife plays an important part in the management of the shop, in the affairs of the town it is her husband who stands as representative for his family".²⁴ Moreover, they state that "the managerial aspects belong primarily to the husband. . . . The freedom of movement accorded to him, as a male, is virtually as complete in its way as are the restrictions placed upon his wife as a female".²⁵

The portrayal of Irish women as objects in a mother-cult which grants mystique,

but very little real influence, can be confirmed by a review of Irish history. For example, when Anna Parnell, youngest sister of Charles Stewart Parnell, founded the Central Land League of the Ladies of Ireland in 1881, the Church soundly denounced the organization as threatening "the modesty of Irish womanhood".²⁶

Yet, despite the fact that the effect of Irish society has noticeably to stifle feminine participation in political affairs, history also records their efforts for the Nationalist cause during the period known as the "Troubles" (1919-1921). Praising the way women came forward, Constance Markievicz, one of the leaders of the 1916 Easter Rising, wrote from her cell in Cork Gaol: "My getting locked up has done more to bring women out into the open than anything else. The shyest are ready to do my work when I'm not there."²⁷ In a later, more sober assessment of the role of women in political affairs, she observed: "Outside the towns, they [women] want their initiative faculties developing. . . . There has been less physical restraint on the actions of women in Ireland than in any other country, but mentally the restrictions seem to me very oppressive."²⁸ During the "Troubles" Countess Markievicz worked hard to get women to seek municipal office, but even in her own district of St. Patrick's, in Dublin, she was unable to get a resident woman to stand for election.²⁹

Perhaps the disordered character of Irish government at the time caused women to hold back. The 1916 Rising had failed, and the British were still nominally in control; but in reality the Irish were boldly attempting to govern themselves through an independent Irish parliament, or Dail, which the Sinn Fein victors in the 1918 election set up. Historian A. J. P. Taylor gives this description of the topsy-turvy government:

The Republic, proclaimed at Easter 1916, was solemnly renewed. . . . The Dail behaved as though the republic were in full being and the British no longer existed. . . . A republican government was formed and extended its administration throughout the country. Taxes were levied. Justice was conducted by republican courts—so much so that British courts were deserted. The local authorities took their orders from the republican minister.³⁰

When the British government sought to reassert its authority, opposition arose from a group of guerrilla fighters called the Irish Republican Army, formed in January 1919 under the command of Michael Collins. The British then brought in the infamous Black and Tans and the Auxiliary Division who became, in Professor Taylor's words, "an autonomous terror squad".³¹ The ensuing violence and bloodshed caused even Prime Minister Asquith to declare: "Things are being done in Ireland which would disgrace the blackest annals of the lowest despotism in Europe."³² And William Butler Yeats, in equally compelling language, had this to say of the terrorism:

Now days are dragon-ridden, the nightmare
Rides upon sleep: a drunken soldiery
Can leave the mother, murdered at her door,
To crawl in her own blood, and go scot-free;
The night can sweat with terror as before
We pierced our thoughts into philosophy,
And planned to bring the world under a rule,
Who are but weasels fighting in a hole.³³

When the "Troubles" were over and the Dail was debating the terms of the treaty which would grant home rule to Ireland, the six women deputies in the Dail spoke to extend the franchise to members of their sex who were under thirty and to give grants of land to women as well as to I.R.A. members with farming experience.³⁴ Speakers in debate argued that women were "just as capable of running farms as men are", and had "proved their valour during the years of the Terror".³⁵

One prominent republican, Cathal Brugha, expressed his appreciation of the part played by the women in the Easter Rising when he reminded the Dail that "it was the women, when they organised the public Masses and the public meetings as far as they could, who kept the spirit alive, who kept the flame alive and the flag flying."³⁶ But the parliament was not willing to grant the women's requests, for many of the men feared that with an extended franchise women would vote solidly against accepting the terms of the treaty. Thus, the ladies were thanked and forgotten—as they had been under Parnell and Eamon de Valera, and as they had been in the United States following the Civil War.

Periods of extreme agitation in Ireland, such as the Easter Rising and the "Troubles", seem always to have produced women of passionate commitment whose complicated and dramatic lives were closely bound to events. There is a discernible tradition of such heroines. Some may not consider them typical Irishwomen; nevertheless, they have a firm place in history. Among these politically active women whose place in Irish society will be examined are Anna Parnell, Maud Gonne, and Constance Markievicz. Their lives reveal the role that it was possible for women to play in the founding of modern Ireland.

The contribution of Anna Parnell to the issue of land reform in Ireland has already been cited.³⁷ She believed that women had an active role to play in political affairs. But for her struggle to enlist women to keep the Land League in operation when the men who were its chief proponents were in jail, she was severely opposed by male nationalists. In particular, her brother, Charles Stewart Parnell, repudiated and denounced her efforts from his cell in Kilmainham Gaol, and upon his release forced the Ladies' Land League to disband. The remaining Parnell girl, Fanny, was an author of tracts and poems on Irish grievances who spent much time in the United States enlisting support for the Irish cause. She had been called the bard of the Land League. The following verses, in which she speaks of Gladstone's Land Act of 1881, gives a sample of her fustian style:

Tear up that parchment lie!
Scatter its fragments to the hissing wind—
And hear again the People's first and final cry;
No more for you, oh Lords, we'll dig and grind;
No more for you the castle and for us the sty!

Tear up that parchment lie!
You, Gladstone, sunk supine to quivering slush;
You, Forster, with the sign of Cain in breast and eye;
You, Bright, whose slopping tongue can gloze and gush,
You, puppet brood, the lesser legislative fry
A people's wrath your grinning cozenage defy
We will not loose the land, we will not starve or fly;
Tear up that chartered lie.

Anna and Fanny Parnell were members of a remarkable family which, while it belonged to the ruling Anglo-Irish Ascendancy, was nonetheless sympathetic to the cause of Irish nationalism. The family's extreme devotion to the cause excited comment in English circles where the mother, an American of Ulster Protestant stock, was considered by most "a little off her nut", and to a lesser degree her children as well.

One woman who carried on the feminine activism of the Parnell sisters was Maud Gonne, the daughter of Colonel Thomas Gonne, an English soldier who had been posted to Dublin in 1882.³⁸ Young Maud was sixteen at the time of her arrival in Ireland, and the Land League made such an impression on her that she subsequently joined the organization and took up their cause in fighting the eviction of tenants. Since no influential role had been permitted to women nationalists since

the Ladies' Land League, she formed her own revolutionary women's society, the Daughters of Erin, on Easter Sunday, 1900. This organization first undertook, with great success, to prevent the enlistment of young Irishmen into the British army fighting against the Boers. Her activities centered on writing articles and pamphlets, giving speeches, visiting prisoners and evicted tenants, and organizing demonstrations and boycotts to promote recognition of Irish rights. One of the most widely known and influential women of her day, she also worked with other nationalists to co-ordinate all nationalist activities into the unified program which eventually became known as Sinn Fein. She was particularly active in the Women's Prisoners' Defence League, a group of women who helped provide adequate food and clothing to political prisoners and worked for their eventual release. When she was jailed for her role, she secured her release by going on a hunger strike. She then resumed her meetings of the League despite the fact that British authorities banned such meetings. In general, Maud Gonne did not involve herself directly in violence, although she once took part in an abortive plan to manufacture and smuggle bombs disguised as lumps of coal into British transport ships bound for South Africa.

One of Maud Gonne's notable contemporaries was Countess Markievicz, whose nationalist zeal was expressed in a more violent and dramatic fashion.³⁹ Born into a wealthy Anglo-Irish family (the Gore-Booths of Lissadell, County Sligo), Countess Markievicz did not begin her revolutionary career until she was forty. Once attracted to the idea of political action to secure Irish liberation, however, she immersed herself in the cause completely. By 1909 she had formed a rebel Boy Scout organization whose sole purpose was to lay the foundation of an Irish army. Using her Dublin home, Surry House, as headquarters, she taught her boys marching, first-aid, and marksmanship in preparation for a rising which was planned for Easter Sunday, 1916. The Countess, herself an excellent shot, held the commission of staff lieutenant in the Irish Citizen Army; and during the Easter Rising she was placed in charge of the group that held the College of Surgeons during the four days of fighting in Dublin. For these activities she was condemned to be shot with other leaders of the rebellion; but the sentence was commuted to life imprisonment, and in 1917 she was freed along with the other political prisoners. Upon her return to Ireland, her continued efforts for Sinn Fein and for the extra-legal, independent Irish parliament which they founded in 1919 caused her to be imprisoned on four other occasions. While in prison in 1918 she was elected to Westminster, but there was never any prospect that she would take her seat, since Sinn Fein policy was that elected representatives should boycott the House of Commons and demand recognition of their own Irish parliament.

There is considerable testimony to her speaking abilities. Indefatigable and dauntless in her efforts to achieve an independent Ireland, she filled her speeches at rallies with a mixture of practical advice (how to build street barricades, how to ostracize the police) and exhortations to action (tear up railway lines, fly the Red flag over the House of Commons). When she was on trial in 1919 for urging the killing of police, she did not deny having advised her listeners to "go on drilling and training and be ready to take the place of your leaders if arrested. Boycott English manufacturers and burn everything English except its coal".⁴⁰ And the bold declarations of Irish republican patriotism which she managed to give during the trial left the court in an uproar, as the following account indicates:

The judge sentenced her to four calendar months without hard labour in Cork female prison. Madame rose and theatrically called for three cheers for the Irish Republic. The crowd responded despite official protestations and loudly approved a girl who called out 'Up the rebels'. . . . Cheers for her and derisive shouts for her escort followed their departure from Mallow.⁴¹

The Parnell sisters, Maud Gonne, and Constance Markievicz are by no means the only ones who made significant contributions. Others whose roles must be at least briefly mentioned include the following:⁴² (1) Mary McSwiney, a teacher who pioneered in the establishment of an independent all-Gaelic school and who became a member of the Second Dail, the parliament which ratified the treaty; (2) Helen Malony, a militant feminist who worked with James Connolly to unite the Irish labour movement with the nationalist cause. She founded and edited the first Irish women's journal, and in 1915 became secretary of the Women Workers' Union; (3) Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington, whose efforts as a member of the Irish Women's Franchise League resulted in equal rights for women being made part of the Proclamation of 1916; (4) Dora McGuire, a nurse and activist who investigated and exposed conditions in public asylums and jails; (5) Charlotte Despard, a trade union activist who sought reform of the poor laws and the penal code. Her personal friendships with people such as Kier Hardie, Eleanor Marx Aveling, Emmeline Pankhurst, Michael Davitt, and James Connolly placed her at the centre of all the important reform movements of the day: suffrage, labor, and Irish independence.

These women, in company with Anna Parnell, Maud Gonne, and Constance Markievicz, were active public speakers. All of them risked their lives for the cause of Irish freedom; many of them were jailed, and some of them dramatized their position by going on hunger strikes while in prison. Their own accounts reveal the danger and excitement which often attended their public speeches, as in the following excerpt from a letter by Constance Markievicz:

I spoke five times for various women in the elections and had some very narrow shaves. At one place I spoke they sent an army just about an hour too late. At another I wildly and blindly charged through a squad of armed police, there to arrest me, and the crowd swallowed me up and got me away. The children did the trick for me.⁴³

To these women, the conflict in Ireland was essentially a class struggle between the impoverished native Irish and the wealthy overlords of the Ascendancy. In somewhat simplistic terms Constance Markievicz set down her version of the aims of the Irish Socialist Republican Party when she wrote: "If one could only get the people to understand that politics ought to be nothing more or less than the organisation of food, clothes, housing and transit of every unit of the nation one would get a lot further."⁴⁴

Constance Markievicz acquired her socialism from James Connolly, who was the chief visionary and mover for a socialist, united country built on Gaelic ideals. Although Connolly was a Catholic, he viewed Ireland's problems from a non-sectarian context. One Catholic priest charged that he was "anti-clerical", because he defined the struggle in Ireland not as a Catholic movement, but simply as one which did not conflict with essentials of the Catholic faith.⁴⁵ In 1897 he diagnosed poverty, not British occupation, to be the root cause of Ireland's woes: "Remove the British and raise the tricolour over Dublin Castle tomorrow, and Ireland's problems will remain because Ireland's problems are economic and social."⁴⁶

Bernadette Devlin's speeches and her autobiography reveal that she shares this analysis of Ireland's problems by the socialist founder of modern Ireland. In her maiden speech at Westminster on 22 April 1969, she made it clear that the central problem in Ireland is poverty, not religious differences:

Since 5th October, it has been the unashamed and deliberate policy of the Unionist Government to try to force an image on the civil rights movement that it was nothing more than a Catholic uprising. The people in the movement have struggled desperately to overcome that image, but it is impossible when the ruling minority are the Government and control not only political matters but

the so-called impartial forces of law and order. It is impossible then for us to state quite fairly where we stand.⁴⁷

The nonsectarian theme was one she reiterated on numerous occasions. After the violent battles in the Bogside and in Belfast during August 1969, she spoke again of the true cause of Northern Ireland's troubles:

These few and simple facts are why we have a near-revolution in Northern Ireland. It is not because the people are Roman Catholic or Protestant. It is because the people are too poor, because the Northern Ireland Government decided they could keep the working class divided on the basis of Catholicism and Protestantism, just as in this country people are kept divided on the basis of colour, black or white, Englishman or immigrant. But they are kept divided.⁴⁸

And on one occasion, during her American tour in 1969, she grew tired of reporters' repeated references to the sectarian nature of the Ulster conflict and snapped, "This is the third time I've said this—it is not a religious problem but one of poverty".⁴⁹

There is much evidence in Miss Devlin's speeches that she has a genuine understanding of the Irish republican heritage and that she sees herself as part of that tradition. On the occasion of her maiden speech, for example, she reminded her fellow parliamentarians of her heritage when she said, "I stand here as the youngest woman in Parliament, in the same tradition as the first woman ever to be elected to this Parliament, Constance Markievicz, who was elected on behalf of the Irish people."⁵⁰ Her speeches in America were marked by exhortations to her audience to remember that the lives of Irish martyrs had been spent not only for Irish freedom, but also in the cause of worldwide civil liberties, and she challenged her listeners to carry on their tradition:

These men—Casement, Tone, and Connolly—represent everything that is Irish and everything that is Irish-American.

Every Irish-American is a potential Connolly, Tone, or Casement. Do you support civil rights in Ireland because you are an Irish Catholic, or because you support justice? If so, are you seeing to it that your black countrymen are being granted the justice you so dearly desire for the people in Ireland?⁵¹

The solution that she offered for the relief of Ulster's problems was based entirely on James Connolly's proposals: a socialist republic formed of the union of the thirty-two counties of Ireland and composed of small collective farms and industry controlled by the workers, with equal rights and opportunities guaranteed for all.⁵² As to how this could come about, Miss Devlin suggested that the existing base of socialist groups, such as the Derry Labour Party and the People's Democracy, could be developed on both sides of the border to work toward the eventual goal of a unified Ireland.⁵³ To deal with the immediate crisis she proposed that all political groups of the North and South attend a constitutional conference where each party could "produce a social, economic, and cultural policy for the whole island, and then let the Irish people vote, not for what flag they want, but for the kind of government they want".⁵⁴

Bernadette Devlin maintained, however, that union with the Republic of Ireland would do little good if conditions of poverty in the South were not removed: "What we must at all times make clear is that we are fighting for the economic rights of an underprivileged people, not to win back the Six Counties for Ireland."⁵⁵ The task was not merely to achieve unification, but to eliminate poverty in all of Ireland; in short, "to start all over again the national revolution".⁵⁶

As for traditional republicanism's willingness to use terrorist tactics to achieve nationalist goals, Miss Devlin professed not to share that philosophy. Describing

herself as wishing to achieve “nonpolitical social justice”, she recalls that she consciously rejected violence as a means of attaining her goals:

But I got over these dreams of violence, and told myself it didn't matter if the people who kept us in poverty were called British or not. It wasn't simply getting Britain out of Ireland that mattered: it was the fact that we were economically depressed, and I couldn't see terrorism solving that.⁵⁷

Miss Devlin was in the Bogside during the riots of August 1969 and was later charged on a number of counts for offences arising from the riot. When questioned on her part in the fight, she replied, “I have encouraged the making of Molotov cocktails and the organised throwing of them, so none would be wasted. I'm a very efficient person.”⁵⁸ On her trip to America following the Bogside riots, however, she stated unequivocally:

I specifically do not want money for guns. If I were to discover that one dollar was spent on violence, I would immediately disassociate myself from the entire collection and insist that all money collected under false pretenses be returned.⁵⁹

In parliament, on her return, she informed her audience that in America she had collected about 92,000 dollars. . . . Nevertheless, I left America because I was sure that the money I had collected would be used for the purpose I intended, but I was not sure that any further money I collected, because of the strain on me of keeping up with that job, would be used for the purpose. So I decided to leave America.⁶⁰

From Bernadette Devlin's speeches and writings it can be seen that she has been profoundly influenced by Irish socialist, nonsectarian, republican traditions, and that she appears a worthy successor to the legacy of earlier Irish heroines. Perhaps her keen awareness of that great tradition explains her apparent unconcern for what the majority of her countrymen regard as “women's proper role”. In making a career for herself outside the home she seems, indeed, to have placed larger questions of social justice ahead of questions of adherence to convention. She appears unconcerned with considerations of sex; to an interviewer who asked if she considered her femininity an asset, she replied: “I couldn't answer that. You should ask the people who like or dislike me whether it's because I'm a woman or because of what I say. I don't think about it.”⁶¹

Finally, Miss Devlin's speeches have force and freshness which enabled her successfully to dramatize the separate identity of those who suffer most from the social injustices of Northern Ireland. Commenting on the effectiveness of her speaking as a means of underlining the aspirations of Ulster's working class, Max Hastings of the London *Evening Standard* has written:

Bernadette Devlin is a formidable speaker, both in the text and tone of what she says. With her biting Irish accent and forceful style, she can command an audience superbly. In the atmosphere of the House of Commons, which is so seldom granted real drama in these days, she was a stunning theatrical success. . . . In those early days of her fame, she contributed significantly to forcing Ulster's crisis back into the forefront of English affairs.⁶²

REFERENCES

1. Sara Davidson, “Bernadette Devlin: An Irish Revolutionary in Irish America”, *Harper's Magazine*, 240 (January 1970), p. 82.
2. *Ibid.*
3. Patrick O'Farrell, *Ireland's English Question: Anglo-Irish Relations 1534-1970* (London: Batsford, 1971), p. 305.
4. Bernadette Devlin, *The Price of My Soul* (New York: Albert A. Knopf, 1969), p. vii.
5. O'Farrell, p. 303.

6. *Parliamentary Debates* (Commons), 788 (13 October 1969), col. 128.
7. Devlin, pp. 53-54.
8. Max Hastings, *Barricades in Belfast: The Fight for Civil Rights in Northern Ireland* (New York: Taplinger, 1970), p. 18.
9. R. S. P. Elliot and John Hickie, *Ulster: A Case Study in Conflict Theory* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1971), p. 33.
10. Devlin, p. 60.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 54.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 55.
13. *Ibid.*, pp. 71-72.
14. Elliot and Hickie, p. 33.
15. Devlin, p. 49.
16. Anthony Carthew, "The Rebel in Armagh Jail, the Hater in the Pulpit", *The New York Times Magazine*, 9 August 1970, p. 20.
17. Elliot and Hickie, p. 35.
18. Edith Coxhead, *Daughters of Erin: Five Women of the Irish Renaissance* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1965), p. 13.
19. Quoted in Alan Bestic, *The Importance of Being Irish* (New York: Morrow, 1969), p. 111.
20. Martin Wallace, *The Irish: How They Live and Work* (New York: Praeger, 1972), p. 19.
21. Quoted in Bestic, p. 40.
22. Conrad Arensberg and Solon T. Kimball, *Family and Community in Ireland*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968), p. 373.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 196.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 373.
25. *Ibid.*, pp. 374-75.
26. Joyce Marlow, *Captain Boycott and the Irish* (London: Deutsch, 1973), p. 262.
27. Quoted in Coxhead, p. 106.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 28.
29. Jacqueline Van Voris, *Constance Markievicz: In the Cause of Ireland* (Amherst, Mass.: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1967), pp. 276-77.
30. A. J. P. Taylor, *English History: 1914-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 154.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 155.
32. *Ibid.*
33. William Butler Yeats, *The Collected Poems* (London: Macmillan, 1952), p. 233.
34. Coxhead, pp. 112-13.
35. *Ibid.*
36. *Ibid.*
37. The following biographical details from Marlow, pp. 260-63.
38. Biographical details from Coxhead, pp. 19-77. R. M. Fox, *Rebel Irishwomen* (Dublin and Cork: Talbot Press, 1935), *passim*. Maud Gonne MacBride, *A Servant of the Queen* (London: Gollancz, 1938), *passim*.
39. Biographical details from Coxhead, pp. 81-122; Anne Marreco, *The Rebel Countess: The Life and Times of Constance Markievicz* (New York: Chilton, 1967), *passim*. Also Van Voris, *passim*.
40. Van Voris, p. 265.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 266.
42. Biographical notes from Fox, *passim*.
43. Van Voris, p. 277.
44. *Ibid.*, pp. 335-36.
45. *Ibid.*
46. Quoted in Devlin, p. 88.
47. *Parliamentary Debates* (Commons), 782 (22 April 1969), col. 282.
48. *Ibid.*, 788 (13 October 1969), col. 126.
49. Davidson, p. 82.
50. *Parliamentary Debates* (Commons), 782 (22 April 1969), col. 281.
51. Davidson, p. 86.
52. *Ibid.*, p. 81.
53. Carthew, p. 22.
54. Davidson, p. 81.
55. Devlin, p. 167.
56. *Ibid.*, p. 88.
57. *Ibid.*, p. 90, pp. 78-79.
58. Davidson, p. 83.
59. *Ibid.*
60. *Parliamentary Debates* (Commons), 788 (13 October 1969), col. 128.
61. Davidson, p. 83.
62. Hastings, p. 103.



VERONICA BRADY

Of Castles and Censorship

Censorship, I suppose, is one of the hardy annuals of letter columns, debating societies and political rostrums. At least once a year, some public figure offers to clean up the magazine stands, purify the screen, defend the radio waves and preserve the innocence of all. Just as periodically, this offer provokes the outraged cries of liberals. And the while all this is going on, publishers, film distributors and so on, mint money, selling to their audiences a delicious sense of daring and guilt along with the pornography and violence. Obviously there is something both absurd and alarming in this situation. For one thing, both protagonists and antagonists of censorship act predictably, out of positions prepared long before the debate begins which continue unchanged after it concludes. For another, this lack of self-scrutiny and self-irony reveals disturbing things about our society in general. May I then, offer some reflections less on the debate itself, whether or not public authority ought to be able to control the imaginative life of individual citizens, than on the premises underlying this debate?

Let me begin with a passage from Solzhenitsyn's novel, *The First Circle*, set in a Russian political prison. In this passage, Nerzhin, one of the central characters is with the artist Kondrashov-Ivanov. Nerzhin is depressed, the sense of imprisonment is weighing on him more than usual. Kondrashov shows him a sketch for what he calls "the greatest picture of my life", a picture which he knows he will probably never be able to paint and yet which sums up the aspiration of his life, and indeed to my mind, the meaning of art. It is a painting of the moment in the Grail legend when Parsifal first sees the castle of the Holy Grail, the object of his quest.

"In shape the picture was twice as high as it was long. It showed a wedge-shaped ravine dividing two mountain crags. Above them to both right and left, could just be seen the outermost trees of a forest—dense, primeval forest. Some creeping ferns, some ugly, menacing, prehensile thickets clung to the very edge, and even to the overhanging face of the rock. Above and to the left a pale grey horse was coming out of the forest, ridden by a man in helmet and cape. Unafraid of the abyss the horse had raised its foreleg before taking the final step, prepared at its rider's command to gather itself and jump over—a leap which was well within its power. But the rider was not looking at the chasm that faced the horse. Dazed, wondering, he was looking into the middle distance, where the upper reaches of the sky were suffused with an orange-gold radiance which might have been from the sun or from something else even more brilliant hidden from view by a castle. Its walls and turrets growing out of the ledges of the mountainside, visible also from below

through the gap between the crags, between the ferns and trees, rising to a needle point at the top of the picture—indistinct in outline, as though woven from gently shimmering clouds, yet still vaguely discernible in all details of its unearthly perfection, enveloped in a shining and lilac-coloured aureole—stood the castle of the Holy Grail.”

This is perhaps the crucial moment in Solzhenitsyn’s complex novel, for it is this vision, or something like it, which sustains not only Nerzhin and Kondrashov, but all those characters who manage to preserve their integrity in prison, which Solzhenitsyn compares with the first circle of Dante’s hell. But I find here also an image of the imaginative experience generally. To a greater or lesser extent, every man, whether he be in Russia, Australia or in an Asian village, lives in prison, the prison imposed by the super-ego, the need to conform to the rules of society to share its values and aspirations, and to live according to habit. But art gives him a glimpse of other possibilities, offers him alternatives to his present state and so sets him on the way to freedom, to becoming this individual as distinct from the member of the crowd. Moreover, as Solzhenitsyn’s image of the castle suggests, art embodies an absoluteness of values. What rallies Nerzhin to the painting seems to be its sheer gratuitousness. It does not belong to the workaday world, it has no utilitarian value, it is just there, like Mount Everest, a challenge to the spirit because it is so totally other than the world he knows, something indistinct in outline yet still vaguely discernible in all the details of its unearthly perfection. Nor can this be dismissed as Slav mysticism. Hard-headed as he was, Joyce suggests a similar view of art in *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, where Stephen Dedalus defines the value of art in terms of its completeness, the radiance, splendour and order which set it off from the unfinished nature of things in their everyday existence. E. M. Forster, too, for all his Bloomsbury scepticism, saw in art a kind of lighthouse, the only stable point of order in an untidy world.

No doubt all this may seem pretentious, idealistic and therefore unacceptable to many readers. But it seems to me that the question of value is a crucial one for us all. With the pressures to conform today being felt even in the area of imaginative experience—and the media, all-pervasive, surely persuade us to accept the status quo,—then art becomes all the more necessary since it keeps alive some sense that the present shape of things is neither the only necessary or the only possible one. This sense it is which sustains men like Solzhenitsyn’s Nerzhin, the man of conscience, who even in a situation in which every man seems to have his price and every event its immediate utility, insists that the values which he regards as absolute exist and must be served whatever the cost. Moreover, these values are essentially personal. He has found them and appropriated them for himself and has played with the contents both of his culture and of his own experience to do this, and it is this sense of being a master of his situation in this way that makes him feel that, after all, even in prison, his life has been justified. So, he is no servant of an ideology, not even a moral ideology. “It is not”, as he tells Simochka, the girl who offers herself to him and whom he rejects because he chooses to remain faithful to his wife, “It is not that I consider myself a good man . . . But the lower I sank in that inhumanly ruthless world (of the prison) the more I listened to those few who, even there, spoke of conscience (i.e. this sense of sheer value) . . . Perhaps I shall die forgotten in Siberia, but if you die knowing that you are not a swine, that’s something, isn’t it?”

In our world, too, that is something, to know oneself and one’s values and to have lived true to them. Art, that which creates and defines a new mode of self, what Ferlinghetti calls the fourth person singular, is, in my view, all but essential to this knowledge. Nor is this value merely personal. On the contrary, civilisation itself may depend on such values, that is, if one accepts Whitehead’s contention

that "the development of civilised thought can be described as the discovery of identities and diversity".

The frequent calls for censorship in Australia, however, ought to remind us that we cannot afford to be complacent as we affirm these beliefs. Granted that most of those who are calling for the Government to do something about the state of the popular imagination act from concern for individuals—pornography and violence, they contend are degrading to persons—and granted also that their concern is with the second-rate magazines, pictures and films which have little or no claim to the status of art, nevertheless the supporters of censorship necessarily argue in favour of uniformity. Yet, as I have suggested, it is precisely this uniformity of feeling and attitude, this life dominated by the super-ego, which tends to inhibit the development of the individual, the man with a conscience, whereas the climate for this development lies rather in a complex of diverse opinions and attitudes held in equilibrium within the community rather than in uniformity imposed from without. True, most advocates of censorship would pay lip service to this ideal and argue that their opposition is directed only against what destroys persons, that is, pornography of all kinds, works condoning violence against persons. Yet there may be a case to be made for pornography as an escape from violence, a fantasy sublimation. Certainly, pornographic stories are often set in exotic places and the situations and characters usually bear little resemblance to those in real life. It may be, as an amount of psychological evidence suggests, that, crude and deficient as it seems, pornography offers an alternative to anti-social action. In any case, the widespread craving for such material in our society, seems more a symptom than a cause of the personal malaise which the exponents of censorship seek to heal. More, I would argue that the general hope for salvation in compulsory conformity and faith in Governments as moral healers, are equally symptoms of a society deficient in true value, the value which is found by the individual in dialogue with himself and communal beliefs. Let me illustrate this with a passage from Patrick White's *Voss*.

"People of that kind will destroy what you and I know. It is a form of madness with them."

The young landowner clucked with his tongue against his teeth. He was unhappy once more. A runnel of rainwater, besides, was trickling down his neck. He was forever shifting.

"I know", pursued Turner, "because I have looked in the book."

"What book?"

"Why, the book that Frank is always writing in."

Angus was not aware that such a book existed, but pretended that he was. Thus he would conceal his ignorance of most things.

"If it is his private property", he mumbled.

"Naow, naow, Ralph", said Turner. "What is that?"

The hair stood up on the back of the neck of the young man. He avoided an answer.

"What is in this book?" he asked, unhappily.

"Mad things", Turner replied, "to blow the world up; anyhow, the world that you and me knows. Poems and things."

"Poetry can be very enjoyable", said Angus, who had memories of young ladies seated after dinner beside lamps.

"I do not deny that", Turner hastened to agree; "I am partial to a good read of it myself. But this was life, you might say, Ralph, like certain bits of the Bible. They are cut up, like, but to make trouble, not to make sense."

Angus and Turner, I suggest, are typical advocates of censorship. They value only what is socially apparent and acceptable, they trust only what they can see and touch and even their God is a kind of super super-ego. Anything that is new, anything that leads them to question their emotional habits or the accepted beliefs, is evil and ought to be eliminated because they have no defence against it, living as they do by convention rather than thought. Precisely because art, by definition, interrupts and overturns the stock response, it is dangerous to them. Hence they call for the punishment and control of artists, men like Le Mesurier, and still more, Voss, the man who most supremely defies their canons of security and comfort.

It is frightening to see how men like this resemble Stalin, as Solzhenitsyn describes him in *The First Circle*. Like Angus and Turner, Stalin adverts very little to his own inner life, and like them, he has a large and complacent faith in his material circumstances. What frightens him is the "other half" of life, everything that is not orderly and manageable, which is beyond his rational control. That leaves him feeling "faint, completely unprotected and uncertain what to do with his hands" because it defies what he likes to believe in, that he is master, both of himself and his world. Now, it is White's contention in *Voss* that Australian society, represented by the Bonners and their friends, also fears this "other half", the desert, the irrational country where man loses control. Voss mocks these fears of theirs. "A pity that you huddle" (he says) "Your country is of great subtlety." And he sets out deliberately into the desert, since in this disturbing country it is possible more early to "discard the inessential and to attempt the infinite". It is only here that he will find himself truly and test himself against the absolute antagonist death. No wonder the Bonners are glad to see the last of such a man, for he threatens them, challenging the complacencies by which they live. "Safe in life, safe in death the merchant liked to feel", White phrases their creed, mocking it with the further comment, "the shellless oyster is not more vulnerable than man".

No doubt it is possible to dismiss White's contrast between Voss and the Bonners as special pleading, and yet many of the appeals for censorship, for authority to save us from what we fear because we cannot control ourselves, suggest fears like the Bonners, of the irrational, the Dionysian forces long repressed but now erupting in our society. Moreover, their sense of morality seems disturbingly immature, resting it seems, on legislation rather than on inner choice. In fact what Kierkegaard said of the bourgeois of his day may well apply to them. "Their ethics are a short summary of police ordinances. For them the most important thing is to be a member of the state . . . They have never felt a homesickness for something unknown and far away." Because of this, because all they know is the horizon of the present, their standards are conditioned by history. In 1926, for example, the British Board of Film Censors, barred two films which showed "white men in a state of degradation amid native surroundings" and several others which "reflect a mistaken concept of the Police forces of this country in the administration of Justice". What is evil must necessarily be defined on their premises as what is socially unacceptable to the majority at a given time. But, as the Abbé de Boulogne pointed out to Napoleon when he was attempting to impose censorship on France, this is to imply that "morality depends on the caprice of legislation, that they can discuss and settle it by a mere show of hands". "Is it", the Abbé went on to ask, "up to the legislator to bend morality to our institutions instead of bending our institutions to the claims of morality? Are we to believe that what was moral yesterday can cease to be today, and that what was moral today can cease to be so tomorrow?" But then, J. B. Say had already given the game away with the title of the essay advocating censorship which he presented to Napoleon. "An Essay on the Means of Reforming the Behaviour of the Nation."

Now, essentially, this seems to be the position of the advocates of censorship in this country also. What, then, is to bring us back to a proper sense of diversity, a creative respect for difference so that the future exists as challenging possibility even in the present?

Here, I think of a scene from Bunuel's great film, *The Exterminating Angel*, the moment in which the guests, trapped by a kind of enchantment in a room in a great mansion to which they came as dinner guests days ago, are set free from their spell. Until now, they have accepted their situation without question. But now, one of their number leads them to think back on the time just before they discovered they were trapped. Recalling their words and actions and re-enacting them they gain their freedom so that when they come to the point at which, in the past, they found themselves unable to leave the room, they now pass out, with trepidation it is true, but nevertheless freely, into the outside world, to take up again the lives they left off in the room.

In this scene I see an image of art's importance for us also. For here, it is clear, the ability to stand off from one's experience, to play it out as it were in a realm of hypothesis, in fiction as opposed to fact, allows the individual to assess himself and his situation and so to establish some mastery of understanding. And this, of course, returns us to Solzhenitsyn, to the vision of the Grail castle which sustains the prisoner in his isolation. It is precisely the sense of doubleness, the sense that reality may be other than it is presently defined, which art generates which makes it the guarantee of the individual's right to dream and to choose to be different. So, far from working to compel belief, it seems that art tends to generate a kind of scepticism, an ability to distance oneself not merely from one's own experience but also from what is currently accepted as orthodox. Thus, in Australia, Patrick White creates characters striving towards the possibilities of revelation, even in the midst of the most commonplace of lives. Thus, too, the American poet Louis Simpson sees himself as a kind of ludicrous tailor.

"All day I was cutting and stitching
Ideas by a dim light—
Hardwork, in an age of machinery;
While the streets belonged to the rich,—
The people with strong teeth.

Wisdom, the artist suggests, is not to be found only in books, and certainly does not belong only with those in positions of power. Hence, traditionally in the last two centuries, they have associated themselves with the losers, the victims of society, rather than with the apparent masters and those who lay claim to absolute metaphysical assurance. Against the Faustian complacency technology offers, in fact, the artist tends to assert the disturbing, the anarchic possibilities of the individual and it is for this reason, I think, that he appears as a threat to people like White's Bonners who are prepared to accept the present state of things as absolute. For the artist insists on the demoniac, or the Dionysan, draws that is, on forces in the psyche that go deeper than mere response to the surface appearances of things.

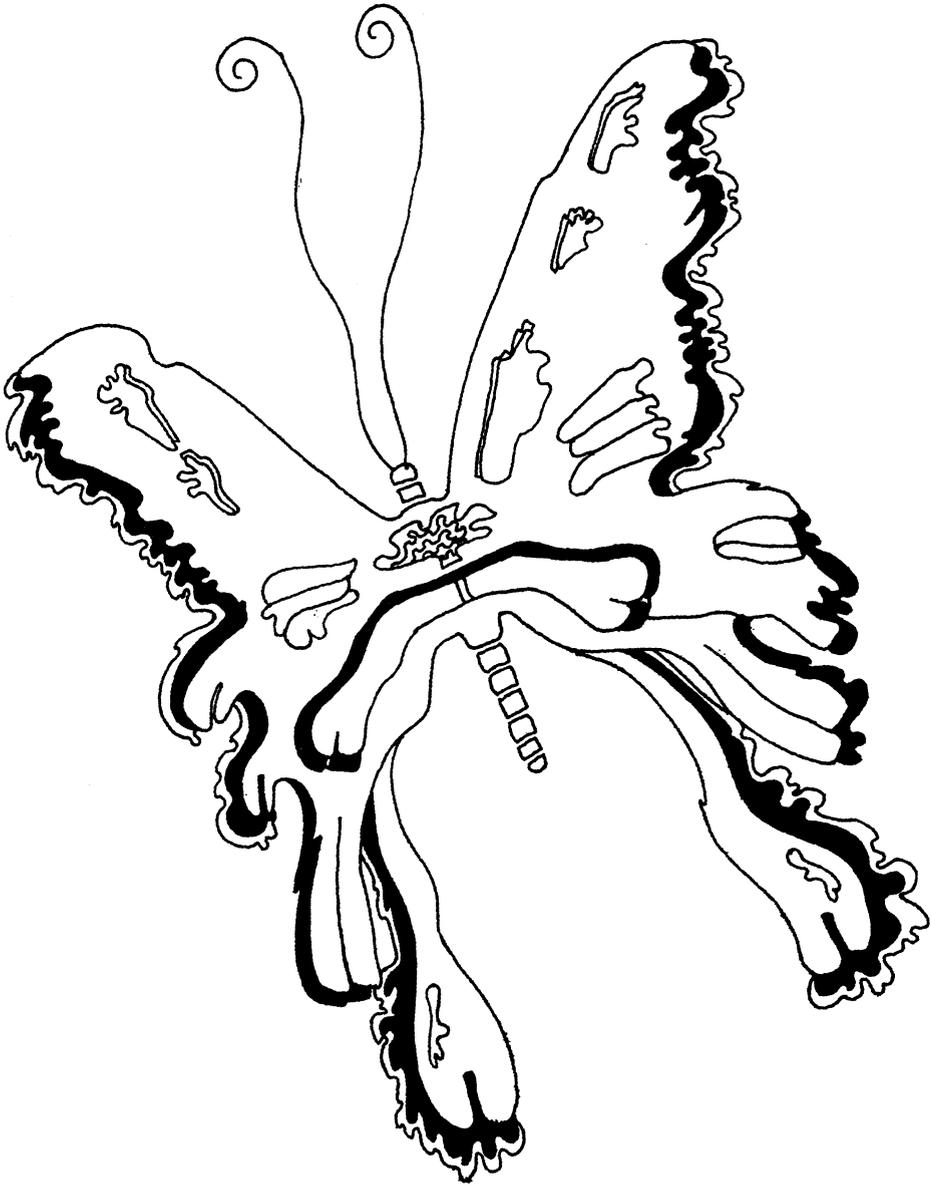
Yet at the same time, as Bunuel's image suggests, the artist is also the ironic man. He has the ability to stand off from himself and to assess himself and his situation, almost as if he were another. As the French writer, Bernard, puts it, "If it is true that to live is to write, it is also true that writing is an act which sometimes I make and which sometimes makes me". This self-irony, moreover, is precisely what makes the artist a pattern of freedom for all of us, for as Bruno Bettelheim says, writing of those who survived in Nazi concentration camps, but also I believe, with reference to most of us in Western society today, what is necessary "to survive as a man, not a walking corpse, is to remain informed and

aware of what makes up one's point of personal no return beyond which one would never under any circumstances give in . . . even if it meant risking or losing one's life". As I have suggested, discussing the moment of liberation in *The Exterminating Angel*, art is the means which, together with the rites of religion, rehearses the experience of becoming self-aware in this way and of keeping informed and aware of one's action, and this awareness is central in Bettelheim's view to personal freedom.

So to return to Australia and to the topic of censorship, it is important, I think, to oppose censorship, the attempt, that is, to suggest that there is one official way of looking at the world. Not that I deny the dangers of pornography and violence, they are linked in the way they degrade the human person. But those dangers will not be lessened by censorship, they may even in fact be increased, since, as Freud tells us, the return of the repressed is always disastrous. As *Voss* reminded us, it may be Australian culture itself that is unhealthy, with its fear of the unknown and the instinctual, so that the widespread private fascination for the pornographic material denounced in public is rather a symptom than a cause of the disease. To insist on further repression is in my view, only to increase the problem, to substitute for a proper morality the individual able to know and to choose what he believes to be right, "a phantom scarecrow made of duty, of boredom, of punishment, of pain . . . a scarecrow standing in a barren field, waving a stick to chase away (his) pleasure".

Let us cherish diversity, therefore, and praise the artists, thinkers and men of action who promote differences, opening up new possibilities of thought, experience and new insights into belief. For it is only by means of these new possibilities that human beings move beyond the confines of the present to become more than they can imagine of themselves now. If we are clear what matters to us, then no amount of eccentric behaviour by others will disturb us: or if it does, it will only lead through self-searching and self-questioning to a deepened awareness of our values. Perhaps it is our central problem that we have in Australia today so few moral heroes, the innovators we used to call saints—a Francis of Assisi, a Wilberforce, a Ghandi. Let us then at least salute our present champions of difference, artists like White, Boyd, Nolan and so on, and all who are different. In the words of Les A. Murray's poem to "The Platypus",

It is good to have (them) in our country,
Unique beneath our thoughts,
To nurture difference,
Changeless beneath our thoughts
and its disjunctions.
Lord of the fairy story.



Fable

He sat there working at a problem
He did not know the city was at war

He did not know the city was invaded
He sat there working at a problem

'Fellow, stand out of my light'
Was all he said

The fellow standing like a shadow merely
Struck off his head.

Flies in March

The flies come out at the New Year
At the scent of the oil-cakes.

For the sake of a gracious legend
We piously suffer
The nuisance of fruit-flies
Eye-flies
And the rather more depressing
Blue-bottles and green-bottles.

This year they have come out early.
They will have to wait a long
Long time I think for oil-cakes
Or anything like it

Watching this patient blue-bottle
Absently humming
Around two quite
Unappetising urchins
Who are lounging about for scraps.

Butterflies in April

The air is full of the butterflies
Full of a flutter
You lose your way walking through them

From a childhood white with butterflies
Like snowfall on a Christmas card
The butterflies come

Endlessly
Wavering one way
You wonder where they are going
Like a milk cloud

Cloud on a barren country

The butterflies are flying
Pilgrimaging
Through bland blue days
And a wilderness
Coiled round the sacred peak

Always
A flutter of white wings
Trailing on all four winds
In the silent forest
A palpitation when they die
At the foot of the god.

Divorce

She left with her hair
ruffled in protest,
Her waistband trailing
behind her,
Drawing patterns of past events.

The children were confused:
Their faces lined with despair,
Seeking reunification
Of half-parted parents.

A pestle rolled to a standstill,
against its will;
The mortar looked on
dejected but not useless.
A cat sought shelter on a rooftop
saying prayers for peace;
A dog sat aloof calling for truce.

An eye-witness trespassed
in a coat of indifference:
“Quarrels are not new—
I mind my own business.”

Owls watched the night pass away,
Hesitant but yielding.

It dawned—
Sunday morning:
No meal.

The sun shone and slept,
Siesta passed without rest.
Noon meal was sacrificed
For hunger strike.

Evening crept up stealthily
With a basketful of reminiscences—
Three years' timid observation,
One year of hurried flirtation,
Frigidity wrapped in rigidity,
Days of moonlit nights forgotten,
Fingers outgrew wedding rings,
Ceremonial photographs faded
With the disenchantment of time.

A Coward That I Was

It was at the 25th yam festival of my life
When the rays of Ramatta's beauty reflected in my eyes.
After a spell of prolonged indecision, I signalled to her;
She behaved womanly: wasn't sure why she should respond
And when at last she did, my throat was dry of expression;
We both looked like wooden carvings in diurnal display.
I gaped and she looked away, shy and respectful
She transferred her attention to the ground and drew a pattern;
My tongue was lovesick, but still remained useless,
Though my eyes were willing, filled with possessive tenderness.

A whiff of fresh air blew between our silence,
Encircled her, and declared her innocent for the moment;
She then drew a last pattern with her toe
And moved away her fresh body by calculated degrees,
The rhythmic staccato of her virginal buttocks
Invited my eyes to pursue her, but cowardly,
And my heart was warned to be more manly next time.

There was enough for my eyes to feed on for days
She dressed for a purpose which caught my impulse;
She did not dress simply, just to please hygiene,
Nor were her bracelets wrist-watches for clocking time.
Lovely lips coated in lipstick to lick lips
Black beauty's black hair plaited to please,
Blooming long eye-lashes, painted black, lay asleep.

I do not know why I let her go,
But there will be another chance
When I will have words ready to meet her
In the same beads, bracelets and headgear.

Five Studies of a Blue Sheet

woman wrapped in blue sheet
woman wrapped in blue
woman wrapped in
woman wrapped
man.

woman unwraps the blue sheet
woman unwraps the blue
woman unwraps the
man unwraps
woman.

woman moves over blue sheet
woman moves over blue
man moves over
woman moves
man.

woman silent on blue sheet
woman silent on blue
woman silent on
woman silent
man.

woman sits near blue sheet
man sits near blue
woman sits near
man sits
woman.

The Farewell

You brought back my books
And talked to me
About them. People sweetened their lips

With words crisp as wafers,
And friends gathered
To celebrate those last days in College.

Did I see the girls
Whose heels nailed their silhouettes
Into the floor,

Or boys
Who approached them on tiptoe
To whisper sweet assurances?

Then, you were silent
And gone when you saw
The ogling suspicion of some.

Memories are suspect now,
Since your sari thinned out to screen
All certitudes of vision.

Untitled

Please do not ask me
to look through the glass-door
at those sun-sick
faces.

Only yesterday, when
the sun boiled in the sky
and tar on road
caught a cursing pedestrian
by the shoe,
our feet
were firm on the ground
and our anxious bodies
nimble.

Later,
we had caught all
formalities in the mouth
and encased ourselves
in a warm rhythm,
without ever changing
an epithet.

In that climate of our making
no eye could feel
an afternoon
spent in love-shades
of feminine siesta.

See

I am alone now,
and vulnerable.
If I look out,
beyond this door is
the sun
and the sunned
recriminating.

I would rather
close my eye
and see
if something will
happen.

Thai Impressions

1. Rain in Bangkok: October

It pours, almost around the clock,
four or five days in a row
as if all the country's rain
has centred on the capital.
Streets revert to the canals
they once were or dissolve
into rivers swirling
around stalled motor-cars.

This once Venice of the East
has not yet recovered
from the surprise of roads.
But no one drowns
although the poor live
off their knees for days.
They slip into further neglect
like cars into klongs.

I survive, although
I'm in the wrong city,
having learned to guess
where surfaces used to be.
But unprepared and bootless
I have to roll my pants
empty my shoes, before
mounting the steps to dry.

9 p.m. Alone and shut in
my telephone is knocked off.
The drone of crickets
compete with the croak of frogs,
my bedroom bulb splutters and dies
windows slam and slam
a cold wind whines—
night, night is complete.

2. Base Impressions

Udon, Ubon, Utapao, Korat, Takhli . . .
You who leave these bases
in F4 Phantoms, F111s, B52s,
who are you?
Missionaries
on mercy missions airlifting
food, medicine, clothing
over Laos and Cambodia?
But Jesus, what are those holes
gaping from the ground
that I see in the Bangkok Post?
Softly whisper in my ear
G.I. and tell me
what's it like, really like,
to be a missionary?
Ouch!
Do you have to shout?

3. No Place like Home

"There is no place like Thailand"
said General Prapass.
"Americans who come and visit Thailand
say our country is most contented and happy,
that everybody is smiling and happy.
That contentment can be seen everywhere
and there is no need to fear any danger
wherever one goes.

Yesterday my nephew returned from London
and he stopped over in Singapore for 18 hours.
He grumbled terribly.
He said that the city was clean and orderly
but one had to be careful at every step taken.
Everything seems to be an offence
making one liable to fines continually.

Suppose you forget and open a packet of cigarettes
and the paper torn is carried by the wind,
a fine of \$200 is imposed.
But here, there is no fine,
anybody can throw away anything
as he pleases on the street
or you can spit anywhere."

4. Korat

In the street
I approached a G.I.
and said, "Excuse me ——"
"You're excused", he said
waving me off without a pause.
"Bastard!" I almost shouted.

He wheeled around, menacing.

"Pardon me", I managed in time,
"I only want to know
of a good restaurant."
"Jesus Christ!" he softened,
"why don'tcha say so?"
"You didn't give me a chance"
I replied.

Committee People

Let us praise necessary people—
Committee people: not members of a
Committee who may not be committee
People, but those who would have all of us
Doing everything the same way according
To standardized practice: let us praise
Such without whom there would be no order
No rules and regulations no conformity
No solemnity: we wouldn't be a
Department union association
Organization man: we would only be
People—a nuisance to committee sense
Because people would insist on sense and
Sensibility fused. There is a time
For living it up individually
And there's a time for dying into a
Committee: it's clearly illogical
To be oneself in an official capacity.
Where would official capacities be
When there are only you and you and me?
Thus if you're an academic, as
I am and am not, you must behave like
A scholarly institution; if you're
Setting an exam paper you can't afford
Your own turns of phrase: no matter if you are
Clear—you must be clear in the way of
Scholarlese. But let us be fair to them:
Academics and committee people
Who are precise prosaic pedantic and
Petty—they do not mean to be: they are.
And often enough they don't know they are.
They are quite sure you are wrong and they right,
And in their presence you think so too. They
Stir envy: I would and can't be like them
For the comfort of one's careerist soul.

Poem for the Tourist Promotion Board

These then are the visibles:
Blatant vigour of dragon dance,
The annual agony by needle and fire,
Bersanding paper palms trembling
To the tambourines of a kampong culture.
Travel agents list the items:
Fossils of a multi-faceted land,
Driftwood left on golden sands
Out of the reach of algae-coloured seas.
Wood blackens in the drying sun,
Bones whiten out the living past
While crystalline salt preserves
(For the casual collector of curios)
Dislocated images from a trip.

Note: "Bersanding" refers to the Malay
wedding ceremony.

Grace

Strange grace: your solemn fall of hair,
The slant of light upon your head,
Your eyes humbled before the lamb.
Evensong while ice tinkles in the glass
And my hasty fork blasphemes the prayer.

Grace, dear girl, seems out of place.
The waitress at the counter smirks;
Her mascara is blue to match the walls.
She rubs a hand on her behind and,
Pondering on the tip, glances at my face.

This grace I share is strange as truth.
Consider the riot of early manhood.
The uneasy pick-ups at the Venus,
The free booze and expensive fights:
Neurotic aftermath of inhibited youth.

Yet, when you lift your lids from grace
And, wide-eyed, ask if we should start,
My fork glitters in assent, the ice replies,
The waitress vanishes behind a pillar,
I'm granted absolution; all falls in place.

At a Corner of the Barleyfield

With an utterly honest mind
I'd like now to declare
Certainties, things signed
With the undodgeable
Thereness of things there.

What once I saw, the shined
Gel of the atmosphere,
I'd like to tell so clearly
You can but share the sight.

Things of this kind
Assume all kinds of elaborate
Clothes; and emit, like waves
Of wind on barley, light.

God-waste, they are; gods nearly,
Things from enormous caves.

Goldfish

Although the goldfish, like a swimming sheaf,
Flaunts flanks of red,
The colour of its eyes is loneliness;
And though the cherry-blossoms overhead
Have scaled the sky with flower and light leaf,
So dragon-deep the sadness they express
I void myself into the gape of grief.

To Drown in the Mountains

Descending the deep road
The sounds of water flowing flowed
Over me, round me.

Sounds of fluence, the fat-fountain
Pounding of some vast cascade
Flattening this world I wade,
Flayed me and drowned me.

God, like a stone, is sleeping somewhere.

Travellers passing over the mountain.

Catch of Fireflies

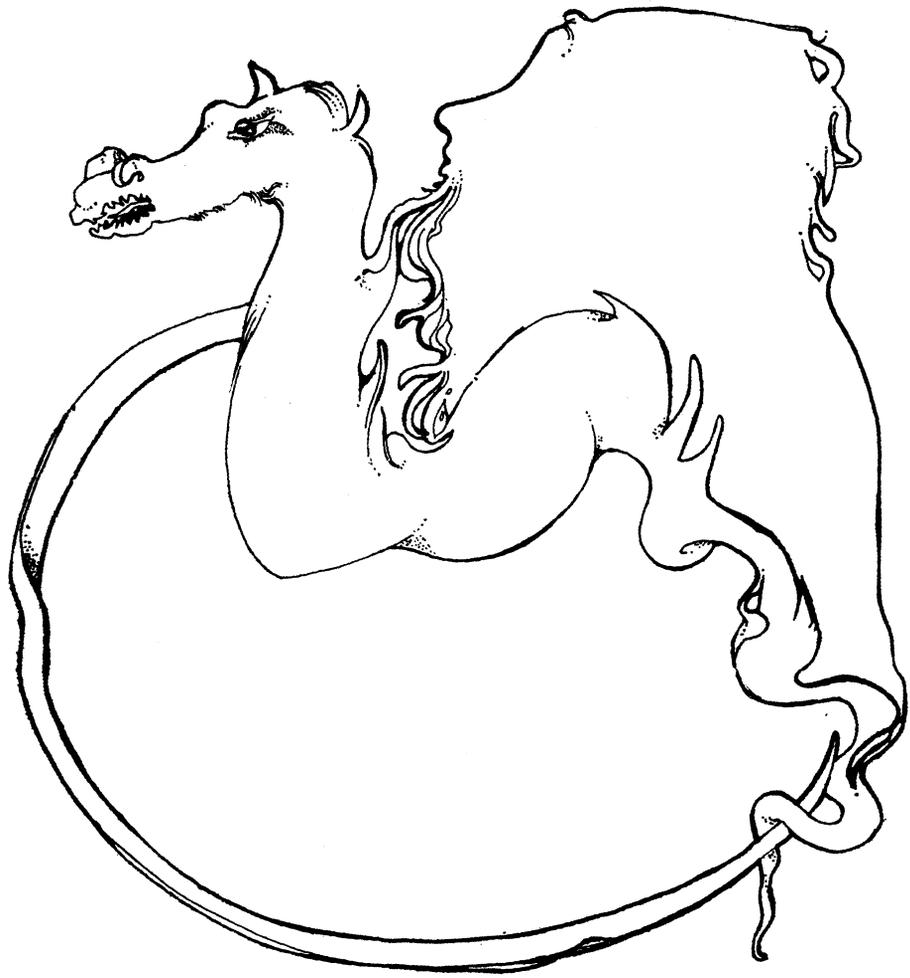
One from the nape of my beloved sister,
One from a window of the loony-bin,
One from the wound in Christ's bare foot,
One from a crevice in the tomb of kin,
One from the dead heart of a murderer,
One from a fish-spine's shining splay
And one from my own polished hand:
Fire from a world five worlds away.

Autumn Cricket

It seemed (well, didn't it?), seemed to be
An autumn cricket whose chirr of wings
Hung above something killed; whose blue
Face seemed (didn't it?) staringly
Pinned to the inwardness of things:
Death's blue blunt face abandoned to
The world's interiority.

Hagiwara Sakutarō (1886-1942)

Translations by Graeme Wilson



HAL COLEBATCH

Between Two Worlds

A critical re-appraisal of Donald Duck
as contemporary Western Myth-figure.

In seeing Donald Duck as a valid social and literary symbol of the dilemma presently confronting Western Man, I believe him to be the valid contemporary expression of the perennial Western tragedy of the Divided Nature. This is, of course, implicit in his very name,¹ but some deeper aspect of it is revealed in nearly all those situational contexts in which the theme may obtrude itself.

As originally conceived, Donald Duck is obviously the classical American myth-figure hewn to heroic proportions. His three nephews, Huey, Dewey and Louie are so plainly the three enigmatic officers of Captain Ahab—Starbuck, Stubb and Flask, the demi-urgic figures at once voices of sanity and acceptance and codified indices of powerlessness in the face of their master's Promethian quest.

(The primacy of Donald Duck's claim to the role of contemporary symbol-hero is most clearly seen when contrasted to the altogether shallower creation of Daffy Duck, who, far less involved in the agonies of inculcated anthropocentrism, is still unashamedly able to fly with his hand-wings, and is chiefly concerned with obtaining groceries, in a cargo cult-like manner, from the eunuchoid Elmer Fudd, a spokesman for the Western liberal conscience.)

Ahab has been mutilated by the loss of his leg. Donald Duck, however, has achieved an even more obvious and less symbolised castration of his nature: (i.e. his innate, Duck, nature, overshadowed and ultimately crushed by human cultural imperialism) The tensions built up by his internal role-conflict drive him, not only into frequent quacking frenzied rages, but also into a continuous, incessant act of self-exposure. Never without his sailor-suit jacket,² he continually refuses to wear pants, thrusting, as it were, upon a complacent social context, the reality of his avian, but also quite possible literally and physically castrated, self.³

The secondary symbol of castration is, of course, the fact that he has only three fingers on each hand (this links him with Ahab's obvious and enigmatically sinister

¹ I refer, of course, to the words "Donald Duck"—even no more than a moderately close reading of the text will reveal the significance here: "Donald" is a human, anthropocentric name, symbolising a man. "Duck", on the other hand, is an avian name, symbolising a duck—a lucid and elegant statement of the two conflicting sides of his nature. Donald Duck is at once established in the ranks of the maimed, the self-questioning. He is, in fact, Western Man.

² The wearing of a (significantly incomplete) sailor suit casts Donald Duck, of course, in the highly symbolic role of a sailor—linking him not only to Ahab and Commander Lowell in Robert Lowell's *Life Studies*, as well as the same poet's apocalyptic "Quaker Graveyard in Nantucket", but also to the archetypal quest-figure of Ulysess.

³ A highly significant linking of these converging symbols was brought forcibly home to me when I was told by a Petty Officer in the Naval Reserve Cadets (in his role as a meaningful variation of the Ahab figure) some years ago that a squad of New Entries drilled like "bloody castrated ducks" (!).

alter-ego, Captain Hook, who has suffered a somewhat similar amputation). The fact that Donald Duck has, however, developed hands (appropriately, imperfect ones), rather than wings, points to a further aspect of the divided Self. He can no longer fly,⁴ and when fishing uses a rod and line—human inventions—since his super ego will, in the present role-conflict situation, no longer permit him to scabble through reeds and mud with his beak. Indeed, in a recent, and highly significant publication,⁵ he is actually shown going to shoot other ducks! In this dark night of the soul, he has apparently achieved the final betrayal of his avian nature, and has become, at least outwardly, a contented consumer of the products of the U.S. Military-Industrial complex.

The failure to use his beak as a food-gathering organ⁶ has further resulted in/caused its progressive atrophy, his face having become, on the surface at least, steadily more human, as he has assimilated more of the ontological uncertainties now assailing contemporary Western Man, enmeshed, like Ahab to his whale, or Voss to his desert⁷ in the flat, stale, weary and unprofitable boredom to which Western technology has condemned him. And Donald Duck is, quite literally, a one-dimensional figure.

In this contemporary Western society, however, so desperately in need, as I believe is the trend of what Professor F. R. Leavis is trying to say, of codification and organisation of values around literary archetypes,⁸ the Duck factor in the equation of Donald Duck's being stubbornly continues to persist.⁹ Note, for example, his unending conflicts with Uncle Scrooge, the paradigm of the Western Capitalist ethic, a basically anti-life force.¹⁰ For his even deeper betrayal of his Duck nature, however, Uncle Scrooge has paid a correspondingly deeper price.¹¹ His sexual life is virtually non-existent, achieving not even the level of Donald's fundamentally unsatisfactory relationship with Daisy Duck, in whom similar role-conflicts have obviously induced total frigidity. Daisy, in common with all these essentially tragic duck-humans, has made too deep a commitment to the Contemporary Western Man's bitch-goddess of material success, symbolised by the hand-bag she carries. Even Gladstone Gander, to some extent a life-force, is also a guilt-ridden social parasite, plagued with inner conflict whenever his 'luck' (Manifest Destiny) is seen to desert him.

The charting of these ontological uncertainties involves a perilous voyage, perhaps, appropriately enough, not unlike Ahab's. It may be objected that there is the distinct social danger of the role-confusion being *perpetuated* here through a medium which merely seeks to *portray* it, but this seeks to beg the question, since the charting and codifying of these ontological uncertainties is the major function to which a contemporary writer in the West can aspire.

⁴ He is, for example, acutely terrorised by the prospect of falling from high buildings.

⁵ Huey, *Dewey and Louis and the Junior Woodchucks* (G549, Walt Disney Publications, 1973, p. 32).

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Patrick White, *Voss* (pp. 113-202).

⁸ I am indebted to Professor Leavis and Q. D. Leavis for their influence in sentence construction here.

⁹ I am further indebted to numerous commentators on literature and the English language for their instruction by example in the use of tautology.

¹⁰ Uncle Scrooge is certainly a symbol of those arch-reactionaries who have attacked what they term over-generous endowments for faculties of English, Education, Social Sciences and the humanities studies generally, on the ridiculous grounds of alleged wastage of money.

¹¹ I believe Uncle Scrooge represents a deeper betrayal for two reasons—not only his obvious embracing of the contemporary Western Capitalist, profit ethic, but also because his name, Scrooge McDuck, implies a renunciation of an intrinsically Celtic, rather than WASP, heritage.

BOOKS

Labor Pains, Cecil Edwards: Hill of Content, Melbourne, 1974.

One facet of private enterprise at least which the Whitlam Government has lavishly assisted is political writing. *Memoirs of Canberra '73* should provide a useful future supplement to the incomes of cabinet ministers, press secretaries, media mandarins, base-grade clerks and the lady who disinfects the telephone. Already the first waves of the inundation are beginning to wash about us, the jacket of each volume adorned with the same sleek, silver-haired, smirking head.

Cecil Edwards' book has been hastily written, and the author has been unfortunate in having been rapidly left behind by events since the Gair affair. *Labor Pains* is journalistic, rather slick, and suffers (for which the author apologises) from the lack of an index. It is, however, a very valuable corrective to the wash of uncritical, indeed sometimes hagiographical, writing which has surged forward so far.

Perhaps, even though it is in no sense an academic work, the natural market for the book is a first-year Politics reading list. Even if the metaphores are facile and not notable for originality, they do stick in the memory:

"There was, for the Liberals, not even the sense of heroically sinking with all guns blazing; rather, it was like a ship with a slow leak, foundering gently on a mudbank."

Cliche, or aphorism? In any case, it is not the book's style that matters (though how one wishes that political writers tended to be better stylists!), but what it may remind the notoriously short-memored electorate of: that the generous and forward-looking vision of the Whitlam Government has been accompanied by an undercurrent of petty nastiness and viciousness.

The passport which had been arbitrarily stripped from left-winger Wilfrid Burchett was restored to him as an act of simple justice—at the same time as a passport was arbitrarily stripped from right-winger Air Vice Marshal H. Hawkins.

No-one should be naive enough to doubt that democratic socialist governments, led by men of real humanitarian conviction, can behave like playground bullies, but in case anyone still does:

"Four days after the election, and while he was still only putative minister for Labour, Cameron announced an extra week's leave for Federal civil servants . . . Cameron said he expected the Public Service Board to withhold the extra week from non-unionists."

The Government's employer-bashing got well under way in the first hundred days. Employers were threatened with prosecution if they broke awards, while unions were freed from any danger of prosecution or even civil action. A point which many small shareholders might have liked elaborated is that of capital gains tax on small paper profits which in a situation of galloping inflation are actually heavy losses. Still, it is a while since most small shareholders saw even small paper profits, however happy some big businesses are.

Edwards gives the ASIO affair 32 fairly crisp pages. Given more time this weird business might well have made a book in itself, but this summary is certainly one of the best to emerge so far. It should be required reading for students of government if only to show the conspiratorial fantasies with which even the leaders of small, pluralistic democracies in peacetime may excite themselves. If the chapter asks more questions than it answers, at least it appears to be asking the right questions. And, as Edwards remarks, if any Croatian terrorist was discovered or deported in the year following the ASIO raid, the public never heard of it.

Edwards scatters about a few quotes that could begin a nice little book entitled *The Wit and Wisdom of Chairman Gough*. There are more where they came from:

"Won't someone help him to get up?" (of McMahon, trying to catch the Speaker's eye in Parliament).

"I am not conceding that inflation is going to grow."

"... I do not think even my worst enemy would describe me as pompous."

Or the following edifying parliamentary dialogue on Mr Forbes, after Whitlam had "regretted that my hospitality last night was abused":

Whitlam: "I invite honourable gentlemen to look at the honourable gentleman's eyes, even this morning."

Snedden: "You must be ashamed of yourself."

Whitlam: "You ought to be ashamed of yourself. Look at him; look at his bleary face."

Snedden: "You are being gutless."

Whitlam: "It is what he put in his guts that rooted him . . ."

When Francis James began a question to him with: "Would you agree that there is an extraordinary parallel between Chairman Mao's dictum: 'We must be modest, prudent, avoid arrogance and serve the people' . . ." Whitlam interrupted his old schoolmate with the observation, "I follow it myself constantly".

Like Narcissism, inflation is a rich source of quotes, such as this one from Labor's 1972 policy speech:

"Will you again trust the nation's economy . . . to the same men who have presided over the worst inflation for twenty years?"

That was an inflation rate of about four per cent.

Blue Poles cost \$1.34 million. (Pollock sold it in 1953 for \$4,033. Ben Heller, who was to sell it to the Australian Government, bought it in 1956 for \$21,513.) It was decided to spend \$32 million on Australian embassies (how many Australian embassies are actually necessary at all?). A 135 m.p.h. white Mercedes, costing \$20,000, was bought to accommodate the Prime Minister. These are, of course, like the turtle farms, no more than the tokens of irresponsible government wastage. That is a story that needs fuller investigation, and by some body with more resources than a Public Accounts Committee.

Edwards says some things on the French Nuclear testing fracas that needed saying:

"Australia confined its protests against Chinese tests to mild methods like formal 'notes', yet demonstrated against France's tests, boycotted French goods, withdrew labour from French ships and planes, refused French postal and communications facilities, exhorted French workers to protest and strike, and brought France before the International Court of Justice. . . . For Australia to react so strongly against France and so perfunctorily against China¹ showed our objections as physical or ideological rather than moral or ethical. . . . China is a

¹ One wonders if the reaction would have been so perfunctory had the bomb been Taiwanese. Edwards might well have mentioned the Taiwanese fishing boat affair.

great, new and growing potential market for Australian goods, while France is an old and fading customer . . . Cairns was sponsoring a move to send a ketch into the nuclear zone. His son Phillip (Cairns' private secretary) said his father wanted to go on the ketch, but was committed to leave almost immediately on a ministerial trade mission to China . . ."

But the French tests turned out to be an anticlimax, as well as a signal demonstration of the test-ban campaign's futility. There was something more too:

"The test explosions continued, with less and less notice being taken of them. By 4 September, the ACTU decided to consider lifting the ban . . . and oddly, the next day, stories were published that Australia and France might be partners in a \$1,000 million enrichment plant in Australia. This would provide wealth for Australia and France; an almost inexhaustible source of energy—and material for making H-bombs."

This book makes no startling disclosures, probably nothing it says has not appeared somewhere in the press before. If its task has been to throw the sour side of the Labor dream into the light, there are considerable gaps. Foreign affairs are treated rather perfunctorily, as are Aboriginal affairs, defence and education. Government administration of the arts is not mentioned at all (apart from Blue Poles), and while Edwards has sought to give the Labor Government credit where it is due, for achievements such as putting pensions somewhere in sight of wages and moving on Aboriginal and other social problems with some sense of urgency, he has neglected to point out the increased equity it has brought writers and other artists (though of course Public Lending Right came through long after the book must have gone to press). More surprisingly, for a professional journalist, no mention is given to the Department of the Media, or the Government's relationships with individual journalists and academics.

But to write a really comprehensive investigatory account of the whole of the Labor government's first year would perhaps take years of work, and the result would be a mighty, American-style jumboburger of a book. We can be grateful to Mr Edwards for having swung a stout if erratic blade through the rapidly gathering cobwebs of a new political mythology.

HAL COLEBATCH

THE
UNIVERSITY
BOOKSHOP

AT THE UNIVERSITY, NEDLANDS
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Specialists in the Service and
Supply of University Text Books
and organised for obtaining any
work of Literature published
overseas.

FOR PROMPT ATTENTION - - RING 86 5578
86 5579