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WESTERLY

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WESTERLY

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SUSAN HAMPTON

Jocasta's Chair

The house looked as intimidating as ever. Fran had just raised her hand to knock when Mrs Harvey opened the door abruptly in her face.

"Oh, it's you. Paul's in showing some slides to his father."

Fran watched as Mrs Harvey marched out to the kitchen, and then entered the darkened lounge-room on her right. She touched Paul's hand and said hello to his father. She could see the white glint of Mr Harvey's smile across the room. They were looking at a slide of the family: Mrs H. in her W.A.A.F. uniform after a re-union do, Mr H. in his overalls, spanner in hand. Between them was Mike, Paul's older brother, a seventeen stone businessman who always looked . . . sleazy, Fran thought. Paul had taken the photo.

They stared at it for a long time, at the tentative way Mr Harvey held an arm around Mike's shoulder, and at the discomfort on Mrs Harvey's face. She was standing a little apart from Mike, as she had done all his life. She made no bones about disliking his fatness, and the way he cringed continually; nor could she forgive him for having frequently bashed up Paul when they were boys. She pretended to like him now, for the sake of the family. After all, he had a flourishing business and a nice wife. He didn't come home very often. Fran knew that Mrs Harvey's only complaint about Paul was that he talked too much about alternatives. He wasn't settling down. "You have to face reality sometime," she would say.

"I'll see if I can help in the kitchen," Fran murmured. She made a grotesque face at herself in the hall mirror, baring her teeth like a looney. The rigours of this place. Rigor-mortis, yes. Why did she still bother to offer help? The paring knife had to be put in a certain drawer, the tea-towels hung in a certain way, the spoon replaced in the tea-caddy. Offers of help were mandatory, but nearly always rejected because no-one but Mrs H. could do it properly. Constant nagging and supervision if you did help. Not worth the bloody bother.

It worried her that Mrs Harvey's life was entirely bound up in the running of an immaculate house and the coddling of Paul when he was home. Fran had tried to talk to her once about women's issues and independence, but Mrs H. had laughed cynically and said that young women didn't know what liberation was, *she*'d been liberated when she was in the W.A.A.C.'s, *she* didn't need to wear overalls to prove a point. Fran almost hated her.

Waving a carving knife, Mrs Harvey swung around from the sink as she heard Fran come into the room.

"Ha ha hah!" she said with a flourish, "I'm cutting up my husband's sandwiches!"

"So I see," said Fran.

"Would you like to stay for dinner?"

"If it's no trouble." Fran didn't really want to stay, but she didn't feel like

arguing about it, and besides, she'd hardly seen Paul for the last week.

"Well, would you *like* to stay?"

"If it's no trouble, I said."

"Make up your mind, Fran. Yes or no."

"All right, fine."

And so on. There was no avoiding it, really. What followed was a long discussion about whether she would have schnapper or steak, tea or coffee, dessert or an apple. Fran knew that "I don't mind" wasn't an answer, but she said it anyway. She was tempted to yell, in the black-and-white tiled kitchen, I DEFINITELY WANT PRAWNS AND I WANT THEM RIGHT NOW.

During dinner, she wondered for the hundredth time why Paul still came home. His mother was sucking at her fish and asking endless questions about who they lived with, what was so good about communal houses anyway, (wasn't it sloppy?) when would they finish Uni and get jobs, why didn't they get married if they were going to live together like this . . . Paul was giving one-word answers.

"Have you ever thought of getting engaged?" she asked.

"The schnapper's very nice," Fran put in.

"Yes, very nice," said Mr Harvey, "lovely."

Fran took Paul's hand at the corner of the table and squeezed it hard. He gave her a soft look and went on eating, ignoring his mother's last question.

"How can you concentrate when you're holding hands like that?" she asked.

"How's work, Mr Harvey?" Fran said.

"Not bad, Fran. Night shift all this week."

Mrs Harvey was still watching Paul, and with her head on one side and her fork in the air at an odd angle she looked like some frail water-bird, seeking reassurance.

"Oh Paul, remember twenty-five years ago when I gave birth to you, how close we were, and all through your childhood, and look at you now . . . a handsome stranger."

Mr Harvey wrinkled the end of his nose and coughed. Fran stared at a loose thread in the tablecloth. Paul went on eating. His mother was frowning at Fran, or rather frowning and grinning, so he said,

"What now, Mum?"

Mrs Harvey waved a hand towards the centre of the table.

"Mum, I think butter knives must have gone out of fashion by now."

"Have they," she said shortly.

Fran went on buttering the bread with her fish knife; she smiled at Mrs Harvey. While she was feeling the smile contract on her face she remembered something, and kicked Paul under the table. "Eleven," she said, almost under her breath. Paul nodded. One night in bed they had counted ten different knives his mother had, all for special purposes: tomato knife, bread knife, steak knife, fruit knife, paring knife . . .

"What did you mean by that, Fran? Eleven what?"

"Fran was talking to me, Mum."

"I see." Mrs Harvey began to dish up dessert.

After the meal they went back to the lounge-room, and Paul set up the next box of slides. Mrs Harvey clanked about in the kitchen for a while, and then came to stand in the doorway. She began to look very flustered.

"Where will I sit?"

"Sit anywhere, it doesn't matter. Here, sit on this," Paul said, moving a chair for her. Fran was aware that she was sitting in Mrs Harvey's chair, but she was too exasperated to move. *She can ask if she wants to sit here.* Mr Harvey switched off the light and went to his chair in the corner of the room. Fran didn't notice

it at the time, but she remarked to Paul later that the seating arrangement in the room was pretty bloody symbolic. There was Paul, behind the projector, his face in the light it gave off. Fran and Mrs Harvey, one on each side, half-lit. When Fran moved her chair to within a few inches of Paul, so did Mrs Harvey. And there was father, off in a dark corner.

There were more slides of the family, and then one showing Fran and Paul perched on the arms of Mrs Harvey's chair.

"That's *my* chair!" she said smoothly, laughing.

The next slide was one of Fran on her push-bike, wearing the same overalls and jumper as now. She felt exposed in the dark, and laughing in a half-hysterical way, she said: "Look, same clothes!" Mrs Harvey leaned back and said,

"Oh look at her, look at her, she's got some sparkle now she's got some food in her!"

Jesus, thought Fran. A second later she wondered if she had said it aloud. There was no telling what a person might do or say in this house; Mrs Harvey made everyone (except Paul, surprisingly) feel and act like a petulant child. Mr Harvey, especially, was pleased to act with complicity in any verbal game against his wife. He was frightened of her and tried to dominate her at the same time. "Have you made my sandwiches?" he would explode in the middle of something. And "Yes," she would say, quite meekly, until the next round had begun and the boot was on the other foot. What a bore.

The Watagan Mountains clicked onto the wall, and Paul began telling them about the camping trip, a month back. One slide showed a close-up of a bush orchid. One of a platypus painted on a cave wall. One of Fran putting up the tent. Then a kangaroo, thin, unsure, ready to disappear.

"Mike shot these kangaroos," Mrs Harvey said, patting the rug on her chair. Fran almost groaned. Mike's money, and the dead presents he brought home, were his only merits. Paul glanced at her and then back at the wall. *He's putting on this slide show to placate them. Because he hasn't been home for three months.* She put out a hand and stroked his thigh. He smiled without looking at her and she thought gratefully, he's escaped, he's not like them. She wondered how he'd managed it, after having spent so long making polite noiseless gestures to his mother's rules and his father's evasion. Mr Harvey spent most of his time in the garage tinkering with his car, his two lawnmowers, his fishing gear . . . or cleaning Mike's guns. What was it like for him, when he had to come in at night, what was it like in bed with her?

"God this chair's uncomfortable," Mrs Harvey said. And then, noticing Fran's hand, "Look at her! She can't leave him alone!"

Fran flinched, and folded her arms. How *could* Paul excuse this woman, she was unbelievable! "But listen," he had said, "you're a feminist, you should be able to understand her if anyone can. Shovelled back into domesticity as soon as the war ended—bored with her husband—transfers all the love to her favourite son. The whole D. H. Lawrence thing. We can't change her." Fran had shut her eyes and said "Yes, all right. But I don't see how you can be so tolerant of her fussing and cooing. It's as if you're encouraging her, even though you hate it. You could *try* explaining. I'm sick of her being jealous of me. Fancy somebody's mother setting herself up as your rival."

Then something weird was happening in the room, something Fran could hardly believe: Slowly, as if in a trance, Mrs Harvey was rubbing her hand up and down Paul's left leg. At the same time she was staring at Fran in a blank kind of way, a stare that made Fran feel as if she weren't really there. And rubbing, so slowly and softly, up and down Paul's leg.

"Don't *touch* me!" Paul jumped half way across the room. His mother laughed, teasing. "Don't you like it?"

"I know it's unfortunate, but no, I don't, I hate it. Now leave me alone."

Mr Harvey sat perfectly still, staring at the kangaroo. Fran shivered, and then blew her nose as loudly as she could.

"Think I'll go and have a shower," Mr Harvey said.

Half an hour later, the slide show had finished. Mr Harvey, for some reason, had decided to stick it out, and now he said, "I'll go and wash the dishes."

"Do you need a wiper-upper?" asked Fran.

"Oh!" Mrs Harvey snorted, "you wouldn't offer to do it for me, but you'll do it for *him*!"

"Don't worry about it, Fran," Mr Harvey said as he left the room.

Fran felt weak, unhinged. It was *not* that she wanted to help Mr Harvey because he was a man, but because he was easier to get along with; he didn't make an issue out of every little thing. She knew her loyalties should be with Mrs Harvey, but the woman was impossible to like. Maybe Paul was right, you just had to put up with people like his mother, and expecting them to change only made things more difficult.

She looked at Paul and saw that he was still shaking. He told his mother that there'd been a change of plan: they were going back to Sydney that night. Mrs Harvey stroked her upper lip and said, "Is that true, Fran?"

"Yes. We thought we'd leave as soon as possible. Thanks for dinner, it was . . ."

"But why so suddenly, why right now?" Mrs Harvey looked belligerent.

"Mum," Paul warned.

"All right. All right. Sometimes I feel you two have a conspiracy against me, you want to shut me out. I *am* your mother, Paul."

"We know," he said, but he could not bring himself to kiss her goodbye.

On the front footpath, Fran turned to look back at the house. Through the window, she could see the T.V. flickering over Mrs Harvey, so that she looked like a blue and white statue. She was sitting in her own chair.

JEAN KENT

Fruit Salad

(i)

In the beginning, I ate apples. Clean, crisp, good-eating apples.

Not caring much what you were or how my teeth might meet you, I followed the lines of teeth into red, shiny skin with sensations, and pearls of white dribbling out. It was that I was looking for, not you. That milky, crunchy underneath. You were patient in your familiar grocery bags. Not expecting more of life than this: A good polish, now and then, on someone's skirt. If I forgot the crunch after biting and stared out into the distance, it was because some gastric juice had told me—this is not for you—pallid, wholesome, keeping doctors away, you will die ignorant

And like little pebbles you slipped coldly under my tongue

(ii)

Something more exotic.

A tamarillo. Half vegetable, foreign. And expensive in that remote shop where I found you.

Remote blush under the deep scarlet, you retreat even in the mouth, jerk away, start upon my tongue you would always tantalize, dropping down out of other people's cases, in tissue paper, as if you might bruise. But you did more bruising with your absence than I could ever enact when you were near. You who were so witty, so macabre, you thought you knew the end of everything sitting on your silver salver, spitting out seeds from a world unknown to me

Rich ladies, they say, partake of you now. I wouldn't wonder

(iii)

But why then the pear?

Plopping out of some nursery rhyme, some bounce me back here I am in your lap fruit that somebody three me like a gift

A gift? Gobbled whole. Six weeks and you were gone, season fin. And I was still wet upon the cheeks with water-juice, still rattling seeds in my throat, waiting for you to ripen. On the old shelf now you are the bush fruit, the woody pear that splits on native trees to fling seeds out into the grey bush, two grey wooden half-pears, joined only at the stalk, bending their full weight away

Away, but so sweet when they were real, the green skin turning gold, the flecked eyes that whorled, and the taste just there, like rain in the air, earth swelling, evanescent, ethereal enough to become whatever I had hoped it could be

(iv)

The orange.

Of sweaty acid skin, fingers thick in pith, drowning in those clouded fumes, arguing, prickled by the swelter of closeness, the threat of impingement, of a bitter peeling that might uncover hurt. And also honesty. Sipping, through that storm of open pores, at the strangely delicate world with its own light, its own eyes, inward turned.

But even you could turn sour. You were bitter grapefruit, better for a marmalade of dissent, academic palaver or old men's biographies than thrown in the brandy and syrup with me. Your thousand wise eyes would wither, curl tight and brown, dry, and the brown scales pinch into rocks in the nest of my hand.

My grandfather had a way with oranges, I've heard. He made orange wine.

But he died before I met you

(v)

And lastly, rising like a dawn or a dusk over the beginning and the end of you all, no bowl I could ever buy or carve out of philippino wood wide enough to contain you

O my peach, where did you come from with your skin so tight upon you? I have only to reach out a glance and there is rust on the down, movement through fur that invites

I should like to suck, to sidle back to that skinclose place where you fell full as rain and brimming with juice

You went down so easily

WENDY JENKINS

Jigsaw Puzzle

I saw two people
doing a jigsaw puzzle.
He made the sky
in
skip
quick
starts
and she the earth
slow paused
and
pon der ous
and where they met
at the horizon
all pieces fully interlocking
the trees exploded red
and
gave off
birds.

PETER MURPHY

A House Like God

In my father's house there were lots of rooms, each one a kind of dream. My first memory is a child in an empty study—the smallest object twice my size—and the laughter of guests from the floor below. There were always guests—staring at the hideous murals, resting in the carved chairs, drinking wine or tea. I say 'my father' out of affection only. He was not my father, although the house he loved is now my own.

I think the colours of a man's spirit are seen, not in his love for people, but in the things he cares for, and, although I knew my father loved me deeply, it caused me no grief to see that the house meant much more to him—that, and the dustless lawns and velvet flowers which surrounded it. I knew my worth, and was not a competitor.

Often in winter, in twilight, we would walk together through the hush of green —the smell of rain still clinging to the stems of leaves and the stalks of grass, his great frame moving through the small light like the approach of night. There was an awesome intimacy in our comradeship. He never worked in the garden, but he never walked in it either, when other people were about. I felt honoured to be there with him, even as I grew older.

He was tall and his eyes were blue and vague. His hands were strong, but unexpectedly slender. Later in life I was to become very much aware of the sharpest characteristic in his personality, an ability to sum up any stranger at a glance. Over the years he had managed to turn this gift into a lot of money, but was not unkind in his way of using it.

At parties, he was quite a different person, jolly and out-going, whereas normally he was easy-going and quiet, and had a habit of staring into space, or into your eyes, sometimes, in much the same way. In the flux of host-games, though more excited, and laughing more frequently and quickly, I suppose he might have revealed, to an older person than myself, the personality he would be tomorrow. To a child, however, differences are chasms.

I often remember his face when all the guests were gone, and half-filled glasses and wavering cigarette-butts were dazzled by the full force of electric lights, still brilliant throughout the house. I can't describe his expression accurately, and you will not really be able to imagine it, though I would like you to.

It was a little like the way he looked, moving around the house, when he thought he was alone. A ghost in a huge fawn sportscoat, drifting so gently among a world of old and fragile things that he seemed completely insubstantial—how sharply his silhouettes are etched into my imagination!

His moods are differentiated in my thoughts as surely as the texture and taste of apples and pears. Even now I sense his presence more deeply than my own, and, as I write, feel as a stranger at a seance, who believes that some beloved spirit

has just been evoked from that half-lit world where all our dead still breathe. The feeling of sheer proximity is sustained only by that mixture of joy and anguish we reach in dreams.

This house was his world, and I have not found another more intense, or as kindly. He would touch rocking-chairs and pianos as if they were possessed with the delicacy of china. The light that crossed his face was soft, and always found his features placid, or just perceptibly constrained.

Often I felt like him, alone in those vast rooms. The burgundy leather couches, that could dwarf me three times over, were so ancient that if I tore at them with my hands, decades of dust would cling to my fingernails. At times, though, when I was very young, my father would be away for days on end, and when I had learnt to love the place without mistrust, the shadow of those devil-ridden fantasies only added to the complexity of its appeal. I would walk down passages like centuries; sit upon the laps of chairs like grandparents; see chandeliers glimmering from the first light that entered here; and play in gardens like paragraphs from Jane Austen, where primrose and hollyhock shared the same air as wattle and gum. There was something fey in my father's imagination: you could feel it in this world he had chosen to find.

Perhaps it is not surprising that my adolescence was an absent-minded thing, a second coming after a more intense reality. The transformation of feeling, of that age, was a poor light against the incandescence of childhood. Rather, I continued to walk through rooms and through garden pathways far more complex and astonishing than the people I was to meet or the experiences I was to find.

Even then, I was beginning to look back. As an adult, I have done nothing else. It was as if there were a fire, perhaps small as a candle-flame, hidden somewhere among those years; or a storm, a gale, whose blustering now only lightly touches me, lost so far away, over all these years, where I may at last perceive its subtleties, and the parameters of its being.

My 'father', as I have already said, was not really my father, and, because of this, we had nothing to do with my brothers after I left 'home'. I met them only once, when he was quite old. I was pleasantly drifting, at that stage, into the somewhat aimless life I have become.

There were two of them, and I have never felt less in common with any two people I have ever met, although I suppose it was only the charm of his money, and the world it had bought us, which separated my brothers and I, for their fortunes had certainly been the reverse of mine.

We saw each other three times that evening: although they were guests at one of his parties, they did not know anyone. At first I was struck by the orange beard of the older one, and then by the pinched face of the other, which seemed like a skull with skin pulled tightly across it.

They had both crawled from the squalor of dirty kitchens, only to find a struggle more harsh than that which lay behind them. The young one had recently married. Before this, his life had been rather wild, but now he was settling down, with surprising gratitude, to a routine which would involve more responsibility, acquisitiveness and regular tension. He told me that he loved his wife, and had a job with a future, in a bank where the manager was a keen stamp-collector.

The older brother was well on the way to completing some post-graduate degree: hence the beard. He would have finished it off already, if only the administration of his university were aware of the scurrilous habits of its supervising tutors. A careful radical, he had a nice home, a wife who was a school-teacher, and five children. He thought that the family and capitalism still had roles to play. He was well-groomed and spotlessly preserved, and reminded me of a blue china sink, before the glaze, ever so slightly, starts to crack.

I don't think I will ever find this meeting less disturbing in recollection. Of course, at the time, I was very much aware of the sounds of the party while they were speaking—the clash of glasses, the laughter always out of sequence, the brushing-past of clothes, and the distant discordant conversations. Their faces were partially absorbed by those which surrounded them, just as their words were frequently erased by voices which echoed with the crisp folding of bank-notes and the hushed tread of expensive shoes upon polished surfaces.

Over the years, their voices have won out against the other sounds of that day. Once they came to visit me, but I was not home. Later, I tried to imagine their figures waiting, irritably perhaps, just inside the door. I don't know why they came. One of them was seen at my father's funeral, but I can't remember which.

I do not think of them very often, yet, oddly enough, it was thinking about the difference in our lives, which led me to write these odd reminiscences, that now only make me more than usually aware of the anomaly my life has become, although it is pleasant enough.

I still walk beneath the same silent trees. The rooms of my childhood could scarcely become remote here. My world doesn't change. I can still sense my father's comradeship in the unobtrusive friendliness of the place. Light reaches out to us more feebly, through the rising vegetation, and rain slants uncertainly down through all this milky green. Certainly, I can't make much sense of this life of mine, but there's more pleasure than pain in it.

And, after all, whoever does find any meaning in things but theologians and philosophers! If you have the time to read such a story as this, you may very well feel, as you put the story down, in much the same way as I will be putting down this half-sharpened pencil, and stare into space wondering what to do next, that our lives do not differ in any significant way.

PAUL O'DONOHUE

Pebbles

As children we threw stones,
watched them skip across the water
in swift bright ripples
that seemed to flash forever.
Throwing stones was an act of faith then,
a belief in the strength of our young years
when everything skipped and rippled
and flashed forever.
Now it's the years that ripple the water
into which our time is slipping,
but I know that the stones I once threw
are still flashing and skipping.

DIANA KAN

Ripponlea, Melbourne

memory releases the inhabitants
of dusty albums
from their mansions

fragmented faces that glide
through mellow light
take on coloured shapes of gaiety

babies in lace
amazed at peacocks
coo their astonishment

a child's black stockinged legs
dart across the bridge
over the still half-naked ornamental lake

scattering ducks
(what babes
the moreton bays were then)

through stagnant rooms
late autumn breezes blow
mirrors flare messages of light

eschewed by watchful saints and knights
tell-tale giggles in the patterned dark
bring stairs to life

beneath the pomegranate window
the gilded clock records the hour
of awakening

and eyes in solemn rows
captured by the lens turn again
motionless black on white

MALCOLM LEADER

Parrots

During the day you could hardly hear yourself think, with all the trucks thundering in and out of the siding, and anyway you didn't really have much time for that luxury as you weighed the loads and battled to get the books up to date, keeping an eye on the 'bridge to make sure that the cockies didn't put one over you by staying in their trucks, or standing on the weighing surface, or setting any of the other classic traps for young players. Added to that, the weighbridge hut was impossibly uncomfortable by day, concentrating upon itself the blistering midsummer heat and drawing in the heavy diesel exhaust fumes, so that often by mid-afternoon your head had begun to throb in time with the dull chug of the distant elevators as they augered the grain up into the bulkheads.

But once five o'clock had passed and the last truck had been weighed out, the elevator engines were cut and the siding quickly fell silent. The air cooled slightly and cleared as John, the bin attendant, shut up shop and eventually beetled off towards town on his slightly incongruous Vespa. It was then that you began your real life, resuming each night what you soon came to regard as your proper place as the only human for many, many miles. You felt somehow safe in the knowledge that the farmers were either cooling off in some distant Rubbety, or else, for the conscientious ones at least, were far off out in their paddocks stripping one last load to put in the field bins ready for the next day's carting.

You would then thankfully leave the stifling weighbridge and cross over the road to sit leaning against your own hut, feeling its galvanised iron still hot through your shirt. The tremendous emptiness of the bush bore down upon you as the sun dipped slowly behind the bulkheads, silhouetting their wooden skeletons and ricocheting off the scattered sheets of roofing iron.

Each day the pyramid of oats in the bulkhead grew bigger, and before long it was joined by a pile of wheat, tiny at first, but destined to overtake and eventually to dwarf the oats as the season went on. And daily, as the evening silence flooded back throughout the siding, the parrots would begin to arrive. Cautiously at first, but later in small green and red flocks, they floated in to feed silently on the oats. They very quickly accepted your presence, no doubt because you were happy enough to keep still beside your tin hut, totalling up the day's deliveries, or reading, or simply letting the warm evening flow freely around you.

Each night you watched the sun go down behind the parrots, saw the green and red fade into a hesitant grey and watched the silent bobbing as the flock calmly, resolutely picked out its feed. There was something deeply soothing in the immutable routine, a compensation for the rest of the hectic day. You soon grew to love those evenings and to live almost for them alone.

But it was asking for too much, no doubt, to think that your privileged situation could last indefinitely, and you were only slightly surprised when, after only a

fortnight on the bin, Geoff was suddenly sent up to join you. He was a Company rouseabout, and had been stationed at Williams when they moved him up to help truck out some of the oats. I suppose that in other circumstances, or if you'd been the type, you'd have referred to him as "a character". He was not much older than you, but had been brought up tough and was shot through with the brawny extravagance that comes of long nights spent with CBH flotsam in tiny country pubs up and down the wheat track.

He soon made himself at home in the hut, and wasted no time in starting to bash your uninitiated ear about the evils of the Company and the rotten conditions under which he was forced to work. He also carried on for hours and in great detail about his strange, convoluted private life, in which, by some alchemy he never quite explained, his best friend had managed to become his father-in-law and was responsible for leading his mother astray. You listened to it all, and at first you made noises in what you hoped were the right places, but you were never really with him. Geoff always began the chatter just as the siding was closing down for the day, when your mind was turned mainly to the one thing that you loved and were missing, the silence of the bush with the green and red parrots beginning their nightly ritual. They still came, of course, but the presence of the extra person disturbed them and their unhurried bobbing soon became a nervous, frantic tearing at the grain.

Despite the chatter, however, you could probably have learned to put up with the change, if it had amounted to no more than that. After all, Geoff did leave the siding quite a bit, to go into Narrogin or to hightail it up the line to visit his mates on the big silo at Kulin. But he had to have that one brilliant idea that ruined everything.

He spent a couple of evenings off in the scrub looking for the right piece of wood, and then a couple more working it into shape. "Blunt as my big toe," he said a few times as he hacked the sapling with your old Bowie knife, getting the Y-shape just right. He eventually completed it, though, and then fitted on the rubber bands that he'd managed to scrounge from somewhere, finishing the job off with a small rectangle of leather. You stared sullenly throughout the operation, but managed to convince yourself that it was not your place to say anything derogatory.

Geoff tried out the sling on trees at first, and also sent the odd boondie rocketing into the iron weighbridge hut or into an empty railway truck, creating a tremendous racket which ripped the silent dusk apart and sent the parrots reeling away in startled anguish.

Then came the inevitable evening when Geoff promised you parrot pie for dinner and slunk off behind the bulkhead, the pocket of his black footy shorts bulging with assorted rocks.

As you waited, the silence seemed even thicker than usual, but you tried to reason that this was just another evening. Then it came: a distant twang, followed almost immediately by the spongy smack of a stone embedding itself deep into the pile of oats. A couple of parrots jumped, but they didn't fly away, and the rest of the flock just kept on bobbing, cracking the grain out of the hairy yellow husks. A second smack produced the same effect in a different part of the flock, but you knew this couldn't last. The third stone struck home with a chilling thud, lifting its victim several inches off the pile and crashing him down senseless in the midst of his startled mates. Panic set in immediately, and the flock screeched away to the safety of some distant gums, leaving the one forlorn corpse on the oats pile, brilliant green and red in the dying amber light.

Geoff yelled triumphantly, ran from where he had been hiding behind a railway truck and scrambled up the pile to recover his prize. A quick wring of the

·neck, and he threw the bird at your feet, telling you to start a fire so that he could get cracking on the parrot pie.

You should have refused point blank, but you didn't, of course, and you fussed around with the old wood stove as if nothing had happened. You saw the flock settle in again after a while, and heard the repeated muted thuds as the rocks hit their targets. The parrots kept coming back, and Geoff claimed four more lives that evening before reluctantly giving in to the fading light and coming in to supervise the cooking.

In the days that followed he began to keep score. Not that he really wanted the parrot pie—the first experience was a disaster and you didn't even have the satisfaction of being able to refuse to join him in the meal. As the days went by it became simply a game, and each evening the siding was strewn with green and red corpses for the stray dogs to pick up during the night. You ventured a few words of remonstration in the beginning, but before long gave it away and tried to find something like solace in one of the books you'd brought up.

Finally, though, after several weeks of this sport, Geoff's usefulness at the siding ran out and he left for the fresher pastures of Kulin, where the Company had some more urgent trucking out to be done. So you were left alone again, mercifully, to taste the silence, to sit beside your burning iron hut and to watch the sun dip behind the silhouetted piles of grain.

But it wasn't the same, and I can't say you were surprised. The parrots came, indeed they returned with almost annoying meekness, but you sensed immediately that they no longer regarded you as an innocent participant in the evening liturgy. They and you knew that you were a tarnished accomplice, responsible by default, and the rhythmic bobbing of the flock in the red evening was an enduring and crushing reproach.

ROBERT C. BOYCE

The Human Race

first
past the apple-tree
under the unerring eye
of the creator
adam & eve
locked
together

then
the rest
following
in some disorder
an abortive start
from
scratch

JOHN GRIFFIN

Feeding the Ducks

Andrew at the focus of a known world
of water: God, with a packet of bread.

The swan will not come close; the lame goose
teaches courage to boys, the neck's thrust

works down greedily, almost fingers gone
in the grab. Hierarchies cope

with the lust of ducks for bread.
This is midweek hunger. We avoid

the Saturday park, the lake like a soup
with crusts. A delivery van

nuzzles the kiosk wall, and pigeons wait
by custom, for lamington crumbs.

In the water's murk, below the ducks,
a tortoise swims, arrival sudden wonder

out of the brown light. His tilt
as he swims, his elementary head

amuse. He is parachuting upwards
out of a dream of mud, slowly strung

on invisible wires of water, and the ducks
make room. My son has had enough

of birds. The world persuades new pleasure,
betrays with the shock of toppling in.

PHILIP COLLIER

A Very Nervous, Semi-Pastoral Cow

ascending the city
as their stairway to heaven
this hillside of hobbyfarmers
abide in backyards
of experimental cacti,
terraced rusty patchworks
of galvanized iron,
sunday drovers,
magpies marble warbles
& coop-stricken chickens.
clouds glide free
through holes in trees
& deadwood & delabeled cans
damn the inflammable creek.
a semitrailer snort
blasts a bird
out of his tree
while a dog walks his man
past trendy rotted sheep-pens
& the gas barbecue.
a semi-pastoral cow
in all this fracas cricks
his rheumatic neck
while every tourist &
hoony holiday family
abattoirs his nerves.
the man looks down
& heaven reflected
in tyretrack pools
muddies under his boots.
he continues at a whistle
as a semiquaver
lodges in the mud.

MARK MACLEOD

Friends Meeting, After Rain

Have we both, then, grown
so old, or are we really friends
after less than a year
                and I
just don't remember?
What has the rain washed away?
It is surely two months
since I walked with you last
but your body has thinned
like creekwater when weeks of rain stop:
another of the Januarys
we are, well, becoming
used to.
        I'm afraid I have gathered
a little topsoil.
                Meticulous as days,
the paving bricks of my courtyard
have settled in the sand since then
and I have picked the green worms,
gorged with my plants,
off the bones of a garden.
                I don't
think that silver ring was on
your hand before.

MARGARET HARGRAVE

Elegy for my Father

Palmer Elwin Packham, 1902-1964

Harshened, hardened—by grief?
(The carefully acquired, "modulated" speech
was still preserved.)
Her telephone voice
told me
"Your father's just died."
Even at 5 am I had expected
news of some pet cat
disaster. I wept.

I would not look; I could not see you
death-dawn grey and cold,
abandoned
on that cheap war-manufactured bed.
I could not see large hands I loved
now stiff and still
and eyes dull like children's marbles,
no life; no light. My hurt
crept away to a cold front room
and silent sisters.

Ten years have passed
and still my grief seems new.
The bond remains.
Now I hold my son, disturb the cinders,
grieve for what you never knew,
watch his eyes, his hands—they're yours.
I hold my man, I feel his warmth,
and with his strength renew
my wilting self.
My favourite daughter hears your song
and loves it as I do.
I am the child it soothes to sleep,
and so I sing, and weep.

JOHN FOULCHER

roads

photographed onto our lounge room wall
are 2 girls with a bicycle, wrapped in the teenage
haze of French dresses. light things, they seem
to sleep with the flowers and the road, bare

feet barely touching the silk street.
and under the edging trees a photographic blur
rides with all sensual proportion, decorum—
laced with our bookshelves, this could be real.

and we sat beneath them that night, wrapped
in our wives and husbands, retreating in the arm chairs;
easing into marriage was a confidence we knew.

only Steve—Rimbaud in his twenties, undiscovered—
believed her when she said she'd leave
perhaps. "Every street is free," he said, "and open."

JOHN LEVETT

The Cars

Many lie immobile, beached and stranded,
ribs picked clean, in the wreckers' yards,
the highway's littoral,
and others are ranked head to tail,
on the fishmongers' slabs of the used-car lots.

Some shoal, uncertain, at a junction,
where predatory gulls of newsboys swarm,
and moving on, are netted by police,
dour gillies of the freeway,
are tagged, and thrown back in.

One writhes past, gaffed by a towtruck,
bound for gutting in the wrecking yard,
then compression to a corroding slab of metal.
But even in that grotesque fishfinger form,
it finds its way upstream,
bound for a sort of reincarnation
in the furnaces of Ford.

The survivors, multicoloured, fins glinting in the monoxide depths,
pelagic cars, mindless as running fish,
thrust up the freeway river
to their spawning place, Geelong.

FAIRLIE SZACINSKI

Doodling on Newspaper

Ball-point netting, neat as crochet,
lace, pineapples, rows of wheels,
paired eyes (or bisected eggs), boxes
adjoining smaller boxes, diminishing
in a descending stairway, to vanish
in the sanctuary of a block of print.

Always
my attempt to resolve life's marking
to black on white ends in dark relief—
I blacken the boxes, spoke the wheels,
make purdah of lace—the erring Biro
has mastered me at my random game.

Now play cool until the next release
of stop-press marginal news, itemized
episodes in this lifelong pasticcio.

A Spectacle Spoiled

I could see the rise of smoke
a couple of miles away, and a bright
grand leap of flame as I drew towards
the seat of its magnificence (. . . can
only run for fire of haemorrhage).

Abreast with home-going sightseeing
lovers and mothers, bared and barrel-
bellies, Miller and stuffed shirts,
a Jesus or two, dogs jerked to a trot—
I become a kid again, wildly beating
towards the unpredictable—(cut!
grown woman! smouldering branch,
wind change, debris *could endanger* . . .)

Later, putting a middle-aged match
to the griller (. . . care, care) noting
the dying wisps from my window, I view
with sudden love a hundred marigolds
inching upwards from winter's castouts.

JENNIFER COMPTON

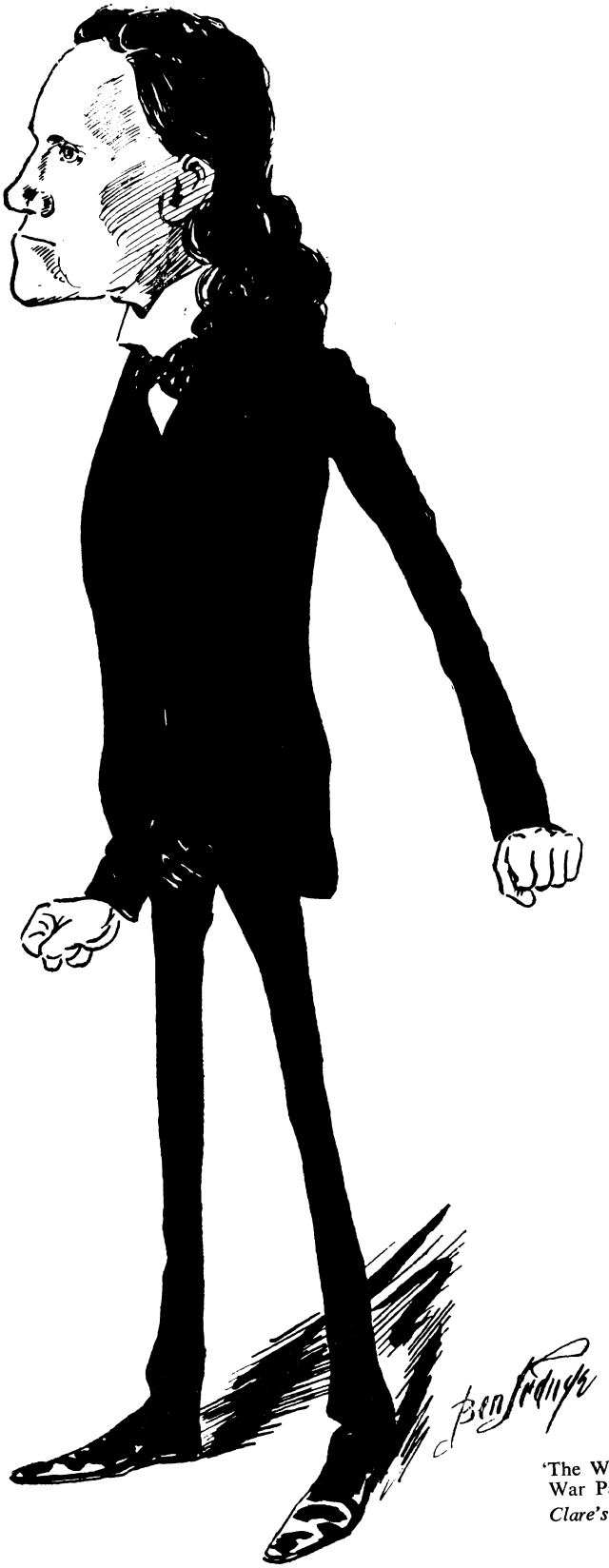
Ominous Rose

Walk into my streets
Your propaganda has been disseminated
Your air power has softened up my towns
Your soldiers have eaten my soldiers' boots
Your spies have damped my powder down
Walk into my streets
The Fuehrer knows about my Maginot Line.
My cannon is cracked to the breech
My generals are on their knees
My cavalry is manoeuvering out on the flood plain
Wheeling to left and right waving a broken sword
My army is in the square raising a flag
Made of white and yellow rose petals,
High day and holiday for my people
They are scattering perfume and rose petals.
There is nobody who wants to die
In my country
There is nobody to kill
In my country
But if a hand on a rifle butt
Is threatened by an ominous rose
She is only an innocent bystander—
We have plenty of those.

COLLEEN BURKE

recycled gravestones

this small island
breathes to the sound
of mulled gravestones
crumbling
to earth
a century or more
they still stand
mostly upright
& peace comes
with the drifting tide of summer
the muted shadow of gum
and fir leaf
over the gravestones
of charlotte burton
john greer joe byrnes
michael green.
Mostly an english feel
from the placid ghosts who
in flower and verse
"sweetly sleepeth" and
who once
sailed the waterways of the
hawkesbury up and down
the timber ways.
Through the
trees the river passes
and i lay
down with a gravestone at my
head and feet
one from
charlotte and one from john
and go to sleep
in the silence of mulled stone



'The Western Willy-Willy on the War Path."
Clare's Weekly, 10 September, 1897.

EDWIN JAGGARD

Bread and Democracy: F. C. B. Vosper in the Roaring Nineties

Writing in 1956 Victor Courtney argued that F. C. B. Vosper

> ... was a man of undoubted talent for spectacular campaigning, but I cannot find anything in his political career in Western Australia to suggest he was much greater than a political showman.[1]

Such a judgement seems condescending and superficial when compared with Sir John Kirwan's view that Vosper was "Highly intellectual, a deep student, a magnetic personality and a wonderful platform speaker" with "brilliant qualifications as a parliamentarian".[2] Beverley Smith has recently added to the numerous fragmentary comments on Vosper,[3] who was editor of the *Coolgardie Miner* and *Sunday Times* and the first M.L.A. for the goldfields constituency of North-East Coolgardie. However it is time for a more detailed re-examination of the career of a man who was outstanding among his contemporaries, not only because of his fearless journalism and oratorical ability, but also because he was a democrat and a flamboyant individualist who in the 1890s consistently stood up to Sir John Forrest and the ruling clique of the West Australian government.

Apart from a brief entry in the *Australian Encyclopaedia* (1958),[4] the only biographical study of Vosper has been that published in 1967 by Dr John Bastin and Miss June Stoodley.[5] Unfortunately the article was marred by some small factual errors, and the writers attempted to prove that Vosper was a notable Australian radical, by examining his career in both Queensland and Western Australia.[6] When he came west to the goldfields Vosper was deeply involved in the organisation of many of the popular movements which were spawned by the animosities between 't'other-siders' and native born 'sandgropers'. This study is intended to add to what is already known about Vosper, to correct some of the commonly accepted 'facts' about his life and to explain why he was such an influential figure in Western Australian journalistic and political life.

Frederic Charles Burleigh Vosper, born at St Dominic in Cornwall on 23 March 1869,[7] was an agitator and traveller almost from birth. He was educated at nearby Truro, although the duration of his schooling is unclear. Bastin and Stoodley claimed that at the age of 15 he emigrated to Bolivia and that one year later (1883) he arrived in Queensland;[8] however in the Battye Library, two family letters dated 17 September and 26 November 1885 establish beyond any doubt that Vosper was in the British navy, aboard Her Majesty's Training Ship "Lion", at Devonport, until he was sixteen. Sometime early in 1886 he must have decided to come to Australia, and his first letter to his family in England was from Maryborough, Queensland, on 3 August 1886. After roaming around the state following

a variety of occupations he turned to journalism, first working at Eidsvold and later at Maryborough.[9] Vosper's first sub-editorial position was on the *Northern Miner* at Charters Towers, a thriving town on the North Queensland goldfield.[10] Already in the press he was revealing his radical beliefs and late in 1890 he accepted the editorship of the *Australian Republican*, also published in Charters Towers, and backed by the Australian Republican Association which had socialist objectives.[11]

It was during his association with the *Australian Republican* that Vosper gained for himself a reputation as a fiery and articulate journalist, always prepared to back the workers against the tyrannical capitalists and governments. His carefree invective published in an editorial during the shearers' strike of 1891, resulted in two trials for sedition, eventual acquittal, and an acknowledgement that the offending article was seditious libel.[12] The union movement in Charters Towers divided over Vosper's stand, and the rift widened when in August 1892 he was prominently involved in a strikers' riot, which resulted in his imprisonment for three months, and the close cutting of his hair.[13] For the rest of his life Vosper was taunted over his agitation on the Queensland Goldfields, and his long hair, which he vowed after his imprisonment, would never again be cut.

Already it was becoming apparent that Vosper was setting himself objectives in public life which were almost unattainable. Firstly he was a passionate and dedicated supporter of Labour, but reluctant to be bound by the restrictions of the political organisation. Secondly he believed in political separation as a remedy for the economic and political grievances of gold mining districts.[14] Charters Towers was the crucible in which his basic political beliefs were moulded, and the Western Australian goldfields provided him with the catalyst for their successful exhibition.

Why Vosper decided to shift to Western Australia is unclear. After leaving Charters Towers he moved to Rockhampton before working in Sydney and Melbourne on the *Truth* and the *Workman*. He may have been attracted by the easily won alluvial gold at Coolgardie, the return to the 'frontier' way of life, the appeal of mateship and an embryonic radicalism,[15] but the most obvious reason was an opportunity to become involved in goldfields' journalism.

In 1892 the *Murchison Miner*, the first of the goldfields newspapers, commenced publication at Cue. The editor, Alexander Livingstone, was a small shifty-eyed Queenslander who had worked as a journalist at Charters Towers before coming to W.A. Livingstone, knowing Vosper's reputation, encouraged him to come to Cue in 1893, as sub-editor of the *Murchison Miner*.[12] Vosper later wrote that when he arrived at the town, Livingstone, in his *Murchison Miner* office, acted as the town's postmaster, "secretary and general factotum of the public battery and half a dozen other concerns", librarian, stationer, tobacconist and newsagent, while in his newspaper he successfully entertained his readers.[17] Andrée Hayward recalled that Livingstone "wrathfully referred to the mine jumper as a curse to the community amongst which he lives, moves and co-habits".[18] The variable quality of the paper was well known throughout the Murchison.

Hayward also left a vivid impression of his first sight of Vosper:

> ... the tribune was standing on a beer case in Austin street, Cue. Also, it must be admitted there was beer in his eye, and the aroma of the hop clung about his streaming mane. Still, there was no periphrase about his speech. "The Asiatic must go," he said. But it wasn't the Asiatic that went just then; it was the beer crate that gave, bringing the orator up with a round turn.[19]

In another incident Vosper also revealed his sympathy for the miners. When he was campaigning for the Legislative Assembly seat of North-East Coolgardie the *Coolgardie Miner* (12 April 1897) reminded its readers that while in Cue,

Vosper had been the only man in a crowd of 2000 striking miners with enough courage to enter the heavily guarded Day Dawn engine room and persuade the driver to join the strikers.

Vosper's conspicuous figure was soon well known on the goldfields and in Perth. He was much taller than average, very thin and pale faced with a prominent jaw and long, shoulder-length black hair. As an orator, "he could rouse the crowd to heights of enthusiasm, or play upon its hatred of anything tinged with injustice so as to draw a scowl on every face".[20] An extensive vocabulary and a gift for repartee as well as for lucid and logical presentation, made him a formidable platform orator. However it was Vosper's journalistic talents which quickly brought him before the public in 1893-94, for after leaving Cue he worked briefly with the *Geraldton Express* and then moved to Perth where early in 1894 he became founder and editor of the *Miner's Right.* The paper was shortlived; W. E. Clare purchased the printing plant, transported it to Coolgardie where it was installed in a ten by twelve feet tent, and commenced publishing the *Coolgardie Miner*, on Friday 14 April 1894.[21]

Most writers on the eastern goldfields have stated that Vosper edited the *Coolgardie Miner* from its inception in 1894, until he was elected to the Legislative Assembly in 1897,[22] but this is an oversimplification which fails to give justice to Vosper's many talents, his boundless energy, and willingness to travel widely promoting the causes in which he fervently believed. For various reasons Vosper probably acted as editor for less than half of the three years.

The first editor of the *Coolgardie Miner* was the bohemian Jack Drake ("when he was good he was very good and when he was bad he was 'orrid") who was quickly replaced by Herman Mondlestam for a few weeks before Drake resumed control.[23] A. G. Hales soon followed Drake as editor, and he in turn was replaced by George Stevens, an experienced South Australian journalist who had also worked at Broken Hill. Stevens remained with the *Coolgardie Miner* for several years and he may have relieved Vosper as editor in 1895 when the latter was touring W.A. as delegate for the Anti-Asiatic League. Sometime in July or August 1894, Vosper became the sixth editor of the *Miner* and he quickly turned it into a platform for his radical political opinions. Not only did he espouse the general causes of political equality, republicanism, opposition to Asian immigrants and justice for the working man, but he also took up the local issues of reform of the mining law, improvements to mail and telegraphic services, a regular supply of fresh water for the goldfields, and a reduction in freight charges and customs duties. In fact Vosper was to be closely involved with almost every organised popular movement which sprang up in Coolgardie in the years 1894-97.

Because of the miners' grievances, together with the unpopularity of Forrest and his government, the first of the major mass meetings at Coolgardie was called on the separation issue. Although Vosper had strong views on the question he was not the first at Coolgardie to advocate this action. In late August 1894 a Coolgardie councillor, R. D. McKenzie (later M.L.C. for North-East province, 1904-1916), suggested at a public meeting that Esperance Bay become the capital of a new colony centred on the goldfields.[24] Two weeks later, at a meeting in the canvas theatre of the St George Variety Co., Vosper addressed a large audience on the topic "Is Separation Possible?". Naturally he believed it was, because of Clauses 61-63 of the Constitution Act (1890), by which W.A. was granted responsible government.[25]

After listing several well known grievances of the diggers, as well as "the evident and unfair preference for the agricultural districts" and the inequalities of the W.A. electoral system, Vosper reminded his audience that when the Western Australian Constitution Bill was before the House of Commons, Sir George Campbell was one of several who opposed it because so much territory was being

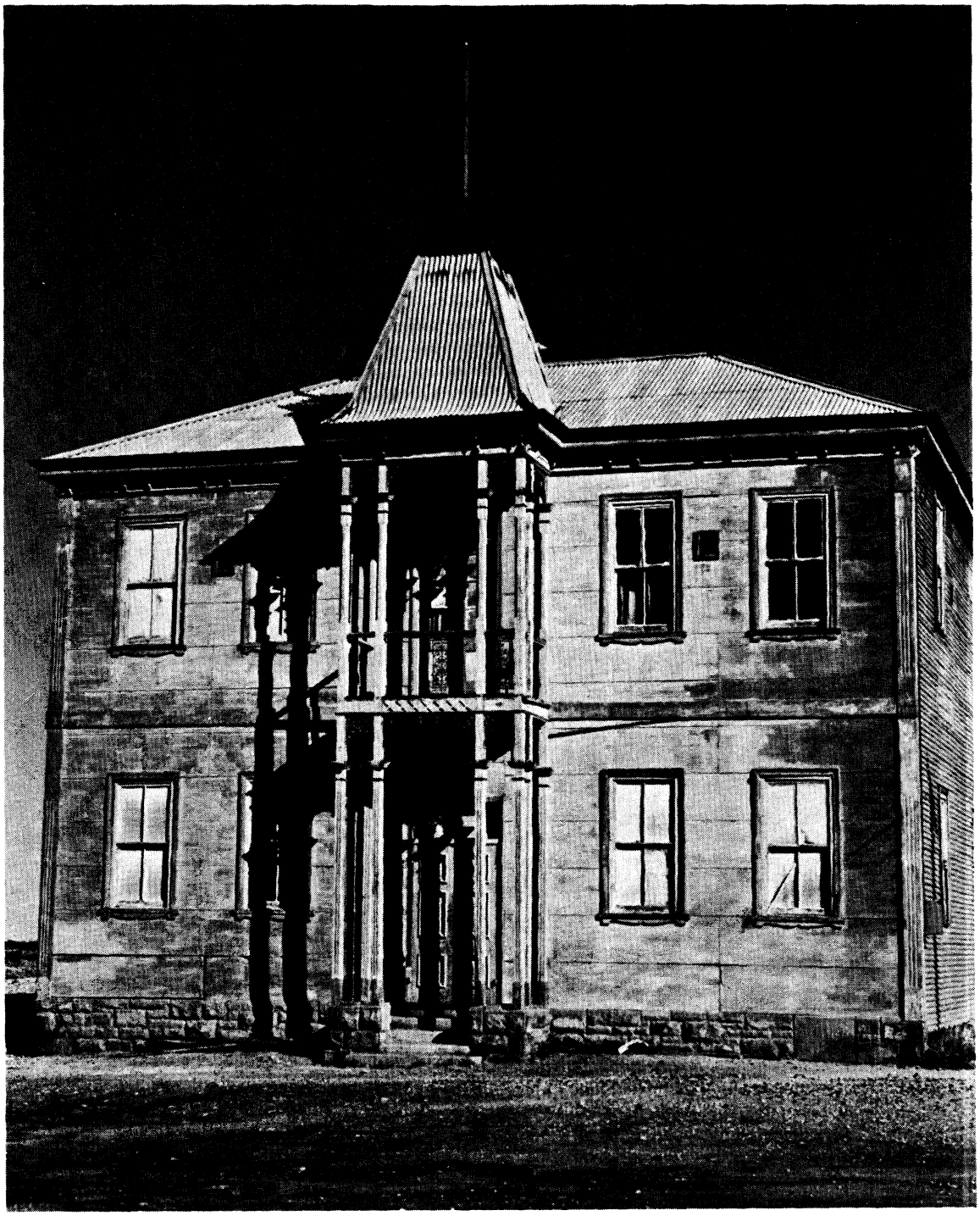
given to such a small and relatively concentrated group of settlers in the south west of the state.[26] The speaker detailed the proposed boundaries of the new colony, boundaries which John Kirwan happily adopted later in the 1890s, and then said "He believed fully that the energy now expended in trying to waken Perth to a sense of its duty would be far more usefully applied if directed at Downing Street, with the object of getting complete legislative and financial independence".[27] This issue was to become one of the several which dominated Vosper's journalistic and political life in Western Australia.

Two months after his speech, Vosper demanded in the columns of the *Coolgardie Miner* (8 November 1894) that a Goldfields' Protection and Advancement League be established. One of the objectives of the League should be "to take into consideration, discuss and consider the feasibility and necessity or otherwise of the erection of the eastern districts into an independent colony". The separation movement continued to flourish while Vosper was away from Coolgardie until at least September 1895. On 10 August 1895, after the *Coolgardie Miner* published an article entitled "Justice or Separation", a group of prominent local people decided to form a Goldfields National League which embodied many of the objectives of the November 1894 proposal.[28] The National League was to press for specific reforms by the Forrest government, however the contentious issue of separation was to be left in abeyance until after Forrest's proposed visit to Coolgardie in September.[29] Vosper was touring the Murchison goldfields as special correspondent for the *Geraldton Express* and delegate for the Anti-Asiatic League when these developments occurred, but he returned to Coolgardie in time to become a member of the League's deputation when it met Forrest in November 1895.

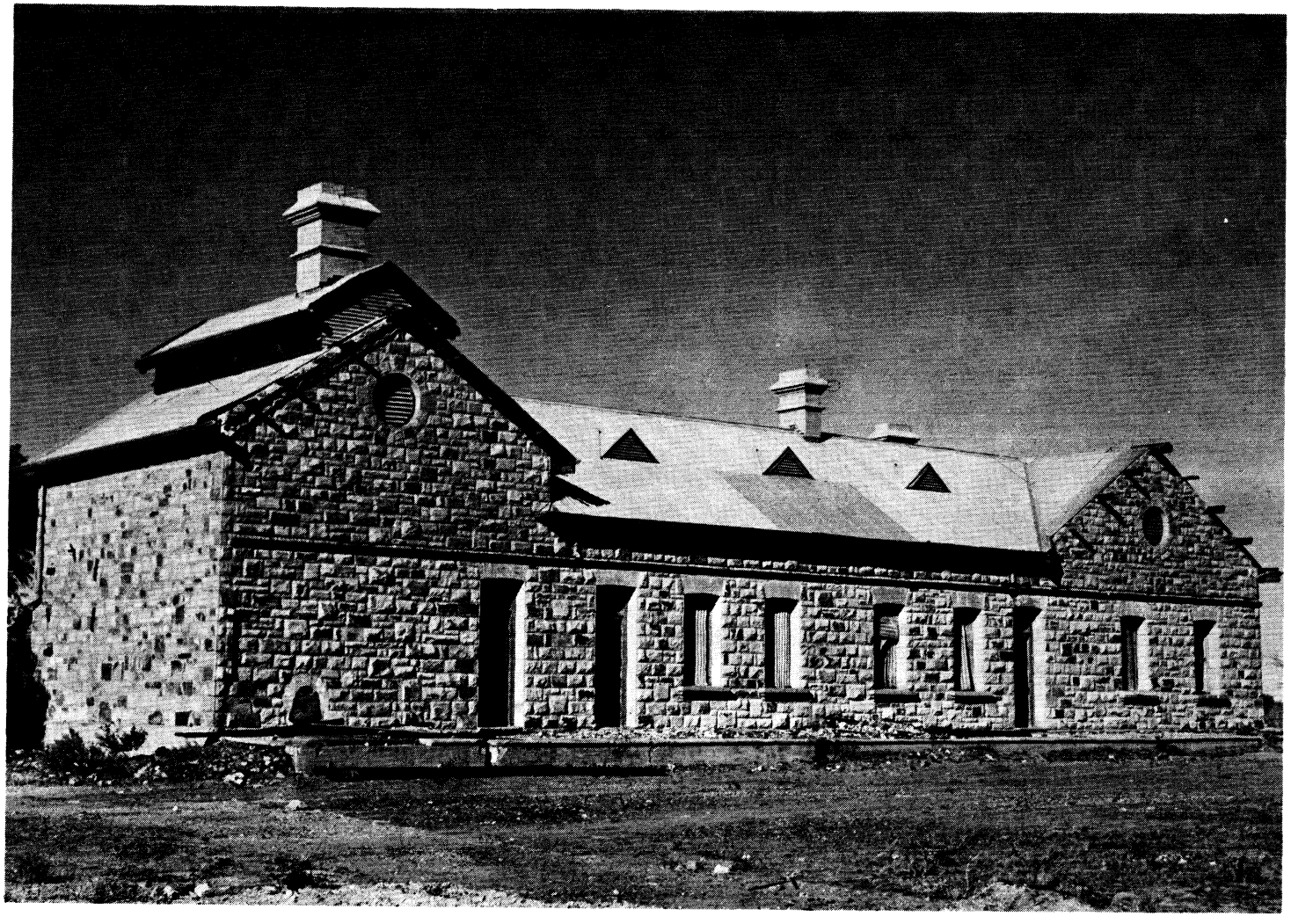
Bastin and Stoodley have explained that "when the deputation finally met Forrest, Vosper harangued him on the subject of political democracy, emphasizing among other things that in a truly democratic community one class could never represent another, . . .".[30] The grievances were genuine, but part of Forrest's purpose for visiting the goldfields was to pacify the smouldering discontent with his government. He succeeded to the extent that he announced a scheme to bring fresh water by pipeline from the coast, to introduce a Redistribution of Seats Bill in the next (1896) session of parliament, to erect adequate public buildings in Coolgardie, and other measures.[31] The National League gradually withered away after these initial concessions, and by February 1896 it had been transformed into an Electoral Registration League, founded by Vosper, for the purpose of getting miners in the remote camps to register on the electoral rolls.[32] From March to August 1896 Vosper toured mining districts helping the prospectors and founding branches of the League, which then changed its title to the National Liberal League of Western Australia,[33] and disappeared altogether when Forrest announced the electoral redistribution proposals to be implemented for the 1897 general election.

The struggle for political rights and equality was one of several movements which led to Vosper being away from Coolgardie for much of the period 1894-1897. He had always been a strong advocate of total opposition to the immigration of coloured peoples and soon after becoming editor of the *Coolgardie Miner* Vosper announced that, "Like the fever and drought and just as paralysing, they have come to stay. The flesh pots are smoking and the Afghan is sniffing them with ravenous expectation."[34] He also had strong views on the Chinese and Japanese:

> Japanese servile labour is in some respects more objectionable than Chinese. In the first place the quick intelligence of the former renders him not only a formidable competitor, but enables him to organise, through the medium of his countrymen a combined opposition to the business people already established. The new Jap, insignificant in himself, is quite capable of spying out



House—galvanised iron—Cue. Remarkable not only for the delight of its appearance, but because it is still standing.



MINES BUILDING—DAY DAWN 1902. Now empty and being vandalised.

the land, and having an ear well attuned to the chink of specie, the date is not far distant when he will be followed by hordes of his countrymen, who, if left unchecked, will overrun the field, driving before them the white storekeeper and the white miner, involving all alike in a common ruin.[35]

With views like these it was hardly surprising that on Saturday, 22 December 1894, at an open air meeting in Bayley Street, Coolgardie, Vosper addressed a large crowd on the dangers of Afghan, coolie and other asiatic immigration.[36] The outcome of the meeting was the formation of the Anti-Asiatic League with Vosper as the official delegate, encouraged to travel through the goldfields setting up branches. He wasted little time before starting on his proselytising, however, before he left Coolgardie early in 1895, the newly created organisation joined with the Alluvial Rights Defence League to become the Gold Diggers Union.[37] The leaders of the merger were Vosper and George ('Mulga') Taylor (later M.L.A. for Mt Margaret 1901-1930). Like Vosper, Taylor was an eastern states radical who had been imprisoned for his activities in the 1891 shearers' strike.[38]

Having established the Gold Diggers' Union in Coolgardie Vosper left for Southern Cross where he recruited 200 members for the local branch of the Anti-Asiatic League.[39] By May he had also established branches in Perth and Fremantle, and at this time he proposed that it be an offence, punishable by fine, confiscation or imprisonment, for any Asiatic to have any money or property worth more than £5. He also hoped Europeans would be prohibited from employing aliens.[40] In the same month the Trades and Labour Council appointed George Foster Pearce (later a Federal Senator, 1901-1937) and J. Grant to join in a deputation from the league to the Premier.[41] Apparently Forrest refused to receive them, an action which rankled Vosper for months afterwards.

Further efforts on behalf of the Anti-Asiatic League now had to be curtailed for while Vosper was in Perth he received a request from John Drew, the forthright young editor of the *Geraldton Express*, to edit that newspaper while Drew and the paper's manager, H. E. Kenny (M.L.A. North Murchison, 1897-1899) came to Perth for a libel action, Elliott v. Victorian Express Company.[42] It is likely that Vosper had met Drew two years earlier and they certainly shared a common outlook on the Forrest government, coloured immigration, political inequalities and the grievances of gold mining districts.[43] Although he had never travelled outside W.A., Drew, like Vosper, was a determined radical, and he eventually became a long-serving Labor M.L.C. for the Central Province (1900-1918, 1924-1947). Predictably, in May 1894, Vosper travelled to Geraldton to help his fellow-editor.

Beverley Smith has recounted the "Free Press" incident of 1894 in her article in *University Studies in History*, 1963-64, pp. 82-3. However Vosper's part in the events of May-July 1895 need some elaboration, for he used the *Geraldton Express* to attack Forrest, the Perth press, and the colonial gentry who had ruled the colony's life for so long. In fact the interlude encapsulated many of the beliefs which Vosper held at this time.

From 7 June 1895, Vosper used the editorial columns of the *Express* to cover a broad range of topics including the Forrest government's disregard for conciliation of opposition groups in W.A. society. "During the recess they have on more than one occasion flung insults into the teeth of those who were deputed by the people of the colony to interview them in reference to certain grievances."[44] He condemned the government's lack of policy, on 7 and 28 June, accusing it of placating the Perth interests and "conciliating the mangold-wurzel interests of Bunbury", which he labelled Sir John Forrest's pocket borough. Vosper also advised the men of the Yalgoo, Melville and Peak Hill that they should register on the electoral rolls if they wished to get rid of the "mutton-chop nonentity", E. T. Hooley (M.L.A. Murchison, 1894-1897), who, some believed, was mis-

representing the electorate.[45] However he saved his most virulent attacks for *The West Australian* which had dared to criticise the youthful editorialists of the *Express.*

> Our revered grandmother, as usual is engaged in the congenial task of holding up its hands in holy horror at the fact that there can exist in this official-ridden colony, a journal which dares to honestly and straight forwardly speak its mind . . . To pour [*sic*] over the columns of this jellyfish journal, seeking in vain for a single gleam of intelligence, a spark of humour, or a grain of independence is a nauseating experience, and we are forced to bring these remarks to a close in order to soothe our revolted stomach with about half a pound of nitrate of amyl.[46]

While the libel suit proceeded in Perth, Vosper unfortunately published a telegram sent by Drew to his wife, with the result "that Drew was cited for contempt of court and gaoled for fourteen days".[47] Consequently when Drew arrived back in Geraldton on 22 June, late on a stormy Saturday night, he was met by a large crowd and carried shoulder-high from the train.[48] Crowds also stood outside the *Express* office in the slush of Marine Terrace as Drew, Kenny and Vosper all made speeches. Drew said, "Mr Vosper is a credit to the colony, and though I never hope to reach anything like his ability, I intend to follow in his footsteps of independence". Vosper admitted he had experienced a "troublous career as a journalist" but was very proud to be associated with Drew in the events of the preceeding month.[49]

With the return of Drew, Vosper was now free to once more become involved in promoting the Anti-Asiatic League. On 29 June, in the Geraldton Masonic Hall, Drew described Vosper as delivering "what was unquestionably the most powerful and convincing deliverance of the kind ever heard in Geraldton".[50] Vosper warned his audience of the health risks, the likely establishment of the Opium trade and the horrors of leprosy, all of which were likely if "Chinamen, Hindoos or Japanese" were allowed into the colony.[51] There was also a republican strain in his speech for he addressed himself to those ". . . who looked forward to the day when Australia would be a free republic, acknowledging no flag but her own blue banner . . .".[52] Thirty-nine members joined the League and then Vosper, now special correspondent for the *Geraldton Express*, left for Yalgoo (". . . a queer place. It does not stand still, neither does it go ahead."[53]), Cue, Nannine and other now long forgotten fields on the Murchison. He did not return to Coolgardie until September or October 1895 when, as mentioned earlier, he soon became immersed in the affairs of the Goldfields National League.

Two letters written by Vosper to his father in December 1895 have survived, and they help to understand his wide-ranging interests. In the first, dated 3 December, Vosper attempted to persuade his father of the impracticability of the goldfields water scheme.[54] He estimated that eventually there would be 500,000 people in the Coolgardie district, and the cost of reticulating over a wide area would be enormous. "To supply these fields thoroughly you would require thousands of miles of pipes, hundreds of pumping stations, dozens of reservoirs and an unlimited supply."[55] Vosper believed the water problem would eventually solve itself because the water was under the ground. It is interesting to note that in the same letter Vosper also prophesied the discovery of telluride gold;[56] when that happened treatment methods would demand "fire and chlorination", not "water and amalgamation", therefore the treatment plants would be somewhere on the coast, close by supplies of coal and sea water.[57] Despite his lack of formal training in geology or mining engineering Vosper nevertheless became an acknowledged expert in both fields,[58] and by December 1895 he had severed his connection with the *Coolgardie Miner*, and was the sole W.A. representative of the mining director

and consultant engineer, A. F. Calvert, and correspondent for the *West Australian Review*.[59]

Undoubtedly, by 1896-97 Vosper was one of the best known figures on the West Australian goldfields. Extensive tours on behalf of the Anti-Asiatic League in 1895, and the Electoral Registration League in 1896, had taken him to most of the communities on the Coolgardie and Murchison fields. He worked tirelessly for causes with which the miners really identified, and he was unsurpassed as a platform orator. His radical beliefs brought him to the fringes of the embryonic W.A. Labor movement, however he remained aloof from it, proud of his individualism and confident of his abilities. Vosper's fearless journalism which probably exacerbated the tensions between 't'othersiders' and 'gropers', gained for him a strong following of men who were happy to support his various crusades. Therefore it was inevitable that he would be pressured to move from the dusty street corner politics of Coolgardie, to the quieter and more sedate legislative chambers in Perth. And, no doubt he was more than willing to make the change, for he was shrewd enough to know where the real power lay in the colony.

With a general election to be held in May 1897, and newly created Legislative Assembly seats for Coolgardie and North-East Coolgardie, it was certain that Vosper as a prominent local figure, would be asked to stand. Initially he was presented with a requisition signed by 322 people (the biggest ever presented to a public man in the colony to that time), to contest Coolgardie,[60] but because of the likely cost he decided to stand for North-East Coolgardie, and to conduct his electioneering without committees, canvassers, posters or colours.[61] Vosper presented himself to the electors as a Liberal Oppositionist. His opponents as announced in the *Coolgardie Miner* (31 March 1897) were A. Barclay (Oppositionist), G. Gifford (Independent), H. C. Rhys-Jones, J. F. Dwyer, N. W. Harper (Independent), and G. Waite (Ministerial Labor). By Monday 26 April, nomination day in Kanowna, Gifford, Rhys-Jones and Waite had withdrawn and so Vosper was opposed by a sharebroker (Barclay), a champion of labour and the owner of seven hotels (Dwyer), and a mine manager and potential ministerial supporter (Harper).[62]

Backed by the *Coolgardie Miner* and little else, Vosper was indefatigable in covering the electorate. At Kanowna on 3 April he said he was "plain, blunt, Vosper" who would sit on the Opposition benches and look after the interests of the goldfields.[63] He aded that he would spend no money on the election for he had none, and that he would probably have to walk around the electorate on his next tour.[64] On Monday 19 April he began a final circuit, speaking at Ballagundi (Monday), then on consecutive days at Bulong, Kurnalpi, Kanowna, Gordon, Hayes' New Find, Mulgarrie, Kanowna (26 April, nomination day), Paddington, Broad Arrow, Bardoc and Black Flag.[65] Fortunately he managed to complete part of the trip on horseback! Wherever he went Vosper was received with great enthusiasm, although various opposition groups continually heckled him about his Queensland exploits, his suitability to represent the miners, and the length of his hair.[66]

The final result of the election was Vosper 233 votes, Harper 177, Dwyer 69 and Barclay 67. The turn-out of voters was small, considering that there were 1,044 on the roll. However, Vosper had done well to defeat Harper who was very well known in the Kanowna district, and later, M.L.A. for Beverley (1910-1911) and Pingelly (1911-1914). As the final results were posted in Bayley Street,

> Some cheered with joy, while others scowled and passed ungentlemanly remarks, but the majority gathered in knots and several heated discussions took place on our ex-editor's qualifications to represent a goldfields' constituency... In the community no man has more friends, nor more bitter enemies.[67]

The Bulletin (15 May 1897) said Vosper was a man "of no particular brains, but with imposing appearance and splendid energy". The paper also added that "if he puts ice on his head and walketh slowly and uprightly, W.A. holds for him a fine political future".

Unfortunately for Western Australia and the goldfields, Vosper sat in the Legislative Assembly for only four years (1897-1900 inclusive). However in that time he earned a reputation as a brilliant and dedicated parliamentarian who quickly mastered formal procedures, spoke on a tremendous range of issues, and was never cowed by Forrest's presence or bluster. His repartee was sharp and well directed. Sir John Kirwan recalled how a Minister was in the habit of constantly repeating points which he wished to emphasise. When the Minister said that history repeated itself, Vosper interjected, "Yes, but not so often as you".[68] Predictably Vosper favoured political reform for the goldfields, construction of the Esperance-Coolgardie railway, restrictive immigration legislation, amendments to the mining laws and, most important, federation.

It was equally predictable that Vosper would not be content to come to Perth solely as a politician. Inevitably his political interests would lead him onto the platforms of public meetings and soon he was as well known as he had been in Coolgardie. But it was the press which had always been a medium for Vosper's radicalism, and within six months of his arrival in Perth he had founded the *Sunday Times*. On 12 November 1897 he married Venetia Anne Finn, the widow of Wilfred Nicholson,[69] and the couple used the bride's money (£4,000) to commence W.A.'s first Sunday newspaper which was typically sub-titled "A Journal For the People".[70] The paper was later described as "splendidly got up, fearlessly written, bright, original and amusing",[71] although it was dominated by politics and Vosper. Soon the *Sunday Times* enjoyed a wide circulation, "and the number of men on the fields whose whole notion of politics in an unbounded faith in Vosper, is much larger than is generally supposed".[72]

A superficial analysis of the newspaper's editorials from 1897-1900 clearly reveals the public issues to which Vosper devoted most of his attention. Federation, goldfields separation, mining regulations, and an almost violent antipathy towards the Forrest government, far outnumbered editorials on immigration, local government, transport, international topics such as the Boer War, and the misconduct of the governor, Sir Gerard Smith.[73] Vosper's effective use of alliteration ("Platitudinous Ponderosities—Pedantic, Pragmatical and Paralysing Phraseology"[74]) was always a feature, and his scathing attacks on Perth's leading men must have brought him many friends as well as bitter enemies. Sir Gerard Smith, Governor of W.A. from 1895-1900, was directly involved in the puffing of the Peak Hill Gold Mining Company,[75] and as one of several directors of a Coolgardie hotel, was also sued in the W.A. Supreme Court.[76] Naturally, Vosper excelled himself. To Sir Gerard he wrote, "It is only a question of time when he shall see you figuring as the author of a testimonial to Bile Beans or some other nostrum",[77] and he concluded,

> We must at all hazards prevent this colony from being branded as altogether subservient to the boomster, and the company monger, and if you, as Governor, choose to leave your pedestal and come down into the muck, you must abide the consequences.[78]

The *Sunday Times* did not provide Vosper with a substantial income, the main reason being his generosity and characteristic dedication to popular movements with which he became involved. Late in the 1890s he was a leader of the W.A. Federal League, and when taunted by E. A. Harney that he was "sitting on the rail" on the federation issue because of his commercial instincts,[79] Vosper stated that in the preceding twelve months, all advertising for the League in the *Sunday*

Remains of once attractive stone building—Cue—vandalised partly for the materials. The original building and that at Day Dawn could have been utilised as area museums.

Old freestone miners' buildings—Cue district. The roofs have been taken but the walls remain solid.

Times had been carried free of charge.[80] Considering the amount of advertising in the paper it is not surprising that Vosper and his wife were forced to live frugally.

Despite his impact on Perth journalism, Vosper was probably better known as one of the most determined political opponents of the Forrest Government. He once stated his opinion of his parliamentary responsibilities:

> I decline to be guided by noisy fanaticism. As long as I sit in the House my constituents shall have the best of me—the best my intellect can afford them, the best of my character, the best of my judgement, the best of my thinking powers.[81]

Judging by his performance between 1897 and 1900 Vosper's constituents certainly received value for their votes.

It was uncharacteristic of Vosper, usually an individualist, that early in his parliamentary career he should have become involved in the formation of a Parliamentary Goldfields Party. The convenor of the initial meeting was Frederick Illingworth (M.L.A. for Nannine 1894-97, Central Murchison 1897-1901, etc.) and the party planks included payment of members, drastic changes to the electoral laws, revision of tariffs and redistribution of seats.[82] Vosper whole-heartedly supported the objectives of the party and he was appointed secretary. But the members agreed not to sit together in the Assembly,[83] so that as a party little was achieved.

The first major political issue in which Vosper took an important part, was the well known Ivanhoe Venture dispute which developed on the 'golden mile' in 1897-98. Primarily a confrontation between alluvial miners and the W.A. government over the problems of the Dual Title regulation of 1895,[84] the crisis gave Vosper the opportunity to become directly involved in the interests of his constituents. Mossenson has written that,

> ... the mine workers as a class were disgruntled by the relaxation of the labour clauses and the ease with which leaseholders obtained exemptions. In its determination to woo the investor the Administration was in no mood to placate the worker.[85]

The speed with which the government acted in January 1898, to apparently protect the interests of the gold mining companies, was deeply resented by the alluvialists. The infamous Ten Foot Regulation[86] resulted "in the first serious attempt to unite goldfields and coastal opposition to the Forrest regime",[87] and the Premier's controversial goldfields visit in March 1898 did little to ease the tension.[88]

Vosper wholeheartedly supported the miners, publicly on the goldfields, and in parliament. However in the latter sphere he could do little by himself and the 1898 amendment to the Goldfields Act 1895, while something of a compromise, eventually impeded the progress of alluvial mining in W.A. Vosper's role was later described by Sir John Kirwan:

> He was about the only legislative friend the alluvial diggers had; almost single handed he championed the cause of the alluvial men in Parliament, and fought for what he knew to be the right, with unyielding tenacity in the face of heavy odds.[89]

Despite these efforts the alluvial disputes ultimately led to the estrangement of Vosper and the goldfields, for the bitterness engendered among the diggers was channelled into the "separation for federation" movement with which Vosper now disagreed.[90]

Since the 1880s Vosper had openly advocated federation, and also separation of mining districts when he believed there was justification. However, from 1897

the complexities of the federation question in W.A. slowly forced Vosper in opposition to both the federalists in Perth and the advocates of "separation for federation" in Kalgoorlie. The explanation for this apparent inconsistency lies in Vosper's total respect for democratic principles and his belief that the Commonwealth Bill should, if possible, be amended.[91] He never hid his disapproval of Forrest's decision (or lack of it) not to allow the people of Western Australia the right to choose the delegates to the 1897 and 1898 Federal Conventions, believing that on such an important matter the people should be consulted at every stage.[92] And as he explained to his father, "I have always been in favour of Federation *per se*, just in the same way as anyone might be in favour of partnership or marriage . . .".[93] He believed the delegates were little more than the nominees of Forrest, and that they sadly neglected W.A.'s economic and political interests. Therefore it was imperative to insist upon certain safeguards for W.A.'s entry into the federation, and the right to amend the Commonwealth Bill.[94]

Vosper's caution was unpopular, particularly after *The West Australian* (1 May 1899) published a detailed explanation of his views. He urged a policy of negotiation, the need for a transcontinental railway, provision of varous defence facilities at Albany and Fremantle, and stronger trade links with Malaysia and Indo-China, "the natural market for the export of our agricultural produce". The next day John Kirwan wrote to Vosper about his reservations towards Federation[95] and Vosper replied, "I can quite understand your surprise at my attitude although you will remember that I have always insisted on a transcontinental line as a vitally necessary concomitant of federalism".[96] But the key to the letter came later: "Let (the bill) pass by all means, but let us nevertheless, not lose our last opportunity to impress our views upon our co-partners and the Imp. Parliament."[97]

Public criticism of Vosper's apparent change of heart quickly surfaced and at a public meeting on 13 June E. A. Harney criticised Vosper's motives and indulged in what were termed "utterances of gross misrepresentation".[98] Evidence suggests Vosper and Harney had never been on good terms for in March 1897 when the latter was contemplating standing for the Seat of Coolgardie, Vosper had called him the "democratic, aristocratic, autocratic, acrobatic candidate for Coolgardie", then adding that he was "loose in political principle, deceptive in phraseology, artistic in artfulness, strong only in selfishness, triumphant in trickery . . .".[99] In response to Harney's Perth speech, Vosper resigned from the Federal League and in an interview on 15 June said he wanted an objective discussion of the bill and its good and bad points.[100] By taking this line Vosper became an advocate of a minority viewpoint, a role which could only end in disappointment.

From this tme Vosper became increasingly cautious about federation, He was a member of the Select Committee appointed in July 1899 to examine the Commonwealth Bill. The Committee concluded that W.A. was not entering the Commonwealth at the best time, and recommended that the state be allowed an initial five years of fiscal freedom.[101] Eventually the Bill was submitted to the electors of W.A., minus any amendments, and was approved by an overwhelming majority. Characteristically, on 30 July 1900, the day before the referendum, Vosper was back in Kalgoorlie and Boulder campaigning to the bitter end for a no-vote.[102] Bastin and Stoodley wrote that by this time Vosper was particularly concerned about the provisions in the Commonwealth Bill relating to senate representation, but in a speech to the Legislative Assembly on 10 October 1899 he expressed equal concern about the probability of extra taxation, the apparently greater power of the Senate *vis à vis* the lower house, double dissolution procedures, and the anticipated role of the High Court.[103]

No fair assessment of Vosper's political career could fail to mention his consistent endeavours to secure payment of members, triennial parliaments, compulsory

arbitration, electoral redistribution, a minimum wage clause in all government contracts, and votes for women, although when the last of these was passed he was saddened to find himself voting side by side with members who had repeatedly opposed the legislation in earlier years.[104] Vosper was dubious about the outcome of the Goldfields Water Scheme and on one occasion sarcastically said to Forrest, "Of course the Coolgardie water scheme looks extremely rosy when viewed through the bottom of a champagne glass, and that is the medium through which the right hon. gentleman usually gauges public opinion".[105] For various reasons he opposed most of C. Y. O'Connor's major projects; he believed the Colony had suffered more than enough of O'Connor's "experimental science".[106]

The turbulent political events of the late 1890s must have placed a great strain on a man who was always prepared to drive himself to his limits; he admitted to his father in November 1900 that he had recently suffered a severe and agonising attack of kidney trouble, and he had encountered such serious financial difficulties that he had contemplated retiring from parliament.[107] Despite these worries and his wife's serious illness late in the same year, Vosper appears to have enjoyed the domestic tranquility of 201 Adelaide Terrace, where he and his wife lived close by such bastions of the Perth establishment as the Cliftons, Wittenooms and Burts. He could not afford any social extravagances, however the childless couple surrounded themselves with dogs, goats and ducks as well as the black and white swans which regularly waddled up from the river.[108]

Late in 1900, with the Commonwealth soon to become a reality, Vosper decided to stand for the Senate as a liberal free trader. He pledged himself to work for a wide-ranging programme including a variation of Imperial federation in which he had become increasingly interested.[109] Unfortunately, when it appeared certain he would be elected, he suffered an acute attack of appendicitis, and died on 6 January 1901.

Vosper's death shocked the goldfields and metropolitan communities. He was only 31 years of age but he had earned an enviable reputation in his nine years in Western Australia. John Kirwan wrote in the *Kalgoorlie Miner*, "Perhaps there was no other such powerful satirical writer in the colony, and when advocating a principle or political platform he carried strength in every line and word".[110] Many other sincere tributes were written, but it was Drew of the *Geraldton Express* who made the most honest and blunt appraisal of his life:

> The late Mr. F. C. B. Vosper M.L.A. was a reformer of the most virulent type, consequently he counted for little in the eyes of the alleged leaders of thought in Western Australia. Now that Vosper, the lion heart whom they fear is gone, numbers of his former detractors are admitting his courage and his prowess. They are also acknowledging that Vosper did immense public service. The pity is that Vosper was not given his due earlier."[111].

Drew concluded that Vosper's life "was a continuous struggle for bread and democracy", an awkward but truthful summary. As public speaker, journalist and politician, Vosper influenced the lives of thousands of men and women during years of exciting expansion and vigorous public debate. A visionary, immensely talented, and a strong minded individualist, he fully deserved the inscription on the monument over his grave:

"Nevertheless I Live."

NOTES:

1. *All I May Tell* (London, 1956), p. 34.
2. *My Life's Adventure* (London, 1936), p. 243.
3. See "Heyday of the Goldfields", *Westerly*, No. 3, September 1976, pp. 58 and 60, and also G. F. Young, *Under the Coolibah Tree* (London, 1953), pp. 89-90, Arthur Reid, *Those Were the Days* (Perth, 1933), p. 211, Jules Raeside, *Golden Days* (Perth, 1929), pp. 107-112. Vosper has also been mentioned in numerous articles and unpublished theses.
4. See p. 135.
5. "F. C. B. Vosper: An Australian Radical", *University Studies in History*, Vol. V, No. 1, 1967, pp. 38-53.
6. Almost half of the article was concerned with Vosper's years in Queensland.
7. This birth date is two years later than that mentioned by Bastin and Stoodley. The obituary in the *Sunday Times* (13 January 1901) and records at Karrakatta Cemetery confirm the year of birth as 1869, not 1867.
8. This date, mentioned in the *Sunday Times*, appears to be incorrect. The Vosper Papers in the Battye Library do not cover the period.
9. *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 7 January 1901.
10. *ibid.*
11. Bastin and Stoodley, *op. cit.*, p. 40.
12. *ibid.*, p. 42.
13. *ibid.*, p. 43.
14. During the 1890s Vosper's views on separation gradually changed, particularly after he left the goldfields in 1897.
15. Bastin and Stoodley, *op. cit.*, pp. 44-45.
16. *Sun*, 22 December 1907.
17. *Geraldton Express*, 23 August 1895.
18. *Sun*, 22 December 1907.
19. *Sun*, 25 December 1910.
20. *Sunday Times*, 14 July 1907.
21. *ibid.*
22. Bastin and Stoodley, *op. cit.*, p. 45, also stated this, and then modified their explanation in a footnote.
23. *Sunday Times*, 14 July 1907.
24. "Separation Movement on the Eastern Goldfields 1894-1904" *W.A.R.H.S., Journal and Proceedings*, Vol. IV, Part V, 1953, p. 45.
25. *Coolgardie Miner*, 12 September 1894.
26. *ibid.*
27. *ibid.*
28. *Coolgardie Miner*, 13 August 1895.
29. Mossenson, *op. cit.*, p. 46.
30. *op. cit.*, p. 47.
31. *Coolgardie Miner*, 23 November 1895 and 5 December 1895.
32. *ibid.*, 29 February 1896.
33. *ibid.*, 28 August 1896.
34. *ibid.*, 18 December 1894.
35. *ibid.*, 17 October 1894.
36. *ibid.*, 29 December 1894.
37. Mentioned by H. J. Gibbney in "The Goldfields And The Labour Movement In Western Australia", p. 3, unpublished paper held at W.A. Trades Hall, Perth.
38. The secretary of the League was John Marshall who later wrote *Battling for Gold* (Melbourne, 1903).
39. *Geraldton Express*, 5 July 1895.
40. *ibid.*, 17 May 1895.
41. J. Merritt, "George Foster Pearce and The Western Australian Labour Movement: 1892-1901", *University Studies in History*, Vol. IV, No. 3, 1965, p. 35.
42. For the letter which sparked the incident see the *Geraldton Express*, 22 October 1894.
43. Drew developed a journalistic style very similar to that of Vosper. He once wrote. "Vosper with the *Sunday Times* tin opener will continue to pry open the rotten oyster of malfeasance in high places and permeate the atmosphere with the pungent odour thereof. With might and *mane* he has done the disagreeable work he has taken up, enlightened the public, poured torrents of merited abuse and logical criticism over the jarrah blockade of Forrest's side of the house . . .". *Geraldton Express*, 17 March 1899.
44. *Geraldton Express*, 7 June 1895.
45. *ibid.*, 21 June 1895.
46. *ibid.*, 14 June 1895.
47. B. J. Smith, "Western Australian Goldfields Literature", *University Studies in History*, Vol. IV, No. 2, 1963-64, p. 83.

48. *Geraldton Express*, 28 June 1895.
49. *ibid.*
50. *ibid.*, 5 July 1895.
51. *ibid.*
52. *ibid.*
53. *ibid.*, 19 July 1895.
54. See Vosper Papers, Battye Library.
55. *ibid.*, letter, 3 December 1895.
56. The first official discovery of telluride was made at Block 45, Kalgoorlie, in May 1896.
57. Letter, 3 December 1895, Vosper Papers.
58. See the obituary, *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 7 January 1901.
59. Letter, 19 December 1895, Vosper Papers.
60. *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 7 January 1901.
61. *ibid.*
62. *Coolgardie Miner*, 28 April 1897.
63. *ibid.*, 6 April 1897.
64. *ibid.*
65. *ibid.*, 17 April 1897.
66. See *ibid.*, 10 April 1897 and 30 April 1897.
67. *ibid.*, 6 May 1897.
68. Kirwan, *op. cit.*, p. 244.
69. Letter, 26 November 1900, Vosper Papers.
70. Letter from Mrs V. A. Vosper to Vosper's father, 21 March 1901.
71. *Murchison Advocate*, 15 April 1899.
72. *ibid.*
73. From 1897 to December 1900 there were approximately 319 editorial articles in the *Sunday Times*. More than half were on such topics as Federation and Referendum (56), Anti-Forrest and Government (50), Mining Disputes etc. (45), International (28).
74. *Sunday Times*, 22 October 1899.
75. Puffing, the public boosting of company prospects, often caused an accompanying rise in company share prices.
76. See F. K. Crowley, "A Vice-Regal Defendant: Sidelights On Westralian Federation", *Historical Studies, Australia and New Zealand*, Vol. 9, No. 34, 1960, pp. 117-129.
77. *Sunday Times*, 10 September 1899.
78. *ibid.*
79. *The West Australian*, 15 June 1899.
80. *ibid.*
81. *Sunday Times*, 12 November 1899.
82. *Geraldton Express*, 2 July 1897.
83. *ibid.*
84. Clause 36 of the Goldfields Act 1895, authorised the simultaneous mining of reef and alluvial gold on leases.
85. D. Mossenson, "Mining Regulations And Alluvial Disputes, 1894-1904", *University Studies in History and Economics*, Vol. II, No. 3, 1955, p. 16.
86. *ibid.*, p. 18. The alluvial miners were to be prohibited from working below ten feet, on the leases.
87. *ibid.*, p. 19.
88. This was the famous occasion of "The Riot Where No One Was Hurt", when Forrest was jostled, and jabbed in the ribs by an umbrella.
89. *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 7 January 1901.
90. This brought a rift between Vosper and John Kirwan, then editor of the *Kalgoorlie Miner*.
91. Vosper continually argued for amendment in 1898-99.
92. In particular, he believed there should have been more consultation over the selection of Convention delegates.
93. Letter, 26 November 1900, Vosper Papers.
94. *ibid.*
95. See letter from Vosper to Kirwan, 6 May 1899, Kirwan Papers, Battye Library.
96. *ibid.*
97. *ibid.*
98. *The West Australian*, 15 June 1899.
99. *Coolgardie Miner*, 31 March 1897.
100. *The West Australian*, 15 June 1899.
101. "Report of the Joint Select Committee . . ." *W.A. Votes and Proceedings*, 1899, Vol. 3, No. A10, p. 4.
102. *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 31 July 1900.

103. *W.A. Parliamentary Debates*, XIV, 1899, pp. 1623-1633. He constantly reiterated these concerns between January and July 1900.
104. *W.A.P.D.*, XIV, 1899, pp. 302-3.
105. *ibid.*, XII, 1898, p. 124.
106. *Sunday Times*, 17 December 1899.
107. *Letter*, 26 November 1900, Vosper Papers.
108. *ibid.*
109. See *W.A.P.D.*, XVII, 1900, pp. 1248-1254, for a speech on the topic. Forrest praised Vosper for his "versatility and modesty".
110. 7 January 1901.
111. *Geraldton Express*, 11 January 1901.

MICHAEL DUGAN

Birthday

The precipice approaches.
Each day's travelling
brings its own newness.
Each night's stillness
the awareness
of cessation.
Already windows closed;
and those newly opened
give little light.
Each achievement
a parody
of adolescent dreams
judged by memory.

VERONICA BRADY

History, Literature and J. B. O'Reilly

What kind of evidence does a literary text offer to a historian? How far do literary judgements coincide with those made by historians? These are questions raised by the work of Goldmann and Lukács, amongst others, but they have been highlighted recently in Australia by the debate generated by Lucy Frost's article on the perils of an a-historical stance in a recent *Meanjin*.[1] To my mind, criticism can contribute to an understanding of history just as historical knowledge can sharpen the critic's insight, but instead of arguing for this position in the abstract, I should like to prove it by demonstration, taking a particular text as an example, *Moondyne*, the first novel to be written about Western Australia, first published in Boston in 1877. In itself, on account of its vogue and because of the material it offers about Western Australia, this novel has obvious interest for the historian, but it becomes even more interesting when it is realized that its author, J. B. O'Reilly, was the hero of the 'Catalpa' escape, the rescue in 1876 of five Fenian prisoners from Fremantle, organized by him from Boston, and that he himself had escaped from custody in Western Australia some ten years before that. Obviously, this is a text which offers possibilities of insight into the thoughts and feelings of a man who was a leader within a vigorous and disaffected group, the Irish Catholics. But there is also another kind of evidence it can offer, of a kind not instantly available since it involves matters of tone, nuance and structure. This is the province of the literary critic, of course, but when the critic goes on to think about the relationships between the text and the culture from which it arises and to which it speaks, his/her concerns move closer to the historian's.[2]

Taking it as our premise that a work of literature represents for its writer a possible way of coping with the world he inhabits, let us turn first to look at the picture of the novelist which emerges from his book. Nor is this a distortion of the critic's proper task, since in this particular case we are faced with a "readerly" rather than a "writerly" text, to use the distinction made by Barthes in *S/Z*, his brilliant study of a text by Balzac. *Moondyne*, that is, purports to point beyond itself to life: its fictions claim to offer a guide to action, and it seems to have appealed largely by the way it puts the reader in touch with O'Reilly himself. Though the novel is poor stuff as literature, flabbily constructed, didactic in tone and sentimental in characterisation, as an admixture of fact and fantasy it must have been exciting to read, prolonging in its Irish readers their delight in their hero's triumph in the 'Catalpa' escape.

What plot there is, then, is based on the story of O'Reilly's own life, suitably exaggerated, all the displacements tending on the one hand to make him figure even more gloriously in fiction than he did in life and on the other hand to negate all unpleasant and humiliating facts. Thus his original brush with the British is rearranged. In fact, no doubt it was romantic enough: O'Reilly, as a young Irish

journalist working in England had given up his career to enlist in the British Army in Ireland to subvert the troops to the Irish cause. Discovered, he was tried, found guilty and sentenced to death, a sentence subsequently commuted to transportation to Western Australia. In the novel, however, the hero and his situation figure even more heroically. Told later in the novel when Moondyne has become rich and powerful, this story takes us back to the beginning of his career, presenting him as a kind of Robin Hood who stole from the rich to feed the poor who were starving in a time of depression and unemployment. In court, he stands up and declares defiantly "that he had a right to the deer—that thousands were starving to death—men, women and children—in the streets of the town, and that God had given no man the right to hundreds of useless deer while human beings were dying of hunger".[3]

His enemy, Sir Joshua Hobb, who is telling the story in an attempt to discredit Moondyne or Wyville as he was then called, understands the significance of this defiance. "This poacher" as he calls him, is no ordinary offender against property but "a desperate radical, a Chartist, no doubt, who ought to have been severely treated." (p. 169). Preston where O'Reilly worked for a time as a journalist was in fact a centre of Chartist agitation in the 1840s and saw the most successful of their attempts at re-distribution of land ownership. Nevertheless, even here the novelist refuses to be beholden to the facts. His hero may echo the rhetoric of the Chartists but he is also a semi-miraculous figure exempt from the historical determinism which destroyed the Chartists. Thus, despite Sir Joshua's conviction that he should have been severely treated, he has to record that "the ignorant and dangerous people who heard him cheered wildly at [his] lawless speech" and that even "the judge looked leniently on the case, because it was proved that the poacher's own mother and sister were starving" (p. 169). Even at this stage God is on the hero's side. In a similar way, the novel enlarges the scope of O'Reilly's achievements in the 'Catalpa' escape. In the novel, the rescue of five prisoners turns into the liberation of all the convicts of Western Australia. Moondyne's story begins, like his creator's, as a convict. But where in real life after his escape O'Reilly withdrew to Boston, organizing the rescue of his friends from afar, in the novel his surrogate invades the stronghold of the enemy, having become "King of the Vasse country" in Western Australia where he had formerly been a convict and master of the gold mine the whole colony had been looking for. A figure of wealth and power, he goes to London where he carries all before him, winning the respect and admiration of the most powerful men in England who then entrust to him the task of reforming the penal system and send him back to Western Australia to put an end to the convict system there.

A similar impulse to self-aggrandisement is apparent also in the way the novelist works to restructure the world according to his own desires. Consistently, friends are rewarded and enemies punished. Thus English law and the English penal system are heavily criticized, and its present masters made to look both evil and foolish. Sir Joshua Hobb, the director of the present penal system, is no match for the humanity and intelligence of Wyville, the name Moondyne goes by in London. The Parliamentary Committee set up to look into the matter of prison reform:

> The Committee consisted of five average M.P.s, three country gentlemen, who had not the remotest knowledge of penal systems, nor of any other than systems of drainage, and two lawyers who asked all the questions and pretended to understand the whole system (p. 118).

The sneer implicit here at those present in power points up the novelist's confidence in the man whose intelligence and sheer personal presence overwhelms them so completely so that, when he first arrives in London, Sheridan falls in their

esteem, being greeted with a "rude stare" when he confesses that he does not know Wyville whom they regard as "the most influential man in the West Australian Penal Colony". (p. 97).

Apart from imagining himself lording it over the rulers of England, O'Reilly gives himself and his readers the pleasure of paying off more personal scores. It is obvious, for example, that the Sergeant in charge of the detachment bringing Moondyne back into custody, is drawn from memory, suitably rearranged. A caricature of brutal stupidity, he is no match for his prisoner. In the first place, he is conquered by his prisoner's moral superiority. Attempting to torment him by flinging a pannikin of water in his face which a sympathetic trooper had offered the thirsty prisoner, the Sergeant makes no impression.

> The face of the prisoner hardly changed. He gave one straight look into the sergeant's eyes, then turned away, and seeked to look far away through the bush. He was a remarkable being as he stood there (p. 9).

Then the novelist goes on to dwell on his physical strength, making him out magnificent "in strength and proportion of body . . . a model for a gladiator" (p. 9), stressing his superiority even at this basic level. But it is Moondyne's intelligence which leads to his triumph here, in accordance with the dream of the oppressed for whom intelligence is the best weapon against enemies more powerful than themselves. He plays on his captor's cupidity, bribing him to let him escape with the promise of sharing the secret of the gold mine with him. When they reach the mine, however, the Sergeant is carried away with greed, kills the mine's aboriginal guardians and makes off for civilization to claim all this wealth for himself. Yet even here, he is more victim than master, victim of the evil desires that make him suspicious of good men like Moondyne and his aboriginal friends and helpless before the power they represent. Standing in the mine before he makes his bid to seize it for himself, "a terror crept through the sergeant's heart, that was only strong with evil intent" (p. 32). Otherwise, he is weak, and O'Reilly makes a great deal of this contrast here between the good and the evil which underlies the melodramatic structure of the work as a whole:

> He glanced suspiciously at Moondyne. But he could not read the faces of the two men beside him. They symbolized something unknown to such as he. On them at that moment lay the great but acceptable burden of manhood—the over-mastering but sweet allegiance that a true man owes to the truth (p. 32).

When the passage goes on to remark that "it does not need culture and fine association to develop in some men this highest quality" and to contrast these paragons with "those who live by externals" who are "not men, but shells of men" (p. 32), one hears the echoes of the belief with which preachers consoled their people, the promise that God would deliver his people from their enemies, pull down princes from their thrones and exalt the lowly.[4] Sure enough, here too, God steps in. Moondyne sets off in pursuit of the Sergeant, even though he is on foot and the other man on horseback, sustained by the divine help which endows him with prodigious physical strength and provides food and drink for him even in the desert, leading him to it, like the prophet Elijah,[5] by means of a miraculous dream. He overtakes his quarry as he is about to die of thirst in the desert, just in time to hear him beg pardon for his sins.

As for rewarding his friends, it may be that Sister Cecilia, the Mercy nun who looks after Alice Walmsley, is based on real life, a transposition of the figure of Father Patrick McCabe, the priest at Bunbury who helped O'Reilly in his own escape. Certainly, the novelist settles the sectarian score in a way most satisfactory to Catholics, Sister Cecilia's goodness being contrasted with the hypocrisy and hardness of heart of Mr Haggett, the Protestant chaplain to the prison, though he

does improve, it is true after he comes under Wyville's influence. Sheridan, Wyville's faithful lieutenant, may also correspond to the man who played a similar role in O'Reilly's life, John Hetherington, mate of the "Gazelle", the ship on which the novelist escaped from Bunbury, who later managed the "Catalpa" escape for him. So, too, the ship which brought O'Reilly to Western Australia as a convict, the "Hougement", appears under the same name in the novel, though now as the ship on which Wyville returns to triumph to reform the whole convict system.

At this first level of signification, then, Moondyne offers a picture of O'Reilly himself, looking back, delighting in his role as hero of the Boston Irish and of all those in Western Australia who enjoyed the discomfiture of the Government in the "Catalpa" affair. However, as Northrop Frye has remarked, a book cannot be said to represent an Author any more than he is his biography. What is significant is rather the ways in which a work attracts and holds the attention of its readers. Here, ideas are less important than patterns of thought and sentiment. But, to revert to my general thesis about the relationship between literary criticism and history, these patterns, which also underlie social, political and economic structures, are generally latent rather than manifest, and yield themselves only to the kind of analysis critics engage in. So, in the present case, *Moondyne* points to a wider range of reference than that of the study of its author, representing a dynamic field of interaction between author and reader, between a historical situation and a group of people within it, between this work and other texts, between the past on which it draws and the future to which it points. As Goldmann has put it:

> Every [text] . . . is the work of its individual author and expresses his thought and his way of feeling, but these ways of thinking and feeling are not independent entities with respect to the actions and behaviour of other men. They exist and may be understood only in terms of their inter-subjective relations which give them their whole tenor and richness.[6]

To turn, then, to look at these inter-subjective relations. At the simplest level, *Moondyne* throws light on the political thought of the Irish sub-culture, in particular on its aspirations in the New World. Much of the central section is taken up with Wyville's theories and his criticism of the present order, both of which echo the Chartists and the Irish Land Reform League, though as I shall argue, their origins lie further back than that. Essentially, the criticism made is of a moral kind. The present is measured against an ideal of justice and found wanting; a few rich men own vast tracts of land while the poor starve or are driven to crime. Yet for all that O'Reilly is no revolutionary. He does not really question the system, only the allocation of power within it, and the assumption is that once the right man is in power, Wyville in this case, then he will be able to restore the proper order, as he does in the novel, persuading Lord Hamilton, a wealthy landlord, to divide up his estates into small farms, for instance, and reforming the whole penal system. Nor does he have any notions about the abolition of class. Even in the wilderness, the aboriginals recognize true merit and acknowledge Moondyne as their natural master and ruler, and when he returns as Mr Wyville to London they go with him as his retainers. This is in accord with Catholic social thought in the nineteenth century, of course, which was conservative in tendency, looking back to an ideal social order in the past and cherishing notions of feudal service, hierarchy and subordination, all institutions finally being subject to the Will of God rather than to the economic or political forces other social theorists saw as determining figures. Wyville's vision opens up similar perspectives; the good society for him finally depends less on the efforts of men than on the help of God:

> Let every man who believes faithfully do his share, sow the seed that he has received, and in God's time the glorious harvest will come of a pure and

> truthful people, whose aristocrats shall be elevated by intelligence and virtue, and the love of humanity, and not by accident of birth and superiority in vice and pride (p. 118).

So, even in the late 1930s and 1940s the statements on social justice issued by the Catholic hierarchy in Australia echo this vision, while the National Catholic Rural Movement and later the D.L.P. under the leadership of B. A. Santamaria worked to bring it about.

So, too, with the patterns of authority and leadership which emerge from the novel. Where Australians generally tend to think of themselves as egalitarian and their politicians to depend upon popular support, O'Reilly's hero is an authoritarian leader, indeed a kind of dictator, however benevolent. Everyone else, it seems, is to find fulfilment in listening to his words and obeying his behest. So, Sheridan gives up his independent existence in London to spend all his time in the great man's company, leaving it to him even to look after the cause of his love. Lord Somers risks his reputation and entrusts supreme power in penal matters to Wyville, while Lord Hamerton, as we have seen, makes the supreme sacrifice, selling his estates, dividing the land up into small farms according to Wyville's formula and then following him to Western Australia.

At no stage, however, does Wyville appear to be indebted to anyone. He draws his power from within and from the resources and inspiration given him from above. True, he does seem beholden to the aborigines, not merely for his rescue from the chain gang at Fremantle but also for the gold mine to which they lead him, presumably as a reward for being who he is. Nevertheless, the aborigines do not exist on the same plane as the rest of the characters. Rather, as we shall see, they appear as creatures from an unfallen world who live in tune with the Divine Will, so that Wyville's debt to them only intensifies his independence of earthly power. Mediating to him the gifts of God, they point up the real source of his strength. No democratic leader, he is rather a kind of absolute monarch, God's representative on earth.

Yet the interesting fact is that the novel offers no instructions for practical action, paying tribute to the pleasure—rather than to the reality—principle. Wyville is a figure out of the fantasy of those who knew little about the ways and means of power. In contrast with Sheridan, his alter-ego, introduced, as I shall argue later, to pay tribute to reality, he does not really have to work for success; it comes to him magically. The natives revere him instantly and present him with a gold mine, and even though his pursuit of the Sergeant entails heroic efforts, its conclusion marks the end of all further effort or contradiction. When he arrives in London, the most powerful and influential men there fall instantly under his spell, and it seems that he has only to open his mouth to carry conviction.

Nevertheless, this is not to imply that the patterns of leadership in the novel have no basis in social reality. On the contrary, they are drawn from experience, Moondyne/Wyville being the kind of leader the Irish were used to, the priests being the only leaders amongst them accorded any kind of social legitimation by the English authorities. Moreover, as far as the Irish themselves were concerned, the power the priest possessed was of a special kind, not available to heretics, a kind therefore in which they trusted and gloried because it could not be touched, still less possessed by their enemies.

Thus, at the beginning of the story when Moondyne is still a prisoner, O'Reilly indicates that this hero's centre of gravity lies elsewhere:

> His clothing was only a few torn and bloody rags; but he looked as if his natural garb were utter nakedness or the bushman's cloak, so loosely and carelessly hung the shreds of cloth on his bronzed body. A large, finely shaped head, with crisp, black hair and beard, a broad, square forehead, and an air of power and self-command—this was the prisoner, this was Moondyne Joe.

> Who or what was the man? An escaped convict. What had he been? ... No one knew—no one cared to know (p. 9).

The rhetorical questions here imply a kind of defiance of the social position, wealth and education, upon which authority usually relies. Nothing his enemies can do, it seems, can touch Moondyne. Insulted by the Sergeant, he "turned away and seemed to look far away into the bush" (p. 9). There, he is known for what he is, the man God chooses to rule this new country and to lead it in the ways of God. There, too, lies the source of his power, his communion with the Divine Will which assists him. As far as O'Reilly is concerned, what matters lies within, in this communion, not in normal political manoeuvre and action.

Indeed, the contrast between Moondyne and the Sergeant set up early in the first book seems designed to make the contrast between the two kinds of authority. The Sergeant, the type of existing authority, is a slave of riches and a murderer, whereas Moondyne, the friend of God, is omnipotent. Near the end of his physical resources as he pursues his enemy in the name of true justice, he receives divine assistance.

> There came to him a new thought, like a friend with a grave but not unkind face—a vast and solemn thought, that held him for a long time with upraised face and hands, as if it had been whispered from a quiet sky (p. 46).

Nor is this assistance spiritual only, inspiring him "to feel that there were no bonds anymore, nor hopes, nor heart-burnings" (p. 46). The "Great Thought" also indicates to him two palm trees which offer him shade and refreshment in the desert[7] so that next day he overtakes his enemy. But it is when, at the point of death, the representative of English (that is, evil) power is made to confess to Moondyne and acknowledge his superior power that the nature of his authority emerges most clearly.

> The guilty wretch raised his eyes and looked at Moondyne—the glazed eyes grew bright, and brighter, till a tear rose within them, and rolled down the stained and sin-lined face. The baked lips moved, and the weak hands were raised imploringly. The sergeant fell back dead. Moondyne knew that his last breath was contrition, and his last dumb cry, 'Pardon' (p. 47).

Here, the hero is clearly a priest figure, hearing the Confession of the repentant sinner, exercising the power of the keys which is traditionally the source of Papal authority. So, too, his time in the bush represents his novitiate and at the end of the trials he endures he achieves a state of holy indifference just described, feeling himself free from "bonds", "hopes [and] ... heart burning".[8] So he is ready for ordination. "Free from pursuit, he had cut forever the bonds of the Penal Colony" (p. 48). But when he returns to himself after his ordeal, he sees the aborigines, representatives of the unfallen world, and he knows himself to be in a kind of sanctuary, set apart from the evil world.

> Above him bent the deep eyes and kind faces of the old chief and the sisters, Koro and Tepairu, and around him were the hills that shut in the Valley of the Vasse Gold Mine. He closed his eyes again and seemed to sleep for a little while. Then he looked up and met the face of Te-mara-roa watching him. 'I am free!' he only said. Then turning to the sisters: 'I am not accursed'; and Koro and Tepairu answered with kind smiles" (p. 48).

The next we see of him he is in London, with a new name, Mr Wyville, a master among his own people first of all—his aboriginal retainers are like his devoted parishioners, ministering to his material needs and doing his bidding—and then among the people of London, to whom he preaches his true gospel.

In keeping with the priestly role he thus accords to him, the novelist is careful to preserve his hero from worldly taint. As we have seen, he changes his name

from Moondyne, the name which belonged to an early West Australian folk hero, a convict renowned for his escapes and the games he played with authorities, to Mr Wyville, presenting him as a paragon of manners as well as of virtue. As we have seen, he also goes out of his way to stress Wyville's difference from other men, his independence of worldly power and wisdom. Thus Lord Somers is made to remark to Sheridan that "when Mr Wyville first appeared here,... he might have dropped from the moon, so oblivious was he of the doings of the European world... Why, he had never heard of the Crimean War ... and when I mentioned the Indian Mutiny to him, one day, he gravely stared, and asked, 'What mutiny?' " (p. 100). As Somers's further question indicates when he asks " 'Are you so utterly removed from civiliz—from news, in your bush?" (p. 100), he equates England generally and London in particular with civilization. But the novelist shows up this mistake, to the delight, one presumes, of his readers, who would surely glory in a hero whose very presence rebukes this confident equation. In comparison with him and his power even the most powerful men in England are notably deficient. Thus, at his first glimpse of the man all London is talking about, Sheridan recognizes in him a "strange presence of a power and a principle to be respected" (p. 103), something he has never met before.

> Nature circumstances and cultivation had evidently united to create in this man a majestic individuality. He did not pose or pretend, but spoke straight the thing he meant to say; yet every moment and word suggested reserve of strength that had almost a mysterious calmness and beauty (p. 103).

As we have said, this is no democratic leader, but the leader as a kind of Messiah, the man sent from God to set his people free and manifest God's ways to an evil world. In London, endowed with power from on high, he carries all before him:

> Before him stood three men least likely of any in London to be impressed—a young and brilliant statesman, a cynical and able novelist, and a bold and independent worker; and each of these felt the same strange presence of a power and principle to be respected (p. 103).

Even when he is at bay before his enemy, Sir Joshua Hobb, who has ferreted out the story of his past and reveals to the Parliamentary Committee that the eminent and respected Mr Wyville has once been a convict and even accuses him of murdering the sergeant, Wyville's authorty is irresistible. Challenging his enemy and refuting his charge,

> Mr Wyville addressed Sir Joshua Hobb, standing at the end of the long green table. There was nothing in the words, but everyone in the room felt a thrill at the deep sound of the resonant voice... He was strangely powerful as he stood there alone, looking calmly at Sir Joshua for an answer (p. 171).

Sir Joshua is routed—of course—and even converted, coming at the end to cooperate with Wyville in his schemes for prison reform.

This is how the Irish liked to imagine their heroes: a Parnell or an O'Connell or, in Australia, a Mannix are cast in the role of one of the priestly High Kings of Ireland, reborn to lead the people once more to glory. So it is easy to see why *Moondyne* was so popular and its author so much admired.

At this stage, however, the other problem becomes more acute: why is it that the novel, initially so vivid in its impact, dropped out of currency? This question highlights the other matter we have been discussing, the relationship between the literature and history, for the demise of the book bears upon the ultimately ineffectual nature of its author as a politician. In both cases, I think, it is a matter of style without substance, and just as sentimentality fails in literature, pretending to feelings and ideas which are not supported by experience, so too in life, the

leader who is more concerned with ideals than with practical action tends to make little impact in the long run. Furthermore, analysis of the novel points to deeper sources of this preference for gesture at the expense of fact. Far from representing the triumph of the id, as it might seem to do, *Moondyne* endorses the claims of the superego, and the fact that characters fail to live lives of their own, being dependent instead upon the moral order the novelist imposes reflects a similar failure in their creator, a failure which goes a long way to explain his relative incompetence dealing with life. He prefers not to confront the world, it seems, but to retire into an imaginary one. Other convict novels, works like *The Adventures of Ralph Rashleigh* or *For the Term of His Natural Life*, generate a sense of desperation and therefore of protest, because they suggest that the world they show of brutality, degradation and fruitless anger, is all that there is. But *Moondyne* shows a world elsewhere, implying that present injustice gives way, as if by magic, before the power with which his hero is gifted. All that is necessary is to rely on God who will lead his Chosen ones to the better world which is the reward of their sufferings.

In effect, then, the novel is governed by that syndrome which gives rise to religion as distinct from faith,[9] the desire for a tranquillising set of beliefs into which one retreats from contradiction. It is significant therefore that the action reaches its climax not in Wyville's reform of the social order, but in his death, for O'Reilly's real interest seems to lie in abolishing the actual world. So, a bushfire is made to sweep across the land, and the macabre descriptions of men, beasts and even reptiles in flight before it register a delight in the destruction and confusion it causes. Suddenly, however, Wyville realizes that two people have been left behind in the path of the fire, Draper and his wife. Reining in his horse, he turns back, declaring dramatically, " 'I am going back for these—I must go back. God bless you!' " (p. 312). It is for lesser mortals to save their lives; as for him, he is obedient to the higher impulse which rules his life. To underline this higher allegiance, the novelist makes his faithful aboriginal servant protest vehemently: " 'No! no! . . . you shall not! you shall not! It is death, Moondyne! It is death!' " (p. 313) only to have his master bend forward, "speaking rapidly to him" words which "moved the faithful heart deeply" so that he stood aside and let his master ride back into the flames. Child of God as he is, the aborigine shares the secret that enables his master to triumph over physical reality. The others, mere Englishmen, are outsiders and this truth, and even Hamerton can only sit "in his saddle, with streaming eyes following the heroism of the man he loved dearest of all the world" (p. 313). Wyville is translated into what the novelist implies is the only true reality.

> Once, before he died, his open eyes were raised, and he looked above him into the sea and forest of fire. But he would not accept that; but upward, with the splendid faith of his old manhood, went the glazing eyes until they rested firmly on the eternal calmness of the sky. As he looked, there came to him, like a vision he had once before dimly seen, a Great Thought from the deep sky, and held his soul in rapt communion (p. 314).

Meantime, his body has been struck down by a falling branch into the water of a conveniently placed swamp which, remarkably, has not dried up even in this summer of bushfires and which preserves his body "unscathed by the fire" so that, next morning, the faithful aborigines are able to find him and conduct a funeral appropriate for a hero:

> Reverent hands lifted the burden and bore it into the dim recesses of the bush, followed by numerous dusky mourners (p. 315).

Far from the evil world, he is back among the true faithful, as it were, as Te-man-roa declares:

> 'This man belonged to us,' he said, laying his dark finger on the wide brow of the dead, 'he was true to my people, and they understood and loved him better than his own. We shall bury him in the Vasse.' (p. 315).

So Moondyne supports Coral Lansbury's thesis in *Arcady in Australia* that to many people in the British Isles in the nineteenth century Australia appeared as the place in which an idealized past might be reborn. Above all, to the Catholic, it appears as the place in which the true religion might prevail. But Australia is the new beginning, the "virgin continent", as in one of his poems, O'Reilly apostrophises her:

> O strange land, thou art virgin! thou art more
> Than fig-tree barren! Would that I could point
> For others' eyes the glory of the shore
> Where last I saw thee; but the senses faint
> In soft delicious dreaming when they drain
> Thy wine of colour. Virgin fair thou art,
> All sweetly fruitful, waiting with soft pain
> The spouse who comes to wake thy sleeping heart.[10]

Thus the structure of the novel reflects the contrast between this brave new world which lies open before God's people, and the old one, sunk in its injustices.

London represents the City of Man, built on love of self at the expense of the other, dominated by a symbol of injustice, the Millbank prison.[11] In contrast, Australia where the City of God is to be found, has Wyville for its ruler, a man whose perspectives are absolute rather than relative and merely expedient and who invokes eternal vistas, announcing:

> No man who sees the truth, however distant, can conscientiously go on as if it were not there. Thousands of years are vast periods, but the love of human liberty and happiness shall reach out and cling to the eternal (p. 118).

His capital is Perth, where God's law, not human greed prevails. The river Swan on which the "little city" stands, flows "in and out among the low hills like a dream of peace... Its waters turn no busy wheels. Along its banks are seen no thriving homesteads" (p. 258). Instead, its inhabitants depend upon God and his bounty, the aboriginals here being a variation on the theme of the obedient and contented small farmers and craftsmen O'Reilly and Wyville together with the Chartists see as ideal citizens of the just society.

> Here and there, in the shallows, a black man, with upraised spear, stands still as an ebony statue, while his wives and children sit upon the shaded rocks on the shore and watch his skilful fishing. Presently, without a quiver of warning, the statue moves its arm, the long spear is driven under water like a flash, and is raised to bear ashore its prize of a wide-backed plaice. Along the wooded banks, the kangaroo nibbles the fresh grass, and the bright-skinned carpet-snake dives into the pleasant water that has become almost his second home (p. 258).

No one could deny the pastoral charm of this description—another reason for the novel's popularity, no doubt. But equally, no one could deny its debilitating effect as it passes off the real Australia, with all the difficulties it posed to the new settler, in favour of an image of unreality. Like the early painters and poets, O'Reilly still views Australia through eighteenth, not nineteenth century eyes,[12] presenting it as the idealized past reborn. True, this tendency continues right into the twentieth century, and even a writer as robust in his imagination as Joseph Furphy shows its influence. But the pastoral raptures he indulges in in his description of Mary O'Halloran as child of the wilderness[13] are savagely undercut by reality. Furphy knows the bush is no paradise and Mary gets lost and dies in it. O'Reilly, however, pays no such tribute to reality. True, this may be merely the

result of ignorance—his stay in Western Australia was, after all, a short one. Nevertheless, he seems less interested in facts than in ideals, his aborigines, for example, being the noble savages of literature rather than the unhappy victims of white settlement which they were, particularly in areas close to the convict settlements.

In effect, therefore, the ideal which rules the novel is the myth of paradise, a myth which can be seen as a reflection of the longing for security, the desire to return to the womb, to a state of being-no-more-contested.[14]

However, in the novel at least, the form fails to support the vision. In genuine fable, there is a fruitful interplay between the dream and reality. But here, far from exploiting it, the novelist recoils from ambiguity, subordinating his fictions to the "moral" he wishes to inculcate. Thus in the description of the aboriginal girls the literal swallows up the figurative implications, paradise is domesticated and the reader is left unaware of that distance between the ideal and the real which might generate action and fuse the two. True myth is celebrative and participatory, as Philip Wheelwright has remarked, but *Moondyne* does not even reach the level of good allegory since character and incidents fail to progress or to refer to the world of actual experience.

This gap between the world he creates and that of contemporary society reveals one that is more profound, that between consciousness and the conscious, leading to the final reason for the novel's demise, its failure to touch the collective unconscious which is linked with the tendency to repress rather than draw upon the resources of the libido from which art generally springs. As the Manuels also note, the paradisal myth tends to have an inhibitory effect, as it does here. A great deal is made of walls, of the hills which surround the Vasse valley where the mine lies and where Moondyne is King, and of the distance from the old world, as if to emphasise the separation from the existing world. So, too, the mine appears as a source of emotional rather than economic strength. No reference is made to mining it. Instead, the only extended description of it presents it as a kind of Aladdin's cave, glittering with jewels, supporting the Manuels suggestion that the jewels with which most paradises are furnished are associated with memories of "the first glistening objects riveted upon the nursing infant, its mother's eyes"[15] and correspond to the longing to return to the womb, the state of total security.

The treatment of women throughout the novel also highly inhibited. Nowhere, in fact, does O'Reilly seem to be able to create a real woman; instead, they are stereotypes, part of the polarization already discussed, the absolute opposition between good and evil, either "damned whores" or "God's police".[16] Draper's first wife, actually very ill-used by men, figures as the evil woman and is suitably punished at the end, being consumed in the flames of the bush-fire. At the other end of the scale, Sister Cecilia who looks after Alice when she is in prison and after her release, as if to convert her to her ways of innocent womanliness, is evidently godly. In between, Alice Walmsley is the woman who has to be allowed to exist as a concession to "the flesh". Sheridan loves her and finally marries her, and even Wyville is attracted to her, though when he realizes Sheridan's prior claims, he renounces her after a dramatic struggle, thus preserving him as the priestly hero, the celibate dedicated to a higher love. Sheridan's marriage, however, is clearly a lesser good, and the novelist's imagination does not dwell on it, as if he fears desecration.[17] Throughout, he seems to be afraid of this relationship, only dwelling on it when Sheridan is safely removed, in Australia, or when he is separated from her by the walls of the Millbank prison in London. Indeed, describing him languishing outside, the novelist seems to use the walls as a substitute for the woman Sheridan loves, and the confusion of metaphors testifies to the confusion within himself as he deals with erotic feelings:

> Round and round the shadowy, silent precipice of wall the afflicted heart wandered with tireless feet. It was useful to think how near she was, and to touch the sullen granite . . . Surely . . . the dream of the lonely prisoner within must have thrilled with tenderness when his fevered lips were pressed as lovingly to the icy stone of the prison wall, as once they were pressed to her forehead in affectionate farewell. (pp. 85-6).

When finally he catches a glimpse of her, she seems more like a statue than a living woman, the embodiment of the needs of the superego rather than of the id, docile, almost a-sexual:

> She never looked on him, but stood in perfect calmness, with her eyes cast down . . . quiet as a statue, with a face not of happiness but of intensified peace, and with all that was beautiful in her as a girl increased a thousand-fold, but subdued by suffering (p. 92).

Above all, such a woman would make no claims, nor would she imagine herself as having rights or question her husband's calm assumption of superiority—as Hannah Arendt remarked, idealism, not cynicism, may lie at the root of the totalitarian imagination. Certainly, the elimination of all possible opposition here is remarkable.

As Arendt also points out, the totalitarian's first victim is often himself, and so it is in *Moondyne*. The novelist's attiude to women testifies to an underlying fear of sex and of the body itself, a fear which must be counted the most disabling of the factors we have been discussing and may be the underlying cause of the work itself. Essentially, existence in the body appears as the "desecrated life", exile from the true life which is that of the soul. In death Wyville achieves it permanently, but throughout, he seems to live more in his soul than in his body, his great moments being those in which he is shown in communion with the "Great Thought". This is a position closer to Platonism than to Christianity, of course, though Irish Catholicism, influenced by Jansenism, also shows a certain suspicion of physical reality. In particular this is true of the scene in which Wyville, deep in thought, is praised for his ability to separate his soul "from the moving world and . . . [retire] to its cell like an anchorite, taking with it some high subject for contemplation" (p. 142). From this retirement he looks down on the world in disgust:

> As the pale corpse lies upon the dissecting table before the solitary midnight student, so lay upon the table within the man's soul, a living body for dissection—the hideous body of Crime. (p. 142).

The novelist goes on, almost hysterically, to expand this image, presenting society as a grotesque organism in which "every atom had within itself the seminal part and the latest pulse of the ocean of Sin" (p. 143); a nightmare counterpart to the vision of the Body of Christ which is a variant of the image of the City of God.

Whatever the influence of Plato, the note of hysteria suggests that the polarization in the novel between good and evil, soul and body, derives rather from a terror of the physical and libidinal, the body being equated with sin. Thus the intrusive moralising reveals itself as a kind of defence mechanism and a confession of an inability to cope normally with the body or with the world as it is.

This failure of management helps to acount also for the novel's rigidity, for its lack of anecdote and consequently of pathos and genuine emotion. The novelist drives on grimly, disdaining the world or everyday incident in quest of the essential, the underlying forms of society and behaviour which he conceives as the absolute moral forms which will give him the security he needs. So, too, his style knows nothing of the search for precision; any word will do, it seems, since in his scheme the world of sense to which language is tied, must give way to the

world of ideas. But the flight from reality is most evident perhaps in the doubling effect that lies at the heart of the story, in the interplay between Wyville and Sheridan who appears only when Wyville comes to London but who then provides most of the covnentional interest as the man who makes his way in the world, the lover in search of his lost love who finds her at the end of a long process of tribulation. If Wyville is the man of God, triumphing over the world effortlessly and by divine gift, Sheridan as we have said, represents the layman who has to work his way, slowly and painfully, to the City of God. Yet it is here, in telling his story, that O'Reilly reveals his inability to translate his theories into facts, for in effect there is nothing to distinguish Sheridan from any other man of his time who managed to make a fortune. Far from being the embodiment of new and more godly way of life, he belongs to the world of Samuel Smiles, growing successful according to the good capitalist maxim the novelist enunciates, preparing us for Sheridan's success:

> When men of large intelligence, foresight and boldness, break into new fields, they may gather gold by the handful (p. 73).

Going on to remark, "so it was with this energetic worker", O'Reilly then praises his ability to seize the main chance, to learn from everyone, aboriginals as well as settlers, the secrets of the sandalwood trade in Western Australia so that by his "large intelligence, foresight and boldness" he manages to make large sums of money for himself and the company he represents. Nor are his methods particularly scrupulous—he is not above enlisting the physical support of the Irish farmers of Dardanup to fight off the rivals who are trying to prevent his carts from reaching Bunbury first. The inhabitants of the City of God, it seems, behave much like those of the City of Man when it is a question of business, the picture of Sheridan being very much a picture of any successful capitalist. True, throughout it is clear, that like Martha in the Gospel story in comparison with Mary (in this case Wyville) he has chosen the lesser part, above all, that he is tormented by earthly desires, by his love for Alice,

> Here worked a brave man from year to year, smiled on by men and women, transmuting all things to gold; vigorous, keen, worldly, and gradually becoming philosophic through large estimation of values in men and things; yet beneath this toiling and practical mind of the present was a heart that never for one day, through all these years, ceased bleeding and grieving for a dead joy of the past (p. 74).

Nevertheless, this is the man whose life offers the pattern most of his readers will follow.

Thus it appears that the main thrust of *Moondyne* is not towards change but towards accommodation. The picture it presents is of a perfect society having no real connection with the present and obliging the reader to no kind of action. Instead it allows him the pleasures of imagination, raising him in his own esteem as the one who possesses the secret of this ideal society (which he may very well see embodied anyway in the Church). This work of ennobling an oppressed people and giving them back their self-esteem was important politically, of course, and the cohesion and influence of the Irish-Catholics of Boston as well as in Australia testify to its effect. However, in the present context, the point to be made is that literary analysis enables the historian to discern more clearly the true nature of that influence, that it was not, as their rhetoric declared, revolutionary but rather conservative, not so much in favour of the democratic principle as of a certain kind of totalitarianism. Furthermore, it appears that leaders like O'Reilly were as much self-deceived as their followers, that they too believed their own claims to be champions of the poor and oppressed and did not realize the extent to which they were on the side of the establishment. To quote Goldmann once more: "ideas

are only a partial aspect of a less abstract reality, that of the whole, living man, and in his turn, this man is only an element in a whole made up of the social group to which he belongs"[18] and this social group, it appears, had considerable trouble in making the connections between the ideal and the real, belief and action, fact and fiction. Thus Vincent Buckley in his account of his own political development speaks of the "tediously well-known Irish pattern of politics [which] have always been those of the underdog, yet have included a strong tendency to pursue a hope of some total salvation for the world" and suggests that it has "something to do . . . with the desire for . . . a final healing, a completely restored innocence".[19]

Moondyne, then, reflects a similar pattern, a desire to idealize, essentialize and finally abolish the actual world, absorbing it into the embrace of an all-enveloping consciousness which is concerned with the super-human and the supernatural, with an ideal world elsewhere, exempt from the pressures of time and space. Given that Australian history and Australian culture has been predominantly this-worldly, concerned first of all with the problems of physical survival in a hostile environment and later with the pursuit of material abundance, *Moondyne* can thus hardly be said to belong to the main stream of writing in or about Australia. Similarly, to the extent that the Australian Catholic sub-culture reflects the sense of life apparent in the novel, it exists somewhat apart from Australian culture and history as a whole. Thus its otherwise mysterious failure to make the contribution one might have expected falls into place.

The great transformations of history are generally transformations of popular life, and *Moondyne* reveals a habit of mind and feeling unwilling to trust itself to the actual world.

NOTES:

1. Lucy Frost, "English in Australia: the Perils of an Ahistorical Stance". *Meanjin*, 36, No. 1 (May 1977), 117-130.
2. *cf.* Edward W. Said, "Roads Taken and Not Taken in Contemporary Literary Criticism" *Contemporary Literature* XVII, No. 3 (Summer 1976), 330-347.
3. *Moondyne Joe: a Tale from the Underworld* (Boston: Roberts, 1879).
4. Luke, 1, 51-52.
5. I Kings, 19, 5-8.
6. Quoted in Edward W. Said, *op. cit.*, pp. 346-347.
7. O'Reilly may be thinking of the native trees from which the aboriginals get water in the desert. It is more likely, however, that his source is the Scriptural story of Elijah already referred to—see note 5.
8. The Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius, often used in the retreat for candidates for the ordination, makes indifference the *sine qua non* of all apostolic work.
   Traditionally, the novice changes his name when he is received into a religious community to signify that he is beginning a new life.
9. The distinction is made by Karl Barth in his theology but underlies much contemporary religious discussion and reflects a response to Marxist and Freudian criticism of religion.
10. Quoted in Joseph Jones, *Radical Cousins* (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 1976), pp. 60-61.
11. Rather as Dickens' Paris in *A Tale of Two Cities* is dominated by the Bastille, and for similar reasons.
12. *cf.* A. D. Hope in his essay on "Three Early Australian Poets" in *Native Companions* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1974), pp. 103-126.
13. Joseph Furphy, *Such Is Life* (Melbourne: Lloyd O'Neill, 1970), p. 91.
14. Frank E. and Fritzie P. Manuel, "Sketch for a Natural History of Paradise", *Daedalus* 101. 1 (Winter 1972) 90-123.
15. F. E. and F. P. Manuel, *op. cit.*, p. 91.
16. *cf.* Anne Summers, *Damned Whores and God's Police: the Colonization of Women in Australia* (Melbourne: Allen Lane, 1975).
17. *cf.* James McAuley, "Fled from his own disaster", "exiled man must learn to live, as the enlightened should,/The desecrated life".
    "Celebration of Divine Love" *op. cit.*, p. 74.
18. L. Goldmann, *The Hidden God* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961), p. 7.
19. Vincent Buckley, "Remembering What You Have To", *Quadrant*, XII (September-October 1968), p. 20.

SUSAN HAMPTON

The Keening

I

Sitting at your desk I suddenly
(it is never like crying) begin to keen:
wild cats I think of. See airmail letters
pens files books photos of children wooden ruler
smiling wife, all blur to a flurry of coats at the airport.
This is an image of never: my face, blank with pain
watches yours, small, lost in crowd faces
but fine dark hair: glimpse. Eyeful. Eye empty.
"Death is the absence of presence."
Eyes refocus to the room and your clothes on a chair,
my brain nudges at the immaculate distance
between here and not here; mad shrieks tear from me
like noises from someone else, and I almost
look to see the sounds palpable in air, or another
mouth that made them.

II

Again blur: airport escalator
upness: your physical body from me: your
lovely conjunction of skin on bone,
your profile on the wall and then just the wall:
this must stop, but how to remove a picture of parting?
If I breathe deep I can slow from keening closer
to a formal feeling but sudden my head balloons
sideways with absence so soon, and leaden eyes close
to again calm, all right now, breathing deep to tame
the wild cat. All right. Hands flat on the desk,
I force calm on my helm of sad days,
I adjust the ballast of longings.

NORMAN BARTLETT

Perth in the Turbulent Thirties

During the "Great Depression", sometime in 1933, I threw up a secure job on Bunbury's *South Western Times* to enrol as a student in the University at Perth. The University was free—the only one of its kind in Australia—otherwise it would have been beyond me for in those days there were no student subsidies. As it was, married, penniless and jobless, I had to depend on Eve, my wife, who took a job at 35/- a week while I struggled to establish myself in casual and freelance journalism. At that time Perth was small enough almost to justify the cliche that everybody knew everybody else. Certainly, we experienced no sense of intellectual or social isolation despite the ingrained Eastern States conviction that Perth was the end of the line, the capital of what has since become known as Ockerdom, the great Ockeropolis.

True, like Canberra and the areas of Sydney and Melbourne satirised by Barry Humphries, Perth was suburbia incarnate. Apart from those on the dole, whose situation has been crystallised in the short stories of Peter Cowan, the average citizen centred his ambition on owning his own home on his own quarter-acre of sand and cut and contrived to move into the car-owning class for at that time everybody did not own a car as a matter of course. Yet, for those who cared for such things, there was the University, Walter Murdoch's weekly essays in *The West Australian*, Paul Hasluck's drama criticism, Albert Kornweibel's music critiques, Keith George and the Workers' Art Guild, the Repertory Club, the Writers' Fellowship, the Mechanics' Institute Library at the east end of Hay Street, opposite one of the best secondhand bookshops in Australia, and, alone and aloof at Greenmount, the Grey Eminence of the Western Australian Left, Katharine Susannah Prichard.

The University, just moved out of a collection of wooden huts into the new campus (we didn't use the term in those days), was not exactly a dynamo of student assertion. Nevertheless, we had no excuse for ignorance about the way the world waged outside Western Australia. Fred Alexander's history classes probed at the roots of current controversies in addition to more formal lectures on European and Australian history. Walter Murdoch sometimes deplored that he had to provide the A.B.C. of past literary fashions that had been part of the general mental heritage when he was an undergraduate, but Alec King kept us right up to the minute on the latest "movements" in England and Europe although nobody told us anything about America. As a self-educated undergraduate older than most of my fellow students, literary fashion had hitherto passed me by. I knew the English classics, read H. G. Wells, Arnold Bennett and Bernard Shaw, but Yeats, Joyce, Eliot, Pound, Lawrence, and other "in" writers of the 'twenties, were hardly more than names. I skipped them now for Alex King's particular delight, Auden & Co.

Auden, Spender, Day Lewis, and the prose writers associated with John Lehmann's *New Writing*, seemed to me the authentic voices of the age, as indeed they were. They were a challenge to action after the vague idealism derived from Shelley, Ruskin and William Morris, an idealism stiffened by arguments from Wells and Shaw or drawn from popular works on economics. They preached purpose, "the expending of powers/On the flat ephemeral pamphlet and the boring meeting . . .

. . . . . Yesterday, all the past
. . . . . Tomorrow, perhaps, the future . . .
. . . . . But today the struggle . . .

With hindsight, much of what was then "the movement" in literature now has a flat Boy Scoutish ring. Or, more accurately, it resembles the earnest outpourings one might expect from gifted members of the Young Communist League before the Stalin freeze, or in *Wandervogel* campfire songs. Certainly, the young English ex-public school Communists had none of the intellectual discipline of their older French and German contemporaries who had embraced Communism much earlier and much more realistically. The English *avant garde* tended to see themselves as the incorrigible Wyndham Lewis had seen the Brownshirts before Hitler revealed the full extent of his nastiness—"hefty young street-fighting warriors" in quest of an Adamic Eden. "We must love one another or die", said Auden, but he and the others did not contemplate blood on the streets in England although some died later in Spain. The poems and polemics that stirred intellectual ripples along Perth's wilder shore of love were more concerned with what John Gross calls the "boy's own adventure" of setting up as bogeymen to frighten liberals who "wouldn't join the big parade:

Something is going to go, baby,
And it won't be your stamp collection.
Boom!"

At Crawley, we did not pay much attention to the fact that the concrete historical situation, as the jargon put it, was quite different in Australia than in England. Auden & Co. spoke for the rebellious young of the privileged classes enmeshed in hierarchial structures in which the different classes looked different, spoke differently, wore different clothes, played different games and had little in common except a suspicion of foreigners, a distaste for Americans and colonials, and an ingrained deference for legality and constituted authority. We, on the other hand, belonged to the vast amorphous Australian middling-class who mostly looked alike, spoke alike and considered everybody more or less equal except that some were luckier than others. Our enemies were not "our hunting fathers" but our working-class fathers who were more interested in immediate means of improving their material condition than in literary fashions or revolutionary theory. Like Katharine Susannah Prichard, Auden & Co. were Communists of the heart rather than the head but Katharine Susannah had the common Australian faith in the decency of common people. She did not think of them as a different species . . .

By cops directed to the fug
Of talkie-houses for a drug
Or down canals to find a hug
Until you die . . . . .

For me, compared with Auden & Co. an Australian Communist living at Greenmount seemed to provide a more compelling focus for diffuse revolutionary idealism than the University represented in the days before students replaced workers as the hope of the New Left. C. Hartley Grattan, the American critic who visited Perth at this time, drew my attention to Australia's indigenous radical

tradition. When interviewed for *The West Australian*, on which I found a Literary Page niche under the transparent nom-de-plume "Norbar", he reiterated his conviction that Katharine Susannah Prichard was undoubtedly "the hope of the Australian novel". An interview at Greenmount was the obvious sequel to interviewing Hartley Grattan. Katharine Susannah agreed readily enough and a three-hour session followed. There was nothing brash, dogmatic or Girl Guidish about the first acknowledged Communist I had met in the flesh. Rather, she was a self-contained personality controlled from a central core of understanding. She knew where she was going and had a chart of the course as surely as any Christian martyr under Nero. The difference was that her heaven was an earthly one and she was in no danger of martyrdom from the bumbling administration of Joseph Aloysius Lyons.

The interview took place in Katharine Susannah's writing room detached from the house at the bottom of the Greenmount garden. The room was green and restful, a place in which to work or talk. Dingo pelts covered the floor, a kangaroo skin rug draped the couch, the wall pictures were the conventional work of Australian artists. A stone fireplace filled most of one wall and there were book shelves in the corners but books did not obtrude. Nor did the small jarrah table that held a portable typewriter and the books and papers on which she was working. She was then writing *Intimate Strangers*, a novel which, as she freely admitted, would depart from what some critics had termed the Lawrentian primitiveness of her short stories and earlier novels. She instantly disclaimed D. H. Lawrence as an influence and said she owed more to French writers, particularly "Colette" and Anatole France.

It is difficult to reconcile Anatole France's elegant ironies with the fierce passion for the earth and things of the earth which most critics find in the early Katharine Susannah Prichard. Looking back, with *Intimate Strangers* (1937) and the Western Australian Goldfields trilogy in mind, it seems probable that she had been reading the later Anatole France, who used the novel "to air theories and expose pretensions more than to create character", in preparation for the propagandist vein most people find in her post-thirties' novels. She protested fiercely against critics who tell authors how to write books. She waved aside the suggestion that she might be accused of using art as a vehicle for propaganda, intimating that all art, whether consciously or unconsciously, was a reflection of what is nowadays called an established hegemony—or a conscious reaction against an Establishment, as she intended her novels to be.

"I write to please myself," she insisted, "to express what I feel to be true, and not to please the people who review books. If an artist is dealing with incidents and lives that are intimately bound up in the social forces that operate upon human beings he is justified, if not compelled, to reveal his attitude to those social forces. The books I have written so far have not made it necessary to deal very exactly with the cruelty of conditions which are as active in the lives of many men as drought, flood, fire and the forces of nature."

Katharine Susannah insisted that her interest in Marxism did not originate in a theoretical approach to social problems. As a newspaper-woman in Melbourne and later in London she had come in direct contact with what Jack London called "the people of the abyss", the victims of sweating and poverty in their worst forms. She found Marx's analysis of capitalistic society more in keeping with the facts than orthodox economics and history and became convinced that the only hope of real social justice lay in a radical reorganisation of the whole social fabric. With the world as it was in the thirties there seemed no reason to quarrel with that. On the one hand there were 70-million unemployed and millions more starving Asian peasants while, on the other, wheat was burned, coffee dumped in the sea and

cattle slaughtered because there was no profitable market. Millions starved in the midst of plenty, as the catch-phrase truly expressed it.

Until meeting Katharine Susannah Prichard the middle-class Fabian socialism of Ruskin, Morris, Wells and Shaw had seemed good enough, plus an up-to-date injection of Auden & Co. I now bought the Everyman edition of *Capital* and even read the more readable parts plus Mehring's standard life of Marx. The articles that followed week-by-week reflected the Hartley Grattan-inspired interest in the Australian radical tradition and a close acquaintance with the stock of the Communist-front bookshop then situated at the northern end of William Street across the Horseshoe Bridge. After 1935, Victor Gollancz's Left Book Club and the Webb's *Soviet Communism: A New Civilisation* relieved me from the labour of studying Marx direct. Alienation was not then an "in" word but "dialectic", "scientific socialism" and "the materialist interpretation of history" had full play. They seemed a revelation, a clue to man's destiny, rather than the key concepts of a revolutionary myth, although it should have been obvious that there was hardly a working man or woman among the earnest young Leftists who clustered about the William Street bookshop.

The Spanish Civil War crystallised the previously rather inchoate character of Perth's handful of dedicated Leftists. Katharine Susannah emerged from her sanctuary at Greenmount true to her announced intention of making Marxism an integral part of her life as well as of her forthcoming books. She had been to Russia and emerged from the conditioning convinced that she had witnessed a rebirth of human possibilities. Like another famous devotee, whose name I forget, she exclaimed, "I have seen the future, and it works". It seemed to her (and to her disciples) that given the proper accouchement, a similar rebirth was possible in Australia and elsewhere.

It is easy nowadays to feel contemptuous of what seems a wilful blindness to things as they were in Russia. But Katharine Susannah was not the only visitor who did not see, or refused to acknowledge, the blots on the Soviet escutcheon, *vide* the Webbs and many others. After all, there were blots enough on capitalism. She (and we) were concerned with them not with the motes in the eyes of those who had undertaken the task of acting for the proletariat until the proletariat had been conditioned into acting for themselves. What we did not see was that nothing approaching a revolutionary situation existed in Australia. If it had, hard-eyed professionals, who understood the meaning of power, would have swept in, as they had in Russia. Successful revolutions haven't much room for bookish idealists.

As a non-party fellow-travelling journalist, without access to the inner councils of the Central Committee, I have no knowledge how far Katharine Susannah's new role stemmed from her own re-animated enthusiasm and how far she acted under direction. Something of both, in all probability. Certainly, she was not a reluctant or unskilful propagandist. She became the Grey Eminence behind the Workers' Art Guild, the Spanish Relief Committee, the Modern Women's Club and left-wing prompting for more active political commitment on the part of the Western Australian Fellowship of Writers. We, her faithful followers, packed union meetings, sponsored slanted resolutions, provided cheer-leaders at crowded Spanish Relief rallies in the Town Hall, gave a proper kick-off to the collection by waving £5 notes (afterwards recoverable) as tangible tokens of our sympathy for the victims of civil war.

The public response was sometimes generous and many contributors believed they were helping women and children irrespective of political affiliation. They were wrong. I also began to have an uncomfortable feeling that some of the money stayed right in Perth for purposes other than Spanish relief although I'm sure Katharine Susannah knew nothing of this. She believed in the essential good-

ness of the common man. Original sin, or the peculiarities of the Freudian Id, was something she did not know about. The System not the Soul was at fault.

Mind you, even as unpaid publicity officer for the Spanish Relief Committee I did not churn out blatant tongue-in-cheek propaganda. Indeed, it did not occur to me that much of what I wrote *was* propaganda. I wrote to please myself, to express what I earnestly believed to be true. Much of it has stood the test of time better than the patriotism of my friend Mr Vanzetti, who coached me for University examination in Italian, or the rhetoric of Dom William, O.S.B., of the Benedictine Abbey, New Norcia, who lambasted me in letters to the *West* for contributing to "the sustained campaign of palpable lies issued from the BBC and Red broadcasting stations". The Spanish Civil War no longer appears the simple black-and-white issue it seemed then. Yet it still remains true that most intellectuals supported the Republicans and that Italy and Germany intervened, while Britain wrung hands in despair, to bolster vested interests and to strengthen the threatening power of Fascism in Europe, a charge which Dom William dismissed as "a lie which has been pulverised to death a thousand times".

Fortunately, the public "me" never succeeded in submerging the private "me". Despite Katharine Susannah, the Left Book Club and the Workers' Art Guild, I retained a stubborn conviction that a reactionary, as the cant term then was, might be a better man and a greater artist than a progressive and there was always Walter Murdoch to remind us that moral, literary and human values existed beyond and above political commitment or economic exploitation. Culture might in one sense be a system of ideas and feelings conditioned by the economic and institutional structure of particular places at particular times but it was also something more. The concept of good and evil might have been reduced to the utilitarian measure of value but, either way, or so it seemed to me, moral judgement depended upon some system of ethical criteria that transcended the individual *and* the particular economic and social structure under which the individual happened to live, whether that structure was feudal, capitalist, socialist or an Oriental despotism. In short, good ends did not justify evil means. Men and women were not pieces in a cosmic game of chess, or the end products of historical determinism, but human beings, each individual unto himself or herself, born to a mixture of suffering and joy, doomed to die an individual and lonely death.

Miraculously, Eve and I did not quarrel about politics although she did not conceal her distaste for those who poured mud over traditional moralities and loyalties. She retained her faith in religious symbolism and her belief in the reality of human goodness and the healing power of humour. While I attended political and literary meetings she tended an aged mother and wrote books for children, short stories for the *Bulletin* and other publications. Eve's father, the late Martyn Elliott, a well-known Western Australian journalist and naturalist, was equally conservative and equally tolerant, living rebuttal of the firmly-held prejudice among many of my Left-wing friends that all loyalists were Blimps and all sportsmen dumb. There was nothing Blimpish or dumb about Martyn Elliott. When Communist and crypto-Communist friends came to display their homesickness for the future they often found themselves unaccountably enjoying past and present in his company for he had an endless fund of reminiscences of West Australian country and sporting life.

It was the business of a freelance journalist, whose continued University studies depended on his wits, to get around in search of saleable stories. Getting around disclosed that other "fronts" existed in Perth, not all quite so innocuous as Katharine Susannah's coterie of crypto-Communists. Surprising as it may seem, there was a Nazi-promoted German Bund. The earnestly idealistic anti-Fascist editor of the *Daily News* tipped me off about its existence. At his prompting I attended a dinner to honour Hitler's birthday held above a shop in William Street

not far from the Left Book Shop. I passed myself off as a South-Australian-born son of a German emigrant with an admiration for the *Wandervogel* and an interest in Hitler. The last bit was true, anyway. The bumbling old man at the door taking tickets did not know what to do. Two hard-faced bullet-headed younger men came up to see what the trouble was. I repeated my story and eventually they let me in.

The function was more like a chapel tea-party than a political rally. Stout comfortable middle-aged citizens, presumably of German descent, sat each side of long tables drinking tea and nibbling at sandwiches and cakes. Speeches were made but they were in German and I did not understand German. They had nothing of the fiery abandon of Hitler at Nuremberg for by this time the Fuehrer's rages and his marching Storm Troopers were regular news-reel features in Perth cinemas. The climax came when we each held a foaming stein of beer and stood facing a swastika-draped picture on the wall. "Heil! Hitler!" we toasted together as one of the hard-faced younger men pulled a cord and revealed a life-sized portrait of the Fuehrer in jackboots and breeches, a Nazi armband on his immaculate brown shirt. At this stage a *Daily News* photographer was to dash in and take a flashlight picture. He never got past the door.

Next morning I was at Police Headquarters trying to trace the history of a one-time Police Department clerk who, according to legend, was the original Starlight in Rolf Boldrewood's *Robbery Under Arms.* The Duty Sergeant winked at me when I came in and said, "You must have been after a different story last night. How did you like the German beer?" I would have taken my oath that I was the only intruder at Hitler's Perth birthday party. We did not discuss the matter but I wondered if my previous afternoon's visit to a meeting at the Left Bookshop had also been under police surveillance. Obviously, if the Comintern and the National Socialists thought Perth worth propaganda attention the Australian police were not unaware of it. Nor, as it turned out later, were they unaware of P. R. Stephenson's "Australia First" Movement which also provided a *Daily News* story.

Neither Eve nor I suffered the grim fate of having nothing but like-minded friends. There was Gavin Casey, who represented the genuine Australian literary tradition and saw no reason to bolster it with Auden & Co. or theories out of Marx. Gavin knew instinctively, without having to read about it, that Australia possessed a populist tradition which stemmed from our indigenous working class, a tradition which the England of Auden & Co. lacked or possessed in an entirely different way. Australia never had a real upper class and her writers were and are mostly ordinary men and women speaking to ordinary men and women not members of a cultural or an intellectual élite.

Then there was Henrietta Drake-Brockman, who entertained Hartley Grattan during his Perth visit and never showed the slightest rancour although she knew that most of us shared Hartley Grattan's opinion that Katharine Susannah was the hope of the novel and Henrietta a competent local practitioner. Nor did Henrietta allow political differences discolour her friendship for Katharine Susannah. She probably realised, although she never said so, that Katharine Susannah was an unwitting political front rather than a political force, and that her adherents play-acted without sufficient skill or knowledge to affect real economic or political issues for better or for worse.

John K. Ewers, president of the Fellowship of Writers, showed no disposition to allow the Fellowship to be turned into a Communist Front. With Gavin Casey he sturdily upheld the Australian tradition represented by Henry Lawson, Tom Collins and Vance Palmer. He was then cogitating his Adult Education Board lectures, later incorporated into the syllabus, giving Australian literature a needed fillip at a time when the University was almost exclusively English-orientated and

when too many members of the Fellowship were more concerned with political content than with literature. His *Creative Writing in Australia* (1st ed. 1945) concentrated on the essential function of literature as a factor in the clarification of living values to the exclusion of narrow parochial attitudes. In short, literature as "an aid to a fuller way of life", the expression of a single spirit which belongs equally to all men everywhere but expressed in different circumstances by different men, the product of their own particular national environment.

Gabriel Parry, later of the ABC in Sydney, provided an exuberant Gallic cosmopolitan weave to our grey provincialism. Gabriel arrived at Fremantle an apprentice merchant service officer aboard a Belgian training barque, fell down the hold one night with a lighted lantern and lost an arm. He married his nurse and settled in Perth with some sort of a job on the *West* before enrolling at the University under Margaret Clarke, Professor of French, where he flickered like a flame above the warm embers of our earnest endeavours. Gabriel believed that the purpose of life was to live not to buy lottery tickets on the future. Books and ideas, like men and women, were playthings in the game of life which he enjoyed with immense gusto and ultimately tragic results.

Lennie Harrop, a Catholic from Dom Williams' New Norcia, was another brightly-coloured thread in the pattern of our lives. Lennie, who was born with a genius for languages, had wandered about Europe among the cosmopolitan mob of students, artists and deadbeats, as we called dropouts in those days, who people Henry Miller's *Tropic of Cancer* and Wyndham Lewis's *Tarr*. He came back to Perth with a Spanish wife and held open house, where all were welcome except the utterly conventional and the completely dull, until the Nazi contagion spread and the war ended our brief enjoyable and stimulating apprenticeship to the realities of life and politics. We both joined the R.A.A.F. but thereafter our paths never crossed.

The Munich Agreement of 1938 and the German-Italian victory over the Spanish Republicans gave Katharine Susannah's coterie a new cause: anti-Fascism. Few people, on the Right or the Left, shared Dom Williams' optimism that the threat of Fascism was no more than a Red propaganda ploy. We, on the Left, made more of it than either the Establishment or the Labor Opposition, both of whom had their own troubles without crowing peripheral challenges to Europe's dictators. The moral dilemmas that face real politicians, in contrast to enthusiastic amateurs and moral crusaders, had not then occurred to me. Faced with the feelings, prejudices, vested interests and historical circumstances of time and place, Mr Lyons and Mr Curtin had to grapple with things as they were and not, in the words of Max Weber, as if they "were living in the Kingdom of Heaven, the Good Society, or in a Utopia beyond the terror of history".

Mr Lyons struggled to be impartial and left decisions on foreign affairs to Whitehall. Mr Curtin tried desperately not to split the Labor Party, which included many Catholics, on the Civil War issue and thus ruin any chance he had of winning the next election. As professional politicians they were not unnaturally contemptuous of idealists who bawled out their principles without stopping to think whether those particular principles were appropriate to that particular problem.

Those who sneer at professional soldiers for allegedly fighting the last war at the beginnng of the next forget that causes become archaic, too. During the Great Depression, the doctrine that the masses are doomed to increasing misery under capitalism had a certain relevance. Now, it is about as relevant to the Left as the Divine Right of Kings is to the Right. Stalin, although the Communist Party in Russia did not have to worry about a forthcoming election, soon showed himself as pragmatic as any Western politician. Like Mr Chamberlain and most professional politicians he was quite ready to sacrifice principle to expediency. His real crimes against humanity went far deeper than that.

Meanwhile, if the more innocent among us continued to think that anti-Fascism, like anti-capitalism, was a propaganda conflict of intrigue and words, there was no excuse for not seeing the logical outcome: war. At a Fellowship of Writers' dinner in the Palace Hotel during 1938, H. G. Wells warned us that we were faced not with a conflict of words between Right and Left but between those, on the Right and on the Left, who upheld the European tradition of free inquiry and those who threatened it in the name of a brutally frank racism which equated civilisation with a proclaimed Aryan right of domination over non-Aryans. About the same time, Sir Keith Smith, the Australian airman who had shared the Federal Government's £10,000 prize for the first Australian-manned flight from England to Australia, said in an interview in the *West* that war was inevitable. He had been in Germany and knew.

Up to then, it had been possible to nibble at party-line propaganda that Mr Chamberlain and the English governing classes were pro-Nazi and intent on destroying Russia. To us, every move to appease Hitler was evidence of a capitalist plot to promote Fascism and end "real democracy". Stalin (yes, Stalin!) was a disinterested champion of the world's masses, the only real bulwark against Hitler and Mussolini. We had read all the Left Book Club publications but not Boris Souvarine's *Staline* (1935). Even if we had we would have swept aside his exposure of the Moscow treason trials as anti-Russian propaganda. It took Stalin to undo the work of Stalin's conscious and unconscious agents: he signed the Russo-German Pact of 1939. Overnight, yesterday's anti-Fascist orthodoxy became today's original sin. Katharine Susannah, whatever her private thoughts, urged: "It was in the interests of Russia ... of Russia!" She was right, of course. But she did not seem to realize that for most Australians and most Englishmen the interests of the British Commonwealth were equally important.

Nobody in Perth at that time knew, nor could have known, the diplomatic dealings and wheelings that lay behind the Russo-German Pact and the cynical dismemberment of Poland. As A. J. P. Taylor has since put it, "The British feared for Poland; the Russians feared for themselves". Stalin behaved as any other realistic statesman might have behaved, in what he no doubt sincerely believed to be the interests of his own country. That is the point. Stalin's realism pricked the bubble of our idealism. We, or those of us who felt nothing but revulsion for the new party-line, saw what we had been doing was not furthering the interests of mankind but the interests of Russia. For Katharine Susannah Russia represented the foundations of Utopia. For us, as for Stalin, Russia was a nation state among nation states and one ruled by a man as dictatorial and ruthless as Hitler and Mussolini and just as ready to eliminate opposition with firing squad and prison camp. Socialism in one country was practical and possible—in Russia. But a Russia allied with Germany and Mussolini, who also preached their versions of national socialism, was more than we could swallow.

Looking back, it seems incredible that we could have been so politically naive and intellectually snobbish as we were before Stalin revealed to us the realities of power. As Raymond Aaron saw it, we were no more than pawns in a power game of politics, isolated, unimportant, dispensible pawns at that, "a band of half-baked intellectuals, fanatics and ignoramuses", an embarrassment to our families, a nuisance to the Labor Party, as much a joke to real revolutionaries as we were to the populace at large.

Yet, in those days, only the intellectually flaccid or the downright stupid could have failed to be moved by the state of a world moving out of depression into war. That is our only excuse. As John Gross puts it in *The Rise and Fall of the Man of Letters* (1969): "When all the blunderings of the period have been taken into account, all the fatuities, all the deceptions, can anyone doubt that it was

nevertheless honourable to protest and dishonourable to lie low?" At least we protested for the right reasons if not by the right means.

Our saving grace lay in the fact that we were young enough to be enthusiastic rather than complacent. "The young," says A. P. Thornton in *The Imperial Idea and its Enemies* (1963), "are not members of society; they live on its frontiers, They are still uncommitted, sceptical of all accepted principles and quick to condemn this acceptance as a kind of cowardice. But they do not doubt as yet that better principles exist." Nor were we quite so anaesthetized as might appear. We did not live for politics but tried to make politics live for us. The sun shone, the breakers rolled in along the beaches, cricket fields and tennis courts beckoned, the Darling Ranges lured us to explore other worlds than Katharine Susannah's garden at Greenmount.

Thus, we were not political automatons—the climate forbade it—just as the Algerian climate saved Albert Camus from the commitments Sartre demanded. "There is beauty and there are the humiliated," Camus wrote. "However difficult the enterprise, I should like to be unfaithful neither to the one nor the other." Beauty and the humiliated remain with us always. To be utterly faithful to beauty risks the sterile flight from reality achieved by Oscar Wilde and Art for Art's sake. To allow the humiliated to swamp all other considerations is the path to sainthood but it stops short for most of us at fanaticism.

The bridge that spans the ages is not the iron arch of revolution and war but a much more fragile construction based on consensus: the fact that today's apparent impossibility becomes tomorrow's commonplace. In today's political climate consensus, of the kind that united the democratic Right and Left in the war against Hitler, seems utterly remote. As remote, say, as universal franchise and democracy seemed to practical-minded mid-Victorians. Yet, nowadays, Conservatives and Liberals accept without question Chartist aims which at one time seemed wildly revolutionary. Any dispassionate appreciation of the present conflict over inflation, which to the seventies is what the Great Depression was to the thirties, suggests that the only solution lies in what one economist describes as "a reappraisal of the country's economic and social priorities by all interested parties". A mildly sensible approach which at the moment seems beyond all expectations. One wonders.

CAROLINE M. CADDY

The Beast Disillusioned

She would have her handsome prince
or spurn me; and I a fool to her cajoling ways.
Now I'll stay contorted here in this false skin;
I could loathe myself no less in old
familiar bounds. At least restricted here
I may not grovel, having done enough
of that at tiny irate feet.
Those feet look flatter now from this cramped
height, her fairness pitted as a lemon through
these clear lenses; (I do a good job
when I metamorphose).
I wonder does she see the malice
in my guarded glance, demurely begging meted
kisses? I can count the hairs in her nose
now my view is not befogged by maned humility.

And yet at times I feel I pay too dear
for this revenge, if revenge it be.
For I may grow to love her and forget the pain.
Then, all I am, pent up in this bland shell,
is forfeit; to a perfect vision in her eye,
a shining thought in her head.

G. C. BOLTON

A Local Identity

Paul Hasluck and Western Australian Self Concept

Paul Hasluck, like Vin and Dom Serventy and Nugget Coombs, was one of that generation of local boys, mostly Modern School graduates of the early 1920s, who tended to be held up to younger Western Australians as examples of what might be achieved by young men of relatively underprivileged origins who made good use of their opportunities. A respected journalist in the Perth of the 1930s, Hasluck distinguished himself in the Department of External Affairs during the Second World War, rising to be head of the Australian mission at the United Nations before his resignation in 1947 as a result of difficulties with his minister, Dr H. V. Evatt. After a short period in the Department of History at the University of Western Australia, during which he laid the foundations for his two volumes on the political history of Australia during the Second World War, Hasluck went into federal politics in 1949. After a quarter of a century of distinguished service as cabinet minister and Governor-General he returned to permanent residence in Perth in 1974 and has since devoted himself to placing on record various aspects of his career. In *A Time for Building* he has written about the development of Papua-New Guinea from 1951 to 1963 when he was responsible minister. Rumour has it that other volumes will follow on Aboriginal policy and perhaps on external affairs. If *A Time for Building* is any guide, these works will be characterised by a concern to show the forces and relationships by which policy is created and administered. They will not be concerned with establishing the author's place in history or—what is more usual among Australian politicians' autobiographies—the retailing of a string of mildly amusing yarns which say very little about the political process.

*Mucking About** is different. It is a revelation of the writer's personality rather than a description of the events in which he took part. 'All autobiographies ought to end about the age of thirty-five' says Hasluck, on the grounds that by that age personality is firmly moulded. Those who write of their participation in public affairs as mature adults should do so as witnesses rather than advertisements for themselves. In Hasluck's case this choice is further vindicated by his belief that his career was shaped on no conscious plan or pattern. Rather it is the story of one who accepted the duty or followed the interest of the moment without worrying where it led: simply mucking about. If an explanation is sought of the process by which the son of dedicated Salvation Army officers of narrow means became a journalist, historian, and participant in public affairs, much depends on the skill with which the writer presents his upbringing and environment. *Mucking About* strikes me as a remarkably successful achievement: both honest and subtle, reveal-

* Paul Hasluck, *Mucking About: An Autobiography* (Melbourne University Press, 1977). pp. 287. $16.90.

ing facets of the author perhaps not widely appreciated—at one point a moving mystical streak, at another a Chaucerian earthiness—and written with skill. (One perceptive friend has suggested that the chapters written on young manhood in Australia are characterised by a suitably direct and informal diction, those on travels in Europe and Asia with greater elegance and formality. I don't have the ear to spot this, but it is an interesting comment.) As a recreation of a segment of Australian society between the two world wars the book is as fully satisfying as—in its very different manner—Donald Horne's *The Education of Young Donald.*

Mucking About makes many comments, both explicitly and otherwise, about the nature of Western Australian society before the Second World War. And here I must declare an interest. I have more than once argued the case that, at least before the Second World War, many of the themes and preconceptions of mainstream Australian history are inapplicable, or at least substantially altered, in the Western Australian setting.[1] From his eye-witness perspective Hasluck endorses this view: in social habits, manners, and self-perception, Western Australia *was* different. The point is worth establishing not simply to flatter provincial self-esteem, but because many of the most enterprising attempts to reinterpret Australian history at present come from scholars such as Inglis wishing to establish a pattern of national self-identity, or such as Connell and the young marxists of the *Arena* school who look for a key to understanding in class theory. I want to consider Hasluck's view of Western Australian society in order to strengthen the case that regional diversity must be taken into account in any attempt to understand the patterns of Australian history.

Hasluck describes the Western Australia of half a century ago as a society in which status was not necessarily determined by the possession of economic power. There are three key passages which to me offer a convincing interpretation of that society:

> There were marked social gradations in Perth, not so much of wealth as of position and, in some circles, of family connections . . . Yet at the same time it was an open society with a strong emphasis on opportunity for all. The manual worker's son could aspire to be a doctor and be accepted. The barrier he faced was not so much social as the problem of financing his education. We all really did believe that we lived in a land of opportunity and we had no grievance about anything . . . I knew nothing of class-consciousness or of gaps or of lack of trust between members of the same community. One took it for granted that people would be friendly and helpful and that they would trust and respect each other. (pp. 126-7).

> There had been successive adjustments of the colonial circle. In the very early years there had been distinctions between gentry and working classes but, with the inauguration of the transportation of convicts in 1849, the circle gathered in all those who were truly among the early settlers. After the cessation of transportation the presence of expirees led to a distinction between the bond and the free. The gold rush of the eighteen-nineties made the distinction between the true Sandgropers and 't'othersiders'. (pp. 148-9).

> Who else knew as much about Western Australia as we who had grown up with it? Some of us knew it all at first hand. All of us had heard it from our parents . . . This habit of identifying oneself with the 'early days' has probably lapsed now. Out of a million people in Western Australia today, only a small fraction have a link with the State longer than fifty years, but in 1926 the old connection was still most marked and most important. On several occasions in my early years in politics, persons who considered themselves very influential

[1] For instance in 'Cranford-on-the-Swan?', *Labour History*, No. 4 (1963), pp. 52-3; *A Fine Country to Starve In* (Perth, 1972), p. 120, p. 255. The contrary view is put by F. K. Crowley, *Australia's Western Third* (Melbourne, 1960; the title is in itself significant), p. 276 and pp. 328-9, at any rate for the period from 1938.

> in the city because of their prominence in business or in public office used to be puzzled how someone obscure like myself could get a great deal further into the confidence of certain people than they could. It was not a matter of being important but of belonging to the same old Western Australian community. (pp. 142-3).

This is what one would expect. It is not a society in which the concept of class as based on control of the means of production is as yet applicable. Even the concept of class as determined by a group's perception of itself and its values is at best of limited usefulness, since it takes no account of the widely held and widely demonstrable Western Australian belief that migration between classes was open to anyone. It was not simply that a John Forrest or a John Curtin or a Paul Hasluck could aspire to high office, but that those who held high office continued to be accessible to the less important. One thinks of Victor Courtney's story of the 20-year-old J. J. Simons walking unannounced into the Premier's office to persuade Walter James to commute the death penalty on an Asian sailor, or at another level of Hasluck's own anecdote of how the ladies and gentlemen of social distinction who formed the Western Australian Historical Society accepted him willingly as a committee member despite his lack of years—once they were able to identify his grandfather. We are almost back among the 18th century British situation described by Sir Lewis Namier, in which family and connexion held together the political and social network. And this is not surprising in a colony which, although founded in 1829, was compelled through isolation and poverty to prolong far into the 19th century many pre-industrial Georgian attitudes towards questions of authority, welfare, and the role of government. It would not be too much of an exaggeration to assert that whereas most of the rest of Australia was a creature of the 19th century—Victoria and South Australia, and in its different way Queensland—Western Australia moved directly from the 18th to the 20th century, missing out on such influences as laissez-faire capitalism, Chartism, and the more rampant forms of religious bigotry.

Western Australia developed no old moneyed class such as might have been found in Toorak or Vaucluse. Belonging to an old family was no passport to influence or success. The backwoods of the South-West were and are full of families whose forebears had been among the colonial leaders of the first and second generations, but who had not entrenched their situation—retaining, Hasluck reminds us, 'distinctive codes of good manners and respectability—a respectability that covered both respect for others and respect for oneself'. That was all they had, for few were rich. The pastoral industry which dominated the Western Australian economy before the 1890s went through too many lean times to throw up families such as the gentry of the Western district of Victoria or the Central district of South Australia. Those who prospered, such as R. E. Bush and I. S. Emanuel, tended to go off to England or Monte Carlo. Again, for reasons which have yet to be properly explored, the gold-rushes of the 1890s failed to produce many local plutocrats. Some of those who did conspicuously well, such as W. G. Brookman and J. Howard Taylor, seem to have run through their money quickly. In general the prosperity generated by gold appears to have spread very evenly throughout the community, and not to have spawned a class of investing capitalists. Perhaps Perth was already too much of a branch-office town. The prosperous of Perth in the early 20th century were usually successful merchants or investors in real estate, and they were expected to use their good fortune modestly and philanthropically. Hasluck more than once suggests that the merely purse-proud gained little social acceptance. My own impression is that the tight-fisted were not held in much regard by their peers either.

Hasluck's comments about the accessibility of social status also ring true. For the intelligent and the city-dweller Perth Modern School provided a reliable ladder

of opportunity for the meritorious until the reforming wisdom of the Education Department of the 1950s did away with it. The independent schools were not well enough endowed and had not developed traditions of prestige which enabled them to wield in Western Australia the towering influence of Shore, Melbourne Grammar, or St Peter's in other states. It also looks as if until the depression of the 1930s the land was seen as a similar means of self-improvement. The Western Australian rural frontier remained open longer than in most other parts of Australia. Of course the wheatbelt and the group settlements were to produce tragically many failures, but those who succeeded seem to have done so largely through skill, luck, and persistence, and not through adventitious advantages of background. Western Australian society accordingly lacked the tensions which arise from a sense of blocked opportunities.

Nor was the Western Australian community exclusive against outsiders. Hasluck's second quotation depicts the stages by which successive groups of 'outsiders' were absorbed into the ranks of those whom Tom Stannage has defined as 'ancient colonists', and I suggest that the process of assimilation went on beyond the goldrushes of the 1890s. By 1933 when Western Australia was seeking secession because it was seen as a remedy against unfeeling treatment by the Eastern States, many of those who voted "Yes" came from goldfields and wheatbelt families originating in Victoria and South Australia, or from Pommy migrants who arrived subsequently. This capacity to absorb potentially divisive elements meant that Western Australia missed out on some of the cleavages that shaped society elsewhere in Australia. There was a prospect of conflict in the late 1890s when the Labour movement came into being as an assertion of largely 't'othersider working-class solidarity against the old Sandgroper oligarchy; but it is remarkable how the A.L.P. in Western Australia soon adjusted its aims and its vocabulary to suit local conditions. There was clearly potential for tension in the industrial disputes of 1919-21 and the depression of the early 1930s, but consensus triumphed.

The price of this eclecticism may have been an inability to understand and handle situations of conflict. It was one thing for Western Australians to eradicate the convict stigma by simply not speaking about it; Hasluck still declines to record the names of the five convicts who brought his grandfather to ruin by robbing him, since some of them still have descendants in the State. It is alleged that as late as 1949 when F. K. Crowley was appointed from Melbourne as the University of Western Australia's first lecturer in Australian history, Sir James Mitchell still thought it expedient to warn him against delving into convict ancestries, and it is only in recent years that Western Australians have cheerfully acknowledged ancestors who did not have to raise the fare. But the need to preserve the appearance of harmony and consensus may also have led Western Australians to ignore minorities suffering from need or injustice. When Hasluck writes of his part in raising the local consciousness about the needs of Aborigines in the 1930s he is rather self-effacing, and it is now easy to overlook the impact of *Black Australians*, which for the first time gave chapter and verse to the victimization of Aborigines by settlers in the colonial period. In Western Australia, where some of the Aborigines' main antagonists were the founders of respected pastoral families and where consensus was achieved by not talking about the unpleasantness of the past, it must have required considerable moral commitment to publish such a book. Hasluck is careful not to generalize indiscriminately about the condition of Aborigines in different parts of Western Australia. He argues that until the depression of the 1930s Aborigines or part-Aborigines in the South-West often exercised a wide measure of choice about assimilation or other forms of adaptation to modern Australian society. It was only when the slump brought about competition for jobs and unemployment benefits that pressure mounted to segregate the Aborigines. He also reminds us that frontier conditions of conflict persisted until well within living

memory, and that it is one of the more disgraceful episodes of our past that no adequate attempt was made to deal with the killing of Aborigines by a Wyndham punitive expedition in 1926. No need for nostalgia about that aspect of Western Australia fifty years ago.

Nevertheless the main impression of *Mucking About* is to reinforce the view that would see the Western Australia of pre-1939 as a clannish and homogenous community with a strong sense of its separate identity, particularly in its lack of some of the complexities and tensions apparent elsewhere in Australia. It may be that this is an unwarrantable idealization of the past. In reaction to the rapid modernization of the last decade and the greater prominence of industrial and ethnic tensions, it could be tempting to create a myth of a simpler and more Arcadian Western Australia, a land where, as T. A. G. Hungerford puts it, 'it was always summer'.[2] Several writers may have fostered this tendency—Hungerford, Mary Durack, myself—but the most specific commentary on our community as Arcady will be found in George Seddon's *Swan River Landscapes*—and it is significant that Perth has been the only major Australian city to stimulate a topographical essay of this nature. Seddon assesses the suburban development of Perth against the Arcadian ideal of 'a landscape that is naturally harmonious and well proportioned'. However lamentably Perth architects and designers fall short of the Arcadian ideal in practice, the whole point of Seddon's essay is that Perth is an environment in which it is not absurd to think of attaining that ideal. Hasluck, who wrote an introduction to *Swan River Landscapes*, shows in his own attitudes a preference for the harmonious and the well proportioned, as befits a citizen of Arcady. Arcady is not Utopia, and it has manifest imperfections, but there is room for hope that the application of informed intelligence to existing social and constitutional forms will enable people of goodwill to improve the quality of social justice and maintain the community's sense of felicity and self-improvement. These attitudes were to make Hasluck a most effective minister for territories, though some have questioned whether they were the most suitable preparation for the foreign minister who had to deal with the issues and passions of the Vietnam crisis. At any rate, Hasluck was a Western Australian who had the uncommon experience of personally visiting pre-war Vietnam.

All the same, it could be that Western Australia was kindly to those of us who were male, Protestant, locally born, and English by background; but what about the others? While it is unfair to criticise the author of an autobiography for not offering a complete resumé of the state of society in his younger days, does Hasluck say enough about the strong and persistent feminist tradition of protest in Western Australia? When he does so, as in a passing reference to the Housewives' Association, isn't there a suggestion of taking them less than wholly seriously? Would a reader of *Mucking About* wonder if the book could possibly be dealing with the same society as Justina Williams discusses in *The First Furrow*, her account of early radical, socialist, and communist movements in Western Australia? It could be answered that because of its homogeneity and its sense of internal security Western Australia has found it possible to be accepting of—perhaps Marcusians would say repressively tolerant of—dissenters, provided that they are good Western Australians. There is material for an interesting study in the career of that eminent Fremantle citizen Paddy Troy, respected by many not because he is a communist but because he is a good member of the community; one of us. One can think of other examples.

Let us try and put Hasluck's portrait of his Western Australia against a wider context. In an important marxist critique of Sir Keith Hancock's *Australia* Tim Rowse argues that the late 1920s saw a crisis in Australian capitalism marked by

[2] T. A. G. Hungerford, *Wong Chu and the Queen's Letterbox* (Fremantle, 1977), p. 2.

barely concealed conflict between two major interest groups: a nationalist, protectionist group which sought by high tariffs to promote manufacturing and a 'rural-imperialist' sector, favoured by the major British investors and more tenacious of the British connexion, which saw Australia as mainly a source of wheat, wool, and minerals. Rowse puts Western Australia with Tasmania firmly in the latter camp: 'It is not surprising that both states produced perspectives on social change in Australia which were emphatically hostile to centralization, state intervention (wage fixing, tariffs), the inadequacy of the Nationalists' liberalism, and the socio-political squalor generated by city life.'[3] Well, maybe; but the arbitration system functioned no worse in the West than elsewhere. There is a nice picture in *Mucking About* of Mr Justice Burnside's consuming interest in the tricks of various trades and craft, and it all sounds a good deal more human than the counterparts in New South Wales and Queensland. And from 1919 until after the end of the 1930s depression, Western Australia had better rates of unemployment relief than any other State. This doesn't suggest an emphatic hostility to state intervention on wage fixing. Rowse then goes on to say: 'Class struggle was pursued with particular intensity from 1919 onwards. The incidence of working class militancy widened in the decade.' And he takes to task contemporary liberal intellectuals such as Hancock, Eggleston, and the Palmers, who in their quest for social justice within the existing context of Australian society, failed to perceive that the system was inevitably biassed to the detriment of the working class.

Hasluck's account of his times offers no support whatever for the Rowse interpretation. When the 1930s depression came Hasluck discerned no sharpening of class divisions: 'We were all in it together . . . The small employer as such was not the enemy but was sometimes a fellow sufferer. The faceless enemies, whom everyone distrusted, were the banks and the false economists who advised them.' This could give rise to a populist movement such as the secession campaign, but hardly more. As for the trade union movement, Hasluck describes its officials as 'quiet, unaggressive, and modest', for the most part conservatively concerned with protecting their established rights and great believers in self-improvement through reading and adult education. Now it is of course possible that this relative absence of interest in class conflict merely indicates a low level of political awareness. Western Australians may have been too primitive or too gullible to discern the truth of their social condition. Or it may have been that because of Western Australia's relative under-development it was a community where class was not stratified, where social and political status were not seen as determined solely by control of the means of production, and where it is simply inappropriate to attempt its analysis in marxist terms. This is not to deny the importance of economic factors in the sociology of Western Australia past or present, but it is a warning against the over-enthusiastic application of class theory. In an Australia where capitalism was overthrown and marxist principles were everywhere established, Western Australian society would still have been shaped by geographical isolation, industrial retardation as against the Eastern States, and the complex of communal attitudes inherited from the past.

It is perhaps a temptation for historians to over-estimate the pervasive influence of past attitudes on the present. Hasluck, as a pioneer of oral history in the days before tape-recorders, certainly shows a sensitive awareness of the ways in which the reflections of older citizens on their shared past come to influence a community's perception of itself. Yet it is arguable that the modernization of the past half-century is carrying Western Australia away from its easy-going sense of *gemeinschaft*. Undoubtedly there has been a great transformation since the depression, with the doubling of the population through massive immigration and

[3] T. Rowse, 'Liberalism and Hancock's Australia', in *Arena* 44-45 (1976), pp. 60-93, esp. p. 64.

the industrialization which began in the Second World War and accelerated with Kwinana and the mineral boom. The Poseidon episode of 1969-70 brought Western Australia within coo-ee of a nouveau riche materialism. One hears it asserted that the current disagreements between Sir Charles Court's government and the trade unions represent a new and unprecedented phase in confrontation resulting from the State's greater involvement in international capitalism. If this is so, it still remains true that in his unselfish enthusiasm for Western Australia's economic development, his personal commitment to hard work, his perhaps too masterful dominance of his cabinet, and his intolerance of pessimists, Sir Charles bears a much greater resemblance to that archetypal Western Australian Sir James Mitchell than he does to Bjelke-Petersen. The real problem is whether a style of leadership and a set of goals shaped by such a tradition can be adapted to the needs of the last quarter of the twentieth century. But the influence of the past goes well beyond the personalities of individual State premiers. It must be more than a coincidence that Queensland, with its history of violent polarizations and sectional conflict—as much a feature of life under that dreary dynasty of Labor leaders, Forgan Smith, Hanlon, and Gair, as it is under Bjelke-Petersen—makes its anti-uranium demonstration an occasion for a confrontation between authority and protesters which results in over four hundred arrests. Western Australia, with its history of avoiding showdowns and seeking consensus, gets along without any show of violence at all.

A community's response to a period of rapid technological and economic change is substantially influenced by its dominant myths. Its members will draw their canons of appropriate behaviour to a considerable extent from their concepts of the past, mediated to them conscientiously by historians, unconsciously and much more influentially by senior inhabitants of the community. Such influences are none the less real for not being exactly measurable by social scientists, but it is important that the quality of the testimony be as high as possible. Sir Paul Hasluck's account of his past is of particular value because he is a skilled historian as well as an unusually observant and honest eye-witness. He reinforces the concept of Western Australia fifty years ago as essentially a secure, confident, and tolerant society, accessible to those who wished to improve themselves and their community. It may not have been like that entirely; but it is not a bad myth for a community to carry with it into the last quarter of the twentieth century.

STEFANIE BENNETT

I Removed the Oxygen

I removed the oxygen tent, my safe
hood, my fall-out coverall
and began the journey naked.
I stormed the dividing ranges,
I pleated my way through shrubbery,
through sand; I tripped out
the notes of the keyboards:
I traced the lines of the forehead
reliable as any compass.
A million light years hence I found
you there

—Diana come lay down your bow. Your
quiver is rust. Your resistance low.

—Don't be sad. I say Don't Be Sad. There
are ways: Alternate the strappings.

The Priestess spoke, the tone was steel:

> Now when planets collide
> and Gods defect
> and words no more than cellophane
> contend the atmosphere
> and cannons are hymns
> and thirst is blood
> and pride be damned
> and the senseless rewarding
> and hell a holiday
> and sin but praise
> and history loves only
> in terms of lust
>
> I'll not wear the costumes.

I removed my nakedness.
I donned the skin of space.
In the crook of her arm
 she held me; invisibly.
To the tone of steel
I knew my place.

FRED ALEXANDER

John La Nauze on Walter Murdoch*

Of all forms of modern historiography, potentially the most dangerous, and therefore the most suspect, is the biography of a contemporary or near-contemporary.

Almost invariably, your biographer is drawn to his subject either by strongly felt antagonism to a prominent public figure or, more commonly, by profound admiration for his or her personal characteristics. This highly emotive approach is often intensfied by equally strong convictions as to the soundness or otherwise of the deceased's judgment and the value of his major achievements. While the author is still awaiting the result of a widely publicised appeal for copies of correspondence to or from the great man; before he has even begun his self-imposed, arduous labour of sorting and working through collected papers, writings, speeches and documents, published or unpublished—to all of which impressive footnotes or bibliography references will in due course appear at the end of the foreshadowed volume—his central theme of praise or denigration will already have shaped itself clearly in his mind. Like Boswell, he may profess an intention to produce a Life and not a panegyric, but his chosen Johnson's feet of clay will rarely be visible in the published portrait, though a diligent and critical reader may well find them there.

This potential danger in contemporary biography is seriously increased when the work in question has been commissioned or invited; and especially when initiative comes from the great man's family, royal or otherwise, with or without financial or other promised forms of assistance. A professional biographer with an already established reputation can of course be relied upon not to omit episodes already widely publicised or to ignore hostile comments by other well-known contemporaries. By selecting such criticisms carefully, however, a skilled writer may succeed in drawing a veil sufficiently gently to cause minimal offence to the faithful, inside or outside the family circle. In this a more or less official biographer will be aided greatly if, since his subject's retirement from public life, and especially since his death, a myth has grown up round his name, and perhaps his period. This tends to obscure the vision and so distort the judgment of readers from a later generation.

With some such thoughts at the back of his mind, the casual reader who picks up a copy of Emeritus Professor John La Nauze's 189 page record and assessment of the life and work of Emeritus Professor Sir Walter Murdoch may be forgiven a little preliminary uneasiness, even a little cynicism, as he leafs the book through. Its very subtitle, 'a biographical memoir', is underlined by the author's frank confession in the Preface of his need to write in the first person about a man who was his teacher in impressionable undergraduate years and who, even earlier

* John La Nauze, *Walter Murdoch, 1874–1970* (Melbourne University Press, 1977), 189 pp. $14.80.

than that, had been a familiar figure in the sleepy suburb of South Perth in which both resided.

The easy, informal relationship between professor and pupil which had been facilitated by the cramped but intimate setting of the huts clustered round 'tinpot alley' in the heart of the city of Perth, which then housed the few hundred students and the miniscule teaching staff of the University of Western Australia, continued intermittently throughout the remaining four decades of Murdoch's life. The pupil who sat at the feet of the foundation Professor of English in his classes at Irwin Street, and later at Crawley, deserted formal literary studies for a professional career in economic and political history in Oxford, Adelaide, Melbourne and, finally, at the School of Advanced Studies in the Australian National University at Canberra. The paths of the two men nevertheless continued to cross. Spasmodic personal correspondence over forty years was enriched and enlivened by occasional meetings, in Perth or elsewhere, and through family associations.

By a strange quirk of fate, moreover, Murdoch's one substantial book[1] was his 1923 *Alfred Deakin: A Sketch*; La Nauze's principal claim to significant and distinctive historical scholarship came to rest firmly on his two 1965 volumes, *Alfred Deakin: A Biography.*

There's a warning here for any reader approaching the current *Walter Murdoch* memoir who has already worked through its author's two definitive volumes. The La Nauze of 1965 wrote kindly and with respect of his former teacher's *Sketch* of 1923 but his own text made it abundantly clear that Murdoch's technique as an historian was somewhat shaky and that the earlier work could not be deemed a major biography, whether in form or content. Nor, indeed, had it been so regarded, either by Murdoch himself or by the Deakin family who, through son-in-law Herbert Brookes, had pushed, persuaded or tempted Walter Murdoch to write this preliminary tribute to his old friend and mentor, partly during the equivalent of a 1921 sabbatical study leave spent in and around Melbourne. One leaves La Nauze's sixth chapter, "Writing the 'Sketch'," with the distinct feeling that Murdoch had a lucky escape by then withdrawing from what had been contemplated as a larger, two volume project, spread over several years' study, which was to be written jointly with Brookes. Murdoch was thus able to concentrate once more on academic teaching and the more profitable newspaper articles—for the *Sketch* had not been a financial success.

La Nauze's reputation for meticulous scholarship before and after 1965—some of his friends and contemporaries, and perhaps more of his junior colleagues, might express this a little differently but the substance of the comment will not be questioned—ensured that his 1977 biography would use all the accepted forms of historical investigation to test and check purely personal judgments, past and present. Indeed, his book opens with a chapter, 'A Son of the Manse', which could not possibly be brought within its subtitle, except by some miraculous form of pre-natal inspiration on the author's part. It covers events in the little fishing village of Rosehearty, northwest of Aberdeen, some three decades before La Nauze himself was born—a fact, incidentally, which may help to explain a certain contrast between the flow of these first eleven pages of the book and the easy narrative and analysis of subsequent chapters.

Walter Murdoch spent his infancy and early childhood in Rosehearty. There his father, a matriculant of Glasgow University and a potential professor of divinity, according to an anonymous parishioner, ministered to the spiritual needs

[1] An appendix to the La Nauze memoir lists Murdoch's publications, in periodicals and (pp. 174-6) as books and pamphlets. These include the textbook potboilers, annotated literary texts and anthologies and the successive collections of his newspaper essays, from *Speaking Personally* (1930) and *Saturday Mornings* (1931), published and republished by Angus & Robertson almost *ad infinitum* until the 1964 *Best of Walter Murdoch*. But the *Sketch* was Murdoch's first and only 'real book'—the phrase was his own.

of a thousand or more Scottish fisherfolk within the communion of the Free Church. How much Waiter the man was influenced by actual memory of these boyhood years, as distinct from family talk about them, may be questioned. They doubtless contributed something to the burr of his adult speech and they certainly familiarised him with the outward practices of the Calvinist faith which he subsequently discarded. La Nauze's first chapter thus has its proper place in his biography. Its somewhat intricate details, alike of paternal background and of shadowy maternal links with what in England might have been described as country gentry, attest the biographer's diligence in search for recorded fact; they may give satisfaction to surviving Australian members of the Murdoch family, whether offspring of Walter or of his more flamboyant nephew, Keith. The most serious lasting influence of Rosehearty, one suspects, was the dread memory of the scourge of tuberculosis from which so many of the fisher families suffered. The spectre of Rosehearty reached out into Western Australia as late as the mid-20th century, striking down Walter's only surviving son, Will. Fear of the disease seems to have haunted the family; references to it reappear in Murdoch's writings from time to time.

For most readers of the La Nauze biographical memoir, however, interest will first be quickened by the lively account given in chapters 2, 3 and 4 of WM's Melbourne days. These cover his undergraduate years at the university in Carlton, early experiences as country and suburban schoolmaster in Victoria during the nineties of the old century and the first few years of the new, and the period spent from 1904 as the erudite, amiable if somewhat precious Professor T. G. Tucker's associate (and largely independent) lecturer in English. These chapters include a stimulatng account of the friendships made by Murdoch during those Melbourne years, some of which lasted throughout most of his life. Above all, they also tell of the beginnings of his long career in literary journalism, as Elzevir of *The Argus.* Murdoch was then feeling his way as a literary critic; more significantly, he was shaping what became his peculiar contribution to Australian life and letters: the weekly, fortnightly or monthly essay directed less at the literati than at the general reader.

Those Melbourne years had a strong, formative and lasting influence on Murdoch the man, as well as on the teacher and writer, which few who have written and spoken of him seem to have realised. In this La Nauze confirms one strong conviction long held by the present writer and emphasizes another effect, probably unknown outside the family and one or two intimate friends.

There can be no question that Murdoch was deeply disappointed, and humiliated when, at the age of 37, he was in May 1911 passed over for the newly created chair of English which absorbed the independent lectureship held by him for some six years. La Nauze's documented account of the Melbourne University Council's deliberations confirms the present writer's study of those records for other purposes a quarter century ago; his references to the comments of contemporaries carry the story further and deeper. The Council's majority decision of 1911 was undoubtedly supported by R. S. Wallace's evidently greater linguistic qualifications. It was probably influenced in some degree by the then prevailing academic preference for applicants with training at one of the older, overseas seats of learning. We shall never know how far it revealed the weakness as well as the strength of Murdoch's growing reputation *qua* Elzevir.

In the short term, the setback served to sharpen and widen the range of WM's skill in literary journalism during a year or so of full time employment on *The Argus.* Its long range psychological effects went deeper. He wrote later that the incident caused him to suffer from an inferiority complex. He had, he said, 'a silly desire' to prove to his wife and her brothers and sisters that he 'had the goods'.

> I suspected myself of being a nobody and I wanted a chair as evidence that I was a somebody . . .

This probably explains his strange and unsuccessful request of mid-1912 to the Melbourne Faculty of Arts that it accept his three elementary textbooks in place of a thesis for the degree of doctor of letters. It may also have influenced his decision a decade later formally to submit the (as yet unpublished) Deakin *Sketch* for the same purpose.

That Murdoch was 'hurt and indignant' when the Deakin MS was rejected, following a difference of opinion between the local (literary) and the overseas (politico-historical) examiners, is understandable. The 1911-12 and 1922 incidents also go a long way to explain the unfailing sympathy he displayed after he had obtained his Perth chair, with the aspirations and difficulties of non-professorial staff members, particularly those who, in a small academic community, were carrying responsibilities comparable with, or even greater than, those of colleagues enjoying full professorial status and salary.

La Nauze also brings out—for the first time to the present writer's knowledge—the strength of the pull which Melbourne and the Victorian friendships continued to have on the foundation professor of English in Perth, even when he was in his fifties. His correspondence with his old friend Herbert Brookes reveals a very strong desire to get back to or near Melbourne. In 1924 he was eager for his name to go up for a chair in Hobart, even at a drop of two hundred pounds in salary—but the Tasmanian authorities preferred a younger man.

There is more significance in this, it is suggested, than the mere isolation of the West and the limitations of its literary circle. Murdoch never ceased to be aware of the dangers inherent in the parochialism of Perth in the 1920s and early '30s. This was evident in one phase of his extra-curricular activities not mentioned by La Nauze: his strong opposition to the Secession campaign of those years.

By the same token, however, Murdoch had no time for narrow Australian nationalism, whether literary or political. This, it may be suggested, is part explanation of his failure to do full justice, later in life, to 20th century Australian literature. In La Nauze's treatment of the severe criticism then levelled against Murdoch by Frank Dalby Davison and others for neglect of Australian writers since the Great War, he admits the neglect. He might perhaps have strengthened his defence a little by suggesting that the explanation lay not only in the laziness, perhaps justified in a man on the eve of academic retirement, but also in Murdoch's irritation with those who thought that nothing was Australian literature which did not concern itself with Australiana, rural or urban. There was indeed a certain lazy streak in Murdoch the writer as well as in Murdoch the teacher. He was, however, ahead of his time, and of at least some of his artistic contemporaries, in insisting that Australian writers, like Australian painters, should be concerned with international standards and seek subjects of worldwide interest instead of being preoccupied exclusively with gumtrees and kangaroos, diggers and Ned Kellys, with the bush or the backyards of Sydney and Melbourne slums. In this sense WM's outlook foreshadowed that of the later 20th century even if he himself continued to turn back for enjoyment to the Lawsons, the Wilmots and the O'Dowds of the 19th.

The Melbourne University episode of 1911 and its aftermath also raise the more fundamental question, with which La Nauze is concerned intermittently throughout his book: the quality of Murdoch's scholarship and his academic standing. Many issues run together in the consideration of this complex question. Murdoch's lack of qualifications and active interest in linguistics had certainly prejudiced his Melbourne chances in 1911. The absence of significant linguistic studies during his tenure of the chair in Irwin Street and at Crawley may also

have been a certain disadvantage to the handful of his students who subsequently sought to do graduate work in English at older British universities. But these were exceptions which, if they did not prove the rule, were consistent enough with his declared 1913 objective when taking up his professorship: to instil 'a love of reading and a capacity for clear expression.'.

For the first two decades in the life of the young University of Western Australia, moreover, there was neither the demand for, nor the staff to provide graduate studies in English. The quality of Murdoch's purely academic achievement between 1913 and 1939 (the year when he vacated the chair though he had been teaching less than full-time since 1934) should be assessed against the actual background of those inter-war years, in the Western Australian environment of that day. By these criteria, La Nauze's coolly considered verdict may be accepted without qualification: 'He was a good academic man for the time, the place and the circumstances . . .'

Murdoch's contribution to the intellectual life of the infant university was not, however, limited to the students in his classes, to a good many more outside the English classroom and to his academic associates. No near-contemporary of those days would question his biographer's assertion that Murdoch was "a 'figure' in the university despite his ostentatious lack of bustling energy or flamboyance . . .". Precise assessment is nevertheless difficult; there was something of a paradox here. Always accessible to students or colleagues in distress, Murdoch nevertheless kept himself physically aloof. He was rarely seen on the campus except before and after scheduled classes or meetings. These he cut frequently and sheltered behind the walls of his booklined study in the Suburban Road residence he had built overlooking the Swan. There his wife Violet sedulously encouraged the growth of the first Murdoch myth: that Walter in his early fifties was a delicate, ageing person who needed to be protected against the excessive demands of students and colleagues alike. Though he suffered from an irritatng form of nettlerash, which he thought the Perth climate aggravated, WM was then, and remained an extremely healthy person. But, as early as the mid 1920s, he seemed not only to his students but also to some of his younger colleagues—the present writer included —already something of an old man when he was in fact wiry and tough, in more senses than one, with nearly half his lifespan still ahead of him. It was understandable that he should enjoy the company of his books and his home—and, no doubt, the opportunity to compose regular contributions to Perth and Melbourne newspapers.

Some colleagues resented Murdoch's absence from tiresome preliminary committee discussions of significant academic projects, which he might subsequently riddle with destructive criticism when they reached the final stage of Professorial Board or Senate deliberations, which he rarely missed. The student body as a whole warmly welcomed displays of 'Old Murdie's' sardonic humour but some of them saw through the Suburban Road smokescreen. Hence the undergraduate doggerel which should be set alongside other Graduation Day verses which La Nauze cites and no doubt correctly attributes to WM:

Weary Wally, of the *West Australian* staff,
Weary Wally, who tries to make us laugh;
Sets his students work to do;
Marks it in a year or two;
Weary Wally, of the *West Australian* staff.

La Nauze does not dodge such implied undergraduate criticism. ". . . When it came to marking student essays, Murdoch had by our time grown, if not lazy, at any rate bored." This frank comment does not, however, prevent a highly sympathetic summing-up on Murdoch the academician which few contemporaries, students or colleagues, would have disputed:

> He earned his salary . . . If his circumstances in Perth and his own temperament and interests meant that he was happy to be relieved of the burden of 'specialism', he was soaked in his English Literature . . . from Chaucer to Conrad, he was at least as widely read as the 'specialists' and in some fields —for example, the nineteenth century novel—more deeply read than most of them. The newly founded university, in its relatively raw and utterly isolated community, had been fortunate in its choice of the first professor of English literature. It had appointed, not a second class scholar, but a first class man of letters.

In matters of government and high policy, WM's contribution at Crawley lasted a decade longer than his teaching. Despite his professed distaste for 'the paltry business' of committee meetings, Murdoch welcomed if he did not seek membership of the Senate, on which he sat continuously from 1917 to 1948, for the last five years as Chancellor. He was no doubt happier and more effective as an individual senator than when in the Chancellor's chair. I find nothing, however, in the fruits of La Nauze's researches here to challenge my own 1963 *Campus at Crawley* conclusion, expressed as both colleague and chronicler, that, whatever Murdoch's shortcomings as a chairman, "his independence of outlook and his Australia-wide reputation restored dignity to the chancellorship".

It is well to avoid exaggeration. The very considerable post-World War development of the University of Western Australia must be linked with the names of others than its foundation professors. This was the work of younger men and women than Murdoch, including successive vice-chancellors and their senatorial superiors of the 1950s and '60s. Yet the sixth chancellor of 1943-48 helped to bridge the gap between the new university and the old; by then, moreover, his name meant much outside as well as within the State.

I recall a conversation on the Crawley campus nearly two decades after Murdoch had ceased to be a senator as well as professor. The Prime Minister of the day had accepted an invitation which I had extended through the Vice-Chancellor to open the new buildings of the Faculty of Arts of which I was then having my third two-year term as dean in forty years. Menzies and I were chatting about student days at 'the shop' in Melbourne, of which Murdoch, he and I were all graduates and at which his term and mine had overlapped. In confidence, the Prime Minister mentioned that he had recommended Murdoch for a knighthood in the next Birthday Honours; he expressed the hope that, in part, this would be recognised as a Commonwealth tribute to the increased post-war standing of the University of Western Australia.

My reply seemed to surprise Menzies a little. I said that I was sure that the honouring of Murdoch would be warmly and widely appreciated by the people of the West but that few of them would think to link his name with the University of the mid-1960s.

Ironically enough, another political decision was to associate Murdoch's name more formally with tertiary education, through the State's second university. Early in the month of July 1970, at the end of which Walter Murdoch was to die at the ripe old age of 96, Premier Sir David Brand announced that the new institution would bear his name as that of 'a distinguished scholar and a man of letters'.

A fitting memorial, indeed, though omission of the Christian name from the formal title of the new 'Murdoch University' implied a danger which might well have been apparent to WM had he been able to display all the sharpness and wit of earlier years. In the publication of his essays outside Western Australia Murdoch had long clung to the declining *Argus* rather than accept the implications of sponsorship (and syndicalising) by the expanding *Herald* empire of his nephew Keith. Might he not possibly have foreseen the risk that future generations of undergraduates across the Swan would come to link the name of their university

less with the highest standards of literary journalism than with the scandal sheets of the *News of the World*?!

Appraisal of the merits of Walter Murdoch the essayist is perhaps La Nauze's most difficult task. He tackles it with characteristic care and skill, combining recollection of personal appreciation and industrious rereading of originals (not mere selections) with some frank and, insofar as this is possible for him, detached criticism.

Some conclusions emerge clearly and should not be disputed. La Nauze is at pains to insist that the essays, like the purely academic record, must be viewed in their original settings, as regular contributions to the literary pages of newspapers. That they eventually obtained a wider circulation—sales figures are given in an appendix—when brought together in one or other of the Angus & Robertson collections, cannot be allowed to obsure the fact that they were written, if not exactly between the breakfast egg and the breakfast bacon, for enforced deadlines, regardless of other commitments. Some were composed at times of considerable personal stress as, for example, during his wife Violet's prolonged illness and decline when Walter was part nurse and houseman-cook.

Even more important is the fact that their greatest impact was upon the readers of those Saturday morning Life and Letters pages or their journalistic equivalent. Others, including present and future students, might read the several selections and collections and, perhaps, dispute their distinctive form and quality. They could not be expected to recapture easily the atmosphere in which the essays were originally read, often *with* the breakfast egg and bacon, in sitting rooms or kitchens, urban and rural, by litterateurs and labourers alike, in an age when newspapers were read, if only because there was little Radio and no T.V.

La Nauze does his best to distinguish between the classes of readers: those who read for laughs and little more; those who disregarded the content but thoroughly enjoyed the form, an especially the literary allusions; those who openly scoffed—but continued to read; and those who were stimulated to thought and action by the pricking of the pompous and complacent as well as by the denunciation of accepted dogma—for WM prided himself on being a persistent 'growler'. Today, no doubt, he'd be dubbed a 'stirrer'. But no biographer and no reviewer, even if he should have the doubtful advantage of being also a near-contemporary, may estimate these several classes of reader statistically. And any such comment or further assessment must needs be essentially subjective; for what they're worth, however, I venture three suggestions.

First, I would stress the wit and humour with which WM beguiled not only his readers but also the live audiences who welcomed his pre-world war appearances on public platforms and who later enjoyed his highly successful radio sessions. 'Beguiled' is used deliberately; Murdoch had a capacity for putting both individuals and groups at their ease—sometimes when he was preparing to direct a shattering shaft against them.

Secondly, I'd incline to replace 'growler' by 'debunker'—with perhaps a somewhat sinister implication. I am no more able than anyone else to estimate the effects of WM's Essays on the general public. My considered opinion in the mid-1930s, however, after having watched closely the reactions of undergraduates over a decade—and I, too, met them outside the classrooms, in my home and at other functions where a few years difference in age was no barrier to frank discussion—was that Murdoch's influence on young students could be as disturbing as it was stimulating. When old gods are torn down and nothing put in their place the effect can be anarchic.

A third comment is more controversial. My personal impression at the time was that the most vulnerable feature of WM's prewar essays—his preaching of Douglas Credit in and out of season—was a conscious or unconscious recognition

of the fact that widespread distress caused by the economic depression could not be remedied merely by the cheap device of denouncing orthodox economists.

La Nauze struggles hard to cover this Douglas Credit lapse but does not fully succeed. His position is indeed unenviable. Not only must his later training and expertise in Economic History—his biographical memoir is published while engaged in a post-retirement visiting fellowship in the Department of Economic History at the National University—compel criticism of his old teacher of literature for dogmatic intrusion into an alien disciplinary field. He must also have felt the pull of loyalty to his other academic mentor at Irwin Street and Crawley, the economic historian Edward Shann. One can but sympathise with the La Nauze lament that J. M. Keynes had not published his *General Theory* before C. H. Douglas produced the *Control and Distribution of Production* and his regret that WM had not succumbed to the former rather than the latter!

If this comment be deemed unkind it should be added that the biographical memoir deals fairly and firmly with what WM's religious critics had to say of his recurring ventures into another field, that of theology, in the 1940s as well as in the '30s. And La Nauze makes it clear that he has no intention of subscribing to the myth which grew up round Murdoch's name in the closing years of his life. He frankly rejects the 'sage of South Perth' soubriquet and suggests that WM should have done likewise.

This is as it should be. Above all, Walter Murdoch emerges from this extremely readable memoir as an essentially human person, not only widely read and personally generous but gifted, with a capacity for warm friendships and with a sharp and lively wit, a happy turn of phrase and the courage of his convictions. These characteristics attracted to him the sympathy and the respect of a large and varied reading public as well as his visual and unseen audiences before he gave up public speaking and broadcasting and replaced his essays by 'Answers to Questions'. La Nauze is convincing in presenting the latter, like the 'Afterthoughts', as a literary device of increasing old age, devised primarily perhaps as a source of income without too much strain in preparation but still revealing a remarkably wide range of intellectual interests as well as the continuing literary skill of one who was by then an octogenarian.

In a portrait of one so human, closely knit family relationships compel, and receive, due recognition by Murdoch's biographer—but sparingly, and with restraint. John La Nauze's memoir is of Walter Murdoch, not of his household.

One could have wished for a little more of Mrs Violet Murdoch's influence and contribution. She was not only largely responsible for what has been called above the first Murdoch myth and for the good works of which La Nauze speaks. She also succeeded in making 'Blithedale', South Perth, a hospitable centre for a large circle of WM's friends and associates, some from interstate and overseas. With the wives of one or two other foundation professors, she helped to provide some social community life for the small band of academic teachers who built the young University of Western Australia; in time of trouble, she could be relied on to provide them with practical assistance, in motherly if somewhat 'bossy' fashion. There was a sad irony about Violet Murdoch's closing years, when her 'ailing' and much protected husband himself became both nurse and comforter.

Catherine, the elder daughter, appears and re-appears throughout the memoir as her father's close companion and, later, his responsive and sympathetic correspondent. Her husband, Alec King, receives a little more prominence, perhaps because of the belated appreciation of his quality which came after he had taken up his chair at Monash and so had escaped from the somewhat confining and dwarfing effects of the strong Murdoch tradition at Crawley. The younger daughter, Anne, remains rather a slight figure in the biography—almost a by-product of its treatment of the warm personal and literary association between

WM and her father-in-law, the cultivated Francisco Vanzetti. Will, the only adult son, who became a journalist on *The West Australian*, is a pale figure throughout La Nauze's pages, likely to be remembered by the reader primarily as the mid-century victim of the Spectre of Rosehearty.

By contrast, Lady Murdoch (née Barbara Cameron) receives her full meed of professional praise for nursing services before and during Violet Murdoch's illness and, subsequently, through her eighteen years of close companionship with WM, at home and on two octogenarian visits overseas (which included his beloved Italy), for the last eight years as his wife. She was to see WM through his more dfficult years at Blithedale at the end of the 1960s when he was severely handi-happed by increasing deafness and failing eyesight and became less and less mobile. Murdoch had long been a 'shuffler', La Nauze rightly remembers; for all that he remained to the end a grand old man, literate to the last.

The twelve illustrations scattered through the biography are adequate—for the most part family photographs, possibly blown-up snapshots. None of them come up to the standard of the impressive Louis Kahan wash drawing which doubles for frontispiece and jacket and was made in 1959, a few years after that talented Vienna-born French artist left Perth to live outside Melbourne.

ANNE LLOYD

after street walk, 3 am

tick the tin chantsong,
tattoo blown
windlass of street life,
midnight and a second one lit.
alone and it's,
god, two in a night
and no forgetfulness.

ashen windsong
ashen deadsong
ash and bent butts.

what more could the king bring
on a bare sunday blownabout?
what more could a cold girl give
than two bent butts
and tick of a fridge?

VIJAY C. MISHRA

Early Literary Responses to Charles Harpur

"There's a path to redemption—but *that* shall we miss,
Till we seek it no more in the old warring manner"
—Charles Harpur

'... Australia has now produced a poet all her own, to atone for the indiscretions of poetasters among her adopted sons.' So wrote Henry Parkes in his review of Charles Harpur's first published volume, *Thoughts, A Series of Sonnets*,[1] which appeared in the *Register* of 22 November 1845.[2] The enthusiasm with which Parkes greeted the publication of verses by a 'native' poet who had already made his presence felt through contributions to various magazines and newspapers in the colony,[3] echoed the sentiments expressed in an earlier review of Harpur's short volume in the *Australian Chronicle*.[4] The *Chronicle* detected in it verse of some creative merit and eagerly pronounced that at long last Australia had found grace in the eyes of the Muses. Thus the *Chronicle* contended that Charles Harpur was one of those whose literary pursuits 'were fitted to crown his country with a diadem of poetry worthy of herself, and of her children'. Yet these reviews were not restricted to prophetic prognostications alone, they also pointed out the more concrete aspects of Harpur's verse. Parkes, for instance, felt that 'Mr. Harpur was ... not unworthy to be named with these august sons of genius (i.e. Shakespeare, Milton and Wordsworth)' and the *Chronicle* critic complimented Harpur on his 'great flow of words ... rich stores of imagination'. This young 'sonnet-writer', as Parkes called him, was however not without 'affected piety and pure patriotism'.[5] Unwittingly perhaps—though a more deliberate action is certainly discernible—Harpur was raised to the heights of the first genuine 'bard of the country', a position which agreed closely with Harpur's own self-proclaimed position as stated in 'The Dream of the Fountain' which appeared in the *Chronicle* of 14 March 1843. In that poem the Muse of Poetry urged the poet to:

Be then the Bard of thy Country! O rather
  Should such be thy choice than a monarchy wide!
Lo! 'tis the Land of the grave of thy father!
  'Tis the cradle of Liberty!—Think and decide.[6]

In some ways, much of the literary reputation and the critical positions surrounding Charles Harpur arises from the inevitable conflict between cultural and historical significance on the one hand—Harpur was, after all, the first major poet of the country—and the aesthetic foundations of these assumptions on the other. As Henry Parkes' own evocation demonstrates, too often 'criticism' aligned Harpur with the poetic 'greats' without attempting to distinguish Harpur's personal strengths.[7] Analogies of this sort are quite often nothing more than subconscious projections of an underlying sense of social and cultural uncertainty, the need to assert indigenous culture without denying its links with the overall European

civilisation. In the absence of a strong 'popular opinion'—the type of 'opinion' which was partly responsible for Gordon's elevation—assertions of this sort became all the more important. Yet popular 'literary opinion' is another matter and many people did write in praise of Harpur (though, it is equally true that a large number did not always concur). However, even literary opinion found Harpur slightly evasive at times, refusing to fit into the preconceived patterns of the writers concerned. A study of this sort cannot ignore the difficulties Harpur presented the critics of the time, difficulties, which, in part, can be explained by the collision of the literary expectations of the times against a very individualistic expresson of poetry on the part of Harpur. It remains one of the great mysteries of Australian literary history that Australia's first major poet was a 'difficult' poet who, even consciously, remained slightly aloof from the prevailing tastes of the period, tastes which, as Dr Webby has so aptly demonstrated, were still circumscribed by Shakespeare, Milton, Scott and Burns.[8]

Moreover, it cannot be denied that part of the uncertainty also arose from Harpur's strong mystical bent which infused his somewhat 'traditional' romanticism with an element of the unknown which inevitably made readers uncomfortable. Thus the *Hawkesbury Courier* of 30 July 1846 wrote about Harpur's 'The Poet Boy's Love Wishes':

> The above lines are very pretty, but the genius of the Bard, we think, soars too high for our comprehension. If it was somewhat more confined to terrestrial objects we should have read the verses with somewhat greater satisfaction.

Similarly, some eight years earlier (1838), James Martin in an article entitled 'The Pseudo-poets' (later included in 'The Australian Sketchbook') had, on slightly different grounds, repudiated Harpur for producing 'nothing colonial'. It is thus not surprising that Harpur's contemporary reputation became awkwardly inconclusive and even ragged: occasional outbursts followed by long periods of almost total silence.

Some months before the publication of *Thoughts*, the *Colonial Literary Journal*[9] published a letter by A SON OF THE SOIL in which lavish praise was endowed upon the poet. In the letter the author praised Harpur's work for the 'cause of Australian literature' and continued with the compliment, 'the name of Charles Harpur is a magic-word for those of his countrymen who have aught of communion with the graceful and the beautiful in intellect'. 'The native bard of the southern isle', the author added, '(should) come forward and occupy that place which his exalted abilities entitled him—as the guiding altar of his countrymen in the glorious and soul-elevating paths of literature,—of a literature NATIONAL and "Australian".' Something of an evangelical role is early thrust upon Harpur by this rather 'effulgent' enthusiast who himself writes in a lush, romantic style complete with a liberal garnishing of loaded romantic terminology. Yet the fact that the writer signs himself (and so boldly) 'A SON OF THE SOIL' surely explains a lot of the nature of the inherent in Harpur. With this also comes the pre-ordained role of Harpur within the cultural history of Australia. Whether Harpur agreed with the exact meaning of that role remains, as we have seen, an 'undefined' phenomenon. No doubt, Harpur, the author of 'the Dream of the Fountain', had a strong sense of his poetic vocation but, he did not, one gathers from contemporary reports, want to be a simple poet voicing the virgin melodies of the Australian bush. When later editors such as Martin detected this, they were quick to excise the non-descriptive elements from his poetry. Few poets, it is true, have suffered because what they were was precisely what they were denied.

Newspaper articles and notes appended to poems of Charles Harpur continued to put across the view that Australian writing had come of age with Harpur. This sense of euphoria, broken occasionally by James Martin's criticism, continued until

the more volatile 1850's when for the first time Harpur's contributions to colonial culture began to be seriously questioned. In the 1840's, however, the applause was always there. The note preceding the republication of Harpur's 'To an Echo on the Banks of the Hunter'[10] in the *People's Advocate* of 20 January 1849 is typical of the period:

> We venture to assert that the following is the most beautiful poem belonging to the infant literature of this country. A still, deep, shining power pervades it ... (Mr. Harpur's) is a wayward and erratic genius; but we consider this production alone would stamp him as a true poet.[11]

The poem is quite self-consciously Wordsworthian with the usual pantheistic delight in 'swift murmurs', 'the whisperings' and the 'spirit of the past'. It is, however, a much better poem than many others written by Harpur. Here is the first stanza as it appeared in 1849:

I hear thee, Echo, and I start to hear thee,
  With a strange tremour; as among the hills
Thy voice reverbs, and in swift murmurs near me
  Dies down the stream, or with its gurgle low
Blends whisperingly—until my bosom thrills
With gentle tribulations, that endear thee,
  But smack not of the present. 'Twas as though
Some spirit of the past did then insphere Thee
  Even with the taste of life's regretted spring—
Waking wild recollections, to evince
  My being's transfused connexion with each thing
                Loved though long since.[12]

The precise reason why readers found this poem attractive is much more difficult to establish. If one uses 'Australian impressions' as a criterion then surely no other contemporary poem could have been further removed. If, however, even in the absence of local colouring people accepted this as indigenous verse, then it would not be totally incorrect to say that no one was too clear in his mind about the direction poetry should take in the young country. That Harpur is indeed being praised for sincerely capturing English ideals seems to me to be the only incontrovertible verdict one can give.

Yet it would be wrong to assume that part of if not the only real problem in the 1840's was an almost total absence of critical stance. Criticism—and creativity for that matter—did not exist in a vacuum in the colony. If major yardsticks by way of established men of letters and literary journals did not exist, there was still no dearth of speakers willing to elaborate on poetic ideas—especially Coleridgean and Romantic—to responsive audiences in Sydney. A slightly different perspective on national literature was given in a reprint of an article by the American Unitarian and sometime teacher of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Dr William Channing. The article entitled 'The Importance and Means of a National Literature' appeared on Saturday 14 April 1838 in *The Colonist.* Echoing the American experience, Channing related literature to culture, society and the overall progress of human life. 'We maintain', he wrote, 'that a people, which has any serious purpose of taking a place among the improved communities, should studiously promote within itself every variety of intellectual exertion ... Mind is the creative power ... It should train within itself, men able to understand, and to use, whatever is thought and discovered over the whole earth ... the whole mass of human knowledge must exist ... in its higher minds.'[13] Dr Channing's article was also a strong plea against provincialism and it emphasised that the creation of local literature should not mean that overseas trends ought not be completely ignored or that the works of the past should be by-passed. 'The more we receive from the other countries', he

added, 'the greater the need of an original literature.' Four years later, Hastings Elwin's translation of Metatasio's *Observations on the Poetics of Aristotle* was published by Kemp and Fairfax, the owners of the *Sydney (Morning) Herald.*[14] The leve' of intellectual activity in the colony suggests that Harpur was quite possibly aware of a good many currents and cross-currents in the literary thought of the time. We know for certain that Harpur knew Emerson's ideas very well.[15] Thus Harpur is not, as has been suggested by a number of twentieth-century apologists,[16] a man who needs sympathy because of his essential isolation from 'culture'. That handicap was no doubt there: Harpur could not have had the exposure of a Gordon, for instance. But this is no feasible criterion on which to make judgments about Harpur because first it is not totally accurate and second it takes us to areas of conjecture verging on the sentimental.

Channing's American notes were used by R. K. Ewing who delivered a number of lectures on poetry at the Sydney School of Arts during 1844-46. The series ended in late June 1846 with a lecture which was partly devoted to "Colonial Poetry".[17] In it Ewing referred to about twenty colonial poets including H. Halloran, W. C. Wentworth, Henry Parkes and Charles Harpur. In the *Spectator* report, however, it was felt that Mr Ewing 'might have devoted more time to analyze the beauties and less to the defects of Australian poetry'. At the same time the *Spectator* did note that 'there was much justice in his examination of the extravagantly high claims set up for Mr. C. Harpur by some injudicious friends'. In spite of this concession, the *Spectator*, like much contemporary criticism, wished to have it both ways: 'Yet, that gentleman has produced compositions of much merit' and 'Whatever be his faults we will forgive them, if it be only that some lines of his "To an Echo on the Banks of the Hunter" formed the inspiring theme for the following beautiful stanzas by Mr. Henry Halloran'.[18] S. P. Hill's interpolation is typical of the 'damning with faint praise' which often occurs in the period. But no real definition of the special peculiarities or flavour of Australian poetry is actually given in defence. Without mentioning Harpur by name, the *Spectator* continued, 'their art (the Art of Australian poets) is no more trick of versification, but is a genuine growth of nature, having their root deep in their hearts—hearts accustomed to meditate with earnestness and feel with truth, upon the great duties and interests of mankind'.

In his June 1846 lecture, Ewing had referred to the claims made by Parkes about Harpur in his November 1845 review of Harpur's *Thoughts.* Parkes had suggested that Harpur was not unworthy of the genius of poets such as Shakespeare, Milton and Wordsworth. It is true, as Parkes pointed out in a letter to the *Spectator* of 4 July 1846, that Mr Duncan, the editor of the *Register*, had in fact cautioned him that 'it was a piece of extravagance to compare Harpur with Wordsworth'. As we have already seen, the comparison was in fact made by Parkes, though in his defence Parkes quickly pointed out that he did not feel that Harpur would ever 'attain to their (Shakespeare, Milton and Wordsworth's) universal fame'.[19] Parkes left Harpur 'to take care of his own reputation' which, he felt, Harpur 'is well able to defend'.

And, indeed, Harpur wasted no time in getting himself involved in this mini Ewing-Parker-Harpur-Milton controversy, a controversy which, with some changes in cast, was to emerge again later in his career. Charging the editor of the *Spectator* of collusion with Mr Ewing ('that he and yourself had laid heads together upon the matter'), Harpur fumed with the wrath of a weather-beaten journalist and quipped at the 'intolerable nonsense' and the 'subterfuge' which was 'gross as the nature of a bog, and vile as the odour of the fox'.[20] In tone and sentiment at least, Harpur's violent outburst had already been equalled by his earlier letters to newspapers, especially those written in protest against editorial emendations of his poems.[21]

Thus by the time *The Bushrangers: A Play in Five Acts and Other Poems* appeared in 1853,[22] Harpur had been the centre of lively and vigorous discussions in the Australian literary scene. But the exact nature of that enthusiasm, the responses to Harpur primarily as a poet, demonstrates a certain amount of discomfort in critical stance. What the critics and the newspapers of the period in fact sought was an 'epic' voice in Australian literature to strengthen cultural claims about the colony's 'maturity'. In this way wild comparisons to Homer, Milton and Shakespeare were made to assert one's own search for permanence in art and aesthetics. Hence the early literary responses to Harpur reflect a critical stance which has been pervasive since—an uneasiness arising out of a conflict between an uncertainty as to the literary worth of a writer against the feeling that indigenous culture should be encouraged and asserted at all times. Not surprisingly, then, to this day Harpur's reputation, while saved of the excesses of the early period, still continues to survive inconclusively.

NOTES:

1. Sydney, W. A. Duncan, 1845, 8vo. 16pp. Mitchell Library copy (C378) inscribed by the author to Mrs Parkes, 1 November 1845, with holograph notes by Sir Henry Parkes, 1895.
2. Duncan's newspaper to which Harpur had contributed poems pseudonymously under 'A Spirit of the Past' etc. Parkes also reviewed a work by G. F. Poole which was peremptorily dismissed.
3. For instance, the *Currency Lad* published a poem by Harpur as early as 4 May 1833. Another poem by 'Stebii' (Charles Harpur) appeared in Tegg's *Literary News*, 2 December 1837.
4. *Australian Chronicle*, 5 November 1845.
5. *Australian Chronicle, op. cit.*
6. Martin's 1883 edition of *Harpur Poems* has 1.1 'bard of the country', 1.3 'land' and 1.4 'Liberty! think'. This is followed by J. McAuley, *The Personal Element in Australian Poetry*, Angus & Robertson, 1970.
7. Harpur himself was very conscious of the larger 'tradition'. See Harpur holograph 'Discourse on Poetry', 32 mo. n.d., Mitchell Library, C386. Also *Sydney Morning Herald*, 30/9/1859 for a report of a lecture given by Harpur.
8. Webby, E. A. "Literature and the Reading Public 1800-1850: A Study of the Growth and Differentiation of a Colonial Literary Culture during the Earlier Nineteenth Century", PhD thesis, Sydney University, August 1971. 4 Vols.
9. *Colonial Literary Journal*, 8 February 1845.
10. First appeared in the *Chronicle*, 7 March 1843. In the same year the *Chronicle* also published Harpur's 'Loneliness of Heart', 'The Dream of the Fountain', 'Sonnet to My Friend, Mr, J. J. Walsh', 'Sonnet, Description of the Prospect from Mount View, South of Jerry Plains' etc.
11. Note by Edward John Hawkesley, Editor of the *People's Advocate*, founded in December 1848 and sympathetic towards colonial poetry.
12. The text is the same as the one which appeared in 1843. In the final copy made by Harpur in 1865 (Mitchell A87, MS No. 6), however, the following changes were made: 1.2 . . strange shock, as from among . . , 1.3 . . voice, reverbing, in swift . . , 1.5 . . whisperingly, until . . , 1.7 . . Present . . , 1.8 . . Spirit . . thee, 1.9 . . Spring.
    Martin made further changes in the 1883 edition of *Harpur Poems* and completely altered the final stanza.
13. It is worth remembering that like many other advocates of 'literary tradition' Channing also used the example of the Greeks as his overall paradigm.
14. So J. Normington-Rawling, *Charles Harpur, An Australian*, Sydney, Angus & Robertson, 1962, p. 102. However, *Webby, op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 345, observes '. . . an anonymous translation of Observations . . . rendered into English with biographical notice of the author (Sydney, 1842)'.
15. The Mitchell Library copy of Emerson's *Eight Essays* (1852) is in fact the copy which was actually owned by Harpur and has 1855 inscribed in it.
16. Notably H. M. Green and E. Morris Miller.
17. *Spectator*, 1 July 1846. The lectures on poetry were generally of a high quality. The basic assumptions of his criticism were Platonic and Coleridgean: the 'ideal beauty' is the 'sublimer emanation' than the 'soul of poetry, which is energy' said Ewing in connection with Byron whose poetry, he felt, belonged to the latter category. The review was written by S. P. Hill.

18. Poem beginning 'And I in early youth had hopes as deep' quoted in full by the *Spectator*.
19. *Spectator*, 4 July 1846.
20. *Spectator*, 18 July 1846.
21. *Chronicle*, May 1844, for instance.
22. *The Bushrangers: A Play in Five Acts and Other Poems*, Sydney, W. R. Piddington, 1853.

COLLEEN BURKE

the incurable romantic

i am a watcher
of doors
windows
cracks
        waiting
for the stranger
to come.
            I have
read Jane Eyre
once too often

see-saws

our love
is like
a see-saw
the more cheerful
you get
the lower i go.
        someone
will have to jump
off

DERICK R. C. MARSH

English – A Dying Discipline?

To readers familiar with the situation in Arts faculties of Australian universities, my topic may well seem absurd. How can English be a dying discipline, when it is a subject that seems to attract more and more students each year? At the University of Western Australia there are some 800 students enrolled in the first year English courses, and as many again in the later years. Yet in spite of this, I have felt, as have many of my friends and colleagues, that the subject we profess, as we understand it, is in serious danger, and at least partly so because of its very popularity.

If I may be allowed to postpone for a while saying just what I believe my subject is, I shall try to identify four main sources of danger which threaten to overwhelm the study of English literature, or to force such changes in the way it is taught, and consequently in the sort of understanding of it that can be imparted, that the subject becomes something different. These dangers, not necessarily in order of importance, come from the numbers of students wanting to, or having to read English in universities, from the sorts of preparation they have had before coming up to the universities, from the demands on the subject for an immediate relevance, not least from a governmental pressure for an easily quantifiable return for the taxpayer's dollar, and finally from attitudes to the subject within the profession itself.

It is, then, the nature of the subject that I see threatened, and that I believe is worth preserving, and I can best describe what that nature is by explaining what I, as a university teacher of English Literature, try to do. I have a very simple idea of what I should do, although I don't know any simple ways of doing it. I try, in whatever ways I can, to make the great literary works of the human imagination and intelligence, written in my own language, available to others, to help them to read these works for themselves. Since great works of literature are the records of the responses of more than usually sensitive and intelligent human beings to the conditions of our common human existence, I believe, as a sort of faith, that it is a valuable thing to be aware of these responses. What use one makes of that awareness is one's own concern; it will not necessarily confer material success or happiness or any other certain benefit. But I do believe that greater awareness makes one's choices more informed and therefore more morally responsible. All this may appear very old-fashioned and Arnoldian, but I can think of no other serious justification for the way I earn my living. If I am merely organizing people's pleasures for them, then I really cannot claim any right to tell them what they ought to enjoy, and as I hope I can show later, I do feel a responsibility to tell people what they ought to read, if they are seriously interested in literature. Perhaps I may quote here from Wordsworth, in the Preface to the

second edition of the *Lyrical Ballads*, the famous passage in which he scornfully dismisses those who see the reading of poetry as a trivial pleasure.

> . . . it is the language of men who speak of what they do not understand; who talk of Poetry as a matter of amusement and idle pleasure; who will converse with us as gravely about a *taste* for Poetry, as they express it, as if it were a thing as indifferent as a taste for rope-dancing, or Frontiniac or Sherry. Aristotle, I have been told, has said, that Poetry is the most philosophic of all writing: it is so: its object is truth, not individual and local, but general, and operative; not standing upon external testimony, but carried alive into the heart by passion; truth which is its own testimony, which gives competence and confidence to the tribunal to which it appeals, and receives them from the same tribunal. Poetry is the image of man and nature. The obstacles which stand in the way of the fidelity of the Biographer and Historian, and of their consequent utility, are incalculably greater than those which are to be encountered by the Poet who comprehends the dignity of his art. The Poet writes under one restriction only, namely, the necessity of giving immediate pleasure to a human Being possessed of that information which may be expected from him, not as a lawyer, a physician, a mariner, an astronomer, or a natural philosopher, but as a Man. Except this one restriction, there is no object standing between the Poet and the image of things; between this, and the Biographer and Historian, there are a thousand.

Because great literature has a complexity approaching that of life itself and something of the same variety, there is no system or method of approach that will allow easy mastery. Each individual work demands an individual approach. The aim of the formal study of works of literature in a university is to equip the students to make these approaches for themselves. There is no easy way of doing this; books of criticism, which are records of approaches other readers have made can be recommended, formal lectures can be given suggesting various lines of approach, but if students are to be shown how to read and encouraged to read for themselves, then there is no substitute for regular and detailed discussions in small groups, where responses can be compared and discussed and refined. In a lecture I can offer my own reading of a complex poem, say Andrew Marvell's *The Garden*, and with all the practice I've had, I've no doubt I can be very persuasive. In a series of lectures I can offer my reading of *Hamlet*; if my audience has never read the play, or indeed only read it casually, then no matter how careful I am I will to some extent impose that reading on my hearers, and when they later come to look at *Hamlet*, they will find it difficult to see it in any other than my terms. But to get them to read that poem or play properly, we must be able to compare readings. No two readings will be identical, nor should they be, for every reader brings a different range of experience to the work, but good readings will be similar. As a tutor working with a small group, I have not only to be able to explain why I read as I do, I must also be prepared to modify my reading, draw out theirs, encourage them to respond intellectually and emotionally, get them to be prepared to change and modify their readings, to recognise the distinction between acceptable differences of opinion and radical misreadings. All this is very difficult, and can only be done in small discussion groups, but until that detailed basic reading of the text, which must in some real sense be the student's own, has been established, nothing else can be done. It seems to me to be sheer folly to expect our students to have this skill when they arrive at the university, or to acquire it without the most dedicated teaching when they do.

With this account of what I think the study and teaching of English Literature involves, the nature of the dangers may emerge more clearly. The first was the large number of students reading English. The subject has always been, to some extent, the sort of general hold-all of the Arts Faculty, just as the Arts Faculty has been, too often, the hold-all of the university. Now, when many Pure Science

faculties are finding it difficult to fill their undergraduate places, and Geology no longer seems quite as attractive a proposition as it did when Poseidon stood at $200 a share, the universities still have to take their required number of students. We can get the customers in Arts, so to Arts they come, and once in, they almost all "do" English, whether or not they have studied English Literature, because, after all, they all speak English. The result is that too many have little sense of vocation, almost no notion of what the subject is. But they come in huge numbers; currently at the University of Western Australia there would need to be 80 tutorial groups to accommodate the first year students in groups of 10; 80 hours of teaching a week, no single one of which is quite like any other, and in which the students show an enormous variation in their levels of interest and ability. That would be bad enough, but since there is no physical limiting factor other than room size, the tendency has been, in each of the five universities in which I've worked, to admit more students than the English Department staff can properly teach. I think this is very foolish. Medical faculties do not take more students than they feel they can train, and they are allowed this limitation. In the Sciences and Applied Sciences, there are just so many spaces at the benches, round the microscopes, at the calculators, and when they are full they are full. But Dr X or Mrs Y can always be asked to accept a few more people into the tutorial group, as if the human attention were infinitely stretchable. It is distressing to see the trained academic intelligence treated with such scant respect—much less, really, than that afforded to an expensive piece of equipment. Of course what happens is that the students are enrolled first, and once they are accepted they must be taught. So we do our best, and we increase the size of the groups a bit, year by year, and we employ part-time tutors because they are cheap, and who may be very good, but are not, for the most part, as readily available for individual discussion as full-time tutors would be. We manage somehow, but not as well as we should, and the nature of our teaching changes, almost imperceptibly, and so does the sort of understanding that is taken in the senior years. We muddle on, with the feeling that the subject we profess and love never quite gets the attention it needs if it is to survive in the form we want it to.

There is another effect of the large intake. The more students one takes the less well qualified they are, on average, and furthermore the nature of the whole intake is changing. It is not that they are worse, or have less intelligence, than comparable students of, say, ten or fifteen years ago, but there is no doubt that they have less literary experience than used to be the case. We start, in other words, very nearly from scratch. A large number would not have taken the English Literature option at matriculation level. Very many would never have read any poetry. Very many would be taking English not from any interest in the subject, but because of a sort of inertia. Very few indeed would have a second language, and almost all would have been brought up on television and therefore be out of imaginative training. Teaching such classes is hard work, and given the staffing problems I've outlined above, there is a great temptation to take short cuts. In the teaching of literature these almost always substitute information for understanding. Opinions, theories, literary history, background of ideas, are all offered as something that can be learnt, before there is the basic familiarity with and understanding of the text, to which they can be related. Large student numbers, lack of reading experience, overtaxed tutors, all these things combine to make both staff and students reluctant to undertake a task that in the best of conditions is a difficult, if rewarding one.

The third danger I listed is perhaps more controversial. It is the comparatively recent (by which I mean the last fifteen years or so) tendency to question the relevance of English literary studies as the centre, or sometimes even an important part of an Arts degree in an English speaking country. Less of this pressure comes

directly from the students, and more from society at large, than would generally be supposed. There is a general feeling, particularly since the economic difficulties of the Western world, that value is not being got for money spent on higher education unless it leads directly to some vocational or professional qualification. It ought to be easy enough to convince people that someone whose experience as a person has been extended by literary studies might make a better, in the sense of a more humane, businessman or lawyer or doctor or politician or teacher or whatever, but in practice this does not seem to be so, because the nature of humane studies, of what I was taught to call a liberal education, is not sufficiently recognised. And if society at large is conditioned by the voracity of the electronic media to think that what is not new and immediate is unworthy of serious attention, some of this contempt must brush off on the students, who are therefore less likely to make that initial gesture of goodwill which allows the relevance of literary studies to be demonstrated.

Universities are of course also partly to blame. In the happy days of more generous funding, they competed for students. Now, in the United Kingdom at least, they compete even more frantically, for fear that they are on that perhaps mythical list of institutions marked down for closure if they don't pay their way. The newer universities, wanting to be different, went in for newer kinds of courses, and defended their choices on the grounds of greater relevance. It didn't always work. Studies in comparative literature for instance, which are extremely valuable when conducted by men and women of great intelligence and a wide range of cultural interest, are offered to students who have no literary experience in their own language, let alone any other, and sweeping and abstruse literary theories are placed before students who have never properly read a play, a novel or a poem. This doesn't always happen, and I have no particular institution in mind, but there is always the danger that to popularise these courses, which, I believe, no matter how intellectually rigorous they may claim to be, are actually easier courses to master than those that try to produce readers, their proponents may decry as no longer relevant those courses which deal with the English literary heritage, from Chaucer onward. It is one of the more bitter ironies of the situation that the relevance of the great works of literature to contemporary situations has always been recognised, and feared, by repressive governments. Elizabeth I recognised herself in *Richard II*, played in London at Essex's command, before his abortive rebellion, and through the ages books have been recognised as dangerous. One need only think of Nazi Germany, or Soviet Russia, or South Africa. It is the ideas, the attitudes to our common humanity that remain relevant and dangerous to such people, and it is the particular form of their expression that preserves that relevance. So I believe that the relevance is there, in the human values that inform the great works of literature, if only we treat these works as literature, as about life, and not as pegs on which to hang systems of thought.

Which brings me to my last point: the danger from the enemy within the gates. It has, I hope, been implicit in my argument already that if our subject appears boring and unattractive to students, we have only ourselves to blame. Consider our subject matter; if we fail to reveal its interest, this failure almost always stems from an inability, a reluctance, or a doctrinal refusal to get to grips with the text, because it is in the recognition of the unique value of the particular literary work that the justification for and fascination of our subject lies. But some teachers of literature either cannot talk about the text in a detailed, enthusiastic and illuminating way, or they feel that they really ought to be doing something more obviously academically respectable, engaged in some intellectual pursuit which will bear comparison with the principles, and facts and tables and models of Philosophy or Maths or Sociology. To take an example: let us compare and categorise. It is true that *King Lear* and *Cinderella* have in common a myth about a good daughter

and two wicked daughters; if we then went on to use the one to illuminate the other, all might be well, though I suspect that the comparison would have a limited usefulness. But too often such descriptive information is used as a substitute for the effort of reading *King Lear*, which is a thoroughly uncomfortable experience, if properly undertaken. Or we take refuge in backgrounds of ideas, in literary and social history, in theories of criticism, which, though marvellous tools if used with sensitivity and discrimination, and sometimes indispensable aids to the understanding of a text, are not substitutes for that understanding. Such things have a seductive value for staff and students, because here at least is something that can be learnt, and something that may even excuse us from the difficult, and sometimes disconcerting need to read for ourselves. If English isn't to become a dying discipline, we must all recognise that the needs of our students are not necessarily met by an account of what is of immediate interest to us, whether we are fresh from a high-powered graduate school, or from writing a learned article, or a book which is directed at our peers within our own specialization. We simply cannot afford to become too specialized or esoteric. If we don't teach our students to read, nobody else will do it for us. We don't want to turn out "literary critics", unless by that we mean people who can give a reasoned account of their own responses to works of literature. We do want them to be able in some sense to transcend the human limitations of space and time by extending their awareness beyond their own experience, by reading, so that they can be more fully alive. I'd like to quote here from W. B. Yeats's *The Cutting of an Agate* because it seems to me to indicate beautifully the sort of life and relevance that resides in the great works of literature.

> Art bids us touch and taste and hear and see the world, and shrinks from what Blake calls mathematic form, from every abstract theory, from all that is of the brain only, from all that is not a fountain jetting from the entire hopes, memories and sensations of the body.[1]

If we can somehow communicate that, then I don't believe English will be a dying discipline.

[1] W. B. Yeats, *Essays and Introductions*. Macmillan, 1961, p. 292.

BOOKS

Patrick O'Brien, *The Saviours : An Intellectual History of the Left in Australia.* Drummond, 1977, 220 pp.

His book might have been entitled "The Mind of the Left in Australia", Patrick O'Brien remarks. The title he decided upon, *The Saviours*, encapsulates what I think he shows to be the most important feature of this mind —its salvationist character. Politics, for the Australian Left, is no merely mundane concern; moral and spiritual issues are at stake; not less than the transformation of man is the ultimate goal. "It is difficult to resist the conclusion", Dr Cairns wrote in a passage which is cited by O'Brien (pp. 172-3),

> that the history of man as seen through the eyes of Labor's philosophers shows a purpose, a groping, a drive towards a better life. How else could all the evolutionary stages have been overcome? . . . This evolution is certainly not without direction. It moves logically as though it has a destination. And that destination is not of man divided into races, nations, parties or groups; it is man in one, men in unity . . . Whatever we may choose to call this goal of man's evolution, this unity of all men, there can be no doubt that it is present in all religions and philosophies. There can be, of course, no unity in conditions of conflict, acquisitiveness and violence. There can be unity only in conditions of co-operation, friendship and love. This is the philosophical background of the Australian Labor Party as it is of many others in our midst, and therefore, it is not the exclusive property of the Labor Party. But there are things derived from this background which, in Australia, are the exclusive property of the Labor Party . . . Labor then reflects the view that man is moving towards a unity of human association . . .

One thing deriving from this background to which the Labor Party could lay exclusive claim, would be the appointment of a Royal Commission (in 1974) having as part of its terms to enquire into "every aspect" of human situations in Australia. However harmlessly, if expensively, such a Commission might operate in this country, the conception of it reflects the totalistic attitude of political salvationism. Other features of political salvationism picked out by O'Brien include the following: seeing the world as a field of conflict between (the "forces" of) light and darkness, which involves categorizing people as *moral* opposites according as they are politically on the good or the bad side; seeing the world as it is as doomed, and salvation as likely to have at least somewhat of an apocalyptic character; seeing the world's evils as having a single cause or a group of closely interrelated causes; having a "supreme evangelical faith" in the efficacy of one's propositions.

The salvationist goal — a transformation of man — and these features of the salvationist attitude, powerfully attract the "seekers" in politics. The seekers are likely to find the Left because it is especially the Left that proclaims the salvationist goal and exhibits these features of the salvationist attitude. In connection with this seeking and finding, O'Brien puts forward his "greylag goose theory of political commitment", emphasizing, however, that the phenomenon to which it applies transcends political boundaries, and particularly traditional distinctions between Left and Right.

Greylag goose political commitment he describes as

> the phenomenon whereby individuals who are breaking out of their traditional family and/or church-derived belief systems tend to identify with the first big cause or belief system that they encounter during this period of seeking (p. 31).

Konrad Lorenz (*King Solomon's Ring*, pp. 40-41) found that his artificially incubated and newly hatched greylag goslings "unquestionably accept the first living being whom they meet as their mother, and run confidently after him".

If the point about the greylag in politics is that he is attracted to *anything*, provided it is the first thing he encounters after he breaks out, the attraction provided for the seeker by salvationist views and associations is unexplained. There is a bird which Lorenz con-

trasts with the greylag goose. Mallard ducklings ran away from him and even from a muscovy duck that had hatched a clutch of mallard eggs. Lorenz found out what would work: "I must quack like a mother mallard in order to make the little ducks run after me".

Well, too much is not to be made of this: the greylag goose attaches itself to whatever it is as to its *mother*, and the greylags in politics, with whom O'Brien is predominantly concerned, attach themselves to salvationist views and associations because these answer to a deep *need* in themselves. The important consideration is that this need is not one which anything might satisfy pretty well as much as anything else. The need is a religious one. Denied, for whatever reason, its proper satisfaction by a religion, it obtains satisfaction from political religion.

" 'Seekers' and 'Greylags' in Politics" is the first essay in O'Brien's book. The second is "Zhdanov in Australia". It was Zhdanov who, at the All-Union Congress of Soviet writers in 1934, laid down socialist realism as a requirement not to be deviated from in literature and painting. The essay reviews the "literary and cultural style of the Zhdanovites in Australia". Part of this style is the vilificatory rhetoric directed against heretics and apostates. I choose for illustration — reluctantly passing over the denunciation of Albert Tucker who had left the Communist Party, by his fellow-painter, Noel Counihan—Lance Sharkey's denunciation of Professor John Anderson of Sydney. Anderson had been briefly a member of the Party and was one of the few liberal intellectuals in Australia at the time (1943) who called the foreign policy of the Soviet Union imperialist and who spoke out against the mass murders under Stalin. He "mouths slanders invented by the arch-scoundrel, Trotsky", Sharkey wrote (in the *Communist Review*, May 1943: quoted p. 53). "Anderson has no free mind, he is a bigot, a fanatic, his mind is closed . . . Anderson's creed in the absolute links Anderson with Hitler, Goebbels, Archie Cameron and the blackest reactionaries in the world over."

Positively, under Zhdanovite influence, attempts were made to celebrate the Soviet Union in an Australian idiom. To quote O'Brien:

> Whilst poets in the Soviet Union wrote hymns in praise of Stalin as a means of staying alive, Australian writers of the Soviet school wrote them voluntarily as quite genuine celebrations of ecstasy and in conformity with the prevailing ideological mode. The writers tried to combine the style of the Australian nationalist tradition with the style of the Soviet court flatterers. They attempted to 'Australianize' Stalin and to 'Stalinize' the Australian outback and populist traditions, which they claimed as their own (p. 42).

The broad theme of the cultural Left in Australia, entered upon in this essay, is continued in the essays "Melbourne's Left Intellectual Establishment and the ALP", and "Revolutionary Romantics". They contribute essentially to showing in *detail* and with meticulous documentation the mind of the Left in Australia. Having nothing to say worth saying about them, I will come back to the general salvationist theme of the book. One might have expected illumination to be cast on this theme in the essay "Catholic Radicals, Communism, the ALP and the Radical-Progressive World View". But this in a way is a rather disappointing essay. With Catholic radicalism, O'Brien had a contemporary case of the sort of thing merely referred to in the "Seekers" and "Greylags" essay: the breaking out of "church-derived belief systems" and identification with a substitute. Concentrating, however, on the political radicalism of the Catholic radicals and not on their theological radicalism, he does not study an example of secular religion in the making. And in line with this omission he does no more than mention in another essay Australian theologians who represent "salvation" as meaning "liberation". All the same, besides much else, the essay assembles interesting material on the advocacy of Catholic-Marxist rapprochement. Looking at this material one notices a point of some importance: Naively, or by design, the advocates of this rapprochement, and those who talk more vaguely of "dialogue" between Catholicism and Marxism, compare the Marxist *vision* with the actuality of states with a capitalist economy, but not with the actuality of the Marxist states. Thus Father Denis Kenny, writes in his contribution to the book *Catholics in Revolution* (ed. P. Ormonde, Melbourne, 1968, p. 13; quoted

O'Brien, p. 147) of the Catholic New Left as seeing

> greater compatibility between the spirit of the Last Supper and the Marxist vision of the international community of the classless society based on co-operative ownership and endeavour, than there is between Christianity and a society which is radically competitive and consumer oriented.

The last essay in the book is entitled "On Understanding Labor and Its Defeat: Spiritualist and Eclectic Forms of Socialism". Passages which O'Brien quotes from politicians and theorists of the Australian Labor Party strongly suggest a will to dedicate the Party to bringing about salvation by transformation. The transformationist idea, O'Brien writes,

> has become to ALP politicians what the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights are to US politicians or what the Marxist/Leninist/Stalinist texts are to Soviet politicians.
>
> Because of the commitment to notions of 'transformation' by the party's principal clientele groups, leading party members must pay notional respect to the ideal and at least give the appearance that they are working towards the reality, even if ever so slowly, and even if in fact they are not (p. 175).

Seeing the transformist idea as uniquely important ideologically in the Australian Labor Party, O'Brien sees those on its Left wing as likely to be where they are not out of *political* sympathy with the Soviet Union, but because they regard the Soviet Union as a great transformationist agency. And, indeed, when Labor is seen in the way O'Brien exhibits it, as having strongly salvationist tendencies, the terms Left, Centre and Right seem to characterize quite misleadingly, sometimes, attitudes of those to whom they are properly enough applied.

One of the books O'Brien makes use of for the ideological background of the Labor Party is *Rooms in the Darwin Hotel* by Tom Gibbons which is a study of literary criticism and ideas between 1880 and 1920. From this book can be obtained an indication of the great permeation of socialist thought during the period with occultist, spiritualist, evolutionary — optimistic ideas.

Before making a comment, in relation to some remarks on Labor's defeat in the 1975 federal election, I want to quote a passage celebrating Labor's victory in the previous election, which O'Brien reproduces. I quote this passage both for its thematic value, and as an example of his deadly eye for what does you in. Fancy being one of the most celebrated of contemporary Australian historians, Professor Manning Clark, and, in the throes of emotion, writing like this:

> I remember in particular that great day of elation on a Sunday late in November 1972. The place was Queanbeyan. The hall was packed with people of all ages, all occupations, all creeds — yes, and all colours. That night tears came not only to my eyes when we stood and clapped and stamped and cheered Gough Whitlam. He told us that when he became Prime Minister the last vestige of colonialism would disappear, and that our years of shame in Vietnam, and the old corrupt order of society would come to an end. It seemed that the years of unleavened bread were over. At long last we had a teacher who had a chance to lead us out of darkness into light, always provided THEY did not cut him down, that THEY spared him a little before he went from hence and was no more seen... (*Meanjin*, vol. 32, September 1973; quoted O'Brien, p. 170)

After its defeat Dr Cairns said that the Labor Party needed to become more radical.

> He claimed [O'Brien writes] that under Whitlam's direction, the party had lost sight of its goals and had become too concerned with money matters, adding that the pursuit of money and material satisfaction were the preoccupation of Labor's political opponents....
>
> Such a reaction to adversity is similar to that of men of religious fervour who attribute ill-fortune to acts of retribution directed against them for having strayed from the true path (p. 191).

Yes, saying that the Labor Party must become more radical when the radicalism it went in for contributed so strongly to its defeat, does express a kind of religious reaction for the reason O'Brien gives. But it expresses a religious attitude to a political cause for another reason as well: it invests that cause with an invulnerability to empirical consider-

ations because its claims are largely or wholly transcendental. (Though largely invulnerable to empirical considerations, the Christian religion, it might be remarked, is open to conceivable empirical *refutation*: it would be refuted by the discovery in Palestine of bodily remains positively identified as those of Christ). An invulnerability to empirical considerations does not matter in the case of a religious as it does in the case of a political cause. That is because while the claims of a religion are at least primarily transcendental, political claims are wholly empirical. A political religion is deeply, and dangerously, fraudulent.

There is another side to the Labor Party, a side of it where the concern is with such things as wages and working conditions, not with the transformation of man. Inadvertently, O'Brien's very important book pays little attention to this side of Labor. It is to the point that Bob Hawke's name appears only once.

S. A. GRAVE

DA SLESSOR A DRANSFIELD Antologia Della Poesia Australiana Moderna, Mito Società Individuo, ed. Bernard Hickey (Edizioni Accademia, Venice, 1977). Available at Liberia Scopo, Italian Bookshop, Suite 1, 264 Lygon Street, Carlton, Victoria.

In the last but one edition of this magazine, Bruce Bennett contributed a short article ("Aust. Lit. Exported") on the growing interest in Australian literature overseas. As well as chronicling the more recent outbreaks of enthusiasm, his article made the point that those that have been considerate enough to show interest so far have been content merely to describe and elucidate that literature without offering it any sort of critical appraisal. This is a common enough phenomenon among initiates to any new or rare experience and is by no means limited to overseas, indeed it can usually be traced back to the originators of the literature itself. This particular anthology of Australian poetry illustrates the tendencies that Mr. Bennett first pointed out in that edition of *Westerly*.

The book (*From Slessor to Dransfield, an anthology of modern Australian poetry: myth, society, the individual*) is a reasonably-priced glossy hardback, produced with the intention of introducing post-war Australian poetry to an Italian reading public. A long article by the anthologist, Dr. Bernard Hickey, Associate Professor of Commonwealth Literature at the University of Venice, painstakingly explains the general cultural background to the poems, and the work of each poet is (with one exception) preceded by a sympathetic explanatory note written either by Professor Hickey or by the poet in question. Each poem is accompanied on its facing page by a literal translation in Italian by one Giovanni Distefano. In all, it is a very thorough attempt to establish Australian literature as something worthy of serious and lasting consideration within another, quite different culture and Professor Hickey is to be applauded for his splendid initial intentions. Their success, however, would seem to depend to a large extent on the excellence of the works chosen and the quality of their translation. Here, one is bound to be less than enthusiastic.

In making a selection of poems from those written, say, thirty or more years ago, the would-be anthologist has time on his side. All the trivia and *vers d'occasion* have sunk without trace together with the circumstances that engendered them, and only a few works remain, hardy and undefiled. The values implicit in such works are those relevant to any time or place. To attempt to explain them solely in terms of the circumstances within which they were created would be to ignore the very qualities that enabled them to survive those original circumstances. There is therefore very little work entailed in selecting works from the immediate post-war period, and it comes as no surprise to find all the much-anthologised old favourites of Hope, Wright, and even McAuley once again doing the rounds.

It *is* odd, though, to find these works embedded in a mass of additional detail about Jindyworobaks, Angry Penguins, Ern Malley and Melbourne/Sydney differences. Any account of the cabals and furores of yesteryear would at least inspire bewilderment in a Mediterranean reader, to an Australian the text has all the disturbing savour of time regained, of flaunted anachronism. It is as though Lot's wife, realising that the pillar-of-salt-scene was at hand, had thrown the Great Cinemascope Projector into reverse and marched triumph-

antly backwards into the miraculously rebuilt Cities of the Plain to wallow happily ever after.

This is not entirely fair, though. Professor Hickey is careful to dissociate the works of these better writers from the various literary movements of the forties and fifties. Why then should he waste time trying to revive these long-dead issues? The answer probably lies in the rest of the book, which contains quite a broad coverage of the present literary scene. The majority of works taken from this later period, particularly those of the sixties and seventies, cannot be appreciated without making some reference to the cultural or political circumstances within which they were written. In other words, posterity's sorting-out process hasn't quite begun to take hold. It eventually will, of course, and so many of the works that seemed so real at the time will be bundled into the dustbin of history (there presumably to await the attentions of Ph.D. students, those dustmen of history). Were the anthologists to dismiss the irrelevant squabbles of a bygone epoch, he would be hard put to prove that the majority of circumstantial verse written nowadays was any more relevant (or better, for that matter). If, on the other hand, a writer's cultural background is considered to be of prime importance, then the anthologist is justified in including any of the works contained in this volume.

Yet it is hard to believe that Professor Hickey is not unaware that many of the poems that he has chosen will not survive another decade of anthologising. To find the reason for his choice we must consider the public that the anthology is aimed at. Many poems seem to have been chosen because of their affinity with several of the issues current in Italian and indeed all Western European society: for example, pacifism and the Vietnam war (Noel Macainsh's *At the front,* Bruce Dawe's *Homecoming*, Jennifer Strauss's *Songs our mothers teach us*); police repression (Les Murray's *The Breach*); immigration (Bruce Dawe's *Migrants,* Wilma Hedley's *Celebration*, Geoffrey Dutton's *To a migrant girl*, Jessica Aldridge's *Italian workmen on a country road*); and urban alienation (too numerous to mention). The work of two Italian writers resident in Australia is represented, and certain poems seem to have been chosen because of their Italian setting (Rodney Hall's *Studio at Anticoli Corrado*, Andrew Taylor's *Sistine Spiders*). Of this latter group, Geoffrey Lehmann's fantasising about Ancient Rome (*Meditation of Marcus Furius Camillus in Old Age* and *After Exile*) would oddly enough have more impact in Italy, which is still beset by its Fascist past, than in the writer's native country.

Whatever the reason for their choice, few of the poems are well served by their translator. Some consideration should be given to the daunting nature of the task, of course: there are fifty English-language writers represented here, with all the bewildering array of styles, quirks and oddities that that entails. Still, the translator has for the most part taken the expedient approach of aiming for nothing more than literal accuracy. Presumably any poetry that survived this process could speak for itself, and occasionally it does: Francis Webb's *Five Days Old* loses very little in Distefano's translation. Bruce Dawe's humour and exquisite sensibility are on the other hand particular victims of this method, disappearing without trace. Certain bad originals improve, but these are rare indeed: Richard Tipping's slavish adherence to literary fashion, *you*, becomes livelier in Italian, the pretentious ramblings of Robert Adamson's *Towards abstraction / possibly a gull's wing* positively glow in their new monotony. Usually, however, nobody escapes the same nubbly, prosaic tread that tramples over the works of good and bad alike. Whatever the English original may have lacked in stylistic consistency (not a bad thing if all the poems are good) is amply compensated for in the ponderous uniformity of the translations. Here, one style *is* apparent.

Assuming that anyone compiling an anthology of this sort is obliged to compromise his own tastes to a certain extent in order to ensure the success of the publication, Professor Hickey must be praised for the measure in which he has still allowed himself to be guided by his own good sense. If we assume that the poets represented in this book by a fair number of works are those preferred by the good professor, then we begin to have some idea of his tastes. A system even begins to emerge. Those writers that need not have been included but were because of some "representative" aspect are allotted one poem apiece (this is hard on people like Slessor,

chosen to begin the anthology because of his claim to being the first "modern" Australian voice but only allowed *Beach Burial*). Those who are more interesting rate two poems; anyone with three or more may be considered to have arrived. Curiously enough, the number of poems allowed any particular poet usually varies in direct proportion to the amount of attention accorded him in the book's introductory essay.

With this in mind, a brief look at the poets given most prominence and their particular poems reveal that Professor Hickey possesses a very fine sensibility indeed. Moreover, he displays in no small measure an ability to cull those works most likely to last. He has clearly seen that in the world of literature virtually any year is a lean year, and when he has chosen in any quantity he has chosen well. Rarely has the clear evidence of another person's tastes given so much delight. It is only to be regretted that the constraints of "relevance" and cultural difference have been so strong as to impede the free movement of his sensibilities. Perhaps, if the book were to be a success, a further edition might allow a greater freedom of choice (providing always that public taste, never a certainty, did not perversely clamour for more of the same thing), and thereby permit a more true representation of all that is good in Australian poetry. With this thought foremost in mind it would be churlish not to wish success to this book.

LEON TRAINOR

"Women Believe In The Moon"

Judith Wright, *Fourth Quarter and Other Poems* (Angus & Robertson, 1976), 71 pp.

The publication of *Fourth Quarter,* Judith Wright's latest volume of poetry, is a significant event, occurring as it does just thirty years after her first volume *The Moving Image*. In a way, the poems of *Fourth Quarter* crystallise many of the themes which have preoccupied the poet during those thirty years. At the same time, the poet has not lost her power to surprise us with her new and often quite startling treatment of those themes.

Fourth Quarter is one of the most thematically unified of any of the poet's volumes, for the whole collection constitutes a celebration of the feminine principle — the dynamic of love and creativity, both physical and imaginative, which so dominated the earlier poetry. The central symbol is the moon in its different phases and various aspects, for the moon controls the ebb and flow of the tide, the mysterious cycles of the feminine, and the "salt blood" of man which betrays his marine origin. The sublunary world is the world of physical change and flux, and in these poems the poet reaffirms her earlier commitment to it. Moreover, the moon as muse inspires the imaginative and creative power of the unconscious which, according to Jung, is feminine in essence. In these poems the emphasis is upon psychic rather than physical creativity, and the source of psychic power (the unconscious) is symbolised by sleep, dream and water. Water and the sea image the source of and the ebb and flow of creativity. The individual in dream or creative states floats upon the sea of subjectivity like a boat lightly tethered to the tangibility of rational thought. All aspects of creativity, such as the vision of Burley Griffin, are related to this generative compulsion, and subsidiary symbolic motifs such as the owl and the hare (these are traditionally associated with the moon), the platypus, the whale, and the termite queen, are brought into play to amplify the conception, and to expand its reverberations out to the furthest horizons of feeling, intuition, meditation, vision, and the action which stems from these states.

Against this creativity is set the concept of rationalism symbolised by the daylight world, the land, and the active male principle. Here the poet's attitude towards evil is interesting. In "White Night", from the previous volume *Alive,* she poses a question which has been a constant preoccupation throughout her poetry:

> Where does it all begin?
> If evil has a beginning
> it may disclose its meaning.

and the poems of *Fourth Quarter* provide her answer. Here evil is placed in perspective as the inevitable consequence of rationalistic ways of thought, of the dissociation of thought and feeling, and the denial of human values which this split involves. From the

rationalistic principle stem all the evils of the modern world — war, inhumanity, environmental despoliation and mechanistic ways of life and thought. The consequences of rationalism are, once again, taken out to their furthest limits. They apply not only to the physical world but to the mind of man. The sludge and detritus of modern civilization has silted up and choked not only the pure streams of the physical world ("At Cedar Creek"), but the well-springs of the unconscious. Yet nature will not be spoiled nor will the creative power of the psyche ever be completely suppressed. This is the point of the poem "Platypus", where the platypus is both itself and the elusive poetic impulse which is threatened by the ugly consequences of a polluted word and rationalistic ways of thought:

> Platypus, wary paradox,
> ancient of beasts,
> like a strange word rising
> through the waterhole's rocks,
> you're gone. That once bright water
> won't hold you now.
> No quicksilver bubble-trail
> in that scummy fetor . . .

Yet when the conditions are right ("At midnight and alone / there's a stir in my mind") the streams run clear, and the paradoxical image, half memory and half symbol, rises up through the scum which threatens to block it:

> suddenly my mind
> runs clear and you rise through . . .
> platypus, paradox —
> like the ripples of your wake.

Within this dialectical framework — the creative feminine principle against the rationalistic will to power — the keynote of the poetry is acceptance. For instance the poet's former preoccupation with poetic or linguistic failure, as shown in such poems as "For Precision", "The Lake", "Nameless Flower", "Beside the Creek" and "The Real Dream", is at last resolved, for her own shortcomings are freely conceded, placed in perspective, and accepted as simply a reflection of and a parallel to the waning moon and the ebbing tide:

> In my last quarter
> let me be hag, but poet.
> The lyric note may vanish from my verse,
> but you have also found acceptable
> the witch's spell —
> the witch's curse.
> ("Easter Moon and Owl")

The poet accepts her decline, projects herself into the tragi-comic figures of age and sibylline power ("hag" and "witch"), and defies the moon's advice to "throw it in", for her response to nature is still powerful, still sensuous:

> . . . still this rim of gold,
> this last-light tongue
> touches me till I shiver.
> ("Fourth Quarter")

There's still "gold to win", and the poems of *Fourth Quarter* are the proof of it.

Although the volume opens with a traditional address to the muse, the tone is ironic and wry, and the muse is no longer the abstract Power, Truth or Love of an earlier stage, but the moon, the symbolic embodiment of the imaginative life of manknd. Here the continuity of all artistic endeavour (the moon will make a "comeback") is set against the individual poet who "won't be back again / or not this way". In "Easter Moon and Owl", this continuity is further emphasised and, at the same time, the antithesis of imagination and intellect, emotion and reason, which dominates the volume is established. The moon is closest and clearest at the Easter season; its "full-tide flood of light" most powerfully felt. Women and poets are the true citizens of the moon in its dual aspect of ruler over the sublunary cycles and over the world of the imagination. The male world of intellect and action (the colonization of space and the reduction of the mysterious power of the moon to mere matter) and of appropriation ("Their red brand's on your flank") is here established, and declared subject to the rule of the feminine, the moon, the feelings and intuition:

> Yet we still drag his tides.
> His salt blood's subject
> to the old spells of women
> as to your own, Selene.
> He fears the night, and still our music
> draws him.

In the "Interference" sequence, the inherent dualism of human nature is seen as a consequence of evolution. Having left his mother element, man is now a creature of both the sea (intuition and emotion) and the land (the intellect). The dominant antithesis of the creative unconscious and conscious rational

states is symbolised throughout the poetry by sleep (or dream) and waking, sea and land. In "Interface (I)", mist and sea signify a dimension to which man has access only in sleep or the dream-life of the imagination:

> Dreams: waves. Their mind-meandering changes
> reach to the edge of shore, no further.
> Their soft admonishing voices
> sound from a sea where we can swim no longer.
> Now we must wake.

and this is conveyed not only by symbolism, but by the meandering lines, the humming and swishing sea-sounds of the various combinations of "s", "w", "m" and "n", and the lulling vowel sounds of this extract. In "Half-dream", the poet uses similar symbolism and similar effects to simulate the pattern of her own imaginative and emotional life. Like the old boat, she is moored to the land by a fraying rope, drawn by the ebb and flow of the water and the moon-road. The poem also suggests the unity of the mind with the elements and the creatures of night and water, and the inevitability of the final drift out towards darkness and death. "Dream" is far more vigorous than "Half-dream"; it suggests that the unconscious expresses the truth of life far more accurately than waking life, which is seen as a comfortable rationalization, the soothing of an infant by the parent:

> "No one is dying, nobody's being tortured
> this is the real world and perfectly safe."

Man can have access to this truth only in states of lowered consciousness — dream, intuition, vision — for the evolutionary process has betrayed him ("unfinned") to the daytime rational life ashore:

> Beached by the old betraying sea
> I drag my body further,
> crawl to my unfinned feet and dress and go.
> ("Interface (I)")

and he is caught in the "cross-traffic" of antithetical ways of thought and the actions which stem from them. In the "Interface" sequence his plight is contrasted to that of the whale who, at the evolutionary crossroads, denied the call to progress up from the dark seas and regressed:

> Whales tried the land early,
> didn't like it. Easy to slip back
> into the mothering upholding element,
> be rocked again to half-sleep.
> ("Interface (II)")

This regression explains the whale's guilty impulse to suicide:

> This is where they choose their suicides.
> Dry harsh wind-battered beaches remind them
> of an unaccepted challenge; their
> old uneasy guilts
> over that failure.
> ("Interface (II)")

Yet man "from the opposite direction", having accepted a challenge which he can't quite meet, is no better off. Humans too "come to their own extremes" and "take their own guilts / back to surrender". Because of his dualistic (amphibian) nature, there is no real answer for man. If there were, it is long-since past, for he is now on the highroad which sweeps him on into a world of increasing inhumanity and violence ("By-pass") and the chance for a "U Turn" has been missed for ever. "By-pass" is over-allegorical, but its point is apposite. Because of the poet's clear recognition of man's dilemma, these are poems of acceptance. Modern man is, after all, the product of the Quaternary Age, an age of violent and contending forces:

> Quaternary Age that made me in your dream,
> fertile and violent, swung from ice to heat
> to flood to famine — what you've grafted in!
> Could I be calm when you are so extreme?
> ("Quarternary Age")

and the poet not only accepts this, but delights in it:

> . . . I'm still your child,
> adoring this sudden light, the gaps between
> terrors, the glow of cloud-tops, crevices
> of green serenity. Whimpering, half in love,
> I press on the armoured glass to watch
> you, lean to your diverse passages, asking
> what you mean by those mute and merciful designs of pearl.
> ("Quarternary Age")

Part of this acceptance is the acceptance of love, and "Eve Sings" is a magnificent love

lyric, informed and strengthened by an acceptance of the imperfection of love. The keyword is "human", and its full implications are defined by the old Edenic symbols: serpent, crossed swords, Eden, the tree, and a doomed world. Against the full knowledge of guilt, failure and betrayal, the poet sets the "greed and joy" of love, for still ". . . the tree / drops one last fruit for you and me". In "Eve Scolds", the implications of being "human" are further developed, for the individual woman, Eve and mother earth are identified and opposed to the active, rapacious male principle:

> . . . so entrepreneurial, vulgarly moreish, plunging on and exploring where there's nothing left to explore, exhausting the last of our flesh.

The two impulses — creative (female) and imperialistic (male) — are clearly incompatibles:

> But you and I, at heart, never got on.
> Each of us wants to own —
> You, to own me, but even more, the world;
> I, to own you.

As always, the female impulse is to surrender:

> I go overboard for you,
> here at the world's last edge.
> Ravage us still; the very last green's our kiss.

The witty colloquialisms — "I go overboard" and "the world's last edge" — suggest that the surrender to male domination is suicidal but inevitable, and the poem's irony is light and humorous, in keeping with the title.

Age is more difficult to accept, and the narcissistic young woman in the orchard (Eve again?)[1] who "kneels / to love her body in the pool / and dream herself for ever young" confronts instead her *alter ego*, herself grown old, the witch who "steals / not the flesh but the joy of it":

> Look down, you fool;
> the witch is watching from the pool
> to make you what you will be
> and poison what you are.

[1] There may be a reference to Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Bk. IV, 11.456-68.

There are chilling implications in the poem, for the series of changing time perspectives as the feminine figure confronts herself at different stages of development calls the very basis of identity into question, and the figure of the artist who stands outside yet manipulates the perspectives is ambivalent, yet the tone is once again light and these implications should perhaps not be taken too seriously. "Moving South" is more serious and less complex, for moving south, closer towards the pole, is a metaphor for divesting oneself of the fleshly extravagance of "summer" existence — an extravagance which is, after all, a cheating enchantment ("*Beaute de diable*")— in order to approach the essence of experience; not only the "root's endurance" which the poet has been stressing throughout her work, but also the waiting winter and death.

In *Fourth Quarter* Judith Wright returns to a number of old themes with a new vigour and often in a completely new context, demonstrating control, detachment, and a mastery of her material. In "The Dark Ones", for instance, the aboriginals are identified with the dark and potent contents of the unconscious. They rise up like wraiths to confound and reproach the confidence and assurance of the daylight world:

> In the town on pension day
> mute shadows glide.
> The white talk dies away
> the faces turn aside.
> A shudder like breath caught
> runs through the town.
> Are *they* still here? We thought . . .
> Let us alone.

The aboriginals are the shadow side of the self; to deny them is analogous to a denial of part of the self:

> Something leaks in our blood
> like the ooze from a wound . . .
> The night ghosts of a land
> only by day possessed
> come haunting into the mind
> like a shadow cast.

Like the Jungian shadow, the aboriginals must be brought up into the consciousness, accepted and assimilated, before the shame and guilt of the white race can be healed. This is a significant and moving poem; to me quite as powerful as the early "Bora Ring" and "Nigger's Leap, New England", for it re-

lates the immediate racial problem to the deepest levels of the psyche, of feeling and intuition, of repressed guilt and shame which, like the "dark ones" of the poem, is denied at our own risk.

In *Fourth Quarter* there are a number of poems which appear on first sight to be simply descriptive of nature, examples of that reverence for nature and concern for its uniqueness which the poet has always advocated. These poems are not a return to an earlier mode (for instance the complex symbolism of many earlier poems), but a new departure, for by imitative form, and subtle modulations in linguistic texture, the poet captures the visual, tactile, and even the kinetic quality of the subject. She thus avoids, as far as possible, the propensity of symbolism to humanize nature and, by mimesis, captures the individuality of the natural form. In "The Eucalypt and the National Character", for instance, the long and flexible, broken yet springy rhythms effectively imitate the sprawling and informal / even dishevelled, disorderly landscape:

> Ready for any catastrophe, every extreme,
> she leaves herself plenty of margin. Nothing is stiff,
> symmetrical, indispensable. Everything bends
> whip-supple, pivoting, loose . . .

In "Case-moth" too the texture of the language captures the visual form, the movement and the life-quality of this particular organism:

> Homespun, homewoven pod,
> case-moth wears a clever web.
> Sloth-grey, slug-slow,
> slung safe in a sad-coloured sack,
> a twig-camouflaged bedsock,
> shifts from leaf to next leaf;
> lips life at a bag-mouth.

"Swamp Plant" and "Encounter" are similarly impressive. These poems however are not simply examples of imitative form: each has a major point to make. "Case-moth", for instance, conveys the tenacity of life and the cautious subterfuges required for survival, and suggests that such caution stunts the life of the moth ("Inside, your wings wither') and, by extension to the human sphere, the life of the imagination. The termite queen too (in the poem of that name) is both valid on a naturalistic level, and a superb indigenous symbol for the generative feminine principle (thus tying the poem to the central theme of the volume):

> Now gross and tended,
> the clay-red temple's centre,
> still she pours out
> her milky stream of slaves.
> She is nursery, granary, industry,
> army and agriculture.
> Her swollen motionless tissues
> rule every tentacle.

Meanwhile the predatory echidna symbolises the threat to the dark generative world of nature — and the dark world of the unconscious — by the daylight forces of philistinism and rationalism. This is a feature of *Fourth Quarter*, that the indigenous creatures — whale, platypus, termite queen, and echidna — are transmuted into resonant symbols without any betrayal of their unique Australian quality. The balance between inner and outer is exquisite, particularly in the case of the platypus; while the whale, the water-inhabiting air-breathing mammal, is a wholly appropriate analogue for man's dualistic psyche. Throughout this volume symbolism is a finely integrated structural feature, exemplified not only by the basic symbolic dualisms which dominate the volume (darkness and light, water and land, dream and waking, male and female), but by the symbolism of individual poems; for instance the sequence "bitter", "lemon" and "shiver" in the title poem, which sustains the astringency of the poet's wry acceptance.

Irony and humour are a feature of *Fourth Quarter*, and a number of Judith Wright's serious preoccupations are satirised here. In "At Cedar Creek", for instance, the poet seeks a "formula" for poetry in a satiric "schema" which parodies her previous concern with primitivism, with language, and with myth:

> Complex ritual connections
> between Culture and Nature
> are demonstrated by linguistic studies.
> The myths of primitive people
> can reveal codes
> we may interpret . . .
> Religions suppress the decays of time
> and relate the Conscious
> to the Unconscious (collective).
> Metaphorical apprehensions

of the relations of deities, men and animals can be set out in this schema.

Meanwhile in the superb "Creation - Annihilation" the previously sacred creative act is treated with irreverent irony. Creation is no longer the linguistic feat of man, but the work of a jubilant and playful God who, with untidy gusto, scatters his "mudscraps and sparks of light" everywhere to the bewilderment of men:

> Notes from his hand's delight
> crowded earth, water, air,
> too small, it seemed, for care;
> too small for Adam's eye
> when all the names began.
> None of the words of man
> reached lower than the Fly.

The importance of Anthony van Leeuwenhoek in the context of this poem is not only that he discovered minute forms of life previously *un-named* by man and thus considered not to exist (for instance bacteria), but that he established the basic unity on the level of sexual generation of man, fleas, weevils and other "scraps and huslement(s)" of the Creation — hence man's insecurity; he is no longer "Favourite Child"! In its wit, sheer energy, and virtuosity, this poem is quite different from anything that Judith Wright has written before. This versatility is displayed to a lesser extent in other poems of *Fourth Quarter* such as "Counting in Sevens" which has the surface simplicity of a child's counting rhyme, yet is a moving recapitulation of the poet's emotional life-story.

This is not to suggest that the poet's control of tone is always sure. Her description of the Canberra sky, for instance, is startling and grotesque:

> Tiny invisible midges
> draw over it
> snail-trails
> of glistening snot.
> Day
> why don't you wipe your eye?
> ("Brief Notes on Canberra:
> iii Military Aircraft")

and the whole Canberra sequence is disappointing. Nevertheless, in *Fourth Quarter* all the positive themes of the earlier poetry are crystallised and expressed in poetry which, in most instances, demonstrates the poet's mental dexterity, her control of irony, and her versatility with language and form. Continuity, for instance, was a major thematic preoccupation in the earlier poetry. In *Fourth Quarter* continuity is no longer simply the physical continuity of the generation and the cycles of nature, but the expensive vision of the continuity of artistic endeavour, of the rage to create, and to transmute the flux into "immutable jade":

> Holding all skill and tradition, all times and eyes,
> feeling the chill of the poles of art, the blaze
> of its equator where the moment of making lies,
> all lives and visions our own; past nights and days
> my raging kin, we'd shape eternity
> into earth's image, make the unseen seen
> in forms of immutable jade.
> ("Envy")

Meanwhile love is still, as it was in the earlier poetry, the creative principle itself, the urge to "celebrate lovelong / life's wholeness, spring's return, the flesh's tune ("Unpacking Books"). "For M.R." is a superb example of this celebration:

> All summer the leaves grow dense, the water-lilies
> push up arrowhead after arrowhead,
> burst into smoke-blue, hit the central gold,
> and then retract themselves into bulb and mud.
> Coming round the world, another season begins.

The old fears — time, evil, death and personal failure — do not matter in this context, for "the arrow sprung to the target, / the shaft trembling in the central gold" is a rare event for any poet — "more than once is luck". At the same time there is always the possibility of "reaching the highest power of what we've been" ("Envy"), and it seems to me that, in the poems of *Fourth Quarter*, Judith Wright has once again done just this. There has always been a point of growth in her vision, and she has followed her vision and the conflict inherent in it through to that sense of acceptance and of fulfilment which she celebrates in "Growingpoint" — one of the finest poems in this latest volume:

Breadth, form, completion — those depend
upon a proper symmetry.
The length of branch, the stance in space,
what leaf and fruit tree can sustain
dispose around a central strain.
I know no word for growing-point,
but in myself the sapling rose,
an aim, a need, a sleep to air;
where weighted, rounded, bough on bough
the tree fills out its limits now.

SHIRLEY WALKER

Wild and Scrappy — Two Readers From The Mezzanine

Colin Talbot's Greatest Hits, 237 pp. $4.95, Wild and Woolley, Sydney.
The Radical Reader, ed. Stephen Knight and Michael Wilding, 239 pp. $4.95, Wild and Woolley, Sydney.

The two readers put out by Wild and Woolley hover somewhere between the underground and the pedestrian level. Colin Talbot's "Greatest Hits" follows the pattern of the pop albums — some good tracks laced with garbage to fill the sides. At its best it's lively, sharp and funny, at worst sloppy and juvenile. At some point in the book, and it doesn't matter much where you start reading, the flavour changes. From the enjoyment to be expected from the picaresque reporter with a sense of humour venturing into the sleazier reaches of the contemporary scene, the reader finds himself confronted with a passable impression of contemporary hell. The cumulative effect of the relentlessly defensive witticisms is a grim ferocity and the world exposed by this jokey voyeur is seen to be a freak show. Our uneasiness is not lessened by the way he stands aside from it — at the skin-flicks he is the only one without a dirty raincoat, and his forays into massage parlours and other disaster areas are usually written with the assistance of an insider.

In fairness, one must remember that these pieces were not written with a view to appearing *en masse* — or for that matter of reappearing at all once they had left the fish and chip shop. Seen singly the effect is less strident and more piquant. Nobody in their right mind would chew a whole mouthful of peppercorns either.

The pieces are reprinted from sources as far apart as *The Australian,* and *Nation Review,* to such evocatively titled publications as *Flash and Loose Licks.* They vary from throwaway fragments just over a page long, which to warrant collective publication would need to be little gems, but aren't, to more solid pieces bulking out to twelve or so pages.

The first section, Cosmopolitan Punk on the Road, is by far the best. These American travel notes are funny and vivid in a way the Australian material rarely turns out to be. Talbot is responding to the stimulus of an unfamiliar vibrant scene. He picks up telling detail, gets hysterical about the strangeness of it all (American hotels, rituals of saying goodbye), but clearly relishing it all. The equivalent experience in Australia (except when charting the lowest depths) is either tainted with stock responses or petulance. For example, when dealing with the "elite" at the Adelaide festival, his traveller's eye deserts him and instead of being delighted at absurdity he pillories it with the bitterness of the rejected. Elsewhere, the familiarity with local Australian backgrounds makes him dispense with descriptive touches and resort to place-name dropping which is adequate for identification but flat.

Name-dropping also tends to mar another largely successful area — the pop scene. The tacky life-style of the rock groups and the hysteria are marvellously brought to life (Joe Cocker, the Stones), and in a piece called Presenting the Lady Singers there is some first rate critical comment. Again and again one feels that, given just that extra burst of energy, and if the writer weren't so easily contented with the gossipy catalogue he would be excellent and do something really original, like breaking out of the in-group and make the sub-culture accessible and fascinating to a larger readership. (It's not what he's aiming at, but worth consideration.)

One of the more memorable pieces is a collage called Plugging in on the Surrealistic Telephone, written in collaboration with an anonymous male nurse in one of the Melbourne hospitals, which reveals that death before brain-failure doesn't merely occur with the patients: the examples of shock-treatment

and associated mindless brutality exercised by staff are as shocking as any s.f. fantasies about the undead could ever be. With this piece the limits of journalism are pushed out to something altogether tougher and more significant.

None of the other exposé pieces reach this level, particularly the sex-section called True Romance, which is devoted primariy to masturbation. A heading like Sliding down the Aisles at Wank Palace says it all. As a comment on stunted sexuality it's valid, and the piece on massage parlours has some nicely matter-of-fact cameos of the ladies who do the rubbing. The ultimate impression, though, is less of the wide-eyed Candide reporting on a grotesque world than a knowing lad showing off.

If Greatest Hits is too slight to stay in the memory, The Radical Reader often errs the other way. Radical here is a political stance not necessarily a radical new approach to the critic's method and function. Occasionally the book reads like an unwitting parody of its "straight" peers, complete with interminable footnotes and fulsome presentation of credentials. Thus Richard Kostelanetz, whose most notable achievement is a book called The End of Intelligent Writing, is credited with having "written and edited some thirty or forty books" which may, indeed, explain the end of etc. . . .

Memorable for excellence: Jan Bruck's "The Alienation of the Academic"; Jonah Raskin's "In Search of Traven"; and Craig and Egan's "Decadence and Crack-up". Memorable for awfulness: Didier Coste's "Politextual Economy (In Defence of an Unborn Science)"; and Carole Ferrier's "The Inadequacy of the Imagination (Towards a Feminist Literary Criticism)."

Of the eleven essays these five seem to demonstrate what is best and worst about the "radical" approach. At its best it does two things; it takes a revitalising look at old problems and comes up with new insights by breaking the constricting modes of academic writing which by now is so overlaid with mannerisms and rules of the game that personal expression and analysis have become almost impossible. In the hands of a lively writer this is an act of liberation, and the results are exhilarating. However, where the freedom is misapplied, merely to set up alternative systems of bondage, the reverse is the case. Not merely does the writing achieve a dullness that any hidebound traditionalist might envy, but the lack of discipline inherent in "rebel" activity usually ensures that the result will be obscurantist nonsense or even a capricious game relying on private language. There is no outside authority to furnish any kind of perspective.

Bruck's Alienation of the Academic digs deep into the nature of the disease that craves for the kind of remedy that "radical" criticism might provide. Dividing his paper, at the centre, into three sections, he examines the academic's social situation, the range of academic discourse, and the relevant psychological aspects, which all taken together sum up the current dilemma of the teaching/learning experience at the tertiary level. It examines the loss of purpose and direction of the tertiary level. It examines the loss of purpose and direction of the academic, the poisoning of human values by petty politicking, the substitution of analysis for what first originates as the creative impulse. The academic described here is an isolated creature in an irrelevant world.

Jonah Raskin's In Search of Traven is a good example of the man of literature *not* alienated from his original impulses. Written in what must be the shortest, most direct sentences seen in 1977 (though alas, he is capable of writing "a . . . relationship developed between Rosa Elena and I"), this is an account of a literary hunter at work stalking the enigmatic and colourful figure of B. Traven, who had not wanted a biography, to write his biography. Mexican backgrounds and an affectionate portrait of Rosa Elena, Traven's widow, make this as compulsively readable as any novel, whilst at the same time showing the researcher at work, refreshingly not counting commas or uses of the subjunctive, but being conscious of "unlocking a mystery" when allowed to examine the contents of a locked trunk. There are occasional lapses into bad novelese — as when Rosa Elena asks about their next meeting. "Not for a while," I said, feeling heartless and cruel." Well, perhaps it's worth paying the price for the lively bits which dominate.

Closer to the area of traditional Eng. Lit. is "Decadence and Crack-up" which seeks to incorporate in an ambitious mosaic of 25-odd pages all the elements and symptoms of the forces at work in the twenties that were finally to erupt in the disease of nazism. The traditional critic would be frightened of such a display of fireworks (if he had to attempt it), or suspicious of it (if he had to evaluate it). The sparks fly everywhere — Bunuel, Eliot, Lawrence, Waugh, Fitzgerald, Yeats, Isherwood, Conrad, L. H. Myers, Kipling and Forster, are all pressed into service — and the resulting picture achieves a new relevance that would be far less dramatic and satisfying if presented in greater detail.

The Unborn Science suggested in Didier Coste's Politextual Economy is a mutant worthy of co-existing with the monsters posited by the genetic engineers. It is a textual system made dynamic and full of *zones* and infrastructures. I suspect it is hoax, and if not, as a cure it is far worse than the complaints (any complaints) it may seek to alleviate. As this is the most totally condemnatory piece of the current book review, it is only fair to advise the reader to buy the book and puzzle it out, by way of recompense.

Ferrier's piece on feminist criticism while raising many interesting points is so encased in its dual cage of dogmatic assumptions that it fails to make direct contact with the issues that matter. Taking in good faith outmoded assumptions about what is possible in a "capitalistic society" and what liberation actually means in the feminist context, the entire article is thorough, wide ranging and intelligent, but ultimately hamstrung. It lacks the directly perceptive quality shown by Colin Talbot in his piece on the Lady Singers: "The ability of a lady-singer to say she is a woman, better than a man can say he is a man (in song), and be more credible doing so, creates the genre of lady-singer." Very simple, but it hits the spot.

Despite the cavilling, both books have enough to offer to justify their existence and a place on the bookshelf partly for the straightforward interest and enjoyment they provide, partly as sociological documents — tomorrow's museum pieces.

MARGOT LUKE

Peter Cowan (ed.) *A Faithful Picture, the letters of Eliza and Thomas Brown at York in the Swan River Colony 1841-1852*, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1977, 168 pp., $7.95.

> Throughout a period of ten years I have endeavoured to give a faithful picture of all that has happened to us of good or evil, storm or sunshine. If I have lifted up the veil that should have been hidden in some matters it was that you might know all my heart.

Thus wrote Eliza Brown from Swan River Colony to her father, William Bussey, in a letter near the close of ten years' correspondence. The letters collected in this volume are vital and expressive, giving a detailed picture, as Alexandra Hasluck writes in her Introduction, "of the colony and of the character of the writer", and beyond that of a complex pattern of relationships.

The whole correspondence has an almost literary coherence; life is yet again copying art. There is a beginning, a middle, and an end to the story; we are first introduced to the Brown family as they wait to weigh anchor for Swan River, we follow their fortunes in the colony, and we leave them at the point where their real pioneering efforts are over. Eliza and Thomas Brown, whose very different voices counterpoint each other throughout, both write with a clarity and a capacity to convey emotion which any novelist would envy, and their constant movement between adjustment to the new and attachment to the old shapes the correspondence. Even the silent recipient of the letters, old William Bussey, has a role in the drama; he effectively cuts both the attachment and the correspondence as we now have it by ceasing to preserve his daughter's letters.

The triangular relationship between Eliza, her father and her husband is both the raison d'être of the correspondence and its most fascinating theme. Eliza is tied to England, and to her family there, by strong bonds of affection expressed and perpetuated in best Victorian style:

> This is the greatest loss in coming to Swan River, the deprivation of social intercourse with our relatives and friends which I cannot at times but feel most keenly. My dear little ones have no indulgent grandfather or kind aunts to promote their pleasures

and expand their affections. The benefit of such helps to the parents and aids to their mental and moral development are lost to them by the step we have taken. This is the dark side of our enterprise . . .

In addition, both Eliza and Thomas are tied to old Mr Bussey by a strong bond of gratitude and dependence because of his services in managing their remaining property in England, in supplying them with a flow of essential household goods for private use and very profitable barter, and in loaning them the major part of the capital required for their Swan River venture. The letters mirror the general lack of viability of the early colony, and the continuing dependence of all the colonists on their tenuous link with England. Thomas's inability to repay the loan and worse, his continuing requests for more assistance, create a tension in which Eliza must mediate between husband and father to achieve her own ends without loss of dignity to either, a delicate task often impinging upon "the veil that should have been hidden". Some elements of ths tension are timeless; others are peculiarly Victorian, especially Eliza's show of deference in matters of finance:

> Make every allowance for me my dear Papa if it should be absurd, remember I know nothing at all of money matters or business matters and am very dependent, never venturing to give an opinion about anything except where my sweet children are concerned . . .

Ironically it is a perceived lack of loyalty to her husband which leads William Bussey to punish his daughter by restricting their correspondence in the early 1850s.

It is Eliza who works hardest to preserve the ties with home, and it is also she who is most drawn to the new land. As Thomas protests to Mr Bussey, on being taxed for his mismanagement:

> I never had a wish to leave prosperity in England where I always felt comfortable and happy . . . My sole object in coming hither was for the improvement of Mrs Brown's health and spirits, she . . . took a particular fancy to Swan River which she has never deviated from, always liking the colony and seeing better hope than I ever did. Her health and spirits are certainly much benefitted which makes me not regret the change although it has plunged me in pecuniary difficulties from which however I have never seen so fair a chance of being extricated as the colony gives hope of as at the present time . . .

This hope lies in the coming of convicts to Western Australia, bringing cheap labour and Imperial expenditure which will give Thomas Brown and other struggling capitalists the means to cut their ties of dependence to England — although not those of the colony as a whole.

If distance and crusty old age make the relationship between father and children increasingly difficult, the distances within the colony whch sometimes separate husband and wife tend if anything to strengthen the bond between them by moving Thomas to open statements of affection:

> My Dear Eliza,
> I received yours of the 16th. Inst. last night and beg to give you warning that if you continue to write in the same strain you will dispel all my stern and morose disposition and more than ever charm me in love and affection.

Eliza replies in a vein described by Alexandra Hasluck as "a sort of stately teasing" which is at once engaging and strange to the modern reader; again in Hasluck's terms "Eliza Brown's pages show the real woman in the frame of her times".

The frame of the times shapes other relationships into patterns foreign to modern sensibilities. Servants are ungrateful creatures requiring the force of law to show them their proper place — though the family's herdsboy is a "parlour guest" and the children's playmate after his work is done. Relations with the "better people" in the colony are carefully preserved; Eliza writes

> I am not much of a visitor but feel it to be for the interest of my family to keep up a distant acquaintance with the higher circle that they may feel it to be their natural position when they grow up.

Her own social relations, however, are deliberately restricted:

> I do not wish to know any person out of my own family very intimately for fear

they should find out my imperfections and like me less.

Despite the breach in family relations which ends it, *A Faithful Picture* is a success story of satisfactory accommodation to the new land. Through their hard labour, consistent support from the family at home, and well-cultivated relations with the colonial government, the Browns prosper and take their place amongst "the higher circle" of the colony. The tragedies of settlement are only incidental to this narrative — men like the Browns' labourer, Mitchell, who dies of inflammation of the brain "brought on by his good nature in carrying a woman through . . . the floods", and like Fruin, their steward, "no-one's enemy but his own" who is destroyed by "his old habits of intemperance", the death of an only child, and the lingering illness of his devoted wife.

A Faithful Picture is a most attractive publication, designed and produced with the usual elegance of the Fremantle Arts Centre Press. Alexandra Hasluck's Introduction is useful and much too brief. A reader with no previous knowledge of the Swan River colony may well welcome more historical information on many points raised in the correspondence, perhaps in note form, together with maps less decorative and more legible. Two recent publications provide a more detailed narrative of the settlement of the colony to which such a reader might turn. Mary E. Calder's *Early Swan River Colony*, published in Rigby's "Pageant of Australia" series in late 1977, gives a brief, pleasantly written account which reconstructs the lives of the more prominent settlers in simple prose and attractive pictures; this tale is also a success story, though darker shades are sketched in where the documentation allows. Mary Durack's brilliant history, *To Be Heirs Forever*, published by Constable in 1976, sets the story of the Shaw family in a colonial tragedy of misplaced hopes, destroyed lives and stunted growth, in which another Eliza emerges as a great and lone survivor.

Eliza Brown outlived her husband by more than thirty years. In her last years, we are enigmatically told in the Introduction, "other tragedies were to befall her. One can live too long." The two Eliza's shared, perhaps with many other women in the Swan River Colony, a great strength limited in its expression to the famiy circle alone, and both outlived their chosen function and died lonely. One wonders how they would have taken the dictum of Edith Cowan, Eliza and Thomas' grand-daughter and the first woman to enter an Australian parliament, that women must move beyond home and family to full social responsibility.

MARIAN AVELING

ROBERT C. BOYCE

Cycle

the good poem
the good poet makes
right now

other poems
all other poets make
right later

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

FRED ALEXANDER—emeritus professor of modern history, joined the teaching staff of the University of W.A. in 1924 after graduating from the Universities of Melbourne and Oxford. His fields of interest have included contemporary British Commonwealth and North American history, and, more recently, 20th century Australian history. He is author of the jubilee history, *Campus at Crawley* (1963). He was part-time director of adult education in W.A. from 1941-54 and founded and directed the first two years of the Festival of Perth. Chairman of the Library Board of W.A. since its creation in 1952, he is also a director of the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust and of the Australian Ballet Foundation and is an honorary fellow of the Academy of the Social Sciences of Australia.

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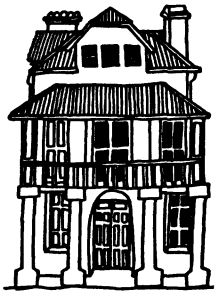
SHIRLEY WALKER—teaches English at the Northern Rivers College of Advanced Education. Special interest in Judith Wright's work.



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