

GOING
DOWN
SWINGING

NOB.



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GDS began as an experiment, in order to view and document some of the fresh work by new and/or young Australian writers. It has been the strength of contributions from these writers that has been the impetus for keeping GDS alive through six issues now. And already we're impatient to present some of the writing we've received for issue 7. 'Impatient' may seem a strange word for GDS to use, as it's been 1½ years since our last issue, but our biggest problem remains a lack of funds. GDS can only appear when sufficient money is available to cover costs.

Although there is strong and exciting writing being produced, survival remains the chronic preoccupation for both writers and small presses. There have been recent co-operative efforts that give readers hope for better access to new writing: in Victoria, THE COLLECTED WORKS BOOKSHOP (74 Smith Street Collingwood 3066), specialises in literature from small publishers and magazines. In NSW, SPAM (PO Box 51 Burwood 2134) is a collective concerned with distribution and promotion of small presses, as well as formulating policies to present to the Lit. Board.

A few magazines have disappeared recently (ASH, 925) and INPRINT has gone into recess for 1984 as a result of missing out on a grant. But new inspirations have appeared in the form of SYLLABLE, BIG BANG and MIGRANT 7 (all from Melbourne), P76 (Sydney) and PERVERSE PLEASURES (Perth).

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PO Box 64
Coburg 3058
Vic. Australia

subscription:
\$6 for two issues
(\$12 institutions)

editors: myron lysenko and kevin brophy

cover photos & centrefold by Brendan Hennessey
interview photo by Ray Cassar
cover design by Janine Brophy
gds printed by George Papakotsias

thanks to Nola Brace, Nolan Tyrrell and Hilton Street. GDS is a hit & miss publication. ISSN 0157-3950.

PROSE IN THREE MOVEMENTS ON THE THEME OF
LIFE-STYLES

moya costello

One

The Goldbergs own a multi-million dollar consortium of companies. The original basis of the empire is a meat plant. Theirs is the ritual rise to extraordinary wealth in a capitalist economy. Competitors speak of 'devotion to business'. Hard work and a more ambiguous concept, enterprise, are the keystones to their success.

Refugees from revolution in Europe, they arrive in Australia and set up a small family business. Sticking to family butchering proves most successful.

In busy periods, the wives attend the cash registers and finish parcelling. At the meat plant during a strike, the men slaughter, skin, clean and bone the carcasses. The children work in the plant during school holidays.

All over the country people are trapping rabbits and transporting them to the Eastern plant. Soon Mr. Goldberg is displaying frozen rabbits at American conventions.

The company expands from the processing and packaging of meat, to animal byproducts and plastic coat-hangers and shoe-laces, to chemicals and electronics. The brothers personally lobby the government for business expansion, but lacking the anonymity of other companies, the family keep a low media profile. They make no comment on local community complaints of air pollution from the meat plant.

The aim of the patriarch was to have an expensive car, become wealthy and change his address. The family moves from the Western to the Eastern suburbs.

Leisure, like business, is a family activity. Winters are spent at the holiday chalet in the mountains, less than an hour away by private plane. Skiing is a favourite sport of one of the sons and the family indulge him. But a fatal accident on the slopes cut short one holiday.

There is a service. A set of stained-glass windows, designed and executed by an artist, is commissioned in memory of the son. The service has national t.v. coverage. The report concentrates on the work of the artist and discreetly on the family mourning in solemnity.

Two

Helene Alexopoulos works in a meat plant, preparing meat for freezing. She gets up in the morning at five to make breakfast and prepare lunch for her husband, who goes to work with her, and for her children, who will go to school. She leaves home at six to get to work at seven.

Her children hang around the school playground until the other kids arrive and classes begin. Sometimes the children go to a friend of Helene's who is not working, has young children of her own, and is prepared to supervise a couple more.

Helene is happiest when this occurs. She does not have to rush home at 4 p.m. to check on her children's safety. Perhaps she can do a little shopping on the way home for that night's meal, instead of making two trips. She is most anxious when they return home alone to an empty house. She cannot make or take phone calls on the process line.

One day she is slower than usual in getting to the canteen for the morning tea-break. Menstrual cramps aggravated by the cold from the concrete floor on which she works, force her to stop for painkillers. All of the other women have gone ahead in the usual centrifugal rush at the sound of the bell. She is in the cranking lift alone and having trouble getting the upper and lower doors to close. She stands close to the entrance of the big, box-like goods lift looking from the top to the bottom door, while tugging on the thick piece of free-swinging rope that is part of the mechanism that moves them. After several tugs, the doors come crashing together.

The lift moves upward to the canteen. Some women getting the lift from the canteen back to the work areas, find her body on the floor of the lift. On his way to a later morning-tea with men from a different section of the plant, Mr. Alexopoulos finds his wife's head outside the lift door.

After taking the official amount of compassionate leave, Mr. Alexopoulos asks for more time off work. He finds it very difficult to do the simplest tasks, his concentration is negligible, he doesn't recognise objects in front of him. His employers refuse him an extension of leave.

Three

- from ABC Weekend Magazine, October 1981:

The Lady Diana Spencer had an uneventful childhood except that on her eighth birthday, her father hired a camel for the party.

The theatre was quite old, built at the turn of the century and designed by a grandiose colonial architect whose name had not officially been recorded. It was set back a little from the now busy road and a platform of marble steps spread out from its impressive entrance way. During the day, for the most part, it was quiet, with people sitting on the steps, waiting, or perhaps eating their lunch. But an hour or so after the bulk of the peak hour traffic had managed to inch out of the city, the white marble would be shining harshly under floodlights, and people would be striding up the steps and into the foyer, lingering awhile to allow their dinner suits and glittering evening gowns to blend with the deep crimson velvet and crystal chandeliers.

As this evening was opening night there was an uneasy mixture of critics, male politicians with their showy wives, and a modest sprinkling of the city's social elite. Twenty minutes before the bells were rung, the first group of people made their way to their seats, arranging legs, reading programmes and eating imported chocolates. Others remained talking in the foyer, brandy glass in hand, till they almost reluctantly had to move towards the doors, driven by the urgent ringing of the bells.

On the half hour people were still being shown to their seats. Without warning the lights suddenly began to dim and ushers hurried to shut the doors. The hum of conversations died with the lights. Except for the exit signs there was complete darkness. Someone coughed.

The curtains parted, moving slowly, but very smoothly, so that one was hardly aware of the darkness on stage. Suddenly a spotlight exploded onto a clown. He stood motionless, staring out blankly at the vague shapes and shadows of the audience, all expression having been painted on to be clearly visible under the lights. A woman in E row spoke his name to herself, having read it in the programme as the lights faded. He stood there, silent and alone, with stars around his eyes.

Then a hum from the back of the stage. Very soft, but in the silence of the theatre, clearly audible. A stabbing splash of light to the back of the stage, another spotlight. A long metal cutting edge burst from the darkness. Light burst into a thousand coloured fragments flashing towards the clown.

He turned and saw it coming. His expression didn't change, the paint continued to smile at the audience. He jumped, tucking his knees into his stomach and spreading his arms as if he were trying to fly. The blade swished past underneath and he landed back on stage.

Almost immediately another blade flashed out of the darkness and was picked up by the lights. The clown, smiling, wobbled slightly and jumped again. Then another blade. Jump. The splitting of air.

It was impossible to understand anything of the blades except their sharpness. There could have been hundreds of them, flashing across the stage once, then becoming lost in the darkness. Or as few as four, connected to a spinning centre, flashing past again and again.

Then the clown overbalanced. Somehow he still managed to jump, missing the blade by a miracle. But, of course, he landed late. To make matters worse his left foot slipped and his arm flew down to steady him. Pushing up as the next blade raced smoothly towards him.

People began to scream. A voice yelled "Jump!" Too Late. The clown scrambled to his feet but the blade sliced into his ankles. He was lifted clear of his feet and dropped onto his spurting stumps almost a metre away. The next blade crunched into his shins as a scream burst from his contorted face. This time he landed off centre and the following blade entered just below the knees and sliced upwards towards his thighs. It was not a clean cut. Pieces of shattered bone sparkled among snapped muscles and twitching nerves. The clown lay on his back. The final blade caught him under the chin, stifling his screams as it crunched through his skull.

There was a smattering of applause, but most of the audience was silent. After a few minutes they began to make their way out of the theatre.



"P76" Poetry & Prose

BOX 250 WENTWORTH BUILDING
UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY 2006

Subs: \$7.50 for two issues

Edited by: Mark Roberts
Adam Aitken

YOUR SON'S FRIENDS

allan eric martin

All your men
are your son's friends.
You doctor their wounds,
feed them tea
and mend the crutches
of their jeans.
On Saturday night
you drink their youth
as uterine cancer
stems the life
between your legs.
And when they leave
you bed down with the
silhouette of the man
who left you at twenty,
carrying a bastard son.

ONE

Collide with the wooden scaffolding outside the church. Lean for a moment against a column inside, rubbing my head. Cold marble at my back. Tony beside me. Helen has walked on ahead with Mario. Tony's laying-on of hands a good excuse to deepen intimacy. Edge away. Polite, stiff smile: No toucha da fruit.

Back in Brindisi asked to see Trulli, conical houses typical of the Puglia region. These boys probably don't know where to put their hands on one. It's a guided jog around the backstreets of Ostuni instead. Ostuni. White queen among olive groves. Brochure said. Standing high on a gently sloping hill overlooking the sea. Picturesque spontaneous architecture.

Today rain is plastered across the hills like cellophane paper. Mist hangs leaden over the walls of the town, obscuring almost everything.

Follow Mario and Tony up and down steep streets of the old part of town. Nothing. Expanse of grubby white-washed buildings. Little Athens. Here and there, round a corner to find an archway spared the uniform dirty white. Softly-weathered stone, warm to the touch. Gargoyle heads and lion door-knockers.

Sheepish, pose, taking turns for photographs. Stick it in the ... Helen's feet shift about in ridiculous black motor-bike boots, two sizes too large. Mario's arm heavy on her shoulders.

Eyes gradually adjust to the darkness of the nave. Dull glow of altar lights, ivory candles reflected in mirrors. Rib-cages of extinct animals. Stand in deepening shadow behind the colonnades. Unawed. Somewhere, far above, a grey patch of sky. Banging and sawing at the back of the chapel, a workman - Christ the carpenter? Smell of cut wood all through the church.

Tony struts up and down, hands pushed deep into coat-pockets. Waits for approval of a drab, run-of-the-mill church. Too many images glitter in our heads, fragments of a mosaic we haven't yet pieced together. San Apollinare in Classe. San Vitale. The Sistine Chapel. Rough-hewn sculptures in the Pisan Battistero. A hammer clatters on the tile floor.

Stippled marble columns loom above us, the horticultural nightmares of a house-painter.

His *horror vacui* has overwhelmed everything. Strangled doves and virgins in murderous vines. A tatty crib-scene plays out its farce in plaster-of-Paris grotto. Magi and donkeys do action-replays under an electric-blue sky: multifoliate rose of dawn to midnight spangle of stars to multi The music-box tinkle of *Schlafen mein prinschen*.

Urgent hammerings in corners.

Silent, wait for our reactions.

"You are Catholic?" Goaded by a *horror vacui* of my own.

Strategy number one, type-cast them: good Christian boys. Make it difficult for them to behave otherwise. Small hope.

Tony fiddles with a tiny gold crucifix.

"We don't go to the Mass very often, but we are good Catholics, yes. And you?"

"We're atheists." Cough. "But we like looking at churches..... Some churches." I see wooden figures jerk about on treadmills.

Mario pushes open the double doors on the side of the main chapel. They creak apart. Walk through into another, smaller room, utterly bare. No. Portrait in funereal tones blends with wainscoting. Steps sound hollow on the marble floor.

Necks far back to eye the one small stained-glass window in the ceiling. Mario, arm casually through mine. Gives it what is supposed to be a friendly squeeze.

"You like?" Weak eyes stare at me from the lair of his face, too close. Look up at the window again. Deer drink from a small blue lake. Vertical and stylised. Swirling acanthus twines its leaves around them.

As the deer need the spring, so, O Lord, my soul needs you.

Reclaim my arm.

"Molto interessante." Concede, move away to Helen's warm side. Tonight, her breasts my burrow. Together, against.

"A little familiar, don't you think?"

"I warned you. You wanted to meet the natives."

"Not *that* way, I don't."

"What is that you are saying? Why you do not talk with us?" Tony's loose preference for me is slipping. Helen comes over as the more easy-going, less prickly one.

"We were saying we'd better go soon, it's cold and I don't feel well." Not tonight dear too tired.

A workman waves his arms about: a torrent of dialect more or less lets us know we're in the wrong place at the wrong time. Allow him to shepherd

us out. Relieved. Outside, past the film posters for Pornoshock and Pornostrike on the walls of the church. Nipples blacked out, lurid busty women are spread-eagled on beds.

"E tipico?" Tony nods.

Hands still in pockets, though not so cold now.

In the car, engineer the talk round to subject of relationships. Strategy number two. Untouchables. Bias: offensively feminist. Sit back and wait for the cool change. Back in Brindisi, before it sets in.

Tony soon gets edgy. So far so good. Housework shared, yes, joint responsibility for childcare, yes, but ...

"You can go too far with this kind of ideas."

At last. Turn my head to look at him, and he is suddenly very attentive to Helen squashed in the back seat with him. Picks up her limp hand to examine her rings more closely.

"There are women in Italy who are the fanatics, throwing bombs, making the demonstrations. They are mad, these women."

"Perhaps they throw bombs because the men won't listen."

"You are feminist?" Tony translating sourly for Mario.

Nod and smile.

Mario swears at the car cutting in front of us, furiously sounds the horn. Accelerates and re-establishes his right to be in front. Looks sideways at me, shaking his head sadly.

"But Helena, she is not a feminist." Tony's arm lies along the back of the seat, protective. "She is a mother."

Strategy number three. Gushy enthusiasm. Respectable mother of three. Couldn't possibly be on the make.

"Oh, she's told you about her three children?"

"She has told me. We have been talking, Helena and me."

Getting under his skin. Good. Thank Christ. Helen is treated to a dose of outsider-repelling intimacy. For me, the insecticide of disapproval.

Hemmed in. Crammed into the front of Mario's tiny car, passenger for destinations they decide on.

One thing obvious, at any rate: Tony has already handed over the tougher nut of the two to Mario to crack. Probably shrivelled by fanaticism, anyway.

"I'm a feminist, too." Helen a little slow establishing her position. Uneasy, like me. Always freezes in these situations, doesn't trust herself to state politely where she stands, what she expects. Says little, seems easier, more flexible. Silence and reserve in her seem to say "I would if I could but my friend wouldn't like it." Gives them impetus for a new offensive. Circumvent the prude. One gate falling to the battering ram better than none.

"You think we are bad boys, perhaps? I think if the girl wants to be with me, it's good, if she does not, it's okay, we are friends."

"That's fine. Do all Italian men drive like maniacs?"

"Italians are very good drivers, we think so."

Wearing me down, this strain of being polite. Different back home. Piss off not interested no thanks not into men ta ta.

Dilemma. Natural suspicion of men's bullshit games. Deference to cultural values not our own. Tie ourselves in knots.

Stop beside the Seno di Ponente. Headlights off. To our right, beacons in the Canale Pionate. The newly built Monument to the Italian Sailor throws a bridge of light across the water. Spotlights our absurd performance.

Stifling in here. Get out and breathe cold fresh air, fling off the nets closing in.

"It's freezing. We'd love to eat soon. Isn't the restaurant open yet?"

"Too early now. We like to show you some famous things of our town."

Circumnavigate the Piazza Duomo. Tony walks several paces behind with Helen. Go on with Mario, arm resigned to his. Comradely only. Remove it soon. Turn down the Via Colonne, stop, look around for Helen. Tony has stopped dead. Heads down in soft conversation. Wait for them to catch up. Mario urges me forward.

At the end of the Appian way, on the steps of the Colonne Terminali, couples sprawl and grope. Getting the message loud and clear, boys.

"You do not like our company?" More than a hint of displeasure.

"We're quite happy with your company."

"Ah, I think no."

Fourth and final strategy. No sex boys we're just travelling through meet people learn the language expand horizons etc. not interested in sex lives of our own back home repeat ...

"Ah, Rosa. You are molte intelligente, molto intelligente."

"Wille grazie, signor."

"You are very smart. Too smart."

"For my own good, you mean."

"I think so, you are too smart, you miss out la dolce vita. Your life is poor, I think."

"That's not true - she has a rich life, she has friends, books, travel, her thoughts ... "

"You have everything, you are smart, but in the end you have nothing."

"You think so, do you? I suppose you'd know."

"Nothing. You never experience the love with the Italian man."

Scream, jerk to a stop.

"The restaurant is here, but we are leaving. Enjoy your pizze. Ciao."

"Ciao, if it's like that."

Run the gauntlet in the main street. Saturday night. Wall-to-wall males spilling from pasticcerie out into the gutters. Drinking, eating, leching

spitting. Help. City map. Walk in the wrong direction down the Via Garibaldi.

They are back. Lean out of the car beside us.

"You are lost? Wait one minute. Before, we were insulted. I became angry. It is alright now, we go to the restaurant for pizze."
Hunger resolves us. But the meal is ruined.

Nothing more to say. Eyes roll upwards, tongues click in mock sorrow at our silence. Insult still in my gullet. Why the comeback? Last resort, one last try. Get us drunk and carry us victorious to the hotel room Tom arranged for us this morning. Were they testing us to see if they were indispensable?

A long wait. The cook who is fighting with a customer spluttering over the bill finally calls the police. Our pizze arrive, slightly singed.

The boys sit at a separate table pushed next to ours. Notice we are not drinking, and waggle their heads.

"Ah, Elena. Ah, Rosa. You do not talk, you are thinking still we are not good boys."

"We're fine thanks. Hope there's no more delay with the boat, Helen."

"Hate to be stuck here for much longer."

"Why do you always talk with each other? Rosa, you do not leave your friend free. Both of you, you watch each other."

They eat quickly, are soon finished. Talking Italian to each other, looking at us.

Helen eats hungrily. Mario watches her.

"Elena is vorace." Tony nods.

"She has the good appetite, not like Rosa."

"I enjoy my food."

"Ah, Rosa, but you pick, you are the delicate one."

Narrowed eyes.

"You and Elena, you are perhaps very good friends?"

"We've known each other a long time, yes."

"Ah."

Blacked out nipple women busty on beds lurid are spread-eagled.

We know Hellenic-Adriatic are on strike, Mario and me, so we take time off from the Ufficio Turismo and go round to Fragline to see what we can pick up. Sure enough, they are pouring in and out of the office like lemmings, changing tickets, wondering what to do with their extra night and day in Brindisi. Rucksacks on backs or trailing suitcases on wheels, hands spilling maps and brochures. Worried looks stamped across their faces like stigmata. Tourists - you can tell them anywhere. Especially Inglesi. We stay outside for a while, just looking. At last they come out. The older one wears a fur coat and enormous flat-heeled boots. She

is rich, perhaps, and eccentric. The other is younger, quite pretty, but *più*, a little.

"You have just changed your tickets?" I move across their path. Mario does not speak very well the English. At first they think we are tourists too, and want to help.

"You have been round to our office?" I ask next, pointing to the brochures and the maps.

The older one does not wish to answer, but the younger one speaks. They have had them from the Tourist agency near the station.

"Ah. We are at the other Agency. Along the Via San Francesco near the Quay. We have those too. That is how we know you are tourists. There is a strike on. Today we do not work."

"We know. It's a real nuisance."

Mario prods me. "You would like to go somewhere? Have a drink, or coffee?"

"Thanks, but we have a lot to get organised. Money to change, then we have to get rooms somewhere and pick up our bags from the station." The younger one looks disappointed.

"Perhaps we can help. We know the best place to change money. My friend works in the Cambio by the Quay. Then we go round to the agency and fix you a hotel."

"All right." They look doubtful.

"Our names are Tony and Mario. Good Italian names."

They smile at my joke.

"Ours are Rosa and Elena," says the younger one. "I'm Rosa, she's Elena."

"What, Italian names?"

"No, that's just the Italian version." She speaks some Italian and wishes to practise. The older one has only a few words, mostly wrong.

"You are Inglesi?"

"No, Australian. *Australiano*."

They change their money and I wink at my friend. Then we go round to the *ufficio*.

"These two young ladies," I say to the boss, "need hotels. What can we find for them?"

He grins. "Depends on how much they want to pay."

"Not too much. We're on a tight budget," says the older one.

"But not the worst dump in town, either. We want hot water."

"You won't get anything decent under twelve hundred lire." The boss speaks English with the American accent. "Hotel Torina looks like the best bet.

Hot water, private bathroom. All for twelve hundred lire?"

"For two?" They look pleased and we arrange to take them round there instantly.

We talk on the way, Mario trying out some English and also French, which he speaks quite well. "My friend owns this hotel," I tell them. "He will get you a room for sure."

"You seem to have friends everywhere."

"It is like that in Italy. It pays to have friends. Like the Mafia, only smaller. Without friends you are nowhere." I take them in the back way. Down the alley and up some narrow stairs.

"This is very, how do you say it? *Pericoloso*?" says the young one. "I

wouldn't like to come up here at night."

"Ah, yes. *Pericoloso*." I laugh. "There is another entrance."

We go in, and I have a quick word with Riccardo on the desk. He produces a key. "You will like this room. Very good room. Leave the passports here and you can go up and look."

"Can we wait for our passports while you take the details?" The older one is worried.

"If you like. Or you can collect them later."

"Later today? Or in the morning?"

"When you come down." He copies down, in the meantime, the details. They wait until he is finished. Very suspicious, they seem. I can read their ages, and that the older one is married.

They go upstairs, the one nearly tripping on each step in her great boots the other in the serviceable *Inglese* coat. Riccardo winks at me from the desk. I give them a few minutes, then follow, knocking discreetly on the door. Mario waits downstairs.

"Well. What do you think?" My eyes slide across to the bed *matrimoniale*, then back. They avoid looking, appear not to notice.

"It's great. A really nice room."

"Good. You like this bed.?"

"Yes. It looks very comfortable. And the bathroom too. It's fine."

"Well," I say, with my shy *ragazzo* smile, "can we meet you later? Take you somewhere. You like to spend the afternoon with us?"

"Yes, we could. We need to have lunch first. And collect our packs from the station. And shower." They have spread very smelly cheese out on the bed, and bread rolls. The younger one laughs nervously. "That's not us smelling. It's the cheese. It needs eating."

"Ah, yes. Tastes very good, but does not smell so well. We will go back to the office now and meet you here at, says, fourteen hours."

"Two o'clock. Okay. Will we meet you downstairs?"

"No. I will come up and knock. I know very well this place because, you see, I live here too."

We return at fourteen hours sharp. They have washed and changed and look thinner without so many clothes, though the older one still wears those ridiculous boots. Their hair is wet. I touch Rosa's.

"Your hair is not dry? You do not bring the hairdryer with you. You will catch cold."

She brushes it aside. "Of course not. We can't afford to carry things like that around the country."

"Well. Where shall we go?" Mario is growing impatient.

"We'd like to see some of those little huts with the pointed roofs."

"Ah, *trulli*. Yes, we take you. We go for a drive."

We walk to Mario's car and while we are doing this, we talk. They are *professori*, teach at the University. We tell them we are *studenti*, I am nearly finished my Law degree and Mario studies French. They are interested. When I am finished, I tell them, I will quickly get rich in criminal law. I know the right people. We only work in the *Ufficio*

Turismo during the vacation, we tell them.

We drive to Ostuni, the White City, and I sit crushed in the back with Elena, my knee against her, occasionally dropping the familiar arm around her shoulders. We look at the white painted brick houses. They are not so impressed, these tourists.

"Where are the *trulli*?"

"Oh, I am not sure. Not here."

They take some photos of an arch with me and Mario standing in front. Good souvenirs. Then we show them the lookout and one of our churches, under repair.

It is very cold. I walk arm-in-arm with Elena. I put my hands inside the front of her fur coat to warm them, and rub my cheek on the lapel. She is stiff. She moves away and talks to the other one. Then I walk with her again and she tells me she has children in Australia. She and Rosa would like to teach in Italy for a while, but it is difficult to get jobs. I tell her I have a friend in Firenze who will give her a job teaching the English. When will she come? Will she bring the children? She does not know. She wants to talk to my friend first.

We swap about and I walk with the younger one, who is more friendly. I put my hand in her pocket to keep it warm. She teases me by moving it away. It is very cold, she says. We must go soon because she has been sick with the bronchitis and the wind is not good for her.

"Poor Rosa." Mario ruffles her hair.

We decide to drive back to town then, and share a pizza. Rosa rubs her fingers over Mario's little pictures of Our Lady and the Christ Child on the dashboard and starts to talk about when she will have a baby, but she does not say who will be the father. As it turns out, she wants a baby but not the father, and that is very bad for the child, I tell her. She is one of those feminists, and does not want marriage. She thinks the man will not be of help. But she does not understand the Italian system, where the family is important. I, myself, would be prepared to help with the dishes. We are not in bars all the time, like Australian men. We do not find it amusing to be drunk, and if we go to the bars to meet friends and talk, well, what woman would want to be there anyway? I tell her the feminists here are the ratbags. In Roma they throw bombs and cause much trouble.

Elena, I can see, is not such a 'feminist. She is more of a woman, a mother of children. The other one is very nice, but maybe trouble. Let Mario handle her.

It is dark when we arrive in town, but too early for the Pizzeria to be open. We park near the waterfront.

"Is this where it is?" asks Elena. "I'm starving."

"No. It is very close. *Andiamo*. Let's go."

We walk down towards the Piazza Duomo and into the Via Colonne. I talk to Elena again about coming to Italy to teach, and ask her to make up her mind. I stop in the middle of the street, allowing Mario and Rosa to move

out of sight around the corner. Elena becomes agitated, looking after the other one and trying to move forward, but I stand firm.

"We'd better catch up with the others," she says finally, nervously. This is absurd. She behaves like a virgin.

I tuck my arm into hers and we mount the steps to the colonne Terminali. Mario and Rosa are there. Mario is slow tonight. Other couples kiss in the shadows, but they do not. Still, there will be time.

"What happened to you?" asks Rosa.

"We were talking. I wondered where you were."

We steer them towards the bridge and look out over the water. This is a very romantic place. But they shiver and wish to leave. They are hungry. They think of nothing but their stomachs, these Australian girls. Rosa takes the older one's arm and walks with her and talks quietly. Elena nods.

"What are you saying? You are talking about us."

"No, we're not. But we want to go to dinner soon. Can we go there now. This is an awfully long walk to the pizzeria. You've taken us a funny way."

"What is the matter?" I ask. "You do not like our company."

"Of course we like your company. We like to meet people in the countries we visit. We like to make new friends."

"Very good, then. We drive."

Before we get into the car, however, the younger one is on her rostrum again.

"You understand that we're eating Roman style. We'll pay for ourselves. That's the way we usually do things."

"No. You are our guests."

Elena looks at Rosa, who grows red and shifts nervously.

"Look," she says, "We should make one thing clear right now. We would feel compromised. Do you understand? If you pay for our dinner you may expect something. We don't want it that way. We wish to remain friends."

This really affronts me. I get mad. I don't need to buy a woman. "You insult us. If we want someone, we ask. We pay for the dinner because it is the custom for the man to pay for the woman. There are no expectations."

They have the grace to look embarrassed. Elena seems to wish she is not part of all this. "It's better," Rosa persists, "We don't like to feel there are any obligations. In our country men sometimes think there are."

"We are good boys." Mario puts in.

They laugh, and I get mad all over again. "What is funny? Why do you laugh?"

"Nothing. We're not laughing at you. It's hard to explain. Just a cultural joke that doesn't translate."

We get in the car. "Ah, Rosa." Mario pinches her cheek. "You are *molto intelligente*." He sighs.

"What do you mean by that?"

"You miss out on the good things. You will be very lonely."

"She doesn't miss out on anything. And she's not lonely. Her life, her work are very satisfying. Writing is more important to us than having

affairs."

"You miss out on making love with Italian boys. We know about *amore*, we Italians. You have not the experience of this."

"I've had enough of love. There are other things."

So, she is not a virgin. But she withholds. Mario shakes his head sadly.

Molto intelligente. Molto intelligente."

We arrive at the Pizzeria and walk them to the door. They can eat alone.

I have had enough. "Ciaou", I say.

"Ciaou."

"What's going on? We thought you were eating with us."

"We do not wish to eat."

"Then, if it's like that, nor do we. We wanted to eat with you as friends."

Elena says. They announce they will go back to their hotel, and ask us

the way. We explain, and return alone to Mario's car.

"Perhaps you were too hasty", Mario says. "I think they want to be with

us."

"Well, I became angry. After all we have done they mistrust us. They are not nice girls. Very suspicious. Perhaps users."

We drive up the Corso Garibaldi. There they are at the Piazza, looking at the town map and arguing and pointing in all directions. *Molto intelligente?*

I know this town like my own pocket. It is impossible to be lost.

It perhaps they do not want to go back to the hotel.

"Are you lost?" They say just to tell them which street they are in.

They will be alright. We offer to drive them. "Look", I say, "I am sorry

I lose my temper. But you insult me."

"We're sorry too", says the young one. "But you insulted us." She does

not seem so sorry. Her cheeks are rather red.

"Well, we will eat." I am a little stiff, waiting to be appeased.

We go to the Pizzeria and my friend finds us a table. Two tables, in fact, side by side. Mario and I sit opposite each other and the girls

the same. There is an argument in the kitchen. One of the patrons has

attempted to leave without paying his bill and the cook has summoned the

police. The meal will be delayed. We wish to leave, but Elena is too

angry. So we order drinks. Rosa wishes merely the *minerale*. Elena

hesitates over *vino*, glances at Rosa. No. We order *birra*. Mario pours

some of his into Elena's glass. Rosa frowns. The waitress arrives and

we order pizze. "Separate checks?"

"Separate checks", they say.

Mario and I talk to each other in Italian. Rapidly. I wish to waste no

more time on these girls. They are not feminine. Elena likes us, but she

is afraid.

"What are you saying?" Elena asks. "Why don't you talk to us?"

"Nothing", I reply coldly. "Men's talk."

Our pizze come and they are burnt. The girls have ordered Quattro Stagione

which take longer. "Do not watch us eat" I ask. "Eating is private."

They avert their eyes and talk to each other.

Their pizze arrive as we are finishing. Elena attacks hers voraciously, enjoying every mouthful she consumes. She is ravenous. Rosa picks at hers slowly, delicately savouring. Her teeth are small and sharp. The bitches, the bitches.

We nod to each other, significantly. "You know, you are very suspicious girls."

"Why do you say that?"

"You do not trust us. And you did not trust Riccardo with your passports at the hotel. Why? You do not like foreigners?"

"That's not true. We explained that to you. We've had troulbe with our passports and thought we might need them."

"And Elena does what Rosa says. You have the potency over her."

"No." The older one is defensive. "We have the same ideas on certain things. We've known each other a long time. I've been influenced by her, but I think for myself."

"You are more than just friends, perhaps?"

"We are very good friends."

I look at Mario. They are perverse, travesties. Well, it is their loss. We drive them to their hotel. We are cold. Mario places a kiss on the cheek of the younger one.



M I G R A N T 7

BOX 2430V
GPO Melb 3001

Issue No.4 out now.

*Work concerning the
migrant experience.*

If you could slice away sections of the city like a cake, what would you see? The invisible cities behind walls, the conjunctions that the economic megalopolis makes, people talking, whispering, fighting, making love, doing deals, thinking they're alone ten feet away from each other, ~~making~~, scheming, worrying, looking out windows at the same sky. When I came back from London I went and camped on the beach to expand my horizons again. Then I came here, and we used to walk out into the back yard and lean over backwards to see if the sky was there. There were hardly any stars.

We are blown about the streets like dead leaves. And behind the screens thrown up by the city are the cities of the imagination where we would like to live. The only way to live, we say, is to live as if it's an ideal world, to celebrate the possibilities. So in summer we go to the beach, in winter we drink cappuccino, and we talk, we tell each other stories, we are always on the point of making sense of things, shouting over the noise of planes going over in Leichhardt and the hiss of the cappuccino machine and the traffic piling up outside, we lean towards one another, trying to catch the crucial word, to listen for the clue, the last bit of information that will set it all in context or burst the balloon, we buy the papers and throw them away, having an idea, faint but getting stronger, of the stories behind the stories, the plots, subplots, fictions, fantasies, wheeling and dealing. We dream. We have reconstructed our cities over and around the economic base and the social superstructure, like posters over the wallpaper in rented ~~houses~~, like gestures of kindness in the Social Security office. We go to a concert and hear Margaret Roadknight sing, We're all dancing at the revolution, why don't you come by, it's the song for Emma Goldmann, and we're on our feet. Just for a night, the streets almost belong to us, we are strong, we have dreams. Out of the subversive power of the imagination and because we're having a great time, we get these glimpses of the cities we could build

synchronize: cause recorded sound-effects to coincide with filmed actions.

The man who can be divided in two by a school of fish, or a mob of sheep, first came apart between the perfectly synchronized jaws of a crocodile. This was while he was a cleaner at the City Reptile Park. The crocodile was known to be fond of the man and every day let him scrub its teeth with a straw broom.

division: unit of two or more brigades with artillery attached.

"Our crocodile," said the park supervisor on the day of the division, "we think has a particularly nasty cavity. Our cleaner may have scrubbed this too hard and angered the beast. We will employ this country's best surgeons to mend the victim."

organism: individual capable of growth and reproduction.

The nation's 'best surgeons' set about validating that description, but were unable to reorganise the cleaner's anatomy into one functioning organism. Instead they reorganised his anatomy into two functioning organisms.

spotlight: reveal or emphasise dramatically.

This angered the cleaner's brother, a musician, who felt public spotlight had necessitated the surgeons to create a mutation from his brother. His brother, he argued, had earned the right to die. Actually he simply hated spotlights since the night he screamed at an audience: "I'm not a harmonica, I'm a man."

key: metal instrument to fasten or unfasten a lock.

During a press conference later that evening he snarled at a reporter, revealing two perfect rows of chrome-seated reeds. The papers argued whether his teeth were in the key of B-flat or C-sharp.

resort: adopt as expedient or method.

The mother of the cleaner and the musician worried, and when she wasn't worrying she worried she should be. After she turned into a lump of worry her sons took her to a seaside resort. That was where, while swimming with his family, the cleaner was divided in two by a school of fish.

retreat: sunset call on bugle.

days after they'd booked into a mountain retreat, the management
em to leave. "We've had complaints that you played a mouth
organ all night," insisted the manager. "I have to breathe," replied the
musician. "What are you," asked the manager, "man or a harmonica?"

RESEMBLING STUPIDITY

selwyn pritchard

Imagine lonely 1 a.m. and
this last will of 'a nice young man'
with 'a good U.E.' and an aerosol can
and a bomb strapped on his chest!

Kilroy's protest against death's whitewash
was more self-regarding, Neil, than what
the press, with Kiwi ingenuousness, got
right: your 'painstaking' writing on the wall.

They splashed headlines in your icon blood:
'PUNK ROCKER DEAD.' Pavlovian epithets,
'tattooed', 'pink-haired', are more powerful threats
still, I'm afraid, than your Bakunian bomb.

Now lenses swivel, programs scan within,
read 'bad' for 'sad' and 'mad', unease uncured
'for every security must be further secured'
and most have forgotten your steady hand.

"Doctor, why do you say I am a dog?" he asked.

"I've given you a thorough examination," the doctor replied. "I'm afraid that's what you are."

"But doctor, never in my life have I been ... "

The doctor interrupted him in midsentence. "There's always a first time."

"Always?"

"Well, perhaps not always. But more often than not ... "

"How can I be sure that your diagnosis is correct?"

The doctor was about to lose his patience. "Dash it, man, I can refer you to a specialist if that is what you want."

The man got up. "No, thank you, doctor. That won't be necessary. I take your word for it. Only ... "

"Only what?"

"What am I to do, doctor?"

"You'll have to learn to live with it. There are things worse than being a dog. The world is full of them. You are not the only one, you know."

The patient hesitated.

"Yes?"

"I'm not sure how to tell my wife."

"Don't! She'll find out sooner or later. If she does, OK, if she doesn't, OK too. Anything else?"

"My employer, doctor. I mean, I'll get the sack."

"Not necessarily. They may never notice it. If they do, bark!"

"I am a shop assistant. Soft goods."

"Fancy that. Soft goods." The doctor thought for a moment. "Soft goods. Why?"

His patient had no answer. Indeed, why? Strange how things work out, he thought. And now this being a dog. It had come as a complete surprise. True enough, the world was full of them. They all seemed happy enough, few of them ever starved, some were better off than the people who kept them. Come to think of it, why not? Indeed, why not! He left the surgery and walked out into the street. It was lunch hour and there was quite a crowd on the move. He sniffed through the thick layer of exhaust fumes hovering over the ground. To cross the road he waited with a bunch of people for the lights to change and then trotted across the zebra stripes. Everybody was in a hurry. But he had plenty of time. He was supposed to be back behind his soft goods counter at 2 p.m. He had always been on the job. Suddenly he felt that there was no need for it any more. They couldn't sack him. There was a seniority rule in his store. They could only force him to retire at 60, to be sure. But his superannuation would still be high enough to see him through.

Two barks, and his mind was at rest again. By force of habit he went to his usual public convenience but on seeing the word 'gents' decided that that was below his dignity. He found a tree with suitable antecedents and relieved himself with more satisfaction than he could remember ever having felt before. As he trotted along he passed a bitch. The two dogs did what dogs do and having satisfied themselves that they had met at the wrong

end of the year parted without further ado.

For the first time in his life he realised that the city was inhabited by feet. Feet were predominant in the life of the city, the only ones who could compete with the smell of exhaust fumes. Exhaust fumes and feet. Chasing another tree he realised that the bitch had used it. Just to show that there is no animosity he lifted a leg. No more than a symbolic action because he had just been.

He was late. His manager looked at his watch. "Twenty minutes past two." The manager grunted. He gave a short bark. The manager took a step back and stared. "Our figures are down, you know. Times are tough. We've got to keep on our toes."

Another bark.

The manager withdrew.

For the rest of the day he barked at every customer but controlled himself sufficiently not to bite.

Later, on coming home, his wife didn't notice a thing. "What sort of a day did you have?"

Another bark.

"Well, you can retire at sixty, you know. I don't mind if you do. We can go and live up north. It's warmer. Cheaper. No heating needed."

He more barks.

The rest of the evening television till bedtime.

Night. Sleep well."

Three or four barks. The last one only muffled. Perhaps the diagnosis was right after all.

He dreamt that he had changed into a human being. It was horrifying.

Fortunately he woke up before the dream turned into a thorough nightmare.

Thank God that was only a dream. The dog snorted comfortably, then issued a high-pitch bark, indicating joy.

"Boyfriend trouble, boyfriend trouble", said Vanessa. Her long hair dragged into the bucket. "Oh Hummy, you're the only one who's been faithful to me." Hot sudsy water hit her bare legs as she slapped a sponge onto his body. "Humbert Humbert my dearest, I'm sorry about yesterday. I shouldn't have let that awful man near you. Terrible driver, terrible. Mud all over you, poor darling Hummy." She picked at a red speck with her fingernails. "But not to worry, I've given him the push now." she stretched up on tiptoes and started on the roof. Her T shirt was wet and clung to the driver side window. "It's you and me now, Hum, just you and me."

Hamish didn't know much about cars, but he didn't think there could be such a thing as a sigh in the engine. Rattles and knocks maybe, but a sigh? He leaned forward and listened to the engine idling. It was purring smooth as a cat. And old car, but a well-loved one, this. A sigh? He had to be hearing things.

He turned off the engine and gazed with proprietorial eyes at the walnut dashboard. What a find. These old cars have such personality. He was glad he'd called in at the caryard again. Couldn't wait for his friends to see him come floating along in a Humber vogue, playing the English country gentleman.

For a moment Hamish surrendered to fantasy, a woofle of hunting dogs in the back seat, his trout fishing gear in the boot, deerstalker pulled firmly down round his ears, gleaming leather elbow patches on his tweed jacket ... Then he giggled and bounced up and down in the seat for a bit.

A pair of size 12 boots stuck out from under the engine. It was dark and deplorably grimy down there, but Hamish was expecting a friend at any moment, and wanted to look as if he knew what to do with the adjustable spanner in his hand.

He ting'd gingerly on a bit of pipe. Mistake. A cascade of rust fell on his face, and he was about to make some pungent comments on bloody stupid decrepit cars, when he caught sight of two feet standing near the front wheel.

"Oh, hello there", he called. "I wasn't expecting you so soon. Just fixing the muffler, won't take a tick."

He started to wiggle out. Funny, don't remember John having shapely ankles. Hamish quickly swiped at the rust flakes as he stood up and turned to say hello. "Sorry about that. Just a minor problem ... " he began. But there was no one there.

"Ah", said Hamish sagely to himself, and flung up the car bonnet with a deft gesture. He stuck his head inside, peered about and announced "Battery terminals!" These were the only things he could recognise in an engine, and he was going to show them who was boss.

As his fingers slid into the virgin Vaseline, specially procured for the

...sion, a tiny sigh drifted up from somewhere near the radiator. "Wham!" coughed Hamish, and crashed the bonnet shut, Vaseline all over the shiny Humbert crest. Whistling loudly, he whipped a grubby handkerchief out of his trouser pocket and rubbed at the chrome. John would be there any moment, wanting to know all about the gear ratios and points and gaps

He stopped, stared at the bonnet. There was a reflection, a slender arm and hand holding a dipstick. He looked up -

"Wh. Thought not."

He stuffed the hanky and jar of Vaseline in his pocket and headed back to the house, taking the steps in one bound and disappearing in the door at a run.

"How much d'yer want?" asked the boy at the pump.

What kind of petrol did it take, standard or super? wondered Hamish, and opened the tatty old car manual. From between its finger-smudged pages floated a shimmer - a long strand of blonde hair.

Near his lukewarm cup of tea, Hamish gazed at the glistening folds of silk. He touched. The fabric gave softly beneath his fingers. As he unfurled it slowly from the table, streaks of grease were revealed between the folds, and little rips, and here and there a streak of dried sweat tapering into a wisp of lilac coloured lipstick. Hamish pressed his nose into the thick slipperiness. Why, it smelled of ...

"What've you got there, mate?" blabbed John, bounding into the kitchen and snatching the swathe of pink away from Hamish's face. "Well well well, you're an old sly boots, aren't you? What are you doing with one of these stinky nighties? Got a new girlfriend, eh?"

"Give that back!"

Hamish grabbed the nightie and tugged with the outrage of the dispossessed. He retrieved all but a shred from John's hand.

"I found it in the boot of my car. It's a polishing rag, if you must know."

Quickly slinging the rag over his shoulder, he clattered about in the cupboard under the sink, found a bottle of Silvo, and headed out of the kitchen and up the stairs to his bedroom. Then, looking round first to make sure no one was spying, he tiptoed over to the bed and lovingly tucked the nightie out of sight under his pillow.

The nightie took on form. The woman spoke. "We're going for a ride, Hamish." She gestured to the window and it swung open, her long straight hair growing like Rapunzel's, and he climbed down but no he was sliding like down a golden slippery dip and landed flat on his back in a patch of ~~grass~~ sprung up from the gutter as green hands to catch him, caressing his face. She sat on his chest, blue eyes gazing down and smiling said "First gear please darling."

"Where's the car?" asked Hamish, confused, and she twisted her hand into his hair "Oh but that's you" and slipped him into first, spinning out onto King Street with finely chopped rhubarb scattering in their wake.

The long red nails of her hands slipped into his neck as she moved him into second and his shirt started to shred as they picked up speed along the bitumen, with neon signs blurting out EAT ME flash flash DRINK ME flash USE ME flash flash flash. She was having some trouble getting him into third and nearly lost control as they careened into a pothole, the corner of her nightie wrapping around a traffic light and ripping off. He strained his head up to get a glimpse of her body, but the yellow hair whipped into his eyes and she pressed her mouth onto his, their teeth clicking like a loose tappet. Quickly up through fourth and into overdrive as they tore along Oxford Street, she slipped her arms around his chest, around his back, digging her nails in to keep a hold as sirens started to scream behind them. He could hear the crash of waves up ahead and smelled the sea as the sun grew hotter and tar started to melt onto him, a warm black glue wrapping them together, her legs twining round his wheels, her torso stuck to his dash. "Where's the knob for the lighter, hon?" she asked and casually lit a cigarette on him as they plunged over the edge of the road onto the beach.

It was a bit of a worry, really. Hamish asked "Are you familiar with Freud's theory of the subconscious?"

"Nuh", said John, stuffing a vegemite sandwich into his mouth.

"But I've started having these dreams. Since getting the car. And sometimes I think that I see things. You know - around it."

"Get your eyes checked."

"There's a sigh in the engine."

"No such thing."

"But according to Jung ... "

"You think too much, Hamish. Here, have a vege sango. Seeing things - first sign of creeping malnutrition."

Hamish never refused food. He munched. In his ears was the sigh, a whispered breath over the purr of the engine. He was sure it was the sigh of a lonely woman.

"Vanessa, Hamish. Hamish, Vanessa."

Hair. Arm, hand. Ankles. It was her.

He was sure it was her.

She spoke. He had to lean closer to hear her over the pounding of the stereo. She smelled of ...

"Christ, it's hot in here. I'm going outside. You will excuse me, won't you?" and she turned to leave.

He wasn't going to let the woman of his dreams get away that easily.

"Just a tick, I'll get us both a drink." He waded over prone bodies to get to the wine cask. By the time he had waded back, she was nowhere in sight. He headed for the front door.

She was leaning against a car, a Bellett which glowed in the moonlight. Her hair too glowed, falling straight and golden to her waist. She had not tied it back. Hamish liked that, it reminded him of a wild carefree gypsy girl wandering across the moors, her hair streaming in the breeze, her heart searching, yearning for a strong man, someone who would seize her roughly by the shoulders and say ...

"Who - great, mate. Here, put it on the bonnet, just let me light this.

"What, what did you say your name was?"

"Hamish. Hamish McSporrán."

"What! Oh, you're joking!" Her laugh cascaded down the scale like a babbling brook. Hamish was enchanted. He searched for the right line, something to catch her unfocussed gaze.

"What do you do, Vanessa?"

"I'm a call girl."

"Oh. That's a nice looking car, Vanessa."

"I really love these old cars, they have so much --- personality."

"I've got a Humber Vogue, myself. A grey one. '64. It's in beautiful nick. Somebody must have really loved that car."

Suddenly he had her. She turned to face him. He leaned closer to check the colour of her eyes. It was a little hard to see by moonlight

"I used to have a Humber Vogue."

"You don't say! How amazing!"

Hamish started to sweat, though the dew was rising and it was getting quite nippy out on the side of the road. From the house, he could hear the Pretenders singing gonna use my arms, gonna use my legs, gonna use my style, gonna use my senses, gonna use my fingers, gonna use my my imagination, woe-oh ...

Vanessa blew out a cloud of smoke and smiled at Hamish. It occurred to her that she looked coked out of her mind, but - but no, surely not.

He looked up at the moon, and smiled at him too.

"Would you like to see it?" ventured Hamish, his hands shaking as he put down his wine-filled plastic cup on the Bellett.

"See what?" asked Vanessa, beaming at the moon, the moon beaming back.

"My Humber. It's just round the corner. Maybe it's even yours, come back to haunt you."

"Oh no." She leaned over the bonnet of her car to blow a speck of dust off the spotless paint. He could see the faint reflection of her puckered lips. "Oh no, I have another car now." She beamed at her reflection, her reflection beamed back.

"Let me introduce you. Hamish, Bullet. Bullet, Hamish."

Vanessa turned back to the moon.

Hamish turned back to the house. The Pretenders wrapped around him as he stepped into the smoke filled hallway.

Its canopy was striped in all the colours of the rainbow and it had four flashing wheels with spokes that sparkled on the greyest of days. But the most remarkable thing, or things about it were its *two* drivers and *two* teams of horses, one at each end! How it ever managed to travel around the country in opposite directions and keep together on the same route is one of the mysteries it is hoped this story will explain. Originally the people had been a little puzzled by this duality, but they soon grew used to it; besides, they enjoyed the interest it created too much to question it too deeply. All year long it would travel the length and breadth of the land, visiting each village and district in its turn. Everywhere it went, people would say: "Here comes the cart!" and everyone within hearing would look, and sure enough, there it would be, with its horses and drivers, bearing down upon them. They would all stop whatever it was they were doing and run to the square to gather around it, scarcely giving the horses or the drivers a second look - enough to see there was nothing new about this - before concentrating their full attention on the cart. They would stare back from it, as one does with a large painting, or bend down and examine its undercarriage, or look for a change in its overall symmetry - all with the same, studied expression of one who knows what he or she is looking at. With great scratching of heads or chins, some of them would pass such comments as: "Looks very clean today", or "Isn't that a smudge?", or "Isn't it grand!", and other such remarks that require no real answer or comment. There was, of course, the usual rebellious fringe in the crowds who would scoff at or challenge its purpose; but they were still there to see it, weren't they? "What is your point?" and "Which direction are you really travelling?" they would shout.

"Ah well," would say one of the drivers in reply.

"Yes indeed," would say the other.

And they would add a "Whoa!" or a "Giddap!" as they went on their way.

Thus generations passed with relatively little questioning of the cart.

Eventually, however, more and more people began to wonder what *was* its purpose, and they usually concluded that it must be carrying something. But what? Some even tried to sneak a look inside the canopy, but they were severely dealt with. One day a rather large young man leapt onto the cart and pulled back the flap before the driver could stop him. He reeled away in horror at what he saw and turned to the crowd about to say something when the driver suddenly clubbed him unconscious. "He will be taken away to have his mind removed," said the driver, bundling the young man into the cart. The crowd murmured.

A few days after this incident, a proclamation was issued and distributed by the cart. It read: "Because of the increased interest shown in The Cart, the Governors have decided to release the following information:

The Cart and what it contains is the key to the universe as we know it. It shall do the common people nothing but harm to see within it because they would not understand what they saw. It is thus our profound wish that you, the good people of our land, shall join us in continued homage to The Cart, and in doing so, lend weight to the glorification and prosperity of our great state."

After this, the people regarded The Cart with even greater awe. Some of them even touched it for good fortune. Merryl 248 East 28/40 touched it and the following week she was pregnant. Her story soon spread across the land and many young women began touching it, sacrificing their virginity for the honour of carrying its child. But no matter how many times they touched it, they didn't seem to get pregnant. And so, Merryl 248's conception began to be regarded as a miracle. Only she and Herbert 572 East 20/40 knew that The Cart had had nothing to do with her pregnancy, but they could say nothing because they weren't licenced. The Governors knew their secret of course, but they allowed the myth to continue when people seemed to want it that way.

When her child was born, although it was a girl, the people called it "Cart", which, as everyone knows, is a boy's name. Merryl 248 seemed to have little say in the matter, so she too called her daughter Cart. She was, consequently, thereafter considered to be a male, although the social transformation took a good many years. Every birthday the drivers would let Cart 1 East 28/40 sit with one of them and pretend to drive The Cart, her father. The Governors gave Merryl an allowance of ten minutes solar for Cart, which she decided to save for her until she was Mature age.

The twenty one years passed quickly. Cart had grown more masculine every year. On his birthday, everyone in his village gathered around him in the square, awaiting the arrival of The Cart, his father. He stared sternly in the direction it would come. Time passed. The crowd began to grow restless. Cart glanced at his mother on the outskirts of the throng, who threw up their arms and cheered as it came into view. A few of them noticed, however, that Cart himself did not cheer. It trundled down upon them in its peculiar fashion and pushed through the crowd to its miracle son. The relevant driver helped him up onto one end; the crowd cheered. Merryl pushed her way through to The Cart. Cart stood proudly and seriously, looking across the sea of faces. She reached up and handed him his accumulated solar allowance, which he swallowed in almost one gulp. He then raised his arms in the air and shouted: "NOW I'LL PERCEIVE IT!", with which, he kicked the driver into the crowd, pulled back the flap and peered inside The Cart, his father. The crowd fell silent. The driver at the other end smoked his pipe and sang a little ditty, as if what was happening at the other end was of no concern to him.

Cart slowly extracted his head from the flap and turned to his people. "I don't believe it!" he said, although his words were only audible to those close by. He gazed at the crowd. Some of them suspected the sight had driven him insane.

"I told you it'd send you stark raving," said one.

Heads nodded.

"I'LL SHOW YOU YOUR SECRET!" yelled Cart. He lit a match and threw it under his father's canopy. The explosion of heat drove him and the other driver off The Cart. The horses pulled away, the ends of their harness dragging still lit across the square. The crowd stood back in shock as The Cart was reduced to ashes.

"Hang him!" yelled some of them, falling on him.

"But can't you see ... ", he pleaded, trying to point at the remains of their mystery.

"We can see what you've done, you idiot!", and "Come on, let's string him up!", they shouted.

Merryl was pushed aside. They captured the horses, harnessing one team to his hands, and the other to his feet. They then made the drivers mount the horses, and with much cheering and yelling and waving, drove them off in opposite directions: to gallop across the country, being greeted and cheered by all.

But soon some of the people that greeted them began to feel sorry for him. They found some wheels and a platform for him to lie on. The drivers were able to sit on the platform and the horses were more comfortable too. Other villagers and townspeople painted patterns on the wheels and the platform, and decorated them with stones.

A few months passed with Cart continuing to tour the country, when one day he came to his old village covered by a large canopy, emblazoned with a pattern of such colours as had never been seen by the common people. The stones on the wheels had been replaced by gems and precious metals. He was of course, however, no longer visible.

MATTOID MAGAZINE

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seven poems about not travelling to America

THERE IS NO NEED TO TRAVEL TO AMERICA

lyndon walker

Just close your eyes
And in three short lines
Your television flickers
Bluely in a corner
Showing endless movies
About sitting in a hotel room
In America watching movies
On television. Stuck in the room
For days on end. Scared to go out
Without knowing where to go out.
On the screen the movie is 'Midnight Cowboy'
And the television in the hotel room
Where Jon Voight is stuck is showing
Horrific examples of American television
With characters that make you scared to go out
So you sit in your room
And watch television
Over and over
Like a late night movie
Which begins with the movie screen
Within your television
And the sound
Of cowboys and indians
On television
Showing you
America like a continual air disaster
Until you can't stand watching any longer
And get up to buy your ticket
For NOT travelling to America
By turning
OFF the television and going out
To find
The blue eyes of television in the streets
Saying
There is no need to travel to America.

She was there at the bend in the road with the railway station behind, the bitumen at her feet, and the expanse of country flowing out towards a thousand and three hillocks, with blades of grass so green they were emerald and sharp against one another.

Her face had narrowed to the bare essentials and was tight on her skin. The hazel coloured eyes contained hints of past journeys as her wavy brown hair tangled with itself and stood at odds with her head. She felt young, yet she was also old.

Old enough to know that she could be the stuff dreams are made of, had not been made also of blood and bone, gristle and tendon.

She was slight and destined to be blown by the wind, but as she walked she cut a swathe of her own making. Outside the earth held unfathomable possibilities, whilst inside she fought with her own thin reality which transformed everything to its own measurements. Turning to gaze at the view behind she swung herself back almost violently, and then with a determined stride turned again and walked on. In the distance she could see faint vistas folding into one another.

Her feet were sure of themselves. They would blithely go on, stepping one foot in front of another, while her head ruminated on possible variations of past, present and future.

She was like you. She was like me. She was like all of us, anxious not to repeat herself, yet destined to make some of the same mistakes again. There was always a hole in the wall.

Being. Being wise. Being wise enough to live and not curl into parchment worn out and forlorn. That was the thing. A subject worthy of fiction, an object worthy of life.

To be outrageous. To be outrageous enough to touch that place inside where she could be conscious and knowing. She wanted to shout, to sing, and not be afraid of anything.

Outrageous? To break asunder all her chains. To be in full recognition of that thing. To join forces with that other, the others, those others. The right others. Was it possible now that she was alone in a strange land?

But taking cognisance, that was the thing ... not running away blindly into the hurricane.

The trees were her oasis.

They stood in all kinds of gails and confronted everything, though some like the weeping willow, turned their branches in upon themselves to cry unshamedly. But others, like the poplars, would stand narrow and thin with their backs braced in readiness for the severest onslaught.

And as if that wasn't enough, they'd extend their crevices for squirrels and send carpets of heart-shaped leaves down to the ground.

Yellow carpets for humanoids to walk upon.

It was alright. It had to be alright, despite the juggernaut of a world. There wasn't there always 'hope'. Hope that could transform the daily reality of the 'manmade' existence into something more.

Something more fair, more equitable, more livable, more loveable. And a critic in The Times wrote that: "the central ill in our society is our lack of loving one another." Perhaps he's right, in a way.

He was walking off into the sunset, but she was also walking home.

The tube must be the worst place to think like this, she thought as she went on thinking. A tube of a train which carries worn-out people to jobs where they try to gain a purpose, a fulfillment, a paycheck. A tube where the grey faces and furrowed brows said all there was to say about the human condition, as she sat there with the others on her way to her niche in the world. She was on her way with Elizabeth Gaskell's *A Life of Charlotte Bronte* on her lap. She had it open at their tombstones.

*

He was typing, typing a letter for her boss. There was no word-processor or visual-display unit, because she was the word-processor and visual-display unit. She hadn't yet been deskilled. And he was looking at her in his way, in his unique masculine way that was soft and appealing. He was the star of the office - one of Murdoch's proteges, they said. He was young, he was blond, he was 'on the move' and in charge of a hundred journalists. And she, all she could be was 'his' typist. He wrote stories for The Times whilst she wrote his correspondence.

All around there were typewriters. It was Fleet Street with a fleet of typewriters doing overtime. It was Fleet Street in its prime, still echoing the words of George Bernard Shaw: Twentieth century 'man' had given up culture and reading the book for the newspaper.

"Come over here," Jason called to her across half a dozen tables, typewriters and turning heads, "and bring your notebook."

"Take a memo to the chief of staff," he said softly as he pulled his chair up so close that she could almost feel his breath as it rose and fell on the crest of a wave.

"By God, don't let it happen," she said to herself inside. "I'm not going to end up a pommy mistress, and an on-the-job one at that." She

gazed with a look that told him her resolve. She felt her Australian innocence come to the rescue.

"Dear Alec," he said, "I can't agree with the intended sacking of Anne Cartwright, even though Anne is now almost 60. Murdoch's new unofficial policy to fire all journalists when they have turned 60 has to be implemented with discretion. She is a distinguished older journalist and an asset to all of us. Please don't do anything until we can meet for lunch and talk about this civilly.

P.S. Murdoch's no chicken himself."

When Jane looked up from her scrawl which was a combination of half-forgotten shorthand and jagged longhand, Jason was gazing at her with such intent that she felt exposed. But she said nothing except, "Poor Anne. I always feel such an affinity with her, though I can't understand why."

"Neither can I," he muttered.

He was thinking of her and she of Anne - they were not really together in time and space.

In the canteen at lunch time she found herself compulsively walking towards her - the older woman, the woman who had somehow come through, the woman who could teach her how to be.

Spaghetti slid from Anne's plate into a salmon pink mouth which was watched over by the palest of blue eyes. Her soft grey hair fell over her face and made a filmy curtain, as she smiled at Jane. She's beautiful, thought Jane with surprise, really beautiful.

"Come and sit here, Jane dear," gestured Anne, "tell me how you're finding us."

"Well, I don't know really," said Jane apologetically. "There's a gentleness in the landscape, but an ambivalence in the people that leaves me in two minds. Why does so much culture produce so little kindness - especially in those that can most afford it?"

"They say you have to be an outsider to really see it, at least that's what Grahame Greene says," she said as she looked at Jane, the young woman in her prime destined to go nowhere much. "But what are you doing as a secretary? You can do better. Be your own boss if you can. Though I'm not saying that I'm any example."

"You are in a way, you know," mumbled Jane, somehow embarrassed with the compliment. She could be honest about everything except how she felt about others - so very Australian after all.

She couldn't bring herself to tell Anne about the threat. She said to herself, it can't happen, it won't happen.

They were being drowned out by a sea of voices but it did not lessen the moment, which is after all ... all that they had.

*

She stood in the valley on the small stone bridge over the stream and looked up the steep cobbled street, so unchanged, so inextricably timeless. The street was being worn back down into the earth by the pressure of millions of feet. It was Haworth where people came to try and siphon off for themselves some of the Brontes lives. She remembered Virginia Woolf as called it, making a pilgrimage.

She had come on her own, leaving her sister Maisie behind. That was how it was at this instance of her life. She wanted to be completely unknown, even to herself.

The industrial England stretched all around her. She saw a village on a steep hillside sweep by moorlands where England's poor had dwelt for centuries. A village of craftsmen and women, farmers and tradespeople, which had stood self-supporting until the bourgeoisie discovered factories and the power of the machine.

Then Charlotte Bronte wrote in Shirley of the blighted countryside: "It would not do to stop the progress of invention, to damage science by discouraging its improvements, the war (against Napoleon) could not be interrupted; efficient relief could not be raised; there was no help to be had; so the unemployed underwent their destiny - ate the bread and drank the waters of affliction."

Now the village bathed in the half light of an English summer. Jane could feel it warming her head and the cockles of her heart. She was, after all, only a tourist like the rest of them, even if the world of the Brontes was as real to her as her own red shoes on the old millstones.

But she felt that it had lived a long time ago. A fanciful illusion, she told herself.

She had not come in winter to gain a more authentic experience, even though Virginia Woolf had written that to visit Haworth in summer is almost to deny the spirit of the Brontes. Something told her that to walk in the ice, cold and snow was to risk experiencing their agony. She could not risk that.

It would mean risking everything. Even today the sun was filtered by a mist net of clouds.

She walked past small stone houses built straight onto the street, where afternoon tea was being served in every sixth house for the tourists. She read their signs: Bronte Tearooms, Bronte Restaurant, Charlotte's Kitchen, and a dozen other exploitative names, and felt rather faint. A

tourist coach climbed up the narrow street and almost finished the job pushing her flat to the walls. She looked in windows and saw a ~~multitude~~ of bric-a-brac. Outside on the street people of various nationalities, ages and shapes jostled for leg room.

The Bull's Inn was there, where Branwell drank and almost lost his ~~soul~~. He had finished the job with opium.

When she reached the parsonage she stood still looking up at its ~~bleak~~. Hardly a tree, hardly a shrub, just stone meeting stone. It was all ~~there~~ there was between the graveyard and church, and behind it the vast ~~moor~~ rolled on relentlessly in their harshness. And one and a half centuries earlier, Caroline had confided in Shirley in a passage which said ~~more~~ about Charlotte Bronte than about her: "I sometimes dream melancholy dreams, and if I lie awake for an hour or two in the night, I am **continually** thinking of the Rectory as a dreary old place. You know it is very near the churchyard: the back part of the house is extremely ancient, and it is said that the outkitchens there were once enclosed in the churchyard, and that there are graves under them ... I have an inexpressible weight on my mind which I would give the world to shake off and I cannot do it."

Inside Jane felt the thwarted lives of the sisters still haunting the rooms. Everywhere was the coldness of stone. The small uninviting ~~small~~ room had stone floors, with only the merest hint of furniture. It was the room where the thirty year old Emily had lain down never to rise again, squashed forever by the English outrage to Wuthering Heights. Her ~~face~~ looked forlorn and empty of all life. It was hard for Jane to look at, even now.

Opposite was Rev. Bronte's study, where the old tyrant had steadfastly taken his meals. She read in her guidebook that the children only ~~entered~~ entered by invitation, and felt a lump rise in her throat as she stood at the door temporarily paralysed. The room was almost completely bare except for a few essentials - as Elizabeth Gaskell explained: "Mr. Bronte's ~~home~~ of fire forbade curtains to the windows."

There was no solace here, not even upstairs. She read that this was the children's study where they had first conceived their make-believe world. It was their expression of sisterhood. Not a sound or sign remained - just Branwell's painting of his three beautiful frail sisters looking wistfully out from their case. She walked to the window and saw the interminable tombstones

She ran down the stairs and outside. But even to reach the moors ~~she had~~ to go through the graveyard, and tread on pavements, grey stones, gravestones.

She walked, she ran. The wind blew through her as she screamed inside about the injustice of their young extinguished lives. But it was a long time ago, and she had a chance to go further ... further away, further

and herself, and further towards that life which they had touched on and missed in so many.

The hours were quiet and strange at her feet as they rose and fell, endlessly mouthing their cruel beauty. There were only a few stone ruins left now to mar the horizon.....

It was, but it won't always be, like this. Nothing is really permanent, she told herself, at least be thankful for that. She stood alone and felt the power of the north wind enter her body. The wind knocked against her wall frame, as it ebbed and flowed, lived and died, and went on regardless.

*

Week's holiday, a week's reprieve, ended on Monday morning. It was the same again. She was on the second last page of A Life of Charlotte Bronte. He had an unwritten sign on her forehead - do not disturb please.

Suddenly Jason was beside her. "I won't disturb you," he said quietly. "That book almost breaks your heart, doesn't it?" He sat near her content just to be there.

It almost broke her to hear him. A man who understands. A man who knows something about what women go through. She went on reading with her head, whilst her body tensed rigid and twisted itself on the seat. Keep it together she told herself.

They walked side by side into their open-plan office, though it felt strange. They both threw off thoughts of what others might think - too much.

"Where's Anne," she asked as they marched past her desk, "She's usually early."

"What got to her; I couldn't stop him," he said with reserve.

"Didn't you put up a fight? Didn't you? Didn't you really care? What about the union?" she said knowing it wasn't her place. But she did care. She didn't care if she overstepped the mark. What was she anyway?

"We'll have lunch and talk about it," he said.

That was it. He had given in like the rest of them. When the chips were down he went down too. She was working for an organisation with no ethics and which seemed to be intent on manifesting the second law of thermodynamics - the randomness of actions was increasing exponentially.

She'll go home, she thought. I'll go home and study. I've got to equip myself. I've got to see what it's like in Australia. But first I'll see

She sat at her typewriter typing. Inside through the sadness there was something she couldn't contain - it was soaring and leaping in full recognition of itself. She might somehow be released back to herself. It was as though she'd unleashed dormant brain cells which danced and exploded spontaneously. They were as anxious as her for new life.

The words flew by under her fingers like waves of light across a frozen

WHY NEXT YEAR MUST BE TOO LATE

judy

They call Limbo the place unbaptised babies go.

I'm unbaptised.

I'm not a baby any longer
but surely I am there now.

It must feel like this
empty downfall of dreams.

Hell may be other people
but Limbo is like you

like me and like this house.

Once I saw Byzantium in your eyes
and all life stretched before me in sepia print.

Now no longer eye to eye

hazel can make me feel nothing.

All that remains is a marmalade cat
and a lonely bed

and I am too proud to admit
a gaping heart.

Hung in the Limbo of next year's plans
and tonight's austerity

I cannot see.

Stormclouds gather.

It looks a long way from
the battlements of our sandcastle.

I know the end,

and that Limbo is nothing to do with babies.

swing on the iron arc of the bridge, swaying back and forth in a non-constant breeze, listening to the voices. I can't hear them, but it can. I can't hear anything except my own soft whistling in the silence of the harbour. I never know if it can see me when it's with them, so I whistle just to make sure, watching the arms extended in a prayer posture, watching the glare that splinters on the smooth eyes. It catches whatever deity it finds up there and glitters like a pea-green metal hinge hinged like clasp knives.

It survives the mantis, not even me. But for now I've got my part to play. It's a part that started long before the creature came, that took me from Young Talent Time to Saudi Arabia, from Channel 4 to the emirate of Sheikh Hanifa. It's nothing more, nor less, than my ability to mimic. I'm sort of human lyrebird. Feed me a sound and I'll play it back to you. I play a goods train in a glass factory, feeding time at the zoo, a full orchestral rendition of Beethoven's Ninth - ask and you shall receive. As a child I had my mother starting from her sleep at the cries of a hawk that never stalked the house. And at school I frequently killed my classmates with colliding semi-trailers. But most of all I like to whistle, and more than any other whistling I like the songs of birds. The mantis loves to imitate my birdcalls. They alone have allowed me to survive.

Long before the destruction of Tokyo and the evacuation of New York, even before the first confused reports from half-crazed Eskimos began to filter south, my birdcalls were helping me to reach my own peculiar destiny. For it was at this time that Sheikh Hanifa, tired of technology, smashed every tape-deck, speaker and recorded birdcall in his palace. Instead, already knowing the unreliability of beasts, he ordered me to hide near the pergolas and pavilions chosen by his guests, where I would fill their afternoons with the songs of impossible birds. I naturally after, having always possessed a good sense of direction, allowed myself to be stolen from his employ by Prince Abd al-Rahman, for whom I provided a similar service, swathed in a rich burnoose, concealed behind quarries and huge columbaria, pure as a nightingale or campanero, and as a strike, mournful as a curlew.

The peacetime, however, was soon cut short. The mantis saw to that, and strangely enough, the first reports produced little real alarm in the palace of Abd al-Rahman and his court, as if they were nothing more than a publicity stunt for the latest Hollywood extravaganza, or a comic diversion to the endless mutual insults hurled across the headlines by the world's great statesmen. We were left cold by the pictures of shattered igloos and kayaks, of islanders squatting in their smashed villages, or mutilated Indians piled at the outskirts of grubby towns. There seemed nothing unusual about these early photographs. Even the ruins of the pyramids could have been the product of an earthquake, while the damage in Trafalgar Square and the snapping of Nelson's column might well

have been the work of the IRA. It was the destruction of Tokyo, I think, that began to make us wonder, and the pictures of the vast, deserted city of New York clinched our credence.

When the first photographs of the mantis itself began to reach us we grew truly frightened. With its arms outstretched in a gesture of menace, rockets ricocheting from its back, it was perched upon the Eiffel Tower, crushing a jet in its mandibles and eyeing the fleeing traffic. It hardly seems necessary to recount the feelings of horror and revulsion that filled me as I examined that picture. However, I had little time to indulge in such emotion, since after the arrival of the photographs the creature descended upon Ras Tanura in the flesh (or whatever substance it is that protects it from ballistic missiles). I'll never forget my first glimpses of the mantis as it stalked across the squat-domed storage tanks of the refinery, twisting its head to peer at the squadrons circling over it, picking its way through acres of towers of the alkylation unit, reaching languidly towards the nervous jets, then leaping with a rush of wings across the sky to Riyadh, which it was to devastate in the space of twenty minutes.

It was at this point that I decided Prince Abd al-Rahman had little more to offer me, and so, after discovering a pilot willing to be extravagantly bribed, I returned home. I found the city in an uproar. Wild parties and dancing filled entire city blocks, while gangs in grotesque masks roamed the streets, all desperate to cheat the apocalypse. In the suburban families dug deep shelters in their lawns, paid exorbitant prices for canned foods, bought guns on the black market. Travel companies, diamond insurance ventures and the congregations of depleted churches flourished. People left for distant places, while political careers bloomed and withered at a giddy rate. Fleets filled the harbour, planes swept the sky, and security forces slowly established themselves as something to be feared more than the approaching cataclysm, until it finally arrived.

I saw the mantis coming low over the cliffs of the harbour. It skimmed the whitecaps and ignored the rocket volleys that flashed from the destroyers. It soared above the city, hovering, threshing the air with its wingbeats, until it finally roosted on the high golden bulb of the Centrepoint Tower. It rubbed its toothed arms with a dry, scraping sound, gazing down at us and glittering on its perch like polished malachite. A brace of heat-sensitive missiles burst against it and a laser shimmered to a bright white iridescence on the flesh of its thorax. Then it swooped, straddling the entrance to the Entertainment Centre, munching at the clientele while the bemused jets fretted in the summer sky. It knocked over St. Andrew's Cathedral and the County Council building, ate the commuters on Central Station then gobbled up the crowd in Martin Plaza. Tanks rolled down Pitt St., but to no avail. It was voracious, eating IBM, Australia Square and the Department of Education. It sampled the contents of Government House but hurried on to dally at the Opera House, which it nuzzled like a long lost lover, and had just begun to mount its tallest sails when the army's crack battalions arrived. They fought well but it was futile. The mantis ate them too.

... only from place to place about the city, wreaking total destruction in a matter of minutes. And then to my dismay, the place it went to was the place where I was standing.

... heavily to the ground as the feet of the crowd flew past, then I looked up at the mantis. Its legs trembled above me like thick, taut cables and the sheaths of its wings slid shut. It gazed downwards with that curious impassivity that has always seemed to me devoid of malice, its head cocked sideways, its mandibles clicking and twittering the way they do when it's excited. Then the hinges of one arm sprang open and it lunged into the crowd, catching a man in its sudden grasp. He squirmed and writhed, pinched by the toothed edges, clenched in the joint of the arm. The mantis raised him to its mouth, nibbled at his head and shoulders, then downed him at a gulp. I watched the whole thing, horrified, unable to move. I looked up at the mantis. It looked down at me. I saw its arm begin to tremble as if about to strike, and then I whistled. I whistled with a purer beauty than I had ever done before. I filled that predatory silence with the voice of a whipporwill, I laughed like a lark into the wilderness and cried like a curlew. I sang the love songs of currawongs, I played solos of canaries. I rang like a bellbird, moaned like a wren, crooned like a dove. I carved a nightingale's glass arias upon the air. The mantis hesitated, watching, as if uncertain what to do. I cawed like a macaw, boomed like a bustard, trilled like a thrush. Then it turned, apparently forgetting its hunger, urging me ahead of it. Strange as it may sound, I felt that I was safe for the moment, and I ran forward, laughing like a kookaburra.

... then I've survived only by remaining with the creature. There's almost nothing else in the city left alive. Escape seems too risky. Sometimes the mantis leaves its perch and circles overhead, or occasionally it climbs abandoned skyscrapers, searching for fresh food. It usually roosts on the summit of the bridge, just as it is doing now, hanging out across the harbour as if waiting. I grow increasingly desperate to get away. Its appetite is unpredictable, as is evidenced by the mounds of corpses that lie stinking in the streets. Yet escape seems out of the question. I don't trust the power of the creature's mind. I know it reads my thoughts. Sometimes I wake and sense its presence within me. In my sleep I can feel it watching my dreams. When it speaks to me with its thoughts I can feel it reaching further than I want, yet it neither resents nor mocks my hatred. It speaks to me often, but mostly it speaks to the voices, gazing at the empty air, perched on the summit of the gunmetal arch.

... it's unfolding its wings. The smooth green sheaths snap open and the thin wings fan out in patterns. Light sifts through the stretched membranes, then the mantis leaps, hurtling to the ground. It towers over me, soaring in the uncut grass, arms extended in its gesture of eternal reality. It cocks its head towards me and I see a thousand tiny images of myself reflected in the facets of its eyes. "You must be hungry, little one," it says, filling me with its tender, soothing voice.

"Yes," say my thoughts, though I know that it can hear far more.

"I will find you something nice, something you will not find distasteful." Then it turns its gaze towards the east, but I can feel the others, the voices whispering in its head and I know that I must risk my question again.

"Why have you done it?" I plead, trembling so that I can hardly stand.

"Done what, little one?" the mantis says gently, patiently.

"Why have you destroyed us?" I cry aloud, though the creature reads my thoughts.

"Because I was hungry," it replies, just as it always does.

"But your hunger has destroyed a planet!" I persist.

"Yes," it answers wearily, "My work is almost done."

"Work?" I cry. "What work? What work entails the destruction of the Earth?"

Then, for the first time, I feel the mantis falter. It peers down at me and I can hear the hazy voices buzzing in its head, while its voice answers them, though strangely, as if at some great distance.

"What did you say?" it asks, its voice now flaring like a flame inside my mind.

"I asked what work entails the Earth's destruction?" But I am diffident, afraid of its anger. Yet now it pays me no attention. It is busy with the voices, filling my mind with their ceaseless muttering. And I can feel its anger, an anger directed not at me, but at the things with which it's speaking. Then it leans towards me, its vast, expressionless face closer to my own than it has ever been.

"There's been some mistake," it's saying. "This is the wrong place. I was meant to go to Elna 3. I was directed to the wrong star. It's those bureaucrats who did it. I'm sorry."

And before I can say a word it's leaping upwards, the air of its flight pinning me to the ground, while I try to hurl my thoughts towards it, watching it dwindle in the bright blue sky. But then it's gone and I am crying, crazed as a nightjar, mournful as a crow; though later, when I've had more time to get things in perspective, I find I can't think too unkindly of the mantis. After all, it never struck me as the type that I think to apologise.

entry/base of skull.

to relate to anything I know. Knew? There are no walls. No
to speak of, that I can see. Just white. Forever. Above, below, to
in my lungs (it feels like I'm breathing it).

to me, I have bulk. I can see feet and arms and torso, and
by lips I can see them as well. But my clothes are gone. I can
everything I normally hide, even the hernia scar; ugly thing. The
of that is what it is, must be funny. I have no shadow.

step two, it seems to be walking, this body of mine, step three
there is no sensation of it happening, four, just the image
eyes, step ...

neither increase nor decrease. Sometimes I get so used to them
lulled. They hold me in security. But then they make themselves
again, filling me out, touching every nerve with the intensity of
scraping down a blackboard.

hoooo hoooo hoooo, but no one answers and there is no echo. My
walking and I keep on shouting, but nothing happens.

Chip Shop on the corner I was talking to Sweetpea and
wasn't there. I'd given her the nickname the night before. We'd
party together. She works behind the counter with the grease and
potato and fish. Her uniform is blue with huge white buttons. I
looking at the buttons because I couldn't look at her face. After
we'd gone and two-back-beastied back at my place. Her father had
that's what she was telling me. He's Greek. He was also out
the shop and about to come out and meet me. I was wishing like

wish ... and things started to look far away, then larger than
at the same time, like when you're a kid and it's night and you're
over the blankets at your room which has suddenly distorted and
strange and frightening. It all came true, my wishing. But not
I would have planned it. Had I planned it. All of a sudden I
the shop looking at Sweetpea's buttons.

get so bad I suddenly find myself flailing about in all
directions, kicking and punching at nothing in particular, screaming, and
thinking: What am I doing?

appears in the distance. It grows into a woman. Her appearance takes
off the pain of the noises and my body goes back to walking in
direction. She has a leg missing. All one side of her is badly

mangled. Ribs stick out through the skin and her arms hang strangely.

The weird thing is, she's walking like I am ... step one step two and all that ... as if she has both her legs. I keep expecting her to keel over to one side in a great squelchy heap, like a dog run over by a truck, but it doesn't happen.

I try talking. We're passing quite close. Hoooo, I say, which is not what I want to say at all, hoooo hoooo. She looks at me as if I'm the most ordinary thing she's seen all day, through her broken eyes, and moves her lips a bit. The sound that comes out is glyck glyck, sorry and mangled like her body. Nothing like the good healthy hoooo I've been producing. There doesn't seem to be anything more to talk about. We pass. I watch her for a long time over my shoulder. She shrinks into a dot and disappears in the distance.

I get a surprise in the sky while I'm still thinking about the strange woman. It begins as a smudge but soon begins to break up as it gets closer, into tiny fragments of black. As it passes over my head I see that it is a constellation in reverse. Its darkness glows out of white. I prefer it, I think, it is more defined than the usual image of stars in a sky, which are always blurred no matter how clear the night is. Black looks better in white than white in black.

There is a huge moon sitting squat in the middle of the stars. Black cheese, I say to myself, a negro man in the moon. A pantomime of a woman rhyme flits past. Sweetpea pulls out a fiddle and plays loud, aggressive folk music with lots of feedback while I fly up over the moon, up past a ugly little man in an apron who threatens me with a piece of Bream in Batter.

I shake my head. The stars and moon disappear, as does my Sweetpea and the man with his deadly fillet of fish. I am back in white again and the noises are crowding in harder and louder, the sirens reaching an impossible pitch, the voices gabbling and hysterical, the thumping of hard rubber wheels on concrete.

As a diversion I try to think of a plan to discover direction. After the initial delight of finding myself to be out of the Fish & Chip Shop, and the strangeness of being in white passed, a thick boredom settled on me. Indecision. Should I walk to the left (can I walk to the left?), continue straight on or try going in circles? Perhaps the latter would bring me back to where I began and I could try walking out of the door of the shop instead of just disappearing. Which brings up another problem: How I actually disappeared, or am I still in the shop but simply not letting myself think I'm there?

I resolve to talk to the very next person I come across, no matter what their appearance or manner, and discover once and for all where I am and how to go about leaving.

Imagine an apartment block. One of those Salmon-brick things they used to build in the sixties. Each apartment is stacked on top of another which

exactly the same.

... all the people in the apartment block. According to the laws of physics (and the block was fifteen stories high as well), there would come a point when you'd have a long line of people all sitting shitting on top of each other - about eight foot apart at the very most.

... straight up to the man sitting at the bottom of the line. He isn't aware. Looking up, the people appear like a bizarre totem pole with large segments missing.

... I say rather shyly to the bottom figure, it seems to be all I can do as the lips move and words tumble out on top of each other, vying for position in the air: "... and the entrance is the exit by which we all desire equality in whatever we are, would be or were.

... is the entrance to what we all should be but are not by the very fact that we are here instead of there in the first place. Knowing you're already accepting you're here are the first steps to transition by which we move to there which is where we all desire to be either by being because of the fact or not."

... understand but do not feel obligated to question either. I move away, looking back often. They are all black, the people of the totem pole, black and flaky. The black flakes are as burnt clothing which falls off them in a gentle rain, like ash without breeze, but disappears as it hits the whiteness of the floor. There are too many images.

... is a loud clanging, as of something being thrown into a vault and the vault being closed rapidly behind. It hurts my ears. I shudder, twitch my mouth. My legs take off rapidly in a new direction. The rest of me

... towards a figure shoots down toward me. It hurtles at the end of a long cord, screaming tailwinds and bomb sounds, with one long yellowed tear painted between my eyes.

... in front of me the cord tapers out. The figure continues, neck snapping, and splatters on the ground, only to rearrange itself and swing back up to dangle about a foot in the air. It jiggles. I stop. It is my father's father. My hands flap at the end of my arms helplessly. I hear myself saying. He laughs and jiggles laughs and jiggles. He will not move. I can feel huge bubbles of fear rising and bursting in my stomach like gas. It does not seem right to be afraid of him. I have never met him. Yet I know who he is.

... over so so slowly, he raises his arm and points his damned index finger at me. He seems to know and relish my new immobility, leaning on it, stretching it to an extreme degree.

... he says. And it all happens fast. Everything plays itself back: The constellation the broken woman and the noise, rising to a certain pitch. It builds in a curling wave of sound and vision, ever

growing, ever breaking, forever getting louder and brighter.

I see him hurtled upwards at the end of his rope, his neck stretching as returning, him giggling and pointing. And as he disappears there is silence for the first time. An apnoea of white. Nothing.

Then in the distance the first sounds of the city begin again. Faint, as growing louder. Looking down I see my feet. Step one ... they begin to move. And the sound rises.

Hoooo Hoooo Hoooo

Out/Point of exit/Indeterminate

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CONTENTION

jo drysdale

Last time on earth I flew
on a bald branch of a dead gum I ate grubs
turquoise and emerald butterflies grew in my stomach

if you want to picture me
think of the colours of the flamingo the peacock the macaw
underneath my rainbow brows blue pearls burn

within&within
a dialogue once shared by nature and man
I soared and tumbled and I always returned

I do not wear saffron robes
I fly when gurus shoot at me
outflank their batallions of devotees

collecting alms
like the pointer does my brother the duck
while shotgun blasts echo over miles of reedy water

my friends do not own
they grow like lillies in a pool
and if they're of flesh

i explode through fissures in their skull
i grow like moss on their eyes
I'm not belief I believe definitively

i soar and tumble and I don't return.

DRIVING HOME FROM THE MASSAGE PARLOUR

ros

drugged and down and speeding all at once
with a head full of pain
driving
from all the times and all the ways
she'd been smashed before

home
to the latest one she called love
who bashed her up and took her money

an old story

- how beautiful her body was
how early she learned
what beautiful bodies mean

her dad when she was 10
and said to all his friends
'Come around, Fran's home.'
They came.

Later her brothers.
Working the Cross by 14.

Same old story.

She married loneliness
a husband chasing cash
then gone
shocked by hers
for keeping him.

She saved his face in her wallet
always
played his songs

a whiskey-sucking purple-satin
razzle-dazzle girl
clanking golden chains

loved poems
music
her children most of the time (they were girls)
and tried to mother me

but
alky / drug-runner / jailbird / slut
got what was coming
... death that was coming

just the same old story
just another woman killed by men

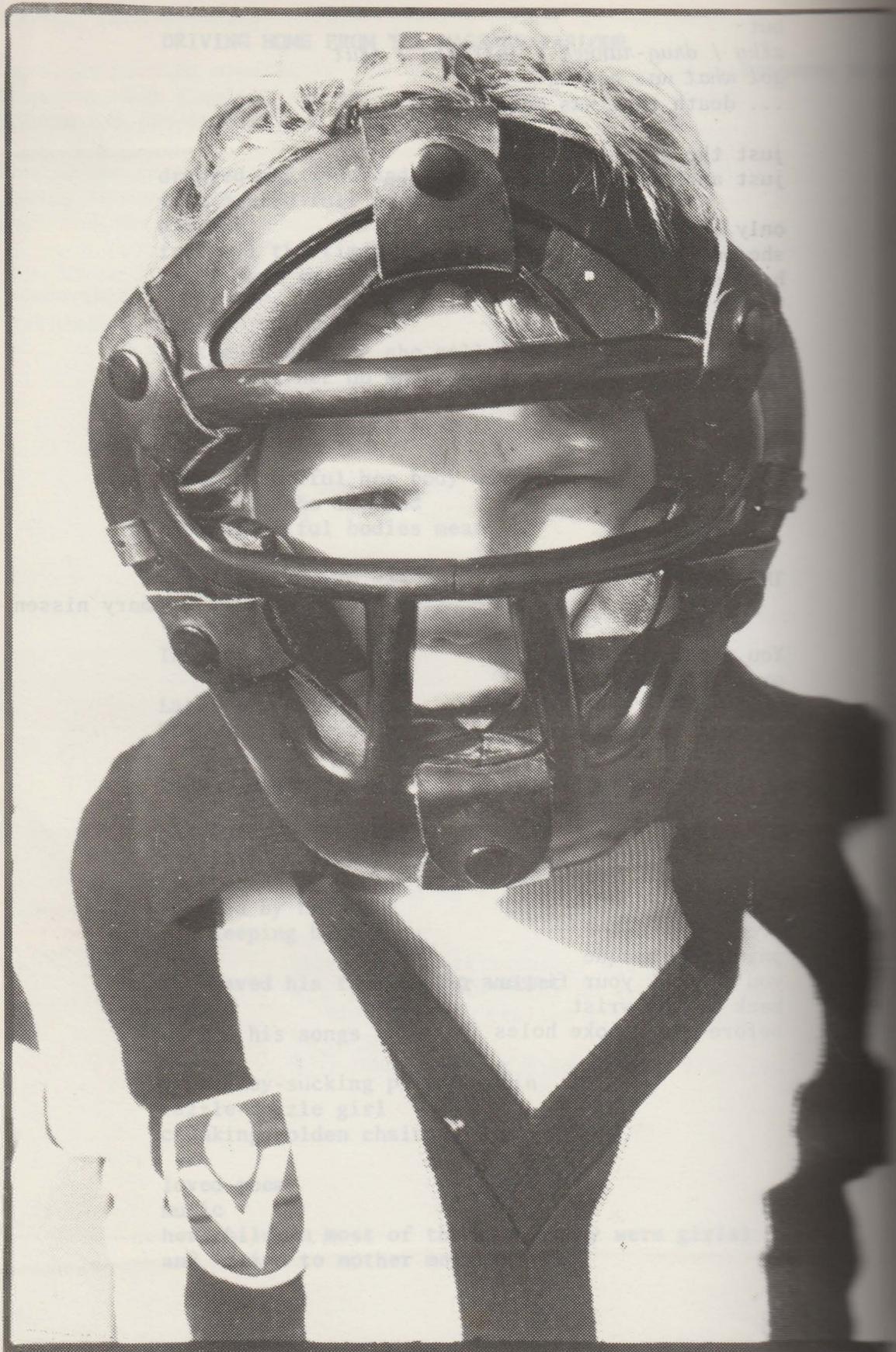
only once
she put her foot down
hard enough
to make an end

THE RESIDUE

rosemary nissen

You sent, for love
or instead of love,
beautiful wrenching words
I could lean to like hands
and cup my face in.
They meant nothing.
Now they thin to one dimension.

Hah! but I have this -
every word I sent
I meant
every last one
painfully opaque
you'd break your fingers off
back to the wrist
before you'd poke holes in them.



POLICE



A BRILLIANT FANTASTIC GREAT INTERVIEW WITH TIO



Why did you start writing & when?

Johnny Cash on TV one day in 1970 & he was tuning his guitar & thought he'd throw out two small poems about the glory of god or something. When he finished, the camera swung to the audience & all these people were standing up & cheering & I thought: Well if that's poetry, then I'm a poet. So I went & wrote my first poem.

Are you still got it?

It's all gone. When you begin to write it's all so bad & embarrassing.

Who were your early influences?

So many influences, I'm saturated.

What were your favourite writers then...

I've got so many of them I'm saturated. I like heaps of poets. My love of poetry is really very large. I've absorbed a hell of a lotta poets, cause I just love to find out where writers are. I love the sound of words, the battles of words, what literature is, what poetry is. And I love talking to poets because I wanna get into their heads, see where their minds are, you know?

I refused to read any poets when I first started writing because I thought writers had to have their own styles & I didn't wanna be influenced by other poets so for a year I didn't read anybody, I started writing poems altho I did have sneak previews every once in a while. Then when I decided to meet other poets I couldn't find any so I went into the Age Building & read 10 years of the poetry in there, in the Saturday supplement. And then Geoffrey Eggleston adopted me & we went around the scene checking out all the poets. I went to one amazing reading held at the Pram Factory I think, where the Hutchinsills were making a film of that particular poetry generation. Carrie Hutchinson was reading, & prompted by Chris Mann, by his suggestions & stuff, told Hutchinson to read his poems with his pants down. Carrie Hutchinson pulled down his trousers & everybody called out he gotta drop the underwear too, so he pulled them down & continued reading. So all the period from then on until September 1983 is contained in the Poetry Anthology I'm editing for Penguin at the moment & I've written 40 columns about the history of poetry, & it's a rich history, & exciting & poetry in this country is gonna get better & better & more. This anthology will redress some of the imbalance of previous anthologies which were all poetically aligned & which tried to grab a piece of poetry in Australia.

Does the sound very excited by poetry.

I've had my head scrambled by poetry & my involvement with it - writing & living it & dreaming it for about 14 years now & I haven't had much of a rest. I used to do a magazine called FREE which I used to run out of the city square. And I was editing FITZROT at the same time.

GDS: *That's one thing I want to ask you about. Your editing...*

Yeah well I did a lot of editing during 925. A lot of steering, sort of telling the writer well ok you're good at this but you lose it there so play with it a bit & see what happens. If it doesn't work then ~~over~~ try something else. I did a lot of editing in its true sense, by having a dialogue with the writer & using logic by looking at the structure of the poem & seeing what makes sense & what doesn't. And I think a lotta people gotta lotta exercise out of it, ya know? Um... so they've learnt something. They've learnt how to edit their work, how to objectify the language. I think it's a helpful thing for an editor to do - nobody's gonna learn anything if you just send them off a rejection slip.

GDS: *What kind of poetry do you like?*

Well I'm very turned on by left wing poetry, for an incredible amount of reasons. Apart from it's content: what they try; what the poem does; how the poem behaves. I'm saying it's Marxist because that's the modern way we use for getting to the human voice, the human condition, experience & madness. I think poetry hasn't scratched the surface yet. It's gonna be fantastic, the poetry of the future - I think it's gonna be fantastic in Australia too. I think we've laid down some amazing foundations & before I die I want copies of my poems slid in between C J Dennis, Henry Lawson, Banjo Patterson. I'm writing an epic that is covering Australia.

GDS: *Is that the BONAGILLA poem?*

Well that's a part of my fabric. You see I go off into an area and investigate it but my final book won't be the one until I die. So I hope I get cancer so I can write my death poem - it'll be a fantastic ending. I mean if I get hit by a car, it would be too boring. I may get a chance to scratch a few letters or words on the pavement or the road maybe, but not an oeuvre or something. Yeah, to have some time to contemplate the horror of a slow death. Not for its own sake or anything because I'm sure I'm going to be in a lotta pain but if I have to go, I wanna choose my way.

GDS: *How do you think literature fits into the wider world?*

Nobody's investigated the effect poetry has had on the world. Nobody's actually worked out how literature affects people. I don't think they know how to tackle the problem, from what angle. I think there must be some way of testing it. Poetry in places like Russia, is, like Nagaiwa says, like bullets & bayonets, guns & cannons. Poetry moves people & rattles them, insults them, soothes them & gives them information.

GDS: *It seems to be more dangerous in places & times where censorship exists.*

Yeah.

GDS: *The less censorship there is, the less power poetry has?*

There are two ways to tackle something if it's dangerous. Either
head on & throw the poets in prison or you ignore them. Now
is not that we're living in better times, just because we're
Australia, not in Russia. Virtually anything we say in this country
just means nothing. Nobody cares. I can think of two writers
done it: Dorothy Hewitt when she wrote RUPUNZAL - that got hit
by the myths of society. Then there's Frank Hardy.

There aren't many poets these days who when they read their poetry,
lose their audience in the process. But there are a few who are
a good job, you know, reading in factories & schools & prisons.
Like Eric Beach, Jenny Boulton, Joanna Burns, Anna Couani, Nigel
Desmond Jones, Grant Caldwell, Rory Harris, you know, the
is very big. They're getting out to people, not just universities,
I think can only be great for literature. I love the idea of
an army of poets. I read somewhere that something like 80% of
in America have written poetry in some stage of their lives.
a big market. I think there must be a way of getting out there
to hit us with their stuff & us to hit them with ours.

*What's the block people seem to have against poetry? Is it
because of the poetry we were taught at school & didn't like?*

Education system is to blame for the general block against poetry
they teach poetry backwards. Instead of starting off with
which is rich & alive, they start with a language which is the
they start with Chaucer & Shakespeare & end up on Keats by the
people have to go to the factory. That's teaching poetry
backwards. If you start with the present, say an Australian poet who
about working in a factory or something & they hear that, then
appreciate going backwards & going to Keats & Shelley & Byron;
go that way if they want to & if they end up on Wordsworth
they've left school then they've got something out of it. Also
thing is, there hasn't been a poetry of the people, with the
voice, very much in Australia. One reason why C J Dennis is so
is because he talked in a dialect which was either spoken or
aspired to speak, & he wrote in that language & people identified
with it. Ditto Lawson & Patterson. But you've got very few people after
you've got Bruce Dawe struggling in the 50's more or less alone.
convinced by Les Murray for instance. But I think what we've
since 1967 is a poetry which has started to talk with people's
& I think that's fantastic, you can only build on that, unless
something very tragic happens.

How did you write the brilliant, fantastic poem... what's it called?

A LA KOCH SORT OF. Great title, isn't it? When I said I'm
fantastic, I'm fantastic, my world changed. In the beginning was the
the words I chose were brilliant, fantastic, great. Now that
brilliant, fantastic, great, because I own those words as a
poet. When somebody says brilliant great fantastic you're not going
of Shakespeare, You're going to think of me (laughs).

I said those words. I like owning language. I own the word fuck. In the FUCK POEMS I own that word & it wasn't going to be vulgar, the way it's often used, the way it's been destroyed. I was restoring it to something very sensuous & very nice. So when I use the word fuck in a love poem it's not being vulgar at all, & I think they're the best love poems in Austr. They can't be beat, in the sense of the structure of them. The use of the language is superb & it's appreciated at poetry readings because people don't hear the word fuck used like that. It's quite a beautiful word in its context.

GDS: Did you sit down to write a volume of love poems, or did they come out of years of writing?

No, I was at the beginning of a relationship & I was feeling good so I started taking down some notes & it sort of grew from there. In fact, most of the FUCK POEMS came 925. I wrote a poem called Vol/Fol which was about how my sexuality was being interfered with by my work & it turned Jeltje onto writing work poems & everybody else started writing work poems & it built up into 925.

GDS: So 925 came out of readings did it?

Yeah, we were reading our poems every week at this cafe in Fitzroy, the Universal, I think & we were running out of poems, you know, new poems, but work poems are something you can write everyday, & Jeltje started doing it.

GDS: 925 was an exciting magazine...

I think it was the greatest literary experiment in Australia for decades. It showed there's a wealth of poetry out there done by ordinary people who've got something to say & I think it taught a lot of people how to write. We gave 925 our best shot, I mean we got it into factories & union bulletins, over the air & recorded on video & tapes & we gave a lotta money & time & energy to a lotta people. I think MIGRANT 7 is doing the same thing, you know, like casting another net to see what those kinds of people have to say. And it's great & it's gonna get greater. And also, later this year Karen Maree is going to do another magazine called WARD 666 which is concerned with hospital stories & in particular she wants a lotta women to write, because a lotta women have had horrific experiences in hospitals which have never been documented, so that will be another net cast & it's gonna be an amazing mirror of our society. Ultimately I see all this as being an epic poem in its true sense - this fantastic collective poem. 925 went for 5 years & we gave it away free. It was the biggest poetry magazine in the country. We printed 5000 copies for about 14 issues, & we did it 4 times a year without fail; we were on the streets every 3 months & we didn't get one literary critic which was amazing. Nobody dared say it wasn't literature & nobody dared say it was. There was lots of media coverage, but nobody looked at the poetry to examine it. I don't think they knew how to analyse it, they didn't know how to look at a text. There are no critics in this country. I'm probably the best critic in Australia & that's poor.

Do you mainly look at poetry as poetry to be performed?

I write in writing poetry as a script so that when someone else comes along, they know how to read it. I want poetry to be people, somehow. I hate the idea of people coming on stage with puppets, you know, or a cabaret act. I don't see myself as being a cabaret act, I wanna say something. When you go to people's houses & have a meal, they will gladly put on a record but you try to read a poem & invariably no! or stop being egotistical or something. There're houses I know of in Australia where I can go for a meal & people read & listen to poetry. That's why I reckon writers like each other, whether they hate each other or not, because they have the chance to read their work at readings & it can be exciting. It's talking about you know?

You used to read very often but lately you've kept away from most public readings. Why is that?

My mother is very sick & Thalia has tenosynovitis now so I've taken over some of the chores she used to do in the house. So I don't have my time out these days, I'm not as spontaneous as I used to be. I try to get out whenever I can, altho there are some places I never read because I can't be bored with where their heads are. I haven't got the time to go there. The point is that I may not be going to upfront readings but I've been reading consistently on television, Channel 2, channel 0/28, ABC radio, community radio...

What response do you get from your work? It seems to me that people either love you or complain about you.

I think that's pretty true of my writing.

Do they complain about the language you use?

When somebody's read 2 or 3 poems of mine the language question is dropped. By then they've found something else to object to. You know it's harsh on the ears for them, you know too fast, too loud, everything, but I love swamping people in poetry, literally bathing them in it. I don't care too much if they don't understand every word I'm saying. I just like to go: "Listen to this: BANG!! Paint, picture, sound, happening!" I like the dynamics of a reading. It's very

Has your poetry has changed recently, becoming more statistical & numerical.

I've always loved facts & figures. I started to realize the value of facts, started to understand how to use them as images; I remember facts were first used in the realm of poetry, Homer in THE ILLIAD as a historical document & it's full of facts & people & names, incidents. The done is when I bump into a fact or a fact bumps into me, I use it. I spent 6 months of my long service leave researching

material for BONAGILLA. I've always been interested in facts & finding out how I can use them so that they make sense. Too many politicians & academics throw them out at you & you don't understand what they're talking about, but I use them so that they make sense, so people can like listening to them, enjoy hearing more information. THE OCKER POEM is a documentary of the 70's & it took me 3 years to write. I flipped thru 30 years of newspapers & magazines gathering facts which I could ~~manipulate~~ & wrangle into a structure. There's a lot of history in that poem & a lot of lying too. I mean if you're using facts & figures you lie too like a politician would if you want your image to be perfect - you know, poetic licence, that's the licence we use to say what we wanna say.

GDS: Can you say something about your method of writing a poem?

I only have one method & that's editing. I edit language, I edit reality. What I often do is go to a body of work which has a lot of language in it for instance if I wanted to write about horse racing, I'd take the language out of the racing forms & work on that as a bank of language. So I do a montage & get speech patterns going thru it, which would perhaps have to be researched by my involvement at a race-course. I get the language required to talk about that ideal. Not every poem actually starts off with an idea, sometimes it just begins with language & ends up as an idea.

GDS: Do you classify yourself as a Migrant Writer?

That's a hard one. Of course I'm a migrant writer because I'm, well I'm a migrant. The migrant issue is one aspect of the whole mosaic that I'm writing about. There was a lot of pain & suffering in the migrant experience after the 2nd World War. A lot of people were done over badly to the benefit of Australians and I think that has to be introduced into the history of this country.

GDS: Have you read much of Ania Walwicz?

Yeah, I think she's fantastic & that she'll continue to write well for a very long time. She's a migrant writer, altho I don't know how to describe her style. Gertrude Stein to a point, but it also comes close to Anna Couani's stuff, not that she's in any way an imitator or anything like that. It's a nice style, a nice form. But I don't know about this term "Migrant Writer". Where's the dividing line between a migrant & somebody who's been here for a while? The issue becomes very complicated & I think it's just beginning to be explored in magazines like MIGRANT 7, which is articulating a language for it.

GDS: What's your involvement with MIGRANT 7?

I do the lay out & contribute & give Jeltje advice when she asks for it. Jeltje's the editor & the final say is hers. I also help distribute it. The print run is up to a thousand an issue & we're not selling them all at this stage, but that's alright, it took 925 six issues before it took off. MIGRANT 7 will gain more & more energy as more writers decide to put their stuff in.

...you written much prose?

...read novels or plays ever, unless forced to. The short story
...writing for but I don't indulge in that kind of writing at all,
...of my poetry tends towards prose.

...POEM is getting some interesting responses...

...POEM took me 3 years to write & Darc from the ABC heard some
...and he wanted it performed on 'Saturday Guest', a 15 minute
...on SAR at 7.15 on Saturday night. So I did, & because it's got
...fucks & cunts & cocks & words like that in it, they sliced them
...them on the tape so that the word is mumbled but it still had
...of the meaning & the switchboards in Melbourne, Adelaide & Sydney
...with people either complaining about the programme or praising
...score was 5-1 against. So Monday morning Darc gets a 'please
...from his boss. Meanwhile, Darc gets a memo from Sydney from the
...there saying it's a fantastic programme, so he overrode everyone.
...a 60 year old woman who was listening to the radio, saying she
...believe her ears & that it was the best thing she'd heard on the

...POEM in Adelaide in this pub & there were about 60
...there & when I finished they all stood up & cheered. It was a

...thought you didn't read much in public anymore?

...had to go to Adelaide to talk to Eric Beach about the Poetry
...I'm editing for Penguin.

...is Eric?

...his teeth are playing up again. An abscess. He's gotta
...so I'm starting up the SAVE ERIC'S TEETH FUND. \$2,000.
...chipped in, we'd get it. He's freaked out by dentists, but
...the money, he'd go. I mean, it's poisoning his system. He
...writing tho - his lyricism is fantastic. He's doing prison
...at Yatala with Jenny Boulton & this crazy guy called Jeff
...who's a bouncer & Jeff has this poem which he reads at the
...the station in Adelaide about pie floaters & the people
...some amazing people get involved in poetry, it's not just
...anymore. What he did was, he photocopied on a large blow-up
...machine the poem with a little drawing & he put these plastic
...them & gave about 50 of them to the Pie Cart owner & sold them
...each. Isn't that fantastic? Yeah? Well, are ya gonna ask me

...is probably the Performance Poetry capital of Australia.

...started it?

...were about 8 of us. Eric Beach was one of them.

GDS: Did it come from America?

No, that's the beauty of it. 925, the Poets Union, performance poetry, wasn't imported.

GDS: But Eric uses the blues as his basic style...

Yeah well, that's what he's using but-

GDS: That's what the Americans were using too. Take the beat poets-

Yeah but he wasn't reading beats, he was listening to music, & writing music in his head. They rhymed, they really rang, they celebrated. That style is not only blues, it's Mayakovsky too. (Eric's committed to Mayakovsky like I am).

GDS: Well why did the performance poets start in Melbourne do you think?

It's all in the Anthology - the Penguin Anthology. You'll have to wait till it comes out. PENGUIN BOOKS are costing it at the moment. I wanna have a record in it, you know, a flexi-disc, or something. It's gonna be the best anthology since Kate Jennings' MOTHER I'M ROOTED & Tom Shapcott's AUSTRALIAN POETRY NOW.

GDS: How did you get Penguin interested?

Well when we were doing 925 we put a boycott on Penguin because they wouldn't publish THE WORKS. So I thought how am I gonna get these people interested, & I thought I'd insult them, you know, because it's worked in the past. So I sat down & drew a penguin logo on 925 number 16 & got some texta coloured pens & gotta whole lotta people together to cross out the penguins & Brian Johns from Penguin bought his copy from READINGS BUREAU & thought it was fantastic. So we got together & a few people like Tom Shapcott & Barrie Reid thought I should be the editor of the next good poetry anthology so I put it to him & he agreed. It's going to give credit to some people who have been writing poetry for a while but who haven't received the proper recognition. It's gonna be great, it's gonna be in schools & everywhere & no poet in Australia's gonna be without one I reckon.

GDS: I can't wait for it.

Yeah, well I don't wanna rehash it here again. But all the info will be there. It's gonna be a great book. And it's gonna have a record with it. It's gonna be subtitled "Put you headphones around this book". It'll be poetry off the page & into the air. That's where poetry came from: from people speaking it; it came from people, not paper. Paper is just the medium for the score. But it's the poetry that's talking. The anthology's gonna be fantastic, it's gonna do great things for our poetry, now & in the future.

GDS: We look forward to reading it.

Great! Fantastic!

A COPS LOT

TO

Constable Don Mathews
was "king-hit" in the dock
by a quote
& received a broken nose

the orchestra-strings stopped mid-swoop

100s of red & white balloons were released
in the city square

then the rehearsal resumed at
nose-breaking speed

there were 18
1st Division winners in Tattslotto Draw 283
today

but

getting back to Constable Don Mathews
in the dock

if

he really wants to get that
Macho-"hands-off-the-nose"-treatment
he could

-ring 283-6572
-ask for Dale Reeves (a former SAS soldier)
-pay him 275\$\$s

& he'll tell him:

how to slay "dragons",
crawl on his stomach & lay inside
the dead carcass of a cow
for 3 days

either that, or leave the force

REFLECTIONS ON ART

(i)

i was writing a poem about
black squares
when X ran in & screamed:
"You're famous"
"look at this!", "& that!"
"& this & that", "& that!"

i was writing a poem about
yellow squares
when Y ran in & screamed:
"I'm going to
cut my ear off", "& it's going to
squirt all over that
yellow poem of yours"

i decided to
write about blue dribble

(ii)

a painter
(in a garage) is putting
the final touches
on his
painting
entitled: "DROUGHT"

the windows are all fogged-up
(it's raining outside)

the painter
takes a glass of turps
& rinses out
a yellow brush

TO

the
HIROSHIMA MEMORIAL

is to be
re-built
cos,
it can't accommodate
all
the names of the victims
who
copped the blast
on the city
on
the 6th
of
August,
1945

so far
188,956 names have been
entered,
in
32 books

it
was good to see it
reported
on
Page 17,
of
the SUN

You, my mother, carry me, twenty years before my birth, the child in your womb. The weight of your pain crushes me, too young to be born, I curl, and cannot understand. Too young to remember, my memories of war and death. I cannot carry you, too heavy, your memories of war and death.

We are the child, alone, just thirteen, who packs her belongings, shuts up a house. We are the child, forgetting childhood, a mother's protection, a thing called home, scratching potatoes from a foreign field with red and blistered hands. A youth camp. "Arbeit macht Frei."

I see with your eyes the road. You walk, days and day, the same road, endless road, a blanket, a coat, a loaf of bread, a world contained in your one remaining suitcase. Hear the drone of silver fighters. Running, running. Nowhere to run. Nowhere to hide. The long line scatters. Shattered. Fall face down into the ditch, feel the spray of tearing bullets, cover your head. They can see us. We are not soldiers. We are the homeless. We are the gypsies of Europe, the like of wandering jews. The shrapnel echoes in my ears, splintering the ground, fertile soil enriched by human blood and bone. The body beside you is dead. Search the dead. Treasures lie hidden. A brilliant in the dust, transparent amethyst. A broken chain torn from a screaming throat. Violet beauty carried through the carnage of black and red, your talisman. You walk on. Running, running. You still dream of the faceless soldier. Hiding. The helmet on his head, a silhouette in the light of a barn door. I tremble in the snow.

Our needs are narrowed, our lives shrunken, seek only food and warmth. We learn the art of survival. Adept thief, steal potatoes or bits of coal from German soldiers. We expect nothing, everything.

Hear the bombs falling, above the cellar roof. The earth shakes, ceiling cracks, dust and ashes prematurely grey your hair. But the ceiling holds, we sing and laugh, hold back the fear. I share your laughter, nudge the woman beside you, stifle your laughter behind a clenched fist. Watch the man huddled in the corner, fingers plugging his ears, eyes half asleep, shocked from his bed by sirens, naked under his dressing gown. His dressing gown slips open. Watch his dangling penis, dangle and sway, sway to the rhythm of rocking bombs, a private baton. A private joke among the women. Another time, another man, alone in a room of women. He bites the fat havana between his teeth, crouches in the chimney piece - Cinderella - the safest spot. No signs of overt male heroism here. We laugh again, War, the ultimate equaliser. Everyone is afraid. No one wants to die.

You/I remember the good times, the funny times, in preference. The bombs are falling, but we laugh. The Italian soldiers, feet slipping in the mud, shoulders braced against a fat bottom, stuck. Panting, pushing to squeeze our fat friend into drain-pipe safety. The bombs are falling, but she won't fit. The bombs are falling, but we only hear, I'm stuck, I'm stuck. We clutch the ground and laugh.

the crazy Americans, the great liberators, the saviours of
They thought. Screeching race through rubble streets, chucking
gun, chocolate, cigarettes, to greedy waiting hands. They should
spam, their larder full and all of Europe starving.

your short legs pacing the freight train, faster. Abortive attempts
board. Afraid you'll be left behind, till the boys drag you up
legs flailing. So important then, to reach Hamburg University,
interrupted life. Without papers, without money, without bread,
a bed, you played a dangerous game, but you survived.

living on the Elbe, gentle water rocking, lapping sleep. Rocked
parties, well supplied by a neighbour's still and stolen Biology
alcohol. Little sister, the boys wouldn't let you drink. Little
you had to be looked after.

birthday. You make a cake with cod liver oil. I hold my nose. You
the evil smelling dough. Coupons cannot buy butter. A barrow of
cannot buy a loaf of bread. Cigarettes can buy anything. Have you
to trade? On the black market, rainbow market, silken touch of
petticoats.

the young lady now, requisitioned by the British Military, who
speaks with her high school English. Acquire perfect pronunciation and
make the Colonel understand the pain. Of people loaded onto trucks,
unknown. No one asks questions any more. Tell us where to go,
do. They see the Russian sector coming closer, cry out, jump from
truck. They beg. Do not send us back. They will kill us. The
soldiers fire to make them stop. They stop. Dead.

people in displaced camps. Everyone together, men, women,
families. Lovemaking, discrete, behind an army blanket wall
around a bed. No secrets. All ages, all nations, together. A
of Babel, we understand each other. Together. In love and death.

our choices. I shrivel in your womb, forgotten, withered by your
I have no voice, no choice. You choose Australia. I follow. We
in Sydney winter, and cannot recognise the grey sky, the wind, the
our woollen coats sold in Cairo. Welcome to sunny Australia. The
joke: imagined Balts were bloody niggers. But we are disappoint-
white, can hardly tell we're different, if we keep our mouths shut.
the first ... bloody Balts, before the wogs and dagos, gooks and

country, just another camp, Bathurst, not so different. You
startle from sleep, the sound of sirens in your head. Draughty army
bents, earthen floors, boots and khaki knickers, too big.
English lessons for all the aliens, we learn Clementine. You
Clementine. We buy a kero heater on our first trip to town.

us to Geelong to sweep hospital floors. You are the ward's
a university degree. Beds in the maids' home, another
curfew, another Commandant: matron, very strict, she
cry. Made you dust the skeletons, you couldn't bear to touch.

Squeamish, lift a human skull by two pencils stuck in either earhole.

The blokes in men's ward loved you, your sympathy and smiles, and secret treats smuggled in to supplement what the hospital called food. Goodbye, he said, and for years you wondered what 'good onion' meant. Their laughter, when that fellow in traction said, you're pulling my leg, and you didn't understand, denied, apologised. A long time learning the important things. They gave you thanks and presents when they left. I still have the velvet pile rug, snarling leopard, faded now. Once the yellow pounced and dazzled. Some of them never left.

Remember our first day off, our first meat pie? You bit into it, grishy gruel scalding your tongue, dribbling down your chin, a red stain of Aussie sauce. How can Australians eat that stuff? How can you eat that stuff? They said the same of you. Your black bread, chocolate sandwiches, salami filling. They wondered about the salami too, and your foul smelling cheeses, esrom and gorgonzola. They all eat it now, cosmopolitans at heart.

You paid your debt, repaid the kindness, that provided refuge - two years of hospital life - and left. Our first real home, boarding with Miss Edmonds and her thirty cats. The stench of cat piss in my nostrils. Look out from the wide bay-window of the white weatherboard, over blue Corio Bay. Swimming in the shark protected baths, scandalising polite Geelong society in your not-so-brief bikini, picnics on the couch-grass lawn under exotic palms. Miserly Miss Edmonds, wizened leather, starving on mutton broth, brewed from a meatless bone. She nibbled from your plate but couldn't stomach sauerkraut, turned up her nose.

Working on the assembly line, endless line of Grosby, great mate. How many pairs of left feet fittings by mistake, christened with your pin pricks, drops of blood? Women learning to work in darkness, dreaming of the light.

Sun of Torquay summers before the tourist invasion. You met my father, taciturn and dark - I fell in love - handsome, bow-legged on his motorbike, romantic in a leather jacket. Leather cap and goggles, photo as a flying ace, who never flew. He bought you flowers, prompted by a friend, took you to concerts in those days. Now we go alone. And followed you, when we came to Melbourne.

You found St. Kilda, a place to live, a little Europe made for exiles. Their Acland Street haven of roll-mops, gefillte fisch, rye bread and continental tortes. We could have lived in your two rooms, upper floor of a terrace house called home, but you had to save for the great Australian suburban dream. Learn the ways. Churning vats of cheese and vegemite for Kraft, with ladies who had entertained diplomats, musicians, writers under champagne chandelier brilliance, amber smooth liqueur.

The land of golden opportunity for those with language, you became a secretary. You bought your house, and married my father, an orchid corsage on your tailored black lapel. No frilly, fancy white for you - no money - you were twenty seven, a mature woman.

... years later, mature enough to give me birth. Struggling to bring
... they cut you open and ripped me out, squinting, wrinkled,
... black-haired, screaming monster. You have forgotten, but I
... The black hair turned blonde. The scream remains.

... separate. The umbilical cord is cut. I learn my own voice, unravel
... your memories, release the guilt and pain. I claim my life,
... I grow. Apocalypse remains a memory. I am not the woman I am
... by scream.



S Y L L A B L E

NEW-WRITING-MAGAZINE

PO BOX 82 WINDSOR VIC 3181

Subs: \$5.00 for 2 issues

*Writing with a strong voice
strong images & strong rhythms*

Editors: Jurate Sasnaitis
Berni Janssen
Carmel Bird

(on the Vietnam veteran's murder of his 2 children in scrub around Murchison University)

Freeze and listen, he signals. His hand is cupped to his ear, he is stiff with body ready. He senses the soft water-ripple vibrations overhead and feels as if they are from ghosts. The trapdoor opens, light gushes down, milky, turbid, swirling like a standing wave, until it settles and the light solidifies. Then there is a shadow and severed legs hang there for a while before his daughter ducks her head to enter. He is breathing silently through his open mouth and he can see her standing in the opening, standing on the earth ramp and peering past the boundary of light. He clenches his fist with his thumb pointing upward and signals, *all clear*. The girl walks down into the dark room and then his son follows, lowers himself through the square, turns and pulls the trapdoor behind him. The dark is sudden and enveloping. He listens and there is nothing, not even his own breathing. Too fuckin professional to give himself away at close quarters.

Always be silent - Remember these signals: *Join me*, he signals with a swing of his arms to the head. The signal is given in the dark but there is the noise of air disturbed and lapping the earth walls in the dugout. He makes use of this noise to check the grenades at his belt. He feels the first, then the second. He struggles to black out the village but the grenade has brought back the sun. The stinking sun is pounding down and the village stench would be unbearable except that he is pretty high himself. The corporal signals, *move up*. They move through the scattered huts. The earth is tramped but there is no one in the village. The sun is absolutely pissing down and he moves towards shadow, prods a hut with his SLR. They are almost through the village and no one has been found. The corporal swings around. It is only a kid with a faceful of white teeth, grinning like a cheshire cat. The corporal yells but the kid is just grinning and walking. He knows what is coming but the sun won't go away whether he opens or closes his eyes. Jesus fuck me he screams in his head as the corporal fires and the kid sprawls sideways. He is dumbfounded. They all are. The village is still silent, no one moves, they don't speak. Then after a dull roar the kid is gone and all that's left is a smouldering hole. You pricks, the corporal yells at them. Grenade under the armpit. Fuckin spread out. There must be more. And find the head. There might be a gold tooth.

The dugout's dark seeps back and his breathing is plainly audible. *As you were*, he signals with a quick sweeping arm, and then scratches his nagging rash.

He wakes and senses a presence. His body tenses and without looking he gradually pinpoints a movement. His head turns with cheek stubble

his collar noisily. Unavoidable. He has to wait some time but finally a sharp movement tells him that there is a toad on the floor. The toad blinks, without hostility, without even acknowledgment, just blinks at an intangible presence. It sits for hours with movement except its eyes. He recalls his wife's eyes. Hateful slivers are in them. He slips out of the dugout in darkness. The outside air is cold. He pushes through it. It snaps like fresh carrots. He seeks a woman that was a wife and two children.

Street reluctance hangs like dust. He walks with sure and steady steps, he uses cover intuitively, his head sweeps slowly. And he cannot be seen. There are people but they cannot see him. The moon is hidden. It is dark. He moves from the padi into the forest and lets his eyes adjust. The defoliant smell is pleasant and cleansing, like a clean shirt, and the B 52's roar overhead as pungent rain splatters on his face around him. The fine mist is momentarily cooling.

The street air is sharp. He moves through the street, avoiding the lightwaves and melting into shadow. He turns and there is a boy with brown skin and white teeth. All teeth but possibly a glint of gold. A missing hole. Nearby streetlights are pulsing harsh rings. He sees a wedding ring flung against a bedroom door. Advance, he signals.

Nothing is stillborn. A deadness lies in the streets and over them. He hurries the children across the street and into the shadows. He hopes no one might see the children. The moon has faded but he still sees the bayonets in his wife's eyes. Morning light moves in as he opens the trapdoor and bundles the children inside. Out of the darkness for them he lights the lamp, but faces away. She will find the children soon. Quickly he straps the grenades to their armpits and as he slips from the dugout he signals ...

WHEN revolution breaks out it hits you in the balls. It hit Peter in the balls standing every day in the same place fuckjesus whats happening. Every day in the same pubs, the dole queues growing old in warm climates like a banana thinks me when the whole arseripping thing blows up in your face.

Sign on a hairdresser says "Curl up & dye" huge Air India travel billboard dirty with a tea bag thrown against it brown stain tea marks all down the Taj Mahal like setting fire to cigarette factories. I apply for job as artistic director of the whole fucking mess. Lose the job / go on the dole. Peter & me sadly indisposed with no one telling when to go for cover.

Sign on a baker's door "We got bread" big deal. Last night Janice explains trade unionism. Take off our clothes quickly cause its cold and that's argument enough. I think you know nothing of the subject of anything except what you read in overpriced books and fucking me which you do rather well though I still remember when we had wanking competitions and you always won / I was sure you cheated. Tonight everything's different lie cold and naked with you trying to recreate a past which wasn't real shit hot anyway. Joke to hide the fact I can't look at you one eye to the window first to see the jets / trouble with revolution being you can never tell which side will grab you first, knowing both sides have people like you, O Janice, judging my right to survive as you sit on top of me guiding prick in just like the handyman I never was. O Janice, the problems of this position. To avoid your face I must stare at your breasts and work my fingers like you were a typewriter.

We are both wholly equal we share this destiny of tomorrow a totally empty, both using coffees like glue to fill in the spaces you have come and I have come you tell me you have come twice and you have won again I say not looking at you. Remembering the game I say I'm very tired and pretend to go to sleep like the priggish suburban brat I sometimes am but can't go to sleep. Because christ you're talking about revolution I turn you onto your stomach as you discuss emergency loans for strike sustenance / massage your neck and you start groaning as I work my way down hear the special sounds as I work thine arse halves thinking slopping slurping slapping are not three ways to describe the noise she and I are making but giving me another erection god opens her legs and we are fucking like doggies in this position where I can see all round the room see everything but your face O Janice I can be honest to the street, your underwear, my towel and a map of L.A. on the wall for no reason but your face makes me a liar as you come and I come and I wait and pull out, edge down and sadly lick your arse hoping for just a little taste of peace.

Three months later O Janice I find you have become truly poor and your job. Her little grey sports car has not left the garage it lived in and that to move towards a poor suburb on minimal petrol now because of Janice to live just this week in an used car lot. There is no more for cars and thy labour has lost value and Janice takes me to pay part of the cost of your body O sportscar I have eaten. At least you have a job, just like Janice did that \$14,000 debt licence that kept holding her from behind that kept Peter on a street and now leaves us both naked looking out a window.

*

Three months later O Janice we are so poor that we can only fuck with colour television that I bought once and you said was not elegant. Peter has moved. Into our bed. What a great mouth I say. You know Peter's mouth is busy. During the commercials all slopping away slapping towards Nepal, Revolution and Charlie's Angels defend which is a great distance from these orgasms and all orgasms are not revolutions but somehow distant cousins with shit on their faces much more approachable this day before yesterday.

*

You spend six months rehearsing researching one sheet of paper when the revolution comes it hits you in the balls and all you can write is "day before yesterday". You, O Janice and me and Peter fucking at the time when the revolution comes its a loaded cock with a real bullet, sharp teeth and a sports car with a bomb under the seat. Its a real revolution and real opium and blood. Janice walks the streets alone and with the knowledge that she can't ask a policeman the way home. To me and you she steals a sports car and flies through a mystricin night, half of which is dug up / supposed improvements and paranoia is a job just like what Peter and Peter's mouth is enough to keep a revolution at home and you can write about it not like this day before yesterday when I was hit me. In the balls.

REVIEW

BIRTHS, DEATHS AND MARRIAGES

short stories

by Carmel Bird

published by Carmel Bird

20 Lesney St. Richmond

Victoria 3121

reviewed by marion halligan

Handbooks of advice to aspiring authors always warn strongly: Do not publish your own work! If it is good enough you will find a commercial publisher.

But aspiring authors are often despairing authors, and potential publishers may be insensitive, or short-sighted, or wrong. So it is interesting to see a collection of short stories published by its author and whether it is out of despair or impatience or pride it is certainly an act of faith, and worth looking at closely.

Its title, BIRTHS, DEATHS AND MARRIAGES, gives a good idea of the range of subject. In fact a number are about all three, starting off in childhood and moving swiftly through adolescence, marriage, childbearing to old age. Another, ubiquitous piece of authors' advice is: Write about what you know. Carmel Bird knows the world of Catholic middle and working class households, of large families, a brother a priest and a sister a nun, of solid over-furnished houses inhabited or perhaps haunted by a last elderly daughter, of children steeped in sin, probably original in the Church's sense if not the world's. Very doomful and gloomful.

Typical is 'Mother of the Bride', a story four pages long which begins with Emily a child of five resolving to be a man when she grows up and ends with her bee-stung and tearful on the day of her daughter's wedding, full of vague but miserable frustration. This sort of economy occurs in all the stories; Bird likes to sketch in broad areas of time and space with brief strokes. It's a deliberate eschewing of any kind of amplification or exploration, needing strong and evocative language that will suffuse the places where the words aren't; the simple phrase that speaks volumes.

This is the sort of thing that poetry does, and I think that one of the most interesting things about the short story in Australia of recent years is its tendency to draw away from short prose and in the direction of long poetry; it's still very much prose, but some of its language and organisation, its syntax, its allusiveness, recall poetry. But the brevity of Bird's writing is not of this kind. Sometimes her prose seems pellucid, limpid, but when one looks through its transparent surface the

strength underneath it is not there. When one expects that beneath the artless simplicity - the pseudo-artless simplicity, I wrote first, perhaps that isn't unfair - will be some irony, there is none beyond a blatant stereotype. Ruby in the garden whose apple tree gives away its name 'Ladies in the Snow', reading the tale of the girls in three dresses, "one like the sun, one like the moon, one that shined like the stars at night", being given away by her father in "a gown more shining than the new-fallen snow" to be a bride of Christ, preventing the poison in the apples sprayed against codlin moth, sure to catch a seagull one day: The romance of fairy tales, presumably intended to be both subject and context of the story as well as a more or less ironic comment on Ruby's life, is no more than a plaything, a charming diversion, and having charmed us has no particular truth to tell. If Bird's stories are sometimes refreshingly her own, with a cool throwaway image that catches the attention, her images and ideas are not, they are cliché. And so are her plots.

A consistent collection, the stories all belong together. Their prevailing quality is fey melodrama.

Bird's is a courageous publishing venture, and a handsome one in its design and decoration and particularly in the meticulous editing. And it offers certain pleasures to the reader. For these reasons there's a lot to admire in it. But I cannot help thinking of that as a warning to aspiring authors

INPRINT
the short story magazine

PO Box 73
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Australia

In need of your support.

Inprint has gone into recess for 1984 after withdrawal of Literature Board grant funds. Inprint asks its supporters to write to Literature Board in protest.

Subscription \$12

REVIEW:

IF BLOOD SHOULD STAIN THE LINO

by Gary Dunne

published by inVersions

Sydney Gay Writers Collective

PO Box 158

Leichhardt NSW 2040

1984

rrp: \$6.95

kevin brown

These fourteen stories are listed as being written between 1976 and 1980 leading an assessment on to discussions of 'development' in the writer. Is this the book that marks the end of a six year apprenticeship

Taking the stories in their chronological order then, the opening is straightforward and self-consciously clever: "Short of the public service I can think of nothing more boring than operating a dishwashing machine in a restaurant." The slapstick cook who throws empty lobster shells at his kitchen hand also keeps a collection of porno-trivia in the kitchen.

During one such lull in work, he beckoned me over and opened his private drawer. Under the assortment of sharp knives, there they were. Very glossy and very gynaecological. I winked at him and didn't mention that I preferred males. Coming out at work is only easy for academics in ivory towers.

Though this writing seems too earnest about its jokes, there was that promise of improvement as the book goes on

The first story strings a few incidents together and introduces us to a few of the recurring characters, Simon the narrator, and Sarah who becomes part of a communal household. It is in the second story that we come directly in Simon's gay world:

A large room, blue neon lights and bare wooden floor. Scattered about the edges, like wall-flowers at a deb ball, about twenty entrants in a Marlon Brando look-alike competition. Mostly clad in leather jackets and tight jeans, a conspicuous lack of helmets. On one wall, a solitary poster, Marlon himself, similarly clad, astride a motor bike.

This description of the more boring types inhabiting gay bars could, well, be taken directly from the photo of Gary Dunne on the back cover of the book. From here we move to the back rooms, those places Tony Sheldon used so hilariously in Harvey Fierstein's TORCH SONG TRILOGY. But where Fierstein's Arnold confronted the fantasies straights might have, and in the process made his point about ridiculous sex, Gary Dunne gives us

...stated reaction, and his descriptions are sometimes casual, sometimes
... sometimes crude or even coy ... the tone is uncertain.

The following story of a bus conductor, Kevin, who is apparently in love
... has some observations that save it from its simplistic
...ology:

It was as if there were a line drawn over the map
of Sydney. To the East, he was gay, to the West,
he was straight. Sexuality is very much a socio-
geographic phenomenon these days. Probably why so
many closet queens and bisexuals drive fast cars.

This piece brings Simon into the alien culture of a suburban heterosexual
barbecue where he "swore brilliantly at appropriate masculine
... and not a single person noticed the beer poured behind the
bushes." The humour is cheeky, as we've been warned on the back
of the book. The twist at the end of this story takes one further turn
... Peter Mathers did with 'A Change for the Better', and it makes a
... funny ending.

... (cool?), conveyed mainly through the technique of a prose
... where sentences are like headlines, broken and incomplete, is
... general tone of this writing. But the observations lack that vivid
... particular quality that makes, for example, Anna Couani's detached
... so convincingly real. There is here more of a search for the
... experiences of a subculture: "Shopping at Fabulous Flemings with
... Two drag queens, both in jeans and tee-shirts, sporting 11 a.m.
... were fighting over the last jar of Nescafe."

... are the first nine stories, and there is a change with the breakdown
... life for Simon. We are given a closer look at him, the stories
... and don't suffer so much in the rush for cleverness or humour.
... story 'An Overnight Offer' comes as a relief with its slower pace and
... portrait of a man whose salvation lies in material goods.

... most of the book unemployment has been a condition of life, and
... comes into focus in a CES office on 'The Other Side of the Counter'

Sharon was right. I probably do have a mental illness.
Maybe manic-depressive psychosis. Just a mild case.
I shouldn't waste it. I could apply for heaps of jobs
and go shoplifting on manic days. The depressive bits
could be used up by coming here. And sitting. Maybe
I could get that part of the cycle to line up with the
day the form is due to be returned. I need some kind
of goal.

... of these stories, '76 to '82, also serves to emphasise the
... of this book as a record of how life has been for someone young,
... unemployed in Sydney.

... two stories though do seem to offer something of the
... promised by implication on the contents page. In 'The
... of Culture' there is an added tone of weariness to the cheeky

camp humour when Simon is questioned at the VD clinic:

They have printed stereotypes: "Active or passive?" they tastelessly ask. They don't know what polymorphous perverse means. Versatile sounds over-confident. Bit of both seems crude. Check the lot sounds worse. I don't remember what I said last time.

And in the final story there are the still detached, but now touched-by-sadness observations on how lovers can sometimes only lie to each other if they are to approach the truth. These final stories are more particular and vivid. Gary Dunne leaves me wanting to read more of his stories.

DEEP SEA FISHERMEN

allan eric

Deep sea fishermen hunger down
drifting days;
misery, a dull pain slowly killing them
without their knowing.

Drawn like pacing prisoners
without visitors
they begin smiling at themselves
in the reflective waters of deep oceans

and on occasions,
when there are no more fish to fish,
hungry fishermen succumb
to midnight power rolls of dissembling seas.

But men never tell men
they love them,
and when it's over, and they're ashore,
they deny their hunger.

talking to eric

billy marshall-stoneking

he said: 'you don't know who you are,'

and

that made me angry.

he said: 'you need a vision!'

he asked: 'what's your vision? what

are you trying to do?'

and

i tried out a few words in my head, then

later,

at the pub, i said: 'loyalty'.

i could see him

grim through his beer,

yellow teeth through the glass,

foam at the mouth.

... we sat at the bar, staring at each other

that's when he said: 'ethics. ethics!

you even put loyalty above ethics!'

and

i remembered our old fight

about my friend who punched

his friend's sister.

i pounded my fist on the bar:

'no, no, that's not it!'

(i was talking about something

... 'deeper')

he looked at me like a man looks

in a filing cabinet

for a piece of paper that isn't there,

then shook his head,

sipped foam

and said:

'you don't know who you are'.

from opposite sides

we tamped our our cigarettes, hurriedly

hiding out bitten fingernails —

and

he coughed

very loudly once.

NOTHING

Imperatives. Their delinquent logic. Their gnashing demands. Closing in.

Nothing happens.

If only the question could be, leaping full-blooded and screaming from the tongue. This has also faded. Somewhere between the silver and the glass.

ONCE UPON A TIME

Beginnings, or the memory of beginnings. Of mornings. Waking up but not out. Going, or being taken. Of legs synchronised to life at the instant of the crackling emergence of the world. And the instruments of rebirth.

Morning consciousness is different. You are wary of solid impacts and they avoid you. At first there is no need to reaffirm your shape against the hard reality of objects. Float for a while, it is unimportant where or how. Volition is that alien atmosphere you observe without encompassing. Gradually, things become complete.

Every day is function, is performance. Scheduled degrees of reality. Now the white room gapes, clean as a toothless jaw. A sterile temple. The mornings most important ceremony awaits your suppliant presence.

Shaving utensils. You are loaded and cocked. Look up like every morning. That casual air of expectancy.

()

Impossible. Nothing. Not even an obviously naked patch of wall. Theft would explain it, but then theft itself would require an explanation. And here there is no trace of dust or darkness to show what once was. Part of the world is undone and someone is missing.

NOT

Not waiting. For the train. Not waiting. Not wanting. Not choosing. Desire unpeels. Its centre is soft and gold-warm. You are consumed.

At the station. The air is a thing to watch. Spilling onto terminals of suspended departure, it gathers above the tracks, haunts corners where nothing grows but drowsiness and dust. Feet slowly soften within shoes.

You could miss a thousand trains this way. Or catch every one, pieces of you riding in the doorway of every outbound express. You would spread evenly like butter across the map, letting purpose slip by with the wind, to meet yourself passing through some station on the other side, becoming thinner, more easily ignored.

The train arrives and the train departs and you are no longer on the

WE ARE OBLIVIOUS, A NORMAL DAY BUT NOT QUITE THE SAME

change. How the lift driver looks through you. Like a wall. You and the lift driver, like walls, but something is forgotten. The room has three corners. There's no way of understanding it. Something just falls away.

All day there are things out there, moving around. But there is no-one. Things throw themselves out of thin air at empty chairs. It would be easy to become resentful. It seems that inanimate objects are beginning to enforce their right to be independently inanimate. Sitting is a calculated

to watch the clock. The clock watches you. What is the time? There is no sense of being certain. The sun itself is stationary and shadows move, only shadows. So what is left? Certainly a hole opens in the floor. It is too small to become a question mark. Wonder if the floor was ever more than a hole. Wonder like a hole. This has embedded itself somewhere and pretends to be universal.

Why does it not seem incredible?

Nothing. The walls are dull. The carpet speaks of no presence. No-one hears the hopeful rattle of keys. But the keys do rattle.

The light is bad and nothing is familiar any more. The key does not fit the lock. The number on the door is right, the key is the same key, but the door does not open.

Approaching at the far end of the hall, a dark shape passes on, neatly disappearing into its velvet hole.

What appears to be a hand, moves. The fingers grow large and distended. There will be no certain contours. Only a swimming dissolution of boundaries. The perceived is absorbed by its proximity to the point of perception. Already they are no longer fingers. Fleishy zeppelins quiver with the miracle of their own expansion.

For my neighbour, weekends were for pottering about the yard; as he was now, oblivious to the throngs of people moving down the road towards the disturbance; he went on watering and weeding or chipping at the brick-hard ground.

Though the camp dogs still shat in there anyway, he'd neatly fenced an area where a few green tufts of lawn had appeared in the red earth. Other improvements were a few struggling seedlings nursed in wire mesh guards as well as the customary vege plot tucked between the tankstands and "doing quite well thank you" - and all the better for some nimble lucky kids if and when the thing bears fruit. Still it was a testimony to his determination to transplant something of the coastal home he'd left behind. He was Homo Suburbus in a new land. He wasn't going to let the desert beat him.

He professed to be "into the bush" and insisted he'd a great empathy and respect for Aborigines and was understanding to their needs. He asked lots of questions like "do the people still hunt kangaroos with spears?" Perhaps he expected them to stand on one leg and cart spears round the bush for eternity; whatever, he was noticeably disheartened to learn that rifles and motor cars were the response. Nevertheless he managed a few snap-shots at the Yuendumu Sports where the old men once a year throw spears at a foam, cut-out kangaroo for the field of cameras to preserve and perhaps be bandied about in some newspaper to show there are still some "real ones" left.

My neighbour was keen and energetic in his sandals, shorts and baseball cap; so much so that he'd erected a humpy-style shelter in one corner of his yard. I had been meaning to ask whether he intended to furnish it with some of the locals as his living room walls were already cluttered with the rest of the paraphernalia - when the shouting down the road finally attracts his attention so he pauses from his digging to look.

A young man rushes out of a house and sends two boomerangs into a crowd of people. Two blokes take turns in a bash at each other. The young man charges and flings a piece of exhaust pipe at another. Women wielding nulla-nullas wail and dance. Men swear, shout and threaten with spears. I am summoned to get the cops twice and twice the cops aren't home.

The young man jumps into a HD Holden and drives it around the house trying to knock people down. He misses. He does a few more laps crashing and banging over obstacles then tears up the road, circles and switches off.

We all wait. Stillness. A parked car. Red road. Mulga scrub. Mountains.

He starts it up, revs it to a scream and drops the clutch. Crashing through the gears along the road he roars towards us in that smoking bomb. With the beautiful Centralian landscape in the background he comes

...towards the people on the road and people scatter out of the way. He misses and keeps coming like a Kamikaze in a roaring broadside, runs up the electric lightpole at my house and smashes into it with no thought of fear or care for bodily injury or death, drives it hard and crashes and slam, bouncing body like a rag-doll; but climbs out without so much as a shrug of thanks to anything, to lay in the wreckage to the steaming wreck and see if someone won't run over him.

...care. He's not alone. They come running in droves, his sisters, brothers, mothers, fathers, in-laws, aunties and uncles all frantic to save him.

...over and the cops have arrived. They're mopping up and collecting details. Someone says, "He's drunk yer see 'e don't know 'imself, what snake in the head from plagon."

...neighbour looking like he'd just witnessed a suburban green backyard BBQ. He wanders over to tell me about it. "Well", he begins, "did you see those boomerangs?"

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press, books, journals &
magazines in Victoria.*

she can make most teachers
hate her

even the trendies

she comes into my office
hands me ten or so
new poems
& leaves

saying, she'll pick them up later

when she does come back
i've typed up the ones
that work

i tell her

she hangs around for the comments
sometimes she agrees

she calls me Mister
(it's a private joke)

we're not friends, or enemies

we're caught
between the firing pin & the explosion

& she knows it

THE TRAIN

rory harris

on the train
a man & his daughter
sit opposite

he is large
his child would disappear
in his embrace

scenes flick past the framed window
it could never be television

somewhere in his guts the man's voice changes
& starts to rise
starts to describe each scene to the child

the child sits on the edge of her seat
legs dangling like fishing lines

she holds onto his words
as if they were the struts of swings

her nose presses against the glass
tiny hands wipe the mist from her breath away

the carriage is filled with animation
a man is becoming a child

1.
know freedom
acknowledge the fact
you, who have not committed a crime
you, who will not commit a crime
you deserve to be outside the law
& inside of justice
2.
get a grant
walk in the front door
& teach poetry
3.
do the same as 2.
but without a grant
4.
when asked why you are trying to break in
be vague
quote Tom Robbins, "we all have to eat shit
regardless of taste"
- 4a
destroy the prison by any means possible
4. didn't count
5.
tell them you have escaped
& have come back to give yourself up

6.
if they don't believe you
do not commit a crime
go home & think more carefully

7.
diet
squeeze into the gaps of the walls
eat
& place wedges

8.
drink vast quantities of beer
& piss for long periods of time
onto the mortar
which connects stone to stone

9.
consider waiting for the walls to tumble
blow the silk notes of jazz

10.
know someone who is inside
visit on Sundays

always get a pass in
always get a pass out

10a
do not become a warder

In the impossible afternoon
gorgeous as all the fading wake
of anathema that shoots into space
at the drop of a bomb

Lives the urgent ungainly lover
and pursuer of my days.

She who tinkers with the many machine elements
of my madness in loving her
who falling into the soup of sunset
sets new records at Kodak
for the number of assistants
to desire the object
of someone else's affection.

It's a day for cleaning cars
and
under the bonnet
the organ grinds away at anything
that comes to mind when she's sloppy
in faded jeans and angular

leaning pensively over the paper
or reading Weber
under the open skies
of modern capitalism

while

across the horizon
the living room of open country
unfolds unzips and falls across

the eyes and plates of millions
in the statistics supplement

which today is
a double spread.

erry story

eric beach

at her wedding she wore a pair of glass slippers which were cracked
because she stepped on a stone on her way from th church

her husband was jealous & she fell in love with a man she spied in
mirror

er after she would stare hopefully into mirrors with a pleading
countenance

one day her husband looked into th mirror, & behold, he could not
see his reflection

er her said th priests it is th sin of vanity

the perfect husband was in love with his wife, truly, he said, if
there is one person who can see themselves in my wife's mirror, she
shall surely be released from this enchantment

the whole kingdom paraded past th mirror, not one was capable of
seeing themselves

it goes to show that a woman can get burned by a perfect husband

TRAVELS WITH KANDY

by Phillip Jenkins
Rigmarole Books
PO Box 54
Clifton Hill
VIC. Australia 3068
1982, 63 pp.
\$4.95

reviewed by Kevin Brugha

"I believe the fragment to be the form that best reflects the ever changing reality that we live and are."

Octavio Paz

On this short, sixty three page journey scattered with brilliant images and events, Phillip Jenkins takes us through the lands of fabulism, surrealism, pop culture and Burroughs-style collage. He treats his fragmented material with detachment and at times wonderful humour while it moves on an edge between taking pleasure in virtuoso performance and a painful reaction to contemporary worlds of war, drugs and alienation.

The book begins with a deadpan and literal narration of a hallucinatory journey where dreamlike events keep intruding into the civilised world of Kandy and her travelling companion. Jokes played at the expense of the narrator's voice give much of the pleasure in this first story. He is a pompous travel writer of undistinguished style - "It was a hot afternoon in June, 1933, Kandy and I sat at a secluded table partly obscured by the magnificent shrubbery and worked our way through the magnificent complexities of the 1924 Reti-Bogoljuboff game that had been played in New York." - who is himself so unfazed by exotica that his common sense explanations for bizarre events become more outlandish than the events. His reaction to a man being shot dead while running across railway tracks in Spain:

"Obviously there was some railway by-law prohibiting crossing the tracks and so, sensibly, there should be. Although why it should be adjudged sufficiently serious to merit summary execution I could only put down to yet a further example of the complex Spanish temperament."

Under the eye of this narrator a series of catastrophes become episodes for jokes, some less tasteful than others.

His second story, 'The Promotion'. is broken into numbered fragments, as many of Peter Carey's stories are - and like Carey, Phillip Jenkins introduces us to a world of war where one can't be sure who the enemy is: "In the absence of any conflicting orders and starved of alternatives, they decided to execute one among their number."

The central section of the book is fifteen fragments that go under the collective title 'True Life Adventures' - one example will give the style:

"Today I was elected president of the United States. My wife and I moved into this very nice bungalow in the suburbs. I realised as we moved in that it's not the White House but perhaps that's not such a bad thing. Washington DC doesn't sound like 'my kind of town'. I was rather relieved that they didn't insist on that when I took the position. The next thing I realised is that I won't have to worry about getting a job any more. Being President of the United States is as good as a job. That's another weight off my mind. Things seem to be going quite well."

The pieces become more fragmentary than this and give an appearance of being unadorned records of dreams.

There is some fascination in following an individual's fantasies, but eventually this sort of fiction raises the question, can the stories tell themselves? Are we part of a circle of language and symbol where, as Levi-Strauss has said, "Myths communicate with each other through men without their being aware of this fact"? Phillip Jenkins' fragments seem to make the implicit statement that they somehow speak for themselves. Some of them though seem too private and too slight to speak of anything much to a reader so that the technique chosen loses its momentum.

The book ends with a powerful and intense pastiche of suicide attempts related by a suicidal voice. No momentum lost in this piece.

The writing in TRAVELS WITH KANDY is often entertaining and cleverly aware of itself, and definitely whets the appetite for more. The introduction of this British writer's work by a small Australian publisher is refreshing. Thanks to Rigmarole for making his work available.

REVIEW

DREAMWORKS

ed. David King
Norstrilia Press
PO Box 91
Carlton Vic 3053
1983, 195pp.

reviewed by Kevin Brugger

DREAMWORKS is subtitled 'strange new stories', and inside the fly leaf is the promise that DREAMWORKS provides the missing element in today's short stories: A radical new perception of what is real. Except for the claim that glimpses of humour will be "cosmic" there's no hint from the covers that this book is after all your basic science fiction collection. The book's brilliant cover illustration suggests that perhaps there's a book here for the writer, or even the dreamer.

And as dreamers, we all know that strangeness is not new, and need not be radical at all. So those who open this book needing a radical perspective and some true strangeness will find that as science fiction the collection is at times interesting and nearly always competent, but as attempts at radical and new perspectives they don't approach the surprise, the power and the ability to disturb that can be found in Kafka or in the Australian fabulists Peter Carey and Murray Bail.

The book opens with Kevin McKay's (designer of postage stamps) gesture to Marquez:

"Many years later, just before he was shot by the dying black swan, Colonel Johann Gutentag was to remember the day his father took him to see the humming-birds."

in a heavily symbolic tale of an Australia colonised by the Spanish. The story doesn't overcome the drawback of its own wordiness. Henry Gasko (computer programmer, bicycle rider) gives us a competently told short story with an O. Henry style ending using computers as the protagonists. Its strangeness consists only in its up to the second modern setting. Lucy Sussex, with 'The Parish and Mrs. Brown' presents a portrait of a breakdown in terms of place: escape/inability to escape from self. There is strangeness in this brave attempt to look at the divisions between 'reality' and perceptions. The dialogue is sharp and sparse, and the men are childish boors - a new perspective in literature? Andrew Whitmore has written a tough epic of heroism, compromise, lust and gladiatorial combat told at unnecessary length. How important is it that Hannibal might not remember to drive his thumbs into Simon's eyes, or that he might not have the strength to bear his heroic reputation? I don't know. One needs to be a long way from 'reality', or even perception, to find these questions

important or entertaining is such a humourless and cliched treatment of high adventure.

Once Gillespie arrives after this with the gem of the collection, 'What God Said to me When He Lived Next Door':

"I thought you might knock at the door", God said. His voice sounded reedy, almost apologetic. "When I heard the crash, you know. I have a large sponge here. It's not every day a milk bottle drops outside the door. Spoilt my nap a bit, but never mind."

His treatment of God is as fresh and witty as Raymond Briggs's treatment of Father Christmas. God, whose predicament is that "nobody really wants to listen to me", produces an I Ching ("I consult it to get in contact with me.") and spends an entertaining afternoon with the narrator looking for the answer that will save us from blowing ourselves up. And thankfully, nonsense is done with the ending.

From here, the collection moves into a more sciencey science fiction with 'Horror City' and 'Crystal Soldier' where we are on the well worn paths of the sf future. Of these George Turner's 'Feedback' spends most time and ingenuity building up credible and interesting characters to carry a theme of recurrence and rebirth.

The book is well worth owning just for Bruce Gillespie's story and Gerald Murnane's delightful 'Land Deal'. Like Lucy Sussex's piece, Gerald Murnane's story does attempt to look at the relationship between perception and reality - this time by postulating that the white occupation of Australia is part of an Aboriginal dream:

"We had recognised an almost miraculous correspondence between the strangers' steel and glass and wool and flour and those metals and mirrors and cloths and foodstuffs that we so often postulated, speculated about, or dreamed of.

And not only this but the possibility that even if we do exist apart from an Aboriginal dreamtime, the Aboriginals might be our dream:

"The spoke to us with oddly raised voices and claimed our attention with exaggerated gestures as though we were separated from them by a considerable distance, or as though they feared we might fade altogether from their sight before we had served the purpose for which they had allowed us into their dream.

In the introduction to the book David King claims this is a collection of nature of reality stories. But can straightforward adventure yarns in exotic settings be called investigations into the nature-of-reality? If Liberace has investigated the nature of piano playing for us, then the answer is yes. There are some stories that can claim to be questioning the nature of reality, or conventional wisdom, and some that even deal with

dreams, but the editor's claim that it's a thematic anthology falls apart quickly. The collection is interesting enough as a review of contemporary sf and fantasy writing without exaggerated claims being made for its importance.

SEPTEMBER IN NORTHERN FRANCE

david harner

There are bats here.
In the glow from cottage windows
I saw them scent the dusk.

My friend builds his house
with both hands.
He talks much to me of La Guerre
and Lenin,
light fails us
spreads like smoke through the branches

he deepens his trenches
leans a spade against the rubble.

Tomorrow he will have to dig
beneath the wall his father built
to find the level earth.

THE WOMAN WHO LIVES HERE & other stories

by Gary Catalano

Champion Books

54 Greville St.

Pahran

80pp. 1983

reviewed by kevin brophy

The plain brown covers of Gary Catalano's first prose collection set an understated tone for his book. Something "spare and elegant" is what we're promised from the back of this startlingly basic object, and though it might look like a move into the plain wrapper world of Payless fiction where only the less impulsive among us are equipped to judge such a cover, there *is* a thin line of clear, perhaps even elegant red print across the front. What does this mean?

Then, as if to belie the promise of plainness, the first story in the collection comes to us in italics and broken eccentrically into tiny fragments by columns of asterisks:

*

The woman who lives here has gone away and left her son and her dog for me to look after. Three days ago I saw her off at the airport, yet now I have difficulty in trying to recall just what she looks like. Her hair black or brown? And her eyes - are they really as blue as I imagine them to be?

*
*

This is the opening section and already Gary Catalano's methods and concerns are laid bare - distance between people and distance from one's memories, the ordinary turned bizarre by the perspective of a narrator. In nearly all of the twenty pieces in this book there is the strong presence of a narrator. And like other parts of the book the writing here is closer to being a dream than a story. 'The Woman Who Lives Here' gives a vivid portrait of the stuckness that can be felt in dreams: "*I watch television one night a week and listen to the radio on the others. Sometimes I just listen to the wind, or to the boy moving up and down the wall. Now I'm starting to think the woman may not return. Now I realise I may be left here with just the boy and the dog. The single thing we have in common is a memory of the woman who once lived here.*"

'Midnight' is the most elaborate story and once again reveals apparently mundane but in fact quite obscure and bizarre processes of thought in a narrator obsessed with following up an interest in Tom Midnight that he can't explain adequately: "One such item was the announcement of a lecture by Midnight in a small hall ... The same hall, I recalled on seeing the

notice, had also been used by a man who ended up being charged with offences too numerous to mention here, and perhaps it was this coincidence which persuaded me to attend Midnight's lecture." It is again a story of impressionistic observations where the narrator is criticised for just this fault. For him all is fuzziness and sensitivity as he struggles to come to the point. He believes that the Tom Midnight he pursues "had the answer to things", and throughout there is a conviction that the writing centres on what is mysterious and important -

As I compile these papers I often spend hours looking at this yellow wall and, through a process I cannot understand, the words assemble and marshall themselves in my head. It is not invention, this process; no, not invention.

But what is important never becomes the subject of focus. We're left with impressions and this deep disturbance. The narrator admits that in all his attempts he had only "smudged the picture and erased its clarity of line", and ends in the hands of his own story confined to a room and expected to write:

Each day new sheets of paper are placed under the door, and I am allowed a freshly sharpened pencil whenever I so desire. Pencil, I demand, snapping my fingers ... and almost immediately the said object appears under the door, as if by its own volition. I handle it gently, this slender torpedo from other parts.

Here the impression savoured brilliantly is almost enough - which is more than most writing gives us.

In such a shadowy world of undefined tensions it is inviting to read further meanings into the work, such as this being a struggle between the poetic and the prosaic in language - where the prosaic wants "the answer to things" spelled out while the poetic waits for us to see this evoked in the impressions delivered ... but that might be going too far beyond the intentions of such a plain brown book.

Gary Catalano excels at the portrait and 'Old Man On The Hill' is one of these, a record of a man's inner life and of his relations to time as well as his appearance in the field "at the top of the beribboned hill." The second half of the book is titled 'Sixteen Sketches' and these are packed with observations of incidents and characters encountered in a string of boarding houses. Here though, the narrator is so retiring and characterless that the pieces depend for interest on the identities introduced; and these colourful Australians full of confused rationalisations and interesting pasts yarn away in kitchens while the narrator took notes, poor soul. This straightforwardness falls flat on the page after the strained perspectives earlier in the book. There are lapses into unembarrassed sentimentality:

Ray's whole manner ... has its roots in an older

and less affluent Australia ... the same Australia I had once glimpsed among the salvaged nails, screws and pieces of wire hidden away in old tobacco tins, an Australia that dangled rusty rabbit-traps from the oily rafters of a tin shed, an Australia which still recalled the thrifty, button-saving mores of the Depression. Ray was the only person in the place who still retained something of the gentleness which went with this old and frugal Australia.

The writing here is vivid and pleasurable, but in 'Midnight' we would be likely to hear of the way the mind takes advantage of the past when this sort of reconstruction is going on. It is not only this straightforwardness that left me feeling dissatisfied with the second half of the book, but the apparent struggle to match the language to the boarding house settings. Words like 'augment' and 'impecunious' sat awkwardly in those kitchens. Gary Catalano is most at home where the restrictions of a social realist context aren't present, but where the self is mysteriously forever "on the verge of revealing itself". He is best wrapped in brown paper that could reveal almost anything inside.

☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆

B I G B A N G

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*witty
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stimulating entertainment*

*First issue appeared Winter 1984.
Deadline for second issue Sept 15.*

Edited by Lauren Williams.
\$1.50 per issue (posted).

THE LAST ADVENTURES OF CHRISTIAN DOOM: PRIVATE I

by Robert Kenny
 pub. by Rigmarole Books,
 PO Box 54, Clifton Hill 3068
 Melbourne 1983

reviewed by rob bath

"FEAR LIKE A MOUNTAIN CHILL"

Robert Kenny is a poet, critic, editor and uncompromising innovator of prose style ... and here I am saying his latest book is - a good read!

A "good read"? Sure. Check the plot: Christian Doom is an aging, legendary private eye, sort of like Humphrey Bogart if he'd been Australian and hadn't overdosed on Chesterfields and had to live through the dreary decades since. Returning strangely haunted from a European trip, he becomes enmeshed in a murder at a creepy mansion run by a mysterious organisation before vanishing and causing a fledgling amateur operator to track him down through a maze of heavy politics, enigmatic femmes fatales, secret societies, disappearing gangsters and shoot-outs. Well! I couldn't put it down!

And now our mission is to track down Kenny the literary innovator, believed to be heavily disguised as a penny-dreadful hack, lurking somewhere in the shadows of the Melbourne he obviously knows and needs. But first, to establish the correct critical tone, a few academic observations on the detective genre ...

Mystery narrative is usually linear, with 45 degree sidetracks - "This happened then that happened and meanwhile something else happened and is that relevant?" - and almost always from the point of view of the hero, whether first person - "Suddenly I felt a sickening blow at the back of my skull and saw fireworks before my eyes" - or third person - "Steele crashed to the carpet as if poleaxed" - in other words, the reader receives no more information than the detective. This is the first 'rule' that Kenny discards. We know plenty more than the heroes - lots of baffling facts - "You know too much", as the saying goes, and of course that statement usually spells danger. We get flashbacks, anecdotes and documentary evidence, any piece of which could be a vital clue or complete red herring - but you feel the need to know! The technique could be called 'layering' - levels and margins of mystery around and over the narrative. This could be the world's first laminar mystery story; it's not a labyrinth, it's a six-lane highway through the fog, with no off-ramps.

It's all set in surrealistic detective terrain, a sort of sepia/neon doppelganger of Melbourne. Characters have moody, unreal names like Doom, Des O'Layshon, Grey - so that's our first clue; we're in a sort of hardboiled Disneyland. (Some of this does get a bit silly at times).

Scenes and devices from all kinds of mystery story - Holmes/Christie puzzles, police procedure methods, espionage thrillers - litter the narrative. At times the narrative reads like a rubber-hose interrogation, sometimes bits of plot are offered like courtroom exhibits, visually - press clippings, Interpol file cards, etc.

And wonderful evocations ... the way events past and events distant control the here and now. What did happen in 1938? What did Doom find out in Europe? These references are typical of the Hammett/Macdonald type of mystery; but I suspect Kenny is also making points about historical and cultural influences on Australia, and I'm sure there are religious overtones to the naming of characters Christian Doom and Cilothac the villain ... perhaps some more sociologically literate reviewer could sort this out. I'm a detective story fan myself.

Look - I picked the answer with forty pages to go; the last-ditch revelation was a letdown (it concerns a double-identity which the crafty pulp reader can smell a mile away). So has Kenny opted for the old ploy of clouding a simplistic plot with a baffling array of red herrings? Has he cheated? I think not.

Rather I believe he has set out to create a kind of tone-poem of mystery rather than craft a rattling good novel. Mood rather than story. An atmospheric pea-soup of themes and allusions concocted from the language, metaphors and symbols of popular fiction. But, as innovative tone-poems go, it's still a rattling good read. I dunno ... it's a mystery.

The jacket blurb and other critics have mentioned Kenny's evocation of Melbourne. Yes, that's there, with deft strokes about social/geographical strata and mention of The City that's evoked. Spade's, Marlowe's, Archer's city, looming over the victims on the covers of a thousand cheap paper-backs.

I live in the heart of Adelaide, certainly not Melbourne. But after finishing the book, I went out into my backyard and looked up at the night skyline, listening to the quiet rumble of things known and things hidden ... and thought about my favourite line from the book:

"It was now possible for him to enjoy fear as one enjoys the crispness of a mountain chill ..."

Bill Turner, one of the editors of INPRINT has formed SMAP, a collective concerned with Small Magazines & Presses. The aim is to initiate policies prior to the Literature Board Conference next year in Canberra. SMAP is looking at the problems of distribution & public awareness of small presses, & initiating promotions by way of public readings & possibly a book bus. Every concerned editor & writer is urged to contact SMAP at PO BOX 51 Burwood NSW 2134, as soon as possible.

INPRINT ended 1983 with their Summer Issue & the news that they failed to receive a Lit Board grant for 1984. So they have gone into recess this year & the magazine seems certain to fold if it doesn't get a grant for 1985. This would be a shame as INPRINT has consistently published fine material from both new & established writers. INPRINT is one of the few magazines devoted entirely to prose fiction & we can't really afford to be without it.

COMPASS (PO BOX 51 BURWOOD NSW 2134) also had its 1984 grant cut off, but is continuing, having a few issues in the pipeline. Brian Dibble, from the Western Australia Institute of Technology is guest editor for the rest of the year & COMPASS will appear in tabloid form.

P76 (BOX 250 WENTWORTH BUILDING, UNI of SDNEY NSW 2006) is edited by Mark Roberts & Adam Aitken. The first issue appeared late in 1983 & consisted mainly of NSW writers but wants more material from the other states. P76 is a promising magazine which deserves support. Subscription is \$7.50 for 2 issues or \$4.00 for one.

IMAGE (PO BOX 36 SOUTH BRISBANE QLD 4101) is edited by Barry O'Donohue. The December 1983 issue featured an interview with John Tranter, a big review section & poetry by Rae Desmond Jones, Rosemary Nisses, Graham Rowlands, Robert Habost, Jenny Boulton & the omnipresent Rory Harris, who had 105 poems accepted during 1983. IMAGE appears 3 times a year & annual subscription is \$10 for individuals & \$15 for institutions.

PERVERSE PLEASURES (PO BOX 118 ABERDEEN ST PERTH WA 6000) is a new mag from Perth. Last issue received was No 3, Summer 1984 & it consisted of 23 pages, 6 of them taken up with adverts. Maybe they're searching for contributors? Contained two good poems by Helen Trensos, by far the most powerful pieces.

Rosemary Jones has announced that ASH MAGAZINE has died. ASH lasted for 5 years & 16 issues. This leaves WORDS & VISIONS (PO BOX 545 NORWOOD STH AUSTRALIA 5067) on its own in Adelaide. Helped by a couple of grants, W & V has become a quarterley magazine of quality, which has also published a book of short stories by Peter Mathers, in an impressive paperback. W & V is a crowded mixture of poetry, prose, reviews, music, sculpture, photography & graphics. Annual subscription is the usual \$10.

When MAKAR folded in 1980, the editors threw a party & called it MAKAR'S, LAST FLING! On a blackboard was written: Long Live The FLING! Since then, Cornelis Vleeskens, one of the editors of MAKAR, has been producing FLING! (19 FORDHAMS ROAD ELTHAM VIC 3095) Volume 4 No 1 has just appeared in a smaller format, which makes it easier to fit in the bookshelf. Subscriptions are still \$10 for 4 issues and all those with lapsed subscriptions are urged to pay up as FLING is struggling financially, like most small magazines. Also, released simultaneously are FLING! Vol 4 No 2 which is a selection of poetry by Ken Taylor titled FIVE, SEVEN FIVES. As an additional bonus subscribers have received Vol 4 No 2b, a collection of poetry by Vleeskens titled ANOTHER SLIM VOLUME.

MIGRANT 7 (BOX 2430V GPO MELBOURNE 3001) is a fine magazine which explores the problems of migrants through poetry, prose, photographs, graphics & songs. Edited by Jeltje, the third issue contains powerful work by T.O., Jas H Duke, Jeltje, Helen Said & an excellent story by Susan Unkovich - My Mother, My Sister. MIGRANT 7 sells for \$2, & appears quarterley. Great value! More contributions will make this magazine stronger so send, send send!

BRAVE NEW WORD received a grant for 1984, but the last issue I saw was No 4 which appeared late last year. Contained work by Eric Beach, Billy Marshall-Stoneking, Jane Elliot, Phillip O'Neill, John Lewis, Richard Tipping & an interview with John Morrison. BNW is a good-looking magazine which seems to improve with each issue. Run by 5 editors, it's available from BOX 98 ELSTERNWICK VIC 3185 and subs are \$13.50 for 4 issues (posted), single copies at \$3.70 (posted). The next issue should feature an interview with Barry Dickins, which will surely be interesting.

BIG BANG (PO BOX 180 ST.KILDA SOUTH VIC 3182), edited by Lauren Williams, is a new magazine showcasing witty, intelligent, stimulating entertainment & is available for \$1.50, including postage. BIG BANG is after cartoons, letters, reviews of bands/plays/movies/books, & of course, poetry & short stories. Some contributors to No 1: Les Wicks, Ken Smeaton, Liz Hall, Thomas Rhymer (Tome the Street Poet), Stephen J Williams & Komminos. Second issue is planned for Spring '84.

SYLLABLE (PO BOX 82 WINDSOR VIC 3181) is edited by Berni Janssen, Carmel Bird & Jurate Sasnaitis. First issue appeared in Summer '84 & subs are \$5.00 for 2 issues or \$3.00 for one. SYLLABLE developed from the FACELESS WOMAN series of readings & intends to publish writing with a strong voice, strong images & strong rhythms, with a feminist emphasis. An innovative magazine with work by Ania Walwicz, Anna Couani, Kris Hemensley, Joanne Burns, John Anderson, Mark Roberts, Ted Hopkins, Robyn Rowland & others. I look forward to the second issue

G O I N G D O W N S W I N G I N G

A MAGAZINE OF AUSTRALIAN WRITING: ISSUE SIX SPRING 1984

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contributions to: editors
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subscriptions:
\$6 for two issues

