WESTERLY

stories poems articles reviews



YOUR SECOND PASSPORT IS WAITING FOR YOU HERE

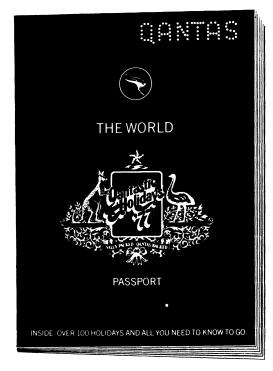
Your first passport, issued to you by the Australian Government, is your licence to see the world. It'll cost you \$20.00. Your second one, which we have right now for you, is your licence to enjoy the world. It's free.

It's the 1977 Qantastic Holidays Book. It's 132 pages of essential information for the Australian traveller. Details and prices of over 150 Qantastic Holidays to every corner of the world.

And all the information you need to plan and choose your overseas holiday in 1977.

Before you start to plan your trip, come and get your second passport, free. And you're half way there.





WESTERLY

a quarterly review

EDITORS: Bruce Bennett and Peter Cowan

ADVISORY EDITOR FOR THIS ISSUE: Harry Aveling

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE: Bruce Bennett, Peter Cowan, Patrick Hutchings, Leonard Jolley, Margot Luke, Fay Zwicky

Westerly is published quarterly by the English Department, University of Western Australia, with assistance from the Literature Board of the Australia Council and the Western Australian Literary Fund. This special issue has also received support from the School of Human Communication, Murdoch University, and TVW Channel 7 in Perth. 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.

Recommended sale price: \$1.00 per copy.

Subscriptions: \$4.00 per annum, plus postage (Australasia 80c per annum, Overseas \$1.60 per annum); \$7.00 for 2 years (postage Australasia \$1.60, Overseas \$3.20). Special student subscription rate: \$3.70 per annum (including postage). 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).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Grateful acknowledgement is made to the following individuals for their advice and assistance in the preparation of this issue: Mrs Bonnie R. Crown (Asian Literature Program, New York), F. Sional Jose (Solidarity, Manila), Dr P. Thomas, Ms P. Afable, T. K. Sabapathy, R. Crock (all of Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang), Dr Muhammad Hj Salleh (Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur), J. C. Watson (Heinemann Educational Books (Asia) Ltd., Singapore) and Professor Burton Raffel (University of Denver).

Thanks are also due to the following for their kind permission to use material from the works indicated:

Sinai C. Hamada, for "Five Men and the Carcass of a Dog", from his Collected Short Stories (Baguio Printing and Publishing Co., Baguio City, 1975).

Oxford University Press, Kuala Lumpur, for Khamsing Srinawk "Owners of Paradise" from *The Politician* (1973).

Heinemann Educational Books (Asia) Ltd. for Suwanee Sukontha "Love and the Fuengfah Flower", from *Taw and Other Thai Stories*, trans. J. Draskau, Hong Kong 1975; and for Ee Tiang Hong "Developing Societies", "The Loan" and "Old Friends", from *Myths for a Wilderness*, Singapore 1976.

Heinemann Educational Books (Asia) Ltd. and London Magazine for Lee Kok Liang "Dumb, Dumb by a Bee Stung".

Heinemann Educational Books (Asia) Ltd. and the University of Singapore Society for Chung Yee Chong "View from a Window", from Edwin Thumboo (ed.) *The Second Tongue*, Singapore 1976.

Asian Literature Programme, New York, for the Burmese and Vietnamese poetry (with the exception of "Self").

All short stories and poems are fictional and have no reference to any actual person, living or dead, unless otherwise indicated.

WESTERLY

No. 4, December, 1976

SOUTHEAST ASIAN ISSUE

CONTENTS Map of Southeast Asia 5 Introduction HARRY AVELING PROSE **Thailand** Love and the Fuengfah Flower 34 SUWANEE SUKONTHA 38 Owners of Paradise KHAMSING SRINAWK **Philippines** Five Men and the Carcass of a Dog 40 SINAI C. HAMADA Indonesia Adam the Wisdom of God 51 DANARTO Malaysia Mr Proudfoot 67 SHAHNON AHMAD Dumb, Dumb, by a Bee Stung 72 LEE KOK LIANG VERSE Burma A reminder KYIGAN SHINGYI 11 He is now a monk ANON. Deceitful Woman MYAWADI U SA 12 Mingyaw, Lord of Lunatics LAYMAN U MIN For a Moment ANON. 13 Colour of Gold SHIN MAHA RATHATHARA Vietnam That Young Man from Hanoi 29 THAI LUAN Farewell HOANG BAO VIET 30 Self NHA-TRANG CONG-HUYEN-TON-NU The Flute of Li Kuei 31 TO HUU A Visit to the Temple of Perfume 32 DUONG LAM The Life of a Mother with many Children 33 TRAN YEN THAO Indonesia Meditation 45 ABDUL HADI Who are you Me? 46 DARMANTO IT. Marriage Poem 48 SUTARDJI CALZOUM BACHRI

49

DARMANTO JT.

I Sort of Understand

Malaysia (translated from Malay)		
Greetings to the Continent	59	USMAN AWANG
Blood and Prayer	60	USMAN AWANG
mekong river	61	A. LATIFF MOHIDIN
the puppeteer's wayang	63	A. LATIFF MOHIDIN
a 'modern movement' collage The plea of the Asian woman	64	BAHA ZAIN
three beserah fishermen	65	MUHAMMED HAJI SALLEH
the tide is out	66	MUHAMMED HAJI SALLEH
Malaysia and Singapore (in English)		·
Christmas Week 1975	81	EDWIN THUMBOO
Fifteen Years After	83	EDWIN THUMBOO
Developing Societies	84	THE TANKS WONES
The Loan		EE TIANG HONG
Old Friends	85	EE TIANG HONG
Gone Overseas	86	LEE GEOK LAN
The Barbecue	87	LEE GEOK LAN
View from a Window	88	CHUNG YEE CHONG
Bonds	89	CHANDRAN NAIR
Sonnet		SHIRLEY LIM
Birth	90	ROSEMARY MOKHTAR
ARTICLES and REVIEWS		
Looking Back at Cambodia Achieving Maturity: Singapore	14	MICHAEL VICKERY
Poetry in English	91	KIRPAL SINGH
Australian News Sources in		
Southeast Asia	95	ROD TIFFEN
A Literary Journal—'Tenggara'	96	OOI BOO ENG
Pramoedya Ananta Toer, The		
Fugitive and A Heap of Ashes	99	KEITH FOULCHER
Lee Kok Liang, The Mutes in the Sun	100	EE TIANG HONG
Notes on Contributors	102	

WESTVIEW 105–132

Quarterly review of the arts in Western Australia

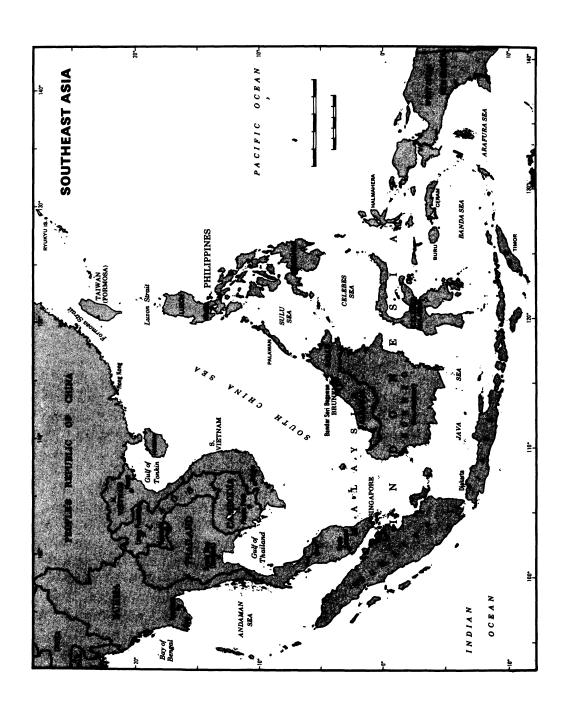
Theatre MARGOT LUKE
Music ROGER SMALLEY
Literature JOHN BARNES
Visual Arts JOHN CRUTHERS

Cover illustration, 'Girls Playing Flute', is from a batik painting by Malaysian artist, Hu Te Hsin.

Photographic composites are by Robert Crock: p. 6, Reflection Singapore; p. 58, Reflection Penang Island.

Illustrations on p. 44, p. 54 and p. 62 are from Amin Sweeney, Malay Shadow Puppets.

The editors of Westerly are pleased to announce that the Patricia Hackett Prize for 1975–76 has been awarded jointly to Graeme Wilson, for his translations of Chinese and Japanese poems, and Graeme Kinross Smith for his profiles of Australian writers, Joseph Furphy, Kylie Tennant and T. A. G. Hungerford.





Introduction

This is the third issue of Westerly devoted to the literature and society of Australia's "Near North". In October 1966, a special issue concentrated on Indonesia; almost half the issue carried the work of the still imprisoned short story writer, Pramoedya Ananta Toer. The September 1971 issue provided "a focus on Malaysia and Singapore", aimed at "confronting Australian readers with a sample of the most impressive work achieved in recent years in those countries". In this issue, we have tried to present some of the major writers of Southeast Asia.

Southeast Asia (the term has only been used since the Second World War) is that part of the Asian continent between India and China, extending out into the islands of Indonesia and the Philippines. To name the states precisely, starting from India: Burma, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Philippines, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam. Despite the diversity of these states, there are certain underlying points of similarity as well.

Geographically, the states have a climate based on the alternation of hot and wet monsoon seasons. Their terrain is composed of forest uplands, flat coastal plains, with plenty of short, fast flowing rivers between, and a shallow sea shelf. The terrain has allowed for a number of different methods of land use; one may distinguish between the highly mobile, small groups of mountain peoples, who hunt and gather, and the settled plains-dwellers who are predominantly rice-growers and, where convenient, fishermen.

Culturally, most of the states have undergone an extensive period of influence by the religious and political ideologies of India. (The Philippines and parts of Indonesia were excluded from this; Vietnam's Indian influence was mediated through China). In each case, Indian influence was adapted to, and altered by, local cultures. The important Indian religious influences were those of brahmanical Hinduism, and of the three forms of Buddhism (Theravada, Mahayana and Tantric). These religious influences were blended into existing animistic cults. Politically, Southeast Asian kingdoms were established around the figure of a king, thought to be divine (or potentially divine), his ministers and court, and the surrounding state. Unlike Western states, Southeast Asian kingdoms were not conceived of as having clear boundaries, the extent of the kingdom grew or waned with the military and sacred power of the ruler. At the centre of the kingdom lay the capital. Besides its political and religious functions, the capital was an artistic centre, for dance, poetry and theatre. The Indian epics of the Ramayana (the story of Prince Rama and his search for his wife, Sita, stolen by the cruel Rawana) and the Mahabharata (the story of the great war, between the five Pandawa brothers and the ninety-nine Kaurawa who usurped them) form the basis of much of this artistic activity.

Historically, all the states, except Thailand, have been colonised by European powers. For about 500 years, to say 1870, European contact with Southeast Asia was peripheral. Merchants largely fitted themselves into already existing trade patterns, and captured and held small areas of land suitable for the protection of their own goods and vessels. There was little effect on the local social structures. (Much more significant was the conversion of Malaya and Indonesia to Islam, after 1350, which broke the Indian influence in the archipelago.) In the late nineteenth century, however, European industry became increasingly dependent on oil, rubber and various metals Southeast Asia could supply, and there were greater

demands for tea, coffee, sugar and rice. The interior of the various states were opened up by colonial powers to facilitate the growing and extraction of these raw materials. Estates were established, roads and railways built, communications networks set up, schools built and health services provided. All of these were, in the first place, for the benefit of the colonial power and not for those colonised. Where labour was scarce, outside labour was introduced, particularly from China and India. In each country a "primate" city developed from European and Chinese capital, dominating the imposed bureaucratic political structure, monopolizing non-agricultural activities, and providing a centre for a new kind of culture. This new kind of culture was based on modern technology—the printing press, radio and film.

The colonial period ended with the Japanese occupation of the region: swift, efficient, and in some places and at some times, brutal. After the Japanese Occupation came independence and a search for new social forms to replace the previous structures no longer deemed adequate. In some cases, this has led towards socialism (Burma, Vietnam, Cambodia), in others towards more or less controlled forms of capitalism and industrialisation. Bob Catley, in a provocative article on "The Development of Underdevelopment in Southeast Asia", Journal of Contemporary Asia 1976, writes of "those characteristics which have become associated with 'underdevelopment': extensive poverty, low productivity in agriculture, limited industrialisation, extreme inequalities of incomes, exports concentrated on raw materials and imports on manufactured goods, a tendency towards a net capital outflow, growing unemployment, 'soft states' characterised by corruption and authoritarianism, and foreign aid programmes which have done little to alleviate these conditions". The Southeast Asian Journal of Theology, on the other hand, speaks of the countries in this region being "in the process of nationbuilding, development, and modernization through science and technology", wanting "to develop and achieve economic growth, social justice and selfreliance".2 The reader may use Michael Vickery's excellent article on Cambodia as one touchstone by which to test these alternative hypotheses.

On the plains in traditional Southeast Asia, self-sufficient peasant families lived and worked their land, related to other families by kinship and the convenience of living in villages. There can be no doubting the widespread literacy made available by the presence of Buddhist temples and Muslim mosques and schools. Both these religious systems provided systems of learning based on written, codified texts. The texts covered not only theology, but also ethics, medicine, astrology, law and myths and legends. The Theravada Buddhist system of study led to the capital and beyond (to Sri Lanka and elsewhere), the Mahayana system in Vietnam led towards China, the Muslim system led ultimately to Mecca. There was also an "almost staggering" variety and amount of travelling theatrical activity in the countryside, and of course there were lively oral traditions as well.

Above the village was the court, with its greater literacy and wider, more sophisticated range of drama, music and literature. If peasant society is "a part society, with a part culture", then it is the court that closes the circle. Not that folk culture derives, in a debased form, from court culture, the reverse is often true, but there is no basic antagonism between the two. In both court and countryside, art was a social experience, based on known content and moral standards, with standard forms differentiated only by an increasing refinement and complexity of performance.

With the shift to the colonial state, and the infusion of new, "western" (or "modern") values, particularly through the new primate city, there is a radical disjunction between the values of city and country. Redfield and Singer have summarised the psychological consequences of urbanisation as an outlook, ethos

and personality that are "depersonalized, individualized, emotionally shallow and atomized, unstable, secular, blasé, rationalistic, cosmopolitan, highly differentiated, self-critical, time co-ordinated, subject to sudden shifts in mood and fashion, otherdirected, etc."5 The peasant now comes to represent a different, older social structure, economy and values, that are sometimes admired, but also often mocked. The literary artist, following new genres (novel and lyric poetry, in particular) learnt from foreign, European models, has lost the very close bond with his community, based on shared values, that was available to the traditional literary intellectual. His printed work carries his name and his values, but is read in private, by those literate enough to do so. Each of the Southeast Asian modern literatures began in the 1920's or 1930's, under European influence, went through a period of consolidation just before or after the Second World War, and confident selfsustaining growth after independence in either socialist or liberal bourgeois ("individual", or "personal", depending on one's stance) directions. Both socialist and liberal bourgeois literatures claim to interpret contemporary social and personal reality. The difference in how they do so, ultimately rests in the political system of the state and the economics of publishing.

In socialist states (Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, and—occasionally—Burma), the state is the publisher. Authors write for "the people", to encourage them to positive action and to criticise specific abuses. The characterisation of Lao political literature, for instance, is restricted to two types of people: "the enemies of the Lao Patriotic Front, which is to say 'the Baddies', who are opposed to partisans of the Front, 'the Goodies'." The reader who criticises such literature for being didactic, simple, not given over to intense psychological self-exploration, and so on, is quite correct. So is the reader who identifies *Hamlet* as a tragedy. The mistake is to reject *Hamlet* for not being funny enough, or socialist literature for not being personal.

Liberal bourgeois literatures are dependent on private publishers, and thus on the taste of the market. Throughout the non-socialist countries, there are at least two types of modern, printed literature. The first may be described as "popular" literature, intended for the semi-literate. These range from comics, photoromances, magic manuals, to novels. These cheap works by amateur authors have an extensive circulation. They are lively in style, often extremely colloquial, and deal with a variety of immediately comprehensible topics—sex and violence, starcrossed love, local legends, detectives ("Life is simple, the police are not", notes Mme J. de Fels in her description of this genre⁷), war, the supernatural (particularly apparitions of ghosts), and comic situations. Piat describes them as "melodramas", whose goal is escape for the reader through fantasy, beautiful women, rich clothes, and a world in which the good are rewarded and the poor punished. Despite their crudeness, limited vocabulary and sense of coincidence, they are at least close to the dreams of a newly emerging class. ("When a Cambodian dreams, he dreams of a society without artisans, or Chinese, which is uniquely rural and princely. Even the moneylenders are Khmer!"8)

Half way between popular literature (for the urban proletariat) and "elite" or "high" literature, is the sentimental romance. Modern Thai literature has been castigated as "primarily feminine novelettes describing situations of conflict arising from love affairs which run across class lines or family obligations; largely written by members of the aristocracy for its own distraction, it was and is oriented towards the capital and uninterested in the surrounding countryside". Suwanee Sukontha's carefully crafted story in this issue, "Love and the Fuengfah Flower", is typical of the kind of work which has earned her the title of the Thai François Sagan. (Khamsing Srinawk's story "Owners of Paradise" is included as a balance to the sensuality of "Love and the Fuengfah Flower" and the view which sees Thailand—and all Southeast Asia—as rice-stalks and smiling Buddhas.)

High literature is aimed at an audience familiar with the complexities of literature, willing to struggle or wait until a meaning is established, able to endure the moral ambiguity that suspends judgements of both good and evil. As in Australia, such an audience is small and well educated, prestigious but scarcely profitable. Lee Kok Liang's "Dumb, Dumb By a Bee Stung" shows a master of this style at work, with an added shade of the grotesque. What does the first part of the story (in italics) have to do with the rest? What does the story tell us of the position of the Chinese in Malaysia today? What does the boy symbolise? Danarto's "Adam the Wisdom of God" shows how a conventional figure of Muslim traditional piety, the Prophet Adam (the same Adam as in the Judeo-Christian tradition), can be shattered, in a story of no more than one long sentence, into multiple electronic reflections of the glory of a dead God. It is an injustice to consider high Southeast Asian literature "the best" simply because it is most like our own, but it does give a more immediate and sympathetic view of that society than anything else available to most Australian readers. Hopefully, it enlarges our humanity.

> HARRY AVELING Advisory Editor

NOTES

- 1 Journal of Contemporary Asia, Vol. 6, No. 1, 1976, p. 54.
- ² Southeast Asian Journal of Theology, Vol. 17, No. 1, 1976, p. i.
- ³ See James Brandon, *Theatre in Southeast Asia*, Harvard University Press, 1967, and A. L. Becker, 'Journey Through the Night', *TDR* (*The Drama Review*), Spring 1971.
 - ⁴ A. L. Kroeber, Anthropology, Harrap, 1948, p. 284.
 - ⁵ T. Shanin, Peasants and Peasant Society, Penguin 1971, p. 351.
- ⁶ P.-B. Lafont, 'La Littérature Politique Lao', in P.-B. Lafont and D. Lombard, *Littératures Contemporaines de L'Asie du Sud-East*, L'Asiathèque, Paris, 1974, p. 52.
 - 7 'La Littérature Populaire', ibid., p. 61.
 - 8 'La Littérature Populaire Cambodgienne', ibid., p. 25.
- ⁹ M. Smithies, 'Introduction' to Khamsing Srinawk, *The Politician*, Oxford University Press, 1972.

BURMA

Poems translated by Win Pe

A reminder

KYIGAN SHINGYI

To the elder Nanda, with ten fingers raised, I submit this in all love and respect. Be happy in the Order of Gotama. Long not to hold for mutual pleasure a lovesome girl of tender years and fine form, one with a gold chain round her neck. Know that the body smells and decomposes. Life flies so swiftly there is not time to scratch an itch, one can only mark the spot to turn to it later should there be time. If you let your thoughts run to pleasures now you will find yourself too busy.

A faith which illuminates like the moon is hard to come by. Therefore, consider. Approach not those who wear bangles and anklets, throw aside your shirt and shave off your hair. If you marry now you will be doubly busy like an ox at the plough. Your wife will weave wiles: "You there rotting on your feet, son of a man of ill-fated death. Don't mope near me. Go search for money. I cannot bear you a basket of children. Look at your eldest son, your youngest son, see." And as you set out to look for money in the country of greed she will seek pleasure with a lesser husband.

He is now a monk

ANON.

Dear ones, good friends and sister-like.

I must not wear the chukrassia;
shall I then pluck it only to cast it away?
I must not love; how then
shall I coax my man who is now hindered?
I must discard the withered mountain flower
which I am not permitted to wear.
I must not love him for he is now a monk
learning the scriptures and keeping the vows.
The chukrassia flower must not be worn.
My man who's in the Brotherhood must not be loved.
oh, my single love who owns the whole world of me.

Deceitful Woman

MYAWADI U SA

A university professor has unerringly declared: "In taking a wife, building a shrine or tattooing, a man should have a clear conception before he acts since faults which appear later can hardly be repaired. To seek peace at a sermon and then be distraught, to have a fishbone in the throat and fingers too short to reach it: consider wisely, the burden of love and marriage is heavy. Believe their honeyed words and you would be like a fly in a cobweb, in a trap. I declare: be always wary of deceitful woman."

Mingyaw, Lord of Lunatics

LAYMAN U MIN

Unsurpassed in imbecility, I fear no man on the Southern Main, so do not err by standing up to me. Unashamed, I change nine times a day from monkish robes to lay clothes and back again till the beholder is embarrassed, not me. Show me a girl with kiss-curls and right away I will strike my chest and fall fully in love. Old baldy, I display my powers. I hold the fold of my robe with one hand and incongruously fling a stone with the other. I nip danger's bud. Don't match me. It's impolitic. This man is the talk of the land. I raise my arm's might to establish sweet fame. Known to the Southern Main as a man born Mingyaw. Lord of the Lunatics.

For a Moment

ANON.

For a moment, unaware, weary, I fell asleep.
My handsome young man, riding his brown horse, visited me. On the foot-high mattress we laid ourselves down and gently slept. This may have been a dream.
May have been a dream.

Colour of Gold

SHIN MAHA-RATHATHARA

Colour of gold, a new-born lotus bud, Youthful, delicate, lithe and elegant, Lovely, her hair hanging charmingly, The gods deserve to wear her liquid glow. Such perfection is hard to acquire. Light dances on her hair-leaf jewel. The fragrant vest is touched with thread of gold. Her sarong is golden and her ear-rings jewelled. Supple, limber, bright as betel, Radiant as a rainbow are the fingers henna-dyed, Torch of beauty. Graceful strokes painted those slender lashes. Perfumed, unblemished visitor from the skies. Face of an angel shining golden-white. Spire of beauty, I have seen her In the twilight. She does smile and yet not smile.

MICHAEL VICKERY

Looking Back at Cambodia

It rarely happens that a historian can look back over the recent past of any contemporary society with the feeling that a curtain has been rung down on the play and that what happened up to that time may be studied without regard to what is going on at present or what may happen in the future. Such is the way Cambodia appears. The appearance is misleading, of course, as the development of other revolutionary countries over the past thirty years clearly shows; but there is no doubt that the end of the war in 1975 marked the end of an entire way of life — something dramatically confirmed by the unexpectedly rapid removal of Sihanouk from even a figurehead role. A blackout on information has been imposed by the new government; what the refugees, the only first-hand source of news, say is contradictory, and contributions from other sources, principally the Cambodian community in Paris, alternate between the trivial and the absurd.

Revolutions have occurred elsewhere, but seldom within such an absolute void of information, or in a manner so contrary to all predictions. All wise old Indochina hands believed that after the war had been won by the revolutionary forces — and there was no doubt by 1972, at the latest, that they would win — it would be the Vietnamese who would engage in the most radical and brutal break with the past. In Cambodia it was expected that both sides, except for a few of the most notorious leaders, would be reconciled and some sort of mild, tolerant socialism instituted. Certainly most of the Phnom Penh elite expected this, even imagining that the new socialism would drift back into something resembling the old Sihanoukism, which is why so many of them stayed on until the end. Among the Indochina countries, only Laos has come out of the war true to form, while Vietnam and Cambodia behaved in ways nearly the opposite of that expected.

What this means of course, is that the Vietnamese and Cambodians were misunderstood and that the facets of their culture and history which might have revealed an unexpected capacity for tolerance in the one and vindictiveness in the other were missed. In the case of Cambodia much more was missed—the position of the royalty, headed by Sihanouk, was not after all so solidly rooted; in spite of its heady atmosphere as the last exotic Asian paradise, the country was rent by political, economic and class conflicts; the war did not begin suddenly in 1970; and the conflict which seemed to explode then proceeded naturally from trends in the country's political history over the preceding twenty-five years, a period characterized by intense efforts of the traditional elite to frusrate any moves toward political, economic or social modernization which would threaten its position.

INDEPENDENCE AND THE DEMOCRATS

The curtain was raised on March 9, 1945, when, after three years of co-operation, the Japanese suddenly interned the French colonial forces and encouraged the Indochina countries to declare independence. The Cambodian government, under Sihanouk, duly abrogated existing treaties with the French.

On the whole World War II was not a very harsh experience for Cambodia. The Japanese occupation was cushioned by the continuing French administration, there was no leftist or anti-fascist resistance, and the only nationalist movement of any importance, although anti-French, co-existed comfortably with the Japanese. This was a group of fairly prosperous urban Khmer with French education and a commercial orientation organized around Son Ngoc Thanh, a Cambodian from southern Vietnam. In 1936 they founded the first Khmer-language newspaper and advocated very moderate reforms: more Cambodian participation in commerce, greater educaional opportunities, equal treatment for Cambodians and French, all of which probably worried the traditional Cambodian elite more than the French, since their realization would have undermined the old oligarchy.

During the first years of the war, under the tolerant eye of the Japanese, they organized propaganda activities among Cambodian soldiers and monks, to destroy support for the French. The French stopped this in 1942, most of the leaders were arrested, the newspaper was closed down, but Son Ngoc Thanh himself escaped to Japan. Thereafter these men were considered heroes of the first Cambodian independence movement.

When the Japanese took over all authority from the French in March, 1945, Son Ngoc Thanh was brought back and appointed foreign minister. In August, after a palace coup by his followers, he was made Prime Minister. As the first independence meant the emergence into leadership of the traditional elite's most dangerous local opponent, the return of the French was probably welcomed; indeed, oral tradition of the time affirms that Son Ngoc Thanh was betrayed to the French by Sihanouk and the ministers loyal to him in October, 1945. Thanh was exiled to France, the first martyr for what, at the time, was termed the Cambodian "left"; during the next twenty-five years he remained, for much of the educated youth, a hero, a man under whom things might have been different. Such confidence later proved misplaced.

Although the French returned easily in 1945, this did not mean a simple restoration of the pre-war situation. Because of decisions made by the Free French during the war, Cambodia became an autonomous state within the French union with some of the trappings of independence, including a constitution to be "granted" by the king and a national assembly. On September 1, 1946, an election was held to choose a constituent assembly to discuss and vote on the draft constitution which had been drawn up by a joint Franco-Khmer committee.

Three parties and a number of independent candidates contested this election. The Democrat Party, headed by Prince Sisowat Youtevong and other young men who had recently returned from university studies in France, took 50 of the 67 seats in the assembly. Their goal was a European-type parliamentary system with a maximum of democratic rights, and full independence. They made little secret of their admiration for Son Ngoc Thanh. Many people also thought, perhaps correctly, that the Democrats were secret anti-monarchists who dreamed of establishing a republic. The Liberal Party won 14 seats. Strongly pro-royalist, and led by another prince, it was favoured by many of the Phnom Penh bourgeoisie and was considered by its opponents to be pro-French. The third party was a small, conservative group of old-fashioned bureaucrats, personal friends and clientele of its leader, also a prince. Its program was very vague and urged moderation on all

questions. It won no seats. The remaining three were taken by independent candidates.

After lengthy, often stormy, discussion of the draft constitution, which the Democrats considered insufficiently democratic, the assembly produced a revised text which was accepted by the king in July 1947. Although stating that "all power emanates from the King" and that the constitution had been "granted" by him, it nevertheless insisted that the king "use his power in conformity to the Constitution", and set up a system of government in which the National Assembly was dominant.

The Constituent Assembly, having drawn up a constitution, was dissolved. Elections were held in December 1947 for the first National Assembly, contested by the same three parties. Ideological and interest lines were now more sharply drawn. Two new parties appeared on the scene, one being Lon Nol's "Khmer Renovation". Drawing members both from among the independents and the older parties, these two groups were strongly pro-monarchist, traditionalist and authoritarian, although, in contrast to the Liberals, probably as concerned with independence as the Democrats. Their leaders were men of the traditional elite who had already achieved positions of authority within the colonial system before the war, and were probably unhappy with the rapid rise of the relative newcomers among the Democrats.

The election results were much as before, Democrats 54, Liberals 21. The new parties were completely unsuccessful. The new Assembly was convoked in January 1948, but the parliamentary game proved difficult. The Democrats' leader, Prince Youtevong, had died in July 1947, and the party contained many disparate elements. Ever since the appearance of their first newspaper in the late 1930s, the ideology of Cambodian Nationalists had never gone much beyond the advocacy of Cambodian businessmen taking control of the country's economic life away from the French, Chinese and Vietnamese. For a number of prominent Democrats, parliamentary and eventual independent government simply meant greater possibilities for self-enrichment. The Democrats also continued to make a hero of Son Ngoc Thanh, barely concealing their sympathy for the Issaraks, anti-French maquis cum bandits, who controlled much of the countryside and in some cases probably had contact with the Viet Minh. This naturally displeased the French, who still held ultimate power and classified all rebels as Communists; it also angered the King and local conservatives who preferred law and order to either parliamentary government or independence.

The inevitable conflicts resulted in the dissolution of the Assembly in September 1949. A new government, responsible only to the king, was formed around a group of conservative Democrats who split off to form their own party. Even with the Assembly out of the way, ministerial stability proved as elusive as before, and six cabinets followed one another until the next elections in September 1951.

In the interim, the country's political life had been embittered by the assassination of the Democrat's new leader in January 1950, an attempt on the life of another, and an effort by the King to revise the constitution through the Council of the Kingdom, the parliamentary upper house which had continued to remain in session.

As the third elections approached, there was a good deal of manoeuvering, in which the King clearly supported the conservatives, to prevent the Democrats from repeating their earlier victories. At a meeting of the king and leaders of the seven political parties in October 1950, four of the parties, including the Democrats, declared that elections couldn't be held because of widespread insecurity due to rebel activity. About a month later, the King submitted three alternative propostals for the country's immediate political future. Two of the parties, including Lon Nol's Renovation, reversed themselves and voted for elections. The

Democrat Party newspaper suggested that this was based on the belief that if the Democrats did not take part in the elections, the field would be clear for the other groups.

As alternatives to an election, the King proposed: (1) temporary suspension of the constitution, i.e. the end of party activity and government by cabinets responsible only to the King, and (2) re-establishment of the old National Assembly. For obvious reasons the Democrats supported the latter, and the government, led by the king's uncle and dominated by non-Democrats, favored the former. Interestingly, the only party supporting the first proposal was the Khmer Renovation, since its leaders obviously knew they would benefit from dictatorial government.

Since holding elections on time was the only proposal to receive the support of a majority of the parties, an "election government" was formed under the leader of one of the conservative parties with ministers from all political parties. The primary task of this government was to prepare for the elections. The Democrats, because of their conviction that insecurity was too great, refused to take a seat in the cabinet and announced that they would take no responsibility for incidents which might occur during the campaign. Nevertheless they participated in the elections and won handily against the seven other parties, even though they received less than half the total vote. The composition of the Assembly was little changed from 1947: 55 Democrats and 17 Liberals. In addition, 4 seats went to the party of Dap Chhuon, a former Issarak who had rallied to the government at the end of 1949; Lon Nol's Renovation finally won two seats.

The election results did not give a true picture of the balance of forces, however. The six parties of the far right polled a total of 100,477 to the Democrats 144,728 with the Liberals getting over 72,000 and independent candidates, mostly conservatives, over 8,000. It was already clear that any movement which could unify the right could immediately cut the ground from under the Democrats, who had also been gradually losing in other ways. At the end of 1949, after the Democratic National Assembly had been dissolved, Dap Chhuon, rallied to the King and was left in control of his territory which included a large portion of northern Cambodia. Soon afterward one of his men formed the "Victorious Northeast" political party, which became another of the group of small parties opposing the Democrats. This coup alone assured that a large piece of territory would not again be under the effective control of a Democrat government and gave the support of an experienced military force with a proven leader to the right.

Thus the Democrats, despite their control of the cabinet, were really on the defensive. Refusing to take strong action against the Cambodian Issaraks, considing them to be genuine, if somewhat misguided patriots, they also drew a distinction, which their opponents refused to accept, between the Issaraks and the Viet Minh. The French accused them of aiding both the Issaraks and the Viet Minh. The internal opposition took up this accusation, and also charged them with striving for absolute power in the manner of Mussolini and Hitler. Lon Nol's newspaper was particularly voluble about this, although there seem to have been no real grounds for the charges, as the Democrats tolerated strong criticism from their opponents and never harassed opposition newspapers.

The return of Son Ngoc Thanh in the Fall of 1951 did nothing to calm the situation. His newspaper, "Khmer Awake", pushed strongly for independence. In the Spring of 1952 he suddenly left Phnom Penh to form a new Issarak group on the northern Khmer-Thai border. The Democrats were accused of aiding him—a charge which they did not take great pains to deny.

In June 1952 the trouble came to a head. An army jeep drove around Phnom Penh scattering leaflets signed by Dap Chhuon and calling for the king and the people to take action against the government, which, assuming that the other right-wing parties were also involved, sent police to search the houses of their leaders, some of whom were taken to Police Headquarters for questioning. The searches turned up nothing incriminating. The arrested men were released after questioning and the whole procedure, as the Democrats emphasized, and as their opponents could never deny, was carried out with scrupulous legality.

Nevertheless, the incident allowed the opposition to pillory the Democrats for their allegedly dictatorial methods and to charge them with attempting to destroy all other political parties. These charges were answered in the Democrat's own newspaper.

King Sihanouk then entered the fray with a message true to the type of logic he was to use against future political opponents. He charged that the Democrats had refused to work against criminals (i.e. Issaraks) because of "consitutional guarantees" against search without warrant and indiscriminate arrest, but only observed these rights for their own people. Since it was clear they intended to use power indiscriminately against present and future opponents, contrary to the constitution which "I gave to the people", he asked the government to resign. In this speech Sihanouk placed himself squarely on the side of the right-wing parties and let the Democrats know that those parties' leaders were not to be treated as ordinary citizens.

Sihanouk himself headed the new government and asked the Assembly to grant him full powers for three years while he worked for full independence. The Assembly refused on constitutional grounds and the body continued to meet. The Democrat party, however, suspended political activity and closed down its newspaper at the end of July 1952.

A further crisis came in January 1953 when the king asked the Assembly for a special law declaring the nation in danger. This was refused by the Assembly. Both it and the Council of the Kingdom were dissolved. The consequent proclamation allowed him and his right-wing supporters to rule alone, with such powers as indiscriminate right of arrest, the right to forbid publications and meetings, and censor mail. Many Democrat party members and assemblymen were arrested because, according to Lon Nol's newspaper, "there was clear proof that they were following the orders of Son Ngoc Thanh and Ea Sichau who are certainly communist and who are allied with the Viet Minh." Sihanouk repeated this in February in an interview with foreign journalists, adding that there was "documentary proof" that the two men were working with Ho Chi Minh and Mao Tse-Tung.

Highhanded methods in internal politics notwithstanding, Sihanouk and his supporters made good their boasts about independence. By the fall of 1953 the major attributes of independence had been transferred to the right.

During this period Lon Nol established himself solidly. The important rice-growing region of northwestern Cambodia, Battambang Province, was reorganized in 1952 as the "Battambang Autonomous Region," French military forces withdrew, and military responsibility was transferred to the Cambodian army. Lon Nol assumed command of the region with the rank of colonel. After this he was never far from the top of the military establishment. During the next two years this area was the scene of brutal operations by the government forces against Issaraks and Viet Minh.

THE RISE OF THE SANGKUM

With independence achieved and the Democrat Party apparently destroyed, power seemed securely in the hands of the king and his supporters, but the Geneva Conference of 1954 added a new dimension to the political scene. At

the conference Cambodia guaranteed that general elections would be held in 1955 and that all political groups, including the former pro-Viet Minh maquis, would be allowed to participate. Moreover, the International Control Commission was to supervise the electoral process.

In the meantime a new generation of university graduates began to return from France and enter the political scene with an entirely different outlook from the founders of the Democrat Party, who had specialized in politically neutral subjects such as mathematics and literature during the last pre-war years and the Vichy period. The new group were lawyers and political economists and had seen Paris student life during the radical ferment of the early post-war days. Several achieved quick prominence by being elected to the executive committee of the Democrat Party which, in the post-Geneva political freedom, was able to resume activity. In reaction to this new leadership some of the older Democrats resigned, and one denounced the new group as Communist.

Another group which took advantage of the situation were the Khmers who had fought with the Viet Minh against the French to the end of the war. They formed a party, the Pracheachon, "citizens," and began publishing a newspaper. A further group which benefited from Geneva were the members of the non-Viet Minh maquis, Son Ngoc Thanh's followers, who also came out of the jungle. Some of them formed a political party, the "Khmer Independence Party," whose very name was a challenge to Sihanouk, and published a series of newspapers generally, like those of the Democrats and Pracheachon, critical of the government. The other political parties on the scene after Geneva were the old Liberal Party, and the previous collection of small right-wing groups.

It appeared that a revived Democrat Party would repeat its previous victories, especially with electoral freedom guaranteed by Geneva and the International Control Commission. The right was determined not to let this happen. In October four of the small parties, including that of Lon Nol, formed an alliance which announced itself as rightist, monarchist, traditionalist and in principle opposed to party politics. This alliance broke up in February, 1955, and most of its members joined another political formation which appeared the same month, the Sangkum Reastr Niyum, or "Popular Socialist Community". Its supreme councillor was Sihanouk, among its prominent members were leaders of the old right-wing parties. Within the first few months of 1955 all of these groups except one dissolved in favour of the Sangkum. The Popular Socialist Community of ex-king Norodom Sihanouk and the Liberal party of Prince Norindeth thus became the political representatives of the large landowners who made up less than 10% of the population but whose influence was very great.

The unification of the right was almost complete. From the beginning the Sangkum made its conservative ideology clear. In the first issues of its newspaper it set forth an authoritarian philosophy: natural leaders should rule, those less fortunate should not envy them. The natural leaders were the rich and powerful, whose situation was attributable to virtuous conduct in previous lives (a common belief in popular Southeast Asian Buddhism). The poor and unfortunate should accept their lot and try for an improved situation in the next life through virtuous conduct in the present. The Sangkum was also strongly anti-Communist, desired close relations with the United States and American military aid (an agreement was signed on May 16, 1955), and felt that Cambodia should not be bound by the Geneva Accords because she had achieved independence before the conference.

The Sangkum's main opposition, the radicalized Democrats, the Pracheachon and the Thanhists, held closely related positions on major issues. They emphasized the importance of the Geneva Conference in securing Cambodia's independence,

the undesirability of American military aid, the dangerous situation in Vietnam, and the necessity for free elections as guaranteed by Geneva and the constitution of 1947.

The reorganized Democrat Party asked for a cabinet post, since the cabinet was to contain representatives of each party in order to assure the fairness of the election. This was refused because of the suspicion of Communism. Naturally, there was no chance of a cabinet post for the Pracheachon.

Thus as the 1955 elections approached all government power was concentrated in the hands of the pro-Sangkum right, which had never previously been able to achieve electoral success.

The election was at first set for April, but by then it was almost certain that the Democrats would win. Delegations from the provinces began arriving at the palace with petitions for an end to elections and parliamentary rule, and for Sihanouk to rule the country. Sihanouk claimed that these petitions represented the will of the people exasperated by the abuses of party government. Of course, with the ICC present, outright abolition of parties and parliament was impossible, but he tried to get around this by a constitutional reform which would have taken power from the National Assembly and, under the guise of returning it to the people, given it to the right. The reform would also have prevented the exmaquisards from participating in the election. The ICC disapproved and the project was dropped. The election was then postponed to September, still within the limits set at Geneva but giving the right more time to prepare.

From then on the "Local News" columns of the anti-Sangkum newspapers were filled with accounts of campaign irregularities. The Sangkum made full use of the administration. People were coerced into taking out Sangkum membership cards, then told that if they voted for any other party they would face punishment. Villagers were forced to take an oath to supernatural powers that they would vote for the Sangkum. They were also threatened with punishment, including death, if they didn't vote for the Sangkum.

One might wonder if these accounts were true, or simply dishonest election propaganda by the left. The answer is based on indirect evidence. Left-wing papers were constantly harassed throughout summer 1955. One Thanhist paper was suspended in February. In May another, representing a group which had just left the Thanh maquis, was closed. Still another paper in the same camp opened on June 7 and was shut down after its second issue on June 10. Its energetic editor immediately started a different paper on June 17 which only lasted a few issues. The Pracheachon paper published its first number on April 1, was suspended after number 19 on June 10; a successor lasted 39 issues, until October 25, after the election. The three editors whose papers had been closed down were brought to trial and sentenced to three months each for (1) claiming that independence had been obtained at Geneva through the efforts of the whole population, (2) lèse-majesté, and (3) false statements about United States military aid. As the reports of election irregularities did not figure in the charges, it may be inferred that the government didn't consider it expedient to make an issue of them. The more moderate Democrat Party paper also chronicled election abuses. Harassment of candidates was common. Three Pracheachon candidates spent most of the campaign period in jail as did two Democrats, and others were arrested for brief periods or brutalized.

The results of this election are well known. The Sangkum took all the seats, the Democrats came in a very poor second. The Pracheachon did surprisingly well with five of their candidates getting over 25% of the vote in their districts, including one who had spent the entire campaign period in prison. The International Control Commission certified the election as "correct," indicating how little such inspection may mean.

THE SANGKUM SYSTEM

The Sangkum victory was the victory of the traditionalist Cambodian right, chiefly the Renovation group. Lon Nol entered the government as Minister of National Defence, and from then on, almost continually retained control of the military establishment in one post or another.

The Sangkum never again had any real challengers. The Democrat Party dissolved itself in 1957 after its leaders had been called to the palace for friendly conference with Sihanouk and set on by Lon Nol's soldiers. They later asked for admission to the Sangkum, as did anyone whose future lay in public life or administrative work. The elections of 1958 and 1962 were rubber-stamp affairs with candidates hand-picked by Sihanouk. Only the Pracheachon feebly contested the 1958 elections; before the 1962 contest its leaders were arrested on charges which may or may not have been true — it looks as though even this negligible opposition was more than Sihanouk could tolerate. His true feelings about electoral opposition bubbled up in the heat of a speech to the National Congress in 1965 when he berated his adversaries of 1955 for unfair tactics — using the question of American military aid and SEATO to discredit the Sangkum. Because of this, "16% of the voters, normally attached to me, voted against the Sangkum".

Power throughout these years remained solidly in the hands of the old right, although a number of young intellectuals were allowed into the National Assembly in 1958 and 1962, thus giving the illusion that the politicians of the extreme right were progessively confined to strictly honorific posts (where they waited "in hibernation" for their hour, the coup of 1970, to come). Nothing could be farther from the truth. Throughout the fifteen years from 1955 to 1970, the same names recur constantly in the key government posts. Sihanouk was willing to make use of the new intellectuals' abilities too if they were willing to offer him absolute loyalty, because they were of much greater value than the conservative rank and file which had cluttered the Assembly after 1955. Cooperation between them and the old guard was impossible, though, and at times of crisis Sihanouk always opted for the latter; the new intellectual elite were never allowed to hold one job long enough to work effectively or develop power position. The Sangkum always favoured the worst elements of traditional society.

Sihanouk was a non-removable Chief of State after 1960. Constitutional reform was no longer a major issue, and the constitution of 1947 remained in effect. The style and ideology of internal politics did not change during the Sangkum years, although never again expressed so frankly as at the beginning. The interest groups organized earlier as political parties became cliques within the Sangkum. Meaningful political activity lay in inciting Sihanouk against one's enemies.

The rewards in this type of political life were the traditional ones of personal wealth and power for those who found favour with the sovereign. All state employment, the only employment with prestige, was ranked according to the possibility it provided for private profit. Even socialism could be integrated into this system; the state industries and nationalized enterprises were eventually transformed into appanages for Sihanouk's favorite mandarins. Periodic scandals served to spread wealth, placing some in temporary eclipse while others took their turn. No high official was ever forced to repay what he had taken.

Within such a context, "progressive," or "radical" meant not only the left as usually understood, but any position seeking to rationalize and depersonalize the economic and administrative systems. Hence the progressive rightists, came in for almost as much criticism as the marxists, and Sihanouk in his more excited moments could accuse the Thanhists of working both for the CIA and the Viet Cong.

Sceptics might ask why the system didn't break down, since those in power were continually taking wealth out of the public purse without doing anything in return. In pre-modern times, a good deal of wealth was redistributed through conspicuous consumption within the economy and by the support of the large clientele. A breakdown merely resulted in a palace coup or replacement of the royal family by a new dynasty. In the mid-twentieth century such a system is more fragile, and without special props unlikely to last more than a few years. Conspicuous consumption by the elite involved expensive foreign products, frequent trips abroad, hard currency bank accounts, and no large clientele. The system broke down; Cambodia passed through a war and a revolution.

Certain features of the Cambodian situation prevented the breakdown from coming even earlier. First, there was the character of Sihanouk himself. For most of the Cambodian peasantry a monarch was essential to the well-being of the country and even for the maintenance of Buddhism. Any king properly enthroned, who maintained the traditional rituals, would serve the purpose. Next there was peace and internal security, something the country had not known within living memory. Throughout the 19th century Cambodia had been plagued by warfare, and the colonial period had seen whole regions ridden by outlaw bands who could raid, rob, and burn entire villages with impunity. In the years following World War II these bands turned themselves into "Issaraks," fighters for independence against the French; this ended about 1958-59 and the Sangkum government received credit for this.

Even the wasteful expenditures of the elite had certain psychic returns peculiar to Cambodian beliefs and attitudes. Since one's situation in future existences is conditioned by behaviour in the past and present, wealth and power are the results of virtuous conduct in previous lives, and their misuse need not be too severely criticised for punishment will be sure to follow. The opulent living of a Phnom Penh functionary served as an example of what the poor peasant might hope to attain in the future if he was virtuous in the present. For all but a tiny minority who had truly absorbed European intellectual values, modernization meant the type of growth exemplified by Bangkok and Saigon — chrome and concrete, streets clogged by cars, a plethora of luxurious bars, and everyone dressed in western clothes.

Without foreign aid, the Sangkum system could not have survived as long as it did. American military aid began in the early 1950's and was then distributed through the French. After independence in 1955, a Khmero-American military aid agreement made the U.S. the chief supplier of the Cambodian army.

Sihanouk set out very intelligently to improve Cambodia's image abroad. Normal diplomatic relations were established with the socialist countries, including China, between 1956 and 1958. Diplomatic relations were accompanied by aid; China, for example, built factories and the Soviet Union a hospital. Neutrality was to be Cambodia's foreign policy. Sihanoukian foreign rhetoric was full of "socialism". American embassy personnel in Phnom Penh, still in the grip of Dullesian hysteria and hopeful of drawing Cambodia into SEATO, spoke darkly of the red prince and his communistic policies, without distinguishing his rhetoric from substance. Within the country anti-communism was still the rule and Sihanouk often explained that Russia and China were good friends, but their economic systems were not for Cambodia. He gave heavy emphasis to the point that communists were against religion.

The aim was to obtain maximum possible aid from competing foreign countries without allowing Cambodian society to be influenced either by modernizing capitalists or revolutionary socialists, both of whom were equally subversive. The United States was frightened just enough by talk of socialism to keep the aid coming while the socialist countries were convinced that their aid might bring

Cambodia closer to them. The aid itself permitted the Cambodian elite to extract more from the country than they redistributed and to avoid any of the basic reforms which must be undertaken by a developing country relying mainly on its own resources.

Strains on the system began with the recrudescence of the Vietnam war in 1958-59. There was pressure from South Vietnam and the United States for Cambodian support, which even the Cambodian right wished to refuse, for in spite of their anti-communist stance they had no sympathy for Diem or any of his successors, who made territorial demands on Cambodia and were said to be oppressing the Cambodian minority in South Vietnam. Ultimately Saigon and the U.S. accused Cambodia of providing refuge for communist troops and frequent raids across the Cambodian border caused many casualties.

At the same time the Cambodian left urged support for the NLF and closer ties with the socialist world, accusing Sihanouk and his clique of secretly selling out to the U.S. Sihanouk's policy from 1958 to 1962 of using talented intellectuals in the government gave some of them prestigious platforms for promoting their ideas, and the general diplomatic rapprochement with the socialist countries often made it appear that they were only following Sangkum policy. The right reacted vigorously, probably assuming that with foreign policy oriented toward the socialist camp, there would be no objection to the suppression of the domestic left. The Pracheachon leadership was arrested just before the 1962 elections. In early 1963, a student demonstration in Siemreap was allowed to grow into a small rebellion for which the leftist ministers were blamed and forced to resign. Thus, after early 1963, important leftist participation in Sangkum ministries virtually came to an end. These events also convinced some of the left that gradualist efforts within the system would not succeed, for in the early summer of 1963 a number of major intellectuals disappeared from their jobs and, as we now know, fled into the maquis. It is probably safe to say that the war against the Sihanouk-Lon Nol group began from that time.

THE 1966 ELECTIONS

The basic Sangkum policy toward Vietnam was based on their estimate of the likely outcome of the war; by 1963 they had apparently become convinced that the U.S. would give up and the NLF would win. A propaganda campaign against the U.S. and its aid missions was begun, which sometimes looked like an effort at blackmail to get even more aid — with less control by the donor over its ultimate disposition. If it was blackmail it failed, and late 1963 American aid in all forms was rejected.

This break cannot be put down to leftist agitation, as many Americans seemed to think. The grass-roots leftist leadership of the Pracheachon had been jailed or driven underground in 1962, the intellectual elite had lost all power by early 1963, and during the entire period of the "Sangkum socialist era," 1963 to 1969, the government was solidly in the hands of Sihanouk and his supporters of the traditional elite.

The end of American aid was accompanied by much rhetoric about Cambodia preferring to aid itself, and the necessity of a policy of austerity accompanied by the development of local industries. Austerity, however, was not to the fancy of the Cambodian elite. Cars and other luxuries continued to be imported at an ever increasing rate and luxury construction in Phnom Penh doubled. It could no longer be said that the bars and restaurants were for the entertainment of American aid personnel and diplomats as the most conspicuous clientele consisted of high-spending Cambodian army officers obviously not living on their salaries. Finally the accusation of collusion with the NLF was coming true, and this

became a large enterprise by 1965. Besides being diplomatically expedient, it provided one of the props needed for the Sangkum system after American aid had ended. In itself this was insufficient, or perhaps collusion benefited the military and not the groups who had profited most from American aid. Attempts were also made to squeeze more from the countryside. Rice crops were bought at artificially low prices and sold through state outlets to retain the profits for the budget, or those in charge of the related government agencies.

As could be expected, discontent in the countryside increased, directed toward the local administration rather than Sihanouk. Discontent also spread through the teacher corps and urban intellectuals, who knew where the ultimate blame lay. The discontent was met with repression. The secret police were omnipresent, people mysteriously disappeared. By 1966 Cambodia, though still smiling and pleasant for the casual visitor, was a country of fear.

But the 1966 election revealed rifts in the Sangkum system. That system was failing, not because of plots organized by its enemies either external and internal, but simply because Sihanouk and his closest advisers refused to face any of the basic problems. They had established a system requiring constant infusions of external aid, had lost some of the aid through greed, and then tried to make up for it by squeezing the country harder.

Instead of choosing single Sangkum candidates for each seat as in 1958 and 1962, Sihanouk allowed all Sangkum members to stand in districts of their choice; in some districts as many as ten candidates competed. At the same time the official Sangkum newspaper began attacking a number of young representatives who had incurred Sihanouk's ire, on both the left and the progressive right. In earlier years this would have resulted in "spontaneous" demonstrations or petitions against these men. Surprisingly, nothing happened, one of the first indications that Sihanouk was losing his magic. When the votes were in, they were among the few with large majorities in an election distinguished by the enormous number of narrow pluralities and doubtful practices. The victories of the three leftists, two of them in rural areas which were among the first to go to the anti-Phnom Penh forces in 1970, are clear-cut cases of popular support in the face of official opposition. Otherwise the new assembly was characterised by the reappearance of some of the riff-raff of the Renovation Party, absent from the political scene since the 1950's. Six seats were won by Sangkum conservatives of 1955 passed over in the elections of 1958 and 1962, while thirteen others had last been seen in 1951 when most ran as candidates of right-wing splinter parties. The re-emergence of these reactionaries in no way affected the balance of power, since the Sangkum had always been the vehicle for the right.

Sihanouk apologists have tended to portray this election as an unexpected coup by the right which opened the way to the real coup of 1970. Jean Lacouture quotes Sihanouk himself as saying that he had opened up the elections against the advice of the "best leaders of the youth" and that instead of an Assembly which, "up to then [was] in majority young men", "I let them elect the most corrupt and reactionary Chamber I was ever subjected to" (L'Indochine vue de Pekin, p. 82). Corrupt and reactionary the Assembly certainly was, but the contemporary press showed that Sihanouk had cut himself off from the advice of "the best leaders of the youth" and hoped for nothing so much as their defeat. Since his major internal problem after 1963 was the influence, first, of the intellectual left in Phnom Penh, and later, leftist exploitation of peasant discontent in the countryside, a better explanation for this election is that Sihanouk had decided that salvation lay with the extreme right. By allowing them to win through their own devices he could later, should it prove necessary, avoid the onus of having delivered the country over to them.

When the statistics of all the elections are examined closely, it almost seems as though Sihanouk and his Sangkum advisers had been planning this since 1958. The early Sangkum had been frankly reactionary. In the 1958 elections, to answer criticism that he discriminated against younger men, Sihanouk chose 33 candidates who were under 40, including 11 age 30 or under, favoring those with university degrees. Real power remained concentrated in the hands of the same conservative coterie who held most of the important cabinet and advisory posts. The resultant conflict between Assembly and government enabled conservatives to say that, in spite of their degrees, the younger men were incapable of solving the country's practical problems. In the 1962 elections, only 25 of the deputies remained candidates, and although this group included the most notable of the leftists, it was heavily weighted with proven supporters of the right. Thus the 1962 Assembly was planned to be both older and more conservative than its predecessor, and by 1963 the younger left had been shorn of all power and influence.

The election of 1966 was the logical culmination of Sangkum politics and Sihanouk must bear full responsibility for it.

THE 1970 COUP AND SUBSEQUENT WAR

As the American build-up in Vietnam became more massive, an NLF victory became less certain, and the Cambodian leaders must have begun a painful reassessment of their situation. After 1967 Sihanouk's public declarations became more nuanced. He several times mentioned the need for a stabilizing American presence in Southeast Asia, and, at home, asserted that Cambodia's chief enemies would always be the Vietnamese, of whatever stripe, and that U.S. military activity in Vietnam was good since it got rid of so many of these hereditary enemies. Some Khmer-language newspapers devoted most of their space to anti-"Viet Cong" news and articles, and the desirability of resuming relations with the U.S. was reconsidered.

The years after 1966 were a period of steady economical and political decline. Prices rose, corruption increased, a state gambling casino was established in Phnom Penh. The first large peasant revolt broke out in western Battambang province in the spring of 1967 and was suppressed with bloodshed reminiscent of the 1950's, and prefiguring that of 1975. The military tried to blame the Phnom Penh intellectual left and soon after two of the most important of this group disappeared presumed murdered by the police or military. In the fall of that year a third also disappeared.

There were more revolts in 1968, and more disappearances. By 1969 one of Sihanouk's own French-language publications devoted a large amount of space to details, with maps, of "Red" and "Khmer Viet-Minh" activities in different parts of the country. In some cases blame was placed directly on the NLF or North Vietnamese who were charged with attempting to take over certain border areas. Finally, official contacts were resumed with the U.S. and this led to the re-establishment of diplomatic relations in July 1969. Cambodia seemed to be swinging back, not just to its position of the middle Sangkum years, but to that of the early, pro-western Sangkum of 1955.

Why then, the coup in 1970? Since Sihanouk was already moving toward the U.S., it is unlikely that it was directly inspired from that direction. Although both Sihanouk's supporters and those who overthrew him were rather close ideologically, they did represent different economic cliques within the country. The "socializing" reforms of 1963 gave the direction of the economy to a group personally close to Sihanouk, at the expense of another rightwing faction who would have preferred a more rational, modern, capitalist-type of economic organization. This latter group were among the important elements behind the coup. There is also

the possibility that some of the moves were unplanned and that no one expected Sihanouk to react as he did. In any case it must be emphasized that the leaders who emerged were by no means new men, fascist opponents of the Sangkum, or disgruntled nonentities who had been in "hibernation." Lon Nol, Sirik Matak, Yem Sambaur, and Sim Var had always been among the major figures of the right. They had sabotaged democracy, opposed the Geneva Accords, organized the Sangkum, and helped maintain Sihanouk's absolute rule from 1955.

Although Son Ngoc Thanh, who also returned after the coup, had been an old opponent of Sihanouk and the Sangkum, his later drift to the right led to his rehabilitation with the Sangkum conservatives. He was never completely trusted. His well-trained troops were much desired in the fighting, but they were split up under different commands. Thanh himself was kept out of political power as long as possible, and his debacle as Prime Minister in 1972 was partly due to lack of support from his old enemies among the Phnom Penh leadership.

Of the main Cambodian parties to the subsequent war—Sihanouk, the maquis, the population on the government side, and the Phnom Penh leadership—the role of the last is easiest to assess. To a large extent they lost out of sheer greed and incompetence. With an army larger than their opponent's and continually replenished by volunteers, adequate food (if it had been equitably distributed), and superior military equipment supplied by the United States, the Lon Nol government nevertheless demoralized its army and civilian population and lost the war largely by default.

It looks in retrospect as though Sihanouk's moves were now calculated to bring him back eventually as a hero who could confound his enemies both of the left and right. When he arrived in Peking and issued his declaration establishing the anti-Phnom Penh resistance movement, FUNK, in March, 1970, he probably had no very clear idea of how it would be received, what the organization of the maquis was, possibly not even which of the vanished leaders were still alive. It is, however, clear where his sympathies lay with respect to the men whom he believed, or knew, might possibly be among the insurgents, and his declaration must be understood as an attempt to divide them.

Among the politically conscious part of the population on the Phnom Penh side, the new alignment of 1970 produced a good deal of confusion. There was a brief period of euphoria occasioned by the disappearance of Sihanouk and several of his most hated henchmen, and the return of freedom of speech and press. In a general liberation of political prisoners even the the Pracheachon leaders were released, but they, having no doubts about what was what, took off for the maquis soon after their speeches of thanks to Lon Nol.

For the less doctrinaire, Sihanouk's switch from head of the reactionary government of Phnom Penh to leader of a progressive government in exile was extremely disconcerting. Had he remained in Phnom Penh as head of a government allied with the United States against the rebel forces, many of the dissatisfied youth who remained under Lon Nol would have defected to the maquis.

The euphoria quickly gave way to disillusionment. At first the government was the old Renovation-Sangkum group of the 1950's, whose policy was Sihanoukism without Sihanouk. When they proved incompetent, Son Ngoc Thanh returned as Prime Minister in early 1972. This was the moment of truth for all those who had considered Sihanouk and Lon Nol as equivalent evils and imagined there could be a progressive solution without the ideological left. When Thanh also proved incompetent, disillusionment was complete, and by mid-1972 nearly everyone was convinced that without a thoroughgoing reformation of the Phnom Penh government, the other side would win.

It was also clear by this time that the opposing forces were not Vietnamese invaders depicted in government propaganda, but Khmer, and that some, at least,

of the missing leftist intellectuals were leading them. The demoralization which increasingly gripped those on the Phnom Penh side was probably compounded by guilt over supporting one's declared enemies against one's erstwhile friends. Although a considerable number of well-known figures left Phnom Penh for the other side after 1972 thousands of others remained, half-heartedly supporting a regime which they made no secret of hating.

The hope of such people, probably a majority of the population on the government side, was that Lon Nol would be overthrown by someone who would arrange an end to the war and a moderate socialist coalition with the other side—a solution which would save them from the difficult choice of remaining under a regime with which they had little sympathy or engaging in the dangerous career of a guerilla fighter. Their position was made even more uncomfortable by the fact that FUNK offered no encouragement toward this and made little effort to explain its position to the urban population or offer them any particular incentive to overthrow the government. It almost seemed as though FUNK had already written off the urban areas as hopelessly corrupted by U.S. aid.

The FUNK leaders must also have observed that colonial reflexes were being reinforced by the war situation. Increasingly, people were convinced that Cambodia could only exist as the client of a more powerful state, and that it was better to be a slave of the United States than of the Vietnamese. During the severe U.S. bombing of the first eight months of 1973, there was no reaction in Phnom Penh other than relief, and it must have seemed to FUNK that their urban campatriots were quite willing to see the entire countryside destroyed as long as they could enjoy a parasitical existence as U.S. clients.

It is certain that FUNK policy became much harsher after the bombing. Whereas in 1971-72 they showed considerable efforts at conciliation and in general Cambodian villagers did not fear them, there are authentic accounts from 1973-74, of brutal imposition of new policies without adequate ideological preparation of the population.

A major mystery over the last two years of the war was what the U.S. goals really were in Cambodia. In spite of repeated protests by their own subordinates and responsible Cambodians, the American leadership insisted on preserving Lon Nol, even when it was certain that a change of regime offered some possibility of renewing morale and turning the war around. Of course, turning the war around could only have meant a temporary advantage, and perhaps a position strong enough to force the other side to compromise, for any leadership capable of rallying strong support would have seen that the ultimate solution lay in a coalition between the best elements of Phnom Penh and FUNK and the establishment of a moderate socialist regime. This was probably the last thing the U.S. government wanted.

CONCLUSION

Although prediction with respect to Cambodia has always been hazardous, it would be unfair to conclude without some remarks about the chances for success of the new Cambodian society.

First, the Phnom Penh government had been so unpopular for so long, the population so demoralized, that the final defeat must have come as a relief. Eyewitnesses reported the massive, spontaneous welcome which the first FUNK troops received in Phnom Penh. Few revolutionary governments have taken over amid so much good will. Opinion abroad since then, however, seems to hold that the new government, by its gratuitous brutality, destroyed this good will, and now rules only through terror. We cannot really know much about this until there is more first-hand information, not just about the first few confused weeks after the war but also the general situation since the regime has been stabilized.

The basic policies of the new regime seemed clear enough, though: people should be taken out of the cities and put back on the land, decentralisation should give more power to local authorities, much more investment should go into agriculture, and the old elite should lose its wealth and political power.*

There is nothing in the actions of the new regime which argues against ultimate success. Even the rigid exclusion of all foreign contacts and the 'hermit-republic' stance may become an acceptable norm for Cambodians, for in spite of the generally open attitude towards strangers which characterized pre-war society, there was agreement among all classes and factions that Cambodian affairs were of no legitimate concern to foreigners and the country would be better off if they went away. The new leaders will certainly have no trouble teaching their people that Cambodian suffering was mainly due to foreign intervention. Although one may legitimately ask whether the new egalitarian society could not have been established with less deliberate destruction of the old, there are ample reasons for the new leadership to answer in the negative.

^{*} Readers are also referred to the article by Nayan Chanda: "Cambodia: When the Killing had to Stop", Far Eastern Economic Review, October 29, 1976 (Ed.).

VIETNAM

Poems translated from Vietnamese, mainly by Nguyen Ngoc Bich

That Young Man from Hanoi

THAI LUAN

The American patted my back: You've just won a great victory.

Then he pointed to the corpses atop the barbed wire and told me to count them...

With his feet he turned up a body, and smiled: What a young and skinny VC!

Yes, hardly twenty years old.

I wonder what his name is, whose son he was. The American was nonplussed—what a thing to ask! Yes, my friend, it's hard for you to understand. Right, corpse? What's your name, whose son are you?

The base commander's report: Sir, according to the captured documents the enemy force came to about a regiment fresh troops infiltrated from the North most of them youngsters.

Right in front of you are two machine-gun positions with ninety-two corpses in them not counting the ones in the bunkers.

On behalf of the Government, I confer upon you the Gallantry Cross.

How about you, corpse, what reward do you get? Only a smirk on his face. Corpse, what's your name, whose son are you?

You from Hanoi? Then why hang there, you Hanoi young man? Why don't you have any face, any head You from Hanoi? Why don't you have any hands Why don't you laugh, why don't you cry You from Hanoi? Why are you straddling the wire?

Me! Let me stand by his corpse and you, enormous American friend, would you please take a picture of us for a memento?

HOANG BAO VIET

I brought with me loved voices faces laughter The door-frame the mosquito net over my sleeping wife and children I brought the taste of tears the sweat-streaked back the drumming rain The curfew-dark city a collapsed pier the village path empty at dusk

I brought my departure day April sixteenth our year-old child in my wife's arms

The fiery bloody storm overhead never ending sowing hot coals in the tender grass

Oh the wound in me is deep the bullet pierced the heart the bayonet struck near the lungs

Across the globe my land is suffering while here I can only wrap my arms around my chest

Here I know Dani caught between pleasure and remorse seeing me after ten years

And the Seine is washing spring colors over Paris

And the hands and eyes of her I left behind follow me touch me

As night after night I watch the stars and feel my homeland like a cloak around me.

Self

NHA-TRANG CONG-HUYEN-TON-NU

Do not come to me Expecting to find perfect beauty My hair a stream of poetry Or my laughter music.

In my heart
Are confused personal feelings
And love for my country.
My words and laughter
Betray the alienation of a century.

I do not know how to worship Jade and glittering gold. In my poetry I sing of human suffering.

My world
Is open for friends
Lost in the crowd
Wanting to talk until dawn.

Please come to me Face my life this way Welcoming surprises gladly Expecting disappointment.

translated by the author

The Flute of Li Kuei

TO HUU

Perched on the barrel of a cannon, Li Kuei looks as handsome as a guide in Paradise, lit up by the late moon sidling through the clearing where the Red Army pauses, having marched miles across the tortuous mountain trail to camp at nightfall beside this soothing stream.

Tonight, as on so many other evenings, two birds cut short their flight above the pass and under the Red Banner, Li Kuei lifts his flute of green bamboo and plays the Internationale while in the brook's water, Red soldiers scrub the dried blood from their shoeless feet.

All the way from Kiangsi, night and day, eking their path through mountain and valley, braving alike cascade and rapids, they keep their pledge to the Red Banner, living undaunted in forest and ravine.

They left, promising to bring victory home.

Disembodied, the flute soars on the air, now whispering comfort to the Red Soldiers, darting, shifting, now surging with conviction as it steels them for the next thrust forward. Li Kuei perches on the barrel of a cannon. Listen to this young bird singing in his cage.

translated by Nguyen Ngoc Bich and Kenneth Pitchford

A Visit to the Temple of Perfume

DUONG LAM

Where's the way to the Peach-Blossom Spring? Take the Plum Forest or the Swallowtail Ravine! Who had this inscribed, "First Grotto of the Land?" Where are we? In Buddhaland or the home of immortals?

O green hills—wise you are with your snow caps, Let me ask you just a few questions: Let the immortals on P'eng-lai, or better, Buddha Tell me the meaning of appearances and the Void. What makes the world the way it is? How much longer will the land know its misfortunes? Let me ask too about mankind, and literature. Let me ask God what He plans to do. O why do hills and streams have to stay the same? Why are the trees dyed in the colors of autumn? Grottoes, caverns, temple! Let me ask you too. Birds, will you keep on chatting in the Outer Yard. Let me inquire also about the drums and gongs of former times. Deliverance Spring, how many persons have you cleansed so far? I don't want to question myself, so I turn to the sky And the hills—but they refuse to answer. Let me ask the Creator then. Who is to be left And enjoy this wind and this moon? Born to a hundred years in this world of dust, How many times will we meet again? I am senile now, and cannot help asking.

The Life of a Mother with many Children TRAN YEN THAO

Her face is a forest of grapes, a garden of youth, vibrant green trees, pure bright sky and a hushed ocean. She wakes up each morning smiling with her awareness an awareness green like the garden of youth. She becomes pregnant gives birth to softspoken modest children who grow up with sap, grapes and awareness.

Suddenly the storm-burst, the rainy season returns—trees are thrown into confusion, the sky looms black and the ocean seethes over its shores.

She wakes up each evening hugging self-pity and crying cries remote like a dream and thin like a hair. She becomes pregnant gives birth to disabled weaklings who grow up with paleness, confusion and remorse.

After rain the drought—
trees shrivel, sky burns and the ocean churns with wrath.
She wakes up each afternoon
hugging old age and cursing
curses vindictive like a conflagration.
She becomes pregnant
gives birth to children blind with hatred
who grow up eating charred bark and flames.

Drought is followed by stagnant waters. She is desolate like an end-of-winter day, ocean frowns, sky hangs heavy and the trees are barren. She wakes up each midnight sobbing in the dark darkness desperate like her thoughts. She becomes pregnant gives birth to hollow children who grow up with quiltless nights and riceless days.

More storm, more drought—sky choked with haze, bark peels off trees and the ocean roars, dawn is foggy, afternoon parched, evening oppressive. The river runs by, cutting her face in two. Each child now carries an infectious disease: whether struggling one side or the other its incisions are clean its yearnings are quiet its curses are savage its love is tremendous.

As for her, she is now a cripple. But she still lives.

THAILAND

Love and the Fuengfah Flower

SUWANEE SUKONTHA

I picked a flower, a red and white fuengfah growing in a clump out in the garden. I like to watch the bougainvillea every day from the verandah. Their branches weave a dialogue with the sunlight. The bamboo has the delicate sharpness of classical stems. If you're going to compare the bamboo to Chinese brush-painting, I suppose the best comparison you could find for the fuengfah would be a cheap paper flower.

It reminds me sometimes of a beautiful woman, in the flush of eternal youth. Once past full bloom, the fuengfah falls from the twig and the wind tosses it into the pond, where it drifts among its fallen comrades until, quite withered, it sinks to the murky depths.

When the fuengfah is in bloom, its colour gradually deepens from pale to dark, and, inside, the stamens fluff out in little white spots as if God had spattered the heart of the flower with white paint like stars in a moonless night.

I wonder, would you still be so pretty without your little white dots, your flowers within a flower? I was shredding the bloom, ripping off one petal after the other, with a kind of implacable ruthlessness. I did not spare a thought for the exquisite delicacy of the thing, nature's gift of consolation to the lonely heart. I even crushed the last few scarlet petals. In my white fingers their loveliness turned to dried blood.

I plucked another bougainvillea flower with bright scarlet petals. This one I wrapped carefully in tissue paper and laid in my bag. All the way there on the bus I was longing to open the bag to see if it had been squashed by the jostling elbows, or by the lustful ones who saw their chance to squeeze against me under cover of the crush, until I had to use the bag as a shield to ward off physical contact with them.

When I reached my stop, I got off and began to walk, walking as if my feet had invisible wings that helped them to skim swiftly above the ground, like the angels in a Renaissance painting. The soft white wings moved quite as fast as I wished, but they could not catch my heart, for it had been there all the time before me, with my waiting lover, even before I left home.

Through my mind scenes from the past flashed, like scenes for a film that have already been edited and set in sequence. My mind had carefully cut out all the parts it did not want to remember, leaving only the beautiful scenes.

I was in the strong brown arms of my love. My man has the same beautiful body as most men, but love tells me that he is more beautiful than any other man, more wonderful than anyone in the world. Let us try to believe what love tells us. Am I not a film editor, and is it not my right to select and edit my material to fit my plot?

His shoulders are broad, and find their chief use as a pillow for my somewhat brainless head, while my mouth runs on in senseless torrents of words—words about love and other chimera that only exist in poetry or in the translucent petals of fantastic flowers that painters create. They are as unreal as steam or clouds.

I turned my face up to his. No, he didn't turn away, but bent and searched for my lips with his own. When our lips touched, I felt myself soar. If the world stood still, it would be in order to watch us kiss.

I wanted to look at his face, but something deep inside me made me keep my eyes shut. At this moment I was like a blind girl.

I could feel nothing but his caresses. I could feel his lips, so warm and soft that I wanted to press myself into him until we blended into one. I could smell tobacco on his breath, and from his armpits came the mingled scents of some kind of eau-de-cologne for men, and his own male odour. Whatever it was, it was his smell, and I loved it. All my senses took flight.

I let my fingers explore his forehead, damp with sweat, his aquiline nose and his chin with its threat of bristle. I let them explore between our searching lips, felt the soft tongue tickling my own until I went weak and could do nothing but thrust myself against him until I felt his heart beat against my own.

The perspiration from his back and chest drenched me. I pulled my body away from his and began to fan him with a little white fan. Some Chinese painter in Hong Kong had daubed a picture of a mountain with a couple of trees on it. The man was obviously no artist but it wasn't bad. I'm looking at it right now, as a matter of fact.

The painter has shown the mountain, quite naked and treeless, towering against an empty sky. At its foot there is a clump of odd-looking trees and beneath them is a boulder with a man leaning against it playing some sort of flute. If you like, you can imagine that he's waiting for his girl. She may come, or she may not, as you wish.

It was so hot, too hot to stop fanning, and the fan turned the hot air briefly to cool and back again to hot. I was reminded of the Songgran festival up north. I had never had such a time in my life; but with my health, never robust, I had managed to catch a severe chill.

So I have never been back since. But anyway, why should I want to go anywhere at all outside this stuffy little room where my love is? And what should we care if the room is small, when our hearts can take wing to any paradise a poet ever dreamt of? My friend Angkarn Kalayanapongse likes to paint the kinnaree, the bird of legend, perched high on a cliff against a background of sheer mountain face and a pale moon. I often wish I could get into those paintings, fly over to talk with the kinnaree sisters of love and dreams and the beloved. I want to pick those flowers from their mountain nooks, wondrous flowers the artist has painted from dreams—dreams I secretly share.

Angkarn—my friend Angkarn, who likes to sign his work: Angkarn, Poet.

I pulled myself out of one dream to plunge into another.

The deep brown eyes of my lover were gazing tenderly down at me. Ah, love, how sweet it is! I have no words of my own. The best I can do is to borrow the words of Dr Su-Yin.

He turned to me and took me in his arms, his skin smooth and hot against my cold body. I could not concentrate on the words he whispered. All my senses were responding to his touch alone.

'Darling, it's so hot,' I murmured. He said nothing, just went on caressing me until I felt the heat rise in my own body. My long hair had come loose, and some of it was tumbling down my spine. I tried to tie it back with his handkerchief. The handkerchief smelled of him. Before I used it I breathed in his smell from it. 'It's dirty,' he said apologetically. 'I don't care,' I said. 'I'm so hot. Don't come near me for a minute.' 'But I'm hot too,' he retorted. Our eyes met and we burst out laughing. We laughed, and stopped laughing, feeling happiness that comes in waves like sound and can reach out and stifle us.

If I could just make time stand still. If I could point a finger at the days, and

the night, the hours, the sun and the moon, command everything in the world to stop moving, arrest all progress and all decay. If I could stop the carriage of the sun-god to retain this moment! I would be Hanuman, the mighty monkey general of the *Ramayana*, Hanuman who could become a whole army at will, and stop the sun with his bare hands.

When he let me go for a moment, I took up the crumpled fan and pulled it back into shape. The mountain against the empty sky had become rather hunch-backed from the creases and the trees were crooked, but the little man was still leaning against the rock with his flute.

I got up and went over to the table and hunted through the contents of the flower vase, coloured pens, brushes, drawing pencils. I picked out a red pen and drew a girl on the fan—a Chinese girl in her funny costume, standing under the tree behind the rock. I showed it to him. 'Look, here's his girl.' 'Why does she stand there, so far behind him?' was his only comment. So I drew another girl for the little man, close to him this time. Now he had two girls. He took the fan away from me and pulled me down to him and again the world stood still, alas, weakling that I am!

He moved away from me and I heard water running in the shower, and thought of the cool cascading water of Sai Yoke Falls in Kanchanaburi where a thousand canary yellow butterflies like winged flowers flit and flirt among the spray. I used to chase them, but if ever their yellow wings came in contact with my fingers, they were gone again, leaving me spent in my hopeless task—as well try to capture a rainbow, a poem's loveliness, the genius of a Rodin.

A scent of masculine eau-de-cologne wafted towards my nostrils. I tracked the cool fragrance to its source. I was hot. Pretending I was floating on a sea the colour of emeralds, I took some flowers from a vase and scattered the petals one by one into the bath where someone even hotter was already lying.

I observed the man who owned me and whom I owned, as if he were a fine piece of sculpture. I was thinking how infinitely more beautiful man is than woman. My man was tanned all over. His neck and shoulders were strong, the sinews in his arms had the beauty of a wood carving. Hah! But he'd better watch out! If he didn't take care, his stomach muscles would vanish under a spare tyre. I can think of nothing more hideous than a paunchy old man with three double chins, like some of the repulsive old lechers you see.

In my egoism I almost wished he would lose his beauty, that his hair would fall, leaving him balding and unattractive to other women so that I could be sure he was all mine. I smiled at the thought.

'What are you dreaming of now, day dreamer?' He tweaked the end of my nose in his huge man's hand. I was wishing for gills, to be able to breathe like a fish deep in the sea.

'I was putting a secret curse upon you,' I answered, moving my face out of his reach. 'I was willing you fat and bald, with a paunch.'

He got out of the water. The hair on his body was damp and matted. I suppose if man were completely hairless he would be as ugly as a chinchook. Nature, or God or whatever, whoever, created Man, was a craftsman of genius to produce such perfect symmetry. The Creator must have seen that Man would be a figure of fun with just flesh and no hair. He scooped up a handful of dust and puffed here and there on the body he had created with a few choice words of magic, just so Man would not look so naked.

'I will you to get fat too. I'm willing your waist to spread until it's as thick as your hips,' he said, blowing his spell on my waist. I shivered.

'And when I'm fat I suppose you'll go off and find some slender young thing to take my place?'

It was my turn for the bath. The cold water from the shower splashed my hair

so I washed it, too. The flower petals floated against my body and clung to my arms and legs. He picked them off one by one and drew me up to him, his hands on my shoulders. I looked up at his brown face and he smiled. When he did that his eyes crinkled at the corners. I moved my gaze down to his mouth. Nobody else had such a mouth: and his moustache, that tickled when it touched you.

'Why do you look at me like a stranger?' he said in surprise, speaking my own thoughts aloud. But he was a stranger. All I really knew about him was his body and his lovemaking: yet I had fooled myself into believing that I knew him.

'I want to see your thoughts inside your head.' His only reply was to stoop and grope for me under the cool water. I felt out of breath. My efforts to assess him ended right there.

Why does the past keep leaping into my head, foolish head that cannot banish sad thoughts however hard it tries? Because we cannot make time stand still, our joy is condemned to evaporate. It is ephemeral, without substance, too elusive even for the radar beam.

Since that May, time has fled, and already it is May again. Last May, we sat by the pool watching the red and white bougainvillea blossoms floating. Some had fallen on the glossy lotus leaves, among beads of moisture that glistened like jewels. I rose to search the grass for a cigarette lighter my man had lost. The heavy dew had soaked my sandals through. The lighter should have had a shiny reflection—finding it should have been easy, but I did not see it. At last I gave up and sat down close to him. I could smell his man-scent along with the scents of damp earth and fresh grass. He held me close, his lips soft and warm, lighting a fire in every part of me. 'It's your birthday tomorrow, isn't it?' I said. My white blouse had blown open in the wind, and the sharp short grass stung my back as though an army of ants were biting me.

By the pool as the sun rose, we exchanged our birthday gifts.

This May, I sat again by the pool looking at the fuengfah flowers. Some of them had fallen on the lawn. The lotus leaves that used to gleam in the pale moonlight were gone now. A fish jumped, spreading ripples. Now and then a shadow by the fence startled me, and all the time I was wishing someone would come and lose his lighter again just so we could spend the whole night looking for it. Nobody did, and when the dawn came I was still sitting alone.

When it was morning, I picked a fuengfah, taking care not to crush the scented petals, and I carried it on feet like wings. 'It's your birthday, isn't it?' I was going to say. Then I was going to give him the flower.

But when I stepped into the room my words were no longer the right words. I could smell coffee.

'Coffee?' he asked, nodding towards the kettle boiling on the little stove. What kind of talk is that? I thought. Here am I, trying to wish you a happy birthday, and you offer me coffee. So I put my hands behind my back and walked right up to him, hoping with all my heart that he would take me in his arms as he did last year. But he turned away, so that I had to turn away too, to hide the tears that welled up as I thought of a happier time.

I threw the flower into the boiling water and watched the petals bobbing up and down just like my own swirling thoughts. I watched for quite a while before I took the kettle off. The water had settled down now and the bubbles had died, leaving only a white froth. I picked the hot red flower out of the water. Its petals were withered now. I shredded the bloom carefully petal by petal, crushing them in my fingers. They stained my fingers with the red of blood.

Next May, May ever after, what will have happened to this love of ours? Is there nothing to be done, no way of preventing this indifference between us from growing and spreading just as the seaweed multiplies beneath the emerald sea?

Translated by Jennifer Draskau

Owners of Paradise

KHAMSING SRINAWK

The Lord of all deities, Indra, dwells in the second tier of Paradise, on the top of Mount Meru, 460,000 miles above the surface of the earth. The green god inhabits palaces with golden gates that are adorned with precious jewels and open to beautiful music. The divine creatures of this domain can assume any shape they choose; they can become as small as the end of a hair and feed on ambrosia.

(A traditional Thai description of Paradise)

HEAVEN

In the shade of a glowing day, in an ambrosial golden region a pair of stern eyes blinked open.

'Hey, kid,' cried a creature to the diminutive body of another as it slithered before him.

'And who are you to be calling me "kid"?' was the answer.

'Are you addressing me?'

'Who else is there?'

'I'll tell you, then, I own this place.'

'Who, may I ask, taught you to be so proud of yourself?'

'Well, it's true.'

'How come?'

'The Prince of Angels himself ordained that I was born in this abode of pleasure.'

'That's a good one.'

A pause.

'If that's all you can say, it shows you're staggered by the truth.' The second creature remained still as a third voice laughed followed by a chorus of sniggers.

'What's going on? Who do you think you are?' the first retorted petulantly.

'The same as you,' the newcomers jeered. 'You've got it wrong. You should be asking "Who do you think we are." Look at yourself: see any difference between us?' The quarrelling tapered off and the thrumming music of an orchestra drifted down from above.

'Well, any difference?'

'None.'

'You saw none.'

'There's no difference at all.'

The celestial harmony grew louder and in a moment the entire company ceased bickering and gazed upwards excitedly as the curtain of the sky was rent by the sharp green silhouette of the supreme deity in his appropriate colour, flanked by his splendid attendants. He slowly descended in front of the group and asked, 'O you heirs of accumulated merit, O you righteous ones, what is this commotion?'

'We have a great problem,' the first volunteered.

'Speak.

'Initially, I addressed one of these here as "kid" which offended him and when I informed him that I was the proprietor of this place by virtue of prior establishment, they all mocked me. In short, we cannot agree as to who we are.'

'In our omniscience, we thought as much.' The dignitary rubbed the palms of his hands together in thought and then continued. 'All of you should appreciate that you are here as the beneficiaries of the righteousness of your ancestors.'

'What does that mean?' they asked eagerly.

'Let us finish. All of you have come to this divine abode through the fruits of merit.'

'Why divine?'

'We caution you not to interrupt us. This is the paradise of the righteous. All here is divine.'

'If so, does that mean we are also divine?'

'If that is your understanding.'

'Hey, ha, you're divine, we're divine,' they bantered cheerfully.

'And who may you be?' a divine demanded.

'Do you really want to know?'

'Yes.'

'If you were in the least observant, the luminescence of our person would have told you. Ah, but as you are newcomers, we will tell you. We are Indra, the Lord of this habitation of bliss.'

'O honoured Lord Indra, forgive our simplicity.'

As the divine host quietened, the surrounding attendants raised their voices and celestial music sounded. The newcomers entreated their Lord to describe their Heavenly City.

'This world,' Lord Indra intoned, 'is coeval with the world of man and as for its location, starting from the sky, it is but two cubits to two fathoms lower than the surface of the earth. Everything, as you may see, looks as if it were made of gold and as we are farther away, the sun's brilliance as it strikes the earth is filtered down to us in gentle rays and neither heat nor cold can reach us. Life is carefree and if we are hungry, delectable repasts from which to choose float down from the air. All, until the end, is felicity.'

As these words ended, paeans reverberated through the heavens and the company of divines danced with joy.

EARTH

Late in the morning a man stepped out of the flimsy privy at the end of the field carrying an old tin still smelling of insecticide.

'Damn, more bloody flies every day. That should do it. Only the big green bastard got away.'

Translated by Domnern Garden

PHILIPPINES

Five Men and the Carcass of a Dog

SINAI C. HAMADA

They were all from the same village of Mainit in Bontoc. Five men, Ombac, Fangyaot, Kilong, Chugyoken and Isilen. A pall of mist and a thin drizzle had ushered earlier than usual the twilight of evening. They were past the city park and were rounding the bend of the road leading away from Baguio's downtown. They were on their way home. Suddenly...

"Look, a dog run over!" said Kilong. "It's dead."

"Indeed, let's pick it up," chorused the five. "It has not been dead long," observed Isilen, the eldest in the group.

The dog was lying in a puddle of blood on one side of the road. "It must have been bumped, it's not crushed," said Kilong again.

"Well, if we're picking up the dog, let us do so right away and not talk over it," Fangyaot chided his companions as he took off his army coat which was damp anyway and wrapped the carcass of the dog with it, swung it over his shoulder and trotted off, the other four men surprised following and admiring him approvingly.

"That's it," said Ombac. "It takes Fangyaot to get us going. So I always say." They hurried. It wasn't that they were afraid to get caught picking up the dead dog. They knew the Christians of the city did not care and wouldn't touch it anyway. But they still had a distance to walk to reach home and the dead dog had to be disemboweled soon or its meat would begin to stench and sour.

At that, they were home soon. The drizzle had stopped. The sky was red overhead, promising of a moonrise tonight. Their wives and children gathered about the men come home as Fangyaot threw down the dog's carcass, then they built a bonfire, soon they were singeing its hair over the fire, the dead dog stiffened as its scorched hide tanned, and the smell of burnt hair abroad meant meat for tonight.

"How lucky we were to stumble upon it!"

"So I say," said Ombac.

"There," Fangyaot pushed the dog burned clean of its hair to Chugyoken, the biggest Bontoc in their group. "Take your turn to open it up and remove its entrails."

"Let me have it," said Chugyoken, bolo ready in hand, as he lifted by one leg the scorched dog to the lone water pipe in the midst of the clustered huts, squatting securely by assurance of the Congressman-elect who even had the city to extend the water pipe to the illegal settlement of fifty voters.

After washing the dog, Chugyoken slit it open from the sternum down, removed the entrails and passed the carcass on to the other men who were soon cutting it to pieces on a chopping board. Chugyoken cleaned the entrails after removing the liver, the lungs, the heart, the spleen and the kidneys. These were to

be roasted along with the lean abdominal shank for a preliminary feasting by the men.

In no time at all, there was meat in a cauldron of boiling water, the cauldron itself was set on an open hearth of three stones on the ground, as the children gleefully danced around, the wives bound infants with blankets on their backs, and rice was cooking in several pots.

Thereafter, men, women and children were eating, relishing dog meat with rice in plates set on the open ground, brightly lit by the bonfire and a newly risen moon.

The men were laughing. "Christian lowlanders do not know what meat they are missing, not eating dog flesh." They laughed aloud, and laughed some more, till they had devoured all the meat.

As the women took the empty dishes away, the men sat around the bonfire which they kept feeding with split pine wood, and the children went to sleep in the huts with their bellies full, as the men talked some more.

They were two years now in the city and so they even had to call for their women to come to join them. They built low squat huts with rusty GI's in an unwanted section of the city. Secretly, each Bontoc fellow was vying with the others in saving as much as possible of his earnings at odds and ends here and there in the city, so that he could build the biggest zinc-roofed house in all Mainit, their hometown.

Presently, they were engaged in gathering scrap iron lying anywhere in the city, or even in deserted logging camps on the hills beyond, and selling these pieces, however broken, to a Chinese dealer of second-hand goods in an obscure corner of Baguio's business section. They planned for tomorrow.

"We rise early. We need a pick, a shovel, a sledge hammer and a sack. Tomorrow, we break to pieces, a foot-wide, two meters long, soil pipe," Isilen, the leader of the group announced. "Let us retire now so that we shall be up by dawn. We have to have strength for tomorrow."

In the morning, the five trooped to a former U.S. naval reservation in the city. There they had discovered an abandoned sewer line with one remaining soil pipe a foot in diameter, which they were now to dig up, break into pieces, stuff in the sack, and cart to the Chinese dealer. The effort would net them twenty pesos. They thought there was nothing wrong with what they were doing as the United States had given up the reservation to the Philippines, and the sewer pipe long not in use was buried and forgotten.

But a patrolman cruising in a police car saw the men on the grassy hillside at great labor and with a loud noise breaking the soil pipe, and he thought they were robbing government property, so he arrested the Bontoc fellows.

At the police station where they were brought, the five men were grilled, and with prodding by the investigator, confessed to taking public property, and so complaint was filed against them, they were detained in jail pending their trial, then they began to get alarmed and called for a lawyer.

"Let us call for Attorney Samadang, our casaud,1 who is married to Impon, our teacher-townmate," they all agreed.

The men had been in jail for three days when their wives approached Atty. Samadang, their in-law. The women were carrying babies bound to their backs with colorful native blankets. Their men had been missing at home because they were in jail for three days now, and unused, the children had been crying for their absent fathers, the women reported.

"What are they accused of?" the lawyer inquired.

"Of stealing sewage pipe," the women chorused.

¹ Casaud-In-law

Atty. Samadang almost laughed, he could not understand what ignorant natives would steal a sewage pipe for, and he repeated sewage pipe, muttering under his breath, but he promised he would go to see the men in jail and look into their case.

"Please do," the women pleaded, "for our townmates in the mines have even heard of the wholesale arrest of our men-folk, and they're raising money to pay a lawyer, and they will come on the day of the trial. It would be deathless shame for Mainit if our men get convicted of stealing sewer pipe."

The Bontoc women were satisfied as their lawyer in-law at once went to his car outside and drove away upon hearing that the townmates of the accused were raising funds for a defense lawyer.

At the city jail, interviewing the accused and the arresting officer, Atty. Samadang found out that the Bontoc fellows had dug up an abandoned soil pipe in a former U.S. naval reservation, broke the cast-iron into pieces, intending to sell it to Singwa, the Chinese second-hand dealer.

"Why accuse them of theft?" Atty. Samadang turned to the officer.

"They stole public property, sir," the zealous policeman answered.

"There is no case of theft here," the lawyer said emphatically enough to impress his clients, townmates of his wife.

"Why, of course not, Casaud," the men pleaded innocence. "We would not think for a moment of stealing government property. (Fearful respect for the law and the government.) But for our digging it up, the pipe would lie buried and forgotten forever."

"We'll see about all this on the day of the trial," the lawyer promised. "It will be the day after tomorrow. Send word to your townmates in the mines," he carefully instructed his clients, remembering what the prisoners' wives had told him shortly before.

Meanwhile, the lawyer hastened to get a certificate from the superintendent of city utilities that the soil pipe in question did not belong to the city, much less the Republic of the Philippines. Having obtained the certificate, Atty. Samadang had the defense of his clients clearly outlined in his mind. He was noted in the local legal circle for his flair for dramatics in trials.

That same day, he saw the city attorney. He saw the judge of the municipal court. Both were his friends. He convinced them that there was no theft, that the soil pipe was res nullius, abandoned property. The Bontoc fellows should be set free.

"But there is rampant thieving nowadays. The public should be taught a lesson. Pretty soon, these fellows will be stealing private property, finding no junk around," the judge had demurred.

"They are not the criminal type," the lawyer had reasoned. "Judge, they are innocent natives who are only trying to make an honest living."

"But the soil pipe is public property," the city attorney had also interposed. "When the reservation reverted to the Philippines from the U.S. Government, all property inside the reservation went along with it."

"It is abandoned property, I tell you," Atty. Samadang had explained. "The soil pipe had long been out of use and has unknowingly been lying there, abandoned, buried. Who would ever have discovered it but for these fellows?"

"All right, if it is not theft, they must be fined for some other crime," the judge relented. "You must also help the city. It has no money. My court has to earn its keep. What crime shall we charge, Fiscal?" the judge turned to the city attorney.

"If it is not theft, I would not know what other crime right now," the public prosecutor replied.

"I know," Atty. Samadang came up with a bright idea. "They can be charged for excavating rocks and soil inside the city without a permit, a violation of an ordinance punished by a fine."

"A ten-peso fine?" the judge looked at the lawyer.

"Make it twenty pesos," Atty. Samadang at once generously offered.

So, the outcome of the case, except for the shouting, was by now all arranged. The next day, the wives of the detention prisoners came again to the house of their in-law, anxious to know. One wife brought a bundle of split pine wood. Another a bunch of bananas. Another a handkerchiefful of edible mushrooms. These were all handed to Impon, their townmate married to the lawyer.

The wives were seated one on each step of the tall stairs at the top of which Atty. Samadang appeared.

"The trial is set for tomorrow," he announced. "I will fight that they be set free at once. They may pay only a fine of twenty pesos though, which you must have ready."

"Yes, Casaud, thanks to you," the women were profuse with their gratitude. "How helpless indeed we are before the law," they lamented, "but for you, our in-law," they consoled themselves.

"But you must bring my fees along too. Send word immediately to your townmates in the mines to make good their promised aid to your husbands or your husbands will remain in jail," the practitioner mockingly threatened the wives. "One sack of silver money," he hinted.

"Yes, Casaud, our townmates will come," the women assured their in-law. "Meanwhile, we have come to clean your yard and weed your garden, as your wife, our townmate, has asked us."

Which they did, till late in the afternoon.

Now in the morrow, the trial of the Mainit men took place. Quite early, the wives of the accused, in colorful attire, were spread on the stone steps of the City Hall. They were later joined by their townmates from the mines. That day, the court-room was packed with Bontocs of Mainit, as though the whole village itself were to be on trial.

Atty. Samadang, with dramatics, rose equal to the occasion, seeing how many were the townmates of the detained natives. His refutal of the charge of theft of public property was convincing and eloquent.

"To be charged with stealing public property is, for these villagers from the hinterland, the height of ignominy," the lawyer's plea concluded. "Far from being accused, they should be commended. Where but in this instance do you find such industry as theirs? At a time of unemployment in our country, these unlettered natives do not just sit back and wait but hustle to find ingenious ways of gainfully occupying themselves. They have dug up wealth which but for them would lie years buried and forgotten."

The public prosecutor, as arranged the day before, was ready with an amended information, charging instead illegal excavation without previous permit, to which the men pleaded guilty, and for which they were fined twenty pesos, also readily paid in open court.

"The case against you for theft is dismissed. But you are fined for violation of an ordinance prohibiting excavation in public property without previous permit," the judge carefully explained to them, who nodded approval. "You are fortunate you have a good lawyer," the judge hinted heavily, looking at Atty. Samadang.

After the order for the immediate release of the accused was issued and the judge had called for the next case, the Mainit audience trooped out of the court-room to the grounds of the City Hall, led by their hero-counsel. There, behind a tree trunk, a thick wad of bills was handed to Atty. Samadang with the profound gratitude of a whole village tribe.

Soon processed for release, the accused joined their townmates outside the City Hall, and there was rejoicing over the vindication of Mainit honor which would have been shamefully tarnished by conviction for theft of a sewage pipe. Just the same, each erstwhile detainee must slaughter shortly a pig or fowl to wash off the stain of the experience. The Mainit folk were proud of their in-law whom they considered a legal luminary.

The released natives could afford to laugh now. Isilen, the eldest in the group, observed, "The carcass of that dog we picked up has brought us bad luck." The five laughed over this.

Meanwhile, in the courtroom, the session was recessed. The judge, seeing the native crowd still outside, worshipping the lawyer, looked out the window. He saw Atty. Samadang taking leave of his clients.

"Sammy," the judge called out the nickname of Atty. Samadang. "We'll see you at the officers' club in John Hay Air Base tonight, shall we?"

"Sure, Judge," Atty. Samadang responded, patting his hip pocket.

Now, more than ever, the native crowd was convinced of the high esteem with which their in-law was held officially, or why would a judge be addressing their lawyer intimately? They were overjoyed indeed, Mainit honor was vindicated.



INDONESIA

Meditation

For Kong Yu-Fei

ABDUL HADI

The one with the dog, lifting her wet skirt, is a princess: look at her shivering in the temple (The leaves bow to each other, on the verandah you can hear the sound of the rain on the sand) He pointed to an obscure yin-yang over the door and my eyes felt the incense burn in the wind (Look, you said, he is inviting us to the grave of an emperor who died fighting the gods for the city) The running wind scatters perfume from the hand of a cold, fragrant woman (The yin-yang gathers moss, the writing is illegible: the sky casts shadows, you are sad because it is only a dream: next to the temple is a many-sided building and a river made of rock, clay and wine) here you can see the pole-star

The princess comes closer. She turns to the wall and undresses next to the couch (She is as stiff as an arc, the emperor is building castles in the air) Uncomprehendingly a thousand spells fall into her deaf ears

Who are you Me?

DARMANTO JT.

```
The sun rolls in the furnace
The men are still friendly
Young men run among rocks
crawl in the mud with bazookas
      Memory fades
     Life is thrown like a dice
      fate and the future
     hang in the balance
     Logic? None
Who are you
hunting birds with a net
"If they don't die today, tomorrow they will"
Who are you
(I ask the running candle-nut trees):
     I am the one you asked about;
     Who are you
     my voice is cast back like seed
Who are you
(I ask the shining water
beating against the rocks)
     Ah
           Ah
                Ah
     Who are you?!
     Who!
Who are you?
(To the cart-horse clopping down the road):
     clop
   (silence)
     clip
     clop
II
My loneliness dies when we meet
     The cold wind swings in the coffee bushes
     (Medicine is good for you)
I hunt you
thrush, thrush
for my health's sake
I hunt you in the moonlight
I want to be refreshed
in body and soul
and alive again
     Nonbeing chases after me
     Past 27, and nothing
```

Mechanised ghosts ensuare me in the name of modernisation with 1000 differentiations formulas of status and function a sociogram of my broken-backed fate yesterday—today—tomorrow

I hope your luck is awful I hope you buy lots of lottery tickets and I win all the prizes

Ш

I beat the drum for your trance-dance
bad luck to all my enemies!

The clock strikes twelve
I think of you
and a thousand other women
I love them all
outrageous lust drags me from brothel to brothel
(The prostitutes scatter rosewater)
from casino to casino
(croupiers throw roses)
from church to church
(priests sprinkle tears)
and back to bed
to extinguish lust
in the shadow of your body

The clock strikes three I think of you and no-one else

I can hear your silent voice among the roar of cannons student demonstrations armament factories

A lonely voice shouting jazz and soul

Who are you

Young person shedding one by one laughter, grace, motion assuming wrinkles, white hair, melancholy

(The stars are dazed by the drummer)

I see a world of light in your eyes

I hear your name: Ai Ai Ai

It is six I sip my coffee wondering if you remember me

Marriage Poem

SUTARDJI CALZOUM BACHRI

birds nest outside flowers seed two sexologists make marriage machines of flesh and wood down nut up naked throbbing flame of sparkplug tiktaktiktaktiktak restrain a sneeze the tank start the motor tiktaktiktaktiktaktik bolt up nut over final check sexologists in and out timing firing seven six five four three two the motor roars the wheels turn flesh one zero go! on flesh on bed on flesh the sexologists smile the boat sails tiktaktiktaktiktak hold your nose I am embarrassed the sexologists smile would you like to try our marriage machine tiktaktiktakno no no no no no no no no mouth tiktaktik on mouth flesh on flesh bolt down heart and body tiktaktiktaktiktaktik the sexologists smile the do you want to try my marriage machine boat sails tiktaktiktaktiktak I don't want to be put in a box I don't want to be screwed I want flesh and tiktaktiktaktikthe bird to fly and fruit to grow taktiktaktiktak the sexologists smile the boat do you want to try my marriage machine stainless steel shockproof water resistant guaranteed fresh free yourself from pain tiktaktiktaktiktaktiktaktiktak no no no no no no no no no ZZZZZZZZZZ ZZZZZZZ-ZZZZZZZZZZZ

Q

SUTARDJI CALZOUM BACHRI



Translator's note: The Arabic letters lam and alif form the beginning of the Muslim profession of faith, la ilaha illallah, there is no God but Allah; mim is the first letter in the Prophet's name, wa Muhammadun rasulu-llah, and Muhammad is the Prophet of Allah.

I Sort of Understand

DARMANTO JT.

```
You're deceiving me
      because you're afraid of losing me
I think I understand
      You're lying to me
      to try to please me
I think I understand
      You watch in silence
      as my hand moves
      from your belly to your breast
I think I understand
      Do you remember Soeharto? The general?
      President of Indonesia?
      He was a lieutenant-colonel at 27
      He won Jogjakarta back from the Dutch
I'm not sure I understand myself:
I'm the only person
allowed to touch you
      Have you heard what they say about us
      "He isn't her husband"
      "They weren't married in church"
      "The Holy Spirit has abandoned them"
I don't understand you;
perhaps God is playing hide-and-seek with us
We can't find Him
      Do you remember Chairil Anwar? The poet?
      The one the poets always write about?
      His poems were great
      He was dead at 27.
      What are you smiling at?
I understand
      I burn with passion
      blue metallic vibrations
      fight in my flesh
      Oh
      Be quiet
          It's all you deserve, they all say that
      Be still
          It's all you deserve
      Ah
      Ah
      Oh!
```

```
It is finished
I barely understood
You're right
God is playing with us
We feel better
sadder
The blue grows darker
The noise is inaudible
Sin Sin Sin
What was that
Hell Hell Hell
What was that?
```

All right
I'm 27
and nothing

I know but so what?

Poems translated by Harry Aveling

INDONESIA

Adam the Wisdom of God

DANARTO

I am the light hanging down in clusters at 300,000 kilometers an hour, opening dawn so that it can be called dawn, placing the sun over their heads so they can say that it is day, throwing it to the west so you can say afternoon, the burning ball which sinks into the ocean, gilding the waves with silver needles, the beach looks as though it has been swept with a brush, the dark unfolds stretching endlessly, you wonder where I am, I reply: I am the light speeding forwards at 300,000 kilometers a second, I am in the dark you call night, I fly from midnight to morning, you must not sleep in the afternoon or you will not see me break tin into seeds which lengthen like the stamen of a flower, its tip pointing out like a certain ornament, soft and pale green, I crack the turtle's eggs on the beach, see the babies still wrapped in mucus kissed by the foam of the sea, I change minerals into amoeba, and make the hair on your body grow, it talks to me as it grows, we talk a lot, I also talk with your hands, feet, eyes, nose, ears, mouth, genitals and anus, they have more interesting things to say than you, you wonder who you are, you are what you discover, I am a secret: I am the light slipping away at the speed of thought, sparkling and multicoloured, the rainbow curving from one continent to the next, no material known to you can move as quickly as I, I control your mind, your mind is connected to a central office which I also administer, and to your feelings, the clouds fly, I make the rain fall, I place the stars so that they do not collide with each other, all beautify the sky, you learn from these, and grow year by year, like the rustling wind, wait, when I first formed you I wrapped you in warm caressing light, do you know what the mist looks like through a window? like that, a mixture of the warmth in a room and the cold air on the window's lips, of the childish desire to run outside while wanting to stay in your parent's room, all mixed into one, fused, that is the best analogy I can think of, I'm sure you understand now, I must go now, I'm always busy, never weary, I am light, I never stop, even when I rest, I greet whatever I meet and if there is anything wrong I fix it, this sentence is correct, I created you, once you were wind in my hands: meaningless, wait, I am the swift rustling wind, I replace stale air with fresh, I am the gentle breeze, the whirlwind, the storm, the hurricane, I breathe them all in just as you breathe in air, I enter your lungs through your nose, I pump your heart, I travel in your blood, make you erect, I also stroke your cheeks and make you purr, massage your body, blow into the marrow of your bones until your backbone flowers and grows, reaches its full size, lovely, beautiful, rub your fingers hands and feet, like a masseur, ah, stroke your hair, whisper in your ear, you only live because you eat air, your lungs are a continual workshop, I am the labourer, you never leave for a moment, you are so busy, I peer out through your pores, I inflate your chest, I help you walk, sometimes you slip and leap into the air, work harder than you should, eat more than you should, sleep longer than you should, that is all my doing, one day you will do something you never thought you could, perfectly normally and quite naturally, I know you will because you can, I am the wind, I breathe into nature, it enlarges, the stars circle other stars, I blow from my house, nature breathes, inout, in-out, you are the world, I love you, you breathe on cities and towns, in-out, in-out, it is easy, even when you are very tired: I blow into the foetus, moment by moment, it grows, I wait for it, I rock it, sometimes it moves like an object, sometimes like an old man, but I am the fire: my breath was the great prophet Jesus, my ears were Jacob, my face was Joseph, my voice was David, my power Solomon, my soul Abraham, my hair Enoch, my skin Sayed Ali¹ my blood Abu Bakar,2 my flesh Umar Kayam and Omar Sharif, my backbone King Usman,³ my marrow the great Fatimah,⁴ my vitality was Aminah,⁵ my intestines were Job, all the hairs on the Prophets' bodies live on me, my light was Muhammad, my insight his Apostleship, all the prophets sent by God unite in my body, I am the life force, I am the soul, I am creativity, I am the creator, I am desire, I am power, I am enthusiasm, I am resoluteness, I am the strength underlying thought and action, I am the spirit behind religion art and love, I am lust, I am anger, the certainty of destruction, I am war, I am hunger, I am stupidity, I am intelligence, I build up and I tear down, I am the spirit of nature teaching you all you know, I am change, look into me and you will see nothing but me, my face is as real as your own, everything is to test you, eventually everything will be me, everything is my blood, I flow in your blood, I am the coals in your blood, I once dreamt of red blood—so I created red blood, I once dreamt of white blood so I created white blood, the two types respect each other, I separated myself from them,

"who are you?"

"red blood"

"who are you?"

"white blood"

but I am also blue blood, brown blood, black blood, orange, purple, gray and yellow, I am the blood of the rainbow, the flame of life, I sleep while awake, and am awake while I sleep, I sail in blood, my boat is blood, my sea is blood, my wind is blood, my breath is blood, fire flashes like a cigarette-lighter—I run to a field and light a fire for your blanket-illumination-the centre remains, I am North, you point towards me, because I am fire—you are a moth, you are me made visible, I am your invisible self, all of you become me, there is no test, nonsense, yes I am nonsense, I am boredom, I do not know how to know, I am extremism, I am futility, without meaning, loneliness, you cannot escape me, I make you sad, angry, disappointed, I hide you in the fire of my blood, really I am water, the source of your being, I once blew into the belly of a mountain, you dug and found some great, overflowing treasure, you who were no more than a spurtthen grew and flooded the whole plain, new seed grew in the damp mud, the heat briefly stung, I was smoke from a volcano, rolled then fell again, just as you did when you were a child, it was a good game, I rippled, formed waves, a broad lake, of great depth, hard and soft, I splashed—you sniggered, happily kept playing, the sea became a sea, the river became a river, the seed became seed, and you asked, continually asked, what was water before it was water? you grew in your own way, catching the heart's embers in the morning, storing them away, all that day

4 Fatimah: daughter of Muhammad.

⁵ Aminah: Muhammad's mother.

¹ Sayed Ali: the last ruler of a united Islam, the fourth Caliph to succeed Muhammad. 2 Abu Bakar: close friend and eventual father-in-law of Muhammad, the first person to accept Islam.

³ King Usman: the second Caliph, a man of great courage and resolution.

and the next hidden in dew with your hook, catching some things, drowning them, you saw my face in the mirror and were suddenly on fire, swollen with air you flew to the surface, you—the primal egg, floating in the eyeball, visible but invisible, others crowded to take your place and sank in the dew drop of early dawn, thus it was, you burned again and became one with the air and the others, your background was a good one, thousands of others took its place, deeper, I shouted: 'you are water', they surged quietly forwards without reaching their goal and as they burned joined with the dew they wanted to analyse, the dew is still my secret, others came, millions of them, I let them reach various conclusions, that pleased me, why shouldn't it, sometimes they fought, that was good, I remained myself, alone, from one age to the next, continually flowing, changing, always new, I am renewal, taste me, I tasted different before, I am earth: a framework coffin made of large and small sticks, straightened and folded, lengthened and shortened, stretch me out handful by handful, often thrown down from a height, I leap and tug the cable, bite and scream, shape your hands, I become you, a clever creation made of earth, of earth, from earth destined to return to the earth I know the problems, I ride on top of the bus with the luggage, eventually we reach the terminus, perhaps the largest terminus in the world, the bus stops and lines up with the other buses, many inner-city buses come and go, all leaning at an angle because they are so tightly packed, after disgorging their passengers they stand upright then swallow new passengers and lean again, I smile briefly on top of the bus, untie the luggage to my right and left and pass it down, I shake, I am the luggage too, and not the luggage, time after time I rise and fall, I call out the destination, silently, clearly and quite comprehensible, without a sound, this is the terminus, everyone knows it, they queue, they advance and ebb, many of them stroll about, it is time, everything is written down as it must be if any sort of order is to be maintained, changing buses is forbidden, I can because noone sees me, I can change from a heap of sacks to a light plastic bag, the paperboys fight over me, I become a kite, fly high on the wind, this time beggar children chase me ignoring the traffic, eventually I stop here, stuck on a large tamerind tree in front of a fine hotel, disappointed the children go, I self-destruct and return to

Malay shadow puppets:

Javanese-type demi-gods

(no permanent names)



the top of the bus, everything lies spread out before me, more buses are needed for more and more passengers, the buses are always crowded, always full, there are always too many passengers, I smile I want more buses and cheaper tickets, I want to look after the garden at the terminus so that the plants are large and leafy, cooler than the exhaust fumes or the hot air, I want to make bus travel easier, see —I care about little things, then I leap onto a tall monument nearby, I can see things more clearly, one after another, but my conclusion is still the same: you need more buses, I Adam the Wisdom of God know your problems, I stand on the monument, the fountain, the treasury, the president's palace, the war memorial, the shanties, luxury houses, the ricefields and the factories, then I stand on top of the bus and shout like a conductor touting for passengers:

"....."

they, those about to get on and those getting off. stop and a few of them approach me,
I shout again:
"....."

a lot of people come, they surround the bus,
"who are you" they ask
"Adam the Wisdom of God"

"what do you want?"
"I want to speak," I reply

"are you a prophet?"

"no"

"are you a god?"

"no"

"who are you?"

"not a prophet and not a god, just the physical manifestation of Allah"

"Good Lord .."

they are angry and take up rocks,

"I am the mango tree," I shout

they throw their rocks at the leafy mango tree on top of the bus and the fruits fall, because it has been predetermined that there are as many mango as rocks, they do not need to fight, the fruits fall right into their fists, they all enjoy them, the fruits are so tasty that the people go sleep, the terminus is a large bed, the asphalt stops melting, they all snore, the frustrated buses snore too, disaster comes, more buses, rows of them, the drivers and conductors are angry, the passengers are angry, they crowd in to scold the happy sleeping folk, but, as soon as they see the mango tree they begin to approach it picking their way slowly past the bodies, the tree bears fruit again.

they are scared and search for rocks,

they pelt the tree.

the tree counts the people so that it knows how many mangoes it will need, they take the fruit in their hands, eat it, then doze and sleep, more and more buses arrive, more people scatter and look at the tree, the police arrive with guns, cock them and shoot into the air, no-one stirs, the effort to wake them has failed, they cock their guns again, then lower them, as their commander orders, approach the tree, it suddenly bears fruit again, more fruit, it is not right to shoot a tree but they don't know what to do with the delicious fruit so they do nothing, the tree smiles, a siren approaches, a fast fire engine with the firemen hanging on, they leap down and quickly fix their hoses, the jet of water hits the sleepers but they are so drunk with their dreams, maybe, that they do not feel the hard rain of the spray, in the end there is no more water, the firemen are worried, their chief advances and orders them to lift the sleepers onto the edge of the road, they stack

them up, the snores sound like a choir, the fire brigade drives around the mango

tree, they push the button and the ladder automatically creaks forwards towards the tree, the brave firemen pick the fruit and the policemen shout out for their share, there are enough for everybody, finally they are all asleep too, it is very quiet, the biggest bus station in town is a comforting baby's bed, the air is clean, I slowly rise and change back into myself, carefully lift the corners of the asphalt and fold them over, shake down the contents so the sides bulge, the tall building in the middle is a pivot front and back, left and right, this is a large boat, I order the wind to blow the boat quickly along, all the sailors are asleep, the boat shakes, slowly moves, a few people suddenly wake and are frightened, surprised, scared, jump overboard and run down the road, the boat sails, following the highway, more people jump off, I let them, not even tantalising them with fruit, they are free, if anyone wants to be free he can be, in fact I even shout out:

"if you don't like the trip you can get off, you're free"

the people sit there and smile,

the boat sails, of course I am prepared for so many passengers, hot water for bathing, food to eat, clothes to wear, beds to sleep in, they bathe in the late afternoon just as they would at home, at night they eat from a white table covered with a white tablecloth, good food,

"eat up," I call, they eat, slowly because no-one is making them hurry, they talk and joke,

"what did you say, tell us again" they ask, so far I have only laughed at their jokes,

"this is what I said," I begin once the plates have been put to one side so they can take coffee and snacks,

"we only lack one thing: equal justice for all"

they talk to each other again and the boat sails on, a few leave the table, perhaps to walk on the deck, of course I have prepared all sorts of games, including a television with a lot of screens, simultaneous transmission, they gather in front of the screens, press the buttons and watch the others jump off the boat and return to their villages or the city, the past and the present together, they're alarmed, a number of programmes are showing, a man in a field surrounded by a crowd, a man in a garage surrounded by a crowd, a man standing next to a fountain in town surrounded by a crowd,

```
"who are you?" the crowd shouts
```

the screens blur, then a mango tree appears laden with fruit, they are delicious, you can tell because it is colour-t.v., the people fight over the fruit, so do the people on the boat, everyone is screaming and shouting, they rise to their feet, gradually the tumult dies away, they sit, quietly all of them, breathing heavily, like a large, heavy swelling crying

"I am Adam the Wisdom of God" they sigh as though singing, the singing changes into a roar and a howl,

Adam the Wisdom of God understands without studying

Adam the Wisdom of God is drunk without drinking

Adam the Wisdom of God sleeps without closing his eyes

[&]quot;Adam the Wisdom of God," the man replies

[&]quot;what do you want?" they ask

[&]quot;I want to speak," he says

[&]quot;are you a prophet?"

[&]quot;no"

[&]quot;are you a god?"

[&]quot;no"

[&]quot;who are you?"

[&]quot;not a prophet and not a god, just the physical manifestation of Allah"

[&]quot;Good Lord ..."

Adam the Wisdom of God is great and uncrowned

Adam the Wisdom of God advances unpropelled

the boat sails, along the highways, past the tall buildings, the unfinished buildings, the suburbs, government offices, hotels, amusement centres, banks, shops, supermarkets, theaters,

Adam the Wisdom of God lover of rivers, he dams them,

they never run dry, even during the drought

Adam the Wisdom of God the power station, roaring light,

the beautiful noisy traffic

Adam the Wisdom of God the long queue for rice, the pensioners queueing, the day-labourers queueing

Adam the Wisdom of God the band of beggers, the unemployed, a dangerous force, hungry mouths

the boat sails, the shops explode

who is God's lover, the dry dew, the unpetalled flower, Adam the Wisdom of God, at the corner, in the shop, happy,

the boat sails, the supermarkets explode

who is God's lover, the silent wind, the smooth gravel, Adam the Wisdom of God, the water in the gutter, the administrator's chair

the boat sails, the banks explode

who is God's lover, the blunt pines, the squirrel that never moves, Adam the Wisdom of God, a full sack in a warehouse, a full belly at the table, full barrels can't jump

the boat sails, hotels explode, factories explode, offices explode, amusement centres explode, the villages explode

Translated by Harry Aveling

OVERLAND No. 64. The 25th anniversary of the anti-communist referendum. Stories by Morris Lurie and Laurie Clancy. Major critical studies of Dorothy Hewett's work by Brian Kiernan and Bruce Williams. A major, autobiographical statement by Peter Porter, reviewing McAuley's anthology. And our usual poetry section featuring both the new and the established poets. Glen Lewis on McQueen and Conway. Important reviews. \$6 a year from G.P.O. Box 98a, Melbourne, 3001.

AUSTRALIAN LITERARY MAGAZINES

RIVERRUN—new magazine from the Hunter Valley, containing poetry, prose, graphics, both parochial and Sydney/Melbourne style. Poetry by Rae Desmond Jones, Robert Adamson, Keith Russell, Chris Pollnitz. Prose by Kris Hemensley, Tom Thompson, Ross Bennett, Ray Ball. Vol. 1 no. 1 available now. \$1.50 per issue or \$5.00 for 4 issues, posted. Contributions and subscriptions (cheque to Riverrun Press) to 107 Laman St., Cook's Hill, N.S.W. 2300.

The Spring MEANJIN includes Dorothy Hewett on Australian drama, Ian Reid on Translating Valery, and poems by Tranter, Duggan, Faust, Maiden and Cid Corman. There are also articles on R. D. Laing, *The Cuckoo's Nest*, and Greeks in Australia and at home, together with an excellent story by new writer Angelo Loukakis. *Meanjin Quarterly*, University of Melbourne, Parkville, Victoria, 3052. \$10.00 annual subscription, single copies \$2.50 (40c postage).



MALAYSIA

Poems translated from Malay

Greetings to the Continent

USMAN AWANG

Ι

they separate us
with passports visas frontiers all names for barriers
they rob us with their laws
sending bullets wrapped in dollars
forcing us to choose
and choose we must
there is no other way

П

brother you have chosen guns and bullets many leaders prefer their dollars for this you must soak your clothes red grass, red rivers the blood of the Vietnamese people

Ш

you squeeze cactus and grind stones
to make food and drink
girls toil decorated in dust
little children sling on their weapons
you darken the sky with exploding pipelines
others sing in prisons
for the freedom of palestine

IV

we struggle in drying rice-fields
daring peasants have begun to clear virgin jungle
small beginnings in a cloudlike calmness
a calmness that nips us in the bud
we the few are still learning
from all your experiences,
and your own
we shall consolidate the May eclipse
at the true target
of this archipelago

Greetings
(without visa
passport
golf
colour)

to humanity, people, of all continents.

translated by Adibah Amin

Blood and Prayer

USMAN AWANG

without the autograph though I should encounter it at ampang gallery this heart would be untouched, unstirred; my child can paint: self-portraits and orchids in pots.

yet names have meaning in our lives (though shakespeare may protest from his tomb) and the autograph compels me to gaze: this is henry, from the heart of the writer faulkner.

american writer from the banks of the mississippi your love draws life-growth from your native air as we here love this earth and sky with a thousand pulses of joy and pain.

in henry's face I see serenity in suffering smile gently budding, offer of love and peace but in his heart, listen, thunderous as niagara screams of death in the slaughter on vietnam's soil.

the songs we have been chanting; of humanity and brotherhood are as dust in the wind, for the world is an ocean of hatred, a mountain of vengeance over differences of color and conviction.

come henry, lay your breast against lincoln's statue and hear the shuttering waves of grief violence upon violence everywhere glorified in the name of peace.

henry, if you are the son of all continents fly from peking via malaysia to the kremlin and returning knock on the door of the white house to clasp, if you can, the hand of the man from texas.

translated by Adibah Amin

mekong river

A. LATIFF MOHIDIN

Ι

mekong river
i choose your name
for i am desolate
i shall plunge my breast
down to your bed
right leg to the moon
left leg to the sun
my heart shall drift
with your waters
my name to the sea
my voice to the mountains.

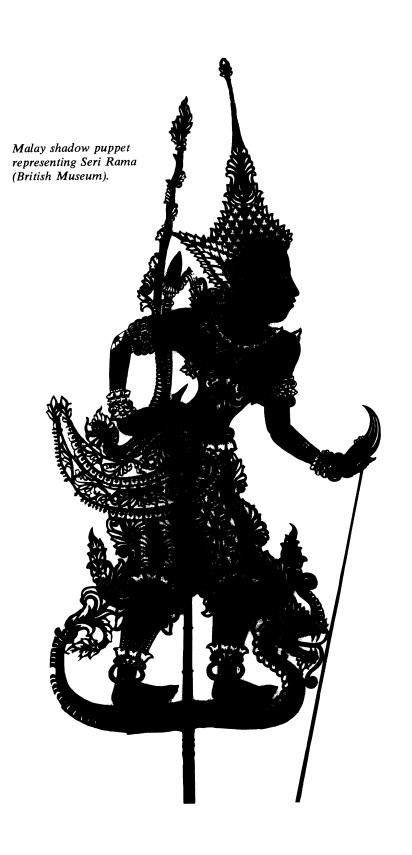
II

mekong river how tranquil your breath how untroubled your gait on your bank a mother's voice calls forlorn for the voice of a lost son when she lowers her face against your face you can still smile at ease.

Ш

mekong river
end the day-dance of your ripples!
i see down in your bed
buds bleeding
pebbles wounded
tonight
a storm shall come from the north
your banks shall break
your waters shall run red
and your current shall rage more violent
than Niagara

translated by Adibah Amin



the puppeteer's wayang

A. LATIFF MOHIDIN

the wayang is over rawana is dead

no longer the curses and blood no longer bitterness and lightning the skies are again at peace

for the hundredth time rama and sita live happily in the box

now, puppeteer you can sleep well on the shredded banana trunk

but
puppeteer,
here
the audience is still standing
still standing
waiting
for rawana to return to life
waiting
for the wayang to begin again

a "modern movement" collage

BAHA ZAIN

Petrol fumes, tractor's smoke flats, massage parlours women & hotel = prostitute mascara, eye-shadow = floor show

[Beware of Dogs] bungalow aquarium & orchid, poodle & piano antique chairs, classical music status symbol = progressive-modern 'cheap sale' at the new supermarket

> invitation card reception R.S.V.P. tel: 8891 lounge suit cocktails b.g.ale whisky soda et cetera

In the city lane
The artist asks his way
Looking for a gallery
To exhibit his collage

A collector Buys his painting In the grand hall Hangs a false collage.

The plea of the Asian woman

BAHA ZAIN

What else can I give
All frangipanis wilt in the fire of the blasts
All wombs you have filled
With your dollars
With your V.D.

What else
What else
You have left me
An heir to your germs and destruction
Leave me alone

The prostitute at the Hotel Embassy She cries, "Oh, Jo, gip me your dolar Not yor napam, not yor gonoria."

translated by Muhammad Haji Salleh

three beserah fishermen

MUHAMMAD HAJI SALLEH

three small souls in a frail old sampan in the bowl of the sea between the teeth of the waves between the sea and the home there was no choice against the big winds and the capricious sea.

the wind has no heart nor the sky nor the sea, and the heart was for words of prayer; time, between the stretches of a red imagination was a promise of hope, for the heart knows its logic and the pains of the whipping winds.

what of the wives, sons and daughters, the tomorrow, the eye of the day, the rice and the fish, the school fees? on land how heavy the soul is loaded; to survive was as difficult as to die. to go down into the bottom of the sea-dish, the bare dish: to jump and swim into the time and hope?

the early morning nest, the boats, the friends, the chattering gregariousness, and the sea-saw on the fulcrum of the shore. the harsh land pushed them into the uncertain sea deep into the eclipsing experience of death. but yet to be responsible is to love and to love is to live, to be rich is life.

do not make this wind our hangman and the sea where our souls are soaked and our hearts are buried where they cannot find us.

the tide is out

MUHAMMED HAJI SALLEH

the tide is out. far below the mud. only children are out looking for clams. i stand there on dry sand, footprints bigger than my past, recollecting days at the water's teeth. they come in between the grit-wire of some intellectualised present, broken along some unnatural lines, fragmentised into a mosaic of memory.

i have forgotten the slime or the bite of the broken shells on rough soles. only a hint of taste lingers across the beer-sour tastebuds of ketapang nuts. otherwise the seashore is crowded by ghostly inhabitants of the mind. ideas have risen above the mud, chased the children home.

MALAYSIA

Mr Proudfoot

SHAHNON AHMAD

I can spew my anger out through my short stories. Snap the paper into the type-writer and type, type, type . . .

His nostrils flared wide open, like his anal orifice used to when he engaged in homosexual activities with his room-mate at Buffalo. Mr Proudfoot remembered those times well. But this was different. He was revolted. How could these Asians take such a delight in eating the inside of that thorny fruit, which was the colour of excreta and smelt like a corpse? He couldn't understand it.

But when he remembered that the natives still lived like savages, his puzzlement vanished. Real primitives. Very backward. Not like his friends in the States. He often felt sorry for them. He wanted to show the savages how to progress, to explain to them what it meant to be modern. There were times, in fact, when he felt he had been sent by some strange power to be their guide and lead them to truth.

The feeling made his dishevelled head even more confused. He had been especially invited to the university to give all that he had. The students needed to be exposed to all sorts of philosophies, so they could learn to be complicated. They could learn to love the ideologies of Trotsky and Mao. Or perhaps come to understand Lenin and Che Guevara, Castro and Idi Amin.

A vile lump rose in his throat and he spat it out. He could give them monkey music, baboon music, shake, the bump. They moved so gently, like children. That would have to be changed. Rearrange every muscle in their bodies. Use narcotics if need be.

Mr Proudfoot was sure he could do it. Three years was long enough. He could stay longer if he was effective. It would be interesting to see how the students reacted. They would probably bow down and beg him to teach them how to be civilised. It wasn't really correct to call them students. They were beggars.

At times he felt very lucky, when he thought of the enormous gap between his own civilised origins and those of the primitive natives.

He breathed in. His chest was as full as an empty bottle. He had come like a prophet, bearing a holy message for the savages of Asia. Immediately he stepped through the front gate of the campus, however, the feeling vanished. A guard rushed out, waving his hand, and inspecting him from head to toe. Mr Proudfoot felt sorry for the guard. The heat was unbearable and the poor man had so many clothes on. The guard blocked his path. He looked at Mr Proudfoot's dirty black toenails. He looked at his bare feet. His gaze travelled up Mr Proudfoot's hairy legs, to his frayed shorts. Then to his filthy singlet. And finally rested on his hair, which spread untidily like an abandoned hornbill's nest.

"Are you a hippy? Are you carrying any drugs?"

Mr Proudfoot was insulted. The bastard. Couldn't the locals tell the difference between civilisation and savagery? Couldn't the man see that he was white? Bloody fucking.... The country was rotten with bureaucracy. OK. It didn't matter. He would start a few slum gangs and motorcycle gangs among the students and fix these bureaucrats. He would use their frustration, rage and violence and teach them to boo and heckle. Perhaps he should take his clothes off and show the guard a thing or two. Naked was pure. Virginity is waste.

Mr Proudfoot decided not to respond in that way. The guard was a savage. There was no need to become a savage as well. Ignore him. In a week or two, Mr Proudfoot could slip the guard some drugs and they could both engage in mutual masturbation, homosexuality, and lesbianism too, if they could get a woman. Then the savage could start to find out about modern civilisation.

"Are you a hippy? Are you carrying any drugs?"

The guard was getting angry. He had been warned to watch out for hippies trying to sneak onto the campus. Now he'd caught one.

"Who are you? Where do you work? Who do you want to see?"

Mr Proudfoot ignored him. He was Mr Proudfoot from Buffalo. He had come to be a lecturer. He wanted to meet the savages on campus and teach them how to be civilised.

He wanted to explain all these things at length, one by one. But he resisted the temptation. There was no point in making long speeches outside the guardhouse. In a few days time he could bring a couple of thousand students and sit along the fence, then march against the administration. He wanted them to live in hate, violence, and learn to assert themselves. It was good to live like a bohemian, like him, the boy from Buffalo. He would teach them about hippy culture—morphine, free sex, rock music, clothes, marijuana, and even take them to the homosexual heaven and lesbian nirvana. He would inject the guard with anti-intellectualism, teach him to hate all institutions such as heroes and gods. Radical culture. Teach him to enjoy pork and human flesh.

Mr Proudfoot was lost in an optimistic dream. He knew that he knew all those things. He could vomit them out for the benefit of others. People here need to learn how to avoid reality. They need to learn how to make love openly, with whoever and however they wanted. Sex is simply an exchange of objects, one material thing for another. Ravaging a virgin ought to make them feel proud. The girls need to learn how to be social escorts. They ought to get out a bit more, not just to lectures, but also to night clubs, bars, massage parlours and brothels.

Mr Proudfoot shoved his hand into the torn back pocket of his grubby shorts. Taking out a crumpled piece of paper, he showed his letter of appointment to the guard. The guard straightened out the paper and read the essential details. Mr Henry Proudfoot. 35 years old. Lecturer. Buffalo. Department of Animal Behaviour. Bachelor. Salary: \$2,000 per month. Three year contract.

The guard was still not convinced. How could such a dirty, hairy, barefoot, dirty nailed, mop-headed monkey be a teacher?

As he waited, Mr Proudfoot watched leaves fall to the ground from a large, leafy tree. He walked over to the tree and lay down to sleep, with his mouth wide open like a prophet waiting for inspiration to fall from heaven. Still not fully convinced, the guard rushed into his shelter and lifted the telephone receiver. Frowning, he nodded briefly then rushed back out to Mr Proudfoot, who was stretched out on the grass.

"Mr Proudfoot! Mr Proudfoot!"

The creature opened its eyes and sucked in the cool air. The green leaves waving above him excited him. Three years to enjoy the lush trees and gentle breezes. He looked at the guard. The guard was smiling. He felt no anger towards

the guard. Why should he? The man simply didn't know what was a backward culture, and what was advanced.

Sitting up, he took the letter of appointment back and smiled. He was free. Slinging his knapsack over his shoulder, Mr Proudfoot stood and slowly walked away from the abashed guard. He could hear loud voices at the other end of the road, behind a wall. He ran briefly, then continued walking on the tar road. He wanted to roar as loudly as he could, to show that he was absolutely free. The loud voices were obviously a sign of their owners' freedom.

He was suddenly aware of the thick leafy trees on either side of him and the chirping birds hopping in the trees, collecting twigs. Moved, he quietly admired the vitality of nature. The students needed to learn to be birds and strong winds. They had to learn to confront anything and everything. Every peaceful creative act ought to be confronted with chaos. Weeping had to be met with raucous laughter. Rape the virgins. Soil the young men. Turn black white. Bring death to life.

The voices grew louder as he walked more quickly towards them. He waved his hands in the air. Then, deliberately, bent his elbows and beat against his chest, cackling loudly. The campus was his. He could reach out as widely as he wanted, as high as he wanted, thrust his way into the sky, and nothing could stop him. Bowing his head, he pushed his unshaven chin into his bobbing adam's apple. His bare chest seemed to expand and float like a hovering eagle. Inside his heart beat fiercely. Raising his head, his eyes focussed on a small section of sky that seemed to weigh down on him like a cork in a bottle. There he was—Mr Proudfoot—especially sent to change the way of life of these primitives on the other side of the world. He bowed his head and almost wept when he thought of the barren ground, crowded with the masses begging for the civilisation only he could give them.

Suddenly his eyes leapt back up towards the tall, silent patch of sky. He could see distant mountains and his own feet planted on the highest peak. The plunging valleys under his bare feet were filled with hundreds of thousands of students with arms outstretched, begging for civilisation.

Mr Proudfoot would come down from the mountain; he would struggle along-side the hungry, thirsty beggars. There was no higher civilisation than his. Its primary goal was sex. The linking of one object to another, one thing to another. Know this and practise it as wildly as you can. Damn virginity. To hell with manliness. There is no greater form of individuality. If you don't have a regular lover, be a homosexual or a lesbian; both are acceptable and high states of human development. Primitive people need to expose those things which they have never before dared to expose. Learn to use drugs. Learn to riot. Come to understand violence and pornography, brothels and gonorrhoea as close friends. Get down on the ground and dance the monkey, shake and bump, so that you lose their modesty and shame. Tattoo Che Guevara on your arms, Kojak on your chests, Castro on your backs, and astrology signs on your foreheads.

He was full of things to tell the savages. He had been especially sent to tell what it was to be absolutely free. Freedom began with oneself. Every sense had to be totally liberated.

"Hey! Hippy!"

He suddenly heard the guard's voice roar in his ear. He turned. The guards' shed was far behind him. All he could see was two girls in ankle-length dresses following him. He wanted to tell them about himself. Mr Proudfoot from Buffalo. New lecturer in animal behaviour. Is there a streaking club on campus? Suddenly the girls were in front of him. He smiled weakly. They ignored him and kept walking. He wanted to say "hello" or cough, but nothing happened. If they specialised in animal behaviour, we could be animals together. We could start a

streaking club, if there wasn't one already. All animals are naked. We are animals. We should be naked. Those who refuse to strip will fail the exam.

He was not offended by their attitude. Give them a week and they would be kicking their long skirts off, and throwing their headscarves, pants and brassieres to the wind.

Again his ears caught the sound of a noisy crowd. He quickened his pace. Fiery speeches, booing and hissing could lead to violent behaviour and civil unrest. They were useful steps on the way to complete liberty. The crowd would be even louder with its mouth full of drugs and its genitals excited. As yet he wasn't certain whether the primitive tribes of Asia were capable of full freedom. Not at all certain. The voices did not seem to be antifeudal or nontraditional; they seemed to affirm an allegiance to parents, the establishment and established institutions. Loud voices were meaningless if their owners were neatly dressed and believed in heroes. Look at my hair and beard. I'm radical. Smoke marijuana. You'll like it—it's like nothing else you've ever tasted. Shake your bodies to the monkey and the baboon, long live rock'n'roll. Practice the teachings of Trotsky, Mao and Lenin. It's time to set up slum and motor cycle gangs. It's time, I tell you, time.

Again Mr Proudfoot quicked his step. The voices were louder. He wanted to walk right into the middle of the student gathering and tell them how to act. In Buffalo we had streaking, homosexuality and lesbianism in church, with Jesus Christ and His priests watching; why not here, in the mosque, in front of the religious leaders? Show them that we are liberated beasts. Shake your bodies in front of the living dead. To hell with bureaucracy. Come with me. Let me lead you. We'll march against anything there is, whatever gets in our way. The University exists to teach us how to live and fight. The age of rational politics is over, we want politics based on emotion. Come alive. Destroy everything.

"Hippy!"

The harsh voice seemed to stab its way into his ear. Mr Proudfoot turned around. The guards' house was a long way behind him. He looked to the right and left for the origin of the voice.

"Hey! You! Hippy!"

Again he started. A neatly dressed youth stood on the other side of the road. His short hair was neatly parted and kept in place with brilliantine. With his index-finger the youth beckoned him as one might call a dog.

Smiling, Mr Proudfoot nodded at him.

"Hey! You! Hippy! Come here!"

Mr Proudfoot smiled and nodded. This was just like the gate. None of these savages could recognise an advanced civilisation. Mr Proudfoot. Buffalo. U.S.A. Animal behaviour. The young man would bow down to him as soon as he read the registrar's letter. Why don't you take bestiality? We can start a streaking club. Anyone can join. Even your mother and father. We can do all sorts of things, including homosexuality, lesbianism and flashing. Polygamy and polyandry. Just one rule: be free like the animals.

"Hippy! Crawl over here!"

Mr Proudfoot smiled. What a pity they were at such a low evolutionary stage. Neat on the outside and rotten inside. They needed to learn to discriminate between internal and external attributes. Perhaps we could put that on the agenda for the streaking club. Or practise in-and-out. It wouldn't be hard to find the right equipment among the students of animal behaviour. Let them learn the secrets of the animals. In-and-out was more fun than theory-lessons. Everyone could take part too.

He would do anything they wanted. Crawl and lick their behinds if they asked. He had once demonstrated a hundred and thirtyfive different positions with Miss Clito in Buffalo, watched by his professors.

"Hey! Hippy! Come here!"

Three more young men stood behind the youth. They crossed the road, grabbed Mr Proudfoot's hands and dragged him away, setting him free in "speaker's corner". Startled, Mr Proudfoot realised that he was surrounded by hundreds of shouting students. Their mouths were open and their tongues protruded. They held placards in their hands. Down with hippies. To hell with hippies. Hippies are animals. Hippies are hippos. Kill all hippies on our campus. Kill all hippies on our campus. Hang the hippies. Use the razor on them.

"Silence!"

The tumult suddenly died. Mr Proudfoot fell to the ground, clinging on to his knapsack. He was surrounded by stamping feet. His eyes began to redden. They were not noble savages. He began to be frightened. Frightened for his life. He had to tell them who he was. As he began groping for his bag, he heard a sudden command.

"Get up!"

He stood on his bare feet. Thousands of eyes focussed on him. He bowed his head and stared at his toes. His long, black nails, with the human waste under them.

```
"What's your name?"
```

"Proudfoot."

"Did you hear that? Proudfoot says his name is Proudfoot."

His ears were deafened by the uproar.

"Buffalo."

"Did you hear that? Proudfoot says he comes from Buffalo."

There was a volley of noise.

"What are you doing here?"

"I'm a lecturer."

"Did you hear that? The baby Buffalo wants to be a lecturer."

"Oooooooh!"

"In which department?"

"Animal behaviour."

"The buffalo is going to teach us bestiality."

"Hang him!"

"Hang him!"

"Hang him!"

Mr Proudfoot did not have time to discover whether he was dreaming or not. He was terrified. There was a pile of hessian sacks in the middle of the crowd. A number of full sacks hung from nearby branches.

"Hang him! Hang him!"

The noisy mob charged at Mr Proudfoot and shoved him into a sack. They pulled the mouth of the sack shut and hauled it into the air. The sack jerked about then floated high in the sky. The imprisoned object moved briefly, then stopped.

The atmosphere became more tense. Then the students scattered to all corners of the campus to find if there were any hippies still left alive. They cheered and cheered and cheered . . .

But I shouldn't pour my outrage into my stories. A short story needs careful organisation. A plot, characters, a beginning and a middle, conflict. Rip the typed pages out of the machine! Screw them up! Burn them! Wait until the paper is ash. No one must know my secret anger.

Translated by Harry Aveling

Dumb, Dumb, by a Bee Stung

LEE LOK LIANG

The coffin shone bare and clean under the arc lights of the great cinema hall. It lay with its end facing the auditorium. Thirteen rows of tall straight-back benches were placed parallel to its side. Five women sat on the third row; they were dressed in the fashion of royalty, brilliantly embroidered costumes held up their figures. They were waiting for the great ones to come.

Outside, military guards posted themselves at the two narrow doors leading to the street, forbidding entrance to any who came without invitation cards. Those who had gained entry (and there seemed to be so few) sat on chairs at the very back of the hall, dressed, according to the reminder of the cards, in lounge suits or native costumes—stretched out along three rows and banded together by a tightness of silence.

The crowds had gathered along the roads leading to the cinema hall. At the junction, facing the main entrance, they pressed themselves against the cordon of police guards, staring at the cavernous lobby which had been purposely kept dark and empty. The only sound came from the thick hum of the huge air-condition cooling system on the top of the building.

It had become cold, suddenly cold, as midnight approached, and in the city itself, in the thousands of brick terrace houses and new super-structures, the viewers crowded before their TV sets watching, in their own silence, in their own darkness, the great hulk of the cinema hall, a mass of unrelieved greyish outline against the sky.

The great ones had kept them waiting and it seemed to all that they would never come and the waiting would have to go on and on and the night would always be followed by nights and the coffin would lie there in the great hall—gleaming and unburied.

'We have to follow the route the police gave us.'

Chee Beng pinched the thick flesh dividing his nostrils and then scratched between his eyebrows. He pointed to the map pinned to the blackboard. The route was marked out in red and it covered a few streets. He felt his nostrils again. He was a big man, tanned by the sun, and had a long nose and when he smiled, as he greeted the newcomers, its tip seemed to hang over his upper lip. He was the Master of Ceremonies, an editor of a Chinese newspaper and reputed to be very well versed in the arts and arcane subtleties of forecasting the manner and timing of funeral processions and burials, apart from other things. Such people were dying off very fast as the source from their motherland had completely dried up. Chee Beng therefore took great care of his health and spent the mornings exercising the gentle art of Tai Chi Chuan at six in the playing field.

Tonight, was the second night when Tze Tai Yuen was being ceremonized. He lay in the coffin in the small hall of No. 5 Carmady Avenue, an old terrace house in the old district, coming back as it were, on the instructions of Chee Beng, to his place of origin, as Mr Tze had certainly moved with success and wealth to the millionaire's row in another part of the city.

Mr Tze's first son, Kuq Tee, did not like the idea, but had to put up with it, for who could withstand the permutations of Chee Beng when once he had made up his mind. Everyone had accepted quotations and reference to red-covered books for there was no other authority to question him and as a matter of fact by attending every funeral of important clansmen, casting horoscopes of weddings of sons of rich acquaintances, and choosing the layout and position and structure of houses for his wealthy associates in terms of astrological influences, he had through the years, even if he had made some bad mistakes which he never acknowledged, succeeded in imposing himself as the Master of Ceremonies. Kuq Tee gave in.

Underneath the huge flat tent hastily put up the day before on the vacant ground (permission being swiftly granted by the Municipal Council) the friends and associates of Kuq Tee gathered, sitting on the small narrow benches and stools sipping cups of tea, some dressed up in dark ties or with dark arm bands. Each arrival was clasped with both hands by Kuq Tee or by one of the members of Committee arranging the funeral procession.

There was at a glance the well-known politician the Hon'ble Mr Kung, himself a Catholic, but nonetheless well at ease in such functions, as he had been to several funerals of various sects and creeds in the course of his duties. Short with dark eyebrows constantly jerking, he was well aware that his presence had been gratefully noted by Kuq Tee.

There was Hin Too the lawyer, plump, wearing white trousers and short-sleeved shirt who had come in his chauffer-driven Mercedes, greeting his clients, the new industrialists, the great housing developers, with the habitual twitch and jerk of the muscles of his right cheek. He sat at the same table as the Hon'ble Mr Kung. Both were English-educated.

'How's the route?' Hin Too asked, rubbing the sides of his nose.

'It's marked out on the map' Chee Beng pointed to the board. Some of the new arrivals got up from their tables and approached the board. All of them were men. The women went to the house opposite. At this time there were easily 300 guests under the tent and it was getting hot and everyone was trying to find some excuse to move about.

A Chinese viol and pei-pa were being played at a side tent where ice-cooled coca-colas and seven-ups were stored for those who preferred this to Chinese tea. As usual, such display was crowded by street urchins and members of the public who had nothing much to do in the evenings and regarded the comings and goings of guests as something in the nature of free entertainment.

A small boy, with a broad face, pressed upon the crowd and squeezed his way to the front where the musicians were. As he pushed aside some of the boys, one turned round and shouted, 'Get away, you smelly hunchback.'

The small boy shrugged and the little lump on his back moved like a turtle under his shirt. He scratched his ear and stared at the musicians, watching the execution of every hand movement. Sweat shone on his face but his stare was intent and he stood silently as though his small frame was trying to absorb every note and cadence. He felt so much that he soon forgot his lump and the heat. He had never heard music played like this before.

Hin Too got up and went closer. The route would take the procession around a few streets, very short streets indeed, and he felt thankful for that as he did not relish the idea of having to walk long distances in the hot sun behind the hearse.

Besides, he had a few agreements to complete in the office and meet a few bankers in the afternoon.

Chee Bong looked glum and pressed the tip of his nose with his fingers, kneading the broad flesh. 'Not too good', he said to Hin Too.

'Why?'

'Plenty of reasons,' Chee Beng answered, releasing his nose, sensing he had an appreciative listener. Hin Too knew practically nothing about Chinese customs or lore, although he was a member of a political party organized to represent Chinese interests. But this did not make much difference as his position in society secured him a seat on the working committee. It paid to join even if he could not even communicate well with the other members. Their dialect and terms were a bit too literary for him, but they tolerated his patois and English phrases when he found himself out of depth.

'It's like this,' Chee Beng spoke slowly, using the simplest terms and watching Hin Too's expression, 'according to my calculations the departed must cross three bridges and go through River Valley Road. According to the signs, which are too difficult to explain, he must proceed by way of the East and take a journey to the West, towards the mountains. The three bridges are to wash away his faults as he crosses their waters. Of course, it sounds simple but I spent two days working out the chart. And now the police tell us we have to follow their route. It means two bridges and no River Valley. They have their own ideas about security and trouble. But I do not know what Kuq Tee can do. A wrong route will affect his future.' Chee Beng turned to look and Hin Too followed his glance.

Kuq Tee had just returned from the house opposite and taken a seat with the Hon'ble Mr Kung talking to him seriously. Just then, the Hon'ble Mr Kung caught sight of Hin Too and Chee Beng.

The Hon'ble Mr Kung nodded his head, signalling to them. The two men left the main committee table and went towards the Hon'ble Mr Kung. As they approached, Kuq Tee got up, a look of anxiety on his face.

'Chee Beng can tell you,' Kuq Tee said. His round moonbeam face, usually smiling, wrinkled with frowns.

They sat down.

'Have some tea.' Kuq Tee poured out two cups and placed them before Chee Beng and Hin Too.

'Thank you.'

Hin Too wiped his face before drinking. He could smell a problem and knew he had a long night before him. Sometimes such affairs could be tedious. Why was it that it couldn't be simpler? Have the damned thing cremated and be done with it. God, when he died he would leave strict instructions to be cremated. Not that he didn't have Chinese beliefs. But the whole thing was so messy—without clarity or economy. It was always the same with his Chinese clients, no planning, playing everything by ear, and when they were in trouble, they were like children—always wanting their own way—nothing else would do. He moved his buttocks and settled himself in a more comfortable position, crossing his legs tightly. His face twitched and he heard the soft wet sound his mouth made against his gums. He quickly drank his tea, but before he could put it down, Kuq Tee poured more tea into it.

'I mentioned to the Hon'ble Mr Kung,' Kuq Tee said, addressing Hin Too, 'our problem. As you know, the route is wrong. Did Chee Beng explain to you?'

Hin Too quickly nodded his head. He prevented Kuq Tee from going into the details. Once heard was more than enough.

'Our problem,' Kuq Tee emphasized, 'is the wrong route. And the Hon'ble Mr Kung suggested that I discuss it with you. You may have some ideas. You know about this sort of thing. I don't know why the police insisted on their route. There could be no trouble along our one. But I am not criticizing the police, you know.

They have their job to do. As the Hon'ble Mr Kung has just said, if we could only know their reasons. And we can show them they need not have any anxiety. What do you think? I don't know what to think,' Kuq Tee sighed.

There was silence. Every one at the table was looking at Hin Too who now twitched and sniffed as well. Chee Beng rubbed the left side of his nose vigorously with the back of his hand. The Hon'ble Mr Kung leant forward, knitting his dark eyebrows, his hairless face, pinkish in the heat, looking as though he himself was sorting out the problem. He knew his turn would come next; he had just managed to foist the problem on to Hin Too first. He admired Hin Too's keen brain and had consulted him sometimes on constitutional problems. As a politician Hin Too might not be too bright, but still he was useful.

Hin Too drank up his tea, scratching the ridge of his nose.

'I think, first of all, we must find out who gave the orders. You know, orders are always given by one person,' Hin Too glanced towards the Hon'ble Mr Kung, seeking confirmation. Mr Kung nodded in agreement, smiling.

'Well then,' Hin Too continued, 'the first thing I'll do is to ring up the police. What's the correct route again?'

Chee Beng sketched out the route on the border of a newspaper. Almost every table had several copies of his paper. Hin Too studied it carefully.

'I don't know where the telephone is?' Hin Too said by way of an inquiry to Kuq Tee who got up and thanked him profusely.

Hin Too followed, jumping neatly across the gutter. A crowd of hangers-on followed them. The little hunchback left the cubicle of the musicians and joined in with the crowd. Hin Too noticed the rags and the sores on his body with some disgust. Well it was always like this—a big funeral and filth everywhere. He hoped one day, perhaps during the lifetime of his grandson, some scientist would come up with an invention for an air-conditioned dome over the city. It would be nice to be able to control the weather's winter, spring, summer, autumn, instead of silly rains all the time.

As they approached the terrace house, the Taoist monks with their disciples chanted louder, walking in circles in front of the doorway.

They had to squeeze through, and the little hunchback pressed himself against Hin Too who pretended to ignore the boy. Kuq Tee saw this and shouted to a man 'Get rid of this boy!' The man came and tried to drag the boy away, but he was too late. The boy rushed into the house with the crowd, avoiding the blow which the man had aimed at him. There was a sprinkle of laughter from other boys who thought it a great joke. They walked past the dark coffin, heavy and smelling of lacquer on its trestles—Kuq Tee preferred the old-fashioned and more expensive coffin of the best wood, guaranteed to last a century and imported from Hong Kong. He had bought it some years ago when his father showed signs of failing health but had it kept in Hong Kong. It was not easy to import a coffin into the country with all the new regulations, but with the assistance of some one who knew the chief men in the Ministries of Commerce and Industries and of Finance, he got it in just in time.

The telephone was on a table at the back of the house near the window separating the lavatory from the kitchen.

It was hot in there. A 15-watt light hung overhead.

Hin Too picked up the phone and contacted the police and asked for ASP Chew. Someone at the other end told him ASP Chew had retired. Hin Too then remembered that ASP Chew had mentioned to him some three years ago he would be retiring. Hin Too glanced around. Kuq Tee stood next to him with a tense expression. Luckily the reply was not overheard by any of the bystanders. Hin Too felt relieved. It would not do for someone to know that he had rung up a police officer who had retired. It would sound funny too. Well, he had not much to do

with the police nowadays, having moved from whatever bit of criminal law he did, into real estate and pioneer industry.

'ASP Chew is not in and they don't know where he is,' Hin Too said to Kuq Tee, 'but I'll get the OCPD.'

'Yes, get the OCPD,' Kuq Tee repeated.

'Give me the OCPD,' then, lowering his voice, Hin Too muttered 'tell me, what's his name.'

He waited for the connection. The little hunchback was really annoying, staring at him; his right cheek twitched. There was something in that fellow's eyes that disturbed him—a stare as questioning as a cat's but glazed over by a film of resignation, defeat or acceptance. Hin Too glanced around and it seemed to him that the whole atmosphere of the place had been compressed into the stare of that boy. He shook off the feeling. It was hot and he was getting tired.

The OCPD was on the line.

'Ah, Mr Marimuthu, glad to get you,' Hin Too spoke out in English loudly, putting on a familiar tone for the benefit of Kuq Tee, 'this is Hin Too, the lawyer. Hin Too, you remember, I believe I met you at the Garden Party. Well, it's like this. I am speaking from Carmady Avenue. It's about the funeral procession of Kuq Tee's father. You've heard of Kuq Tee, haven't you. He's the chairman—let me see—oh you've heard of him, you remember now.' Hin Too smiled at Kuq Tee whose face brightened. 'Well, it's like this, Mr Marimuthu, we believe the route has been okayed by your Department. You know how it goes. Good. We just want to find out,' Hin Too paused, choosing his words, 'how did it come about this way? Can you tell me who chose it. Oh, you don't know. Can you find out please? How long? In half an hour's time? Well, I'll ring you back. Thank you very much. Cheerio.'

Hin Too replaced the receiver and explained what had gone on to Kuq Tee who did not understand English. The crowd was just as interested in his explanations. And then in a file, they started walking out, past the mourners who had gathered in small groups, fanning themselves. Old women and attractive young girls with black and white handkerchiefs placed on one shoulder. As they were going out, a woman called out to Kuq Tee who stopped and introduced her to Hin Too as his wife. Kuq Tee's wife was very fair but unfortunately she was very fat as well. She coughed and wiped her face with her handkerchief. Too fat, Hin Too thought. No wonder they had no children and had adopted three boys and two daughters. Hin Too drew up the will for Huq Tee. And it became clear to him that the children hated the wife, especially the first adopted son, who had plunged a knife into the table when she told him to be filial and wanted to stop him from going out with an Australian girl. The wife watched over the son for a month in Melbourne and had returned, filled with terror for the boy, and had persuaded Kuq Tee to make a will. This was the first time Hin Too had seen her. He glanced round but did not see the boy. He greeted the woman, Her broad pinkish face expanded into a smile and the chin crept downwards in a fat roll. This must have fascinated the little hunchback for he stopped and gazed. Mrs Hin Too saw him and shooed him away. Hin Too exchanged some pleasantries with her and then walked out with Kuq Tee. The hunchback followed them to their table under the tent.

Hin Too sat down and scratched the back of his head, staring at the rough surface of the wooden table.

'The OCPD spoke to me. He himself didn't know who gave the order. He'll find out, and then let us know. In half an hour.'

Chee Beng, not satisfied with the answer, asked:

'Tell us what happened. It's funny that he shouldn't know. I don't understand what the authorities are up to now. In the old days things were more efficient.

Like last time when we had the Protector of Chinese Affairs and I went to see him about some article in my paper. He accepted my explanations without question. Very accommodating too. Talked to me about Li Po the poet. That's the stuff we don't print. But for the next issue I put one in and he was pleased. He rang me up and thanked me. He knew some Chinese but had his interpreter watching for the article I promised him on Li Po. Wonderful to do business with him.'

The Hon'ble Mr Kung rested his cane carefully on the edge of the table. He felt he must speak up as some politics had now been introduced into the conversation. It would not do to let the thing pass without comment. It might get around that he had said nothing.

'You know, Chee Beng. Those were the old days. I wouldn't say it was more efficient. Now my office has ten clerks and the State Secretariat about, I think, five Assistant State Secretaries. We work hard. Sometimes they stay back until 6 p.m. So many Committee meetings, you know. And we don't do the things the way we want, but the way the people want. We must be careful in a democratic society. We must study everything, you know. All angles. Why doesn't your paper put up some articles on administration. Come and visit me. We'll talk about it. Of course, there are always certain things that have to be delayed. It just can't be helped.'

'Thank you,' Chee Beng said, realizing that he had not said things correctly; he squeezed the end of his nose with his thumb and forefinger as if in deep thought. 'I meant to come to you. Such a lot to learn and many new changes. The public must know about it. And the new policies too. Damned rumours going around. We must counter them. People just don't understand the education policy, for instance. And the other day I spent nearly an hour talking to a Chairman of a School, very intelligent man too, about it. Took him a long while to appreciate it.'

Hin Too felt the table shaking. He found out that Kuq Tee had his knee pressed hard against the table and was nervously raising it up and down. Obviously the conversation had drifted from the subject in hand into matters that had best been discussed in private. Face to face over a cup of coffee when no one else was around.

'What do you think the police can do?' Hin Too eased the conversation into the right channel. 'We must also think how we can get them to change the route.'

The Hon'ble Mr Kung picked up his cane and rolled it in his right hand. Kuq Tee had a worried expression and took out his handkerchief and wiped his face as though by this gesture he could solve the problem.

'I think,' the Hon'ble Mr Kung said, when no one else said anything, 'we wait for them to call, or is it that you have to call him, Hin Too? You have. Well, when you call them, find out who really gave the order. If I know the person, then I'll speak to him. Don't worry, Kuq Tee.'

Every one at the table relaxed and more tea was poured into the cups. By this time a crowd had collected round the table. Some invited guests stood quietly listening to their conversation. And Hin Too noticed that the little hunchback was among them, staring intently at the gentlemen around the table.

The boy scratched the calf of his right leg with his left toe balancing on one leg. On his face a silly smile appeared and he seemed to admire the shirts the gentlemen had on. He had picked up a cigarette someone had thrown away and was puffing away at the butt, wrinkling the bridge of his nose when the smoke hit his eyes. Suddenly a stone struck the back of his head. The hunchback opened his mouth as if in pain and quickly looked backwards. No sound came out. Hin Too realized now that the bloody boy was probably dumb as well. The sound of laughter came from some four or five boys further back and the hunchback chased after them.

Half an hour gone. Hin Too looked at his Omega. Kuq Tee noticed the gesture and both of them got up and went back to the terrace house, followed by the crowd.

It took some five minutes before Hin Too reached the OCPD. Remembering the Hon'ble Mr Kung's advice, Hin Too phrased his questions carefully and found out that the directive did not come from any single person but from the Central Committee and the Chairman of the Committee was one Inche Omar. They returned to the table and when the Hon'ble Mr Kung saw them coming with grim faces, he knew it was his turn. He waited until they sat down.

He held his cane tightly in his hand and waited for Hin Too to speak.

'I think I got the correct information,' Hin Too said, 'it's the job of the Central Committee. Can you do something?'

The Hon'ble Mr Kung nodded his head and pressed upon his cane. They followed him into the house. The chanting had stopped and even the mourners were aware of his presence. He glanced at them and was nearly going to give them a smile but he remembered the occasion just in time. He was thinking fast. He got Chee Beng to come along as well.

He rang up the OCPD.

'This is Mr Kung speaking,' He had spoken several times to the OCPD and was instantly recognized, 'I am speaking from Carmady Avenue. Yes, Hin Too spoke to you just a while ago. I know that. You know it's a simple procession and Kuq Tee is a well-known and respectable figure in town. Can't you do something? What's that? Strict orders. Well, I'll see. It's unfortunate I know. Yes police control can be difficult along the original route. Who's in charge of the Central Committee? You think, I'd better speak to him. What's his phone number? 74321. I'll see what I can do. Thanks anyway.'

The Hon'ble Mr Kung replaced the receiver and turned to Kuq Tee.

'It seems the OCPD has no power. But he said if the Central Committee agrees, he can put more men in to take care of security. Do you mind if I use your phone to call long distance? I hope the Chairman will be in.' Mr Kung paused, wishing the Chairman was out. Kuq Tee nodded his head. His wife had left the mourners and was standing by his side, coughing into her handkerchief, eyes red and swollen from too much crying.

Chee Beng was watching the Hon'ble Mr Kung and from the expression on Mr Kung's face he had the feeling that the call would be useless. What powers the authorities had nowadays after the great trouble. They needed it of course, but sometimes they seemed to want to control everything. He himself had to be extremely careful of what appeared in his papers and sometimes acted like a suspicious censor himself. From now on, before he worked out any funeral route, it would be wiser if he consulted the police first. No point being stung by the authorities. One could do nothing. Get their views first on the route and fit it in later by supplicating to the oracles. No one would know any the better. He had better think of solving this problem his way. The Hon'ble Mr Kung and Hin Too approached the matter from the wrong angle. An idea came to his mind. He staved close to Mr Kung when the long distance call came through.

'Is that 74321? Yes? Can I speak to Inche Omar?,' the Hon'ble Mr Kung pressed the phone against his ear and sniffed. He nodded to Chee Beng and whispered, 'Better stay close, as I go on you can give me the reasons.' He noticed the pleased expression on his companion's face. It was a good thing he had brought Chee Beng along. Hin Too would not have done it, not knowing the importance of having a newsman on his side.

'Yes, is it Inche Omar? How are you, I am Mr Kung. Yes from Titang. Yes I met you when I was down at the birthday party.' The Hon'ble Mr Kung began his conversation in the National Language and then lapsed into the English

language, both of which he spoke fluently with imprecise accents but with a good grasp of the grammar. 'Inche Omar, there's a small problem. Sorry to trouble you with it at this time of the night. But you know how it is in public life. It's a nuisance no doubt, but can't be helped. Tell you what, you remember the Central Committee you are on? I heard from our local OCPD, Mr Marimuthu, that you can do something. It's about the funeral route of Mr Kuq Tee's father, Mr Tze. It's of no consequence but we heard that the route had been changed. Do you recollect? No, not the one in Segamat town. I'm speaking from Titang. Oh, you've changed several funeral routes? Wait a minute please,' the Hon'ble Mr Kung covered up the mouthpiece with his hand and whispered to Chee Beng, 'The chap on the phone says that they have changed the routes of all funeral processions in the country. What do you say, Chee Beng?'

'Ask him whether he can allow us the original route. It's peaceful here.' Chee Beng answered, scratching the tip of his nose, thinking hard, now that he knew what he had to face. Everyone was watching him. He had the reputation of solving problems. He was fond of telling his junior colleagues of his coups, putting the problem before them and then asking what they would do. Even if they had an answer they would make some preposterous reply, at which he would smile and tell them what he had done, quoting from Confucius as he did so. It soon got around town that there was nothing he couldn't solve.

'Inche Omar, we know your difficulty,' the Hon'ble Mr Kung resumed his conversation, 'but may I tell you, this place is not like Segamat. Peaceful here; no trouble. Even the PM knows about it. Can the route be changed? It would be a great moral victory. What's that? It's out of your hands. You can't call a Committee meeting until next week. You think also they would not agree? Matter of principle, you say. Others may ask for the same thing. Hold on a minute, please. Sorry to cause you so much trouble.'

The Hon'ble Mr Kung whispered the gist of Inche's Omar's reply to Chee Beng. Chee Beng put on a deep frown and pressed his thumb and middle finger on his forehead. Kuq Tee looked strained and his wife clutched at his arm tightly. Hin Too pulled the lobe of his right ear and noticed that the hunchback boy had somehow got himself behind Kuq Tee's wife.

Chee Beng whispered back 'Ask him whether we can change the names of some streets and build a paper bridge.'

The Hon'ble Mr Kung stared at him, puzzled.

Chee Beng quickly repeated what he'd said and added, 'I don't mean changing the names of the streets really. Just pasting the new names written on paper over the existing street signs. Ask him.'

'Inche Omar. I think we've got the solution. It's a small thing really. I'm sure there's no problem. All we ask for—it's not much really—is to be allowed to write names on paper and paste them over existing street signs. We'll tear them up when the procession passes. And to build a paper bridge over a side drain along the route. If you agree, it'll give great confidence in the government. No harm done. It'll be a good thing too. Very good. I'll agree. Thank you. You tell the OCPD and I'll tell him as well. Cheerio, thanks'.

The Hon'ble Mr Kung replaced the receiver and turned brightly to the crowd. He leant on his cane and looked around, his heavy eyebrows resting beautifully above his shining eyes and his calm face expressing confidence. No one was not familiar with this look—the huge election posters carried it on the sides of his election vans, on the muddy walls of tenements, dangling from the thick angsana trees and on the banners strung across the streets.

Chee Beng kept quiet. He knew when to do so. He was thinking of the mine of information he would have from now on, for news and for other profitable ventures.

Everyone waited for the Hon'ble Mr Kung to speak. The crowd pressed closer. A sense of relief and excitement pervaded the atmosphere and even the chants of the monks showered around their ears, cascading like songs, as comforting as lullabyes.

'It's done,' the Hon'ble Mr Kung said solemnly, 'everything will be all right. No need to worry. Chee Beng will tell the Committee later on. I am so glad for you Kuq Tee. You really must have great luck. Your future generations will be auspicious.'

The Hon'ble Mr Kung glanced at Hin Too, smiling slightly. Hin Too acknowledged the gesture and the muscle on his right cheek pulled sharply. Hin Too shook his head as if to get rid of a spasm and caught sight of the hunchback boy. That little chap had a strained tight look; small eyes with one of the lids lowered, dark rings below, and the bones on his cheeks fragile-looking under the pallor of his complexion. He seemed to be holding his breath and was pressing the back of his hand against his nose.

Suddenly there was a stir in the crowd. Mr Kuq Tee's wife had uttered a gasp and covered her mouth with her palm. She became red in the face and quickly turned round. 'You shameless little goat. You pinched me.'

The hunchback ran off quickly, chased by the other boys.

Hin Too moved toward Mr Kuq Tee's wife and stopped. His nostrils twitched. A vile, putrifying smell hit him. He realized that she had just farted. Together with others, he consoled Mrs Kuq Tee, enduring the smell for as long as he could. No one showed by their expression that there was anything wrong in the air.

As he walked out from the terrace house later on, Hin Too heard a commotion near the tent.

The boys were screaming, 'Dumb, Dumb, by a bee stung. Dumb, Dumb, by a bee stung.' They were screaming, laughing and teasing.

The little hunchback boy was rolling on the ground, flailing his arms. He opened his mouth wide and closed it rapidly several times.

Hin Too approached the edge of the crowd that had gathered to watch the scene. They were some fifty feet away from the little hunchback.

Apparently the boys had chased the hunchback and thrown stones at him as he cowered under the frangipani tree. A stone had grazed a bee hive, and some of the bees settled on him. He was too frightened and confused to do anything but roll on the ground. Some one got a pail of water and threw it over him and quickly dragged him away. They had to call for the ambulance.

Above the chants of the monks, the voices of the boys rose decisively as they raced up and down the narrow cramped alley: 'Dumb, Dumb, by a bee stung.'

Hin Too shook off a slight feeling of depression, settled down on his chair, and joined the Hon'ble Mr Kung, Mr Kuq Tee, Chee Beng and others for a cup of tea.

Ah, it must be like this, he thought, the old China legend of the eight wise fairies crowded around the table.

MALAYSIA and SINGAPORE

Poems in English

Christmas Week 1975 For J.F.C.

EDWIN THUMBOO

Ι

As you

Weigh one hope against one fear, Detaching dream from nightmare Or stretch a hand in gratitude, Doing what must be done,

You feel,
Against the shards of memory,
That this auspicious day
Is not its usual self:
The winds do not burn with fire
Nor the sky inscribe
A rare happening.
Instead a sudden desolation;
Unexplained but there.
Within the early city,
The streets lie grey, unvisited.

Nothing, nothing of portent.

II

Season's Greetings are earnest As the year before. But now

You

Visit less, depend upon the post. Somehow cards and calendars are dull; Gifts seem careful, to the point. Even the Magi come in plastic, Smooth, easy to store.

Nothing, nothing of portent.

Except

Voices, leaders of countries, In their annual tone, prognosticate, Offer qualified security, But note in parenthesis

Overtones

Of crisis: oil, Insurrection, closure of borders, Ancestral ways remade, neutrality, Big power interests, laws of the sea, Dragons rumoured in the making.

Yet our children will to school, Keep tidy, learn new maths, Return bilingual, improve upon us While we keep about our tasks.

Therefore
Give us this day O Lord
Our daily bread.
Hungry sheep look up; some are fed.

Whatever the dialect of Your tribe, O Lord, You'll surely help those Who also help themselves.

Fifteen Years After

For Shamus Frazer

EDWIN THUMBOO

That day when you left,
Taking for the safe keeping of us,
My figure from Bali,
Smooth, beckoning goddess
Urged to serenity by the lotus she stood on,
You too were poised in the brittle afternoon...
That day of incense I have kept to this.

You died recently. They say you died.

But no matter.

Image and breath persist,
Grow as I grow, would not suffer the mind's quip.
Your beard, dubious, smelling of cheese and beer,
Affectionate, still presides; your voice pursues,
Sweet or harsh, but ever itself.
Many sit in their rooms, remembering how
You took us through Christabel, Sohrab and Rustum,
Death's Jest-Book, The Raven,
Brought new worlds to meet our own.
You lived—beautiful, precarious—
Feeding us irrevocably on your self
While other gods shed their skin, withdrew,
Taking their notes with them.

But teacher and friend, white man, What are they doing to you, They, who come after? Smaller, paler, full of themselves, Suave, sideburned, tousled? Setting up trade In principles, freedoms, intellectual honesties?

They are eloquent, These revivers of clichés, these late comers, Who strike a neat phrase, write letters to the press.

Old Shamus, Your image and breath slip, You are dying now, When I need you most to live.

Developing Societies

EE TIANG HONG

Sure we need to have doctors, Teachers, builders, and all that, Else there wouldn't have been (Consider also the fate of) Borobudor or Angkor Wat.

Trouble is where do we stand Should the diagnosis be wrong, The teacher not prepared to teach, And the engineer-architect-builder carry on With his monuments of sand?

The Loan

The terms are more or less fixed, Payable—you won't feel it— By instalments,

Say monthly, with effect from The first moon Of your beauty.

Therefore you have the choice: Settle the matter With grace, or

Publish the transaction, Expose the catch, And resign, or,

Finally, though unsound proposition, And only in the last resort, Call off the deal.

Coward.

Old Friends

Those among the successful, Who can afford it, Grow eccentricities, Develop sophistication, or arrogance, Or are simply boring,

The failures, ill at ease, Build up defensive walls, Become (un)necessarily apologetic, Or, worse, embarrassingly envious,

While in between, the predominant, Buffetted like old leaves Scraping the surface of a street In a callous breeze, Forget, or are forgotten.

At reunions, at chance meetings
They no longer look each other
As straight in the eye, no longer
Believe, nor give as once
In their ripe innocence
Words spluttered and crackled
Like seedbursts on a windy morning.

O more and more as they grow wiser More and more they disappoint.

Gone Overseas

LEE GEOK LAN

and so they have all gone overseas some of our friends and relatives because they thought it best to migrate at a time they foresaw the worst to come

the grass is always greener on the other side it's for the sake of their children to make sure they will get a fair deal in education and future employment

and so they said goodbye at the airport with no qualms about what's left behind antiques passed on, have moved downstream filial bonds must somehow break away for some foreign piety

when they are all settled on foreign soil they write back with effusions about the seasons—the warmth and the cold change of weather and people around them like a paradise found

and so they have all settled overseas our sometime friends and relatives who have merged so well with the winter making money and working as other slaves to another country

after three years, we no longer hear the effusions about the open country spaces their children grown have assumed new accents already estranged from their chinese dialects

they will not speak to us again in that warm casual manner, years ago of trivial things that stirred so much laughter within the family circle only their parents growing older who migrated for the sake of the young will think of coming back for a visit

and we will be their tourist-guides.

The Barbecue

it is an annual affair in the open green this gathering of members from the estate clubs for the full enjoyment of facilities provided the swimming pool and its illumination the billiard-room and don't forget the bar that stirs and replenishes.

it is such a grand facade—
the lighted candles on the tables
almost fencing the club with its neon-lights
(remind you of houses in the kampongs
all ready for their "hari raya")

the evening's preliminaries swing again come meet the Manager's wife—"you've been introduced?" there goes the generous deputy offering hard drinks and some excutive staff who mingle well at Russian pool (if you work with an established company, you must mingle well or else the love of labour would be lost, the aspirants tell)

I sit and stare as a newcomer to the show people meeting the same people (doing self-service over sizzling meat on the fires) a planter from England utters jokes about "prune juice" and "stirrup-cups" across to his kinsman (thinking they are too esoteric for an alien like me!)

who is the alien after all, on Malaysian soil talking of the profitability of rubber and oil palm?

when the flames die down
I go home—feeling quite secure though
in a colonial bungalow—for in the open green
I see the chillies, fed with fish-water
flush with their own inflation in sunshine.

View from a Window

CHUNG YEE CHONG

one asks for more: more than these mud-coloured junks lining up the seafront against a pale invariable sky the same sea, asking & giving nothing ships that never came in poised midway between sea & sky bordering on so much infinity

for days now i've stood looking out beyond this range of blue & blue for something larger than the sky can hold what is not quite there & not quite now

for days — nothing not even a heart-wrenching rain to fuse the sea & sky topple those junks & shake the whole seafront

for days

now only an attitude remains: a way of looking out & waiting in.

Bonds

CHANDRAN NAIR

not to scare you, but because we build bonds. words adhere more than we realise, a word sometimes pauses quite unknown, implants and lies dormant as life turns; to blossom into alkaloid reality only when we have lost the inner eye that shows beauty as this stream of cold water running to wash between our toes and minds.

not that I am frightened, that we build bonds can we really reclaim our moments of peace once they fulfil themselves and are gone? will memory be honest enough to restate how it was a look could say everything and a fleeting touch was a cold wind lingering, a new born faith silent and content as we lived within our toes and minds?

Sonnet

SHIRLEY LIM

No one, I thought, loved you as much as I Fearing to move abruptly or far Lest I should lose you. And you, indulgent, Had undertaken quiet lest I should cry. No lovers ever were so loyal. It was sure we knew each other well, And what we knew we loved, forgetting Neither the kiss good-night nor morning. So consoling, we make disconsolate Each other; urged suddenly, we violate, Shake the unshakeable-seeming firmament, And dance amuck solitary among the stars. Now, gentled, each to each returned, We ask, bewildered, where each had gone.

Birth

ROSEMARY MOKHTAR

My thought has gradually stilled Around this unseen life, Turning in silent fluid, Unborn to air or light. My hands, external and crude, Feel for the beating heart, The head, the buttocks, a knee; But I cannot properly know, I cannot see.

"The pain is to open the way," My old servant told me.
The pain is the opening door
Of that dark corridor to life.

"Nur Hayati anak siapa? Nur Hayati anak Rosmawati."

"Nur Hayati, whose child? Nur Hayati, the child of Rosmawati."

So very small is she, Her face seems still half-closed. "Like buds they are, eh Cik Rose? Slowly they unfold, Like buds they unfold."

Little bud, her hair smells of feathers. Her grandfather's hair is white, And his face, it brims with light. The bud that has yet to unfold, The body that gives up its hold.

Achieving Maturity: Singapore Poetry in English

In almost every country outside mainland Britain where English has been used for creative purposes, its results have almost always met with considerable reservations. Even the major literary figures from America have only in fairly recent times made their entry into the literature courses that flourish in the more established of British universities. Where the situation of the writer in English in such countries as India, West Indies, or Africa is concerned, the apologetics convey more than merely the subtle condescension accorded by eager exoticahunting critics. And when it comes to a country like Singapore, it is generally felt that the writer here should remain content within the two hundred or so odd square miles in which he writes. It is nothing new to state that frequently non-literary factors have been responsible for the interest shown in the literatures of the so-called developing countries. Without wanting to make too much of this misplaced appreciation or approach to literature written in English the world over, one has to insist that often the creative efforts of writers whose native tongue is not English compel serious attention if we are to remain true to the obligation necessitated by any good literary work.

Unlike a number of countries where prose literature has flourished more than the poetry written in English, the better and more universally-relevant of writing in English in Singapore has been in the field of poetry. The chief reason for this, perhaps, lies in the fact that the creation of a good novel or even a good shortstory demands a sustained creative continuity just not possible in the spatially-restricted, rapidly-changing, fast-moving and hectic life of Singaporeans. It is significant, in this respect, that Singapore's nearest neighbour, Malaysia, should have produced some viable prose literature whereas the attempts of Singaporeans in this direction prove dismally weak and feeble. It is also significant that no long poem of any quality has been written by a Singaporean. However, the trappings of size and pace not-withstanding, poetry in English in Singapore has come of age—a remarkable achievement when we realise that only in the last decade has Singapore really arrived at its own in the political, social, educational, economic and cultural fields.

The literature of a country cannot, ultimately, be divorced from its setting. For Singaporeans the setting most familiar is immediate, urgent, bewildering, confusing, overwhelming, and complicated. Truly a melting pot in every sense, the Singapore environment affords its writers more perplexities than inspirations. And because the conflicts, value-systems, way of life, is responded to in a linguistic and ethnic multiplicity hard for non-Singaporeans to fully appreciate, it is not an easy task for anyone writing consciously in English in Singapore to produce a spontaneous and free work, using the latter term in its literary, creative, sense. This "hesitancy", as it were, underlines most of the poetry written in English. The poetry reveals a struggle within the poet, painfully aware of his undefined but important role, trying to chart life within the narrow confines of the given surroundings:

As you
Weigh one hope against one fear,
Detaching dream from nightmare
Or stretch a hand in gratitude,
You feel,

Against the shards of memory, That this auspicious day Is not its usual self: The winds do not burn with fire Nor the sky inscribe A rare happening. Instead a sudden desolation; Unexplained but there. Within the early city, The streets lie grey, unvisited.

("Christmas Week 1975")

The most mature of Singapore poets, Edwin Thumboo has explored the language for a long time, coming up with answers which display the poet's inner need to find a balanced point at which communication can be effective without being forced or contrived. Language in itself is found to be meaningless; only civilised use gives it the necessary social dimensions which inextricably link the user with the words:

Words are neither valid, merciful nor bad In themselves, nothing unless used, urged, Imported into dialogue, Becoming part-anger, part-laughter, bruised, Adding to the mood and gesture. Words are words. Except for us They are not personalities.

("Words")

And when words are successfully fused with the personality of their user, the result is an admirable, moving comment-response which transcends the immediacy of the situation:

The casual word, the easiness, the quick straight answer,
The humane delay, the lack of cautiousness,
That gave simple laughter to our evenings
Are too simple for these days of power
Whose nature is to hint not state.
So when one has a chance to talk the conversation
Hesitates on the brink of momentous things;
He ponders...
Suggesting by some unremark

There was much more to be said.

("Gods Can Die")

Much of the poetry of Singapore can be divided into two categories: the purely public and the purely private. The strength of Thumboo's poetry lies, among other things, in his ability to bridge the gap while maintaining a distinctive, individual voice. This breaking into his own was difficult for Thumboo. Born and educated in the colonial era, heavily taught in the verse of Yeats, Eliot and Dylan Thomas, growing into manhood in the throes of early nationalistic fervour-all this demanded from him an emotional and intellectual vigilance and sensitivity which could not with ease be rendered into poetry. But Thumboo's instinctive grasp of situations and feel for language enabled him to emerge victorious from the experience. Many others, harrowed by similar circumstances but less gifted and less resilient, either became displaced, stagnated, or ceased writing poetry altogether.

The younger poets have been spared the turbulence associated with the anxiety and uncertainty that faced a poet like Thumboo. Lee Tzu Pheng, perhaps the finest realisation of this younger generation, conveys her apprehension with startling clarity:

My country and my people are neither here nor there, nor in the comfort of my preferences, if I could even choose.

("My Country and My People")

Poignantly fluent, Tzu Pheng displays a dexterity with words which emphasises an essentially feminine response to an event or act. Her frankness and sincerity are qualities which even a cursory reading of the poems makes manifest:

because I only write,
not knowing where and how to bring
these feelings to your doorstep,
my hands hold no order,
transfer no look, no grace,
cannot contain the red pulse of the heart.
only the blue throb over the page;
small, drying in ways not mine.

("Because I only Write")

According a basically personal and personalised sensibility to her environment, Tzu Pheng manages to capture the cadences of atmosphere with elegance. The said hesitancy persists, but with an internalised confidence:

Since I am young enough to laugh in this old world's scowl, I have this youth's short bitter energies to fuse strength and wisdom, lest Time passing say I flounder ("Since I am Old Enough to Mourn")

The search for identity, the need to examine one's values, the question of relating constructively to others, the problem of articulating one's desires and wishes: these are paramount concerns among Singapore poets. Chandran Nair, of Tzu Pheng's generation, writes almost contortedly of the difficulty experienced in disengaging from one's past, from the traditions and habits of long cherished culture:

I have broken from the past, history etched in ancestral blood, bodies sword torn, shields hacked to hands that have turned to writing and dashed across my throat dry words. ("Dry Words")

Too much thinking and self-reflection can often produce very good poetry but in so doing, they can also contribute towards the destruction of that peculiar innocence which makes a poet a more feeling individual than those around him. Nair's anguished awareness cements the problem:

words rearranged by tired fingers form images of some other life, not this. lens too close on face we see but warts. time to move, edge the failing heart to one side, substitute with confidence one filter to absorb the colours in which the evening sky paints itself. to record forever the soft fluffy clouds before the raging storm: we are awake and can hear our heart-beats unsteady in the rising wind. survival beats honesty anyday.

("The Interior Landscape of the Heart")

Issues associated with "survival" constitute fundamental thematic importance in Singapore poetry. This, of course, is not surprising when we note the precarious position of an island trying hard to remain intact despite the stormy waters. Allied to the question of survival are quesions pertaining to cultural heritage, individual consciousness and planning for the future. These concerns are variously to be found in the poems of Goh Poh Seng (a poet of Thumboo's generation, now somewhat displaced), Robert Yeo and Arthur Yap. But these themes are difficult to handle and frequently result in mere verbosity, particularly when the poets adopt a cynical stance. Occasionally, however, success is achieved by the transposing of emotion into statement, as in Arthur Yap:

so what if this is your grandfather's house his ghost doesn't live here anymore your family past is superannuated grime which increases with time otherwise nothing adds or subtracts the bricks and tiles until re-development which will greatly change this house-that-was dozens like it along the street the next and the next as well ("Old House at Ang Siang Hill")

Here the poet's reaction to the demolition of old buildings in order that new ones can be put up finds an articulate expression in the awry directness of tone.

Verbosity is a common fault with the lesser Singapore poets and sometimes even with those who ought to know better. It is telling that almost all the poetry written in English in Singapore, takes as its form free verse. What happens, however, is that free verse often becomes merely the substitute of loose verse. One wonders whether this insistence on writing without any of the traditional constraints of metre and rhyme is symptomatic of the Singapore poet's need to rescue himself from the limitations which the smallness of the island imposes on him. Verbosity coupled with superfluity becomes the carrier of the kind of poetry which disappoints because it fails to enhance the reader's understanding or involvement. Take a random example:

i write not for the cemetery nor for the gravestones; i write for the sitting rooms and coffeehouses where lips will sugar and salt the life between cups and dishes of dialogue, feeding life with some smiles.

read on if you have hours to smile with words; poetry best served to those with a taste of life's wine, sipping or drinking it after the whims and woes are sung.

words bid welcome; let words bind our hearts and joys vintage our mind, joys distilled from words may not define; but we must dissect joy or sorrow abstract when our spirit seeks sustenance in our hearts?

The writer could have profited greatly by exercising more discipline of language rather than allowing what little energy the better lines of the verse possess to be dissipated by extreme looseness of diction. While the desire to encourage the writing of poetry is well-intentioned, it must, nevertheless, be borne in mind that poetry too-easily written is also poetry too-easily forgotten—and therefore not poetry at all. Diluted sentiments and obvious moralisms constitute a good portion of verse written by aspiring Singapore poets. The cure, of course, lies in greater stress on control and maturity of thought and feeling.

Admonitions aside, it is appropriate to conclude this brief discussion on a more judicious note. In spite of the shortcomings which the fastidious critic will discover in much of Singapore poetry, the better and more representative practitioners of the art have been able to give powerful utterance to issues which provoke not only them but mankind in general. With the

experience of the older poets to benefit them, the newer crop of Singapore poets are better equipped to develop the idiom further by drawing upon the literary tradition, no matter how young, which poets like Edwin Thumboo have brought into being. Two of the more talented among the many new voices in Singapore poetry belong to Chung Yee Chong and Sng Boh Khim. Both Yee Chong and Boh Khim show a firm handling of theme and subject and demonstrate the potential which, if fully tapped, could provide the basis for a resolute and compulsive poetry. Yee Chong writes forcefully of lessons derived from assimilated experiences:

birthdays & X'mas are for children, we need no seasonal reminders of time's tyranny complacent in each our own right we harden to life's endless chagrin until the little card arrives bearing so much goodwill:

("Seasonal Reminders")

And Boh Khim can speak of pain and suffering with a gentle yet wry, irony and humour:

What mattered afterwards, She said, was that he was dead And she still lived. In death, she remembered His admonitions, the gay life She had seemed such poor reward ("Why not all dead!—better still.") Not facile tears but hard-hearted Fate who plucked the virtuous In their youth was her comforter. Thirteen stitches sealed the hole In her knee; her heart, she knew, Would never mend.

("Accident")

Mastery of a language foreign to one's culture and heritage comes only through a long

process of struggle and experimentation. But when success is achieved, it is more durable because it has undergone the rigours of diligent study and careful application. Poetry in Singapore is now on the brink of achieving full maturity. In a society harassed by survivalpolitics and the pressures of rapid socioeconomic adjustments, poets have, perhaps, a special role to play. In bringing to bear their individual, sensitive, responses and reflections to the milieu in which they write, the Singapore poets continue to contribute markedly to the growth of a unique national identity. In the midst of the loud noises made by the ceaseless flow of traffic, the endless piling, the mingling of diverse chatters, the bargaining in shoppingcentres and the eating at foodstalls, the words of the poet ring out-insistent and mellow in their exquisite consummation:

A city is the people's heart, Beautiful, ugly, depending on the way it A City smiles the way its people smile. When you spit, that is the city too. A City is for people, for living, For walking between shadows of tall buildings That leave some room, for living. And though we rush to work, appointments, To many other ends, there must be time to pause. Loosen the grip of each working day, To make amends, to hear the inner self And keep our spirits solvent. A City should be the reception we give ourselves, What we prepare for our posterity.

The City is what we make it, You and I. We are the City, For better or for worse. ("The Way Ahead"—Thumboo) KIRPAL SINGH

Note: Since this article was written, a new anthology of poetry from Singapore and Malaysia has been published: The Second Tongue, edited by Edwin Thumboo (Heinemann Educational Books Asia Ltd., 1976).

Australian News Sources in South-East Asia

International news agencies are the least visible, but single most important source of foreign news for the Australian public. Most newspapers subscribe to Australian Associated Press (AAP), which both collects and distributes domestic news and receives and distributes foreign news. Four international agencies—Associated Press (AP), United Press International (UPI), Agence France Press (AFP), and Reuters—are the principal suppliers. The first two are American owned and based, while Reuters is principally British, but with AAP itself owning a minority share.

All four agencies have staff in each Southeast Asian capital, except Indochina and Brunei, and usually have some system of part-time reporters or informers in outlying regions. They all have highly sophisticated communications systems and are able to transmit news across the world in seconds. Agencies serve a large number of diverse clients with varying needs and differing political persuasions, and so usually avoid opinion pieces and concentrate on accurate coverage of specific events. They compete on grounds of reliability and speed. The agencies provide an indispensable backbone for coverage of Southeast Asia, by ensuring that fast and usually reliable accounts of major events are available to the Australian news media, and providing a continuing flow of news from most countries in the region. But they do not commonly provide analytical or depth reporting. Nor are they oriented toward a specifically Australian audience, and so may not pursue stories of special interest to Australia, e.g. the events on Timor, or Australian relations with Southeast Asian countries, and are not oriented toward the Australian public's knowledge or attitudes on an issue.

For these reasons, as well as to get independent, first-hand reporting, special correspondents, employed by a single newspaper or group of newspapers, are often the most strategic source of news. They cannot hope to match the agencies in volume but they can better meet the demands of a particular newspaper. Whereas a newspaper typically uses only 10% of the agency copy that comes into its office every day, it probably uses nearly all of its own correspondent's copy.

Australia has the second highest degree of concentration of press ownership in the Western world with three groups controlling the whole metropolitan daily press. The largest, The Herald and Weekly Times, has at least one daily paper in all State capitals except Sydney, and accounts for 53% of national daily circulation. The Murdoch group, with 24% of national daily circulation has four city dailies, including the only national, The Australian. The Fairfax group, 23% of circulation, includes those most generally recognised as quality papers — The Age, Sydney Morning Herald, and Financial Review.

Two of these groups have a single Southeast Asia correspondent. The Herald has Bruce Wilson, whose copy is available to Herald papers in all States. The Age has Michael Richardson, whose copy is available to the Sydney Morning Herald, and who sometimes writes for the Financial Review and National Times. Both are based in Singapore and cover a huge area from Burma and Vietnam to Indonesia and the Philippines—ten countries with a total population of 300 million.

The Murdoch group has no Southeast Asia correspondent. One would expect a national newspaper, like The Australian, to have a strong foreign news coverage. In fact it relies primarily on UPI wire service (it does not use AAP), on its bureaux in London and the United States, and on using syndicated material from British and American newspapers (most commonly the Daily Telegraph but also The Guardian, Washington Post and Los Angeles Times). This highly economic way of gathering foreign news is least satisfactory for Southeast Asia, where Australia has more interest than does Britain or the U.S.A. A less obvious disadvantage of not having foreign correspondents is that no personal link between a paper and a region is forged, arousing the interest and knowledge of the home staff, especially sub-editors. So even when copy is available from the wire service or overseas papers, the Australian staff does not realise the importance or ramifications of a story. The result is a sparse and sporadic coverage of Southeast Asia. The Australian averages just over twenty items of foreign news, excluding sport, every day. But only one, on average, is from Southeast Asia: and The Australian often has no items for several successive days from the region.

Marshal McLuhan saw the dominance of the electronic media as ushering in a global village but television presents the most intractable problems in the transmission of highquality foreign news. The first problem is brevity. An entire half-hour news service contains less words than are found on the front page of a quality newspaper. TV news covers fewer stories in much less detail than newspapers. There is an apocryphal but widely told story of an American TV reporter who, when leaving for Asia, asked the New York producer what sort of stories he should aim for. The reply was: "Oh, a minute ten, or a minute twenty." Brevity greatly strains TV's capacity to present a complex or unfamiliar story in depth.

TV news places priority on filmed stories, rather than simply items read in the studio without any visual support. Stories without film are less likely to be selected unless they are of major importance. But getting film quickly from any foreign countries, and particularly Southeast Asia, imposes severe logistic and economic problems. Firstly, there must be a correspondent and cameraman on the spot ready to film. Secondly, TV values speed even more than do newspapers. The film must be either air-freighted (which means it is often a day late) or satellited (which is very expensive, and not possible from some Asian countries).

Australian commercial TV has given in to these problems with little struggle. None of them has a permanent crew in Southeast Asia. Apart from rare trips from Australia, they depend on overseas film. The main source of syndicated news film used in Australia is Visnews, a company part owned by Reuters. It is primarily British based and has very little presence in Asia. If it does get news film in Asia, it is sent to Hong Kong, then to London, and then back to Australia — a route which hardly promises to satisfy television's desire for speed. In short Visnews is a very slender

base to serve as Australian commercial television's primary source of Asian news.

The ABC is the most generously staffed Australian news organization in Asia. It has correspondents in Delhi, Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur, Singapore, Jakarta, Peking and Tokyo. There is, however, only one full-time cameraman for the whole of Asia, which means most correspondents, most of the time, do radio work. Each correspondent is available to any one of about twenty different programs—TV or radio, news or current affairs, in Australia or for Radio Australia. This profusion may create problems for the correspondent and also for the interested public, because—apart from the short Sunday programme 'Report from Asia' -there is no regular outlet where Asian events will always be analysed. The ABC has cut back its staff in recent years. It dropped a correspondent and one cameraman from Singapore and closed the Hong Kong office. Given the current climate in Australia, they will have to fight a holding action to retain what they now have, let alone take any moves to expand their Asian service.

ROD TIFFEN.

A Literary Journal— 'Tenggara'

Since 1967 there have been seven issues of Tenggara, a literary journal run—for the first six issues—from the University of Malaya, and jointly edited by Professor Lloyd Fernando (Dept. of English), Ismail Hussein, A. Bakar Hamid (both Dept. of Malay Studies) and Wong Phui Nam. There have also been two supplements: Wong Phui Nam's poetic sequence How the Hills are Distant, and Three South East Asian Plays. (These are still available, as are all back issues of Tenggara). With the seventh issue, 1975 (published 1976), a reorganization has taken place: towards, among other things, high-profiling the journal's independence; its being something that is not to be associated with any one university department or any one university in the region. This is more visible in the composition of its joint editorship: A. Bakar Hamid and Mohd. Taib Osman (Department of Malay Studies, University of Malaya), Mohd. Hj Salleh (Institute of Malay Language, Literature and Culture, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia), Baha Zainal (Dewan Bahasa & Pustaka), and L. Fernando (Dept. of English, University of Malaya).

It now costs about twice as much to buy a copy (M\$5.00, Asia & Africa; M\$7.00, other countries), but fortunately the way it looks and handles has suffered no change. It is an attractively produced journal, with a beautiful simplicity in the design of its format. Especially pleasing to the eye—and tempting to the pencil poised to comment or exclaim marginally—is the way the body of text is set within a generous frame of marginal space.

There is also a beautiful simplicity in its basic rationale, which justifies its existence in an age proliferating with journals. Now, after seven issues, one can certainly say that it was high time something like it came along when it first did. For clearly, in the words of a Tenggara handout, "the best works by modern Southeast Asian writers (as well as the classical and traditional literature) in Malay, Chinese, Tamil, English, Thai, Vietnamese, Tagalog and many other languages deserve to be brought regularly before a serious Southeast Asian and international audience". Why did no one think of this, or act on it, earlier? Of course this is being wise after the event, but the question points up not just the foresight but also the courage of Tenggara's editors' conviction, their belief in the purpose which Tenggara can serve as "a meeting point for writers in the region". And more than that: if at the moment there is no great sustaining awareness of Southeast Asian literature and culture, that is all the more reason for Tenggara to persist stubbornly in creating this awareness.

Initially *Tenggara* decided to confine its concern to original unpublished work. But starting with the second issue, its scope has broadened to take in work worth rescuing from the relative limbo of ephemeral or limited-circulation publications. For the same reason, and as part of the workable pragmatic simplicity of *Tenggara*'s conception, work not in English is presented in English translation, English being increasingly on a global scale spoken, written or read as a second-language

and thus capable of reaching a readership wider than any particular language community in the region. This aspect of editorial policy is a recognition of a fact of life, of linguistic realism. Malay/Indonesian items, however, are presented in the original language and in English facing each other. This exceptional parallel-texts practice is not entirely arbitrary; it is the other aspect of the journal's realism of compromise, its 'modus operandi' as well as its 'modus vivendi'. Tenggara is after all a Malaysian publication, and the Malay/Indonesian language is the most extensively understood language here. Besides, Malaysian readers not well-versed in the language and foreigners interested in it have here an excellent opportunity for learning it through comparison; for the bilingually proficient there is material for studying problems of translation.

Unlike most academic literary journals, Tenggara is seriously committed to publishing poems, stories and drama. Essays in interpretation, criticism or cultural commentary, and check-lists and bibliographies are by no means discouraged and have not been absent, but so far the emphasis has been creative rather than critical, at least in terms of space allotted, although Tenggara 7 does carry a long critical piece on 'Tradition and Innovation in Contemporary Malay-Indonesian Poetry' by Mohd. Hj. Salleh (pp. 36-83). The creative orientation is rightly the one to persevere with for some time, since some easy familiarity with the first has to be developed before the second can make any concrete impact on readers.

In physical design, then, and in conception, *Tenggara* can be highly rated. What of actual achievement? Inevitably some reservations will be registered; no doubt readers will question the merit of this or that item published. The passage in Usman Awang's 'Chahaya', Tenggara 1 (p. 37):

'Tomorrow shall be a lovely day always there is tomorrow a lovely day wherever the days meander'

communicates a lovely sense of sudden lyrical liberation (although an Yvor Winters type of critic may say there's nothing but facile evocation). But because there are lines which verge on the easy rhetoric of optimism or 'pep-talk', one cannot be sure whether the

verse tableau as a whole succeeds in its pitting of the idealism of hope and faith against the anguished cry of personal loss. F. Sional Jose's 'The Heirs' (also in *Tenggara 1*), which spans three generations, is more an outline of a novel than a short story in its own right. The stories of Keris Mas (in *Tengarra* 1, 2 & 4) certainly afford pleasure in the reading; there is satirical comment on aspects of the Malaysian scene, the result of a clear-eyed assessment; but is there not also some obtrusive element of social or political didacticism?

And what are the translations like? Certainly they seem able and professional; but the question may be raised whether they are also more than just readable and competent: whether they are—if, that is, they should be works of art like their originals. At any rate a translation should in some sense, though not exactly in the same way, be as good, or as worthy or-at the very least-as 'like' its original in impact and flavour as the nature of the target language permits. This C. S. Kessler, for instance, realizes; he tells us, referring to his translation of 'Pahlawan Lembu' ('The Bull-Ring Champion', Tenggara 6, p. 4), that he has resisted substituting a high literary elegance for the directness of peasant dialogue and the colloquial narrative style". But why at all should such a thought have to be resisted? The resistance, anyway, cannot have been very strenuous; the opening paragraph contains a sentence as nerveless and stiff as this: "Pride, lofty as the summit of Kinabalu, swelled up in his breast, leaving him speechless, while over his face spread the glow of unaccustomed self-satisfaction". If this isn't self-consciously literary and formal in syntax and diction, what is? From the translators of 'Sekapur Sirih Segaluk Air' ('A Quid of Sirih, A Bowl of Water', Tenggara 6, p. 26) comes this sentence: "The heartiness of his children pleased him"; which tells us, in the manner of a third-person reporter, what it is about his children that pleases the character concerned. whereas in the original the telling is so accented that we experience with the character what he delightedly becomes aware of.

Still, all carping done, *Tenggara* has shown a happy flair for enterprise and discrimination. The late Rama Subbiah's translations from classical Tamil poetry (*Tenggara* 1, 4, 5) are

notable for their unpretentiousness of idiom, form and clarity of phrase. Pretam Kaur's "Gone with the Peacocks" (Tenggara 2) is within its own terms a completely successful expression of a younger generation's disenchantment with an older generation's motherland fixation: "Father, I had no goose-pimples of patriotism as I stood on that plot of soil that was yours" (p. 16). Siew Yue Killingley's "Everything's Arranged" (Tenggara 1) is a fine piece that takes an ironic, objective look at the tradition of arranged marriages. Contemporary Indonesian poet W. S. Rendra's 'Swan Song' (Tenggara 3) presents the plight of an aging prostitute with a dramatic realism of focus that stays clear of both pornography and sentimental pity (although perhaps the religious turn at the end does not quite escape sentimental wish-fulfilment; and the last six lines on page 9 may be over-dramatically stark in the contrast that points moral accusation at cossetted society). Not in the same class but still straight, hard-hitting social protest, Rendra's "Prostitutes of Jakarta-Unite!" has vigour and bite in its exposure of hypocrisy and corruption in high places.

This quick sampling of Tenggara's bill of fare must end with the work of the Vietnamese poet Thepong, perhaps the most exciting of Tenggara's "Discoveries" (Tenggara 2, 3, 5). To judge from the translations the most remarkable quality of Thepong's poems is a certain epic largeness and universality, an epic anger, an openness of heart, and all this despite the contemporaneous topicality and the personal nature of their substance. No less remarkable is their felt concern, indignation and compassion, despite 'straight' expressions of attitude and thoughts; despite, individually considered, slack repetitions, or phrases that in terms of sketching can be likened to broad, causual strokes, or prose-like statements cut into lines of verse. Instead of dilution or thinness, there is, cumulatively, emotional integrity.

Tenggara, then, has on balance succeeded in maintaining a respectable standard in what gets published in its pages. At the same time it tries not to be high-browishly stuffy; now and then it is hospitable to spirited fun, to light verse—like that of Omar M. Nor, for instance (Tenggara 2).

OOI BOO ENG

REVIEWS

Pramoedya Ananta Toer, *The Fugitive*, translated from the Indonesian by Harry Aveling, Writing in Asia Series, Heinemann Educational Books (Asia) Ltd., Hong Kong, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, 1975.

Pramoedya Ananta Toer, A Heap of Ashes, edited and translated by Harry Aveling, Asian and Pacific Writing 6, University of Queensland Press, 1975.

At the beginning of 1965, Pramoedya Ananta Toer was one of the most vociferous protagonists of the ideal of socialist realism in Indonesian art and literature. By the end of that year he, along with an officially-estimated 120,000 others, was facing indefinite detention as a political prisoner. His guilt, like that of most of his fellow detainees, lay in his association with an organization having connections with the Indonesian Communist Party, the alleged instigator of the coup of 30th September, 1965, which had as its unforseen outcome the demise of the Sukarno regime and the rise to power of Indonesia's "New Order".

The publication of a number of Pramoedya's most important works in English translation, at a time when the writer remains a political detainee in Indonesia, thus has considerable political significance. Despite the fact that A Heap of Ashes, the translator's collection of five stories published between 1951 and 1956, and The Fugitive, a novelette which appeared originally in 1950, are all works written prior to Pramoedya's socialist commitment, and in fact were in large part later repudiated by their author, they are all proscribed reading in present-day Indonesia. Moreover, in drawing the attention of an international audience to some of the anguish in the personality of the writer, and his deep and at times overwhelming humanitarian sensitivity, the translations cannot but serve to drive home the enormity of Pramoedva's detention.

The stories collected in the translations together represent the two aspects of Pramoedya's early writing. The first is that of historically-based novels and stories, set in the

turmoil which shook Indonesia in the 1940's. The Fugitive is a tale of Indonesian resistance to the Japanese forces which occupied Indonesia between 1942 and 1945, set in the few days prior to the Japanese capitulation and the Indonesian declaration of independence. Like the themes which Pramoedya develops in his novels of the revolution, the ensuing struggle against the re-imposition of Dutch control in Indonesia, The Fugitive has at its base a sense of the dehumanizing effect of war, the terror which leads to betrayal of kin for the sake of one's own survival, the hatred which drives one man to plunge a sword through another's head when the power relationship between them is suddenly reversed. The same underlying horror at the betrayal of one's humanity in the extremities of war, and the progressive destruction of those who do not live by the laws of war is also the subject of The Vanquished, one of the stories in the A Heap of Ashes collection. For the most part, though, the stories of A Heap of Ashes are first person narratives, that second aspect of Pramoedya's writing, which deals directly, and at times almost autobiographically, with his own experiences. The stories in the collection are so arranged as to present the writer's own review of experience, from childhood (Lonely Paradise) through to the questioning of the vocation of writer. (The Silent Centre of Life's Day).

It is in the latter area, the stories dealing directly with personal experience, that I believe the translations will have most to offer an audience outside the specialist group of students of Indonesia. Unfamiliarity with the cultural and historical background to The Fugitive, for example, is likely to impede a positive response to the book. For unless the reader is well-versed in the historical context and can read the story in the Javanese terms proposed by the translator in his introduction, recognizing the parallels in structure and characterization with the traditional shadow puppet theatre, the story is likely to appear laboured and obscure. Events proceed largely through long passages of dialogue, in which characters are given to the following type of observation, almost conventional style in modern Indonesian writing, but unlikely to commend itself to the non-specialist audience:

"Perhaps. Man is never free. I know that. He is free of one obligation because he has other obligations. Freedom is only a temporary absence of obligations. What do you think?" (pp. 48-49)

Thus, while the situations which Pramoedya is dealing with are of high emotional intensity, for the reader outside the cultural matrix of the story, at least, that intensity remains in the situation, not in the writing.

There are no such impediments, however, in the way of the reader's response to stories like Lonely Paradise and No Night Market. For when he is evoking a deep-seated emotional experience. Pramoedva succeeds in leading the reader into his cultural environment, providing the guidelines needed for a response to the personal situation as well as its broader cultural and historical context. Lonely Paradise deals with the child's growing perception of his environment, an experience which in Pramoedya's terms is overlaid with a painful sense of disintegration. The breaking of the primary bonds is a loss of wholeness of experience; the accumulation of further experience continues to be a destruction of that primary wholeness. The reader does not need to be informed of the high importance placed on the integrated whole in Javanese culture, nor of Pramoedya's own disturbed family background. Both are there, creatively transmuted in the writing:

"I've come now, haven't I?" he said lovingly. "Come on, go to sleep now. Go to sleep."

He sang slowly. His voice was deep, smooth and rhythmical. Then I don't remember what happened. Except that when I woke, he was asleep beside me. His strong hands were around me and I felt warm and secure. (p. 19)

(The English title given this story is unfortunate, I think. The Indonesian words of the title mean literally "That which has been Lost", quite without the sentimentality lurking dangerously close to "Lonely Paradise").

No Night Market takes this sense of disintegration and loss a step further. It is Pramoedya's recording of the experience of the death of his father, the disintegration of the family which surrounds it, and the disintegration of a society which has lost its sense of community.

The pain and disillusionment grow; the alienation turns inward. In the last story of the collection, *The Silent Centre of Life's Day*, written ten years before his imprisonment, Pramoedya wrote:

Hell. There was so much to write about in Jakarta but most writers were busy with themselves, their tiny thoughts and feelings. So am I. (p. 163)

Perhaps his subsequent commitment to socialist realism was an attempt to do something about it.

KEITH FOULCHER

Lee Kok Liang, *The Mutes in the Sun*, Heinemann Educational Books (Asia) Ltd., 1964, republished 1974, 182 pp.

About his own life Lee Kok Liang is extremely reticent. The biographical note in *The Mutes in the Sun* merely says that he

"lives on the island of Penang, Malaysia, where his family has been domiciled for four generations. He is educated in Chinese and English, was engaged in politics, and his writing has been published in various little magazines and anthologies".

In Bunga Mas, an anthology of contemporary Malaysian literature, the corresponding section gives the following details:

"b. 1927 in Alor Star; educated at Melbourne University and qualified at the Inns of Court, London; a city and state councillor in the island of Penang."

Penang, of course, is the home of the Hokkien Chinese, the predominant dialect group, and their progeny, the Babas. Unlike their counterparts in the former sister colonies, Singapore and Malacca, the Penang Babas retain much more of their Chinese heritage and zest, their hotchpotch patois having more Hokkien imprecations, their temples more devotees.

The context helps in understanding Kok Liang's scope and milieu. Return to Malaya, aptly subtitled An Essay when it first appeared in Encounter, is an interesting pastiche of people, place and patois. Urchins playing cards under the filtering haze of street lamps, the itinerant hawker crying out his ware, accompanied by a boy assistant clacking a wooden clapper, wealthy businessmen colourless in their white drill shorts and trousers but distinguishable by their sex-status symbols—young mistresses and dark powerful automo-

biles—cheroot-smoking nyonyas, sarong wrapped round body under the armpits—a Malay/ Thai influence—and sullen-eyed Malay Home Guard youths—these are the characters that throng the alleys and slums, foodstalls and bookshops, plantations, streams and canals of Kok Liang's Penang.

They seem to have been sketched with the swift deftness of the water-colourist, and with just that extra verve that vitalises what otherwise would appear bare stereotypes.

Perhaps only in the near reportage of Return to Malaya does Kok Liang use local colour principally to present the exotic, record the peculiar before they suffer the change of Development and Modernisation. In his short stories the characters are still rooted in Penang, to be sure, but they also break out of their confines. In Ami To Fu, Silly Q's aunt recalls the El Dorado of the Southern Seas, the Nanyang of the Chinese diaspora in Southeast Asia:

"It sounded so lovely so lovely the beginning of man promises of riches in far-off lands junk-stenching dung women with exposed breasts waving before little crying mouths riches coming in showers dig, dig for riches in far-off lands the junk rolls through waves of gold children in sarung-wombs money is modern modern money death is nothing sarung everything the junk rolls into womb of gold ami to fu the wavenight lashes the lightning-leaks the babyjets of seaspray modern is not modern can never be without gold sleep is nothing gold is everything wake up wake up the beginning of man wake up wake up."

It was the same strange lure that impelled her countrymen even to the goldfields of Southern California and South Australia in the 1850's.

Notwithstanding his politics, Kok Liang eschews the political stance in his writing. Social philosophy is implicit in the concern with the underprivileged, the handicapped and the simply unfortunate, the schlemiels of all races, their lives presented stark, poignant or fatuous, as in the title piece The Mutes in the Sun, Just A Girl, Five Fingers, and The Glittering Game.

The avoidance of sentimentality, of even some emotive, not necessarily political, com-

ment is underscored in a racy, casual, almost careless style. His is a style that belies a conscious and intelligent craftsmanship running through and giving a characteristic texture to the collection as a whole.

In the stories subsequent to this volume, beginning from It's All in a Dream¹ and When the Saints Go Marching² to Ibrahim Something³ and No So Long Ago But Still Around,⁴ one discerns an increasingly penetrating insight into the more complex mainsprings of character, an interest in more tortuous relationships and structure, a more serious attempt to master and control language, the last two stories having all the makings of a superb novel. In Ibrahim Something awareness of the potentialities of language is integrated with thought and action:

"The muscles of the mind I had exercised by committing everything to memory and poring over dictionaries, storing up words, phrases, grammatical rules, idioms, and playing with them as jewellers did over their tiny stones with a pair of tweezers. Everything I set my mind to convinced me that the world was controllable and if the world was not so, as once when the scrawny little master had mocked me in front of the parade ground, at least I was controllable, shrugging his tiny barbs off with a disdainful smile."

These latter stories are due to appear in Kok Liang's second collection of short stories together with some as yet unpublished works. They should establish his standing among all the short story writers in Malaysia, whether writing in English, Malay, Chinese or Tamil, beyond any dispute. Kok Liang is among the few who have attempted with any success to portray the linguistic and cultural diversity of Malaysia, who have something to say about the human condition, and who say it with more than passing interest.

EE TIANG HONG

¹ Tumasek, Singapore, April 1964.

² Tumasek, Singapore, September 1964.

³ Tenggara, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, 1967.

⁴ Westerly, University of Western Australia, September 1971.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

ABDUL HADI: b. 1946, Sumenap, Madura. Studied Gadjah Mada University (Yogyakarta) and University of Iowa. Author of Laut Belum Pasang (1971), Potret Panjang Pengunjung Pantai Sanur (1974) and Cermin (1975).

ADIBAH AMIN: Novelist, journalist, translator of Shahnon Ahmad No Harvest but a Thorn (O.U.P., Kuala Lumpur 1972).

BAHARUDDIN ZAINAL: b. 1939, Perak. Studied University of Malaya and University of Indonesia. Head, Research Branch, Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, Kuala Lumpur. Author of *Perempuan dan Bayangnya* (1974).

CHUNG YEE CHONG: Graduate of University of Singapore. Her poems are featured in *Five Takes* (University of Singapore Society, 1974).

DANARTO: b. 1940, Sragen, Java. Artist and author of *Godlob* (1975), shortly to appear in English translation as *Abracadabra* (HEB).

DARMANTO JT: b. 1942, Jakarta. Psychologist, lecturer (Universitas Diponegoro, Semarang), author of *Bangsat!* (1974) and *Sang Darmanto* (1975).

JENNIFER DRASKAU: Editor and translator, Taw and Other Thai Stories (1975). Spent several years in Thailand, as Tutor to the Royal Princesses and Woman's Editor of Bangkok Post.

EE TIANG HONG: b. 1933, Malacca. Now lectures in Education at the West Australian Secondary Teachers' College. Author of *I of the Many Faces* (1960), *Lines from Hawaii* (1973), and *Myths for a Wilderness* (1976).

KEITH FOULCHER: Holds Ph.D. in Indonesian Literature from Sydney University; currently lecturing at Salisbury College of Advanced Education, South Australia.

DOMNERN GARDEN: Translator, The Politician and Other Stories, by Khamsing Srinawk (1973).

SINAI C. HAMADA: Attorney-at-law, Baguio City. Highly regarded short story writer of the older generation. *Collected Short Stories* (1975).

KHAMSING SRINAWK: b. 1930, Northeast province, Thailand. Now lives on farm in Pak Chong Korah. Fah Baw Kan (2nd Ed., 1969); English translation The Politician (1973).

A. LATIFF MOHIDIN: Artist and poet. Kembara Malam (1974).

LEE GEOK LAN: Graduate of University of Malaya, now lives at Batang Melaka, Negri Sembilan.

LEE KOK LIANG: Lawyer, born and resides in Penang. The Mutes in the Sun (1964, reprinted 1974).

SHIRLEY LIM: Poet and short story writer (Twentytwo Malaysian Short Stories, ed. L. Fernando, 1968, includes a number of her stories); born Malacca, now lives and teaches in New York.

MUHAMMAD HAJI SALLEH: b. 1942, graduate of University of Malaya and University of Michigan. Dean, Institute for Malay Language, Literature and Culture, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur.

CHANDRAN NAIR: b. 1945, South India; graduate of University of Singapore in marine biology. Publisher's editor, author of *Once the Horseman and Other Poems* (1972) and *After the Hard Hours This Rain* (1975).

NGUYEN NGOC BICH: b. Hanoi 1937. Studied in Saigon and U.S.A. Editor and translator, A Thousand Years of Vietnamese Poetry (with Burton Raffel and W. S. Merwin, 1975).

NHA-TRANG CONG-HUYEN-TON-NU: Lecturer in Literature, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang.

SHAHNON AHMAD: Novelist, Sub-Dean, School of Humanities, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang. A number of this major author's works have been translated into English: No Harvest but a Thorn (1972), Srengenge and AL and Other Stories (forthcoming, HEB).

KIRPAL SINGH: Critic and poet. Graduate of University of Singapore, currently studying at the University of Adelaide.

SUTARDJI CALZOUM BACHRI: b. 1942, Riau. Author O (1973): his poems are translated into English, together with poems by Darmanto and Abdul Hadi in Arjuna in Meditation, Writers Workshop, Calcutta, 1976.

SUWANEE SUKANTHA: Painter, short story writer, lecturer in fine arts. 1971 SEATO Literature Prize for A Man Called Karn (novel, in Thai).

EDWIN THUMBOO: b. 1933, currently Associate Professor in English, University of Singapore. Author of *Rib of Earth* (1956) and *Gods Can Die* (1976); editor, Seven Poets from Malaysia and Singapore (1973) and The Second Tongue (1976), anthologies of Malaysian and Singapore poetry in English.

USMAN AWANG: b. 1929, Johore. Editor, Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, Kuala Lumpur. Poet, dramatist, short story writer. Prominent member of the "1950 Generation" of committed poets.

MICHAEL VICKERY: Lecturer in History, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang.

KYIGEN SHINGYI, MYAWADI U SA, LAYMAN U MIN, classical Burmese poets as was SHIN MAHA-RATHATHARA (1468-1530).

DUONG LAM (1845-1922), TO HUU (b. 1920), THAI LUAN, HOANG BAO VIET and TRAN YEN THAO (all born in the 1940's), Vietnamese poets.

ROBERT CROCK: Lecturer in Fine Arts, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang.

ROSEMARY MOKHTAR: Former AVA teacher in Malaysia, now married with two children and resident in Pahang.

OOI BOO ENG: Academic and poet. Lectures in English at University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur.

ROD TIFFEN: Research student, Monash University, currently attached to Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, University of Singapore.

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



a quarterly review of the arts in Western Australia

THEATRE

'Theatre Australia'-a national perspective

For the theatre-goer restricted to the south-western corner of Australia with the occasional foray into the outside world, the new monthly *Theatre Australia* is of particular value. It provides a perspective, a context. Instead of piecing the total scene together from inadequate snippets in the general press and travellers' tales, suddenly there is a panorama giving a bird's eye view—state by state, problem by problem. It is possible to assess which of our triumphs or disasters are unique to our situation and which of them are part of the larger Australian picture. There is a clear account of quantity and quality, reassuring in moments of despair that the grass must be greener elsewhere.

Best of all, of course, is the luxury of sufficient space to allow for intelligent argument, speculation and discussion without the spectre of chopped paragraphs replaced by advertising copy resulting in gibberish and frustrated critics, though the least successful of the articles betray the scrappy superficiality of the writer conditioned to fit into a spare corner. Most of the contributors, however, clearly relish their freedom not merely to expand, but develop distinct critical personalities.

Technically there are a few minor flaws. The covers are fairly unattractive. The rather drab, smudgy look is probably only partly the result of economy measures and more a defence mechanism against the danger of appearing glossy or glamorous. However the generally messy typography of the first two covers is replaced by a considerably crisper approach to colour and layout in the third.

The proof-reading leaves much to be desired. The text is sabotaged, not merely by literals such as 'forzen hamburgers' and prime minister 'Frazer', but there is a plethora of illiteracies—'ei' and 'ie' confused, possessive cases misused or ignored etc. The all over style and content of the magazine is clearly modelled on international patterns, which makes the sloppy editing especially inappropriate.

One might also wish that theatres or companies were more clearly identified. The average reader may be expected to know where the Old Tote or the Nimrod are to be found, but the newer theatres are often unknown.

Also, having in mind that the magazine ought to achieve international readership, parochial sign-posting aimed strictly at the local reader is short-sighted.

The final complaint concerns a stylistic affectation in the third issue, where pale photographs are printed beneath the text, creating visual irritation. This technique is fine for advertisements with subliminal messages to the unwary reader, but here it merely succeeds in upstaging a couple of particularly interesting articles—Collin O'Brien's on AC/DC and Richard Fotheringham's account of the Brisbane SGIO Theatre.

Apart from these minor irritations, the standard is astonishingly high. After the first issue one wondered if it could be maintained, and now, with the third in print (October/ November), there is no sign of deterioration, rather a growing confidence.

The range covered is enormously wide. Reviews from every state (except Tasmania, so far) take pride of place; interviews, playscripts, technical considerations, survey articles on educational and amateur theatre, with opera, ballet and some rather skimpy book reviews tucked away at the back.

Predictably, the most immediate appeal lies in the review section. The magazine is strong on comparisons, so that we have instances both of the same reviewer commenting on two or more productions, and also separate critics presenting parallel reviews without reference to each other. Katherine Brisbane, for example, specialises in comparisons of various kinds: she reviews the Perth production of A Handful of Friends with a backward view to the Adelaide production (whilst John Smythe precedes both with the Melbourne version), or she pinpoints what happened to Habeas Corpus when transferred from England to Australia; or she examines her responses to the revival of Man of La Mancha nine years after the original production.

Often a review will answer questions or clear up long-held doubts. How good was Oakley's Bedfellows, for example? One remembers arguments about its slick, ingroup appeal, and now reads how it failed to get the right response in Newcastle, with the "wrong" audience. One

wondered about the brilliant production of *Palach* at the University of Western Australia and sees Roger Pulvers in Canberra making precisely the same points as one had made about the Perth production, revealing that much of what looks like inspired production is in fact built into the play. Richard Fotheringham contributes a savage comment on the depoliticisation of *Savages* which made it acceptable to the Brisbane establishment—an aspect that did not have to be considered in the Perth student production.

One of the most striking aspects to emerge from a reading of this concentrated mass of material is the growing significance of the subcultures. Alan Seymour in a subdued, almost resigned piece entitled 'Languishing in London' notes the advance of fringe theatre to the status of alternative theatre, and links-the rise of the movement with the alienation of the traditional theatre-goer who cannot tune in to new attitudes and unfamiliar vocabularies.

Interestingly enough, among the magazine's contributors it seems to be the other way about — the more tradition-oriented reviewers responding to the challenge of the more bizarre experiments, whilst the experimenters are totally intolerant of the "other" world and hilariously blind to their own absurdities.

Thus Collin O'Brien, whilst questioning the outrageous self-indulgence of AC/DC, is willing to meet it half way, keeping a sense of perspective:

However I suppose we owe it to posterity to record how a play felt as a new experience, remembering that Pinter's *The Birthday Party* closed after one week and a tepid press, and that only Harold Hobson and Kenneth Tynan saw much of value in *Look Back in Anger*.

At the other end of the spectrum Nigel Triffitt, in a piece chronicling the rise and fall of *The Yellow Brick Road Show*, writes with a fine disregard of the realities of the world of a "geriatric country elite" who cancelled a tour of northern New South Wales:

Education department banning

followed. Police action threatened. . . and thousands of people talked over whether or not sixth form pupils should be exposed to the word 'shit', be presented with plays about masturbation, marriage break-down, racism, and horror of horrors, a ballerina who pooped in her pants.

The piece ends ingenuously with a vision of a long line of "Little Companies" continuing the good work interrupted by the folding of *The Yellow Brick Road Show:*

... touring right left and centre, both politically and geographically since we began. God hope they continue to do so. The future of the nation's theatre is in their hands ...

And may Dionysius have mercy upon us.

The magazine is in fact the point where the two cultures collide head-on, with the more traditional plays and attitudes represented by a fairly slim majority. Of the interviews (one of the weaker facets, so far), the most interesting is with Playwright Steve J. Spears (*The Elocution of Benjamin Franklin*), who is so totally fascinated with himself that he hardly needs an interviewer:

Benjamin was actually physically typed out in something like 10 to 14 days. First draft and rewrite. But I...for some reason I can identify with so much of that old transvestite masturbator fantasy man in me that I can identify in (sic) Robert O'Brien in Benjamin. It's just fantasy. Just looking at myself on stage. A lot of myself on stage.

But of course not all alternative playwriting is psychotherapy on so primitive a level. There is the more calculated exploitation of current fashions in transsexualism which rears its grotesque head in the October/November issue with a celebration of Reg Livermore. Not only does he bestride the cover, but is the subject of a gushy interview. ("How does this theatrical alchemist get it all together and wind up with

his finger firmly on the fluttering pulse of the present. 'I don't really know where it comes from.' he answers. What about the responsibility? Suddenly the impish face looks tired. 'Yes, the responsibility. It has to be mine there is nobody else . . . ".)

Ron Blair, who had contributed a perceptive article on decadence in the theatre apropos of the Cycle Sluts in an earlier issue, gives a nice, level-headed appraisal to the current Livermore show *Wonderwoman*, voicing all the reservations one had felt about the Perth season of the *Betty Blokk Buster Follies*.

Altogether, seeing playwrights as reviewers has its piquancy.

Ron Blair (also writing on *The Duchess of Malfi*), poised, well-informed, versatile. Jack Hibberd exhibitionist to the point where his clotted self-conscious display of word-power overshadows his argument, also insensitive to non-Australian frames of reference which is tricky as he reviews English plays. Alexander Buzo—intelligent and lucid on *A Doll's House*.

One of the most interesting features promises to be the inclusion of controversial issues, the magazine acting as a forum for discussion. Tom Markus threw down the gauntlet in an article called 'Subsidy: A case to Answer', which pointed out some of the dangers of featherbedding, and enumerating the self-destructive practices encouraged by generous subsidies. It is a balanced, intelligent view of an informed outsider, who knows about the realities of theatre (no I.A.C. approach, this), who is not obliged, however, to respect Australian sacred cows. (Dr Markus is an American theatre director and professor.) The subsequent issue brought howls of rage from a number of those concerned, the most intriguing aspect of which was the difference in response between a petulant David Williamson and a mildly reasonable Alexander Buzo. It is refreshing and stimulating to witness such battles and discussions of central issues, albeit at a 4-5000 km remove.

Behind-the-scenes material is also available in other forms. There is an evocative mosaic of Pram Factory activities by Lindzee Smith; a director's casebook (Richard Wherrett on

producing *Benjamin Franklin*), and news of the only regional theatre company in Australia—the recently-established Hunter Valley Theatre Company, whose telegraphic address is Shoestring, and who is bravely struggling to stay alive.

The inclusion of playscripts is in line with international practice, and one hopes will be continued. At best these are to be treasured as reference material, at worst they can warn us of disasters in store. So far *The Bees* by Jennifer Rankin is the more promising, whilst Michael Cove's *Family Lore* seems pretty dead on the page. Perhaps more thought ought to be given to the strictly literary qualities of a play for this kind of presentation.

Without detailing the more technical articles and their specialist appeal it will be clear that *Theatre Australia* is not merely stimulating and informative, but offers for the first time an opportunity for the playgoer or critic to have a sense of wholeness, a sense of contact with the thoughts and activities on the theatre scene throughout the country. In short it is one of the best things to have happened in the world of Australian Theatre this year.

Margot Luke

Theatre Australia, published by Theatre Publications Ltd, 7 President Place, New Lambton Heights, NSW 2305: editorial Board Bruce Knappett, Robert Page, Lucy Wagner.

MUSIC

the advantages of geographical isolation

The geographical isolation of Perth certainly has its advantages as far as music-lovers are concerned. I arrived here (for the second time) at the end of February this year, after having lived for most of the past decade in Cambridge, England. It's depressingly simple to make a musical comparison of the two cities. They are both university towns of approximately equal size, but Cambridge has no concert hall or full size theatre, no opera or ballet company, no symphony orchestra and a moneyless and moribund University Music Department. It does, of course, have King's College Choir, if you happen to like that sort of thing . . . The rationale which lies behind this bleak picture is: 'Why bother? it's only a 70-minute train journey to London, where you can hear absolutely anything and everybody." Such easy options are not open to Perth, and this has bred a spirit of musical self-reliance which I find very impressive. To have built up such an extensive and flourishing musical life in a relatively short time is an achievement which I hope this review does not underestimate.

My arrival coincided with the latter half of the Festival of Perth. Musically it was not a particularly distinguished year (there was only one concert in the entire final week). The 'special tribute to the American Revolution Bicentennial' promised by the brochure evidently didn't extend to the performance of any American music. I remember outstanding concerts by the John Alldis choir and the Frankl/Pauk/Kirshbaum trio, as well as a spectacular outdoor production (fireworks and all) of Purcell's *The Fairy Queen* in the New Fortune Theatre (an experiment well worth repeating).

But the major musical event of the Festival passed by almost unnoticed. This was the visit of American composer John Cage and pianist David Tudor to provide the music (most of it by themselves) for the Merce Cunningham Dance Company, an artistic collaboration which has lasted for over a quarter of a century. To invite one of the two most influential living composers to Perth and then proceed not to let anyone know about it might seem strange behaviour for any Festival, but this is indeed

what happened. I had heard rumours, but it wasn't until I actually arrived at the Concert Hall for the first performance and peered into the gloom of the pit that I finally ascertained he really was here. Sadly, no one had thought of asking him to give a concert or a lecture (and a lecture by Cage is always a happening). Definitely a case of keeping your highlight under a bushel. Since then the Festival has acquired a new Director (David Blenkinsop) and, hopefully, we can look forward to better things next time.

Taking a long term view the most significant musical event in Perth this year may well prove to have been the opening of the new University Music Department building. Nestling along one side of the Somerville Auditorium overlooking the Swan River estuary this imaginatively designed structure beautiful to look at and comfortable to work in. The auditorium, a flexible performing space whose acoustics and seating (for approximately 350) can be altered at will, has already become an invaluable venue for rehearsals, lectures, seminars and a series of Tuesday Lunchtime Concerts promoted by the newly formed Music Students Club. Other notable features include good practice facilities, lavishly equipped recording and electronic studios which are among the finest in Australia and a spacious and light-filled library containing 23 consoles for listening to records, radio and cassettes. A musical life is only as good as its practitioners and I anticipate that the extended opportunities provided by this new building will considerably enrich the musical life of Perth in years to come.

In other respects, too, the University Music Department has filled an important role this season by promoting a wide range of concerts which have gone a long way towards filling the often lamentable gaps left other bv organisations. The Thursday Lunchtime Concerts and the Music Society have ranged far and wide in their choice of artists and programmes. Renaissance and Baroque music were particularly well represented by the first two concerts of the recently formed University Collegium Musicum directed by David Tunley and by a performance of Bach's Musical

Offering arranged and introduced by John Exton — the very model of an intellectually and musically satisfying concert.

Visiting artists included the excellent Ensemble I from Vienna with a mixed bag of rarely heard chamber works, bassoonist George Zuckerman (somewhat hopefully described as "the Heifetz of the bassoon") and two concerts of Indonesian music played by the University Gamelan Ensemble trained and directed by Professor Bernard Suryabrata, who came from the Université Nationale in Jakarta as part of the Artist-in-Residence programme.

Other participants in this scheme, which was outstandingly successful this year, were pianist André Tchaikovsky (for the third time — a measure of his popularity with Perth audiences), cellist Rohan de Saram and tenor Gerald English (a return visit). André Tchaikovsky played the complete piano concertos of Mozart with the specially formed University Chamber Orchestra conducted by John Exton. The orchestral playing was subject to momentary fits of uncertain intonation and ensemble, and my stylistic nerves gave an occasional twinge at

the waywardness of some of Tchaikovsky's interpretations, but such misgivings were more than compensated for by the sheer pleasure of hearing all 23 concertos in chronological order. This was a daring piece of programme planning which paid off handsomely in the event, because it enabled one to appreciate, at first hand, Mozart's burgeoning originality and his increasing mastery of a musical form central to his output.

Completeness was also the order of the day in Rohan de Saram's six recitals. We heard the 6 Suites for unaccompanied cello by Bach and all the Piano Quartets of Mozart and Brahms as well as many duos and trios. For me this series of concerts was musically the most satisfying of the year and I shall long remember de Saram's breathtakingly delicate and expressive performance of Schubert's Arpeggione Sonata, his sheer technical wizardry and intense emotional involvement in Kodaly's Solo Sonata and, not least, his thoroughly engaging personality.

After the packed and enthusiastic houses for these two artists I was both surprised and



The University Gamelan Ensemble performing in the new University Music Department Auditorium

disappointed at the small audiences for Gerald English's series of 6 major song-cycles. Do Perth music-lovers not realise what a fine interpreter of (especially) French and English song he is (they already had a previous opportunity to find out), and what a wealth of wonderful music is to be found in the Song literature? The large audience for the 'Schubertiade' given by Elly Ameling and Jorg Demus (surely the highlight of the ABC's Recital Series) suggests otherwise, so this poor response remains inexplicable.

At the mention of the ABC my review must strike a more trenchantly critical note. This season the West Australian Symphony Orchestra (the ABC's regional orchestra, WASO for short) gave a series of 8 Subscription Concerts plus 2 Special Concerts at which a total of 35 works by 27 composers were played. I thought it might be illuminating to see what conspectus of musical history was provided by the choice of works performed, and the results, categorized according to the usual historical tags, are as follows: - Baroque 3, Classical 7, Romantic 14, early 20th century 9, contemporary 2. The concentration on late-Romantic and early twentieth century music is, in fact, even more pronounced than this list suggests; no less than 15 (just under half) of the works played were composed between 1880 and 1930, a period of 50 years. Since the standard orchestral repertoire covers at least the 276 years from 1700 to the present day it looks as if we are being offered a very thin slice of the cake indeed. This narrow view is doubly unfortunate because it is precisely the music of this period which the WASO is least equipped to perform. It is a relatively small orchestra with an especially reduced string section (11/8/6/5/4) and therefore utterly unsuited to the music of composers such as Wagner, Elgar, Bruckner and Richard Strauss which requires a huge and sonorous string tone from a large complement of players. Actually the orchestra made a valiant attempt at Strauss' flashy 'Ein Heldenleben', but the more rarefied reaches of Bruckner's 4th Symphony, the largest and final work of the season (and a bad choice as it turned out) defeated them almost completely. Now that the

tightening financial screw of the ABC has made it virtually impossible to augment the orchestra even for special occasions such as these, it would seem sensible to look elsewhere for a repertoire which it can more adequately perform. There is no lack of it in the Baroque, Classical and Contemporary periods which are, in the main, badly neglected.

The whole of music before 1770 was represented by a couple of Bach concertos and a stilted performance of Webern's orchestration of the 6-part Ricercar from the Musical Offering (an effective way of de-fusing one of twentiethcentury music's time-bombs). There was no American music in this bi-centenary year (no Ives, Varèse, Copland, Carter, Feldman-not even Measham's favourite, Samuel Barber). But the most glaring omission of all is undoubtedly that of contemporary music - even the two works which appear under this heading are an illusion since they were the Suite from the ballet Miracle in the Gorbals by Arthur Bliss (1944), an instantly forgettable concoction of neo-Romantic clichés, and Clive Douglas's 10minute Essay for Strings (1952), a piece which would have scarcely raised an eyebrow 80 years ago. This was also the only work by a living composer, and the only work by an Australian composer to be played, a shameful record for a national broadcasting corporation which surely has both a moral and artistic duty to support the work of its own composers.

criticisms could reasonably be These countered by saying that one can't include everything in a single season and, more dubiously, that the subscribers simply don't want to hear contemporary music (as I heard one say after Wanda Wilkomirska had given an impassioned account of the Berg Violin Concerto "Isn't she pretty - what a pity she didn't play something a bit nicer!"). But sweet reasonableness and a desire not to offend can be carried too far. Surely a season which found ample room for two empty vehicles of Romantic virtuosity (Moszkowski's Piano Concerto and Lalo's Symphonie Espagnol) and two last-gasp efforts at musical pseudo-modernism (by Poulenc and Bliss) could have included at least one new work which challenged the skill of the



Graham Wood, John Hind, John Exton and Rohan de Saram rehearsing in the Auditorium

players and the ears of the audience?

A moral tale. The conservatism of the WASO programmes reminds me very much of the Hallé Orchestra concerts I used to attend in Manchester as a schoolboy in the late 50's. These days their programmes are much more adventurous and my parents, who are subscribers and very average music lovers, are happily listening to Ligeti, Ives, Webern, Messiaen and Penderecki - not because they decided they wanted to hear this music but simply because it was offered to them, and as a result they discovered (somewhat to their surprise, I think) that there was much fascination, excitement and aural delight to be had from it. There seems no reason why a similar evolution could not take place in Perth.

Of course a more adventurous policy might indeed frighten away a few of the older subscribers, but they will surely be replaced by a new generation of listeners. Or will they? The programmes of the ABC's Youth Concerts (which consist largely of classical 'lollipops' plus the odd TV theme tune and orchestrated popsong to sugar the pill) offer not a shred of

evidence that a potentially highly receptive audience is being made aware of all the exciting things which are happening in music today. It's rather like reading Goldilocks to a group of tough teenagers, and then wondering why they aren't interested. The Melville Orchestra and the University Training Orchestra are also stuck firmly in the classical rut, despite the fact that there now exists a large repertoire of excellent new music especially written for amateur orchestras (by Australian composers Richard Meale, Peter Sculthorpe and Don Banks amongst many others). Similar developments have taken place in the field of opera (the names of Harrison Birtwistle, Mauricio Kagel and Gordon Crosse spring to mind) and are similarly ignored by the school performances of the West Australian Opera Company (to which I shall return later) in favour of the unrealities of Donizetti's 'Rita'. Can one imagine (except as a special case) an art gallery whose acquisitions stopped with the Impressionists, a library which stocked nothing more recent than D.H. Lawrence, a cinema which showed only

silent classics? Of course not — and yet the equivalent approach to concert programming strikes many people as quite acceptable. I say that it is not, and that this 'museum' mentality, which is seductive (because so safe) and yet ultimately counter-productive is the greatest danger threatening the concert life of Perth.

Some of the same strictures could be levelled at the Musica Viva series of 6 Subscription Concerts, which belied their title. After a good selection of contemporary works (Britten, Hugh Wood, Messiaen and David Bedford) stunningly performed by the John Alldis Choir in the first concert, we had to wait until the final item of the fifth concert before hearing another work by a living composer. This was Ligeti's enchanting and witty Chamber Concerto, immaculately played by the London Sinfonietta under David Atherton, in what he described to me as the most conservative concert of their entire world tour (J.C. Bach, Stravinsky, Haydn and Gerhard). Bad luck, Perth! Following the same trend the Parrenin Quartet played Boulez in Sydney, Milhaud, Enesco and Beethoven in Perth; the Sydney String Quartet (which has a large repertoire of Australian works) played Beethoven, Janacek and Ravel whilst the Kontarsky duo (for whom composers such as Stockhausen, Zimmermann, Pousseur and Ligeti have written works) were restricted to a 10-minute snippet of Boulez. Since this was the first year that Perth has presented a full Musica Viva season such timidity could charitably be assumed to be the result of not wanting to frighten away too many potential subscribers. On the other hand it does seem perverse to spend countless thousands of dollars on importing ensembles world-renowned for their performances of contemporary music and then set them to playing the old familiar classics once again. The standard these concerts was almost of uniformly high; perhaps we may just hope for a little more boldness of spirit next season?

It is in the field of opera that Perth is least well served. The West Australian Opera—Company's unaccountable commitment to Donizetti resulted in the production of no less than three of his operas — Don Pasquale, Rita

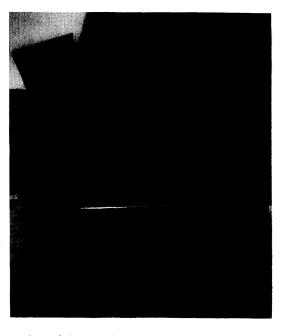
and L'Elisir d'Amore (The Love Potion), of which I saw the third. The twin stars of this production were really the designer and producer. Graham McClean brilliantly recreated a gay and sunlit Basque village square on the stage of the Concert Hall - an intriguing construction of opposing lines and planes rising through a series of intricately interlocking doors, stairways, windows and sloping roofs, topped off by a huge green tree and a slowly revolving windmill. John Milson matched this visual inventiveness in his handling of the chorus, which was treated as a collection of real individuals—an entire village in miniature. There were drunks, beggars, children, a bicycle-riding priest, black-shawled grandmothers flirtatious lovers, all busily pursuing their own particular bit of stage business. The same team was also responsible for the Gilbert and Sullivan Society's triumphantly successful musically far superior - 25th anniversary production of Iolanthe. In the Donizetti there was much pleasant singing to be heard, but noone really aspired to the vocal heights which alone can make this music acceptable. The Company had earlier redeemed itself somewhat with an interesting double-bill of Purcell's Dido and Aeneas and Menotti's The Medium, both of which were musically more satisfying and more convincingly performed. In March and April the vexed question of the W.A. Opera Company's Artistic Directorship was aired in a number of letters to the press. As far as choice of repertoire goes the problem still remains to be solved, since it shows about as much sense of direction Keystone Cops. Finding a more substantial repertoire shouldn't prove too difficult, since the Company has only staged one Mozart opera in its entire 9-year history.

Although my account of Perth's musical year makes no claims to completeness it does, I think, indicate something of the extent and variety of music-making which goes on here. Scarcely a week passes during which the music lover isn't tempted to relinquish his hi-fi set for the pleasures of live performance. I began by mentioning some of the musical advantages which Perth enjoys. But there are also disadvantages, and this review, instead of

merely indulging in unstinted praise (which would have been kinder, but less than truthful) -has attempted to point some of them out.

Exactly what music is performed in any given season is controlled by the few people who run musical life in Perth - the Music Department of the University and the ABC, the committees of the opera and ballet companies and of the Festival – and if we don't happen to be satisfied with what they decide we shall hear there is certainly nowhere to go for an alternative. Often - too often I would say policy is dictated by factors which are beyond the control of even these bodies-by the whims of visiting soloists and conductors and by the ABC and Musica Viva in Sydney. Looking towards the future it seems to me that the ultimate aim must be the establishment of greater autonomy for music in Perth and the control of it by a larger number of people.

Roger Smalley November 1976



a view of the new Music Department building at the University of Western Australia

WRITING

prospecting in the West -a review of recent writing

The Fremantle Arts Centre has initiated an interesting and ambitious publishing programme with Soundings, a selection of poetry chosen by Veronica Brady, and New Country, a companion volume of short stories chosen by Bruce Bennett. These two attractively produced books—excellently designed by Sue Grey-Smith—are intended to represent the current state of creative writing in Western Australia. What does one find? Do these specimens show many traces of gold?

Naturally enough, both editors enthusiastic about the work they have chosen to present-though they seem defensive about the general air of literary conservatism among their writers. Veronica Brady is eager to tell us of the special treat in store, "for these are voices not usually heard even in Australia, voices from Western Australia, voices with their own flavour, from a country of its own." Like much of Ms Brady's excited prose, this will not bear very close scrutiny. She later gets into an embarrassing muddle by saying that she has tried to preserve the "freshness" of the selection-"freshness" being, in her view, "the predominant flavour of Western Australia"-"by giving space as far as possible to hitherto unpublished poetry being written here today." As a result of her pursuit of "freshness", she fears that "established poets like Dorothy Hewett and Fay Zwicky may seem underrepresented." There are sound reasons why Hewett and Fay Zwicky are "established poets"—in the previous paragraph Ms Brady praises them extravagantly, claiming that they "offer an intellectual toughness, an emotional extremity as strong perhaps as any in the poetry of Lowell, Plath or Ted Hughes"and it seems self-defeating to represent the work of lesser poets more extensively.

However, I don't want to argue that this or that poet should have got more or less space. The editor hopes that "there is a personal quality about this anthology"—and perhaps there is. My point is simply that I'd have found it a more interesting and satisfying volume if the editor had consistently aimed at making it representative of the recent achievements of poets living in Perth or associated with Perth.

(As far as poetry is concerned, it seems that Perth is Western Australia.) Whatever its defects, Soundings is an enjoyable volume that has a considerable historical importance for Perth. It demonstrates, convincingly I think, that there is now in Perth a group of poets whose poetry is memorable—not because it is distinguished by any specific West Australian flavour, but because it is good poetry.

Until the early 1960s there were few poetsthere is never any shortage of poetasterswriting in Perth. Over the past fifteen years there have undoubtedly been real changes in the texture of living in Perth-a point Mr Bennett makes in his introduction to New Country—and, in many ways, it must be easier to be a creative writer in Perth now than it used to be. Increased governmental patronage of the arts, the activities of the Fellowship of Writers, the establishment of Westerly as a national quarterly, and, more recently still, the setting up of the Fremantle Arts Centre-these have contributed to making a more congenial environment for writers. Yet, finally, poets and their poetry are more significant than any of these factors in encouraging others to write. Poets have their heroes, as Peter Jeffery says in one of his poems, and local poets of stature are, in a way, "heroes" to the aspiring poet. It's not a matter of "schools" or "influences": rather, it's the stimulus to use one's own voice that comes from recognizing what others have accomplished in the same setting. From my own experience of Perth, I'm inclined to say that the quite remarkable quickening of poetic activity during the sixties and since owes much to the work and the presence of Randolph Stow and Dorothy Hewett in Perth.

In defending her meagre representation of Dorothy Hewett's poetry, Ms Brady remarks dismissively that "Dorothy Hewett unfortunately no longer lives here", as if that were a relevant consideration. She might more pertinently have noted that Dorothy Hewett has lived much of her life in Perth until recently, and has been (as the newspapers say) "active in literary circles". Like Stow, she has felt deeply involved in the place where she grew up, without ever being parochial or bemused by

local colour. Again like Stow, she has no illusions about the limitations of cultural life in the West, as her highly imaginative preface to Sandgropers makes plain. Along with Kenneth Mackenzie (who died over 20 years ago), she and Stow are the most talented poets to have come from Perth, and their work naturally has a special interest for West Australian readers, and for local poets in particular. It's disappointing, then, that Dorothy Hewett is "underrepresented", and that Randolph Stow does not appear at all.

Nevertheless, Soundings does give a good impression of what has been happening on the poetry scene in West Australia. Apart from the absence of Stow (which, I am told, is not the editor's fault), there are no glaring omissions. (I should have liked to have seen the work of lan Templeman included—he has an attractive lyric gift-but I assume that he excluded himself since he is responsible for the publication of the volume.) Of the 17 poets brought together here, two are in their early twenties, and nine are in their thirties or early forties, with the remaining six in their fifties or beyond. The point of this seemingly impertinent age analysis is to direct attention to the preponderance of youth, and in particular to the second group of poets, who have emerged over the past ten years or so. It is work of this group-in which Alan Alexander, Andrew Burke, William Grono, Nicholas Hasluck and Fay Zwicky stand outthat gives the volume such interest for me. These poets I have named, along with Dorothy Hewett and William Hart-Smith-recently come to Perth-seem to me to exemplify the strength of contemporary poetry in Perth, as represented in this book.

A reader of *Soundings* who is unfamiliar with the West Australian scene might well begin with Andrew Burke's playful yet firmly disciplined poetry. It's not the sort of poetry that appeals to all tastes, but at the very least it should dispel any illusions that West Australian poetry is a thing apart, or that one has to make allowances for it. Witty, exact, sharply observant, Andrew Burke's poetry contemplates life in a spirit of amused acceptance of the wonderful absurdity of all creation. He himself

is a part of this absurdity, a distinctive presence in the poetry yet completely free of feelings of self-importance. One of his 'Lake Monger Poems' illustrates his characteristic, ironic humour:

> as overture to lake monger the swans tune their bassoons

i roll a hash spade to dig amongst my (various) selves.

red beaks punctuate the lake

tail feathers point to a cloud: swans break water to breakfast.

self pity goes up in smoke.

Equally characteristic is the economy and restraint with which Andrew Burke uses words. The sequence of 'Lake Monger Poems' is always enjoyable, though there is a tendency to be satisfied with mere skittishness when the reader looks for something more sustaining.

The humour of William Grono's poetry has a bitter flavour (one is tempted to wonder if it is a West Australian flavour!), as in the sardonic imagery of 'An Affair':

On the wall by the door two cockroaches pause to touch, to whisper about Nijinsky.

The sequence of three poems from which this comes begins finely, but it struck me as uneven in quality. 'Poetic Justice' and 'The Critic' maintain the elegance and precision of phrasing which distinguish his work at its best. The

mocking exactness with which, in 'The Critic', he reproduces the tone of a literary critic is admirable—though it does leave the anxious reviewer uncomfortable:

How does one copy with crudity? I realized of course that reasoning was useless, yet I could not help but point out that understanding did not necessarily accompany experience; indeed one could say (I would say) that one could as it were achieve a greater a more viable understanding of life by discussing it in a spirit of rational disinterested—But

he would always interrupt: 'Ah, shit!' and would stagger off to get another bottle.

William Grono's poise and craftsmanship are obvious in the brief selection of his poetry in Soundings, but his command of personal feeling—which is, for me, one of his most distinguishing traits—is not so apparent. While I was pondering this review, a friend remarked that none of his poems in Soundings was as good as his earlier poem, 'Absence', which was one of the highlights of Dorothy Hewett's anthology, Sandgropers. I can only agree, and urge the interested reader to look it up. His output has been small, and his range has not been wide, but he is a poet of integrity whose reputation could only be enhanced by the publication of a collection of his poems.

Another poet whose work one looks forward to seeing collected is Nicholas Hasluck, whose sequence of thirteen poems, 'Anchor', is the longest contribution to the anthology. A meditation, in which the flow of memory leads to reflection on the mystery of existence, it is an ambitious and not wholly successful work, which made me think of Slessor's "Five Bells". The mention of Slessor makes one aware of

what Nicholas Hasluck has not yet managed to achieve: the dramatic projection of the self in the poetry. Though remembered details are sensitively and firmly evoked, the meditating self lacks clear definition, as if the thinking, feeling man were muffled in the effort of reaching after significance. Individual passages make a stronger impact than the poem as a whole. There is, for instance, the resonant, beautifully controlled use of the metaphor of space travel in section V; and the pleasing directness of

In a library once, on a dusty table-top, I wrote, Anchor . . . the sun swam through tinted windows, my mind rocked lightly on the surface of another world.

in which the imagery is all the more effective because it is unobtrusive.

These three poets are already accomplished, and give the impression of considerable potential. The same could be said of Fay Zwicky, whose poetry reveals a rich and complex sensibility, ready to explore the darker feelings in the self. And of Alan Alexander, an Irishman by birth, who has treated a diversity of subjects with energy and imaginative sympathy. Other poets, with rather less to their credit, but showing promise of interesting development, are Lee Knowles and W.S. Warnock. In general, the anthology raises one's expectations of poetry from the West in the future, and leaves one with the pleasant feeling of having made some sort of discovery.

By contrast, New Country is a disappointing collection of stories, which gives a very different impression of the literary scene in the West. It is restricted to the work of six writers whom the editor considers to be "leading practitioners of the short story form in Western Australia in the mid 1970s." Half the volume is taken up with the work of Peter Cowan and T.A.G. Hungerford—the only two writers included who have established reputations as prose writers. Of the remaining four contributors, three—Fay Zwicky, Elizabeth Jolley, and Hal Colebatch—

appear as poets in *Soundings*. And—to complete this recital of the facts of the case—three of the writers are over sixty and only one is under forty. One is led to ask: where are the younger writers? How can one account for this apparent discrepancy between what is happening in poetry and what is happening (or not happening) in prose?

Part of the explanation of the discrepancy may lie in the different attitudes of the editors. Ms Brady has gathered together a varied company in a spirit of enthusiastic encouragement, including, for instance, two poems by Shane McCauley, who might be described (without offence, I hope) as an undergraduate poet. Mr Bennett stresses that he is introducing "recent and mainly unpublished work" by "leading practitioners". I'm not sure what it takes to become a "leading practitioner" in Western Australia-Peter Cowan is the only contributor who has published a volume of short stories, and the only one who has preferred the short story to other forms of imaginative expression — but presumably Mr Bennett has ignored those who have published only one or two stories, and those who haven't published any in the last few years. I doubt whether such an exclusive approach was really appropriate in this instance. It is hard to distinguish some of Mr Bennett's "leading practitioners" from those who only occasionally try their hand at a short story, and a larger number of contributors might have produced a more varied and more lively volume.

However, New Country does confirm the impression given by Dorothy Hewett's earlier anthology, Sandgropers, that there is a relative scarcity of interesting younger prose writers. It may, of course, be a slightly misleading impression. A prose writer tends to take longer to establish himself, simply by the very nature of the work he is doing. And the absence of any prose by Randolph Stow—who was astonishingly successful at a very early age — in both anthologies limits their representativeness. One can't help wondering if there are more promising younger prose writers who have been missed because of the terms in which the project has been conceived. In Sandgropers, for

instance, there's a short sketch, 'The Bus', which may well be from a longer work. It is written with a vitality and a sharp sense of the actual which makes one want to read more of the author, John Lewis. (I assume that he's a youngish writer, though there is no biographical note.) In neither volume, though, is there anything that miaht be regarded "experimental". Mr Bennett is ready to defend his writers against criticism on this score, and seems to imply that unwillingness experiment is a virtue. Of course, contemporary writing there is a great deal of empty modishness - and empty traditionalism, for that matter - but I think it could be said that some of the younger Australian short story writers like Peter Carey and Murray Bail are genuinely exploring the possibilities of the form. And I think it could be said also that in New Country the best stories are those in which Peter Cowan continues his series of experiments on the theme of the encounter of a man and a woman - though he is not, of course, experimental in the popular sense of the word.

My admiration of Peter Cowan's work goes back a long way, and probably no one will be surprised by my thinking that the rest of the writing in this collection doesn't compare with his. Of the four stories printed here, 'The Shaft' is one of his finest: thoroughly characteristic in its bareness of style, its emotional reticence, its reliance upon the commonplaces of ordinary speech, it gives us "much in little"—which V.S. Pritchett once suggested was the ideal of the short story. In this very brief story of a woman's return to the man, presumably her husband, after a violent episode in which she had been injured, the text consists largely of their laconic conversation, an exchange in which the flat, cliched language holds back rather than reveals what they feel. In the manner of a film-maker like Bergman, Peter Cowan notes visual details in such a way that they become images charged with emotional implications. The prose, for all its seeming drabness, has the concentrated energy of poetry: the reader is not allowed to relax and keep a comfortable distance from the painful, confused feelings which the characters cannot

themselves comprehend and articulate. 'Form in Wood' is not as well focussed, but it has a similar resonant quality. The danger of this kind of writing is that the detail, which is not interesting as description, will not carry the intended significance, and the reader will be bored or puzzled. Both these stories seem to me to clearly avoid that danger, and to create a quite haunting sense of the loneliness of those who are imprisoned within themselves.

The qualities of Tom Hungerford—a more traditional storyteller, with a vivid sense of place, especially the landscapes of his native Western Australia—are not well represented in this selection. Both 'The Talisman' and 'The Lady in the Box' are well-made stories, but I don't think they show him at his most distinctive. In 'O Moon of Mullamulla'—the longest story in the anthology—his responsiveness to the beauty of the land and his concern about the future come through the central character, but the story as a whole does not really succeed in giving dramatic interest to his concern.

Among the newer contributors Elizabeth Jolley stands out as being a writer whose voice is strong and individual. She expresses herself more fully in her prose than in her poetry, though the honest and unaffected style of her poetry in *Soundings* is pleasing. The short stories reveal a more original and creative personality, strongly attracted to what is at the one and same time absurd and pathetic. The best story here is 'The Shed', which is written in monologue form—a difficult form by nature of its looseness but one which appears to suit her. 'Uncle Bernard's Proposal', a deftly handled comic story, is thoroughly entertaining, and shows a talent for comic types.

Two of the three stories by Fay Zwicky appear to be introspective autobiographical pieces, and have a similar intensity and authenticity to her poetry; but the third — 'A Pain' — in which she ventures into Dimboola country, is disconcertingly inferior. The two stories by Iris Milutinovic seem rather old-fashioned and faded; while those of Hal Colebatch have a surface cleverness but little more than that.

As a collection, then, New Country does not strike me as being very impressive. If it is indeed representative of the work of prose writers, it suggests that at present it is in poetry rather than prose that the most creative work is being done. In the past, certainly, it was the prose writers-novelists, short story writers, essayists and historians - who dominated the Perth writing scene. Surprisingly, the editor of New Country sees the work he has gathered as indicating an all-important development in the local society. These stories, he suggests, are "opening up" what is "new country". The essence of his view appears to be that "the era of the idvII in Western Australia is over and that the tensions and anxieties of the wider world are an increasing part of our inheritance". Mr Bennett gives a new twist to what Dorothy Hewett calls "the West Australian's secret vision of himself and his country"—the vision of West Australia as a kind of Utopia protected by its isolation. He sees an end to the isolation, with West Australians having a "more developed awareness of the international scene"; and the implication seems to be that this is reflected in a richer literature. He sums up his argument in this way:

> Perhaps not too much can be claimed about Western Australian life from a selection of stories by six different and quite distinctive writers of short stories. Nevertheless they do, as a group, seem to signal a transition from the writing of an isolated, frontier state to one which is increasingly influenced by the problems of a wider world. The vast distances and open spaces, the orientation towards the sea which Dorothy Hewett noticed in Western Australian writing, are still apparent. But the "brutal innocence" which she found so "fatally corruptible" is now being touched by a wider and' deeper experience. Without those contraries of innocence and

experience, as William Blake so persuasively said, there can be no progression.

I don't find this persuasive, and I am puzzled how Mr Bennett arrived at this interpretation from a reading of the stories in the volume.

My main concern, however, is with the notion of literary development which Mr Bennett appears to hold. There is a degree of plausibility in his labelling earlier writing from West Australia as "the writing of an isolated frontier state", but isn't it misleading? All labels over-simplify, of course, but the juxtapositioning of "isolated" and "frontier" seems insidious. Would one be happy to label the writing of, say, Walter Murdoch, Kenneth Mackenzie, Paul and Alexandra Hasluck, Gavin Casey, Mary Durack, Peter Cowan, Dorothy Hewett, and Randolph Stow-to name just a few of the prose writers from twenty or more years ago - as "the writing of an isolated, frontier state"? I would want to question both the implied adverse critical judgment, and the assumption that such writers can meaningfully be discussed as an identifiable group.

What is fundamentally at issue, I think, is the notion of "West Australian writing" as distinct from "Australian writing". One would hesitate to talk about Victorian or New South Welsh literature, but the further one goes from Melbourne and Sydney the greater the inclination to think in terms of state identities. In West Australia the physical isolation and the smallness of the population do sustain a sense of separateness; and it is here, if anywhere, that one might expect to find regional differences in the local writing. The editors of these two anthologies assume that the major interest of the writing lies in what it tells about life in West Australia. In the poetry "you get the flavour of life in this western third of the continent"; in the prose "an understanding of significant pressures and strains within the private and communal lives of Western Australians". It is almost as if the editors feel themselves to be facing a foreign audience for whom the West has all the fascination of a new found land. But, one asks, is life in the West so

very different? Is it not a piece of the continent, a part of the main? Both the editors seem to me to be too inclined to see their contributors as reporters of West Australian realities rather than as imaginative individuals involved, as all serious writers must be, in creating their own sense of reality.

The conditions that make for a regional literature hardly exist in West Australia, but there are regional differences which must enter into the imagination of those who feel themselves to be part of the place, and affect their sense of what life is and can be. "Yet the place stays in the mind, and, in its own weird way, tugs at the imagination," remarks Dorothy Hewett (who has since moved to Sydney). To understand how the place "tugs at the imagination" one has to go to the work of the more sensitive writers; and I think that one does find similar preoccupations and affinities of feeling, though not the kind of shared commitment to a vision of life which would justify one's thinking of them as a clearly defined group or tradition.

The topic needs a fuller treatment than I can attempt here — and perhaps the appearance of these two anthologies will help to promote intelligent discussion. As local publications Soundings and New Country should certainly have the effect of making West Australians more aware and more appreciative of what is being written locally. At the same time I hope that they will not induce dreams of a separatist movement in Australian literature and calls for writers to "Write West Australian".

John Barnes

Soundings a selection of Western Australian poetry, edited by Veronica Brady; New Country a selection of Western Australian short stories, edited by Bruce Bennett. Both 136pp, \$3.50, paperback, published 1976 by Fremantle Arts Centre Press.

FREMANTLE ARTS CENTRE PRESS invites Western Australian writers to submit work for inclusion in the paperback series, 'West coast writing', presently being planned by the Press.

Each volume in the series will be devoted to the work of one writer.

The series, which will include both poetry and prose volumes, is intended primarily to give wider publication to Western Australian writers whose work has appeared in journals and anthologies but who have not yet had a collection of their work published.

The consultant editor for the prose titles in the series will consider submissions of both short stories and non-fiction articles, including published and unpublished work. Material submitted should be typewritten, and two copies of the work should be submitted.

The consultant editor for the poetry titles would like to see submissions totalling some 50 poems, including published and unpublished work. Material submitted should be typewritten, and two copies of the material should be submitted.

The closing date for submissions is March 11, 1977.

All material should be sent to the Manager, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1 Finnerty Street, Fremantle 6160 (telephone 355855).

ANCHOR and other poems by Nicholas Hasluck, the first volume in the series, will be published early November. FIVE ACRE VIRGIN and other stories by Elizabeth Jolley, the second volume in the series, will be published later this month.

Fremantle Arts Centre Press receives financial assistance from the Western Australian Literary Fund and is supported by the City of Fremantle.

VISUAL ARTS

the gallery scene and a retrospective

In the last issue, I wrote about the creative side of the Perth art scene — the painters, sculptors, print makers and crafts people, and the range and diversity of their work as seen in Perth over the past six or eight months.

Artists, however, do not function in isolation. They exist in symbiotic relationship with their society and their time, and need active support and encouragement from this society in the form of galleries to show their work, an efficient system of review and criticism, and an open-minded, informed and interested public. If this support is lacking, or fails to provide for the needs of the artist (just as if the artists are failing to produce art which is relevant to the audience), the art scene will be incomplete, and any sustained artistic maturity impossible.

In this article I want to consider the nature and extent of this support in the local artistic community.

Perth's art galleries, and their rather haphazard and uncertain development, are fairly representative of the local scene as a whole. And yet art gallery owners and administrators, by virtue of their position as intermediaries between artists and the public, play perhaps the most important role in shaping the art scene. In Perth as everywhere else, both artists and public are tied to their tastes, instincts and sense of responsibility.

The Western Australian Art Gallery, for instance, which is the State's main institutional gallery, seems to see its function basically as art historical and didactic. Consequently, through its choice of exhibitions it seeks to raise the general level of art education and in a vague way keep us up with what's happening in the eastern states and abroad. With exhibitions such as the Barlach/Kollwitz Sculpture, the Mayer collection of ceramics, the Genesis of a Gallery exhibition, and the Sculpture from Thailand, it seems to be doing this quite adequately.

This same kind of conservatism also is reflected in the State Gallery's buying policy. It seems to have neither the desire to buy contemporary experimental work which may be important, nor the financial muscle to purchase this same work once it has achieved

the necessary international recognition. Thus we get a safe but not particularly inspiring collection: no duds, but no masterpieces either.

The State Gallery's support of local art is rather more contentious. Whether through policy or simple lack of interest, it has offered very little direct support in the way of historical surveys, retrospectives or group shows. Only recently, with the *Ten Western Australian Artists* exhibition and the Guy Grey-Smith Retrospective, has it finally come out in favour of local art: ironically enough at a time when it has already been outstripped, in many areas, by the other institutional galleries which have stepped in to fill the gaps caused by its neglect.

The most active of these newer galleries is the Undercroft Gallery of the University of Western Australia. Although it takes travelling exhibitions (the Japanese prints exhibition, and the conceptual photography of John Baldessari are examples), the Undercroft sees its strongest role in the continued support of local art and artists. In 1976, for instance, it had several important survey exhibitions - Ten Western Australian Potters, Western Australian Spinners and Weavers, the Western Australian Print Makers' Association exhibition, and the Young Western Australian Artists exhibition — as well as selected exhibitions by local artists such as the Three Realists show and the Ross Morrow/ David Gregson/Miriam Stannage group show.

It is obvious that this gallery has thoughtfully considered its role in the local scene and decided on a clearly-defined policy of support, which has led to a continuing run of stimulating, relevant and well-attended exhibitions. The recent conversion of the Nolan room (at the eastern end of the Undercroft) into a second more intimate gallery, promises a further involvement in the future.

Another important institutional gallery, and a centre of community activity in the arts, is the Fremantle Arts Centre. Exhibitions staged there so far this year have been refreshing for their diversity and originality. There have been drawings by Michael Shannon, water colours by lan Wroth, a painting prize and a print prize, several print exhibitions, an outdoor sculpture show, and a proliferation of craft exhibitions,



Theo Koning 'Glove Painting I' from the Young Western Australian Artists exhibition

including ceramics and enamels, Indonesian batiks, hand-woven belts and jewellery.

Although this critic could find no pattern behind such a mixture, it appears that the Fremantle Arts Centre is attempting to break the tyranny of painting on the local scene and move into other areas of art and craft concomitant with its teaching functions in these areas. Any move in this direction is a welcome one.

The third of Perth's institutional galleries is on the campus of the Western Australian Institute of Technology. Situated on the ground floor of the Architecture building, the WAIT Gallery works in close liaison with the Department of Art and Design and plans its exhibitions at least partially as teaching aids. It has regular exhibitions of work by students and staff, but its most important exhibition of the year is the WAIT Invitation Award, conducted annually in October. Being by invitation, a careful balance can be maintained between art and craft and high standards guaranteed. Furthermore, the exhibition provides Perth audiences with a rare chance to see a cross-

section of the best work being done in the eastern states. This year's show was as good as ever and, as usual, beautifully catalogued (all too rare in Perth exhibitions).

In the past, the WAIT Gallery has suffered from an awkward display area which proved rather difficult to use and light. However, alterations are being carried out which should enable WAIT to run more frequent exhibitions.

To a great extent, these galleries are funded by their parent institutions and by government bodies such as the Visual Arts Board. This relieves the inevitable financial pressure, allowing the galleries to operate in areas which often are not commercially viable.

The last gallery I wish to consider here does not have the advantage of generous financial support but is firmly committed to a non-even anti-commercial stance. The Praxis co-operative gallery is run on a voluntary basis by a group of young artists and sculptors. The lone (and lonely) centre of avant-garde art in Perth, it devotes itself to the creation and display of alternative art activities and happenings, and to providing a venue for poetry reading, film screenings and other activities. What is more, on a minimal budget it has succeeded in presenting several of the most stimulating exhibitions seen in Perth this year. One remembers particularly the theme shows such as the Light Show, the Ego Show and the Head Show, remarkable exhibition of 'found objects'. Underlying all these exhibitions-indeed, one of the basic tenets of the gallery—is the continued attempt to undercut the accepted notion of art as an elitist activity. By its very nature, this type of avant-garde art must have outside support if it is to survive: if only for the sake of the healthy iconoclasm it provides, Praxis strongly deserves greater support.

So overall, the institutional galleries are fairly well balanced, complementing each other reasonably successfully. They cover local art quite well and art from interstate and overseas less so. The one logical improvement would be greater co-operation of the sort which produced the Guy Grey-Smith Retrospective at the State Gallery and a concurrent exhibition of the same artist's prints and ceramics at the Undercroft



Patrick Hockey 'Clearing Sale' photograph courtesy Lister Gallery

Gallery. Through such co-operation the same volume of art could be made more meaningful.

The commercial gallery scene, unfortunately, is not quite so well served. On the whole, the commercials are rather a mixed lot, ranging from the backyard to the plush, but with only a handful really committed to good modern art.

One of these was the artists' co-operative Gallery G, which for a time shared space with a furniture showroom. In the end the proprietor decided that modern art was having an unsettling effect on the delicate temperaments of Perth's furniture-buying clientele, and the gallery was forced to close. In a short life, however, it had some good exhibitions, including paintings by Garry Zeck and Mac Betts, photographs by Richard Woldendorp and the very fine Elise Blumann retrospective exhibition.

Another gallery which at one stage seemed to face closure was the Old Fire Station. This gallery has always been one of the centres of serious art in Perth, and enjoys an Australia-wide reputation. It has provided a Perth showing for a number of eastern states' artists, and has

given continued support to many younger local artists. It is to be hoped that the new director will maintain his predecessor's commitment to modern art, and her enthusiasm and unerring aesthetic standards.

After a shaky start, the Collectors Gallery is beginning to find its feet. Although it seems willing to display a wide variety of modern art and craft, both local and interstate, the bad shows have in the past outnumbered the good. Recently, however, the quality is improving, and if the standard of the last three or four exhibitions can be maintained (especially John Howley/Craig Gough, Five Sydney Painters, and Wendy Arnold) Perth will have gained a significant new venue.

Of the remaining galleries, the Lister Gallery is primarily a dealer's gallery, but does run a small number of exhibitions each year. These are mostly the work of established eastern states' painters such as John Coburn, George Lawrence and Kenneth Jack. Perhaps their most interesting show this year has been a captivating exhibition by Patrick Hockey.

The Fine Arts Gallery is a new addition to the scene, but so far seems to be staking out a similar territory to the Lister Gallery — eastern states' painters whose reputations are already firmly established.

Overall, the commercial gallery scene at present is in a state of flux after the recent loss of the Desborough and Skinner Galleries. The Desborough provided consistently good local and interstate shows, but it is the loss of the Skinner Gallery which is most deeply felt.

Rose Skinner has been a Perth institution since 1958, when she started the State's first real commercial gallery. She gave many eastern states' artists of the fifties their first Perth showing (Nolan, Boyd, Perceval, Tucker, French, Passmore, Meadmore, Williams, Blackman and Daws, to name a few) and continued to exhibit their work throughout the sixties and seventies as they became famous. She also actively supported local art, acting as agent for Juniper, Haynes, McKay, Boissevain and a number of others. Almost single-handed she started the local art scene as we know it, and as such has been a strong civilizing influence on Western Australian society. Her active participation on the scene will be greatly missed, and we wish her a speedy recovery.

Indeed, her absence is already being felt, for if Rose Skinner gave us the artists of the 1950s and 60s, we are now missing out on those of the seventies. Whole blocks of eastern states' art are just not being seen in Perth (how many of the Ten Australians have we seen, or the new realists, or the younger print makers?) and this cannot but have a bad effect on local art. In fact the lack of a strong and committed gallery (like Watters in Sydney or Powell Street in Melbourne) which has the financial backing and the initiative to bring this art to Perth is by far the most serious omission from the gallery side of the local art scene. We are not aware of contemporary developments in the eastern states and artists and public alike suffer.

Another vital area of support for the visual arts is criticism. What is needed is an efficient system of review and criticism to inform and educate the public and provide critical feedback for artists, especially the younger ones.

Locally, the situation concerning art criticism is fairly grim. If they notice it at all, the newspapers devote so little space to art that exhibitions must be mentioned rather than reviewed, with many not even receiving a mention. And that's not even taking into account the standard of newspaper criticism. One looks with envy to the eastern states, where critics such as Patrick McCaughey and Daniel Thomas write regularly and at length on current exhibitions.

The monthly magazine Artlook, since its inception about 18 months ago, has done a much better job of publicizing and reviewing local art and craft. It is willing to provide generous space and usually carries articles and reviews of exhibitions which are often still running. Since it depends on unpaid contributions, however, its coverage, though interesting, is rather intermittent. Even so, Artlook is performing a vital function locally and deserves extended assistance.

By far the best and most regular source of art criticism in Perth is the radio programme *Monday Critics*. Broadcast by the ABC's second network at 7.15 on Monday nights, this is serious and informed criticism by people who know and care about the visual arts. Especially good this year was Tom Gibbons commenting on art prizes, and rescuing Patrick Hockey from his detractors; and Patrick Hutchings on Elise Blumann, the Allendale Square building (which gives an indication of the range of interest of the critics) and John Baldessari. This latter effort was a masterly exposition of a difficult subject and should have been stuck up on the gallery wall for the benefit of baffled viewers.

The unfortunate thing about *Monday Critics* is that its broadcast time makes it so easy to miss. Perhaps the art reviews could be reprinted in *Artlook* for those who were unable to listen on the night. This would also provide a valuable and continuing printed record of the Perth art scene.

Monday Critics aside, there is very little good art criticism coming out of Perth. This is not a healthy situation, if only because of the need for a diversity of critical opinion to promote debate and discussion. Perhaps some of the personnel from the State Gallery — the aim of which is to encourage the visual arts — will soon recognize the importance of good criticism to the continuing health of local art, and their obligation to participate in this facet of the State's artistic life?

This brings us on to the more difficult question of the public role in supporting the visual arts. Earlier I said that what was needed was an open-minded, informed and interested public willing to support art intellectually and financially. Art, however, is inevitably a minority affair. It is not populist, and will never have the following of the more avowedly entertaining arts such as cinema.

This said, there is a small but reasonably dedicated minority who support the visual arts in Perth and who are willing to look and learn. And if recent gallery attendances, the circulation of a magazine like *Artlook*, and the number of tertiary institutions now teaching art are any indication, then this minority is growing.

Financially, things are a little different. There is still a tendency for Perth people to buy second-rate works by 'name' eastern states' artists rather than local art, because of a kind of cultural cringe and on the assumption that the former will have a greater chance of holding its monetary value. Not only is this argument doubtful on financial grounds, but it shows a profound misunderstanding of the vital function of local art in any society.

To put it simply, a creative artist is a professional instrument of sensitivity; what Sidney Nolan has called an early warning system for society. He is attuned to his environment-landscape and people-and has the ability to transform his feelings and experiences about it into art. In Perth, with virtually no artistic or cultural tradition, the artist is particularly important, for in turning his sensibility on us, and on this place, he tells us what it is like to live here and what we are like. He interprets us to ourselves and in so doing defines us; he understands the nature of the place, and through that understanding claims it for us. Thus, in the very broadest sense, art is a main agent of civilization.

This is what is at the heart of the whole business of supporting local art, whether it be the support of galleries, critics or the public. The lesson is simple. As with everything else, a community gets the artists it deserves, and if we are not willing to support our artists, if we don't want them badly enough, then they will leave, or stop painting, and the art scene will stagnate. And if it does, what hope is there for us?

The Guy Grey-Smith Retrospective offers a classic example of the importance of the local artist. The exhibition, which is the first major retrospective organized by the Western Australian Art Gallery, has been mounted in recognition of Guy Grey-Smith's outstanding creative effort over a period of some thirty years. He is predominantly a landscape painter, and the paintings themselves reveal his detailed and deep investigation of ways of seeing the local landscape, and the problems of finding an emotionally and aesthetically satisfying means of recording that vision.

Guy Grey-Smith was born in Wagin in 1916 and spent much of his childhood in the forests of the south west. He joined the RAAF, and after being shot down in 1940 was put into a POW camp where he became interested in art. He began studying painting as part of his treatment while recovering from tuberculosis, and on his teacher's advice enrolled in the Chelsea School of Art in 1946. There he studied under Ceri Richards, Robert Medley and Henry Moore. Finally, after being reminded of Australia by the forest of Fontainebleau, Guy Grey-Smith returned home in 1948. He built a house at Darlington in the hills behind Perth. and since then has lived and worked in Western Australia. producing a steady stream of paintings, pottery and prints.

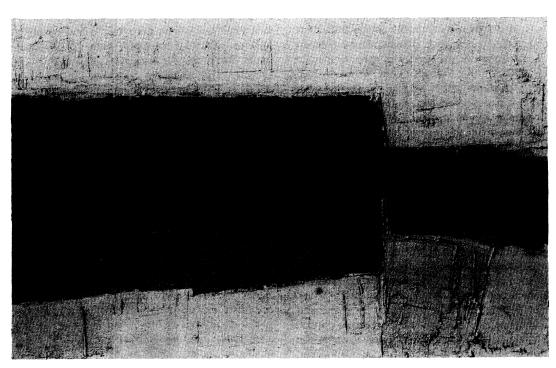
The earliest paintings in the exhibition were produced when Guy Grey-Smith was still studying in England. Their dark 'English' tones call to mind his teachers, but reveal an embryonic interest in the art of Cézanne. By the time he returned to Australia this interest had grown, and the artist decided upon "a sort of seven year plan of trying to catch up on



Guy Grey-Smith 'Karri Forest' 1951



Guy Grey-Smith 'Shark Bay' 1959



Guy Grey-Smith 'Cliffs' 1964 Guy Grey-Smith Retrospective photographs courtesy WA Art Gallery

myself, trying to learn, rigorous exercises based on Cézanne, impressionism, pointillism, colour theories."

The first thing one notices about these paintings, however, is their freshness and raw sense of life, for the artist was re-discovering his own land as well as exploring new styles. The colours of the new world are high, bright and pure, and traditional modelling is replaced by the constant effort to get at the essence of the form through small flattish brushstrokes — a perfect example of Cézanne's dictum of form through colour. The red rock in the painting of the same name, for instance is a decidedly cubist attempt at rendering a form in all its aspects.

'Karri Forest' (1951) is the most successful of the early paintings, and shows the artist using a limited palette to full advantage. Forms are simplified and colours muted, and a subtle reiteration of tones across the canvas creates a rhythmic, almost musical effect, while not detracting from a tight pictorial composition alternating between surface and depth. It is an unusually advanced picture, pointing in the direction his art was later to take.

Most of these early works concentrate on a high, expressive colour. This tendency reached its peak when Guy Grey-Smith came under the influence of the Fauves while in Europe in 1953. It is the spirit of Paul Nash, however, which is easiest to detect, and several paintings contain irrational imagery derived more from Nash than from any unconscious forces. In later works the artist transformed these forces into flowing colours, and the raw and strident 'Rottnest' (1954-57) is an example of this style applied to a local setting. It is not completely successful, though, for there is a strong conflict between naturalistic detail and the large areas of bright flat colour, a conflict which dominated his art for several years.

Gradually, however, the strokes became broader and longer, the colour flatter, and the image/ground relationship much closer. 'Shark Bay' (1959) with its steep picture plane and long strips of flat colour, indicates the natural progression Guy Grey-Smith made towards the style of Nicolas de Stael. Rather appropriately,

'Shark Bay' is the last painting in the exhibition done with a brush. In the next work 'Red Hills' (1960), the artist uses a palette knife for the first time, and the familiar blocks of impasto'ed colour make their first appearance.

So Guy Grey-Smith's plan had been surprisingly accurate. By 1960 he had worked through the influence of Cezanne and arrived quite naturally at his mature style. However, although this was the central development in his career as a painter, it did not lead to any sudden relaxation: rather, the artist immediately began to explore the new style and refine the uncertainty of his first attempts.

Indeed, the years 1961-64 were a period of intense experimentation. Where 'Red Hills' and 'Horseshoe Range' (1958-61) are unsatisfactory because of insistent attempts at rendering naturalistic foregrounding, 'Portrait of the Artist's Wife', painted less than a year later, demonstrates a growing understanding of the possibilities of the new style. With 'Two Fishermen' (1962) the artist began to explore its potential for suggesting movement and action, and in 'Emu by a Waterhole' (1962-63) mixed beeswax emulsion with the paint for the first time, thickening the impasto and enabling him to construct the painting in a physical sense. These discoveries coalesced in 'Anthills' (1963). The painting contains no pictorial depth at all, but consists rather of a series of interlocking blocks of colour planes, crowbarred together as countervailing forces to suggest some of the geomorphological stresses present in the landscape of the northwest.

In the following years Guy Grey-Smith worked in several genres with equal success. He executed landscapes, portraits, figure paintings, still lifes and religious works, all exploiting this flat picture plane and a reduction of forms to simplified almost geometric shapes which were rendered in large flat areas of impasto.

It is in the landscapes that we can follow these developments most clearly. Through 'Cliffs' (1964) and 'Salt Lake' (1966) he ruthlessly excluded detail, constantly reducing and simplifying. 'Cliffs', for instance, is an audacious painting consisting of just four blocks of colour, but so perfectly are they

arranged, and the colour hinged, that we feel the artist has expressed the essence of his subject. For Guy Grey-Smith, less is always more.

In 'Skulls Springs Country' (1966) he produced one of his greatest paintings. It's a monumental work whose classic simplicity only heightens its sense of the powerful and uncertain geological forces of the landscape, which are here held so precariously in check. We feel that at any moment the great blocks might come crashing down, obliterating the smaller lighter ones in their path.

In many ways the later 'River Bed' (1969) continues this development, but concentrates on intensity rather than monumentality. No longer is the viewer compelled to see the painting horizontally, for there is a tantalizing and sophisticated alternation between horizontal and vertical readings. Indeed, one need not read it as a landscape at all, so explicitly do its geological stresses become a metaphor for the stresses of the mind. The use of the blocks of white and pink is particularly effective in this regard; they're so hot we almost have to squint to look at them.

After the emotional intensity of this period, it's not surprising that Guy Grey-Smith should lighten his art. This he did in a series of paintings from 1967. Subject matter became more 'intimate' — cricket, racehorses, the airport — and there was a concentration on the dynamics of movement.

'Above the Sea' (1968) and 'Quinns' (1971) are an extension of this relaxed mood, and it is significant that they are seascapes. In them, impasto is lightened and colour unevenly applied in loosely defined areas; a brush is even used for some passages. This creates an ethereal, floating sensation in which the deep sea colours are only tenuously held down by quickly brushed or scratched lines representing the bounding arcs of islands and coast. Although they are transitional paintings, these works suggest a kind of spiritual calm and release after strain.

The remaining paintings, mostly done quite recently, continue to exploit these new areas and feelings. In 'Karri Forest' (1973) and

'Sandstone Country' (1974) impasto has been re-introduced, but it is often scored by lines which serve as a rough calligraphy to delineate form. The colour, like the geometry, is becoming more complex and fragmented. 'Karri Forest' especially, is a miraculous painting — a flat surface which, from the gallery wall, completely surrounds us with towering tree trunks, foliage and cool dappled light.

Indeed, these later paintings are among the most complex and satisfying in the show. They are sophisticated, resolved works and ring with a note of joy and harmony which is genuine and deeply-felt.

The Retrospective's selection of drawings highlight another side of the artist—his masterly use of line. Working in indian ink and only occasionally including colour, Guy Grey-Smith has developed a forceful personal calligraphy which is eloquent, powerful and completely expressive.



Guy Grey-Smith 'Karri Forest' 1976

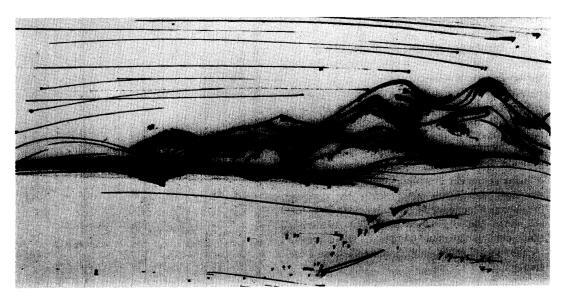
His method is to reduce the form he sees, whether it be land form, plant or figure, to a dominant motif, and then improvise on that motif in a rhythmic and musical manner. Although he can and does draw with a Chinese delicacy or the dark force of Rouault, he favours an impulsive even riotous approach which allows constant reiteration and is particularly suited to his urge to express the exuberant forces he feels coursing through nature. Thus many of his drawings are spontaneous hymns to the life-force: wattle trees burst from the ground and into flower, and hills ripple away to the horizon or multiply endlessly into the sky. It is an art of strong bustling energy and musical joy.

The same may be said of his pots and prints, which are on display in the Nolan room of the Undercroft Gallery for the duration of the Retrospective. The pots are strong functional pieces, eminently usable but aesthetically very pleasing. The prints are a little more mixed, ranging from his earlier serigraphs, employing blocks of colour, to the later woodcuts and etchings, with their dominant interest in reducing land and plant forms to reiterated

motifs. In the latest woodcuts, this interest has developed to the stage where the whole composition sings: the land, the sky, everything is filled with rhythmically repeated shapes and lines, testament to a man both in touch with his environment and in love with it.

In fact, this is the dominant impression we receive as we walk around these exhibitions. Guy Grey-Smith's life's work has been to confront the Western Australian landscape so as to explore and experience every facet of it and his own feelings about it. Only then, as an artist, could he begin to order this experience, to strip it of its inessentials and mould it into a representation — a metaphor — which sums up everything he has felt in a single statement. Thus in his paintings the land is understood, and being understood, claimed for all time for all of us who live here and care to look and feel.

But Guy Grey-Smith's progress does not end there. As his latest work reveals, he has reached that rare stage past simple understanding, where the act of making art out of the landscape involves a celebration of that landscape, and by implication a celebration of the whole of life itself.



Guy Grey-Smith 'Ranges' 1969

Apart from the retrospective exhibition, the last quarter has seen a good deal of activity on the local scene. There have been several interesting one man shows and some very good group exhibitions.

The first show of note was Peter Flanagan's first one-man exhibition held at the Old Fire Station Gallery. Although basically a figurative painter in a post-pop idiom, Flanagan was uncertain of his bearings and tried several different styles. He achieved a degree of thematic unity, however, by satiric presentation of the hedonistic 'sun, sex and cars' aspect of the Perth life-style. In general he succeeded most in the more figurative works, with paintings like 'The Actor', the Volkswagen and M.G. series and the watercolours being stylish and satisfying.

The John Howley/Craig Gough exhibition at the Collectors Gallery provided an instructive contrast in approaches to the problems of modern art, Gough was a colour field abstractionist who produced his best paintings approached most closely the established styles of other painters, such as Fred Cress and David Aspden. John Howley, on the other hand (who was one of John Olsen's protégés in the 60s) was uncompromisingly himself. He painted a kind of figurative expressionism in which the human form was mutilated in the manner of de Kooning, only to be put back together to make intriguing emblems representing the human condition. Howley did not labour his 'world view' however, and much of the horror of the paintings was undercut by their ironic titles, such as the magnificent number 16: "You know, Slogger, sometimes I feel as though we are really on top of these everyday banalities."

A third eastern states' painter to exhibit recently in Perth was Patrick Hockey, who showed a large and entertaining selection of work at the Lister Gallery. His main subject was outback life in northern Queensland, which seemed to have stopped permanently somewhere in the Edwardian era, if the paintings were any indication. He gave us squatters, their wives and daughters, doggers, aboriginal boxers, stockmen, Anzac veterans:

indeed, a whole gallery of exotic characters whom he delineated with a neat psychological insight, strong use of subtle atmospheric effects and an unfailing eye for detail. Thus in paintings such as 'Waiting for Callers', 'Clearing Sale' and 'On the Verandah' Hockey was able to avoid the inherent sentimentality of his subject matter and create a feeling of gentle pathos for a land and its people haunted by lost hopes and fading possibilities.

The Five Sydney Painters exhibition at the Collectors Gallery demonstrated the wide variety of styles possible within the new realism. The paintings of Ian Grant, for instance, were intellectual and witty compositions relating artifacts from different cultures in deadpan but surreal juxtaposition. John Bloomfield (the ex-winner of this year's Archibald Prize) showed paintings of plants and jungle orchids. Garishly coloured, rendered in soft focus and blown up to unnatural proportions, they conveyed a flagrant sensuality and a strong if fearful analogy between paint, flowers and flesh.

James Willebrant was probably the most interesting of these realists. His paintings were as simplified as cartoons, but revealed on closer examination a sophisticated reworking of kitsch motifs from our past (koalas, kangaroos, the Harbour bridge, etc.) into a naive nationalism, ironically celebrating present life-styles. These harbour and beach scenes, with their deep twilight colours and decorated palm trees under which grotesque animals cavorted in Busby Berkeley routines — were full of a surreal menace, testament to Willebrant's understanding of the barbarous forces on the obverse side of our national personality. James Willebrant is an original talent and it would be a pleasure to see more of his work in Perth.

Another artist whose concern was the reworking of earlier styles and motifs was Miriam Stannage, who shared an exhibition with Ross Morrow and David Gregson at the Undercroft Gallery. Her offset lithographs, both black and white and hand coloured, used the whole history of the visual arts to provide material for amusing juxtapositions of styles, anachronisms, and all manner of art-history puns and in-jokes. These superb prints were elegant and witty but often so understated that the viewer missed much unless he kept his eyes open and his mind agile.

Two of the most interesting exhibitions Perth has seen recently were group shows. The first was the Western Australian Institute of Technology's Annual Invitation Exhibition. Called Twenty Australians, its aim was to provide contrasting work in the fields of painting, sculpture, printmaking, ceramics, jewellery and glass, and it succeeded in attracting a selection of very good material. Several contributions were outstanding. particularly John Firth-Smith's large painting Robertson-Swann's complementing Ron sculpture 'Putting on the Ritz', prints by David Rose, pots by Derek Smith and jewellery by Norman Creighton, whose two silver rings, featuring outback scenes complete with farmhouses, windmills and clouds, were popular favourites. Even considering Murray Walker's erotic prints, the predominant note of the exhibition was tastefulness. It was well-balanced. thoughtfully presented and graced by an attractive and detailed catalogue.

The second group show, Young Western Australian Artists, was held at the Undercroft Gallery and featured the work of eight painters, two sculptors and a printmaker. Although more uneven than the WAIT exhibition, it was equally interesting for the showing it gave of several promising newer talents. Among the most successful works were Tony Hart's powerful charcoal drawings, a strong new series of prints by Ray Beattie and spare but complex geometric sculpture by Mark Grey-Smith.

Theo Koning, the other sculptor, showed a diverse collection of assemblages and paintings informed by a freely-ranging imagination, playful handling of materials and a feel for paint uncommon even among painters. He was able to mix sculptural and painterly elements with an unerring touch (see 'Glove Painting I') and used found objects such as horseshoes, wooden boxes and saw handles to evoke a poignancy and feeling of nostalgia for the simpler days from which they had survived.

Like Mark Grey-Smith and Theo Koning,

Clive Croft is an artist who appears to have arrived at an original style remarkably quickly. He is an intelligent and witty painter with a very light touch and a tendency towards visual metaphor which he deploys in the service of a personal and highly idiosyncratic art. He offers us the key to this art when, in a revealing gesture, he makes his 'Self-Portrait' a catalogue of effects. It becomes a kind of personal vocabulary of his main interests and devices as a painter and his head is almost forced off the canvas.

These effects form the basis of his art, and he builds paintings out of them in much the same way as Ronald Firbank composed his novels out of scraps of conversation and half-forgotten incidents. This is not to suggest however, that he loses sight of painterly problems. Indeed, his central interest is the question of pictorial space and the picture plane and 'Shift', which is an extended investigation of this theme, is one of the more interesting and complex paintings done in Perth by a young artist so far this year.

So overall, this exhibition revealed several very talented young artists. The large scale abstraction currently fashionable in the eastern states does not seem to hold sway here, and there is a surprising originality and breadth of approach among younger artists. As a portent for the future of the Perth art scene, this exhibition—indeed, the last three months—was quite heartening.

Asia from

B (Bangladesh) to

Z (New Zealand) . . .

Asian and Pacific Writing

fiction, poetry, and factual prose from the world's oldest and newest societies

Edited from Australia by Michael Wilding and Harry Aveling, this expanding series brings to the English-speaking reader a broad view of some of the world's most exciting and dynamic new literatures.



Bangladesh

Padma River Boatman by Manik Bandopadhyaya, translated by Barbara Painter and Yann Lovelock

Indonesia

Atheis by Achdiat K. Mihardja, translated by R. J. Maguire A Heap of Ashes by Pramoedya Ananta Toer, edited and translated by Harry Aveling

Contemporary Indonesian Poetry edited and translated by Harry Aveling (text in English and Bahasa Indonesia)

The Philippines

Tropical Gothic by Nick Joaquin
Dance a White Horse to Sleep and other stories
by Antonio Enriquez (forthcoming)

Papua New Guinea

Black Writing from New Guinea edited by Ulli Beier

Japan

Modern Japanese Poetry by James Kirkup, edited and introduced by A. R. Davis (forthcoming)

China

Paths in Dreams by Ho Ch'i-fang, translated and edited by Bonnie S. McDougall

New Zealand

Contemporary Maori Writing edited by D. S. Long and Witi Ihimaera (forthcoming)



All titles available in cloth and paperback. Obtainable from all good booksellers.



University of Queensland Press

P.O. Box 42, St. Lucia, Queensland 4067



WRITING IN ASIA SERIES

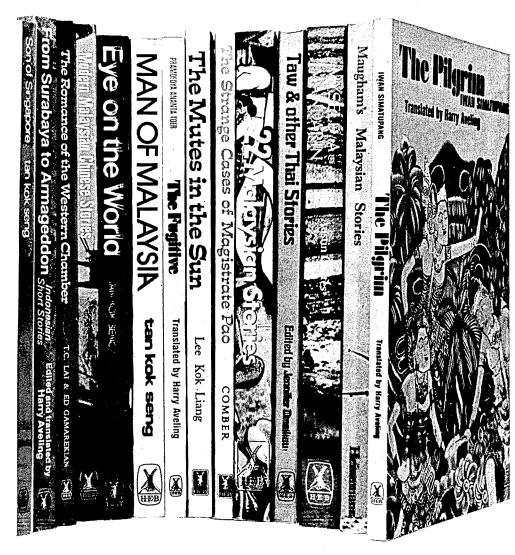
This is the first time a coolie has written his own life story

Tan Keit Sang not only tells the story of his life, he re-lives at their writing of himself as a little boy, he writes have a little boy, with sudden flashes of adult insight. As he grows up, the style of writing gradually matures, Book, reader and author grow up together.

To anyone who thinks a coolie works as he does because he can do nothing better, this simple, beautifully written book will come as a shock to human conscience. Here a coolie seaks, one of the anonymous millions of Asia; and one might be listening to one's own brother.

The end-result is one of the most notable pieces of real-life literature to be produced in Asia.





Heinemann Educational Books is actively engaged in publishing creative writing from Asia in its **Writing** in Asia series. Recently published titles in this series include the third volume of Tan Kok Seng's Autobiography Eye on the World, and a collection of contemporary Indonesian short stories, From Surabaya to Armageddon, translated by Harry Aveling, The Second Tongue: An Anthology of

Poetry from Malaysia and Singapore, edited by Edwin Thumboo, collections of poetry by Ee Tiang Hong (Myths for a Wilderness) and Goh Poh Seng (Eyewitness) and a novel by Lloyd Fernando (Scorpion Orchid). Forthcoming in the next two months are: a collection of poetry by Edwin Thumboo (Gods Can Die) and a novel by Goh Poh Seng (The Immolation).



Heinemann Educational Books (Asia) Ltd.

41 Jalan Pemimpin, Singapore 20 Suite 4012-3, The Regent of Kaula Lumpur, Jalan Imbi, Kuala Lumpur