Westerly
stories poems articles reviews

Poets of the W.A. Goldfields

Recent Experiments in Verse and Prose

Abraham Leeman—Castaway

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WESTERLY
a quarterly review

EDITORS: Bruce Bennett and Peter Cowan


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A NOTE FROM THE EDITORS

To begin with the bright news, the recent Southeast Asian issue (Westerly 4, December 1976) virtually sold out on publication. We were unable to supply orders to satisfy many readers in Southeast Asian countries. Because of the issue’s popularity and its value to those with an interest in the region, we are investigating the possibility of a reprint.

On a less bright note, we have to inform readers that the Western Australian Arts Council has exercised its option to discontinue its subsidy towards the arts insert, ‘Westview’.

We regret also the necessity to increase the price of Westerly to two dollars per issue. The decision has been forced on us by escalating paper and printing costs.

As we announced in the last issue, the Patricia Hackett Prize for 1975-6 was 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. The prizewinners’ work has enhanced Westerly in the past two years. We congratulate them both—Graeme Wilson in Hong Kong and Graeme Kinross Smith in Melbourne.

We look forward to continuing interest and support from our readers in Australia and overseas in 1977. If you are a casual reader of this magazine, we urge you to take out an annual subscription—and urge your friends to do so too. This is the best way to ensure its future.
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*Cover:* Detail from 'View of the Batavia' by A. D. Willaerts (1649). See page 38.
Once it was Frog Hunting

It came on a wave of nausea, in the dark, after so many years, the scene so unexpected yet so vivid, like footage from an old movie spliced into a current attraction. After six hours of sick and troubled sleep, after the shouting and crying when he himself went to bed, he woke and saw it again... the small boy, with a khaki knapsack carrying the jars for the frogs, knocking on the dark door, and Mr Shaw there in his brown dressing gown, and his eyes red, and Mrs Shaw behind him.

"Um...." Bob said, almost as if he had forgotten what he had come for. "When is Barry coming home?"

Mr Shaw shook his head and said kindly, "Barry won't be coming home."

"Oh!" Bob turned away quickly. "Oh!"

David Sanderson could not have thought of putting it like that. Nothing more needed saying, and they hadn't even said the word.

He saw Mr Shaw watch Bob walking away. Mr Shaw watched in case Bob should turn around and need something. Then he slowly closed the door. Bob loved Barry and the Shaws. They were a second family to him—his only family in a way, since he had no brothers and sisters. Sometimes he stayed the night with them.

The small house closed up. David looked at his friend and at the drawn blinds, the closed door. Little Barry Shaw was dead and Bob was not crying.

From when one of the kids came running over to where they were playing football out of season and told them, David had turned away from his own feelings. He had been afraid that he would have to tell the grown-ups how sorry he was, and he knew he would never be able to make it sound true. So he was relieved that it was all over now.

He had known all along that Barry Shaw would be dead. You don't go under the wheels of a tram and live. And anyway they had heard it on the seven o'clock news after tea. It said Barry Shaw was admitted to St Vincent's in a critical condition.

"Critical, do you hear?" his father said, turning on him. "Critical means dying. Now you know why we don't let you go out on the streets selling newspapers!"

"All right, all right!" David Sanderson whined with embarrassment because this was the first time he had known a kid who was going to die. "I wasn't selling papers. I wasn't even there!"

He went close to getting a clip on the ear because his father thought he was answering back.

"What'll we do?" he asked as Bob closed the gate.
“Let’s go to the butts just the same.”
Lying sick on his bed, he remembered that they’d had to hurry to catch the seven thirty-five bus because the one after that was not for another hour.
They walked quickly along Reid Street, under the huge, leafy plane trees. They did not speak. The early morning damp gave the air a fresh taste and a shine to the dark pavement and the smooth trunks of the old trees. The street was wide and the compressed houses did not live up to it or the magnificence of the trees.
That much was vivid visual image to David Sanderson, the event projected forward. The whole thing happened again for him as he lay groggily on top of the blankets feeling the pain in his head and the nausea that filled him from his chest to his belly.
What happened for a time after that was a memory, not a picture. Sanderson knew that they had caught the little red Port Melbourne bus. They had gone all the way to the terminus at Princes Pier. Then they had walked to the butts.
This was a sandy waste land which had once been used as a rifle range. The wooden target supports were still there, backed against a high ridge. But they were sinking in the sand, and the whole place was a sort of disused rubbish tip, or perhaps just an uncared-for place that everyone used as a dumping ground.
The white sand held many pools and was littered with old iron, boxes, cartons, rags and bags. Frogs made their homes under the rubbish.
Sanderson knew that he and Bob Clutterbuck must have worked with their usual zeal, lifting the tins and bits of wood and tearing away the rotting cartons, and pouncing before the frogs could move.
Yes, the picture was there. The shining brown little frog, nestled in its cosy place, hunched down like a miniature tortoise with its legs drawn in, and then the faint shuffle ended abruptly by the boy’s hand. His own hand. He had been so quick and delicate. He had never hurt one of the frogs he caught.
He saw Bob’s face, and heard him say:
“I think I’ll go home.”
“Why? It’s only early.”
“I don’t feel like it . . . catching frogs. I think I’ll go home.”
“But we’ve only just got here!”
“It doesn’t matter. I think I’ll go home.”
“You might have to wait at the bus stop for hours.”
“I’ll just go back and wait.”
Sanderson heard himself say, “I think I had better stay until the bus goes at lunchtime.”
Sanderson saw him for the second time that day spin around as if he had been pushed.
He watched him go. He knew that he should go, too. Not for the sake of Barry Shaw who was dead. Not even to comfort Bob Clutterbuck, for he was certain that he could not do that. He knew he should go simply because it was the thing to do.
But he watched his friend walking across the tip, with that flatfooted walk of his, kicking the sand in front of him, with his head bowed forward so that his white neck showed. And his knapsack limp behind him. David Sanderson watched until Bob went up over the rise behind the old targets and out of sight. If Bob had said something, or if he had looked back, then perhaps David would have followed, Sanderson thought.
After thirty years, it was too late to worry. Maybe it didn’t matter, even then, for they went on being friends until they left school and simply lost contact. But now he knew what a vessel for grief a man was, and the horror at what he had done as a boy grew in him.
Sanderson groaned quietly in a fog of nausea and pain that was as much in his mind. Oh, sick and helpless! And lost! Lost with no way to go!

You could have been a comfort to him. And, really, you knew it then. But you would not feel grief. Or friendship.

"You don't care about people!" Mary had sobbed at him in one of their first rows. "You're unnatural! You hate people!"

"Desperate, ravening, starving man!" he muttered on his bed, eyes closed. "For what?"

To go on gulping down that whisky like a madman until the bottle was finished. Like a madman out to destroy himself. And everything. Mary and Richard, and all the love. It was the same old thing, letting Clutterbuck go, all over again.

Because they bugged you. They tangled you in their lives. Just as Bob Clutterbuck did when he was grief stricken and got turned away. But Sanderson was also turned away. He was always driven apart. There was always something. It changed. But its effect was always the same. Once it had been frog hunting.

Frogs were special. They were full of wonder and mystery. David specially prized the drab little brown ones that became as beautiful as jewels when you looked closely enough. When you really looked at them, and thought about them, they were creatures from another planet that had come to Earth and made their homes in the rubbish at the butts. David would look at a frog and feel prickles of terror from confronting a monster from the age of dinosaurs. It would fill his field of vision—propped huge on hands like human hands, a face unable to smile or do anything but open that fine line of a mouth, topped with black marbles for eyes as impenetrable as the water in some of the frightening pools in the swampy places. And even the simplest thing, when they moved—how unbelievable! Instead of running like lizards and mice, they hopped. Once, while playing with them in his room, he was so overcome with the wonder of it that he put them back in their box and went to the kitchen.

"Mum, isn't it amazing," he said, "how frogs can hop!"

"Have they got away?" she asked sharply.

"No. I said isn't it amazing how frogs hop. You know—instead of walking."

"Oh, I see. Yes, it is."

Maybe it wasn't so amazing, after all. David went into the yard and jammed the axe into a knotty piece of stringybark that no-one could split. Then he went over to the park to see if anyone was playing cricket.

On his bed he said softly, "Oh, my God, what we do to each other!"

He was thankful that Cathy had been well asleep before it got really bad. And he hoped that Mary and his son would remember the good things they had together. He hoped they would—it was a strange word for him, but there was no other—forgive him.

Sanderson tried for some time to quiet his thoughts, to die for a while until the sickness and pain went away. He thought he had succeeded until he was caught unawares by the fierceness of words that burst out under pressure.

"They can all get stuffed!"

No. no! He did not mean that. He groaned softly in his throat, and pushed it all away. He did not want to think about it now, or find out what his true feelings were. Ah, God, he would think about it later.
Weekend Visit

My father buried
piles of leaves each autumn
he did not burn
a waste.

The reminders were
small mounds
eyes in the ground
which the mower couldn't handle

slicing off the tops
and showering dirt and stones
which rang inside the guard.
The plum-tree on the front lawn

no longer flowers
its dark fruit troubles the grass.
These past pale summers
my father hoarded

a whole garden-full of apples.
Always too many
possibly to be eaten
they rotted on the ground

if charities were not called
in time to take them away.
Trees stand
in prodigal fruit

now turned marble-small
through lack of pruning.
My mother housebound
watches TV and does not talk.

My dreams on these returning nights
are peopled with friends I have forgotten.
My nephew and niece make faces
at the window, I make them laugh.
The sun rises over the window sill, peaks between where the pot plants no longer are, and smacks me on the back like a jovial friend. I collect my thoughts and my clothes, drink orange juice/cordial, pick up my camera and leave.

Click.

Up and down the suburban street three boys kick a football. They wear school uniforms and their shirts hang out. They're rough, they swear, and I can imagine them smoking. I'll capture innocence here. Energy. Spirit.

I pretend to take shots. They smile, pose, strut and overact. I continue pretending, waiting for them to tire of the game. One wipes his nose on his sleeve running forward to launch the ball. At the other end his friend resorts to his gangly style. I'm ready. They no longer see me.

I concentrate on the short one. I choose him because of his face I think. Round and clear with the big eyed symbols of childhood. How many parent/teachers are in the football he kicks?

I visualize my picture. There is no smooth composition here. A solitary rubbish bin interrupts the eye. He competes with the parked car for dominance. And I wait for him to pass the lampost.

Click.

He arrives at the studio at 10.30 sharp. A curt handshake. "Are we ready?" he says. "Where do you want me to stand?"

I place him on a stool in the centre of the controlled light. He is a big man. A bulky man. I direct more light behind him to lift the backdrop. He seems to cast a shadow no matter how I angle the light.

"Can you hurry I haven't much time."

I should be talking to him. Relaxing him, making him feel at ease, so the portrait will look most natural. But I fear him, and fiddle with my equipment trying to look more professional than I am.

Maybe it's better. Somehow a smiling benevolent face wouldn't fit the 5 cm square in his company report.

"Turn your head a little to the left," I say. "Without moving your head look at the camera."

Click.

She stands to attention, fingers clawing the fold up steel chair for support. Thirty-four, two kids and deserted. Suffering the mechanics hall social night with patronizing friends. She's been asked for one dance in two hours. Poised elegantly,
half behind the bleary eyed man, and with the dart board next to her head, a
forced smile pushes her lips apart. Her dress looks what it is. Old.

I hesitate. Should I tell her the flash light will not be kind to her? Should I tell
her it will shadow every pore, leave a dark ring around her, whiten her cheeks and
redden her eyes.

“Yes, you look wonderful. Are you having a good time?”

Click.

They leave the church laughing. Their friends violently throw confetti at them.
White gloved hands wipe tears from old eyes. The bride giggles. The groom looks
amused.
Little girls in pink dresses chase each other on the footpath. Little boys scuff their
new shoes kicking stones.

Inside the church the best man hands the minister an envelope, and they both
walk outside.

They line up. Father of the bride, mother of the bride, bridesmaid, bride,
groom, best man, mother of the groom, father of the groom.

I wait for the minister to shuffle out of the frame as he sweeps confetti from
the concrete.

Click.

I leave my car and tramp down from the road towards the river. I brush
branches out of my way and carry my equipment deeper into the forest of early
dawn. Filtered softness surrounds each fern. Soggy footed I set my tripod among
the trees. I slowly compose a circle.

The eye will follow the strong upright trunk. It will sweep across the branches.
It will filter down through the leaves. It will rise again from the peeled bark which
melts on the ground to juice the sapling.

Here is the light of all sides. Here is the light of every direction. Here is the
light of the highlight, and the light of the shadow.

I begin to focus....

JOHN M. WRIGHT

Question on Notice

with your eyelash tweezers, your nail scissors,
with your mascara brush, eyeshadow pencil and lipsticks,
with the hair rollers you electrically heat each morning;
with your hairdresser, manicurist, physician, masseur

can you, will you?
squeeze, cut, brush,
pencil, paint, warm and roll,
manage, trim, doctor,
rub me into your life.
Here I am, Nora. And there you are Clare. Gone plain in our earnestness. Lines gather between our brows—yes we frown. You will have skin cancer, I? my feet are hard, hard leather. My hairs seemed to grow, then stopped growing. Sometimes silky in the evening sun. Now I wear my trousers rolled to the knee. What Clare you no longer have curls about your ears and down your forehead. Your eyes have changed. Oh no, they are still large, but different, they seem more round, more of the eye itself and it is energetic. Remember Clare you had sleepy eyes. Languid. Eyes which squashed when you laughed, when your face composed laughter, when you composed gifts of your face. The gifts broke when the Christmas tree fell, in the new year you were giftless—did you say you wasted money on cigarettes, alcohol, coffee and tea, and in the evenings wasted time talking? And yet your talk became impatient, feverish, tormented. You were driven to use the telephone, and at times my phone rang, and the bells were your bells. And I ran. How are you? Not pregnant? Not likely. You don’t like the way I use fuck in my conversation, but I don’t think you really mind, chiding me was something you could do that was mildly affectionate. Up yours, I say, and ask about him half-heartedly. For him I think there is no hope, for you I am sad, beachcombing won’t do, nor having him spoil you, nor... Nora you are elusive, you move as swift as a sprite and yet when I meet you or ring you or see you or even think of you you have not changed. You were too alone to ever stop moving or being the same. What did you preserve yourself for? There was something sacred you only laughed about, I mean you laughed away telling it... It was something I couldn’t give you Clare. You were too vulnerable to him, and he would have destroyed it. Once I did give you a poem in which I called you Bella, he forced you to burn it. Anyway you could never read poetry, you thought it was some sort of crazy letter: did you? Or was it you who would not tell me where I was going? You did not want to watch, Clare, I don’t know, but slowly I go, slowly life pushes me further and further to the edge of the earth—it is both desperate and optimistic. (Behind Nora sees a class-room full of girls in blue uniforms, and their neat handwriting of couped-up hollow words on lined paper—she is sitting on the teacher’s desk with a book of Tudors on her knee, she gives the students nothing, she can’t even remember the six wives...) Clare do you understand? No. Yes, not exactly. My mind can’t find—(Clare is by the sea, he is away, she has a new black dog. The beach is deserted and there are cowrie shells by her toes, she is seeing sprites in the waves and slight mists, yet hardly believes the dance she sees with her own eyes. She is bored, even here, where she is happiest. Nora is in front moving away, running or flying—she seems to know). But I am
anchorless, adrift. Tides move. Your thread out to me is of thinnest fishing gut, but it slackens and tightens with no rhyme or reason. This puzzles you. Occupies your mind. You go down to the sea, behind the shack you share with him. You have not let you both have children. I know that is your last stand, but I who am adrift would love a child... Some of us wear gypsy clothes, walk in the city street bare-footed with a baby or a pack on our backs, we swagger. We are outlaws—we must forsake morals and all that which is precious to your him. I have many men Clare, I wish you to know this, I cannot live without them, but one, one Clare is too painful. We gypsies do not walk around the streets with men on our backs; and the poverty too, Clare, is another trial, but I could never change it for the spoiling you get from him. I would like to hate him but I can’t he is too far away, and it is useless to hate one individual man. Nora maybe I hate him, but if it is that it is easy enough, it is familiar, it gives me rights: my subtle ways of torturing him—I tease him, I make him cry for my own amusement, and then I am disgusted, not with myself but with him. It is a familiar tangle, I’ve learnt the ropes—Clare is by the sea, a small fishing port, yachts come, bigger vessels come carrying ore and shelite. Clare knows the ropes and how to sail, she knows her way about the docks and the special terms for tackle. She knows the price of fish in China.). Often I call my hate of him love, and express it, clumsily but well enough for his conviction. You don’t know what it’s like Nora! Clare we wear rags, I can’t tell you why, we buy dope instead of clothes, also we like rags... how can I explain to you along the strained stretch of this thin thread? and you as equally alive the other end. No matter how far I move to the left edge of the earth, Clare, I am still as feminine as you, I am not becoming a man as I once wished to become—remember I was ambitious? But becoming a woman is as hard anywhere on the earth... don’t you think? No Nora I don’t think, when I think I don’t know what to think, sometimes I resort to thinking things, I mean stories, tales, gossip, if I think something is unfair, there are also other things unfair and there’s such a lot I don’t know. He is always telling me things, discussing his complaints with me, he respects my mind. It gives me something to do... I have not yet thought of suicide, and why should I go? It would destroy him. I’m Nora, I am still searching for those who refuse to be destroyed, is this wrong Clare? It sounds like an icebox, you are slippery freezing point. No you are colder than I, we are warm, with our rags and our packs and our tough peasants’ feet. Why I am crying all the time, do you cry often? He cries I do not, I wouldn’t be caught dead... I think I understand, it is pride, and a pride you have every right to, you cannot lessen yourself, not in your position. No, I got that clear from the start. (Clare is by the sea playing a line to the clouds.) Give my love to your new black dog, why does our conversation always seem so unreal? I just like to hear your voice, it is always the same, my Nora...
CAROL COHN

Spring Day

Through the bus window
I can see the sky,
a sky with swimming-depths
to it, far reaches of
blueness generating distance.

On days like this,
the future is palpable,
tomorrows stretching like
new cities out of sight,
full-fleshed, and complete

with the sounds, tastes,
scents of days to be spent
in Cairo, Paris, Rome;
grape-swollen with poems
needing only to be written,

with lovers needing only
to be encountered—in
the wide pebbled drive of
a Nervi hotel or strolling
surely down the Corfu corniche;

the whole combining in a
vast climatic joy, not
so much obliterating now,
as squeeze-boxing time
till I'm at once

twenty-nine, eighteen,
forty; plaited and
blue-jeaned; sandalled
and slim, weeding a
French garden; a dark

lady, crossing countless
tarmacs in the rain.
Before me, Government House
glistens like a white egg
in the sun; I am

my own, whole, only world,
ripe with my whole life,
rosy for harvest.
JOHN BLIGHT

Our Tenant Departs

Sleep hedged insomnia for old Tom. After a snore there would be that aroma of dense pipe smoke, as though he had just arrived in the Devil's carriage, the dust hadn't settled and all six horses had manured in harness ... a wide experience of travel in every whiff of leather and sweat.

Yes, I have seen him wipe his brow after a night's sleep—on Nick's red cushions? . . . or was he up front with a postilion? . . . or cracking a plaited whip long as the smell of tobacco curling the verandah's stretch? He would rest out there; never in a room when he paid us a visit.

Flinty old man, not wizened by age; just a red coal in the hands of a fool seeking to argue about Tom's smoking.

"What! out there in the fresh air " Why, he slept on an open verandah, travelled in goods trains dragged on in cramped smokers' compartments.

No pollution in his earlier days. All an accumulation of lies about the harmfulness of tobacco; yet the weed had served Raleigh.

Tom had not haunted Elizabeth's Court, but smoked in the reign of a second sovereign queen of that name; and if Her dissolution of the Estate niggard the plantations he would leave for the East of another day.

We could breathe "Vacancy" on a deserted verandah.
The Luncheon

My house burnt down, the guests came all to dinner. I fed them ash, sauced with dying flames; and thinner though they left me, they remembered all their lives thereafter to eat hot meals in silence, not to chatter.

If I could ask them back to my lean board and share a crust with them we would be better company pro tem, and afterwards would part with song in heart and talk no idle matter: their tongues not burnt, their cheeks not red, glad to drink fresh spring water to rinse a rare meal down, from the source of a true friend who never asked them what they liked, but had the meal spread, ash and flames again.

Ten gentlemen, ten ladies, I the perfect host, my hostess ghost beside me; with no spoons lost upon each guest’s departure, but fire in their imaginations: how we lived in such hothouse temperatures, remaining young as ferns, as evergreen.

Portion of the riddle never answered, the more the mutual pleasure of our brief acquaintance . . .

“That fellow, he’s the very Devil, but also warmly entertaining. We hope for further invitations; but never invite him home to our retreat, our walls are warm enough.”
The Wrong Season

Never the summer people,
we have a long-term quarrel with the sun.

On sand
the barefoot gypsies
stake out their skin, their hair,
knowing the whole coast is theirs.

It is a way that we would emulate
whose tongues are locked, whose feet are wary, whose skin is made of glass.
Somewhere, far back, we discovered those whose need is screened,
the pain behind the archways of their eyes.
We saw too much, too far.

Summer moulds their lives
who have no future, needing none.
Open to the channels of the sea,
they take what comes with ease.
Sun dulls their fears, loosens skin.
But we are closed, fine shells.

Snow queen,
frost lids blinking in sun, cloaked heavy with what need never be,
lost in St George's Terrace—
she folds her metal wings.

To be cold is to feel.
An Exhibition

Home
We had returned Home. I toyed with the telephone. I flipped thru the directory in search of the numbers of people we had known before. I didn't find any. I said—— why don't we walk? We did so.

During the walk I recalled the number of a previous acquaintance (culled from a combination of landscape, conversation, & memory). I rang him up immediately we got back. He said, you? How long have you been home? I thought to myself, we've been back ages. He waited for me to reply. I wondered why it was that we hadn't got around more, visited people. I'll tell you everything soon, I said eventually. We arranged to meet in a nearby park. The sky was prussian-blue (is that the colour I mean? the colour of the Gulf of Aden, the darkest, hottest, deepest blue there is in any paintbox?)—the park was meadow-green. I was filled with a sudden exhilaration. We have been too slow, I said. As if life is a dream. As if you could afford to do nothing. I followed the line of the ceiling out of the window & into the sky. Where do we go from here? He had rung off. Perhaps he was already preparing to walk. I had the telephone in my hand. I thought of the things I might say when I saw him again. I replaced the phone on the receiver. My god! that sky is beautiful, I said. I repeated—beautiful! That sky! And then the mood of a Great Peace came over me & I guessed the secret of our inactivity. What else is there to do but stand here & look thus, up at the sky? And so we stood & looked. And looked. Nevermore answering the phone or keeping appointments.

The Walk
Here is as good a place as any to drop dead. If I fell here I wouldn't shout to the others. If they came back for me I would say, I thought you had left me for dead. If they didn't come back for me I would content myself with the obvious advantages of the place. Halfway up a cliff upon a narrow path, the sea in one direction & fields in another. Not to have bade the city goodbye might not be as calamitous an omission as seems on first thought. But I didn't fall. They were talking about the blossom on certain trees when I reached them. No, I don't know what it is—you country folk ought to know. A drop of rain on my cheek. Storm's coming, they said, & ran on. We descended now thru dead leaves. The trees with the strange blossom shadowed the path. Here is as good a place as any to drop dead. If I fell here I wouldn't shout to the others. If they came back for me I would say, I thought you had left me for dead. But I didn't fall. My heart doesn't break. I scuffled the leaves & followed doggedly, even if I say it myself, ruefully, on their heels.
Venice

Look at the sunlight on that field. It is amazing. Somewhere thru there is the sea. You can imagine the lie of the land. The road swings closer to the coast hereabouts. We sail into the Grand Novel. A woman from the village walks beyond the gate in the wall with a pitcher on her head. Isn't the land simple? A satin-saddled stallion stamping below the verandah. Or the Californian chapter of Hell's Angels attending to their Harley-Davidsons. It is amazing—the gleam of their machines . . . How long is it since you were 19? Or maybe that is the opposite of what I was asking—when were you young & happy & wholly amazed at every single thing thru the windshield?

A Potted History

Where have you been all this time? Fancy meeting you here—just now!—what an inconvenience. One I would have avoided if only I kept my eyes open. Or shut. There's nothing for it now but to be as correct as possible, within my frame of reference that is.

—Went to a show . . . then a meal . . . & now we're drunk as you can see. We are to marry . . . tipsy rather than drunk—satisfied. Have you met my fiancé before?

Just tell me this—what is it makes you a Catholic? Why will you attend Mass tomorrow morning at a time when I'll be sound asleep? And that ritual—how could you pretend it was anything other than private?

—There are some things I haven't made my mind up about as yet. I dont think Barclays Bank have anything actively to do with apartheid & anyway, what use will it be withdrawing my money? All banks are the same. Barclays Bank does do something towards the welfare of Africans. I think I would be a policeman if there were sufficient incentives. My brother also. I think we would all agree that society needs some rules?

You never wrote. I took it our friendship was over. It is over from my point of view because you never wrote. Two whole years. And such paucity since then. It was you who decided it, obviously.

—I can see you want to get away. It's late anyway. If I knock on your door the onus will be on you to open it. There's no getting away from that is there?

Home Again

I walked with my friends. Or, they accompanied me. If I had been on my own I would have walked in detour seven miles rather than cross that field of wild horses. We approached the barbed-wire fence. Once thru I ran. For dear life I ran. I suppose it is to my everlasting shame that I never looked back. I have a vague memory of one. He was tall with a loud voice & he wore a jacket with a zip &—I remember—he knew all about maps. The others escape me. This is the first time I have sought to remember—I ran away without a thought of anything, certainly no recollections. Who were they all? On hindsight, could they have been such good friends as all that for me to forget them? Their faces, what they had to say? My friends, I recall, always had tongues in their heads . . . Ah well—I ran from the field to the road. And rain fell. I fancy it was the final night of Winter. The rain took the edge off the cold. In my duffle-bag was a spare pair of shoes & a book. O what romance! What a combination: a book for pillow, a brook for halo. The page inscribed by which friend? The constant friend (amigo, ami) from across the ocean (yours as ever & ever yours & yours with love), the friend (as always). I wonder now why I ran from them. I took their books & their shoes & ran for my life. Perhaps I did. Peutetre. Thru the fields away from the horses. And I ran for ages beneath the starry sky, up the road, before I was aware of traffic behind me.
From then on i kept close to the edge. There were fenced woods on either side. The cars passed. One seemed to slow. The driver made a signal. For whom else if not for me? But around the bend no car waited. All the same i ran, for myself, for most of the night.

The first day of Spring dawned. I found a bus-shelter & sat there & dozed thru the early hours & daydreamed & then stirred stiffly watching the clouds clear. The sun emerged later in the morning. Men walked up the road in twos & threes & stood around & smoked, or sat in the shelter & read their newspapers. I thought better of reading my book. They took no extra notice of me. They thought i was a traveller waiting for a bus i suppose. There was a sign—To The South. A bus drove the other way. The North. I noticed amongst what was now the early-morning work rush, a man & a boy in a beaten-up truck. In a moment, i thought, i will ask them for a lift. The men around me stood up & began queueing. I smiled inwardly. I was left alone. I looked up for the truck with a jerk. But it was gone. The bus drove away. I thought, there's nothing for it but to walk. There should be no conjecture that i was dismayed by this. Really, i couldn't have cared less. A procession of women walked up the road on the opposite side. To The North. Some men nearby heckled them. The women were out of earshot. The buses drew up regularly. At last i was walking South on the first day of Spring, imbibing the sweet airs of Dear Life. I wore the colours of no one lady. And the road i took was really the only road.
Affinity

she's thin
 & furtive
a lithe, almost
familiar
figure slipping

through darkness or waiting
catlike in doorways
filled invariably
with the heavy inertia of shadow
her silence oddly lethal . . .

something someone said tossed once
like a flower through the air's
startling clarity—& a paper
lantern sways in the nightwind—

years after from across
the crowded landscapes
of another lifetime
I recall her
my great-great-grandmother & wonder—

feeling the slow
sensual beat
beneath my skin

my dark self keening
An Ode for an Ordinary Heroine
For M.S.K.

This sad wet afternoon
I strolled past that place
Where you took your last rented room.

The opaque wall of time
Mist-like melted to reveal
You in your extremity:
Blue lips puffed, eyes close drawn,
Ears numb to our whispering concern—
And yet your face, all else insensate,
Wrinkled into a mask of wry gaiety.

As I remember, the wisps of time
Like flax are teased away
To leave you a distaff naked
In your solemn levity.

How goes it, madam, then with you,
Having spun from your seventy years
A swaddling shroud
With warp and woof of joy and melancholy?

A shroud that has become for me
The embodiment of John Keats's dictum
Concerning the soul's mundane perfection—
"A wakeful anguish"—
Tested on the pulses, as it were,
Of your own hands
Resigned at last upon the sheet
In death's eloquent passivity.
Don

Embarrassed by disparity
of mind and flesh,
at seventeen
you cultivated age
as counterpoise;
affected a donnish stoop and stride;
practised the stiff-necked turn
of the head,
the frown at the pipe
you never really got to like.

Until the man hardened around the boy
abandoned long before
—your idiot in the attic,
—your poor familiar,
too gentle for the world you chose.

The pose maintained
for thirty years,
fooled most of the people
most of the time.

But the glasses
settled on the nose
with thumb and finger
failed
entirely to hide
the eyes
I knew.
Tutorial

It is four-ten.

The corridor stretches ahead. Pillar, bricks, door; pillar, bricks, door; pillar, bricks, door.

The tutorial starts at four-fifteen. The tutor is still at tea. Academic murmurings punctuated by an occasional incongruous shout and burst of laughter (ironic) from the tea room down the passage.

I am nineteen. I am starvation slim, not thin. My hair is the colour of ripe corn (I read that somewhere and anyway it photographs well). Fifteen male students want to lay me.

Tall guy in patched jeans and political T-shirt holds door open with medieval flourish. Study comes into full focus. A Gutenberg delight.

—I am forty-four and dumpy. My hair is going grey.

Nevertheless I make my entrance. It may be the only opportunity. The entourage follows behind.

Girl in floppy hat and Laura Ashley dress.

Fella in caftan and sandals. Beads. Stringy hair.


The rest are unisex.

My knight in shining jeans has a beard. It is unwieldy and rather interesting.

He is the only student in the group with a beard. And bare feet.

The tutor doesn't really like bare feet.

—Don't you feel the cold?

Student switches on heater. Sits beside it toasting his feet.

—Yes.

Darryl—Tutor. Liberated ideas about staff/student relationship.

—Anyone for coffee?

—I'm near the jug. A sucker for electrocution. Repaired a lamp by mistake once. Scissors poised on flex. Saved from instant incineration by a flash of intuitive brilliance. Turned off power. Reprieve. Cats have nine. How many to go? I switch on jug. Fall into my mother role.

—Coffee?

—No.

—No.

—Yes.

—Yes.
Quick, quick, slow.
The jug boils over.
—Save the documents. Five years blood and sweat are in my thesis. Holy Mary!
Save them from the flood!
I mop up the stream with my kleenex. The trickle abates. Drips.
The coffee is dispensed.
—What are we talking about today?
—Obscure modern poetry by obscure modern poets.
—Name one.
Nobody speaks.
Nobody speaks.
Nobody speaks.
The girl in the Laura Ashley dress droops over the waste paper basket and is quietly sick.
Chairs pluck the carpet. No-one moves. A cold wind snakes around the room.
Papers are scattered. The diversion provides movement if not action.
I contemplate view of campus from window. Three figures prowl across the oval. Arms locked behind. As if to balance the sullen brows, oppressive....
Closer study of campus. Bay in background. Staff dining-room in middle distance. The figures are puppets never drawing nearer. Legs move slowly. Up and down. Knee bent then cautiously extended. I ponder the possibilities of fate as opposed to self-determination.
Darryl interrupts. Reads extract.
—& orphans of choice or the storm
  sleeping alone in storm-stained sleeping bags
  All equally under one blanket of autumn blood
  and rust from the high air,
—Let us first consider whether the use of the ampersand is in fact valid. Why for instance is it used instead of the written form AND?
—Cryptic?
—Inexperienced typesetter?
—Fashionable?
I sit looking at my fingernails. Three are broken. It's the bloody detergent.
—What do you feel M/s Enderby?
—At the moment quite depressed.
I am seventy-two, have rheumatoid arthritis and a thirst for knowledge.
—About the poem?
—Ah. The poem. Since you ask. Poetry is the language of heightened emotion, and I quote.
—Could you be more explicit?
—
  ; from the arched roof
  Pendent by subtle magic many a row
  Of starry lamps and blazing cressets fed
  With naptha and asphaltas yielded light
  As from a sky.
Flashbacks are a dated editing device. But useful when all else fails.
—Time is relative.
The girl in the see-through blouse and goosepimples moves her chair closer to the post-grad student.
He is sitting in. For laughs? He is suited to proscenium arch. Rich and fruity. Out of place in McLuhan Land.
—I found the poem (and the ampersand) a triumph of detached sensitivity.
—Would you like to develop that?
I concentrate on post-grad student. I wonder if he is homosexual. If the girl with goose pimples is lesbian. Is everybody gay? Isn't everybody? Or perhaps celibate. From choice. Or necessity. Heterosexuality and flashback have a lot in common.
—As an essential part of the precise rendering of these details it reveals a remarkable awareness of the resources of language.
Closer concentration on post-grad student. He has a sprinkling of blackheads around his nostrils. Too flared for ethnic purity. His eyes don't look as if they belong. Or have been elsewhere a long time.
I am five years old. I am grappling with language.
A is for Apple.
B is for Ball.

Z is for Zebra.
Logical progression.
Orderly.
Simple.
Or is B for Bastard?
That poses a lot of possibilities. Like who is the father and is it said with malice aforethought and therefore punishable is preceded by Pommy.
—The counterpoint is carried out with subtlety.
—Yes?
—With great subtlety.
Nobody speaks.
Nobody speaks.
—It is an intellectual poem and intellectuals pose a threat to the average reader for they are able with apparent conviction to support emotional attitudes by ostensibly logical argument.
—I would dispute that.
Fifteen minutes boring repetitious opinion.
Darryl scans room.
—Summing up then. What are your final conclusions about this particular poem?
Dead air.
Dead air.
Dead air.
The girl in the floppy hat leaves precipitately.
I am ninety-seven. Sans teeth, etc. etc. I believe in euthanasia.
—Could someone sum it up in one sentence?
Fella in caftan opens his eyes.
—It's a lot of crap!
Awkward laughter.
—Crap! CRAP!
Disorder.
It is five o'clock. The tutorial ends at five o'clock.
Darryl has a paper to write.
He rises. We are dismissed.
Young man with patched jeans and bare feet and beard ushers me out. Intones:
—Thy hand great Anarch! lets the curtain fall;
And universal Darkness buries All.
The Kite

Leaving the parcel wrapped protection of my house
I walked, between rain, across the hill lap of autumn trees,
Smiling at winter’s impatience
to leafshake goodbye this season of vague sunlight.
I propped against the edge of the lifting landscape
to watch a kite dartwheel across the crumbling sky.

The wind waves scumbled the hillmantle,
patterned the sky shadowed bluff with a variety of gust prints;
laying in line the hill curve,
the climbing sideways trees and curling whistles of grass.
My senses squall beat in unison
with the shudderdip and quiver of the sky kissing kite.

I felt the kite halyards hum in my hand
as the earth shy, tissue winged bird shook the held harness,
wand sickness tethered us together.
The kite’s feverish tossing and breakfree flutters of anguish
vibrated along the taut string, infesting my whole body,
bone shaft, muscle fibre, thigh and eye, with madness.

The paper dancer and I wrestled with the wind,
each for our own reason beyond skyflight and earth anchor.
The kite whipped from my handgrip,
hailed itself up and over the cloudwall, to disappear.
I was left in the landscape bound with kite twine
and the reward of winter’s patience, a weeping of rain.
The Secret Places

I would give my childhood to you,
days of secret places before I knew
the heart's reflection drowns in pools of dark forest water
and gentle domesticated carnivores still thirst for slaughter.

I would give
you my secret places;
a lyrical mythology of sunscrubbed hero stalking days.
Boyhood calendar hours
when the lush imagination jungled the scribble thickets of eucalypt
and sweetened the thirsty winterleft threads of creek pools
with ferns, fish and fantastic creatures netted in nightfall dreams.
I would give
you my kingdom's moment
when I would lie, eye to reflected eye, above the dark water
watching the quick shuttle
of weaving fish flit across the washed loom of rippled sand shoals,
finger pierce the eye's mirror to tickle the knuckle of slime
gloved stones, inducing whip tailed tadpoles to flick over sun cobbles.
I would give
you the sun spun breath
swell of words and moon mute songs of my landscape's celebration,
where I swam happily
naked, in the dark green waterbelt beneath the buckle clasp of trees,
listening to a flock of parakeets sweep and wingdip my laughter,
deaf to the shouts of missionaries without maps camping downriver.
I would give
you these secret places
hidden from the flat sandplain, tidy housed family ritual.
That land beneath the skull;
an overgrown clockless wilderness flowering without season
and sheltered by the translucent arc of the eye's filter,
where inventive incantation and borrowed magic made miracles.

I would give my childhood to you,
days of secret places before I knew
in the territory of exile, moonfurled foxes prowled at will,
haunting lovedark shadow water, searching out their kill.
Nyngan’s Game

Ironic alpine scrub,  
the carp and barking of the crows;  
the road, Shell-straight.

Other sheetmetal towns the sun has  
stamped out flat hardly register  
our passing (nor do we theirs). Stones  
have plugged the garage sign  

*Nyngan, Star of the Mid-West:*  
I remember you from teatowels.  
You cared, I tell them. A vibrating  
twenty-cented motel bed? My eyes ache  
to rein the land in to stillness.

What do they do?  
The young people love  
their sport, she says.

Nyngan taunts us with her one-star-  
rated city comfort. *No meals*  
halfway across the state,  
we pay the town its due, walk  
the whole of the street’s nine shops  
and back again (missing nothing). Choose  
the cafe without the Christmas decorations.  
Sink into bed after hot chips and iceblocks;  
our tippling air conditioner  
hints at an Inland Sea

We play Nyngan’s game: smile at each other  
with icy-pole green lips, know tomorrow  
our teeth will gladly cringe  
at the water cooler’s stainless steel.
Poem from the Old House

And how could we possibly have raced along this verandah, so small now? An epic we began to tell in quiet rooms twenty years ago. Mica flakes of light peel off the lake we swam on. What I was is only once; but images persist. A man bumps his brother a mile around the lakeside in a wheelbarrow, the other half of his foot in his hand, weeping like a potato. He has dug his spade through it. The old lady of the hill sucks her cotton to a point, squints into the eye of a darning needle and bites the blood away from her lips. We look on. She sews.
Last Journey

At a chaplain’s nod, the silent oarsmen hoist their polished beauty shoulder-high, and the fall of his foot on the floor calls the stroke.
He doesn’t know you (keeps it quiet) treads into the carpet the irreverent clatter of shoes on stone.
Cold waves of marble—green muzak lap at our burning ears.
The banks of grey biscuit tins left after picnics, the boxes old women secrete bits and pieces in:
shelves of them gather our dust behind the tendrilous limbs of a wroughtiron screen.

Like Millais’ Ophelia arranged under flowers, you are floated, conveyed, down the ribbed rubber belt that trembles almost imperceptibly, beats away from the losing team.
And of that last journey I hear only the rowlocks’ first creak.
Panatella

Leading a horse with a golden bridle,
a man with plumes on his hat.
Long beige gloves, a sabre at his side.
Embossed lettering: Ritmeester
five panatellas.

On the table there's nothing else
but a squat glass of burgundy, rifled
by wind that comes across and
down between my breasts. The afternoon
drops on the wall of the next house,
printing a tree and the tail of a bird.

Skeletal, I listen to songs on the radio
weaving through cigar smoke. I feel decadence
descend on me when you are away. I print
bits of poems on the edge of the tablecloth.

People scratch at the words on the cloth
when they come to dinner parties. Visitors.
The words come off on their knives.
The tree is gone from the wall. The streetlight hits
a splotch of orange paint on the fence. Someone
with garish eyes leans over to shut the window.
Places

There
Through a berry bush I see him
waiting on the squat fence. His clothes
are pressed, his weekend port is packed.
In the house with his father,
he doesn’t know whether or not to touch me.
Outside, a spiked mocking green surrounds
neat houses wet with paint.
The ivy-mangled letter box leans
towards half a rock wall
and one demented rose tree.

Here
Another house, a different carpet.
He lays out shoes on a curled piece
of cardboard and writes his name. BniE
That is all he knows.

And me,
in the middle of seven lives:
reshuffled, transported. Cold
in movie houses and hot in the street,
I wonder about all this tangled love.
A clarinet plays in its lower register,
he goes on writing his name.
Armchaired and still, my lover sleeps.

And There
in a London house
his family (a red carpet? does it have flowers?)
sit wondering too, perhaps, at all
this space and at the mock-ups of life they make
visiting relatives. They smile and chat.
We have sliced through them, it seems,
and cut ourselves.

Survival
Sheets of paper on a bare wood table,
jars of sharpened pencils—
not an attempt to collect fragments so much
as the effort to know
that our hands still work,
we are not cut adrift.
PETER HARNEY

The Hunter in Exile
(“too many blacks there”)

too late to kill the indians
(i missed my time)
& we’re fresh out of buffalo
( missed my time)
& the eagles were too tricky for me
i confess
i missed my time & so i stole
the globe to search for it.

again.
but the kangaroos
aren’t much fun,
caught in the spotlight
they can’t even run

& where’s the sport in that?
(missed the race & the present
is right out of space.)

i tell you i’ve tried everything
wombats koalas the lot,
the thing that’s wrong
with yr country is
it’s just too fucking slow
   (australia under his boot
   at the throat.)

there’s communists of course
, but they shoot back
& yr blacks look like they might
   (reduced to downing pigeons
   in the local park)
what the hell
       got to keep my hand in

       his room lined with the pelts of death
       his eyes blood red
       (have u been crying?)

i’m telling you now
if things don’t change
i’ll have to make a stand

& move again

WESTERLY, No. 1, MARCH, 1977
Abraham Leeman—Castaway

I

Few coasts in the world can be more inhospitable than the western coast of Australia. Festooned with off-shore reefs, arid, with no natural all-weather anchorages for well over eight hundred miles, subject to on-shore winds from several points of the compass for the greater part of the year, the European nations avoided close contact for as long as political considerations allowed them. Those shipmasters who encountered the coast did so by accident, largely owing to their inability to calculate longitude sufficiently accurately, and this factor was largely responsible for the loss in 1629 of the Dutch East India Company’s flagship Batavia, and, twenty-seven years later, in 1656, the wreck of the armed merchantman Vergulde Draeck on an off-shore reef about five miles SSW of what is now known as Ledge Point.

The loss of the Vergulde Draeck, or Gilt Dragon as she is popularly known, spurred the Dutch into action. During the eighteen month period following the tragedy, a series of attempts were made to recover the silver bullion lost in the wreck and rescue the sixty-eight survivors who had been left on the mainland in the vicinity of the wreck-site. The third and largest of these expeditions was mounted on 1 January 1658 when the fluyt De Waeckende Boey, or Watch Buoy, stood out to sea from Batavia Roads in company with the galliot Emeloort. Their skippers’ tasks, according to their ‘Instructions’, were twofold: not only were they to attempt to rescue survivors and to recover the bullion, they were to act in concert to chart the coastline of the Southland between 31° and 33°S so that the treacherous coast’s ‘islands, reefs, shoals and sand banks’ should not claim any more of the Company’s vessels. Nothing which might ensure the success of the venture was overlooked. Both vessels were fully crewed, each vessel carried six months’ provisions and, in addition, the Waeckende Boey carried with her not only the customary ship’s boat but also a shallow-draught, barge-like schuyt for use in unknown shoalwaters.

How much the Dutch knew of the western coast of Australia at this time is largely a matter for speculation. It seems highly probable that as early as 1522 the Portuguese had charted the eastern coast of Australia from Cape York as far as the Bass Straits, though in the west the Portuguese may never have penetrated further south than the mouth of the Gascoigne River. The Dieppe Maps remain notoriously hard to interpret, and Collingridge may very well have exaggerated the Portuguese achievement when he suggested that their seamen could have rounded Cape Leeuwin nearly a century before the Dutch encountered the western coast.
of what is now Australia. Yet what seems certain is that in 1619 Houtman had with him charts derived from Portuguese sources when he discovered, or re-discovered, the Abrolhos Islands on which the *Batavia* was to be lost ten years later. It is far from being clear, however, whether any such charts would show the coastline and shoalwaters south of what is now Dongara with any degree of clarity. Most probably not. Though Tasman's expedition of 1644 allowed the Dutch cartographers to close the various gaps between the sections of coastline known to them, neither in scale nor in detail was this master navigator's work completely satisfactory. The NNW trend of much of the western coastline of Australia as far north as Dirk Hartog's Island was recorded faithfully, yet any rocks or shoals entered on to the chart had to be recorded schematically. The loss of the *Gilt Dragon* on an uncharted off-shore reef only twelve years later again demonstrated to the Dutch the inadequacy of their knowledge of the Great Southland's treacherous coast. The vessel's wreck-site was recorded as being at 30°3S—obviously a rather rough estimate—but this further loss was all that was needed to spur the Dutch into making a more detailed survey of the in-shore waters between what are now Dongara and Australind.

From the logs kept during the course of the expedition by the *Waeckende Boey*’s skipper, Samuel Volckersen, and his Uppersteersman, or first officer, Abraham Leeman, it is apparent that the task of surveying the in-shore waters and actual coastline was to be carried out by a shore-party commanded by Leeman himself. Though these logs, known in whole or in part for some years, are not as full nor as detailed a continuous record as later readers might hope, each journal furnishes a valuable series of cross-checks or cross-references one to the other, all the more valuable because they furnish two independent accounts of the circumstances in which Leeman and his boat’s crew of thirteen men were to find themselves left behind on the coast of Western Australia.

As events were to prove, good luck coupled with Leeman’s qualities both as a seaman and a leader enabled the Uppersteersman and the majority of his crew to reach the southern coast of Java after an epic voyage of more than twelve hundred miles. Though such a feat may seem incredible to us, the fact remains that Leeman’s voyage was far from being unique, even in his own lifetime. Following the loss of the *Batavia* in the Abrolhos Islands, Pelsaert in company with over forty other survivors, crammed into what appears to have been the vessel’s schuyt, reached Batavia after a voyage lasting thirty days. In the much more recent past, news of the loss of the *Gilt Dragon* had reached the Dutch in Batavia in forty days, the first report being carried from the wreck-site south of Ledge Point to Java by a small boat commanded by the Dragon’s Uppersteersman. Clearly, then, Leeman was not alone in either his fortitude or his seamanship, however impressive they are to us. Leeman’s main claim to fame, recently acknowledged by the naming of a town-site in his honour, lies in the fact that he is the first European to have left a fairly detailed account of his struggles in one of the most treacherous stretches of shoalwaters known, the four-mile-wide belt stretching nearly one hundred and eighty miles between what are now Jurien Bay and Trigg Island on the Western Australian coast.

Every inference which can be drawn from Volckersen’s rather laconic log indicates that the fearsome reputation of the Southland’s coast was always uppermost in his mind. With the full responsibility for the safety of ship and crew resting on his shoulders, it could hardly have been otherwise. The vagaries of wind and weather, only to be expected during the Southland’s late autumn season, could place the *Waeckende Boey* in jeopardy within a matter of minutes. The NNW trend of the coast meant that the prevailing southerly wind had only to shift a few points westwards (as it frequently does by mid-morning once the sun has heated the land mass) for Volckersen to find himself having to claw off from a
lee shore. As the shifting wind often changes the prevailing moderate-to-heavy southerly swell into an on-shore choppy sea, Volckersen could find himself having to struggle against both wind and tide in order to gain sea room. In these circumstances, it might take even a fore-and-aft rigged vessel like the *Waeckende Boey* a considerable distance to come about. This margin of safety was one factor on which the skipper knew he could not rely. Had Volckersen been able to expect trouble from only one quarter of the compass, the position might not have been so threatening. However, Pelsaert's experience had shown just how speedily the wind could switch from being southerly to a NNW or NW position which could result in the *Waeckende Boey* being driven on to the same shore but from another direction.

Volckersen thus found himself in a dilemma. On the one hand, his 'Instructions' obliged him to give close support to the shore party; on the other hand, to do so effectively would mean endangering his ship by riding at anchor off a lee-shore for considerable periods. The skipper was thus under constant strain, and the burden of command was increased by the knowledge that time was not on his side. Volckersen almost certainly knew that if the expedition were allowed to draw on into late April and early May, he could expect increasingly violent and longer-lasting winds from the NW, winds which could blow constantly for a week or even longer. Furthermore, these were not the only on-shore winds to be feared. The SW winds of late autumn usually whip up bigger and steeper seas than their summer counterparts,14 often gusting savagely and unpredictable, thus putting an added strain on both skipper and anchor-warp. Even if the *Waeckende Boey* were to survive the increasingly hazardous wind and weather conditions to be expected in autumn, a lengthy and painstaking search of the coast of the Southland could result in their dying elsewhere. Volckersen would have been only too well aware, even before Leeman and his party became separated from the parent vessel, that the food and water situation aboard the *Waeckende Boey* might become critical long before he and his crew could expect to reach Batavia once more. Having been forced to battle for days against NW and W winds on their voyage south, the crew of the *Waeckende Boey* had used up about a third of their provisions even before they sighted the coast of the Southland. In these circumstances, if Volckersen were to delay leaving the coast until late April or early May, there was a strong possibility that he and his crew might miss the S or SW winds north of what is now called Exmouth Gulf. Instead of being carried to Java by a favourable wind, Volckersen and his crew could find themselves becalmed, possibly for weeks, thus running the risk of death by thirst or starvation. Against this background, Volckersen might well be forgiven if he were to become obsessed with the need for speed.

On the evening of the 23 February 1658, after fifty-four days at sea, the *Waeckende Boey* had reached the coast of what is now Western Australia and was cruising off-shore in the general vicinity of what are now called Floreat and City Beaches, waiting for the dawn. On the following day, with the parent ship anchored rather more than six miles off the coast, Leeman and his crew were sent to shore for the first time, probably landing at some point between Mullaloo Point and Trigg Island.15 After riding at anchor throughout the night of 24/25 February, by noon of the 25th, having most probably drifted on the off-shore current, the *Waeckende Boey* found herself some miles to the north, almost certainly in the vicinity of the haven now known as Two Rocks.16 Everything had gone smoothly up to this point. The light winds encountered so far had not been troublesome, the early morning easterly breeze may even have given Volckersen some sense of security, but had Volckersen been knowledgeable about the coast he might have realized that the growing WSW swell presaged a change in the weather. In this instance, however, Volckersen was lucky. Though the heavy swell caused the
The *Waeckende Boey* probably resembled the small three-masted *scheepken* to be seen towing a boat in the left foreground. Usually square-rigged and half-decked, this type of ocean-going vessel was often much larger than the galliot from which it was derived.

(By courtesy of the Rijksmuseum ‘Nederlands Scheepvaart Museum’, Amsterdam.)
Waeckende Boey to drag her anchor, the accompanying southerly breeze died away towards nightfall on 25 February, doubtless much to Volckersen's relief.

If Volckersen thought that the danger had passed, he was in for an unpleasant shock. The swell waves which the Waeckende Boey had ridden out were caused by a storm or trough of low pressure far to the south—perhaps two thousand miles away—in the region of the Antarctic. As the swell moves northwards much faster than the storm which generates it, there can be an interval of thirty-six or even forty-eight hours before the front itself passes through the coastal waters of Western Australia. Volckersen would be quite justified in expecting the swell to subside when a storm did not accompany the rising sea. Unfortunately for him, however, the conditions prevailing in northern waters are alien to the south. In consequence, Volckersen was not in a position to know that little more than forty-eight hours later he would find himself in the grip of a strong 'southerly buster'. On the contrary, the relatively mild and shifting winds he encountered during the interval may have given him a false sense of security. Though the swell remained strong enough to capsize the Waeckende Boey's towed schuyt as Volckersen sailed northwards the following day, the weather remained sufficiently good for the Waeckende Boey to continue her search. On 27 February the Waeckende Boey was able to come to anchor so that Leeman could make a cursory examination of the shore in the vicinity of the mouth of the Moore River and on the following day, having sailed further north still, Volckersen was able to send the boat once more to shore from an anchorage point about six miles NE of what is now the Wedge Island fishing settlement.

At this juncture Volckersen's luck ran out, never to return. By early afternoon of 28 February the skipper was in serious difficulties. The southerly breeze, which had deserted him the day before, returned with a vengeance as a 'strong wind' which continued to rise until, about 4 o'clock, the 'terribly high sea' caused the anchor warp to part. With Leeman and his party once more on board, Volckersen was forced to claw off the lee-shore and to seek sea room. According to his own computation as recorded in his log, Volckersen calculated that during the next two days the Waeckende Boey was driven a hundred miles out to sea in a WNW direction. Buffeted by squalls, struggling against rapidly-shifting winds, the Waeckende Boey tossed many miles off-shore throughout the subsequent fourteen days until, on 18 March, Volckersen thought it safe enough to approach the coast once more.

The evening of 18 March found the Waeckende Boey at anchor in good weather two miles off the sheltered north-east coast of Rottnest. That evening Volckersen sailed towards the coast so that the task of combing the shore could continue. During the next two days Volckersen in the Waeckende Boey moved northwards up the coast, as far as possible keeping within sight of Leeman and his men, thus double-checking the section of coastline they had encountered almost a month previously. However, the situation was far from being the same. The events of the next twenty-four hours were to prove that Volckersen's experiences during the past month had sapped his courage and warped his judgement.

Perhaps such a deterioration in the skipper was inevitable in the circumstances. Since reaching the coast of the Southland, Volckersen had faced every danger which Pelsaert had encountered on the same coast twenty-nine years before. Both men knew what it was like to have to moor off a lee-shore and then in heavy seas to lose an anchor. Both men knew the terror of having to claw off such a shore in a desperate attempt to gain enough sea room in which to weather savage and unpredictable winds. Both mariners had shared the experience of being carried too far north by both wind and current. In addition to these normal hazards, Volckersen must have been only too well aware that time was running out and that his margin of safety was narrowing. Perhaps too it was inevitable that
Leeman, the leader of the shore-party whose needs tied Volckersen to the dreaded coast, should bear the brunt of Volckersen’s anger when the skipper’s nerve finally broke.

This occurred during the early afternoon of 22 March 1658. According to Volckersen’s log, a little after noon that day the Waeckende Boey came close to land in the vicinity of Cape Leschenault, riding at some danger to herself about two or three miles off-shore between what are now known as the ‘Four Mile Reef’ and the ‘One Mile Reef’. Having been brought in-shore during the morning by the sea breeze, a breeze which experience had taught him could shift and strengthen at any moment, Volckersen’s nerves must have been on edge. By comparing Volckersen’s log with Leeman’s account, the events of the next few hours, which were to result in Leeman and his boat’s crew being left behind on the coast of the Southland, can be pieced together.

So far as we can judge, both records were entered up after the event: Volckersen’s probably in the early hours of the following morning when it seemed that Leeman and his party had been lost, Leeman’s possibly later still but certainly some time after he realized the ordeal he was about to face. In these circumstances, therefore, neither can be regarded as an unbiased or even complete account of the day’s happenings. Even if the most favourable interpretation is placed upon Volckersen’s own record of the day, the defects in the log are glaring. Amongst the many shortcomings of the text the absence of any reference to the violent quarrel between himself and Leeman is the most obvious. Omissions apart, it is virtually certain from present-day knowledge of the coast and the wind and sea conditions which prevail upon it that Volckersen’s record of the weather conditions on 22 March is a very abbreviated and oversimplified version of a swiftly-changing situation. At this point in the log, even Volckersen’s use of his own language arouses suspicions. In contrast to his usual bald and terse style, Volckersen became expansive, almost lyrical, in his account of the events of the afternoon. ‘Since it was very fine lovely weather and there was no appearance of the contrary we sent the same [Leeman’s boat] once more, being provisioned, ashore, where they arrived before sunset.’

If we examine this sentence in some detail, a number of points begin to emerge. First of all, Volckersen’s account of the weather until dusk on 22 March 1658 is too smooth and simplistic to be convincing. With the benefit of hindsight, the sequence of events was probably as follows. One of the last hot spells of the late summer season had brought in an early on-shore breeze, possibly at Beaufort strength two, and taking advantage of both this and high water by ten or eleven in the morning Volckersen was able to bring the Waeckende Boey relatively close inshore within sight of Cape Leschenault. Though we shall never know for certain, probably Volckersen crossed the ‘Four Mile Reef’ by the ‘Peak Hill Passage’ about seven miles NNW of what is now known as the Moore River. Noon thus found him hove to in a fairly hazardous position between the ‘Four Mile Reef’, which is far more of a continuous barrier than the R.A.N. Hydrographic Service chart suggests, and the ‘One Mile Reef’. To give Volckersen the credit due to him, it could be said that by so doing he was attempting to give the shore-party the close support required of him by both direct orders and common humanity. On the other hand, however, Volckersen may well have been willing to chance the weather in order to hasten the search for survivors. Perhaps Volckersen was swayed by both considerations, though which of the two was uppermost in his mind we shall never know.

Then the unforeseen occurred. The wind switched to the SSW, causing the sea to rise. Experience of the coastal conditions in late March would suggest that this change occurred in early to mid-afternoon, probably at some time between one and two-thirty. At this point there occurs a major discrepancy between Volcker-
sen's and Leeman's account, and, though of course we can never be absolutely certain, it is the Uppersteersman's account which rings true. According to Leeman, the breeze freshened from the SSW during the afternoon and it was this potential threat, coupled with a rising sea, which impelled him to leave the shore to seek the safety of the \textit{Waeckende Boey}. Volckersen, on the other hand maintained that it was only with darkness that the wind began to freshen from the SSW. More important still, the skipper's log seems calculated to convey the impression that it was only during the early evening that the wind and weather had deteriorated to such an extent that the ship's officers had fears for the boat's safety. Throughout the daylight hours, according to Volckersen's own account of the day's events, there had been 'very fine lovely weather' and even when Leeman and his crew, having returned unsummoned from their search, were about to be sent shorewards once more the captain wrote in his log that 'there was no appearance of the contrary'. The skipper then concluded his single sentence account of the incident by stating that Leeman's boat 'being provisioned' reached the shore before sunset.

Even with the most favourable construction being placed upon it, Volckersen's record of the time at which the various events of the day occurred is inadequate to the point of systematic evasion and concealment. Almost certainly the weather had changed some hours before Volckersen admitted the fact and had become threatening far earlier in the day than the skipper obviously intended to note. So far as we can judge at this distance in time, the sequence of events may have been as follows. When the sea breeze shifted to the SSW in the early afternoon Volckersen realized that he could no longer remain hove to or under short sail between the two reefs. Even without a report from the masthead, the seas would be beginning to break on the 'Four Mile Reef' which stood between him and the relative safety of the open sea beyond it. From north to south, as far as the eye could see, the 'Four Mile Reef' would have revealed itself as a belt of foam-flecked water. Though the breeze at this time was blowing at less than eight or ten knots, Volckersen knew that he had to get out of these shoalwaters as soon as possible and was probably about to set sail when Leeman's boat was seen approaching from shore. Volckersen thus found himself in a dilemma. On the one hand, his knowledge of the coast and his seamanship demanded that he should gain searoom immediately, on the other hand he could not leave Leeman behind as he had been almost forced to do on the afternoon of 28 February. Apparently, therefore, in a frenzy of impatience the skipper was forced to wait for Leeman to report. The violent quarrel, ending in Volckersen's accusing Leeman of cowardice, occurred when Leeman made it clear that he did not intend to return to shore and was apparently in process of trans-shipping the remainder of his crew's provisions prior to the boat being swung inboard—or so he expected.

As is clear from both logs, Leeman was once more sent to land. According to Leeman's own log, which becomes fairly detailed at this point, he and his crew were dispatched shorewards towards evening when there was little daylight left. Almost certainly the Uppersteersman was telling the truth and the credibility of Leeman's account is reinforced by the taint of self-justification which is detectable in Volckersen's log at this point. The skipper's apparent need to record that Leeman's boat was provisioned (surely a routine procedure not worth explicit reference) suggests the contrary, and Volckersen was almost certainly lying when he claimed that Leeman and his men reached shore 'before sunset' (he was in no position to see this from six miles off-shore and in bad visibility). Truth or evasion apart, the consequences were horrifying for Leeman and his thirteen men. In a boat no more than eight metres in length, heavily-laden and with a low freeboard at the waist, the Uppersteersman and his crew were left to battle out the night in the shoalwaters off what is now known as Cape Leschenault. With the wind gusting to twenty-five or thirty knots, hammered by a rising wind swell, in
constant danger of being swamped by unpredictable cross-seas, the fact that
Leeman and his crew survived the night is little short of miraculous.

Who was responsible for Leeman and his men being left behind to live or die
on the coast of the Southland? The Uppersteersman himself, according to his log
for 22 March, was in no doubt. Rather more than a third of the total entry for
that date (drawn up, we believe, when Leeman had gained the temporary safety
of Sand Knoll Ledge some thirty-six hours later) is occupied by a diatribe against
Volckersen for his inhumane actions, the bulk dating from the previous month
when, on 28 February, Leeman and his crew had only regained the ship with
difficulty and with no help from Volckersen. In contrast to the later entries in the
log, drawn up when it seems that Leeman and his crew were refitting their boat
on Lancelin Island, the form and tone of Leeman’s log for this day more closely
resembles a libel of articles drawn up against Volckersen by a lawyer than a pro-
fessional seaman’s impartial record of one day’s events. Almost certainly, for some
time before Leeman and his men were virtually marooned on the coast of what is
now Western Australia there had been some friction between the skipper and his
Uppersteersman. Judging by their respective logs, Leeman was better-educated,
possibly younger, and probably socially superior to Volckersen. In these circum-
stances, it would have been wiser for Leeman to show himself aware of, even
sympathetic to, Volckersen’s fears for the safety of the Waeckende Boey and its
crew. Even if Leeman had detested his skipper, it would have been wiser for the
Uppersteersman to have left a demonstrably impartial record, especially if he had
an eye to its being used subsequently, possibly in some court of enquiry. As it was,
Leeman makes no reference to Volckersen’s justifiable fears for the safety of his
ship hove to or under short sail between two highly dangerous reefs, nor does the
Uppersteersman mention the need for a speedy completion of the search on shore.
Furthermore, Leeman’s record of the day suggests that at times he himself could
be foolhardy to the point of crassness. During his quarrel with Volckersen over
the state of the weather, Leeman’s appeal to the secretary over the skipper’s head
was at best tactless. By so doing, Leeman gave the impression that he wished
Volckersen to be overruled and his orders for the boat returned to shore counter-
manded. Though in many situations the ship’s council’s judgement was superior to
that of the captain’s, this was certainly not the case when the handling of the ship
in difficult situations was involved. All that the Uppersteersman achieved by this
ploy was to antagonize an already frightened man, and in so doing strengthen
Volckersen’s resolve to have his own orders—mistaken or not—carried out to the
letter.

In retrospect, however, though Volckersen’s action in once more ordering the
boat to shore may have been insensitive to the point of brutality, there were some
extenuating circumstances. First of all, and here there can be little dispute,
Volckersen’s overriding concern had to be to ensure the safety of the Waeckende
Boey. Even if the wind had not changed direction, he could not have maintained
his position between the two reefs throughout the coming hours of darkness.
Circumstances, therefore, did not allow him the luxury of wasting time in a pro-
longed argument or even discussion with Leeman. The skipper’s obsession with the
safety of his ship goes some way towards explaining—if not excusing—the
cavalier manner in which Volckersen apparently dismissed Leeman’s justifiable
concern for his boat’s crew. From his experience in his home waters the captain
would have known that the shallower the in-shore waters happened to be the
sooner a freshening wind would cause a choppy sea dangerous to small boats.
Further, he must have been aware that the height of breaking waves is notoriously
hard to estimate from seawards. Seen in this light Volckersen’s apparent failure to
call for a report from the masthead undoubtedly amounts to culpable negligence.
These twin islets were probably Leeman's haven between 23 March and 26 March 1658. Coming from the south (the extreme left of the picture), Leeman's boat struck the flat reef, which can be seen just awash, and was man-handled between the two stacks (one half obscured at the foot of the larger islet) into the comparative shelter of the leeside of the islets.

'... she ran so fast that with the terrible strength of the sea we were hurled over the rocks as far as a pistol shot. As we passed through in this way, we received a jarring shock on a rock in the surf; ... I clung to the boat, crying for help to bring her in and with main strength we got her through the rocks on to the beach.'

(Leeman's Journal, 23 March 1658.)
Nevertheless, even then some defence can be proffered for the skipper. An astute defence counsel might argue that Volckersen's actions were warranted by his earlier experience of weather conditions on the coast. If the captain's appraisal of the weather, based on previous observation and reasonable expectation, turned out to be false then no great blame could be attached to the skipper. Soon after Volckersen's first encounter with the coast of Western Australia towards the end of the previous month, the *Waackende Boey* had been endangered by a sudden heavy swell from the WSW. Despite this, there had been a two-day interval before a southerly gale had driven them many miles out to sea. It could be maintained that it was quite legitimate for Volckersen to expect the same pattern of events to repeat itself little more than three weeks later. If the skipper believed that he still had two days of reasonable weather in hand this would explain why he forced Leeman ashore against his will. If Leeman were to press on with his search the next forty-eight hours might see some positive results for all their efforts. Without these Volckersen knew that it would be hard to justify himself before the authorities in Batavia.

Perhaps the greatest accusation which can be levelled against Volckersen is that he appears to have been willing to gamble with the lives of his crew though not with his own.

The tone of self-justification which characterizes Volckersen's account of the 22 and 23 March suggests that he was conscious that his judgement of the weather had been wrong. In contrast to the events of late February, there had been no lull. Within a matter of hours wind and sea had risen to such heights that it was obvious that they were already in the grip of the storm. Though these sudden southerly squalls usually blow themselves out within twenty-four hours, few small boats could be expected to survive as long. Conditions on the coast are such that a twenty-knot wind blowing for twelve hours will cause two-metre-high waves, waves sufficiently large to swamp any heavily laden small craft caught at sea, especially one with a freeboard as low as Leeman's boat. Thus even before night fell on 22 March 1658, Leeman would have found himself in a highly dangerous position. Though he may not have been faced with waves quite as large as two metres in the relatively sheltered waters within the 'Four Mile Reef' off Cape Leschenault, wave-height in itself was not his greatest fear. As Leeman beat up and down in the surf throughout the night, naturally doing his utmost to keep either his bow or his stern to the seas coming from the SSW, he would be aware that the shallower the water he was in the steeper would become the waves. Even discounting cross-seas whose approach the Uppersteersman could no longer pick out, as the night wore on the waves would begin to break more and more viciously and unpredictably, reducing yet again their meagre chance of survival.

Despite the odds, Leeman and his boat's crew lived to see the dawn of 23 March 1658. Daylight, however, could have brought them little comfort as the growing visibility would only have served to show them just how dangerous a position they were in. By dawn the SSW wind may have been gusting at gale force (39 to 46 knots), and even if the boat was not swamped first, their chances of avoiding being driven on to the 'Four Mile Reef' were slim indeed. This was Volckersen's conclusion, looking landwards from a position some miles out to sea from Ledge Point, and everything pointed to his being right. To Leeman the seaward reef would appear as an unbroken belt of savagely-breaking waves stretching north and south as far as the eye could see, yet, driven before a strong-togale-force wind, Leeman had no option but to steer to the ENE, keeping his stern to the following sea. By seven o'clock, or soon after, yet another disaster had
struck Leeman. His rudder fastenings were severely damaged, probably as a result of an unexpected cross-sea, so that it became impossible to steer into the wind. The Uppersteersman had no option but to fly before the wind, using oars over the stern to achieve some degree of manœuvrability. Well might Leeman insist on communal prayers at this juncture: he and his men could expect no help from any other quarter.

Nevertheless, they survived. By nine o’clock, or soon afterwards, Leeman was able to escape from the shoalwaters of what is now known as Breton Bay. Though we cannot be absolutely certain, Leeman and his crew probably reached the open sea through the Ledge Point Passage. Once outside the reef, the Uppersteersman almost certainly stood out to sea for a distance of at least six miles from the shoreline in order to avoid broken water. His experience of coastal waters would have already taught him that heavy seas—at the height of the gale possibly sixteen feet in height from trough to crest—could break unpredictably at the fifteen fathom line or even beyond. Leeman’s main preoccupation would be, therefore, to keep well to seawards of the combers and cross-waves which are a major hazard in all shoalwaters. By so doing, however, he was soon to realize that he was to expose himself to yet another danger.

Now well clear of the land, and the intermittent protection it afforded, the Uppersteersman found his boat exposed to the full rigours of both wind and wave. Almost certainly, even with only a storm sail set, the gusting winds would make the boat terribly difficult to handle. Driven before the gale, and sailing on a broad reach, the boat was in constant danger of being caught by gusts of strong gale force. A sudden gust of forty or forty-five knots could easily pick up a shallow-draught boat, causing it to surf down the shoulder of a heavy sea, and finally forcing its bow so deep into the trough that the boat would be swamped. Even if Leeman had sufficient time to loosen the sheet and so prevent this, an unexpected cross-wave also could be the end of them all. If such a wave were to catch them on either the port or starboard quarter, the inevitable result would be that the boat would swing broadside to the oncoming wave, broach-to and then fill as the wave passed over them all. Sodden, exhausted and terrified, Leeman and his men were driven northwards before the gale throughout the greater part of what must have been one of the most harrowing days of their lives. Finally, about four or five in the afternoon of 23 March 1658, the Uppersteersman was able to run the gauntlet of breaking seas and beach his craft on an off-shore island.

Which island gave them shelter? From a first reading of Leeman’s journal, the description of two islets linked by a strand is far too vague to allow a positive identification to be made. Such features, relics of Pleistocene sand dunes, are a fairly common feature of the coastline between what is now Dongara and Lancelin, and though attempts have been made to identify ‘Leeman’s Island’, the matter has never been finally resolved. The four most obvious candidates, running from north to south, would have to be the Fisherman Islands, Sand Knoll Ledge, the middle and south Cervantes Islands and, lastly, the Green Islets. These range in order from approximately seventy to about thirty-seven miles from Cape Leschenault in whose vicinity Leeman almost certainly rode out the night of 22/23 March. In reviewing these possibilities, it seems that the Fisherman Islands are almost certainly too far north for Leeman to have reached in one day’s sail. The boat would have had to average at least seven knots an hour throughout the hours of daylight, a speed which, though not absolutely impossible for short periods during the height of the gale, would seem to be too high an average speed for a boat of Leeman’s length and rig.

Other considerations too seem to reduce the chances of Leeman having found temporary shelter on the Fisherman Islands. The main features of the islands as seen today do not seem to tally with the Uppersteersman’s thumb-nail sketch of
his refuge. Leeman noted that when approached from a southerly direction, his haven first appeared as ‘two high hills in the sea’ which, when approached more closely, were seen to be ‘two rocks’ linked by a strand of grey sand. In contrast to this quite specific note, the profile of the Fisherman Islands when viewed from almost any point of the compass is far different, resembling more a pair of inverted saucers than anything else. Furthermore, contrary to Leeman’s experience, no sand has ever been known to accumulate on the reef which connects the islands even after the calmest of summers. What, however, seems to clinch the matter is that the range and type of features which Leeman noted as he was being driven north are not easily picked out either in the vicinity of the Fisherman Islands or in the in-shore waters for some miles to their south. In contrast to Leeman’s precise description of the ‘much broken land, rocks, islands and sand-banks, through and past which we had come . . .’, there are no major sand-bars in the vicinity of the Fisherman Islands, no prominent stacks, and no group of islands within ten miles of this, the most northerly of their possible havens.

In much the same way it seems possible to exclude the Cervantes Islands from the list. First of all they lie comparatively close to shore and so it is far from certain that Leeman would have been able to identify them as islands, and, even had he been able to do so, it is doubtful whether he would have seen them as a possible refuge. In the wind and weather conditions outlined by the log, Leeman and his crew would have been forced to cross nearly two miles of savagely-breaking water between the ten-fathom line and the islands themselves before he could pick out any possible landing site. It is doubtful if any experienced seaman would have endangered his boat in such a gamble. At a more minor level, the lack of any pronounced strand linking the islands, coupled with dissimilarities in profile between the Uppersteersman’s description of his twin islets and that of the Cervantes Islands, would seem to suggest that this last group did not provide a refuge for Leeman.

The choice, then, seems to be between Sand Knoll Ledge in the north and the Green Islets much further south. At first sight it seems difficult to opt for either one or the other site. Both appear to be within the sailing range of Leeman’s boat. If the Uppersteersman’s craft could maintain an average speed of five knots during the course of the day then the Green Islets could be reached in just over seven hours from a point near Cape Leschenault. By the same computation, Sand Knoll Ledge could be reached in daylight, most probably after ten hours under canvas. Both islets in each group are connected by a relatively smooth reef on which the sand builds up during the summer months to form a bar between the islands. However, whereas the sand-bar connecting the islets of Sand Knoll Ledge appears intermittently, usually being most in evidence after a relatively calm summer, that connecting the Green Islets is very pronounced and has never been known to wash away completely. Thus, the most obvious choice for Leeman’s landfall would seem to be the Green Islets rather than Sand Knoll Ledge.

There is, however, another side to the argument. First of all, the Green Islets are so close to the shore that Leeman probably did not identify them as islands from a course held five or more miles further out to sea. Even had he done so, and judged them to be a possible haven, any attempt to reach them would have been highly dangerous. Even at the height of a gale, when the wind tends to inhibit seas actually breaking beyond the fifteen fathom line, combers can occur as much as two miles to the seaward side of these islets. Nor were breaking seas well off-shore the only hazard which the Uppersteersman would have noted. Even if he had been willing to run the risk of being swamped more than four miles off-shore during his approach, a sight from his mast would have shown him that he still had to face a thousand metres of white water between the ten fathom line and the dubious safety of the Green Islets.
DETAIL OF SAND KNOLL LEDGE
(The southern end of the larger islet, photographed in April 1976)

The cave which sheltered Leeman and his men.

'I went upon the mountain and looked out to sea ... I then saw the rocks through which we had passed, rising above the water as high as a man, ...

'Towards evening we again gathered under the rock to rest and wait for the day.'

(Leeman's Journal, 24 and 25 March 1658.)
Other factors also seem to combine to reduce the likelihood of Leeman’s landfall being the Green Islets. First of all, in contrast to Leeman’s insistence on his haven appearing first as high hills in the sea which later resolved themselves into rocks,\textsuperscript{35} the profile of the Green Islets, even when seen from as far away as six or seven miles, is much more smooth and gentle. From any point of the compass, the islets more closely resemble two inverted dishes than any other shape or form. Secondly, many of the features which Leeman records do not seem to appear at the Green Islets. There are no rocks ‘as high as a man’\textsuperscript{36} standing above the reef connecting the islands; there is no clearly-distinguishable ‘berg’\textsuperscript{37} or summit on either island; there is no one position where the eolianite limestone is sufficiently weathered or cross-bedded to provide a rock-shelter for fourteen men.\textsuperscript{38} Further, the view from the Green Islets does not seem to correspond to that noted by Leeman in his log. In contrast to Leeman’s ‘broken land’ seen at a fair distance, the profile of the mainland as seen from the islets is relatively smooth for some miles both to the north and the south. This is why the North and South Hummocks form such a prominent feature of the area. Lastly, and most telling of all, the detailed description of the shoalwaters to the south of the islets which appears in Leeman’s log for 26 March cannot be made to tally with the eleven mile stretch of coastline running south from the Green Islets to Wedge Island. There are no clearly-distinguishable sand-bars in this area. No major islands occur. At most, only Red Rock (a minor stack) or Flat Rock (close in-shore and less than half an acre in size) would be sufficiently distinct to warrant inclusion in the log. In short, it seems that there are too many features clearly noted in the log, but missing from the islets or their surroundings, to warrant the choice of the Green Islets.

There now remain the twin islets which compose Sand Knoll Ledge. Rising from a broad, relatively flat reef which stretches for more than a mile on a north-south axis, the two rocks are set about a hundred metres apart, the smaller and most southerly being about fifty metres to the seaward of the other, much larger, island. This last isle, roughly cigar-shaped and about two hundred metres in length, shows all the karst features associated with calcareous dune rock or eolianite. The whole island is seamed by deep clefts and fissures, studded with fractured solution pipes, and most striking of all, the southern section is capped by a thick travertinised crust some twenty to thirty metres in length which forms the roof of a large cave. Apart from this shelter, which extends the whole width of the island and could easily have accommodated the whole of Leeman’s crew, the islets are exposed to the winds from all quarters. Sun-scorched, waterless and almost barren, even on the calmest of days the hostile aspect of the islands is enough to daunt the bravest spirit.

Yet the fact remains that of the four possible choices, Sand Knoll Ledge seems to be the most probable landfall for Leeman during the late afternoon of 23 March 1658. Though, of course, final proof will always be lacking, such inferences as can be drawn from the Uppersteersman’s log point to this conclusion. Having run before a southerly gale for at least half the day, holding a course six or more miles off-shore, the first approachable refuge that Leeman would see could only have been Sand Knoll Ledge. Situated 3.7 miles off-shore\textsuperscript{39}—twice as far out to sea as the Green Islets\textsuperscript{40}—the Knoll appears from the south exactly as the Uppersteersman describes it in his log. Probably owing to the effect of refraction, from five or six miles away the Knoll does appear first of all as ‘two high hills in the sea’ though neither island stands more than seven metres above sea level; then, as the distance closes to two or three miles, the hills resolve themselves into two rocks. Finally, and only when Leeman was committed to attempting to beach his craft on the Knoll, would the strand linking the two islets come into view.
The question now arises: from which direction did Leeman approach the Knoll? Did the Uppersteersman reach it from the open sea, having kept well clear of the shoalwaters, or had Leeman already crossed the 'Four Mile Reef' by early afternoon and was he thus forced to attempt a landing from in-shore waters? Unfortunately, as Leeman's log is far from being explicit on this point, and as the general configuration of the Knoll is much the same whether seen from either the SSW or SSE, we shall probably never know for certain. Nevertheless, present-day meteorological and hydrographic knowledge of the area in which Leeman found himself is sufficient to warrant at least a reasoned guess. Perhaps, therefore, it may be possible to reconstruct the events of the afternoon of 23 March with some degree of confidence.

By early afternoon the worst of the squall was almost certainly over. The gale had most probably blown itself out, leaving Leeman and his crew to battle with a strong wind in its stead. Paradoxically, the falling wind may have added to the dangers which Leeman faced rather than reduced them. As the wind lessened, the seas—many of them four or more metres in height—would become steeper, break sooner, and even more dangerous still, would tend to break unpredictably. This factor alone must have had some bearing on the course held by Leeman, especially as from noon onwards he must have become increasingly concerned with finding some sort of haven for the coming night. Thus it seems fair to assume that however far out to sea he had thought it prudent to sail during the morning, by early afternoon he would have been forced to approach the coast and the formidable line of breakers which marked the beginning of the shoalwaters.

With this in mind, it is tempting to assume that, sailing ENE or NE, he made his landfall on Sand Knoll Ledge from seaward, being thrown over the broad marine platform which links the two islets. At first sight this seems to be the most obvious approach for Leeman, especially as deeper water comes much closer inshore at Sand Knoll Ledge than elsewhere to the south. From a cursory glance at the Hydrographic Survey chart it seems that at the very most Leeman would have had to run the gauntlet of about a thousand metres of broken water, about a quarter of the distance which had separated him from safety at the Green Isles. Nevertheless, other considerations have to be weighed, the most important being the probable height of the seas through which Leeman had to sail to make his landfall. Even on the calmest day, seas between one and two metres high break continually on the seaward side of Sand Knoll Ledge. Following a gale, or even a high wind lasting some hours, seas of up to five metres thunder on to the reef which links the two islets. Even with both luck and skill on his side, it seems doubtful whether Leeman's boat could have survived such a landing.

However, the Uppersteersman's log does suggest that the boat may have reached the islets from another, more southerly direction. To achieve this, Leeman would have had to approach Sand Knoll Ledge from within the shoalwater bounded by the 'Four Mile Reef', rather than from the deeper waters to seaward. Such a course is far from being unlikely. First of all, Leeman would have known from his experiences in northern waters that during or after any storm a landfall on any island is best secured from the protected, leeward, direction. To run, therefore, on to any off-shore island from directly seawards was to invite disaster. In these circumstances, by early afternoon Leeman must have known that he would have to brave the 'Four Mile Reef' if he were to seek shelter and, though we shall never be sure, about this time of day Leeman may have seen his chance and reached in-shore waters through a gap approximately two miles north of Big Wave Reef. Having done so, Leeman found himself about two miles due south of Sand Knoll Ledge, in four to five fathoms of water, hemmed in by breaking seas off his port beam and still forced to run before the wind and sea. During the next hour or more, the Uppersteersman and his terrified crew struggled northwards skirting...
rocks and shoals\textsuperscript{41} until finally, between four and five in the afternoon, they were able to gain refuge on the two rocky islets now called, we believe, Sand Knoll Ledge. Overwhelmed by their deliverance, the crew were 'overjoyed as if they had found a new life'\textsuperscript{42} and later that afternoon showed their appreciation of Leeman's seamanship by bringing him roasted gulls and seal's meat.

The Uppersteersman had earned their esteem. Though Leeman was too modest to stress the fact, the survival of both ship and crew once they were amongst the shoals was largely the result of his own courage and consummate seamanship. With the wind falling and in shallower waters, the Uppersteersman now found himself having to contend with steep-sided cycloidal waves in a boat already damaged. Everything now depended on Leeman's handling of his craft. The Uppersteersman would know that at all costs he had to maintain absolute control of his boat's position and speed relative to the following breakers. Despite being battered, numbed, and exhausted, Leeman's foresight and skill were such that even before entering the shoals his log shows that he had already done all in his power to prepare for their ordeal. By hoisting the jib he not only improved the boat's stability but also had at his disposal a reserve of speed. By having a canvas fashioned into a rough drogue, a crude 'throttle' may have been devised.

In theory, at any rate, the sailing technique in in-shore waters was simplicity itself. By alternately setting and tripping the drogue, the boat's speed could be controlled in such a way that minor waves could be allowed to pass harmlessly under the keel and bigger waves might be ridden in safety. The drogue, acting as a throttle, could be used to keep the boat at a constant speed just behind the shoulder of major waves as they ran, thus preventing the boat from either sliding backwards into the trough of the following wave or being picked up and thrown by the accelerating crest of the wave on which they were riding. Though a split-second error in timing or a moment's hesitation could have caused disaster, luck as well as the Uppersteersman's skill were with the boat and its crew. And so night found the Uppersteersman and his men huddled under a rock on what is almost certainly Sand Knoll Ledge.

Even disregarding the question of distance, which seems to rule out the Fisherman Islands, the topography of Sand Knoll Ledge points to this island being Leeman's refuge. Of all the islands between Lancelin and Dongara, the features mentioned in Leeman's log are most easily picked out on Sand Knoll Ledge. Two stacks rising from the reef connecting the two islets clearly fit the Uppersteersman's reference to rocks 'as high as a man' between which they had beached their craft; the karst features on the main rock provides 'the hollows' in which Leeman's men found the gulls;\textsuperscript{43} the nights spent 'under the rock' were most probably passed in the cave under the travertinised capstone mentioned above. When Leeman 'went upon the mountain' it was probably to the summit of this capstone that he scrambled, the highest point on either islet. Perhaps Leeman's use of the word 'berg' to describe this look-out may come as a surprise, but the Dutch use of the word is rather elastic and, in any event, what would count with Leeman would be the profile of the rock and its height relative to the rest of the islet. However, what does seem to clinch the identification is that at all points of the compass Leeman's description of his surroundings match those in the vicinity of Sand Knoll Ledge and, in our opinion, nowhere else.

When approaching what we believe to be Sand Knoll Ledge, the Uppersteersman noted 'some broken land, a fair distance away from the mainland and directly ahead'.\textsuperscript{44} First seen most probably from the mast of Leeman's boat, this land was almost certainly the irregular outline of the Essex Rocks merging with the islands of the Jurien Bay group and then with North Head beyond. This offshore feature would be clearly distinct from the coastline trending to the NNW dominated by the high, whale-backed ridge of the Gairdner Range. Appearing to
the north as a broken line on the horizon, Leeman's attention would be drawn to it because the profile would be strikingly similar to parts of the Breton coast, a coastline with which Leeman may well have been familiar. Again, the objects which the Uppersteersman saw from the roof of the cave on the morning of 25 March are easily identifiable more than three centuries later. Leeman recorded that he looked first to seaward, which almost certainly means in the southerly direction from which he had approached the island.45 First of all, looking down on to the reef system which connects the two islets, the two man-high stacks caught his eye. One was virtually at his feet, the other about fifty metres away and rather to his left, standing at the root of a tongue of reef which projected a hundred or more metres from the main marine platform and in a general SE direction. It seems most likely that Leeman had first beached his craft on the southerly edge of this tongue, subsequently man-handling the boat over the reef between the two rocks and into the shelter of the main islet. A glance showed that the falling wind had resulted in an even wider belt of broken water off the southerly edge of this tongue of reef, thus making it impossible to leave the island in this direction.

Nevertheless, and as the Uppersteersman was quick to see, this tongue of reef stretching landwards protected some yards of the shoreward-facing edge of the broad marine platform on which the islets stood. No more than thirty metres wide, bounded to the north and south by the two stacks 'as high as a man', this inlet is almost certainly the 'opening ... very foul and full of rocks'46 through which the boat left the island on the morning of 26 March 1658, heading shorewards in an easterly direction.

III

So once more Leeman was forced to face the danger lurking in the shoalwaters. The most striking thing about the Uppersteersman's log for this day is that, despite all the dangers he and his crew faced, the accuracy of the journal is unimpaired. Having man-handled the boat over the edge of the broad marine platform into the relatively sheltered water of the inlet, Leeman made for the shore. In so doing, Leeman seems to have been taking a calculated risk. Apparently he had weighed the dangers of crossing over three miles of shoalwater against the expectation of finding a deeper channel close in-shore, a channel usually produced by the scouring action of breaking waves on a sandy beach. By the time that Leeman was in a position to know that his gamble had failed, he and his crew were committed to sailing as directly SSE as they could, seeing during the day 'much broken land, rocks, islands and sand-banks, through and past which we had come ... which we had not seen before because of the roughness of the sea ...'.47

This is a strikingly accurate description of the shoalwaters between what are now known as Booker Valley, about five miles south of Jurien Bay, and Kangaroo Point a similar distance south of Cervantes. As Leeman sailed towards the coast, he obviously scanned his surroundings from north to south. To the north he once more noted the 'broken land', the line of misty grey hummocks which represented the islands of the Jurien Bay group with North Head beyond. Then, as he tacked in a SE direction towards the coast, his attention would then be focussed on the rock-strewn Ronsard Bay through which he had to pass if he were to reach the wreck-site some miles to the south.48 Having skirted Death Valley and Emu Rocks during his passage shorewards, Leeman found himself having to sail between the Scylla of the Ronsard Bay sand-bars and the Charybdis of the three main groups of Ronsard Rocks. Between Black Point and Thirsty Point, which is just south of the Cervantes settlement, a series of sand-bars project directly seawards from the
coast. A mile or even more in length, in places a metre or less below the surface, their discovery in an area in which he had hoped to find clear water must have come as an unpleasant shock for Leeman. Possibly the Uppersteersman was forced seawards, then finding himself having to tack perilously between the Ronsard Rocks and Big Wave Reef. For over two miles Leeman and his crew were in the greatest danger: not until the shoals round Thirsty Point and the Cervantes Islands had been left behind could he afford to take further stock of his surroundings. Even then his breathing space was very short because about three miles south of Thirsty Point the boat would become enmeshed once more amongst the rocks and shoals off Kangaroo Point.

Throughout the day, with leeboards lowered, the Uppersteersman’s craft battled to the south, first tacking against a SE breeze and then, later in the day, against the prevailing SW wind. Most probably, Leeman’s boat could sail no nearer than 60° to the true wind, so for every mile gained in a southerly direction the Uppersteersman would have found himself being forced to tack a distance of between 1.4 and 1.8 miles. After a day under sail, Leeman and his crew were able to struggle ashore on an island ‘about a cannon-shot from the mainland’. Though both Wedge Island and Lancelin Island are certainly within an aimed cannon-shot of the shore, the weight of probability seems to indicate that Leeman and his crew spent the night of 26 March 1658 huddled under the bushes on Wedge Island. The difficulty which the Uppersteersman had in getting ashore and his use of the grapnel suggests that the island was in relatively open water, fully exposed to the winds and with no natural coves for shelter. This description fits Wedge Island but not Lancelin, the more southerly island. There a NW passage between the island and the mainland offers a relatively sheltered approach to boats coming from a northerly direction. Further, in contrast to Wedge Island, on the landward side of Lancelin there is a large sandy beach where a boat can be drawn up in perfect safety.

Nevertheless, the most telling factor in favour of Wedge Island being Leeman’s overnight resting-place seems to be, once more, the question of distance. The distance as the crow flies from Sand Knoll Ledge to Wedge Island is almost twenty-four miles. However, Leeman’s shoreward sail and his violently evasive manoeuvres in Ronsard Bay probably added at least another six or eight miles to the tally. If, as seems probable, the vessel had to tack a distance of between 1.4 and 1.8 miles to gain each mile in a southerly direction, then the boat would have had to cover between forty-two and fifty-four miles in order to reach Wedge Island in one day. Though this distance seems to have been within the sailing ability of Leeman’s boat, in the wind conditions outlined by Leeman a much greater distance probably was not. In order to reach Lancelin Island, which is nearly twelve and a half miles south of Wedge Island, Leeman would have had to sail a further seventeen, eighteen, or even twenty-two miles. Though a day’s sail of between sixty and seventy-six miles may have been just possible in ideal wind conditions, in the weather outlined by Leeman in his log for 26 March, such a journey seems improbable. On these grounds we may be fairly safe in assuming that Leeman and his crew spent an anxious night on Wedge Island.

On the following day, and with the wind once more blowing from the SE, the Uppersteersman continued to sail as directly south as he could in the hope of seeing the Waeckende Boey. Leeman well knew that his best chance of survival, probably his only chance, was to return to the approximate position from which he had last been sent ashore. If Volckersen was obeying the East India Company’s orders for search and recovery, Leeman could expect to find the parent ship still in the area even though six days had gone by since he and Volckersen had lost contact. So far as we can estimate from the log, by early or mid-afternoon on 27 March Leeman and his crew were in the most northerly part of Breton Bay,
most probably quite close in-shore and three or four miles south of Ledge Point. In order to reach this position from Wedge Island, a distance of approximately twenty-three miles as the crow flies, Leeman may have been forced to tack between thirty and forty miles according to the formula outlined above. If he embarked from Wedge Island at dawn, and assuming that the boat could average a speed of five knots during most of the day, it would have taken the Upper-steersman and his crew between six and eight hours to reach the vicinity of the wreck-site. Once there, the boat's crew must have been bitterly disappointed not to see the Waeckende Boey somewhere off-shore.

So far as we can judge, by this time it must have been between one and three in the afternoon. Obviously, before long another resting-place for the coming night had to be found. Though Leeman makes no reference to it, by now the customary on-shore breeze would have arisen, edging the boat somewhat to the north, so the island which the crew saw to the north and to which they sailed could only have been the present-day Lancelin Island. Moreover, the description of the island and its surroundings as recorded in Leeman's journal seems to confirm this identification. Almost certainly approaching Lancelin Island on a NE to NNE tack, Leeman's terse note that 'the water round it was found to be dangerous, being full of rocks . . . ' is an all too accurate description of the reef-festooned waters between Edwards Island and Lancelin Island itself. Once there, however, having most probably sailed through what is now known as the 'Hole in the Wall' passage just to the north of Edwards Island, Leeman would have found himself able to moor in complete safety off the large sandy bay facing the mainland.

Lancelin Island, like Wedge Island, lies an aimed cannon-shot from shore, but it is fair to say that here the similarity ends. With no safe beaches, exposed, relatively barren and with little sand cover to conserve water, Wedge Island would have been an inhospitable landfall. In contrast to this, however, on what is almost certainly Lancelin Island, Leeman and his crew found some support. Though the Uppersteersman does not mention the fact, within the previous eight or ten days there must have been a substantial amount of rain because Leeman and his crew were able to obtain a diminishing quantity of drinkable water from holes dug in the sand above the high-water mark. In addition, sturdy shrubs growing in sheltered positions provided them with ample fuel and small timber, and, though the deep sand mantle which covers large sections of the crest of the island concealed the mutton-birds in their burrows, another more fortunate result was that it encouraged the growth of a water-filled plant called by Leeman 'sea celery' which the crew were able to stew with their seals' meat. A temporary respite had indeed been granted them. All that remained was to wait and see whether or not Volckersen was still in the area looking for them.

On the evening of the following day, 28 March 1658, it must have seemed to Leeman that God had indeed answered their prayers. A rescue vessel was seen about to come to anchor less than six miles away. In response to a signal gun Leeman lit a huge fire, almost certainly on the north headland of Lancelin Island, whilst another of his crew walked along the beach below the bluff holding blazing branches in order to be seen. Obviously, their deliverance was only a matter of hours away. Leeman must have been beside himself with joy. Though the Uppersteersman was far too devout a man to forget God's providence, he would have been less than human if he had not felt also that his judgement of the situation had been correct. His courage, foresight and seamanship had been rewarded. God had indeed helped those who had had the initiative and resolution to help themselves.

The disappearance of the vessel sometime during that night would have come as the most cruel blow imaginable. Dawn showed an empty sea. Leeman and his
crew could be forgiven if it seemed to them that God and man had conspired to reject them.

This disaster was to prove to be the turning point of all their lives. Against all the odds, Leeman was to survive to rejoin his countrymen in Java. His testimony, moreover, was judged sufficient to make the Dutch authorities contemplate taking legal proceedings against Volckersen. Though there is no evidence as yet that a trial took place, with employers as unbending as the Dutch East India Company, suspicion would be enough to destroy Volckersen’s career as it had done Pelsaert’s before him.

How far was Volckersen to blame for marooning Leeman and his crew on Lancelin Island? It is clear from Volckersen’s log that the ship which the Upper-steersman and his men saw was the Waeckende Boey which, having been carried south through nearly two degrees of latitude since the gale six days before, was once more on the coast. It is also apparent from Volckersen’s own account that the ship’s crew saw an answering beacon lit after the signal gun was fired, and that there was some hope expressed on board that the fires were the work of Dutch castaways. Though Volckersen was right when he recorded that there was no safe anchorage nearby, and though it was inevitable that even hove-to or close-hauled he would be carried some miles to the north during the night, yet the skipper’s failure to return the following day is hard to understand, let alone justify.

In defence of Volckersen it might be said that he did not feel able to hazard his ship and crew any further. Twice on this coast he had lost an anchor; twice dragging anchors had threatened disaster; twice he had been forced to seek searoom owing to bad weather. Almost certainly running short of anchors, with neither boat nor schuyt left to him, Volckersen may have come to the conclusion that the Dutch survivors, if such they were, could not be reached from the sea without once more endangering his ship. Cruel though the decision was, the safety of the many had to outweigh all other considerations. Reason, not emotion, must prevail.

Though it would have been difficult to exonerate Volckersen completely, had the skipper been able to record in his log that he had faced this dilemma and had come to his own decision, then some credit could have been attached to him. As it is, however, the Waeckende Boey’s log contains neither explanation nor justification. So far as we can judge, neither the ship’s council nor the skipper made a conscious decision to leave the area once the fires had been sighted. In a curious way, Leeman and his men appear to have been abandoned by default rather than by design. Most probably fear and responsibility had so far eroded Volckersen’s mental and emotional balance that he had lost the ability to review changing circumstances and make fresh decisions. Confused and fearful, it was far easier for him to adhere to the decision made in the ship’s council some hours before that the Waeckende Boey should return to Batavia. Unfortunately for Volckersen, however, though a temporary loss of nerve might be understood, a conscious attempt to falsify the record would be quite a different matter. Though we shall never be absolutely certain, such evidence as is recorded on Volckersen’s map does suggest that he might have tried to hide his action from the authorities in Batavia. Though the massive signal fire was lit by Leeman and his men on an island which could only have been Lancelin Island, Volckersen placed the fire about twenty-four miles further north, in the vicinity of the North and South Hummocks. This margin of error seems far too great to be accidental: it is about triple that usually found on Volckersen’s chart. Moreover, the siting of the fire is in itself rather suspicious. The distance between Lancelin Island and the Hummocks is just about as far as the Waeckende Boey would have drifted during the night of 28 March. Volckersen, therefore, may have succumbed to temptation and
sited the fire not where he had first seen it during the evening of the previous day, but where he found himself at dawn on 29 March 1658. In placing possible survivors as far from Cape Leschenault as this, he may have been trying to remove any lingering doubts that any of Leeman's party might have survived. At a time when falsification of logs was not unknown, such a discrepancy if detected could only damage Volckersen's record still further.

By an irony of fate, the sequence of events which destroyed Volckersen's character brought Leeman, the man he had abandoned, to his full stature. Until Volckersen's apparent betrayal, Leeman's spirits had been supported by a balanced trust in divine providence coupled with a reasonable expectation that the *Waeckende Boey* would return. According to the Uppersteersman, the crew avoided facing their predicament by adopting an attitude of slavish obedience to their superior officer. Now all had to face reality. Any chance of survival would depend on their efforts, and theirs alone. In face of this psychological challenge, the responses of Leeman and his crew differed completely. The crew, sapped by exhaustion and a range of ills, sank into a mindless apathy from which they were roused only with difficulty. Leeman, on the other hand, rose to new heights both as a man and as a leader. Forced to conceal his fears from the crew as best he could, unable to discuss problems openly, knowing that an appeal to the crew's better natures could destroy the bonds of discipline on which their mutual survival might depend, Leeman found himself cut off from his fellows. A lesser man, deprived of all human comfort, encouragement and support, would have broken under the cumulative burdens of fear, isolation, responsibility, and ill-health. Not so Leeman. So far as we can judge from the log, the ordeal he faced brought to the surface an unselfconscious and instinctive genius for leadership.

The Uppersteersman's strength of purpose was undoubtedly bolstered by his religious beliefs. Leeman's trust in a beneficent God must have been an ever-present source of comfort and satisfaction to him. His spirited and repeated insistence on communal prayers, often in circumstances of great physical danger, kept before all their eyes not only the reality of God's covenant with his creation but also the sinfulness of despair. Leeman's consciousness of the impiety of doubt in God's providence may well have been the crucial factor in his and his crew's survival. A man without such faith could have been stunned into inaction and thus destroyed by the apparent hopelessness of their predicament. Leeman, on the other hand, conscious that a kindly providence could be induced to intervene on their behalf, was encouraged to do all in his power to help his command. Further, the knowledge that he and his crew were still within the sight of God enabled him to concentrate upon the problems of survival without dissipating his reserves of mental and emotional strength. Leeman could have been forgiven if he had indulged in a violent denunciation of Volckersen for his inhumanity, especially after a swift sortie from Lancelin Island on 29 March had revealed that the *Waeckende Boey* was nowhere in the vicinity, yet the Uppersteersman in his time of trial seems to have risen above worldly spite and recriminations. In contrast to his earlier complaints against Volckersen, Leeman preserves a silence in his record of the eleven days that he and his crew spent on or about Lancelin Island. The Uppersteersman may well have been aware of the self-defeating corrosiveness of anger. Most probably, however, he was content to rely on the judgment of God. He was thus left free to concentrate upon immediate problems. Almost certainly Leeman's singleness of purpose was a major feature—possibly the deciding factor—in their survival.

Paradoxically, however, the very strength of Leeman's faith could easily have destroyed them all. If, despite his privations, the Uppersteersman had not remained as humane and well-balanced as he undoubtedly was in normal circum-
stances, he could easily have found himself in another, equally deadly trap. With his own chances of survival jeopardised by the faint-heartedness of the crew, Leeman’s attitude to his own men could have become tinged very easily with the chilling pride and self-righteousness of the Elect towards the Reprobate. In the background of the seventeenth century, such a response on the Uppersteersman’s part would be understandable. The bases of his life and faith, his status and his professional skills, all these elements could easily have induced Leeman to become insensitive to the fears and shortcomings of his crew. Under strain, Leeman could have slid very easily into a hectoring or bullying attitude towards his men who, almost inevitably, would have banded against him to the ultimate ruin of them all. As it was, the crew’s margin of tolerance towards Leeman was very narrow. The Uppersteersman was aware that such gestures of friendship as the crew made towards him were based on their need for his navigational skills. By the same token, he must have been aware that his authority over the sapped and demoralized crew hung by a hair.

Yet neither Leeman’s staunch Calvinism, nor his vastly greater reserves of moral and physical courage, blinded him to the human needs and fears of his crew. Probably without being aware of the fact, the Uppersteersman reveals himself to have been a deeply sensitive and skilled leader of men. Despite many provocations, he seems to have studiously avoided destroying what remained of any man’s self-respect. Though Leeman never thought fit to record the name of any one of his crew, at least he never felt himself impelled to belittle any individual. So far as we can judge, Leeman only bullied and frightened his crew in order to galvanize them into action, never for his own personal or professional satisfaction. Through a subtle mixture of comfort, encouragement, inducement, example and compulsion, Leeman helped his crew to help themselves. Had he been able to minimize the dangers they all faced at the expense of the truth, then perhaps he might have wrung some support or companionship from his crew. But his upright nature denied him even this minor consolation. Leeman was, and was to remain throughout their ordeal, isolated amongst his fellow human beings. Leeman’s courage and hardihood seem to us to have been of Homeric proportions: unlike some of Homer’s heroes, however, there seem to be few elements of vanity and pettiness in his character.

By the evening of 30 March 1658, both Leeman and his crew knew that they had been abandoned. There was no escaping the fact that, if they were to survive, it would be by their own efforts. Most probably Leeman’s own fears were heightened by the realization, kept from his crew, that speed might be the deciding factor in their survival. He would have known without a shadow of a doubt that the seasons were changing. If they were to delay much longer, they would run an increasing risk of being becalmed without water for days, if not weeks, off the northern coast of the Southland. Another factor also compelled Leeman to hasten their attempt to sail to Batavia. It had become increasingly obvious that unless they made their attempt very shortly, neither skipper nor crew would have the strength to man the boat. As it was, lassitude, faintness and diarrhoea slowed their activities to a snail’s pace. Despite the skill of Leeman’s leadership, it took the party seven days of painful effort to make essential repairs to the boat and to increase the freeboard by the addition of sealskin-covered frames to the gunwales. Even then the boat was far from being seaworthy when at last, on 8 April 1658, Leeman and his crew were able to sail along under the north headland of Lancelin Island and escape through the two-hundred-metre wide North Passage into the open sea beyond.

A further ordeal awaited them. Their SE breeze died away, giving way to long periods of calm. Then a northerly wind sprang up, a wind which past experience had taught usually heralded yet another storm, only to die away in its turn.
Leeman must have been terrified, probably thinking that the lull meant that the inevitable storm was already on its way. Perhaps he might have been forgiven, however, if he had doubted whether thirst would have left any of them alive to face it. As it was, after more than two days at sea, Leeman and his men were able to limp ashore on what was almost certainly the present-day Boullanger Island in the Jurien Bay group. After some hours' respite, the Uppersteersman, anxious to take advantage of the wind, forced the crew onwards on their northward course. Though Leeman himself does not mention it, uppermost in his mind would have been the need to catch the S or SW winds north of what is now Exmouth Gulf. If he were to miss these favourable winds, which all Dutch mariners in Batavia would know tended to die away after early May, then his chances of reaching Java would indeed be slim. Luck this time favoured Leeman. The southerly wind held and late the following day, having sailed past the cliffs of the Murchison, Leeman and his crew passed out of what are now known as Australian waters and into the Indian Ocean.

So Leeman was preserved, like Odysseus before him, to seek his home through yet another sea. During the eighteen days of agony which followed before the boat reached Java, Leeman and his crew suffered every torment which exhaustion, thirst and exposure could inflict upon them. There was, and could be, no respite. Though the Uppersteersman’s crew saw three of their number die by inches before their eyes, the events which coloured their day-to-day existence seem to have been the savage day-time quarrels over each other's urine. It must have seemed to Leeman in his misery that the 'barren, accursed earth' of the Great Southland shared Circe’s power to change men into swine.

NOTES

1 The Batavia was built by the Dutch as a retour ship, a type of vessel designed to sail between the Netherlands and her colonial possessions. She probably resembles the large three-masted ship which dominates Willaerts' picture (see Plate 1). Though the Batavia's exact measurements are not known, she was probably about 190 feet in length, over 50 feet in the beam, and had a displacement of approximately 600 tons. Since 1972 the Western Australian Museum has been engaged in recovering the remains of the Batavia from the wreck-site in the Abrolhos Islands. When the excavation is completed more precise data should be available.

2 The Dutch East India Company referred to this type of fast despatch vessel as a 'yacht'. She was approximately 130 feet in length, with a beam measurement of about 32 feet, and had a displacement of about 280 tons. Built in 1653, she was bought from the Zeeland Chamber by the Amsterdam Chamber whilst still new, and was on her third voyage to Batavia when she was wrecked near Ledge Point. (We are grateful to Warren Robinson of the Western Australian Museum for making his notes on the history of the Vergulde Draeck available to us.)

3 In nautical language, a floating buoy is said to 'watch', but all buoys float whether anchored or adrift. A 'watch buoy' in modern usage is an anchored buoy which is 'watched' from an anchored vessel, with bearings being taken on the buoy at regular intervals to ensure that the ship itself is not dragging its anchor. Thus Volckersen’s vessel might be called either the Watch Buoy or the Watching Buoy, the last being the more literal translation. It is far from being clear what type of vessel the Waeckende Boye was. In the V.O.C. Register or ‘Uitloopboek’, and in Maetsuycker’s letter of 14 December 1658 (printed in J. E. Heeres, The part borne by the Dutch in the discovery of Australia 1606–1765 (London, Luzac and Co., 1899), different titles are given. The V.O.C. Register calls the Waeckende Boye a fluyt, which corresponds to Volckersen’s own description of his vessel as a ‘fluitschip’, but the authorities in Batavia seem to have classed the ship as a galliot. So far as we can judge, the Waeckende Boye was twice the size of the normal galliot. The Register gives her dimensions as 90 Amsterdam feet in length, 22 feet in breadth, and with a half-deck 4½ Amsterdam feet in height. As the Amsterdam foot is thought to correspond to 11 English inches, a fair impression of the vessel can be gained (see Plate 1).

4 The V.O.C. Register records the Emeledoort as being a galliot measuring in length 45 last. As a last is approximately 1 English foot, the ship was thus about half the size of the Waeckende Boye.

5 Sections of these ‘Instructions’ have been printed by James H. Turner in his book The Gilt Dragon Incident (Perth, two editions).

6 I am grateful to I. McKiggan of the Department of Defence (Air Office), Melbourne, Victoria, who is currently working on the Dieppe Maps for showing me his unpublished manuscripts and charts concerning the Portuguese voyages of exploration in what are now Australian waters.

WESTERLY, No. 1, MARCH, 1977
58 Westerly, No. 1, March, 1977

The area of the Snag Island settlement, north of Jurien Bay, was officially gazetted as the town of Leeman on 16 June 1961. The name was selected from a short list of four: Emeoloort, Volckersen, Kalber (the aboriginal tracker on Grey's expedition in 1839), and Leeman. We are grateful to Ronald Sibley, Lands and Survey Department, for this information.

We are grateful to John and Eric Trantham, Planjak Fisheries, Jurien Bay, for help and advice on the wind and wave conditions prevalent in Western Australian inshore waters.

The off-shore reef presents a fairly continuous barrier to larger vessels from Jurien Bay as far south as Trigg Island. This obstacle is noted by Volckersen in his log for 24 February. Between the two places mentioned, however, several smaller breaks in the reef allow boats of Leeman's size to reach the shore in safety during normal weather conditions.

This anchorage, the only relatively safe anchorage between Lancelin Island and Rottnest, was apparently noted by Volckersen in his log for 28 March and again features in the short report he sent to Batavia. (This report is published by J. E. Heeres. An interesting discrepancy appears in Heeres' text. Reference is made to three rocks, not two. This could be a notarial slip, on the other hand, however, the Public Works Department has informed us that there is in the vicinity another, smaller rock, visible only at very low tides.)

On the connections between wave patterns and weather changes see Ross Cusack, "A Weather Eye on the Waves", The West Australian, 22 February 1974. We are grateful to Ross Cusack and to Dallas Hamilton of the Meteorological Bureau for help and advice on Western Australian weather patterns.

Most probably Leeman never landed within three or four miles of the mouth of Moore River. Had he done so, the estuary of the river would have been entered on to Volckersen's chart.

A description of the day from the Uppersteersman's viewpoint is given in Leeman's log under 22 March.

The names of the reefs are those used by the crayfishermen at Seabird, for whose help and advice we are grateful. The position of the Waakende Boey between the two reefs is recorded by Volckersen in his log for that date and places the vessel in the vicinity of Cape Leschenault.

Our explanatory note.

Even in the best conditions, this passage is no more than a hundred metres wide. A moderate SSW breeze, gusting at between 22 and 28 knots, makes the break impossible within two hours. To manoeuvre a vessel approximately ninety feet in length through such a passage was a feat in itself.

No description of Leeman's boat has survived. So far as we can judge from Leeman's log, it would have been of fairly shallow draught, broad in the beam, and equipped with leeboards. Probably it was gaff or sprit-rigged.

In comparing the two logs, one of the most surprising things is the contrasting styles and use of language. In general, Volckersen's grasp of his own language is crude and his style laconic to the point of being obscure. In contrast, irrespective of both dangers and hardships, Leeman's style and grammar remain unimpaired and his use of language. In general, Volckersen's grasp of his own language is crude and his style...

34 A.U.S. 333 gives the distance from the Green Islets to the nearest point on the mainland as being 1.8 miles.

35 Leeman's log, 23 March 1658.

36 Ibid., 25 March 1658.

37 Ibid., 24 and 25 March 1658.

38 Ibid.

39 We are grateful to Dr Honeywell of the C.S.I.R.O. for this information, derived from the latest series of satellite photographs of the coast of Western Australia. Earlier estimates had ranged from 2.3 miles (A.U.S. 333) to 3.4 miles (Public Works Department, WA., no. 47233).

40 The most accurate chart available for this area to date is that issued by the Public Works Department, henceforth abbreviated to P.W.D. See P.W.D., WA., Green Islets, no. 48089.

41 See P.W.D., WA., Cervantes, no. 47233.

42 Leeman's log, 23 March 1658.

43 Almost certainly the previous year's hatching of the wedge-tailed shearwater (*Puffinus pacificus*), known as the mutton-bird in Western Australia. Breeding colonies of this bird are still to be found in the crevices of the north islet of Sand Knoll Ledge and also on Lancelin Island. Julian Ford, "The avifauna of the islands between Dongara and Lancelin, Western Australia", *The Emu*, vol. 64, pts 2 and 3 (March and May 1965). We are grateful to Dr Ian Abbott for his help on this and other points.

44 Leeman's log, 23 March 1658.


46 Ibid., 25 March 1658.

47 Ibid., 26 March 1658.

48 The best chart of the area is P.W.D., WA., Cervantes, no. 47233.

49 Leeman's log, 26 March 1658. Earlier in this century and again in the 1960s, Wedge Island has been linked to the mainland by a sand-slip.

50 An aimed cannon-shot being calculated as between 600 and 800 metres.

51 This can be deduced from the fact that the boat's crew could see wreckage from the *Gilt Dragon* on the beach. It is unlikely that wreckage from the vessel would have driven further north than this once it had been thrown over the reef and into the in-shore waters.

52 Leeman's log, 27 March 1658.

53 We are grateful to Don Fortune of Lancelin for his help and advice concerning Leeman's probable route in the vicinity of Lancelin Island.

54 This passage penetrates both lines of reef formation which cut off the in-shore waters from the open sea between Edwards Island and Lancelin Island. A break in the reef nearer to Lancelin Island, known as the 'South Passage' does not cut both reefs and is not as easy to negotiate.

55 The amount of vegetation on the off-shore islands probably influences the height of the water-table. Though Lancelin Island has never been grazed nor rabbits introduced, two attempts to discover fresh water in the island proved unsuccessful (August 1972 and April 1976).

56 Almost certainly the coastal saltbush (*Atriplex isatidea*) which grows to a height of six to eight feet on the landward side of Lancelin Island. Its branches commonly range from 6 to 8 centimetres in diameter and are sufficiently straight to be used as stanchions.

57 The identification of this plant presents difficulties as there is no record of sea celery or wild celery (*apium prostratum*) growing on either Lancelin Island or Boullanger Island in the Jurien Bay group. The plant which Leeman and his men ate was probably the indigenous 'pig-face' or mesembryanthemum (*carpoprotus virescens*). This plant grows almost to high-water mark on both islands, can be obtained in quantity, and remains edible for a considerable time after being plucked. The baked leaves of the 'pig-face' were regularly eaten by the aborigines. (See J. C. Uphof, *Dictionary of Economic Plants*, Verlag von J. Cramer (1968), p. 343.) We are grateful to Dr F. A. L. Clowes, Magdalen College, Oxford, and G. G. Smith, Department of Botany, University of Western Australia, for help and advice in trying to identify plants and shrubs mentioned by Leeman.

58 This accusation was levelled against the captain of the *Zeewyk*. Cf. J. E. Heeres, *op. cit.*

59 Leeman's log, 27 March 1658.
Leeman was aware that drinking brackish water was one cause of the flux and neurological disorders which were sapping the strength of his crew. Almost certainly, however, there were other factors of which he was not aware:

(i) The men would be losing body fluid through perspiration at a rate in excess of two pints a day. If this amount was not replaced by fresh water, the ensuing process of dehydration could cause neurological disorders through the concentration of sodium in the blood. The consumption of brackish water in large quantities, together with each other's urine, would hasten the process and intensify the symptoms of dehydration.

(ii) Since being isolated from the *Waackende Boey*, the crew had been virtually deprived of all carbohydrates. After a period of 6 or 7 days this lack of carbohydrates could cause muscle weakness, faintness, perhaps even vomiting.

(iii) It seems probable that in eating large quantities of the liver of the Hair Seal, the men would be likely to suffer from the toxic effects of hypervitaminosis A. The symptoms of excessive consumption of vitamin A resemble those exhibited by Leeman's men. To date little work seems to have been done on the vitamin A content of the liver of the Hair Seal. However, it is clear that in some circumstances a single meal of the liver of the Australian Fur Seal can cause toxic effect in man. See Southcott, Chesterfield and Warner, "The vitamin A content of the liver of the Australian Fur Seal, *Arctocephalus pusillus doriferus*," *Australian Wildlife Research* (1974), 1, pp. 145-9. Also Ronald V. Southcott, "The neurological effects of noxious marine creatures", in *Topics on Tropical Neurology* (ed. R. W. Hornabrook), published by F. A. Davis and Co., Philadelphia (1975).

(iv) "Their common appearances are large discoloured spots ... swelled legs, putrid gums, and above all, an extraordinary lassitude of the whole body, especially after any exercise, however inconsiderable; and this lassitude at last degenerates into a proneness to swoon, and even die ... This disease is likewise attended with a strange degeneration of spirits, with shiverings, tremblings, and a disposition to be seized with the most dreadful terrors on the slightest accident." See C. Lloyd and Jack L. S. Coulter, *Medicine and the Navy, 1200–1900*, vol. iii, 1714-1815. (E. and S. Livingstone, London and Edinburgh, 1961), pp. 293-4. This classic description of scurvy, recorded on board Anson's *Centurion* during his voyage round the world between 1740 and 1744, suggests that Leeman's men may have been in the grip of scurvy. On balance, this seems more than likely. Since leaving Batavia about three months had elapsed. This was sufficient time for the symptoms of vitamin C deficiency to show themselves. Unfortunately for Leeman and his men, through ignorance they destroyed much of the vitamin C content of the plant matter they consumed by stewing it in a pewter jug. As a result, it is doubtful whether their vitamin C intake whilst on Lancelin Island would be sufficient to reverse the process of the disease.

Leeman's description of the condition of his men is largely non-specific. This being the case, without explicit reference to skin and hair loss it is impossible to say with certainty that the crew suffered from hypervitaminosis A. Similarly, in the absence of references to the appearance of open sores, it is hard to prove that the crew were suffering from scurvy. Nevertheless, such reservations may be unduly purist: what is amazing in the circumstances is that Leeman left so clear a picture of the condition of his crew. We are grateful for the generous help and advice of Ronald Southcott and William Segal on the medical background of Leeman and his men.

60 Leeman's log, 29 March 1658.
61 Ibid.
62 Ibid., 8 April 1658.
63 Ibid., 1 April 1658.
64 Ibid., 29 March 1658.
65 Ibid., 26 April 1658.
66 Ibid., 1 April 1658.
67 Ibid.
68 Ibid.
69 Ibid., 10 April 1658.
70 The fact that Leeman and his men obtained fresh water in quantity and that, so far as we can judge by the Uppersteersman's account, the water showed no signs of becoming brackish however much was drawn off, point to the island being the large sand island in the Jurien Bay group now known as Boullanger. Long before the turn of the century this island was used as a watering station by both sealer and coastal vessels. Even after the establishment of the settlement at Jurien, and as late as the 1950s, fresh water was obtained in quantity on the island. We are grateful to Hugh Hastings of Jurien Bay for a great deal of local information and also for showing us the remains of wells dug on the island.
71 Ibid., apparently 11 April 1658.
72 Pelsaert's description, printed in J. E. Heeres, *op. cit.*
Highway

Mean days
everyone trading in speed.
Around us
the sun ripens the flesh of
the rocks to strange scents,
the columns of light sail unheard
between the flanks of the hills.
The garment
no longer sits on our shoulders
we have shrivelled our gestures
bartered our time
to feed the steel toys.

The Return

Her face was still the same
yet the axis had moved slightly
and the light
changed all the lines.

She used a borrowed voice now,
her self sufficiency worn like an
evening cloak, in touch with Life,
she said, Reality.

I watched the blue decor and the
brass lamps and felt superfluous.
Would the thing yield to her
in these set games she played?
Come the Revolution

In the ideological isolation of a conservative foreign policy she pursued her own cold war, proliferating hostilities, ever diligent in the upkeep of her institutions, and alert to would be infiltrations of her constitutional provisions.

Come the revolution her policy of containment was forcibly superseded, through the insurrection of internal powers and the external threat of his opposing force.

Her attempts at a meaningful dialogue were countered with the proposition that he demonstrate his super powers.

She said
—Let's cease hostilities and formulate a viable alternative.

He said
—Come on baby, let's depolarise!
Possibilities

From the grey-gapped windows of his room
he watched the old stone house across the street,
unsafe through years of tenanting neglect,
floorboards too doubtful to support
more than a rumour of white-ants;
and the roof, an opened honeycomb of iron.
In a shattered pane of glass he saw himself,
and thought that there were possibilities.

It was enough. The FORSALE sign came down,
and the easy sundaymorning song
was rough-rasped through with saws, and
the weekdays angry teeth were drilled & ground.
In the dawnlights blood-hello he would appear,
and look on what was now and what would be,
and stagger in with new wood on his shoulder,
riding heavy there like a cross before the nails,
and cutting deep the flesh of his unhoused years.

Then last saturday the shrill & clatter stopped.
The roof returned his gaze in steady iron.
He came in through the new door with the light,
tried the floor and saw that it was good,
and watched the beams meet flush above his head,
reconciled after years of argument,
and saw the fireplace stacked for flame,
stacked high for flame, and knew that it was his,
and every stone would dazzle in the blaze.
Farmer's Story

Social justice, equality for all. Simple
Arithmetic. So much wealth to be
Divided by so many people—
None shall grow fat on others' misery.

I came here for a better life,
My friend, and what did I find
But bitterness? I am no different.
Nothing changes, unless you do.

Faces lined and lean, the farmers all
Turn out to vote; but new men are
More cheaply bought; different parties—
The same old policies.

We voted for a goldfields grocer,
But simply swapped one set
Of creditors for another.
Possessing and possessed

My wife and I grow old meeting
The mortgage, the dead hand
On our freedom. No chains,
Yet I am surely bound

A prisoner in my land.
Bards of the Backblocks*

I

Bluebush and Dryblower, Crosscut and Prospect Good, The Prodigal and Saladin, these were the pseudonyms of the best known poets of the goldrush days in the west. Their work was recalled by journalist Victor Courtney when Dryblower died in 1939. 'One day', he wrote, 'when the best of their verse has been garnered, it will reflect an era of Western Australian life as nothing else can reflect it.'

'Dryblower' was the pseudonym of Edwin Greenslade Murphy, born in 1867 in Castlemaine, Victoria. He arrived in Western Australia in 1893. Having a good tenor voice — once put to use in the Gaiety Chorus in Melbourne — he soon achieved great popularity. Champion reciter of Coolgardie, he was in great demand at the shanties and pubs, where he delighted the crowds with improvised rhymes recited off to such tunes as 'Good old mother has come again'. In 1895 Murphy was contributing stories and verse to the Coolgardie Miner. He continued to contribute casually to the press between trips to London on mining business, and subsequently became a full-time staff journalist on the Sun and Sunday Times. In 1908 the Sunday Times published a volume of his verse, Jarrahland Jingles, bound in hessian. The book, he wrote, was 'rich in the memory of old mates, acquaintance with whom has given me such splendid material to work upon'. It was dedicated to all the boys who read the verse on 'the chaff bag stretchers outback'. Hayward, who wrote the preface, described Dryblower as a man of ordinary education whose advantage it was to have been trained in the 'University of the World'.

Many of his poems express the viewpoint of his contemporaries. During the early 1900s he condemned alien immigrants who conducted dirty food shops and laundries and threatened to undercut the wages of the European. He wrote of pioneers who had opened the way to prosperity and gained nothing but broken spirit, ill health and poverty. 'Going East' conveys the bitterness of a departing miner, a man whose spirit had been drained so that dividends might 'gild the London gang'. He condemned the Christian Church as an institution which observed only the outward forms of Christianity. Dryblower's imagination ranged state-wide to include workers in the mines, young girls who drudged on small farms or in city eating houses, and timber workers sweated by the syndicates.

The most popular verse writer on the diggings was John Philip Bourke who used the pseudonym 'Bluebush'. He was born on the Peel River diggings, New South Wales in 1860, worked as a school teacher and occasionally wrote for the Sydney Bulletin, before joining the rushes to Western Australia in 1894. In the late 'nineties

* This is the second of three articles by Beverley Smith on writers of the Western Australian goldfields.
he was a casual contributor to the goldfields press and in 1906 became a staff poet with the Sun. On his death in 1914 the Sun received tributes and reminiscences which were published over a period of weeks. The main obituary notice described him as

a writer of verse that appealed to everyone by its rugged force, its fertility of ideas, its truth and the spirit of human sympathy and true mateship which permeated every line . . . Gifted with a keen insight into human nature and unlimited power of happy expression, he was a staunch friend and a true mate, and no man on the fields was more personally popular.3

An appreciation signed ‘Muggins’, referring to his peculiarly Irish gift of expression, described his verse as ‘rough hewn from solid facts’. He was revered as poet and man:

as a man his hatred of sham and convention, his wholehearted Australianism, his democracy that spurned alike the Tories’ assumption of democratic humility on polling day and the bureaucratized audacity of the Trades Hall laborite when working a selection ballot ramp, were his most marked traits.4

In many of his poems Bluebush addresses himself specifically to the miners and prospectors who read his verse. In ‘Churning Copy for the Press’ he tells them to think themselves lucky their job was not as his; to ‘pour out piffle for pelf in the columns of the Western Sunday press’. In ‘Rhymes and Rhymers’ he confides that there are times when the breath of life grows cold and there is nothing but a ‘vacancy’ under the rhymer’s hat. At times like these he reaches for the bottle of Glen Shicker like any worker who dismissed with a bent elbow the tedium of work. Poet and miner seek common consolation. Bluebush regarded his lot as the harder of the two. In cynical mood, he states that he would not write at all except to pay for whiskey, hash, pension and pot. In less cynical mood he admits that he writes like all poets to express his thoughts and feelings:

We singers standing on the outer rim
Who touch the fringe of poesy at times
With half-formed thoughts, roughset in halting rhymes,
Through which no airy flights of fancy skim —
We write ‘just so’, an hour to while away
And turn the well-thumbed stock still o’er and o’er
As men have done a thousand times before
And will again, just as we do today.5

In 1908 in a prose reminiscence Bluebush apologizes to readers for recalling the wonderful spirit of the early days. Hard times had hit the fields.6 In ‘Too Old’ an ageing miner is brushed aside with a callous word to make way for a stronger man. Being generous he had made no provision for the future. His children go barefoot and he himself drifts to the ranks of the greyheads, haunted by fears which hitherto were held at bay by the rattle of a coin.7 Accidents on the mines were frequent, and many a widow, like the woman in ‘The Philanthropic Harlequins’, was stooped over a washtub battling for the sake of her children.8 With the beginnings of a labour party in 1903 there was hope:

For the dawn of day is fringing
Round a land that asks no cringing
And a Labor King is reigning
At tomorrow’s port of call.9
By 1909 he was fighting off disillusionment:

Old Bluff won't hold the field for ever
And soft fat hands, tho' passin' clever
Must cease from thievin'
Keep believin'.
Accounts may be squared up tomorrow
Keep believin'.
When none need beg nor steal nor borrow
Keep believin'.
Sweep clean and close, O world of grafters,
The cobwebs from your mental rafters
That doubt is weavin',
Keep believin'.

Bluebush describes scenes of poverty on the goldfields but rarely looks for causes, although one finds an occasional reference to 'the London Jew' and 'the London trust', an expression of resentment at the role played by British capital in exploiting the Golden Mile. The prevailing mood of his verse is fatalistic. Life is a gamble, and the best policy is to be reconciled to one's lot. This implies, however, that no-one has the right to condemn the drunkard or the derelict, who is simply the victim of fate. The final judgment, in heaven, is whether old 'rags-and-tatters' has done his level best. In this process of reconciliation Bluebush was helped by 'booze', by far the most prominent theme of his verse; but drinking was itself a source of conflict, as he explains in 'Swearing off and signing on':

Yes, I said it and swore
That I wouldn't — but oh!
All my nerves were unstrung
And my flag fluttered low
On a wind-beaten shore —
And that memory clung
With the claws of a curse
With the talons of care
As I uttered a prayer
As I viciously flung
At the door of the Bar
A demoralised purse.

In 'No More Verses in Praise of Wine', he condemns resignation and drinking as inertia:

Shirking the fight that a man should fight
Dodging the joys that a man should know
Scorning the breath of a plumed thought's flight
Down with the swine and husks below —
'Tis thus we reap from the seed we sow.

Nowhere does Bluebush explain this struggle in his own mind between fatalistic resignation and the inclination to resist, but the ideas expressed in his verse suggest an explanation. Without struggle there could be no social change, and Bluebush, who believed in mateship and the brotherhood of men, baulked at the idea of social conflict. Mateship did not square with militancy.

As a man who had rejoiced in comradeship on the track he disliked what political struggle would involve — propaganda, sustained effort and discipline. He was pessimistic about the quality of political leadership:
Let other hands delve 'mid the garbage and grime,
And let others lips puff till they blaze —
Oh! 'tis weary work marching when fools beat the time
But 'tis easy to drift and to laze. 15

And especially in the friendly atmosphere of the pub:

The old world chips in, in the guise of a friend
As the solvent of hops humanises and mellows,
And the limits of brotherhood stretch and extend
Till the Devil himself seems the best of good fellows. 16

One feels that Bluebush was aware of his own inertia in the face of social injustice, which he was not afraid to describe and denounce. There was a struggle between awareness of conflicting interests in society and his longing for peace and universal brotherhood; between the spasmodic desire for action to right wrongs and his ultimate dependence on passing delights and the bottle. Since his verse was the most popular written at the time, this state of mind was probably shared with many of his contemporaries.

‘Crosscut’ began to contribute to the Sun in 1907. This was the pseudonym of Thomas Henry Wilson who was born in England in 1867 and spent some time in eastern Australia before joining the goldrushes in 1895. In ‘The Days When the Beer Was Strong’, one of his nostalgic articles, he recalls his associates at the Hole in the Wall café in Sydney, where he met Victor Daley, Henry Lawson, ‘The Breaker’, ‘Dipso’ and other contributors to the Bulletin. These were the ‘coppers-tails’. The Hole in the Wall café was avoided by ‘silvertails’ of the Banjo type, but was ‘perhaps not the less interesting and soul-satisfying on that account’. 17

In Western Australia Crosscut once again enjoyed the company of poets, on this occasion in a deserted bakery. Writing in 1910, he recalls that probably no township in Western Australia was better off for scribes and versifiers in proportion to population than the little semi-deserted mining village of Mertondale in 1906. The mine was shut down and most of the toilers had drifted away, but a few remained, impatiently waiting for arrears of pay. Among them Bluebush:

We met there in the first place as strangers and all three occupied an old tumbledown mud-brick bakehouse together, in common with a few more irresponsible waifs and wayfarers upon the highway of life. Bluebush and I first became acquainted with the other’s terrible secret when I picked up a weather-beaten copy of the Bulletin in the scrub and discovered some verses of mine therein. In the sudden delirium of knowing that there was a quite unexpected quid coming to me — I was ‘pushing the knot’ at the time — I showed them to him, and after reading them with interest he admitted with some diffidence that he too wrote verses, and when the guilty confession had been made we felt confused and half-ashamed of ourselves, and tried to talk about the weather and wondered if the Pig Well water scheme would ever get to Mertondale and said the ‘Gambier Lass’ was looking well at the time. Then someone proposed a drink and since that time we have looked one upon the other with mutual complaisance — even with toleration. 18

Then ‘The Battler’ arrived upon the scene with ‘matilda’ in tow, accompanied by a young gentleman named Billy Pickett (‘of Pickett and Sons, the great coach-builders of Adelaide’, he never omitted to add). The boy alluded to The Battler as ‘The Heditor’ on the strength of having shared with that gentleman the proceeds of an article written for a Leonora newspaper:

Our friend has been ‘The Editor’ ever since, and the broadsheet he edits is the vicissitudinous journal of life.
We were a happy family in the mudbrick shanty. ‘Bluebush’ had a room to himself as was only due to his high position in the literary circle. He wrote for the Sun while neither of us had yet become sunbeams — or should I say sunspots? I think he slept in the dough trough.

No swaggie passed without making a social call at this ‘lodge of litterateurs’. Apart from the sojourn in the bakehouse, Crosscut had all manner of jobs. He worked as surveyor, timberworker, prospector, miner, navvy, railway official and journalist. Some of his verse was contributed to the Sun from a surveyor’s camp eighty miles out of Dumbleyung. In an article, ‘Tales of the Pipe Track. Boodling Bosses and Ignorant Gangers. Nest Feathering as a Fine Art’, he describes his experiences while working on the goldfields water-scheme pipe line. Another yarn was contributed from the woodline. His work mates frequently handed him verse to be touched up for the Sunday Times. The verse would give one the horrors, he admits, but at least it went to show that ‘amongst the horny-handed manhood of the goldfields the divine gift of verse has been liberally distributed by a beneficient Providence. Crosscut’s contributions to the press included verse, short stories, prose reminiscences, literary criticism and an occasional article on politics.

Though born and educated in England, Crosscut found as much charm in the desert environment as other poets found in lush Gippsland valleys or the meadows of Sussex. Whether one scene or another could inspire verse depended as much on the vision of the observer as on the character of the place. In ‘Trampish’, he describes lyrically his memories of the spinifex plain abloom with wild everlasting, the breakaways dim on the horizon, the ridges of grey diorite and white patches of quartz gleaming in the sunlight:

It has has come like the smell of the trees and the rain
And the desert is rolling before me,
I am crushing the leaves of the saltbush again
For the spell of the mulga is o’er me.
I know ’tis a glamour that soon will have died
When I turn from the town to her bosom so wide,
She will take me and break me and cast me aside —
But the mulga is calling me. Calling.

Crosscut also put the mining industry into verse. No subject was too ‘technical’ for his enterprising Muse. She accompanied him into desert wasteland, down the mine and into the pub:

Sulphur frying
Kinchins crying
Cyanide from sand dumps flying,
Senses reel and rock,
Whistles squealing,
Black smoke reeling,
Bingie gets a curious feeling
On the Boulder Block.

Drunks all fighting
Crowds delighting
Grimy derelicts exciting
Sympathy from mugs,
Have-beens viewing
Past with rueing
(Watching for a chance of chewing
Ears of tender lugs.)
Miners drinking
Crib cans clinking
Just off shift and no-one shrinking
(Never mind the clock)
Ragged shirt and gleaming collar
Empty 'kick' and gleaming dollar
Health and wealth and grief and squalor —
That's the Boulder Block.24

For Crosscut the contrast between the wealth of the goldmining industry and the shabby dress and mean houses on the Boulder was part of its romance. He rarely wrote of the disparity with bitterness, although like most of the goldfields poets he did write with compassion for the miner's widow:

There is clatter and clash in the dusty stopes
As the rockdrills dash at the good grey ore,
There's labour and sweat for the Company hopes
For a quote in the share list of one point more.
There is wealth to win, there are divs to pay —
And what is a labourer more or less?
In the din and clangour now who could guess
That a man was killed in the mine today.25

In political outlook Crosscut had much in common with Bluebush. In the face of hard times a man could find comfort in the old prospector's adage: 'You never can tell what's in front of the pick'.26 Since life was equally insecure for all, the prosperous must give thought to the welfare of the unfortunate. In this way, from a universal change of heart rather than through political action, the disparity of social conditions might be levelled out. Nothing was to be gained by bitter protest.

This attitude is expressed for example in 'The Skiter Scoops the Pool', where Crosscut argues that the day will come when the rich help the poor and hypocrisy give way to truth. Meanwhile it is futile to put trust in those who promise change through social and political agitation: the politicians, the 'leather-lipped, iron-lunged agitator' and the preacher who promises redemption. They aroused passions but achieved nothing. Similarly in another poem written in the same year, 1907:

We may war in hot rebellion with the things beyond our ken
But the restless strife will vanish when we act as Men to Men,
And along life's pleasant vistas there will rise another school,
Teaching not the clash of nations
Nor of selfish emulations
But the unity of Brothers — when the blood begins to cool.

From 1907 Bluebush and Crosscut were the most prominent contributors to the Sun. Earlier, between 1903 and 1906, the Sun had featured numerous poems by 'Prospect Good', in 1904 described as 'the poet laureate of the goldfields'.28

'Prospect Good' was the pseudonym of Francis William Ophel, born on 3 December, 1871 at Point McLeay Aboriginal Mission in South Australia, where his father was in charge of the mission school. He worked on the Broken Hill mines, went prospecting in the McDonnell Ranges and for several years led a life of semi-starvation prospecting with a mate in the Mount Lofty Ranges. He arrived in Western Australia at the age of twenty-one to follow the rushes, working for a wage only when it was unavoidable. His family recalls that no word came from him for a long time. Then someone wrote to say he had been picked up close
to death and brought back to town. He was destitute and ill. His family raised the fare for his return to South Australia and after several years living on his own in a one-roomed humpy he died in 1912.29

Before his arrival in Western Australia Francis Ophel was contributing to the Bulletin. Like his mode of life, this was a cause of sorrow to his parents. For the Bulletin he wrote 'A New Song':

Hands of a people
Building, and bringing
Her sons together,
Each to each clinging;
Heart of a people,
Exulting, singing.50

A recurring theme is his personal vision of Australia, the character of the country, its people and their history, a vision shaped most decisively by his roaming life and familiarity with the Bulletin. To Australia's shores came the sons of the old world, seeking freedom and release from oppression. And to the trouble-laden, the bush called.31 It had called to the prospectors, whose path the poet followed as they fled from 'city slavery' to the track, to the battle of Eureka, in hostile pursuit of 'the heathen' on Lambing Flat and at Castlemaine, past the graves of comrades who had died by the myall's spear or a traitor's bullet, along tracks haunted by the ghosts of lost explorers and the dead men of the inland:

And the gold we got in seeking
Was lost again in quest
From the first find in the 'fifties
To the last found in the West,
But lose by hazard of fortune
Or gain by turn of luck
We kept our place in the forefront
And left the place in the ruck.

But the cities rise with their houses
In place of tented camps,
The quiet bush is echoing
To rhythm of roaring stamps,
Prideless hirelings are at our heels
Fettered to wage and due,
Now must we march in quest again
Through wilderness anew.32

These were the pioneers who turned constantly from the injustice of the city and wage slavery to the independent way of life in the bush. Only the bush lover understood the true spirit of the nation and observed its high ideals. These ideals were epitomized for Prospect Good in the relationship between mates:

This is the law. That the gold we find
It is ours to keep or spend —
Except that a mate must equal share
And we give to a needy friend.33

There is a profound pessimism and sadness in the verse of Prospect Good for in spite of the challenging cry to build a nation the record is one of failure and defeat. Many found gold and as they dreamed of wealth and fame they perished of thirst
on the return track; others had witnessed the rise of cities, yet took to the track again rather than work for a pittance wage; in spite of effort and sacrifice, drought still defeated the efforts of the most industrious. The inland was haunted by dead men whose dreams were unfulfilled:

From the army of the dead the prayers unceasing rise,
Their dumb tongues call the waters to the West,
Their deaf ears hear the Bush sigh in her slumber
For dreams all unfulfilled; the sightless eyes
That saw the full grief of life see now the grey smoke curl
From range and plain — to drought and sacrifice.
Sleep on, dear Bush, until the green awakening
When kinder skies weep tears of falling rain,
Then the army of the dead may fall to sleep in peace
Beneath the sheltering pine patch on the plain.34

On 6 November 1910 the Sun devoted a full page to the work of Dorrie Doolette, verse 'specked from our back files'. Doolette, who wrote as 'The Prodigal', was described as prospector, mining speculator and millionaire in the making. He was photographed in shining top hat high collar and immaculate jacket. In spite of financial success, there was nothing of the aristocrat in Dorrie Doolette. His themes were similar to those of his contemporaries. Like Prospect Good he wrote of wanderers who would forever seek the ends of the earth and tread the outback trails:

The bush our mistress is and we
Remain her willing thralls,
Who knows her once is never free
But follows where she calls,
We find in her mysterious face
The wonder men call God,
Her temples know no secret place
Our footsteps have not trod.

Yet at times even the bushman reflects on his loneliness:

The thought of those who midst the din
Work on or take their ease,
Though little cities hem them in
Yet children throng their knees.
And lonely is our land of dreams
Recalling as we roam,
And bright the firelit window gleams
The harbour light of home.
And though with faith unmoved we go
Nor falter from our quest
Within our secret hearts we know
Through love life finds the best.35

II

Apart from the emergence of various writers, well-known in their day, an avalanche of verse often resulted from particular events. The disputes between the alluvial prospectors and the mining companies in 1898 and 1899 had this result. According to a paragraph in the Sunday Times on 13 March 1898,
One of the worst consequences of the alluvial difficulties is the outbreak of an epidemic of poetry. I hear at Cremorne the editor has several waste baskets full and most of the diggers who are not in gaol appear to be writing, judging by the aspect of the goldfields papers. They had better be careful lest they alienate public sympathy. Some of it is worse than violence.

Throughout 1904 and 1905 there were more casual contributors to the Sun and Sunday Times than at any other period. The Exile, Temora, Diomed, Xenies, Erling, Quondong, Truthful James, Brumby and Cynicus were among them. Their identity is not known. Jack Drayton was editing the Sun at the time.36

Drayton was born in 1858 in the Victorian mining district of Blackwood. As a young man he worked as a bank clerk in Ballarat, and contributed verse to the Sydney Bulletin. In 1895 he was editing the Coolgardie Review and in subsequent years divided his time between dryblowing and journalism. In 1903 he was editing the weekly Perth Spectator.37 On 6 June 1903 the title of the Spectator was changed to Westralia's Bulletin. The issue for July 16 contained 'some lines' by 'Harry Lawson', written about seven years earlier and hitherto unpublished. There were numerous casual contributors including Prospect Good, 'Jean Dell' (Jack Delaney), and Grant Hervey.

In December 1903 Drayton was editing the Sun and went from there to the Sunday Times, probably in 1905.38 Late in 1904 Drayton was involved in an incident in which the Sun was presented to its readers as the defender of the free press and the rights of the poor friendless toiler against the merciless power of capital and traitorous Labour parliamentarians. The Empress of Coolgardie lease was forfeited to a prospector, and then taken from him and returned to E. A. Griffith, allegedly the representative of certain 'Fat Persons' in England. As a result of the Sun's approach to the minister for mines, a Select Committee of Parliament was appointed to investigate the matter. Drayton refused to give evidence, claiming that the confidence of his informant was inviolable. He was fined £100 for 'contempt of parliament'. When it was discovered that parliament has no power to compel payment a new bill was passed, and Drayton lodged for twenty-nine days in Fremantle jail. There was a great public reception for the editor when he returned to Kalgoorlie.39

1904 was a grim year for people on the goldfields. In June 1903 'The Exile' wrote in the Sunday Times that men were being slaughtered to make 'the fat man's dividend'. Two thousand were unemployed in the towns and many more tramped the saltbush tracks desperate for work.40 In June 1904 Jack Hardgraft in his Sun column 'The Democrat' wrote that 2,000 men were out of work in Kalgoorlie while nearby gold was torn up for 'the Jew Lords of Merrie England'. Sixty men were said to be on government rations.41 In May 'Diomed' contributed to this column a quotation from Tennyson with the comment that the average worker feared 'bloodshed on the Block' if something were not done soon to relieve the poor.42

Much of the verse published during 1904 and 1905 reflected this situation:

O things are crook at the Golden Mile, the roaring days are done
And I must mount the trusty bike for the North or the Northwest run,
For a man can't bide with the unemployed when the country's free and wide,
So it's hey for the sands of the Mulga lands and a grip on the Northwest side.

With this introduction the poet goes on to describe his outback trip. At Menzies the wage rate was too low for any self-respecting worker. He refused a billet at Mt Morgans, saying he should go hang rather than toil with 'a blanky 'Ghan'. Lancefield was like 'a foreign sink' and at the Gwalia mine the 'Dagoes' swarmed like bees. A skilled miner with a British name could not please the Moreing boss:
The curse of Bewick-Moreing dark upon the mulga hangs,
They starve the mines, they sweat the men and grease the head serangs.
From Esperance to Murchison is in their vampire grip,
It's like a trip to foreign parts to do the Outback Trip.

From Tower Hill to Lawlers was a long stretch over the desert. The following morning he pushed on to Mt Sir Samuel where men were on half time, then moved on to Darlot and Lake Way. Kathleen was on its 'monthly drunk' which he managed to escape after several days. At Peak Hill there was room for one man, but there he would not stay because the air smelt like a chemist's shop.

I've a brother in the railways and another in the police,
And I'm the black sheep of the flock that cannot live in peace,
For I can't brook the sweater's dole or tread the abject round
Or in a chalkface hide my soul so I go outward bound.

There's nothing left in wages now through Bewick-Moreing land.
And in a year or two they'll have the Coolies from the Rand,
So on the trail where rebels go, far out from railway line
I go to find and work a show along the Nullagine.43

Numerous writers protest at the number of foreigners employed on the mines; some simply condemn the mine management for exploiting this source of cheap and 'docile' labour, but others vent bitter personal feelings against the immigrants themselves. Taking to the track as an escape from intolerable working conditions was another very common theme. The poem quoted above is characteristic in this respect. 'Drift', contributing from Kanowna, prefaxes his poem 'Wanderlust' with this reflection:

This wanderlust spirit that comes upon a man of the working class and makes of him a tramp! who shall define or tell of it? To my way of thinking it is very largely the impulse to escape from a dull round of monotonous labour. A man's soul awakens to the degrading conditions of his lot and wishes to go forth and out into the world. And he can only go forth as a vagrant — as a beggar. He is blamed because he refuses any longer to be a slave. But it is far finer and better to be a wandering beggar than a slave. One gets more out of life.

'Drift' had taken to the track to escape working conditions on a farm:

'I'm tired o' weedin'  
En' poddie feedin'  
En' milkin' leaves no time for readin';  
En' the boss he grudges the bit I eat  
En' bustles me out a-lumpin' wheat,  
So it's out on the good old track,  
The cart track, the foot track,  
The horse track, en' bullock track,  
It's the track where I am free.

S'long ter sowin'  
Reapin' en' mowin'  
S'long ter cockies spuds a-hoein',  
I'm battlin' West where the sunshine's red  
En' the yaller gold's on the ground outspread,  
I'm goin' ter camp with the tin-dog fed;
‘Roo! Tiger! the long, long, track,
The team track, the camel track,
The mulga track, the desert track,
It’s the track where I am free. 44

‘The Outback Trip’ is self-confident and ebullient in spite of its bitter protest. ‘Wanderlust’, though subdued in mood, has a similar optimism. By contrast, much of the verse published at that time is tired and reproachful. The swagman, footsore and weary, is tortured with the memory of his family in the east. He is friendless and forgotten. He tramps on through the scrub, to his last descent down a mine or until with stumbling step he collapses and dies on the track. Even the youngster who left home with the spirit of adventure is an ‘exile’ haunted by memories of home, and sobered by recollection of the vultures which encircle a scene of outback death:

The tucker bag is empty and the water’s just nigh done,
The red-stained rags hang loose around our frames,
And the pitiless and scorching heat from the December’s sun
Sends us blistered, heart-sick, back from whence we came. 45

Daily life in the mining towns is described with similar despondency. In ‘The Grasp for Gilt’ Diomed writes of the fat man who has no concern for ‘high-paid slaves’ injured and killed in the mine, and who never thinks of the cross-marked mounds in the desert:

For the batteries roar and the engine throbs
And the toilers come and go,
And the cages groan ’neath the gilded stone
As they race from the depths below.
And the fat man smiles at the rip and tare
And swings his cane in style,
While a grief-stricken wife battles on through life
In a camp, near the Golden Mile. 46

On another occasion Diomed writes of the company’s failure to conserve and develop resources. Poorly worked mines were left to the rust and spiders, while men went unemployed. 47

Many verses express disgust with the Labor government’s failure to remedy the unemployment and distress on the goldfields. Labor came to office with the support of several independent members in August 1904. The most frequent criticism was that Labor parliamentarians had no intention of carrying out their pre-election promises. Their one concern was ‘place and pay’:

members of ideals prate
But work for self and not the State. 48

Even before the August elections political rhymers were arguing that steps must be taken to bind all party candidates to the platform. Many prominent Labor men, including Dalglish (Premier 1904-05) had already declared their responsibility only ‘to the people’, not to Labor Congress or any other party discipline. This viewpoint was vigorously opposed by ‘Brumby’ in June 1904:

Too long we have suffered in patience
Our heads merely bowed to the yoke
Till bursting the bonds of his thraldom
The giant of Labor awoke!
With intellect crowned on his forehead
And power in his mighty right hand
He fights for the laws of his people —
The cause that is noblest and grand.
So hitch them on fast to the platform!
We care not if ninepins or men,
When nailed to the planks they'll be steadfast —
No fear of them shifting again!
So that is the lesson ye taught us,
Mistrustful we turn from the Past
To strengthen the walls of the future
With vows that ever shall last. 49

In June 1905 an anonymous jingler called upon the ‘men of Boulder’ to assess what had been achieved by ‘hireling labor legislators’ and partisan arbitration judgments which resulted in the privation and slavery of the working man:

Do not temporise or trifle
Better revolution’s tide
Than that they should freedom stifle
And enslave the Boulder side. 50

‘Rocius’, in August 1905, condemned as traitors the Labor parliamentarians who made rags and tatters of pledge and platform and union leaders who betrayed the trust of the rank and file. Rocius tells of a common toiler, one who grafted for ‘the grasping, greedy Jew who owns the Golden Mile’, lecturing to his mates at crib time on the One Big Union. Here was a man who studied the wages question while other toilers wasted their time drinking and betting, or shed their blood in a bad cause on Africa’s veldt. 51 ‘Jack Hardgraft’ also expressed prevailing criticisms of the Labor government in an article ‘Labor in Office’, The Position of the Toiler, No Better Than Under Boodle’, 52 and in 168 rhyming lines, ‘Some Crisp and Christian Christmas Comments, On the Characteristics and Peculiarities of Labor in Office, and the Tactics of Some of the Hangers-On to the Mouldings of the Cabinet, Addressed to Bill Bowyangs by Jack Hardgraft’:

Oh brother workers, we have dreamed in vain
Who saw Utopia in a Labor reign.
. . . . All our ideals bright
Lie shattered by the Labor Tammanyite
Who sees in Labor but a road to pelf
The sordid aggrandisement of himself;
And in the petty strife of warring cliques
With sleight of hand deals out his monkey tricks,
And in return for wagedom’s loyalty
Gives us Corruption for Democracy;
And like the traitorous priests of Christ the Lord
Makes of our high and holy faith a bawd. 53

Jack Hardgraft conducted ‘The Democrat’ column in the Sun from February to August 1904. He introduced himself as one who had ‘acquired his democratic views from “Gavan the Blacksmith” who is also known as “Danton” of the Bulletin, and “Camille”’. 54 ‘Danton’ and ‘Gavan the Blacksmith’ were pseudonyms used by Bernard O’Dowd. 55 Jack Hardgraft’s column consisted of political paragraphs with quotations from authors such as Walt Whitman, Francis Adams and Mark Twain. Verse was reprinted from the Tocsin, the Sydney Worker and the Chicago Chronicle.
Local verse contributors to the column included Prospect Good, The Exile and Diomed. Of contemporary Australian poets Victor Daley is quoted more than any other, usually under his pseudonym 'Creeve Roe'. Daley was very popular in labour circles. Many of the phrases which recur in Western Australian verse are also to be found in his work. In 1904 the *Sunday Times* reprinted from the *Sydney Worker* an article on "Bohemianism in Sydney" in which Daley described the life of poverty and insecurity which a writer like himself shared with his working-class readers.56 When Daley died in 1906 the *Sunday Times* published two articles on the poet, one of them by his friend E. J. Brady.57

Between 1903 and 1906 the *Sun* published numerous poems by 'The Exile'. He could write a dramatic narrative ballad like 'The Roll-up at Mosquito', or rollicking stanzas addressed to his mates as in 'Swamping in from Way':

> Here's to you, my mulga cobbers, putting up a grand old fight,  
> Hard-faced battlers, lion-hearted, stout and true.58

But most of his verse is an expression of political ideals, some of it reminiscent of Creeve Roe. The identity of The Exile is not known. His verse shows familiarity with events in both Queensland and Victoria. He recalls his old mates in Gippsland, refers to 'the bitter strike of '91', to the gallant Lieutenant Price reared at the convicts huts, who directed his 'cut-throats' to 'fire low and rake their guts', and to the treachery of men like Deakin who hurled the dogs of war at bonded Labor's throat. He describes himself as one who had spent five years battling in the mulga, 'five years on the hunger pad'.59 The swagman in his verse is a man 'under the ban' — blacklisted as a strike leader — or else driven to the track in search of work:

> There is a creed in Melbourne town  
> By press and politician hurled  
> At the unfortunate who's down,  
> The outcast of the labor world:  
> This is the creed: Go on the land,  
> Go where the farms and stations are,  
> Where wealth invites the idle hand  
> To labour light and wages fair.

> He went, and sixteen hours a day  
> He found the measure of their toil,  
> And half a crown the lordly pay  
> Wurung from the masters of the soil.  
> Hard-wrought the serfs with grey despair  
> Writ large their rugged brows across.  
> Go on the land, young labourer,  
> As ryot to the "cocky" boss.60

There are those who proudly pass the swagman by with a contemptuous shrug — a loafer, a drinker — yet this was the man who cleared the forests and tilled the lands and brought the nation to prosperity:

> Through peril and hunger these swagmen passed  
> To the verdant pasture or golden plot  
> And the lonely vigil and bitter past  
> Were the only guerdon they ever got.  
> Only a swagman, without a home,  
> With the soul of a man and the life of a hound,  
> Who must roam and labour and labour and roam  
> For the dole of a sweater the whole year round.
Only a swagman — God help the land
Where we crowd on the God-forsaken track
With famished body and idle hand
And the Cross of Christ on a toil-worn back.61

The Exile called on all ‘Sons of Toil’ to organize, and end a life of oppression.
He thought of the poet as a prophet, a man who heard the murmur of revolt in wind
and river, and passed the message on to the people.62 He himself could not write on
‘homely’ themes. His were:

songs of discontent and hate
At property’s triumphant reign
O’er those who all the wealth create;
Aimed at the hypocritic fraud
That serves the iron hand of force
And robs us in the name of God
And sows oppression in its course.

Not songs of fancy’s fairy flights
To paint an Oriental theme
But songs of revolution’s fight
I compass in my dream.
In vision with the vengeful van
I join the Armageddon fray
To wrest by force the rights of man
From parasites and wolves of prey.63

Similarly, in another poem:

I sing for the man who is under the ban,
I sing for the widow’s tears,
I fling my hate ‘gainst Church and State
That bolsters the rotten fraud,
The clanking steel of the iron heel
With the names of Law and God.64

The man who is ‘under the ban’ is the subject of another poem, ‘The Heroes I Sing’:

Blacklisted for crucified Labor
To seedtime a vigil they keep,
Preparing the harvest of Freedom
They are toiling for others to reap.

The hero was not to be found on platform or pulpit but among the people. He was
honest, single of purpose, and sought no ends of his own. He was distrusted by
those he sought to help, and detested by those whom he opposed, yet he battled on,
undeterred.65

Verse by ‘Temora’ published in the Sun between 1903 and 1905 has similar
themes. The identity of Temora is also unknown. Temora is the name of an old
mining town in southern New South Wales. The anonymous ‘Why Silent the
Bluebush Song?’ published in the Sunday Times in 1905 refers to a number of gold-
fields balladists, including The Prodigal, A. Chandler, ‘Chaucer-like Diomed’ and
‘sweet Temora’:

Here in the bush Temora fled
Sings one who fought the social wrong,
But powerless ‘gainst its hydra head
Seeks solace in the realm of song.66
Temora was writing to the *Sun* from Mt Sir Samuel in 1904, to the *Sunday Times* from Leonora in 1905, and to the *Westralian Worker* from Gwalia in 1905 and 1906. He was again contributing verse to the *Worker* in 1908, three years after his signature ceased appearing regularly in the *Sun*. When Bluebush died in 1914 the *Sun* published a poem, ‘Singer and Man’, by Temora in memory of ‘his old mate’.67

Temora’s home was the bush: here, he writes, is to be found freedom, enchanting beauty and true friends. Yet at times even the bushland is no solace as he reflects on battles fought and lost and the unmitigated sufferings of mankind. He addresses a sad farewell to the bush in 1905, promising to return when the bitter struggle for existence is passed, when his dreams of utopia and the brotherhood of man are fulfilled. ‘Aweary I Grow of the Fighting’, published in March 1905, has the mood characteristic of Temora’s verse.68 It expresses a despairing disillusionment in the face of manhood betrayed by false leaders. Will the world and the worker never be at peace? he asks. A fortnight after this poem appeared in the *Sun*, the newspaper published ‘a reply’ by an anonymous contributor, urging Temora and all like him to prepare for Armageddon:

Make war with the recreant leaders  
And the people, too, lash with your scorn,  
The people — the poor, helpless people  
By faction and bigotry torn.  
Be yours the iconoclast mantle  
Though vengeance they’ll certainly wreak,  
And give you the Cross of the Roman  
Or the hemlock they gave to the Greek.

The true democrat must fight, work, live and if necessary die for the people.69 In ‘To My Comrades’, published in April 1904, Temora himself refers to confusion among working people:

Shall you still in your lethargy linger  
Unheeding the dawn of the day?  
Shall caste with inexorable finger  
Still mark out the course of your way?

He urges his comrades to learn from Eureka and other lessons of past history.70 The reference to ‘caste’ is an allusion to disunity in the ranks of Labor, judging by The Exile’s use of this term as the title of a short piece published in January 1905:

The oilrag is the Labor toff, he holds the miner dirt,  
The trucker wouldn’t dare to touch a miner’s dirty shirt,  
Then if the mullocker presumes, the trucker gets annoyed,  
And all possess a lofty scorn for Boulder unemployed.  
Supposing, lads, we sling this pride and try another plan,  
And institute a better code, the Brotherhood of Man.71

Temora, too, was urging the importance of labour unity in verse published in the *Westralian Worker* in 1905 and 1906.72

Polemical verse of the kind written by Temora and The Exile ceased to appear in the *Sun* towards the end of 1905 and beginning of 1906, and few references to the coming of Armageddon will be found there until 1911, when a number of verses reminiscent of 1904 and 1905 again appear. This extract from ‘I Am the Man’ by ‘Sala­din’ is characteristic:
I am deformed by labour,
I am the working man,
Cursing the fate that holds me
A dull-browed Caliban.
Gnarled are my limbs and twisted,
Seared is my flesh and scarred,
And the work I do
My whole life through
Is a burden that grinds me hard.
Yet though I grope benighted
Upon uncharted ways,
The fires of revolution
At times I set ablaze.
When hate that long has smouldered
By sullen blasts is blown,
When the kings that quake
And the thrones that shake
To the ravenous flames are thrown,
When the towers and spires
Are licked by fires —
Then shall I have my own.73

'Saladin' was a pseudonym used by Julian Stuart. Though not a regular contributor to the Sun, Stuart was one of the prominent literary men on the goldfields. Reading this poem in 1960 an old man who could remember him well remarked:

'What a masterpiece that is, and photographic of the author. Julian Stuart was the strongest character we had. He never let up. Fought to the end . . . even the staunchest of them Labor M.P.'s were too mild for Julian. I heard him speak in Hannan Street. Not a fluent orator, but made every phrase tell. Stuck savage words in like a stiletto. While editor of the Worker he wrote what he called 'An Easter Message' in which he started off, 'I have no quarrel with Christ — after all, didn't he whip the money-lenders out of the Temple?'74

III

Julian Stuart's life might be regarded as an expression of the various elements that together resulted in the goldfields literary tradition, since association with the Bulletin, militant political outlook and economic insecurity are recurring components.75

In the 1850s Julian Stuart's father had bought a property on the Hunter River, New South Wales. It had belonged to a colonel who worked it with ticket-of-leave men. One of them, Old Jacob, told Julian of their harsh experiences. Another influence was an encounter with an Irish socialist who had been a strike leader in the Pittsburgh steel industry. Stuart himself was one of the men jailed from 1891 to 1894 in connection with the Queensland shearsers' strike. Before shifting to Western Australia he was contributing to the Sydney Bulletin as 'Curlew'. Throughout the nineties his verse was published in the Geraldton Express, Coolgardie Miner and Norseman Miner. At this period he recalled the harshness of life in the eastern colonies:
Scant pay, hard work and meanly fed
What joy was in the life we led?
What were the highest things we sought?
We hungered to be clothed and taught —
Our native land begrudged us bread.\(^76\)

And expressed his vision of new prospects in Western Australia:

| O Golden West, o’er all your scope |
| May truth and right and justice reign, |
| We greet you as a land of hope |
| In which no toiler toils in vain.\(^77\) |

Stuart continued his political activities in circumstances which proved to be just as difficult and insecure as in the east. From 1903 to 1906 he was editing the *Westralian Worker*, and was M.L.A. for Leonora—Mt Malcolm.

Throughout most of 1911, when Stuart was among the numerous unemployed, there was continuous industrial unrest. Throughout 1911 and 1912 there were strikes which involved waterside workers at Fremantle and Bunbury, building workers in Perth, slaughtermen at Fremantle, railwaymen in Geraldton, miners at Collie and firewood cutters at Kalgoorlie. In the elections of 1911 a labour government came to office with a large majority following ‘the first and greatest landslide in the State’s political history’.\(^78\) Whether one regards it as an influence on events, or as a reflection, or perhaps most accurately as a combination of the two, political expression in verse is relevant to these events.

There was poverty on the Golden Mile, and great was the bitterness at the dispossession of the pioneer. Western Australia was the proclaimed land of gold, and poets sang of the glories of the bush; but the road’s end was a sign ‘no hands wanted’ or a pile of bones bleaching on the desert plain. Mining monopoly, vaguely conceived, was held responsible for unemployment, low wages and accidents in the mines; and the source of oppression was most commonly personified as the fat man, John Bull or the London Gang.

What could be done to remedy the situation? The versifiers gave different answers. When the Daglish government was in office there was widely expressed disillusion with the efforts of labour parliamentarians. They were regarded as self-seekers, traitors to those who had voted them into power. One can detect in these verses the sentiment which resulted in the introduction of election of ministers by party caucus, which first took place in Western Australia.

Turning aside from constitutional solutions, some of the verse writers talked for the need for revolution. Others, equally disillusioned, turned from all political solutions to personal moral transformation: through change of heart, the rich would help the poor and men would live as brothers.

All recalled the mateship of the rush, which seemed to lend conviction to this belief in ‘the brotherhood of men’. To some people this meant co-operation among men irrespective of class or status in society. An editorial of 1896 for example described socialism as a state of mutual consideration between capitalist and miner.\(^79\) To others, however, mateship and the brotherhood of men meant working-class unity and was compatible with a vehement hatred of all who oppress the poor. In both cases much emphasis was placed on personal ethics, which usually meant the ‘Christian’ ethic. Though the wealthy churchgoer and the Church as an institution were condemned as hypocritical, the Christian ethic was widely regarded as the foundation of socialism and the reformed society, and much of the verse imagery was drawn from the Bible.

As an individual solution to economic problems, some ‘took to the track’ in the search for ‘freedom’. As if in answer to these rebels, there were other verse
writers who urged their fellow workers to settle down and to organize. Those who argued in favour of organization and revolution often expressed bitter disillusionment at the disunity and lack of militancy among their fellows. This foreshadowed the combination of radical opinion and contempt for the backward worker which later prevailed among the I.W.W. A few radical verse writers, like The Exile, warned against the dangers of this intolerance.

By 1911 the Sun and Sunday Times had established the reputation of a group of writers who were known not only on the goldfields but throughout the state. It is impossible to convey in a single image the prevailing mood in Western Australia. Along with misery and unemployment went the rising figures of gold production; along with political polemic went a feeling of state pride. Even at their most critical moments, the protestors seem to have shared with pride this sense of state identity.

NOTES

1 Sunday Times, 12.3.1939
2 E. Morris Miller and F. T. Macartney, Australian Literature (Sydney 1956) page 349, also records the existence of a novel by E. G. Murphy, Sweet Boronia: a Story of Coolgardie published Perth 1904. No copy has been located.
3 Kalgoorlie Sun 18.1.14
4 ibid
5 J. P. Bourke, Off the Bluebush, Sydney 1915, untitled poem.
6 Sun 19.1.08, "Broad Arrow in the Early Nineties" by Bluebush. Also Sunday Times 14.6.08, "Men of '95 — A Day Among the Dryblowers." by Bluebush.
7 Sun 19.4.08, Sunday Times 26.4.08
8 Sun 12.5.07
9 ibid 27.12.03, “A Labor Lilt”.
10 ibid 22.8.09
11 Bourke, Off the Bluebush, op. cit., “Song of the Stamps”.
12 ibid “Under the Heel of Fate,” “Your Level Best”, “A Song of Compromise”.
13 Sunday Times, 3.5.08
14 Bourke, Off the Bluebush op. cit.,
15 ibid “The Gospel of Shirk”
16 Kalgoorlie Sun 18.3.06, “A Beer Boost”
17 Sun 4.9.10
19 ibid
21 Sun, 26.6.10
22 Sunday Times, 5.7.08
23 Sun 4.8.07, reprinted Sunday Times 11.8.07 and Sun 1.1.22
24 Sun 30.6.07, "The Boulder Block".
25 ibid 12.5.07, and reprinted at the request of a reader, 1.3.14, “A Man was Killed in the Mine Today”.
26 This adage is the title of one of his poems, Sun 7.7.07, cf Sun 9.6.07, “Derelicts All”.
27 Sun, 22.12.07
28 Figaro (Perth) 9.1.04,
29 Kenneth Ophel to the author, 10.11.56.
30 Marjorie Pizer (ed), Freedom on the Wallaby (Sydney 1953.)
31 Sun, 15.3.03, “Australia”.
32 ibid, 1.2.03, “The Prospectors”.
33 ibid, 18.1.03, “The Golden Dog”.
34 ibid, 22.3.03, “The Army of the Dead”.
35 ibid 6.1.10, “The Wanderers”.
36 The Drayton Papers, located in the Mitchell Library, N.S.W., throw little light on this period.
37 Arthur Reid Those were the days (Perth 1933); Grant Hervey, “The Inky W.A.” Sun 27.3.04.
38 Sunday Figaro, 19.12.03 and Reid op. cit., p.46
39 Sun 1904, on 6.11, 13.11, 20.11, 11.12.
40 Sunday Times 21.6.03
41 Sun, 19.6.04
42 ibid, 1.5.04
43 ibid, 4.6.05, “The Outback trip”.
44 ibid, 20.8.05
45 ibid, 22.1.05, “Exiled West”, anon.
46 ibid, 5.2.05.
47 ibid, 16.4.05
48 ibid, 26.3.05 “Australia’s Animal”.
49 Sunday Times 5.6.04, “For the People”.
50 Sun 25.6.05
51 ibid 6.8.05 no title
52 Sun 13.11.04
53 Sunday Times, 25.12.04
54 Sun 21.2.04
55 Morris Miller and Macartney, op. cit., p. 361
56 Sunday Times, 24.1.04
57 ibid, 21.1.06, and 28.1.06
58 Sun 20.3.05, Sunday Times 26.3.05 and Sun 25.6.05
59 Sunday Times 23.8.04, Sun 22.11.03 “At the Tubal Cain” 22.3.04 “The Mandate of the West” 25.6.05 “Swamping in from Way”.
60 Sun 22.11.03, “At the Tubal Cain”
61 Sun 30.8.03, “Only a Swagman”
62 ibid. 17.4.04, “Organise”
63 ibid, 4.10.03, “The Songs I want to sing”
64 ibid, 28.2.04, “The Song I Bring”
65 ibid, 6.3.04
66 Sunday Times 26.2.05
67 Sun 17.4.04, Sunday Times 26.2.05, Westralian Worker 4.8.05 16.3.06, 10.1.08, 24.1.08, Sun 1.2.14
68 Sun 12.3.05, Sunday Times, 19.3.05
69 Sun 26.3.05, Sunday Times 2.4.05
70 Sun 17.4.04
71 ibid, 1.1.05
72 Westralian Worker 4.8.05, 16.3.06
73 Sun 2.4.11
74 Frank Spruhan to the author, 28th April 1960.
75 See Julian Stuart, Part of the Glory, Reminiscences of the Shearers’ Strike, Queensland 1891 with foreword on the man and his times by Lyndal Hadow. (Sydney 1967).
76 “East or West”, reprinted Geraldton Express 20.11.96 from Coolgardie Miner.
77 “Lines on the West” Norseman Miner 22.12.97, reprinted as “Westralia” Westralian Worker, 4.9.03.
79 Broad Arrow Standard, 26.8.96.
80 Something of this attitude is captured in the pages of The Golden West Annual, published in Perth from 1906 to 1914, and from 1917 to 1949. The editor was R. C. Spear, who had been responsible also for the appearance in 1900 of the Perth weekly, the Spectator.
Lament

jingle jingle
the sky
full of cows and moons
and fiddles and fear

beware beware
gazing too long
at the centaur clouds
and fruits and roads

too late
the sinners and milkmaids
too late the candles
to destroy the wind

memory gleaming
too soon now
as skeletal smiles
cling to black ribbons

already already
the tidal wave
glowing with night and love
has swept the moons away

no-one walks
between the trees
nor sings the jasper stars
the night is made of iron
For Ezra

the late spring sunlight
is bounding
across the concrete
while I pause
and consider that the light
was not the same
three years ago—
this day three years ago
Ezra Pound died
rather discontent with sanity
but with curiosity
still intact—
I felt the breeze
on me as it foretold
the summer
so with old Chinese pencil
I scribbled the confusion—
that became
after all
quite a neat poem
in twelve stanzas—
but that was three years ago
when trees
were three years' smaller
when stars
were three years' nearer
and even politics
had some interest for me—
in this modern sunlight
87 years still doesn't seem
too long a time
for a poet to live
a musical evening

the face is deepset
square your eyes
smile sparsely
    laconic
    fingers feel out
the slow colours of
the concertina
    & your body
waves darkly
to the textures
    of tone
spreading outwards
upwards from freereed
    structures

    and it is
pleasurable
this hot february morning
slow as our blood to
flow with
    the rhythmical
colours of you
    & the concertina.
A feature of the so-called new Australian poetry, say of the kind published in *New Poetry* and associated magazines, is that although it is highly critical of the older established forms and has evolved a wide range of theory and polemic that makes the finest distinctions between groups and movements, it uses the term 'poem' in a sense so wide as to be unheard of in earlier times. The word 'poem' as used now is really a collective term applied over a huge range, from bush ballads and bouncy satires at one end, through traditional metrical and rhyme schemes, free verse and so-called constellations, to concrete, suprematist ideograms, at the other end.

Prior to the latter part of the eighteenth century, the sense of the specific nature of the different kinds of poetry was such as to make it rare for the word 'poem' to be used in the all-inclusive sense now common. But this point has already been discussed by A. D. Hope in his well-known essay, "The Discursive Mode"; and others too have commented on the term 'poem' as a literary portmanteau into which almost anything can be crammed.

The word 'poem' of course has not always had a fixed meaning. In the past, poetic genre, the nature of each of the various kinds of poem, their range of expressiveness, was well understood. However, a characteristic feature of art in this century has been a broad attempt to surpass traditional boundaries. The impetus for this is generally traced to romantic attitudes current since the early nineteenth century. Not only has the idea of a 'poem' become variable and elastic, but the word 'poetic' has since this time led a romantic, ubiquitous existence and is by no means attached to poems alone. Philosophers, such as Hegel, have sought to justify this extension of the word 'poetic'. We find that the 'poetic' in general can be attributed to painting, the novel, music, and so on; we have 'poetic' landscapes, 'poetic' symphonies, 'poetic' young men. Poetry can be as ineffable, as elusive as the first dew-gleam of dawn, and as impossible to retain or describe. For the Romantics, this attitude is essentially related to some doctrine of symbolism, or correspondence. For Keats, the poem would speak of "huge cloudy symbols of a high romance". Wordsworth spoke of "the sounding cataract" that haunted him "like a passion", and on the Continent there were romantic doctrines of correspondence between the inner world of the spirit and the natural furniture of the outer world. Australian poetry has been seen as long under the influence of English romanticism. Herbert Piper has argued, convincingly I think, that even so nationalistic a movement in Australian poetry as the Jindyworobak Movement is
indebted to English romanticism for its belief in the role of Nature in man's spiritual life. Symbolism, in one form or another, is virtually endemic to Australian poetry. Most older local poets have drawn it in with their mother's milk, or at least from Yeats or the Georgians, not to mention the more overt sources in the French poets Baudelaire, Mallarmé, and others. Christopher Brennan, who corresponded with Mallarmé, thought at one stage that he was Australia's only symbolist poet; and, in rough and manly Sydney, with his "shy petal-hearts of Spring", the indications are that he was a little shy about it himself. He may have been its only truly aware practitioner, but Harpur and Kendall, with their mountains and waterfalls, if plainly not too reflective on the point, were well ahead of him. And there is the well-known academic conundrum of how Shaw Neilson came to practise symbolism without having heard about it.

Another aspect of literary history in recent times, of consequence for our own literature, is the relationship of the language of poetry to common speech. Wordsworth and Coleridge in their celebrated *Preface to Lyrical Ballads* had asked for the return of poetical language to the language of everyday life. Others have made this demand too, when it was considered that literary language had become too remote from common life. J. A. Synge and Federico Garcia Lorca took this demand for 'real-life' language in the sense of return to those who dwelt on the land, in the face of nature. But the common language of everyday life has changed; and reaction has set in against what has been considered its debasement and impoverishment. The language of towns has diverged from that of country-dwellers; the spread of mass-society and its communications have brought a levelling of language. There have been poets who became jealous of the difference and prestige of poetry and who sought to conserve its diction from the ravishments of common usage. The 'high' concerns of poetry demanded a diction other than that of common usage. With Mallarmé, d'Annunzio, Stefan George, there arose a stylizing tendency and an exclusive character in verse which influenced English poetry through the American Whistler and through the English francophile poets of the late nineteenth century. These poets found that with much of the longer passages of, for instance, Browning and Tennyson, the poetic battery seemed very weak, approaching the flatness of prose; they accordingly sought a diction of greater tension. The new poems became things in themselves, *l'art pour l'art*.

It is perhaps surprising at first to find how frequently the "new" Australian poets recur to the names of French poets of this time, of this symbolist period. Verlaine and Rimbaud, of course, have appeal to the rebellious, self-destructive young; but Mallarmé was no larrikin. Not that the nature of this Australian interest in the symbolists is clear; it is ambivalent. For instance, Martin Johnston, in a poem called *Gradus ad Parnassum*, published in *New Poetry*, October 1971, tells us that he has been re-reading Majakowsky's last poem, "The Shipwreck of the Heart, or some such", as Johnston puts it—a poem written immediately before Majakowsky's suicide. The poet considers that Majakowsky's poem is flabby, sentimental and in need of revision; and because all writers are really one, he himself might as well have a go at this revision. The whole approach is rather casual. He thinks of revising *The Shipwreck* in an Arnoldian way, as an extended metaphor—

the tang of myth, the vague yearning (perhaps *tristesse* is more or less the word) after something or other indefinable.

But it would be hard not to be woolly.

He thinks Sefiris might do it; but that would be because he is Greek, and for this reason could get away with it. But it won't do for us. And then he writes:
Or perhaps something after the manner of Rimbaud, 
Le Bateau Ivre, say. It's been done, I grant you 
—there's a new Rimbaud every week or so—but it does offer 
both astringency and lots of freedom. It's tempting...

So here, in one instance, is the temptation—even though it's been done and is 
imitated, it does offer a binding, a drawing together, and "lots of freedom". 
Rimbaud, it was, who wrote that "The first study of any one who wished to be 
a poet is self-experience". Rimbaud wished to be a seer, directly comprehending 
his own inner experience, on a plane superior to the senses. One must transform 
one's soul into a monster, he said, derange the senses, so as to be creative. His 
quest led him through a sequence of brilliant poems, The Season in Hell, to dis­ 
ilusion and acknowledgement of the impossibility of his quest.

Martin Johnston's poem continues:

It's tempting; 
and I could invoke Hofmannsthal too, and his incredible boat 
'with enormous yellow sails', the ideal dreamscape property 
if ever there was one. 
Except Rimbaud never had to face 
that particular situation; it was always poor Verlaine 
who copped it—court cases, absinthe, all very sordid—and his style, 
I'm sure of it, would be worse than useless...

Here, Verlaine, the older partner, who 'cops' it, is dismissed because his relations 
with the world are sordid, and because of his style. And his style was based on a 
mastery of poetic tradition and a genius for distilling an exquisite, unique music 
from it. He is inimitable and does not entice the dilettante to follow him. There is 
a touch of the precious, of something dandiacal, in Johnston's rejection. We note 
that he continues on with his considerations of possible ways to revise the Majakowsky poem, without achieving a decision. He thinks it will "have to do" as it is, even though he's not sure that it's much of a poem, and he hopes someone 
will try to steal his own poems, of which, he declares:

the explanation of each poem 
precisely the poem itself

His final lines are:

Sometimes it's hard to repress a snigger. Still, a beer 
and buy the papers and some more tabasco 
and maybe another bash at Mayakovsky....

It is a heartless, clever and irritating poem. One can only wish its author well in 
his revision and hope that his attempt is equal to the tragic dimensions of the 
dilemma in which Majakowsky found himself. I have thought it worthwhile to 
bring Martin Johnston's poem in at such length on several counts. It is a relatively 
full and representative statement of 'new' attitudes. That is, it is subjective, a 
poem about the difficulty of revising a poem; it is defensive, withdrawn from the 
common world and claiming to be an absolute in itself:

the explanation of each poem 
precisely the poem itself.

Its title is an interesting reflection of its Parnassian attitudes, which are more 
substantially present than its irony would appear to allow: that is, withdrawal 
from the everyday world, and even from literary history, in the interests of a 
poetic essence indefinable except by the enigmatic quiddity of the poem itself. Its 
positive quality perhaps, in common with the Parnassians, lies in an implied belief
in this essence and the need to preserve it from what is no longer appropriate to its expression. It sounds like the mild religion of an aesthete. The reference to Hoffmannsthal is of interest, for here too, as with Rimbaud, there was a precocious gift for poetry that ran into difficulties and was extinguished at an early age. A writer of brilliant symbolist poems, Hofmannsthal was led by subjective attitudes into questioning the meaning of words, and then into silence as a poet. His *Lord Chandos Letters* are a milestone in modern sensibility. The crux of the matter is the doubt of relationship between symbolic expression in poetry and life; that is, it is a question of the *semantic* value of the poem.

In *Poetry Australia*, Preface to the Seventies Issue, February 1970, the first poem of the issue, selected by John Tranter, is called *The Symbol*, written by Walter Billeter, born in Switzerland in 1943, resident in Australia since 1966. It begins as follows:

> The birds,
> stilting on summer rust grass,
> before they took off
> for their flight towards evening.

Here there is a simple depiction of nature, a romantic language of evening; the summer, peak of the yearly cycle; the rust grass, dry and soon to decay and mingle with the earth; the birds, central object of action and interest, stilting, unsteady, readying for flight into the indistinctness of loss of light; end of day. The poem continues:

> Was it a symbol?
> On the horizon
> a bleeding sun died—
> no cloud bandage could help.

Here, the question of symbolism is raised and parodied in symbolical terms. The answer is no. The sun, here a rather lurid symbol, is fatally wounded and another symbol, the cloud bandage, cannot help. There is something central about this death—it is not a cause for rejoicing. The poem continues:

> I walked through the suburb
> and saw the usualness, the known:
> traces of yesterday's car accident,
> the postman, two cops
> watching a group of dissenters,
> and cars,
> an endless caravan of chrome and steel.
> I found nothing to construe,
> everything was in the paper.

The world is experienced by the poet as flat, banal, “an endless caravan of chrome and steel”. The last two lines are remarkable, in that the ‘paper’ supplies an account which obviates all need to explain, interpret or, as the dictionary would have it, “*exhibit in another language the grammatical structure and literal meaning of*”. Death on the road, civil dissent, the pollution caused by endless motorcars are dully, helplessly accepted—the lack of symbolism seems complete. Then we are told:

> Only the names of the victims
> thrust a lance at my eye—
> who cut these warning traces?
> I found them
> carved into the bark of a tree,
> aside, at no place.
> Was it a symbol?
The place is no-place, unimportant, but the names of the victims still have enough affective power to reach in through the eye and disturb, but they do not prompt a direct concern. Just as the names are cut "aside" at the no-place, so it seems they prompt the poet "aside" to consider the question of symbolism. The poem ends:

While night leaned
hard against the dusk,
the ordinary went its way.
There ought to be fairies,
still—

Again the answer to the question is "no", but there are reservations. One cannot deny the symbolical force of the night leaning "hard", but what it symbolises, if it is accepted as such, is negation. The last line is also ambivalent; it implies denial but also nostalgia for the realm of phantasy, the symbol. It is a poem which, in its evocation of world-experience, is black, terrible. It is as though the recording consciousness were sedated, its responses to the world attenuated so that only the sharper points of horror could enter to prompt a question of theory. Of human concern, there is none.

A more truculent note is struck by Robert Adamson in *New Poetry*, August 1971. In a poem called "Wow, those Symbolists were so serious", he describes figuratively his own attitude. It is designedly offensive and aggressive, hardly a school-poem:

like warm shit in a dove-cote a million poems
burn softly inside me. but then, when i've carefully
swallowed my dreams: i turn after
drinkin' six cold beers

and pull myself together so that I can relieve
my bitter needs: as sweetly
as morrell i piss towards the dark skies, very high
and very far

In contrast, one thinks of Goethe's *Grenzen der Menschheit*, where we are told that if a man keeps his feet on the earth, his forehead will hardly reach the under-leaves of an oak. It appears to be a general characteristic of modern poetry that doubt about the semantic value of the poem results in a shift of emphasis to the poem itself. To paraphrase Gertrude Stein: the poem is a poem is a poem. Or, as Archibald McLeish puts it, in his *Ars Poetica*:

A poem should not mean
But be.

So much of the "new" poetry is about poetry. This is doubtless one response to the need for the autonomous poem. Also, it appears to be a way for the isolated poet in a pluralist society to achieve community, even at the cost of alienating readers not specifically interested in poetry as subject-matter of poems. But this use of poetry is paradoxical, for it gives poetry a meaning beyond autonomy. The truth is that Mallarmé's dictum that "Poems are not made from ideas but words", and McLeish's prescription, are half-truths; for words can never be wholly divorced from ideas and meanings. One doesn't need to be a Marxist to see that all poetry has political, social, moral implications.

Apart from obvious engagement, however, the use of language has further social implications. Ezra Pound, often credited as the father of poetic modernism, was passionate on the point, and in reply to the question whether literature has a function in the State, replied that indeed it had, and this function had to do with the clarity and force of expression of every conceivable thought and that when
the medium, the words, was inaccurately or in any way faultily applied to a matter, the entire machinery of social and individual thought would go to pieces. Pound pleaded for poets as preservers of precision and clarity against dilettantes and amateur literature-lovers, and for poetry as having at heart the good of the community in general. Great literature, he defined as simple language loaded to the highest possible degree with meaning.

Ezra Pound has had his supporters in Australia. William Fleming and Noel Stock come to mind immediately; the latter has gone to Italy, edited Pound's papers and written a biography. But it is more the exclusivist appeal of Pound that they supported, the purity of language, the perfection of phrase and cadence. Their subject matter was unengaged; their position in Australian poetry rather peripheral. Lex Banning and Francis Brabazon too, until he followed Meher Baber, showed Poundian influence. But there had been a stronger reaction against common speech earlier in Australia. The Vision school, Slessor, Jack Lindsay, Hugh McCrae, had reacted against the ballads and the jingoistic language of Nationalism, and earlier still Brennan and others had to some degree partaken of the late nineteenth century, French-influenced reaction to Victorian poetic diction.

These examples I have given indicate a widespread feature of the 'new' poetry—that is, of attempting to uphold symbolistic language by means of parodistic negation. The tone of it, I believe, can already be found in the 'Mauberly' poems of Ezra Pound, and in the early T. S. Eliot. It is not as radical an attack on the symbol and its referred extra-literary world as is that of the visual and phonetic poets. These latter poems face two ways; outward, as demonstration against the hitherto prevailing mode, and inward, in search of genuinely new means of expression. Most manifestoes, proclamations, etc., are, of course, demonstrative. Although they may specify the kind of art they want, as does Marinetti's manifesto, or Olsen's Projectivist statement, they demonstrate rather more loudly, if not always explicitly, the absence of a superior, higher bond of language. The whole process is of course a living, changing, even seethingly active and conflicting one, with the participants more or less clear, more or less blindly, imitatively, seeking their ends in artistic release, ego-gratification, community or whatever. It is possible to focus for a while on individual developments, but boundaries soon become blurred. The main current of the 'new' poetry appears as an eclecticism—the purer, extreme forms are more at the outer echelons.

An important instance of this eclecticism within the 'new' poetry is given by the kind of poem-sequence or cycle that has emerged. There have of course been sequences, cycles of poems, in earlier periods—Les Fleurs de Mal of Baudelaire, the West-Östlicher Divan of Goethe; but in these works the individual poems contribute their individuality to an overall plan—they are constituent citizens of an ordered world. However, in the new sequences I am thinking of, the parts are only to be understood in relation to the whole, even when, paradoxically, the whole is too large or fragmentary to be surveyed. The meaning of the fragments, sections, is to be sought within the whole work—not in individual relation to the world. The work as a whole is a surrogate world; symbolism is replaced by internal reference.

Christopher Brennan appears to have been influenced by Mallarmé's conception of the "livre composé", in his composition of Poems 1913, but this work is of course symbolist in intent, even though one may have reservations about Brennan's understanding of Mallarmé's concept, seeing that Brennan apparently regarded it as yet another variation of the doctrine of correspondence, of the romantic "analogy" of Novalis. In contrast to this, the cycles I have in mind are characterised by a marked faithfulness to the principle enunciated by William Carlos Williams as, "not in ideas but in things"—that is, the attempt to replace the symbolist mode of expression by the reproduction of 'things' in a language-world.
In the making of such a world, it is inevitable that provision be made for the naming of parts, for listing the furniture and active agents of the world; and, of course, these parts must be located in time and space—hence the need for chorology and chronology. These lists, in the course of development of the poem-sequence, are found to reveal cross-references between the individual items; gradually the poem reveals itself to be, not an interpretation of the external, everyday world, although no one can be stopped from attempting to construe it as such, but a language-world in itself, reproducing features of worlds we have known. This is not to suggest that the poem-sequence actually realises this attempt each time; for the sequence may simply indicate enough of its cosmos in a fragmentary way to enable the reader to carry on with the imaginary construction himself. Works of this kind, are: the Cantos of Ezra Pound—a work issued in successive parts from 1930 until a short time ago—an immense language-world whose coherence is the subject of argument—word has it that Pound despaired of its ultimate coherence and considered it a failure in this respect; Pablo Neruda’s immense Canto Generalé; Jorge Guillen’s Cantico, published in parts from 1946 to 1958; Charles Olson’s Maximus Poems, published in parts from 1953 onwards.

These poems achieve substantiality of location by assignment to places more or less real; with Pound, we have the Pisan cantos, references to Siena, Wall Street, etc. Neruda located his work in Chile; Williams, in the small town of Paterson. Chronology is represented by historical sequence; in Pound, by dynasties of Chinese history, by sequence of famous men. Guillen invokes the system of the seasons. The diary-entry, from the life of the author also serves for time-binding, as with Gertrude Stein, Guillen and Pound. Further binding, stabilising agents, in addition to time and space, are thematic materials of the most various kinds. In a recent issue of New Poetry (Vol. 22, No. 2/3) K. L. Macrae writes apropos of The Dolphin sequence, by Robert Lowell, that “What makes them cohere is familiar: the autobiographical persona, the heavy weighting given to personal and family background, and locality as a point of reference”.

Charles Olson, born 1910 in Worcester, Massachusetts, has had a considerable influence on the ‘new’ poets, and his theory of ‘projective’ verse is widely known. This theory, which regards itself as being in a line of development from Pound through Williams, advocates a so-called ‘open’ verse as against the ‘closed’ verse of certain French writers. Open verse is a ‘projection’ of personality based on physiological rhythms, that is, based on rhythms of breathing, hearing, speaking; the poem is regarded as essentially an energy-field, one of whose essential design-criteria is that energy be maximised. A cardinal rule here is that one perception must immediately pass to the next, to maintain velocity, tension—the kinetic quality striven for—reminiscent of the “Bellezza della velocita” demanded by the Futurists. The typographical arrangement of lines is very important as an indication of movement. Form is an extension of content. William Carlos Williams states that it is the rhythmical unit that decides the form of his work. The Projectivist theory reads like the literary equivalent of ‘Systems Theory’ at present so pervasive in industrial technology.

In Australia, we have, as yet, had no great sequences of the kind I have just referred to; the influences mentioned have only belatedly begun to operate here; sufficient time has not yet elapsed for the really large work that may appear. However, there has been a considerable number of shorter sequences published recently—a number in book form, as to be expected with works of such size; but there are also many shorter sequences published in magazines. Often, these purport to be sections of a larger work in progress. If all these indicated works are ever completed and printed, we will have a flood of long works, such as to press upon library funds for accommodation. The character of these works is of course
various and here I can only give attention to a few of them as illustrations of
the influence of the 'new' ideas.

Bruce Beaver, born 1928 in Manly, N.S.W., has, amongst other longish works,
produced a sequence called Letters to Live Poets, published in 1969. There are
thirty-four parts or letters in the work, though their character as letters is usually
not obvious—rarely is anyone addressed specifically and the general tone is of
soliloquy. In Section XIV, he states:

This is to myself: an audience
gets in the way of writing.
The sense of an audience
gets in the road.

Beaver has stated his approval of Williams' ideas. Indeed, we find in Section XI:
"No ideas but things. That's sense." And he also acknowledges the influence of
Charles Olson's theories and those of the American poet James Dickey, on the
associative jumps that the mind is said to make. His Letters to Live Poets has been
highly regarded by some reviewers. I must confess to finding the work disappoint­
ing. It has a certain low-keyed tone of meditation running through it. Individual
sections have descriptive interest; there are occasional striking images, though these
are usually expressive of disgust, aversion. The work hovers, introspectively, in a
grey no-man's land between flat prose and poetic soliloquy. It embraces many
'things' and events but establishes little connection between them; indeed, the poet
sees the world as "incorrigibly plural" and he states (in letter XI):

There'll be no overall
reconciliation
of opposites this aeon.

The location of the work is not clearly defined but there is constant reference to
beaches, coastal towns, cities, streets, gardens and parks in various places. Chrono­
logically, it is sited in the present, extended by reminiscence and by recourse to his
reading.

In contrast to this is a sequence by Vincent Buckley, an established poet whose
reputation has been built up outside the usual range of publications of the 'new'
poets. The poem Golden Builders, published in Poetry Australia, No.42, 1972, is
made up of eight sections, covering twenty-three pages. On glancing through it,
one immediately notes an Olson-like arrangement of lines, and subsequently
discovers that this arrangement is a properly operative factor in modulating,
promoting a beautifully sustained rhythm, an all-encompassing movement, flowing,
pulsing, shuttling, through a world rich in objects, in tangible phenomena, in
lights, smells, sounds. Golden Builders is a kinetic poem and agrees well with the
specifications of 'Field-composition' in its dynamic quality, its energy, its direct
transitions from one perception to the next. The percussive effect desired by Olson
is vividly generated here in the evoked racket of hammers, drills, and other
machines. The poem is clearly located, with great attention to detail, in the streets
of Carlton immediately near the University of Melbourne. There are imaginative
excursions outside of this territory but they all serve to add significance to this
basic locality. Migrants who live in the area are evoked with their wealth of past
association. Since the poem is so clearly bonded together by location, chronology
as a unifying factor is not so important. The poem's time is essentially the present,
again with excursions, to the immediate and distant past, to illumine and solidify
the actuality of the poem. In contrast to Bruce Beaver's work, a wealth of internal
cross-reference is quickly established, maintained and enriched as the poem
progresses.
Another sequence is that of Martin Johnston, published in *New Poetry*, April 1971. It consists of twenty-three parts, covering eleven pages. The title is *The Blood Aquarium*. It begins with a quotation from Heracleitos. Indeed, the work itself is scattered with references from reading—there is little sense of an actual world, rather a subjective catalogue of impressions culled mostly from indirect experience. One notices the abrupt transitions from one perception to the next, in agreement with the Olson prescription. This poem reminds me that years ago Gottfried Benn spoke of what he called “The Novel of the Phenotype”, the prose work drawing wholly on subjective sources, a world within a world. Martin Johnston’s work appears to be an exercise of this character. Garry Langford’s sequence *The Dying Man* (*Westerly*, No. 4, 1974) is another example of this type, which the editors of *Westerly* have indeed chosen to classify under the heading of “Prose”.

Another sequence, by the late Michael Dransfield, born in Sydney in 1948, and once described by Thomas Shapcott as “terrifyingly close to genius”, is called *After Vietnam* and was published as the first item in *Poetry Magazine* for August 1970. It is a short sequence containing seven sections, spread over five pages. The interesting thing about Dransfield, in comparison with many other ‘new’ poets, is the lack of apparent ambitious straining in this work, the modest but consistent achievement in each of these seven sections which are more individual work in themselves, but also fragments suggestive of a wider world, here only sketched in for the reader to extend in his imagination. *After Vietnam*, however, despite its superficial appearance of ‘newness’, is much closer to traditional mainstream verse than that of the writers Dransfield is usually grouped with.

Another sequence I would like to draw attention to is by Les Murray, called “Walking to the Cattle Place”, published in *Poetry Australia*, No. 42, 1972. Les Murray was born at Bunyah, New South Wales, in 1938. His 14-part sequence shows effective use of ‘new’ techniques while expressive of more traditional views of life. Indeed, some of the ‘new’ sequences suggest that the time has come for more conservative writers of talent to use the technical achievements of the experimentalists for works of a standard not attained to by writers avowedly revolutionary in aim. In the ‘new’ Australian poetry, we no longer sense the possibility, the capability, or even a sense of responsibility for the reconstruction of the world in the work of art, of the artistic reconstruction of objective order.

In these Australian sequences of which I have given but a few instances out of literally hundreds, there is, I think, a synthesising tendency at work, a tendency to gather together the disparate, even contradictory strivings of twentieth-century poetry into a comprehensive work expressive of a longed-for unity, of a poetic universe in which all may find community under the shelter of the most varied attempts to achieve a mode of speech not referred to the inner world of subjectivity, but to a shared world, mythical perhaps, but of sufficient poetic substantiality to be lived in with others.
ANDREW LANSDOWN

Sestina: The River at Night

There is not even one pin-prick of light
In the muslin of this chilled night. The river
Is very deep: a million souls could be lost
Without a whimper, without so much as a murmur
Or the ripple of a thought. I am black
But comely, ye daughters; I am the king's lady.

The shores that encompass you, my lady,
Are strewn with banners of light:
They whisper with the wind to all that is black
Around them; they mirror in the river,
And waver fluid as life as they murmur
The song of victory—but die when the current's lost.

In the evening, in the sun's departure, one has lost
A sense of security, but, at times, gained a lady
And a form of love: ah together we will murmur
The illusions of our souls! The caress of light
On the convex of your eye is the star a river
Pool reflects when the sky is one from total black.

A gull is spattered and fouled with the black
Tar of night: I hear its fear and know it is lost:
Disembodied cries over the quiet of the river—
There is no warmth in you tonight, my lady.
There is something that attracts us to the absence of light:
We are mesmerised by the water's abysmal murmur.

If I were nearer, I might have heard the motor-murmur.
None-the-less, I can see, silhouetted against black,
The ferry boat by its beads of burning light.
It is a company of fire-flies, or a pendant lost
And enveloped in the succulent mystery of a winter-lady.
Charon, you will never carry me across your river!

Upon concrete, the bridge spans the river;
On its back beetle many cars and trucks with murmur
Of wheels and motor. Within me overflowed, Ah lady, lady,
The mellifluous texture, the fluid molasses of your black,
Sable hair is broken and momentarily lost
To the jewelled ribbon of the bridge's light.

Within us is the river. The water is black
And moves with less than a murmur. If we are lost,
Who is this lady? If we are not, where is the light?
ANDREW LANSDOWN

Portrait

Once the nurse has brought the tea
In unbreakable plastic mugs,
The “Rest Home” is vigorous with memories.

Half protesting, she allows
The warmth to draw her out:

See! Granny’s got a teapot
Like a pumpkin with a spout!
They boast and re-affirm—
Looking quite as quaint
As the Dutch children dancing
Round and round the brew,
Sketched on white in blue.

ROBERT C. BOYCE

Challenge

Small
white-haired
boy.

Numberless
glass-houses.

A stone’s
throw
away.

Running wildly
into the wind.
LARRY BUTTROSE

About That Day You Almost Drove Me To Death

THAT oriental gadfly yellow
just too easy to drive dammit
if you'd had something by gmh or someone
such you'd have to spend time thinking
about driving and he was coming
fast as you took the lights
thinking for some godgiven reason
the rules of the road were hereby suspended
giving you & i our basic human rights
to divinity & we almost gained that quality
then and there as you drifted right on the green
with a throwaway homily and by jizus
that tinny fairlane took on the form
of a sherman tank or maybe the whole
nazi panzas revving at the bulge

inside the cabin in lazy time
you turned your head to me & understood
yes you said
but your foot gave no response

and holding my breath in tight
gazed across the thinning space
your eyes brown and ready
as cleared & naked earth
waiting for the ploughman's tread,
sad as the clod-wrenching sigh
as he cuts the first furrow

and this vision was to be
my metaphor, i realized,
for all my life strung
before my eyes

but mighty zeus
the fairlane missed us
jizus i gasped sweating blood
and you changed the subject
as the plough passed from the corner
of my vision.
In This Age of Light and Reason

In this age of light and reason——

we sit in a prism of open windows
and see too many colors; reminded with each
sun climb of darkness waiting
and all it's purple potential.

Never to be safely blinded by one
hue, every relative point of view
thrusting forth it's valid opinion,
each iris blinking polytechnic.

The earth's great abstract pondered
upon till every drizzle and glob have not one
or two but reason unlimited;
while retreat to cooler monotone

brings a dazzle of shrieking protests.
And if this world is but a prism
flashing, someday we might be
gathered through its gleaming

facets and mirror manacled emerge
so definitely at light speed
to rocket away forever in that
great harmonic disagreement;

till one by one each photon winks out.
Autumn came
and leaves fell.
Some sustained multiple fractures,
others just got up
and walked away.

Oak Tree

A centenarian my oak tree
needed surgery last year.
In leafless winter wear it modelled bruised and bare
a unique dignity.

Its antlered head to heaven held
provides a picture through:
a sculpture shapes at any height moon soft and sylvan light
in crossbeam symmetry.

Young branches reaching for support
in time a gallows wrought.

Wounds bleed in need of a caress:
reprieve then convalesce
in oaken majesty.
VIV KITSON

Celebrating Another Spring

I scrape flaking paint from the boat; stripped to the waist, pallid skin soaking in the sun. The cat, too, luxuriates on the hot cement. It's been a hard winter. Birds I cannot name dive and skirl in the still air. I tell myself that this year I will name birds, flowers, trees—know their different textures with new eyes—squeeze the real world for its humble truths; a chastened man. Eschewing artifice, I remove dead paint, sometimes gouging the cedar planks and releasing subtle odours to my rank, honest sweat.

ADRIAN FLAVELL

Pickers' Quarters: Forest Range

Homeless landscape wanderings settled here
   rammed earth and old stone bottles
   thumbprints of applepickers
   faded photograph of uncle
   four mildewed French postcards.

Old memories are the broken patience of years postcard mirror of wars
   fragments of misplaced relatives
toadstools turning away
   from the sun.

*The Savage Crows* is a tricky book, but that is its attraction since so many recent Australian novels seem to minister only to complacency. On the one hand, you can, very grandly, rank it with books like Mailer’s *Armies of the Night* or Grass’s *The Tin Drum*, novels which play with the contents of history. On the other hand, it is written with such disarming simplicity that it mocks the critic’s desire to place, much less make any solemn assessment of it. Nevertheless, I mean to try because I think criticism can matter, that in fact its excuse is to point out books like *The Savage Crows*.

For once, here is an Australian writer at ease with himself and, by consequence, with his style, who knows also how to tell a story. Moreover, the story is in no way fantastic or strained. On the contrary, it may be the reader’s, yours or mine, all, presumably, people of impeccably small “I” liberal sentiments. Stephen Crisp’s ideas are also impeccable—he has a job with the ABC—but his life in general and his marriage and personal relationships in particular are going to pieces. So, giving up his job, he takes refuge in concern for the aborigines, settling down to write a thesis about the end of the Tasmanian people. The two stories run in tandem; the story which centres on the work of George Robinson, “the Protector” who looks after the aborigines and tries to ease their passing, and the story of Stephen Crisp which flashes back to his childhood in Perth and follows him through to the confusions of the present. Unpretentiously, moving lightly from past to present, somehow Drewe manages in the process to get Australia whole as few novelists have done, not the mythopoetic land of recent literature but the country we actually inhabit. It is all there. Perth with its bland surfaces and ennui, the parties at the yacht club and drinks by the swimming pool in Dalkeith, the brother married to an ex-Miss West Australia and the family quarrels over the length of his mother’s tennis dress; Sydney where Crisp lives in the inner suburbs in a dingy flat overlooking Luna Park and the streets with the cruising police cars, lonely old people, friendly New Australian fruiterers, and beyond, fashionable Sydney, Crisp’s journalist friends, his ex-wife and her new lover, his child with her asthma, all the paraphernalia of personal pain and apparent affluence. The people, too, are the kind we know. Above all, we recognize his father, “devoted Company bondsman”, ex-Air Force pilot, who serves Hallstrom Gelatine to the point of a stroke at the opening of its vast new plant in Sydney. And behind all this inane negation of all that is individual and vital, there are glimpses of another world which we also know, a world of lost innocence: Crisp as boy after fish in the river, standing with his boomerang-shaped kylie “like an aborigine, poised and skinny, waiting for the fish to surface” (p. 33) or drawn to the vision of another world in a picture he finds in a magazine of aboriginal girls bathing naked in a pool. Somehow, by a kind of sympathetic magic, these two worlds interact so that the story of the aborigines in the past reflects on ours in the present. What if Crisp and those of us who identify with him were also the last of a dying race?

Not that this is necessarily to make either us or them heroic. Juxtaposing past and present, Drewe leaves us to make what we will of the combination. You may, if you wish, sympathise with Crisp and his half-conscious identification with Robinson, champion of the aborigines. Or you may regard him and his ideals ironically as perhaps the novelist does. Or, again, you may remain ambivalent, directing your ironies against yourself and your need to deduce meanings and morals. Certainly, there is no grand and satisfying apocalypse at the end. Rather, life in all its randomness and brokenness intrudes on the fictions. As his thesis nears completion, Crisp suddenly becomes aware of the incompleteness of his own life and of the dangers of substituting art for life. So, throwing up his thesis he goes off to Flinders Island where the last Tasmanians still live. There, the facts bear little resemblance to his fictions. Far from being tragic, these are a cheerful, a-moral people who make themselves comfortable by trading in mutton birds and, more profitably, the white man’s guilt. What, then, are we to think of Crisp and his project? Mr Drewe does
not tell us, and all that Crisp says, in the last sentence of the novel, is that “it was worth the trip”.

It may be, of course, that the novelist lacks staying power and is unable to draw the threads of his story together. But it may be also that there is an echo of the equivocal ending of Eliot’s “The Journey of the Magi”, a type of the work in the Modern tradition, “It was (you may say) satisfactory”. Crisp, the born loser, is a dubious hero, but what is being composed over the length of the novel is less his story than the reader’s. Besides, his kind of failure may be preferable to success, given the society he—and we—inhabit. So the prevailing sense of malaise becomes important and Crisp’s attempts to get some kind of order into his disorderly existence prompts the reader to do the same by means of the book itself. These, the means of an all-pervasive irony, directed by the author not merely at his characters and readers but also at himself, remind me of Furphy in Such Is Life, and indicate the way this novel stands in a central Australian tradition, though one, it is true, not much worked upon lately. Like Furphy’s protean novel, The Savage Crows challenges established logic, proceeding in a series of non-sequiturs, swinging from past to present; from Crisp composing and finally decomposing his thesis, to Crisp composing and then (one hopes) recomposing his own life, attitudes and values. Also like Furphy, Drewe makes his points obliquely, by means of compositional jokes (mostly a matter of the juxtaposition of past and present), and by leaving characters and situations open-ended, partly to challenge any simple-minded confidence in mere rationality and partly because he seems convinced that mere seriousness cannot get to the heart of things. So, the duplicity of the structure reflects a conviction about the duplicity of life, though not necessarily a nihilistic one. After all, if all things are relative, they may be equally meaningful as well as meaningless. The task Crisp sets himself, “to try and understand everything, starting with myself and working up to the nation” (p. 8) may be entirely laudable, though Drewe is in a good Australian tradition when he suggests that scepticism may also be a way to wisdom.

Thus the games he plays with his hero, like Furphy’s with Tom Collins, are not merely frivolous. For one thing, he is both the novelist’s self and the mask he wears to protect him from himself; from one point of view an idle fellow, a mere philanderer who drifts in and out of relations with people and ideas and from another a deadly serious figure who takes upon himself both the moral debts and aspirations of his people as a whole. In this context, the absurdities of his situation and his feelings anchor the novel in the real world, acknowledging the claims of facts and thus keeping the reader from dissolving into recollection as he delves into history, his own and the nation’s, with the reminder that there are no perfect people, not even those who have suffered like the aborigines, much less right-minded liberals.

Life, not fiction, therefore, has the last word. Although it takes up fashionable questions, both of the aborigines, the alienated middle-class and so on, The Savage Crows challenges rather than propounds ideology; and I, for one, am grateful. Even in a novel, system-building can be a sign of dementia, the need to impose one’s personal order on the world. But this novel, mercifully, rejects systems. At the same time, again like Such Is Life, it is very aware of the struggles between free-will and determinism. Throughout, Crisp is wrestling with compulsions at work not only within himself but also within our society. But while he does not quite get free of them, the reader may understand a little more of the disastrous nature of these compulsions, above all of our repression of all that is instinctual. It is not only the aborigines but the white people themselves who are destroyed by the white penis—repression and disgust are perhaps as deadly in his parents’ case as the licence the aborigines have to suffer. Drewe offers no easy solution, but the thrust of the book is towards the freedom which an increased and ironic self-understanding may make possible.

The Savage Crows, then, is an important book because it reverses the trend to escape from life into art. At the end, in fact, it dismantles itself, delivering its hero from contemplating life over again to the attempt to live it and asking the reader to do the same. The book Robert Drewe invites you to read therefore is ultimately the book of yourself. A problematical book indeed, but one which is probably compulsory.

VERONICA BRADY

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No one who is seriously interested in the literature of the Singapore/Malaysia region and concerned about its achievement and development can afford to ignore this finely produced anthology which brings together the best poetry written in English in these parts over the last twenty-five years. It is only right that Thumboo should have been the man chosen for this formidable task; he, more than anyone else, has variously shaped and forcefully articulated the literary consciousness of the region and brought its products to universal attention by his unrelenting efforts in promoting the poets and their works in an unselfish yet intelligent manner. Thumboo's judicious selection can hardly be questioned by anyone who is at all familiar with the literary scene of this part of the world; and his stimulating Introduction to the book provides the necessary framework within which the work represented is both explained and appreciated. Given the complexity of cultural groupings and the almost inherent linguistic tensions pervading the social scene of Singapore and Malaysia, not a little of the outsider's interest in *The Second Tongue* focuses itself on the way in which English (the second tongue) has been used as an expressive medium to convey some of the most basic pre-occupations of the people.

At its highest poetry powerfully communicates the poet's innermost responses to his environment in order to reach for a wider understanding of the conflicts involved:

> the blood in me has travelled so many centuries,
> flowed in unknown veins
> across swampy rivers and proud straits,
> the loins that have borne the beginnings
> that were me
> are so distant and divorced from these wild
> wild thoughts.
> the great-grandfather who walked in piety

had filtered his purity into his dutch-hating son
who walked with him and with god.
they who have dominated their communities had traditions;
purified the ancestral mud to clean cultivatable earth
and grew in its clutch children of faith and contentment.
but the blood had collected corruptions in
the new arteries torn from the river.
(“Blood”—Mohammad Haji Salleh, p. 43)

Frequently, the anguish finds utterance in image and metaphor successfully poised to confront the disturbed mind:

> This then is a country where one cannot wish
to be. The spirit not given its features
fester in the flesh. Incites the year
to come upon it like the tiger. The city's parks,
odd street corners, and public buildings
bear the stench, the torn fur of trivial remembrances. In the flesh
am I thus the hunted out creature of my days
vocal perhaps to seem some kind of Job
(“Poem for a Birthday”—Wong Pui Nam, p. 163)

And often, the resolution effected by the bewilderment features not in a ready-made formula for living but in the sad acknowledgement of the fact that what is past help should perhaps be past grief:

> And so, at last one must
To one's Job, and one's surroundings,
Mosquitoes. Monsoon.
And life is waking, and working, and wife
And children; and hearing now at midnight
A gibberish of fingers on drum,
A lone voice wailing a holy chapter—
Would that I knew the language—
And life is musing on the mystery
Beyond the sounds and the scents,
Beyond the brightness and the sadness
In the soughing casuarina.

(“Pengkalan Chepa, Kelantan”—Ee Tiang Hong, p. 113)

On occasion, the situation can even be tinged with an ironic pathos making for wry humour and exclaiming the need for a human appraisal of painful occurrences:

> Last week a little boy drowned,
A tragic accident; we felt truly sorry.
But soon forgot.
We repair our sorrows quickly
For death is an everyday thing, is natural,
Part of the Asian scene
And he was not our brother.

("A Boy Drowns"—Edwin Thumboo, p. 84)

Wong Pui Nam, Ee Tiang Hong, Mohammad Haji Salleh and Edwin Thumboo have arrived at a balanced point of poetic comment after years of struggle to find the right personal idiom to embody the dilemmas of the problems requiring statement. Their poetry speaks with thrust and conviction and underlines their commitment to creating a viable tradition of poetic sensibility. Their influence on the younger poets has been considerable and is chiefly seen in the ease and freedom with which the latter have been able to put forth their feelings and attitudes. Thus, Lee Tzu Pheng can voice disenchantment squarely in words which have a peculiar lingering effect:

let the gifted who discern
our pain and our belonging
say it for us:

words are only wind
children of the mind
give nothing if nothing
is accepted

("Lines"—p. 182)

And Chung Yee Chong can half-wistfully allude to the games lovers play:

you could have made
a most royal subject
worn your armour
and charged your steed
you could have swept me
off my feet—

instead
you wore your heart
on a sleeve
and asked for love
i could not give

("Ways of Love"—p. 58)

Though poetry in English in Singapore and Malaysia has a fairly long history, in the early days of its career most of it was either directly imitative or derived from the English poets on whose work the writers in those colonial times were nurtured. When we compare that early verse with its modern-day counterpart, we realize the enormous stride taken by the poets who have fashioned and are continuing to fashion the poetry written today. While Edwin Thumboo takes a great deal of trouble to explain the defects dominating the early poems and then goes on to justify their omission on grounds that “they possess little other than historical interest”, the fastidious reader may be forgiven if he laments this lack: some samples of that early verse would have definitely furnished the anthology with a historical continuity to render it fully comprehensive.

But if the earliest writers are excluded, Thumboo certainly avoids the editor’s other common pitfall—conservatism. Many new and still unsure poets find themselves in The Second Tongue and some of their work is promising indeed:

i am but a silky fragment of a woman
wispy, tiny
i fade like perfume
if you speak too loud, look too roughly
or slip from the senses like powder.
pale green silk,
translucent with elegance
heavily delicate,
the sun shines through me.

("For Anais Nin"—Geraldine Heng, p. 34)

The forward-looking (and needless to say, encouraging) stance that Thumboo has adopted in his selection is surely to be applauded, for it is only too easy to fall into what Tagore called the dreary dead sand of habit.

Altogether, some thirty-eight poets are represented in the anthology. One of the more arresting aspects of the editing is the fact that the collection is divided into seven very carefully chosen thematic sections. Even if readers do not always agree with the divisions, it must be said that they do serve to offer a cogency of arrangement in place of what could otherwise have been a too random hotch-potch of material. Both the editor and the publisher must be highly commended for a job so excellently executed as to fill the readers’ minds with echoes of a sound and moving poetry:

and even now
when evening folds its wings upon the rise
I can feel in the great deep darkness outside
movements in the hedges and the grass
moths in the gardenia tree

("Nightpiece"—Lee Tzu Pheng, p. 1)

KIRPAL SINGH
I have, I suppose, what might be called a Dickens-centred view of nineteenth-century England, and so I tend to test most propositions about the Victorian Age against the works of Dickens. In this case, three passages come at once to mind. In the first, from *Dombey and Son* (1846-47), we are in a London to which the countryside can still send relief:

_They were making late hay, somewhere out of town; and though the fragrance had a long way to come . . . yet it was wafted faintly . . . whispering of Nature and her wholesome air . . . even unto prisoners and captives (ch. 29)._ 

But only six years later, the influence is seen to be reversed, and the city now has a power which is about to reduce outlying provinces:

_‘Railroads shall soon traverse all this country, and with a rattle and a glare the engine and train shall shoot like a meteor over the wide night-landscape, turning the moon paler’ (Bleak House, ch. 55). By the time of *Our Mutual Friend* (1864-65), the struggle is almost over, and Dickens can talk of the place ‘where Kent and Surrey meet, and where the railways still bestride the market-gardens that will soon die under them’. (Bk. 2, ch. 1)._ 

The development which Dickens reported was evident to all Victorian writers, and disturbing to most. We might argue, in fact, that the leading preoccupation of Victorian literature was its awareness of a seemingly irresistible urbanization affecting every aspect of Man’s life. Now Mr. Forsyth has brought together a collection of his essays (originally published separately between 1961 and 1969) which consider some results of this pre-occupation. He lucidly defines the Victorian dilemma thus:

_... the harnessing of steam not only endowed men with a seemingly god-like control of time and space, but led also to the concomitant spread of cities of unprecedented size and complexity. Hitherto the English ethos had been essentially rural and God-oriented, sustained by a pattern of values and attitudes rooted in the soil, and ritualistically determined by the cyclic demands of the seasons. With the emergence of the new man-made urban-industrial environment, however, this traditional ethos was steadily discredited as the real context of human endeavour (ch. 1)._ 

The attempts of Victorian writers to define just what was ‘the real context of human endeavour’ are Mr. Forsyth’s subject, and, taken together, point to the emergence of what he calls ‘city sensibility’.

He begins with a general chapter unfolding the implications of the sentences just quoted. His train of thought, it is true, calls at some of the more famous stations on the main Victorian line—“Maud”, “Dover Beach”, the first paragraph of *Felix Holt* (the latter being utilized very aptly as a sort of guide to the varieties of Victorian experience) — but it connects these to other lines, less familiar perhaps, such as the works of Eneas Sweetland Dallas. One of the satisfying qualities of this chapter is its sensitivity to historical currents, a sensitivity which appears both in its understanding of how the Victorians could sometimes experience an agonized sense of separation from their past as if they had undergone a second Fall, and in its knowledge of how their struggles take on meaning for our century as we trace continuations of their concerns in the writings of, for example, D. H. Lawrence or T. S. Eliot. Succinct and suggestive, this chapter outlines the system of the book; and, with very little modification, it would admirably serve any student looking for an introduction to the Victorian Age.

One introduction per book is usually enough, and it seems to me that the second chapter, ‘The Victorian Self-Image and the Emergent City Sensibility’, is, ironically, given its title, the casualty of the collection — a casualty because excellent as it is in isolation, it loses its impact as ‘a collage of elements, drawn mainly from the lives and works of various literary figures’ when it follows just such another collage where its argument has been sufficiently stated. What we rather look for are particulars to feed the interests aroused by
Chapter 3, ‘Geology and the Early Victorian Traveller’, delightfully does just this. Mr. Forsyth draws on John Murray’s travellers’ guidebooks to show how scientific knowledge began to influence ideas of beauty. We learn that some Englishmen founded in 1858 ‘the Alpine Club, which published a quarterly journal devoted to “mountain adventure and scientific research”’. We also discover that the great scientist, T. H. Huxley, was willing to enthuse about the ‘wonderful works of art in nature’s gallery’. It is not too much to say that for some Victorians scenery was beautiful because it was composed of rocks which could teach one lessons about the world. This obsession with rocks and fossils might have its social disadvantages, as Dickens seems to have suspected when creating Professor Dingo, who justified his chipping away at the stones of edifices with his little geological hammer by saying that ‘he knew of no building, save the Temple of Science’; but it was central to the age, and John Fowles, in The French Lieutenant’s Woman, was perfectly right to make his hero, Charles Smithson, an amateur geologist.

The logic of Mr. Forsyth’s book works smoothly from this point on. We are now given two chapters on Victorian poetic theory: the first, a discriminating account of the thought of E. S. Dallas, the author of The Gay Science (1886), who, in response to the impulse of his times, asserted the need for ‘a scientifically based criticism’; the second, an examination of the ways in which the Victorians, under the pressures of science and urbanization, modified Romantic concepts of Nature (a modification which would mean for example, that the sub-Wordsworthian use of ‘Nature’ seen above in the quotation from Dombey and Son would be eschewed by Dickens after about 1850). These chapters prepare us for essays on three poets, Robert Buchanan, James Thomson (B.V.), and William Barnes. These are, I think, from among the class of authors T. S. Eliot had in mind when he said that it is the minor writers of a period who tell one most about its poetic character. Certainly these three are rarely read now, unless in anthologies. But like many Historians of Ideas, Mr. Forsyth tends to value most highly those writers whose ideas fit the most interesting patterns. For example, he says of Thomson:

... because almost the entire body of his work is directly concerned with the struggle between religious desires and the discoveries of science, he demonstrates in miniature an important aspect of the spiritual history of the time, and therein rests his prime importance. (My italics).

It’s true, of course, that our enjoyment often comes partly from our recognition of a poet’s ‘importance’, in this sense. Nevertheless, Mr. Forsyth is here either too kind or quite unfair to Thomson, if you hold the belief that a poet’s importance really depends on whether or not his poems are enjoyable. Well, perhaps I’m being unfair, for actually Mr. Forsyth rescues these poets from the literary history books and does persuade us that they are worth reading. His piece on William Barnes, for example, should make any reader impatient with the established footnote treatment which places Barnes as ‘a dialect poet, admired by Tennyson’. The poets’ individual flavours are conveyed, but discreet scholarship ensures that ultimately interpretative evaluations are made in terms of relationships with better-known authors. The familiar thus takes on a new look. An instance occurs when James Thomson’s pessimism is illuminated by reference to Hardy, Meredith and Swinburne:

With the increase of atheism and humanism, the ‘Comic Spirit’ and the ‘Immanent Will’ emerge as compromise deities, specifically unadorable, man-made ‘explanations’ of the mystery of conscious existence — manifestations of homage to that mystery, human responses to a Godless world.

The appearance here of Meredith’s Comic Spirit is, I think, unexpected, but, as it proves, justifiable. And it at once tells us something about Thomson, who ‘was too immediately involved in the upheaval of transition to be able to sail thus far on uncharted seas towards the establishment of the new cosmology’.

In the penultimate chapter, comparing Arnold and Clough on ‘The Buried Life’ in the context of Dr. Thomas Arnold’s Historiography, Mr. Forsyth quotes Dr. Arnold’s view that a man ‘who feels his own times keenly . . . such a man will write a lively and impressive account of past times’. Looking over this collection one sees the force of this remark, and one’s impression is confirmed by the final, prize-winning, essay ‘Europe’,
the Hipster's criticism of the Western ethos as expressed in the American way of life springs ideally from a concern with the nature and constitution of man's being rather than from anger at particular injustices. This involves him, as a consequence, in a search for the true source of spiritual authority which, he feels, is to be discovered through a re-orientation of the traditional relationship between "Europe" and "Africa".

This is an essay which makes us feel that the Victorians matter precisely because our own age matters. Like the preceding essays it has much to say about the steady development in our civilization of the senses of loss, bewilderment and fear. Yet, perhaps because I'm a good Dickensian, I can't believe that everything makes for despondency; and possibly one of the most valuable contributions of our own time to finding a way through our dilemmas may turn out to lie in criticism such as Mr. Forsyth's book contains: clear, alert—and, after all, pattern-making.

ALAN DILNOT.

G. S. Reid (ed.), The Western Australian Elections 1974. Politics Department, University of Western Australia, 1976, 236 pp, $3.50.

The West Australian Elections—1974 is a welcome addition to what is a very sparse library on Western Australian politics. Edited by Professor Gordon Reid of the University of W.A., it contains contributions from students and academics from the University of W.A., the Western Australian Institute of Technology and Mount Lawley Teachers' College. It goes a long way in showing that election studies are no longer the preserve of political scientists, with contributions from historians, geographers and students of the mass media. The influence of sociological theory can also be discerned. Its "primary purpose", Professor Reid tells us, "is to assist students in the study of State politics in Australia".

The book is broken up into six parts. The first, written by R. Hetherington, places the election in its historical context. He raises the issue of whether or not the Tonkin Labor Government of 1971 to 1974 was but an aberration from the trend begun in 1959 with the emergence of a Liberal-Country Party government. It was the latter government which preceded over the period of economic expansion associated with the mineral boom of the 1960's. Was it John Tonkin's good fortune to be leading Labor at a time when the Liberals were struggling to find their feet after the departure of Menzies and when the Galbraithian theme of private affluence and public squalor struck a chord with the public in the late 1960's and early 1970's? Certainly most of the articles in the book seem to indicate that the victory of Sir Charles Court was in no small degree a victory for the "politics of development".

Part Two deals with the campaign and the campaigners. Hetherington's analysis of the Liberal and Labor campaigns provides a lot of useful information on party organization. He points to the organizational weaknesses of Labor in the country areas. This, he argues, severely retarded their political chances. The results certainly confirm this, particularly in the North-West-Murchison-Eyre area, for many years a Labor stronghold. This weakness he contrasts with the effective campaigning of the Liberal Party in the country. Here, he concludes, lay "the Liberal Party's strength and the genesis of its victory". The Country Party's ill-fated alliance with the D.L.P. is examined by Hal Colebatch. He concludes that it was "an alliance of politicians—not voters". In an effort to re-establish itself the Country Party allied itself with the urban based D.L.P. and presented itself as a party for all Australians. The electoral failure of the alliance is well examined in the article, "The Results", by David Black. There is an important piece by Tom Stannage on the social origins of the candidates. He raises many questions concerning the sociology of the West's political history. Hopefully the current revival of interest in local history will provide us with the information which can be used in a systematic exploration of the questions he raises.

Part Three deals with the role of interest groups in the election. It contains three com-
petent articles on the role of business, the Women's Electoral Lobby and the Secession Movement. It is pleasing to note that the authors of these articles, Barbara Hamilton, Sandra Penrose and M. Print, attempt to gauge the influence of the activities of these groups on the overall campaign. However, there is no account of the role that the A.L.P.-affiliated unions played in the election. Indeed, a study of the way the industrial wing of the Labor Movement comes to operate in an election is badly needed.

Parts Four and Five deal with party propaganda and the role of the mass media. Leonore Layman analyses the policy speeches and party leaflets of the major parties. Her study reveals that for Labor the central issues were education and social welfare, whilst for the Liberals centralism took the centre of the stage. The effort of the National Alliance to establish itself as a party for all is clearly shown by an examination of their propaganda. In an unorthodox piece Duncan Graham examines the role of television. He shows a very sound understanding of the complex relationship that exists between the viewer and the “box”. Very few of our politicians, he concludes, have yet to realize that television is a skill that can only be acquired through “knowledge and hard work”. In an article on The West Australian Howard Gaskin argues that the West “has a clear editorial posture sympathetic to the Right which permeates through the organization and emerges as an ‘attitude’.” There is, however nothing on the country press—a serious omission.

The final section contains an excellent analysis of the results by the psephologist, David Black. He tells us of the poor showing of Labor in the country areas and the North-West. Given the electoral system, the fact that Labor held its own in the metropolitan area was of little consequence for the final result. As Black notes:

It was the electoral system, especially in view of Labor's decline in those non-metropolitan areas such as the North where it had done well in the past, which enabled the incoming government to win a clear majority.

The book concludes with a survey analysis of three metropolitan electorates and a preliminary mapping of the results in the metropolitan area as a whole. This is done by geographers Dennis Rumley and Michael Hirst. The survey analysis of the electorates of Floreat, Karrinyup and Perth looks at the role social class and status, area integration and religion play on individual voting behaviour. In the same way as Stannage's article, this one raises more questions than can be answered about the sociology of Western Australian politics. It is a pity that some country electorates were not surveyed in the same way. The final piece deals with both the problems involved, and the potential uses of political mapping. It is argued that the maps drawn should be approached carefully as all the technical problems involved with such maps have yet to be sorted out.

What of the book as a whole? How does it tell the story of the election? Centralism, we are told, was the chief issue. It was taken up by the Liberal Party, The West Australian, the Civic Affairs Bureau, and the various states' rights and secession groups and very effectively presented to the public. The impression is gained that Labor was always on the defensive. The issue of centralism was linked to the issue of the economic development of the state. It was only Sir Charles Court, so the propaganda read, who could effectively protect and foster Western Australian interests threatened by a Federal Labor Government. As one Liberal Party pamphlet put it:

This piece of real estate (i.e. W.A.) is worth saving in 1974. It will be too late in 1977.

Labor would have required organizational and political strength outside of the metropolitan area to counter such a campaign. As Hetherington argued, it was precisely in these areas that Labor was weak. Consequently the “politics of development” re-established itself under the Western sun.

The book has two obvious weaknesses. In the first place there are no individual electorate studies. With the exception of a short piece by J. Buxton on three Liberal Party campaigns and Rumley's survey there is nothing on individual electorates. Thus the precise way in which the general factors analysed in the book came to operate in each particular case is never examined. It also means that the idiosyncrasies of each electorate are ignored. In the second place the politics of the country areas is not
examined in sufficient detail. In particular, an analysis of the decline of the Country Party is badly needed. Just what relationship exists between the country residents and the organizational and parliamentary wings of the Country Party? Is the Liberal Party extending its influence in the country areas? If so, how?

One final point needs to be made. Studies of this kind exist in a vacuum. This has already been said with respect to the sociology of West Australian politics. It is also true if we think of WA.'s political culture. Colebatch speaks of "the peculiar conditions of WA.'s political culture" whilst Sandra Penrose asks the question of whether or not the poor showing of the Australia Party is to be explained by "the State's politically and socially conservative climate". However, they can point to no literature which deals with this question. This leaves their comments somewhat "up in the air". The time is now ripe for scholarship which begins the task of filling in some of the details.

GEOFF GALLOP

GUY WELLER

University Silences

The sun hangs over Crawley like a cauldron tipped and the university simpers, smug and pure.
The river loiters along it. Nothing else moves, or has any destination. The trees stripped of defences sulk in the sun, melting in yellow, hiding their leaves. The peacocks in the garden jerk their heads and listen to the silence.

They are reading Blake. Their little caves grow dim and faces peer. A girl carefully farts.
The pages turn to the steady march of silence.
The sun tears at the foliage. Great ferns grip and cling.
Teeth chatter in a room. There is a smell of fear, of flesh turning to stone. Hidden, high and clear, heedless and barely heard, the giant cicadas sing.
NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

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