ANNOUNCING THE

LANDFALL

Poetry Award Competition

FIRST PRIZE $400
AND TWO PRIZES OF $50

CONDITIONS OF ENTRY

1. Manuscripts should be typed, double spaced, one side of the page, on A4 paper.
2. Maximum of 6 poems or approximately 500 lines.
3. Each manuscript should bear a pseudonym and be accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope for return.
5. All manuscripts will be eligible for subsequent inclusion in Landfall. The prize-winning poems will appear in the December 1984 issue of Landfall.
6. Please address all submissions and correspondence to the Poetry Editor, Poetry Competition, Landfall.
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- Small Days, *Kerry Louise Harrison*  
- Reunion, *John Bentley*  
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SUBSCRIPTIONS

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SUBMISSIONS

Landfall publishes stories, poems, extracts from work in progress, reviews, commentaries, articles on aspects of related arts, work by photographers and artists. Work must be typed. Contributions CANNOT BE RETURNED UNLESS ACCOMPANIED BY A STAMPED, ADDRESSED ENVELOPE. Address contributions to: The Editor/Landfall, Box 25-088, Christchurch, New Zealand. Deadline for each issue is two months before publication. Advertising is welcome, and rates are available on request. Landfall is published with the aid of a grant from the New Zealand Literary Fund.

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Almost every editorial for the beginning of this year must have referred to George Orwell, confusing prophecy with prediction. I would prefer to reply to the dystopian vision of 1984 with a quotation from this journal’s founding editor Charles Brasch, writing in 1968: ‘There are no attainable utopias. . . .individuals will always have to find their fleeting private Utopias in the midst of the troubles, the horrors, the fearful uncertainties of the world.’ (The Universal Dance [U. of Otago Press, 1981], p.218) Brasch later asserts, ‘to know, to understand, to accept, that is the real road to Utopia’. It is not too much to claim that Landfall has contributed greatly over thirty-seven years to that process of understanding in New Zealand.

Landfall, the nation’s only surviving longrunning literary magazine, has had five editors: Brasch (Nos. 1-80), Robin Dudding (81-101), Leo Bensemann (102-115), Peter Smart (116-140), and myself—aided by several efficient associate editors and also from 1967 by the tireless Judith Baker. A glance at Landfall Country, the 1962 collection of Landfall items, or the several indexes will remind readers of the central role of the journal in the literary life of this country. Moreover Brasch began his first editorial in March 1947 by arguing that ‘the arts do not exist in a void’; he filled his journal with debate about religion, politics, art, architecture, music, philosophy, as well as his own passionate ideas about the English literary tradition. While the emergence of many other specialised journals since that time has partially obviated the need for such wideranging discussion, this issue continues that readiness to look beyond the purely literary world (whatever that may mean) in an article about Telethon.

Brasch also reminded us in that first editorial that while we speak a European tongue ‘we look out on the Pacific’. Landfall takes strong cognisance of that fact, as this issue illustrates with
a story by Albert Wendt, featured art work by Gordon Walters and translations by Margaret Orbell. Our Commonwealth connections have also been a feature of my editorship, with articles on Australian drama and poetry (with fiction to come), and Canadian literature.

The editorial policy of my associate Michael Harlow and myself towards contributors is similarly eclectic. Looking back over contributors to the past six issues I have edited, and comparing them with those during the previous ten years (1972-82), I can count 29 prose writers and 67 poets; half of these writers had been published before in Landfall, but three-quarters of this number with four items or less (15% of the writers have been published more than once by me). These figures reflect our policy of considering all work on its own merit. Our tastes tend to be 'contemporary' in the sense that we look for work that builds on or challenges tradition rather than perpetuates it. A look at John Needham's essay on postmodernism and deconstruction in the December issue will remind you that new clothes often hide old orthodoxies. Pound's dictum 'make it new', nevertheless, seems to be an appropriate guideline for a journal such as this, where we look for originality within an awareness of what has already been done.

If our tastes are wide-ranging, we hope to encourage readers in that direction too, by continuing the critical debate about how to read unfamiliar-looking literature. Another aid to understanding is the series of 'Craft Interviews' recently initiated—Lauris Edmond, Fleur Adcock, Hubert Witheford, Rachel McAlpine, Michael Morrissey and C. K. Stead—where readers may learn something about why and how a writer writes as he or she does. Our review and criticism sections also open up literature in a variety of ways, and we welcome intelligent correspondence to continue this dialogue between writer and reader, reader and reader.

To encourage new writing we offer in this issue a poetry prize to match last issue's fiction prize. We also welcome the recent arrival of new literary journals such as Parallax, New Outlook, Echoes, Untold and And.

Michael Harlow and I feel that our achievement in the past two years is worth noting and publicising. We look forward to bringing you, if not doubleplusgood Newspeak, then excellent contemporary writing and discussion, to help you build your utopias.

David Dowling
'It's June 1894, and I'm fifty-five years old today,' Barker said to Mautu as they sat in cane chairs on the store verandah overlooking the malae. As usual Peleipu, Mautu's daughter, sat on the floor beside her father's chair. They were having a breakfast of strong tea and cabin bread. 'Fifty-five is old, isn't it?' Barker asked. Mautu nodded as he dunked his cabin bread in his mug of tea. 'Not many people here or in England live beyond forty,' Barker continued. 'I've been lucky. Haven't been seriously ill, ever—' 'Aren't you going to eat?' Mautu interrupted him. Barker said, 'I'm not hungry.' Paused. 'How old are you?' 'Nearly forty-five.' 'The oldest man I've ever known was a Chinaman we took aboard in Hong Kong. About eighty he was. Small fist of a chap but very, very tough. Never said anything, not to me anyway. Bloody pagan he was. So you see, Mautu, we don't need to be Christians to live a long life.' Mautu, who was the village pastor, refused to take the bait. 'The next oldest was a Hindu. As black as midnight and at seventy-something years old not a wrinkle on his face. Another heathen. In fact the longest living people I've met were not Christians!' Mautu refused to reply. 'If old age is proof of the gods' blessings, then the pagan gods are more powerful.' He paused dramatically and, gazing at Mautu from under lowered bushy eyebrows, added, 'Perhaps your God doesn't exist!' 'Going to be good mango season,' Mautu said in English as he gazed up at the mango trees that shaded the store. The high, sprawling trees were pink with blossoms and buds. Peleipu wanted her father to offer their friend some consolation, an answer to grasp at. Mautu pushed away his food tray, looked at Barker and asked, 'Why is God's existence important to you if you do not believe in Him?' 'It isn't important!' 'Then you not need to chase your own questions!' Mautu looked up at the mango trees again. 'Yes, the mangoes, they going to be a lot this season.'
"Why do you always talk in riddles?"
"It is you who deal in riddles!" Mautu replied. Barker looked away.

Peleiupu timed it perfectly. Just before Barker could jab his frustration at Mautu, she jumped up and picked up her father’s food tray. She stood looking at Barker’s tray.

"Yes, take mine too!" he said, finally.
"But you not eaten!" Mautu insisted.
"It isn’t the food of this world that I need!"
"Not even sweet mangoes?" joked Mautu. For the first time that morning, Barker relaxed and, looking up at the mango trees, said, ‘Perhaps the sticky juice of the mango can hold my tattered fifty-five-year old body together for a while longer!’ When Peleiupu returned from the kitchen fale a few minutes later Barker said, ‘Pele looks more like Lalaga than you.’

‘Then she is not beautiful!’ chuckled Mautu. Embarrassed, Pele avoided looking at them and sat down behind Mautu’s chair.

‘I wish my children were like Pele. The brats are total savages!’
‘Like their father perhaps?’
‘I’m not a savage!’ Barker pretended to be hurt.
‘You not believe in the English God. Or English civilisation. You not respect other papalagi, not even the missionary, so you are a palagi savage!’
‘I do believe in other things!’
‘In many things!’ Barker stood up suddenly and, turning his back to Mautu, recited, ‘I believe in birth; I believe in death; I believe in thirst, hunger, pain, desire, joy, because I can experience all those. I believe in the earth, the sea, the sky. In birds too. And mangoes. Especially mangoes because I’ll be tasting their delicious flesh in a few months time.’ He wheeled to face Mautu. ‘I have no need to believe in a supreme being, in a God. I don’t need such a crutch!’
‘But you continue for to search—’
‘Not for God!’
‘—across all the Earth’s seas and islands—’
‘Not for God!’
‘—why you search all these fifty-five years?’
‘Not for God, I tell you!’
‘Then for what, for whom?’ Mautu snared him. Peleiupu
suddenly thought of Barker’s huge hands as helpless anchors dangling into the emptiness around him, and she wanted to reach out and hold up their immense weight of doubt.

‘As I have said already, the things I can feel and taste and experience, those are enough for me!’

‘If that is enough, then you not need to keep asking me. You not need anybody, my friend.’

It was as though the mellow morning light had solidified around them and for a long moment they said nothing.

‘I not know what answers you seek,’ Mautu said. He reached out and touched the back of Barker’s right hand. Barker sat down again. ‘All I know is you are a English Lord who is shipwrecked on a island full of sun and sky and mangoes and need nothing else!’ Mautu said, impishly.

‘Yes, I am the civilised English Lord shipwrecked in Paradise and have no need of the Christian God, missionaries, other white-skinned Lords and crucifixes!’ he laughed softly and clutched at Mautu’s shoulder. ‘I am a pagan in the midst of so much plenty! I am fiftyfive years old today and I seek nothing and need nothing!’

‘Perhaps just mangoes?’

‘Yes, perhaps mangoes!’

As their laughter lost itself in the thick foliage of the mango trees, Peleiuupu realised the two men had a profound need for each other, a bond so strong that one couldn’t do without the other any more. They were so alike, this pagan papalagi trader and the Christian.

‘Our annual Church Fono is to be held in two weeks time,’ Mautu said in Samoan. ‘Will you take us again in your fautasi?’

‘Yes, but on one condition.’

‘And what is that?’

‘That you take Pele and Arona with you.’ Barker winked at Peleiuupu whose surprise was trapped breathlessly in her throat.

‘Do you want to go?’ Mautu asked her. Peleiuupu nodded.

‘You’d better ask your mother then!’

‘We’ll leave you and your party at Malua, and I’ll take Pele and Arona into Apia.’

‘I don’t think so!’

‘Don’t you trust your papalagi pagan friend to care properly for your children?’

‘It’s not that,’ mumbled Mautu. ‘I don’t like Apia.’

‘Apia and the whole life that goes with it is here to stay whether you like it or not. Your children will have to live with
it.' He reached over and ruffled Peleiuupu’s hair. ‘And Pele can cope with anything, even Apia!’ he added. ‘She watches and learns and understands quickly. Don’t you, Pele?’ Peleiuupu blushed. ‘She is fortunate!’

Later as they walked away from Barker’s store, Peleiuupu glanced up at the mango trees. Their dark green foliage, now peppered pink and red with flowers, stirred lazily like slow spring water. She shimmered with joy at the thought of visiting Apia.

‘Do you like Barker?’ Mautu asked. She nodded. ‘Why?’

She pondered quickly and said, ‘He is a very sad man, eh?’

‘Barker is right about you: you do watch and learn and understand.’

They walked in silence the rest of the way.

‘Mautu,’ she pleaded as they walked up the back paepae of their fale, ‘I want to go with Barker to Apia.’

‘All right!’ he whispered. Lalaga was weaving a mat in the centre of their fale. ‘But you had better ask your mother about going on the trip.’ Before she could insist on him asking Lalaga, he escaped to his desk at the other end of the fale.

‘How is the papalagi gentleman?’ Lalaga asked her in English. (Lalaga had taken to referring to Barker that way but there was no malice in it.)

‘He is well,’ Peleiuupu replied formally, thus undermining Lalaga’s line of attack. ‘Let me do it.’ She sat down. Lalaga slid away from the mat and let Peleiuupu continue the weaving.

For a while they said nothing, and as Lalaga observed Peleiuupu’s deft hands and fingers weaving the mat she experienced an upwelling surge of pride in her daughter. At fifteen Peleiuupu was already an expert weaver of mats and highly skilled in other female crafts. Everything came easily to her, too easily, Lalaga had often thought. ‘It is a gift from God!’ Mautu had once allayed Lalaga’s fears about Peleiuupu. Even her English was now better than Mautu’s. Yet Peleiuupu always made herself appear less skilled than other people so as to make them feel more secure, safer, in her presence. For this Lalaga loved her deeply, knowing that Peleiuupu would not use her gift, her superior talents, to harm others.

‘What did your father and the papalagi discuss this morning?’ Lalaga asked, expecting Peleiuupu, as usual, to check if anyone else was listening before replying.

Peleiuupu looked around the fale quickly and then said, ‘Mautu says its going to be a very good mango season this year.’
Lalaga wasn’t going to be distracted that easily. ‘What did the papalagi gentleman and your father, the prophet, talk about?’

Shrugging her shoulders, Peleiupu said, ‘The usual.’ Her hands worked more quickly.

Lalaga waited but got no further enlightenment, so she asked, ‘And what is the usual?’

‘The search for God.’ Peleiupu’s hands stopped their furious weaving. ‘You believe in God, eh?’ she asked.

‘Of course I do!’ Lalaga protested.

‘That’s what I thought.’

‘You thought so!’

‘Lalaga, some people don’t believe in God,’ Peleiupu explained patiently.

Lalaga was frightened by what she felt she had to ask. ‘Are you one of those people?’

Peleiupu’s hands continued their nimble weaving. She said, ‘Barker doesn’t believe and I think many other papalagi are the same.’

‘I knew that!’ sighed Lalaga but, when she noticed the abrupt halt in Peleiupu’s weaving she tensed again, expecting another devastating revelation of heresy.

‘Mautu believes, doesn’t he?’

‘How can you ask such a thing?’ Lalaga was almost shouting.

‘Your . . . your father is a Servant of God!’

Peleiupu ignored her anger and said, ‘All I meant was that Mautu sometimes doubts.’

‘Doubts what?’ Lalaga insisted, angry with herself for allowing Peleiupu to question her belief.

‘God,’ was all Peleiupu said.

‘Peleiupu!’ Mautu called to her.

‘Yes?’

‘Get me a drink of water!’

Peleiupu scrambled up and out of the fale, leaving Lalaga grasping for meaning like a fish kicking at the end of a line. She continued weaving but Peleiupu’s revelation about Mautu’s doubt kept picking at her.

Peleiupu was soon back with a mug of water for Mautu. While raising the drink to his mouth, Mautu whispered, ‘What are you and your mother arguing about?’

‘Nothing!’ she whispered. Mautu started drinking. ‘I just told her that you sometimes doubt the existence of God!’ Mautu choked and coughed the water out in a splutter. ‘That’s true, isn’t it?’ she asked. He wiped his mouth with the back of his
hand and, trying to steady his trembling hands, drank the rest of the water slowly.

‘Have you asked her about going to Upolu?’ He handed her the empty tin mug.

She shook her head. ‘Why don’t you ask her?’

‘It’s best that you ask her,’ he whispered. And before she could plead with him he added, ‘Go now, I’ve got a lot of work to do.’ He continued writing.

She hesitated for a moment, turned swiftly, and started hurrying out of the fale.

‘We haven’t finished talking!’ Lalaga stopped her.

Peleiupu went over reluctantly and sat down beside Lalaga, confused by her mother’s unexpected anger and her father’s timidity and refusal to get permission for her and Arona to go to Apia. Everything was straightforward but adults, especially parents, made things complicated, stupidly unreasonable, she thought. She was only fifteen years old, yet she had to be ever so patient with their lack of understanding, their slow decision-making, and the eternal complications they made of their lives (and everyone else’s!). Most of them were so unwise, yes, that was her description.

‘Going to be a good mango season,’ she remarked. She tried to dispel her confusion with the thought of fat, delicious, succulent mangoes, but couldn’t. Beside her, Lalaga’s presence was a solid rock pillar. She wasn’t going to offer to do the weaving any more. ‘Where are Arona and the other children?’ she asked.

‘I don’t know!’ Lalaga replied. She suddenly realised her daughter no longer referred to herself as a child, and it wasn’t out of any pretence or arrogance. Peleiupu simply did not think of herself as a child. And, physically, she was quickly blossoming into a woman, tall and supple. Peleiupu wasn’t self-conscious about this physical transformation either. It was as if, anticipating well beforehand every change in her life, she adjusted to them before they occurred.

‘Very hot, eh?’ Peleiupu commented, noticing the beads of sweat slithering down her mother’s arms and face. ‘Where’s everybody gone?’ All the neighbouring fale appeared empty of people.

‘Working in their plantations or fishing, you know that!’

‘Yes,’ sighed Peleiupu, ‘but where are Arona and Ruta and Naomi and the other children of our aiga?’

‘Swimming probably. Now stop your questions! Here, you weave!’
When Lalaga looked out of the fale and saw that their mango trees beside the road were covered with blossoms, she heard herself saying, ‘Yes, it is going to be a rich mango harvest.’

‘Mautu was the first to observe that this morning.’ Peleilupu paused in her work and, gazing steadily at Lalaga, said, ‘Funny how you can make an important observation the property of everyone by just pointing it out to someone else who then points it out to someone else and so on. Of course it has to be an observation that is important to those other people. Like the other morning, while Arona and I and the other children were in our plantation collecting coconuts, I suddenly heard the silence in all that growth . . .’

‘Heard it?’

‘Yes, I heard the silence—it was deep and still, a huge kind presence all around us and in us . . . And when I heard it I told Arona to stand still, silently, and listen to it. He did. I told him to shut his eyes. He did. Then I asked him if he was hearing it. He nodded. Then we asked the others in turn to listen. And when we had all had a turn, we all closed our eyes together and listened as a group. And we all heard it and allowed it to become part of us.’

‘What did you think that particular silence was?’ Lalaga pressed her knowing that Peleilupu, as usual, had glimpsed a deeper meaning to it.

‘It was the land itself,’ she explained. ‘The silence of these islands. It must have been here when God created our country. And has always been here.’

‘But why is it important?’

‘I don’t know yet how to explain it,’ she said. ‘Perhaps it is important because if we refuse to hear it, or let it be part of us, we will become other creatures . . . I don’t know. Arona knows better. He doesn’t allow his thinking to get in the way. He just knows. He lets things become what they are in himself.’ She paused and added, ‘It is bad to think too much, Barker keeps telling Mautu. He is right . . .’

‘But Barker does nothing else but chase his thoughts round and round! That’s why he can’t believe in anything!’ laughed Lalaga.

‘That’s the palagi way, that’s how palagi people are.’

‘And your father?’

Aware that Lalaga had once again led her deftly to a discussion she wanted to avoid, Peleilupu said, ‘May I go for a swim?’ Before Lalaga could pin her down again Peleilupu called, ‘Mautu, may I go for a swim?’
‘All right!’ he replied. And Peleiupu was out of the fale and running towards the pool.

Lalaga continued to weave her mat, refusing to ask Mautu directly about his doubts because he was, like Peleiupu, very adept at dodging her questions.

It was almost midday and the sun was snared in a smother of thick cloud that seemed to have oozed out of the sky’s belly. Only the quick, soft squeaking and scratching of Lalaga’s fingers against the pandanus strands disturbed the quiet. Occasionally, she heard Mautu shift in his wooden chair. Mangoes, she thought inadvertently, and then cursed herself for having thought that. Why did her daughter understand more than she? She had no right to, she was only a child!

On their way home from the pool, Peleiupu edged up to Arona and whispered, ‘Do you want to visit Upolu?’ Arona looked straight ahead. A brother, at his age, should no longer be seen displaying affection for his sister. ‘Barker and Mautu will take us if we want to go.’

‘Who said?’ Arona asked.

‘Not too loud!’ she whispered. Ruta and Naomi and the others were too busy talking among themselves to hear anyway. ‘Mautu and Lalaga and the elders are attending the Church Fono at Malua. Do you want to go?’ He nodded once, sternly. ‘Lalaga hasn’t said we can go though,’ she added, hoping he would volunteer to persuade Lalaga. He said nothing. ‘Did you hear?’ He nodded once. ‘Well?’ she asked.

‘Well what?’

‘We won’t be able to go if Lalaga says no!’

‘You ask her then,’ was his curt reply. He looked so aloof and baulky in the noon sun, with the droplets of water glistening like fish scales in his hair and over his body, that she hesitated from persuading him any further.

‘You’re her favourite,’ she ventured into precarious ground.

‘I’ll ask Lalaga!’ Ruta volunteered.

‘Ask her what?’ Peleiupu snapped.

‘Whatever you want me too!’

‘It is not your concern!’ Arona stressed, just like their father when he wanted quiet. Ruta shrugged her shoulders and resumed her whispered conversation with her friends.

They noticed that some of the older girls and boys were gathering in the fale classrooms behind their main fale for their afternoon lessons. Lalaga was still weaving.
‘I’ll ask her,’ Arona said finally, and then walked away from her.

As usual, after lotu and their evening meal, Mautu conducted an English lesson with Lalaga, his children, and the brightest Satoa children. During these lessons, whenever Mautu didn’t know the meanings of words or their correct pronunciation he got Peleiupu to explain them. However, he always rechecked with Barker later. Sometimes when Mautu couldn’t take the class Peleiupu took it; and secretly, Lalaga and the others preferred her relaxed, democratic, patient style of teaching. Mautu also gave her all the students’ assignments and exercises to mark.

After the lesson that night, Peleiupu and the older girls strung up the mosquito nets and soon all the children were in the nets and falling asleep. Instead of sitting up with her parents, Peleiupu got into the net where she slept with Ruta and Naomi and three other girls, pulled her sheet up to her chin, and pretended to be sleeping. Intermittently however, she would peer through her half-closed eyelids at her parents and Arona who were playing cards beside the lamp a few paces away, hoping to hear Lalaga’s decision about their going to Upolu.

Like the sudden pulling back of a curtain, she was awake. It was bright morning and the other children were outside picking up the fallen leaves. She rolled out, untied the net quickly and folded it with her sleeping sheet and placed it on the lowest rafter, with the sleeping mats.

Arona and three of his friends were behind the kitchen fale scraping coconuts to feed the chickens, but because there were no girls with them she couldn’t go and ask him. At the drums of rain water under the breadfruit trees, she filled a basin, washed her face and combed her hair, all the time keeping an eye on her brother.

As she helped the other girls in the kitchen fale cook their morning meal, she tried not to think of Lalaga’s decision. Shortly, when she saw Arona strolling through the scatter of banana trees towards the beach, she got up and pretended to be heading for the lavatory that was located at the edge of the beach behind a thick stand of palm trees.

‘What did she say?’ she called to him. He was standing up to his thighs in the sea, his back to her, washing a coconut strainer he had brought with him. He continued as if he hadn’t heard her. She moved up to the water’s edge. ‘What did Lalaga say?’ she repeated. Raising the strainer with both hands, Arona
squeezed it in one long drawn-out action, and the water dribbled through his hands like solid white smoke and splattered into the surface of the sea.

He waded back towards the beach. ‘She will decide by tomorrow.’

‘Tomorrow?’ she cried, stamping her right foot into the thickly wet sand. He nodded and started to walk past her. ‘But why?’

‘Don’t worry, she’ll let us go!’

‘She had better!’ she snapped.

There was no one else in the main fale as she sat with Arona facing Lalaga who, she sensed, was avoiding looking at her. In the pit of her belly a ferocious beast was inflating itself outwards, threatening to fill every nook and cranny of her shape. She could hardly breathe; sobs were breaking up from her chest like huge bubbles about to burst but she swallowed them down repeatedly.

‘... Arona may come with us,’ Lalaga was saying, ‘but you’ll have to stay and run our classes...’

‘I won’t. No!’ The choking cry broke out of her mouth. She slapped at her knees and she was sobbing.

‘Don’t you talk to me like that!’ ordered Lalaga. ‘No child talks to her mother like that. You hear me?’

‘I want to go!’ Peleiupu cried. She sprang up, fists clenched at her sides, her huge tears dripping down to the mat. ‘I’m going!’

‘I won’t allow any child of mine to talk to me like that. Hear me?’ Lalaga rehitched her lavalava. ‘If you don’t watch out, I’ll beat you!’

Peleiupu scuttled across the fale. At the front threshold she wheeled, wiped her face fiercely with her hands, and called, ‘I’m going and you can’t stop me!’

‘Get me the broom!’ Lalaga ordered Arona.

Peleiupu jumped down onto the grass and started running furiously across the malae.

‘You wait!’ Lalaga threatened. ‘You wait until I get you tonight!’

They watched Peleiupu disappearing into a stand of bananas and into the plantations. ‘Go and bring her back, now!’ Lalaga ordered Arona who rose slowly, glanced at her, and started ambling out of the fale. ‘And hurry up!’ she chased him.

For a while, Lalaga stood on the front paepae gazing after her children, then when she realised the neighbours were watching her she retreated to her weaving.
‘I’ll show her,’ she kept repeating. ‘She thinks she knows more than her own mother—the animal! Just wait. I’ve spent my life slaving for her. Just wait!’

A short while later, however, when she remembered how determined her daughter was, she visualised with increasing panic Peleiupe in a fragile canoe, paddling suicidally across the hungry straits which could inevitably swallow her up. Then, more frightening still, she saw Peleiupe up in a tree fixing a noose round her neck. She scrambled up and out into the classrooms where she instructed the oldest students to follow Arona and search for Peleiupe.

The undergrowth was a dense green sea sucking her into its depths as she ran, her feet making plopping, sucking sounds in the muddy track. ‘I’ll show her! I’ll show her!’ Peleiupe repeated. Ahead, the ifi tree was a massive mother with arms outstretched to welcome her. She jumped up, clung to the lowest branch, kicked up and landed on the next branch then, branch by branch, climbed until she reached a platform of interlocking branches, lay down on her back and cried up into the maze of leaves and branches and thin rays of light.

This was ‘her tree’, her refuge whenever she was troubled. When she had first discovered it five years previously it had intimidated her with its heavy brooding presence; an octopus, she had thought. Its rich, fertile smell of mold had made her think of supernatural beasts. However, one morning after a nasty verbal fight with Arona and Lalaga, she had found herself up in the ifi’s protective shade, and, as she had lain on the platform, the tree’s breathing and aromatic odour had healed her hurt. Soon after that, she had heard Filivai, the Satoa taulasea, say that certain trees in pre-Christian times had been the homes of some aitu and atua. After about fifty years of missionary conversion, aitu had become evil beings to be feared and there was only one Atua. Her ifi tree had an aitu, she came to believe, after hours of relaxing in its green healing. Her tree was also part of Nature, a spiritual force she kept reading about in English books. She wondered what ancient aitu lived in her tree and in her imagination tried to give form to that aitu. She tried her mother, then the taulasea Filivai, then a combination of all the women she admired. One day she even pictured her tree’s aitu as one of Snow White’s dwarfs; she tried the supernatural beings she read about in Barker’s books—the Cyclops, the Genii, the Unicorn. None of them fitted, she decided. So she tried all the animals
she knew. Then all the fish and other sea creatures. Her patient search was methodical and led her deeper into the rich depths of the garden of her imagination. Years later, especially in moments of crisis, she would realise that in her search for her tree’s aitu she had explored and groped her way towards the wisdom of her imagination, to a faith that lay beyond logic and belief.

One overcast afternoon as she sat crosslegged on the platform, hands on her knees, her back straight, gazing motionlessly into the foliage, she let her thoughts settle into a still pool, so still a whisper could shatter it. She waited. She thought she was dreaming: she saw herself sitting crosslegged on the platform. She waited. Gradually, almost as if a slow melting was radiating through her pores into all the corners of her being, she inhaled the tangy aroma of the moss that covered, like a cloak, the bark of her tree. She relaxed with an ecstatic sigh, and the odour not only filled her but the sky and bush and all the creatures in it. Everything was drunk with it, and she knew that the presence of the moss’s odour was the aitu of her tree, and it was in her soul, now.

When she surfaced from the spell, evening was starting to cover her tree like a silk black garment.

A few days later, when she began to doubt her faith in her aitu, she wandered to Filivai’s home and played a game of lape with the children of Filivai’s aiga. Halfway through the boisterous game she pretended she had taken ill and went into Filivai’s fale.

Filivai was using a stone pestle to pound a mixture of leaves and coconut oil. The pungent odour of the potion reminded Peleiuupu of her tree’s aitu, as she sat down a few paces opposite Filivai. Because she was thought of by the Satoans as ‘Mautu’s very gifted daughter’, she was welcomed in all their homes at any time. However, like almost all Satoans she was wary of Filivai because she was a healer not only of physical ailments but of ma’i aitu. Filivai’s powers, she heard Satoans whisper, came from the Days of Darkness: Filivai was heir to an evil heritage which the missionaries and pastors had exorcised (and were still exorcising). But unlike other taulasea Peleiuupu had heard about, Filivai was an earnest Christian who refused to heal ma’i aitu, unless it was absolutely necessary. And before performing such healing she always asked Mautu, her pastor, for permission to do so. Her father, Peleiuupu remembered, had never refused Filivai, and she wondered why. Later in her life Peleiuup would observe that her people’s belief in the Christian Atua, the Holy Spirit,
was only the top third of the pyramid which included, in its three dimensional body and belly, a feared assembly of savage aitu, saualii, sauai, and the papalagi-introduced ghosts, vampires, frankensteins, demons, devils, and Satan. Linked to this observation was the perception that all living creatures were part of a world inhabited by other beings who were both visible and invisible and benevolent and destructive. Now that they were Christians, the Satoans tried not to discuss, within Mautu’s hearing, these other beings. From what Peleiupu heard and observed, she knew that many Satoans, especially the elders, sometimes met and talked with the spirits of their ancestors. At times they even suffered the wrath of those spirits, and were sometimes possessed by them. Even her parents, who professed unshakable faith in reason and the Bible, were not free of the feared menagerie which inhabited the murky depths of the pyramid. To her death Lalaga would deny verbally the existence of the menagerie, but Peleiupu knew Lalaga feared its existence. On the other hand her father, whose ancestors had been taulaaitu, would come to believe more profoundly and without fear in what he called ‘that other reality’ in which dwelled the banished spirits of his taulaaitu ancestors, their atua Fatutapu and all the other presences and spirits. Mautu would never reveal this to his congregation, but Peleiupu would love him more abundantly for it.

‘How is your father?’ Filivai greeted her.
‘He is well, thank you.’
‘And your mother?’
‘She is well too, thank you.’
Filivai trickled more coconut oil into the potion and continued pounding it. Peleiupu watched her. Filivai was over sixty, one of the oldest Satoans, but she looked as young as Lalaga. Only the network of wrinkles on her forehead and cheeks and the looseness of her flesh betrayed her age. Her pendulous breasts, blue-veined around the almost black nipples, hung down to her belly and shook in rhythm to her pounding. She wore a stained lavalava and a tiputa draped over shoulders.

‘It’s going to be a good mango season,’ Peleiupu heard herself saying.
‘If it rains heavily while the mangoes are in flower, there won’t be many mangoes.’
‘Why not?’
‘The rain will break many of the flowers,’ Filivai said. Peleiupu wanted more details but wasn’t going to be impolite. ‘Is it true
you read a lot of books?” Filivai asked.

‘Not as much as my father or Barker,’ she admitted. Then, quickly perceiving the opening, added, ‘Do you like Barker?’

‘He’s married to a woman of my aiga,’ Filivai evaded her.

‘He doesn’t go to church or believe in God, eh?’ Peleiupu sensed Filivai wasn’t surprised by that.

‘You didn’t come to talk about the papalagi, eh?’ Filivai’s unexpected parry surprised Peleiupu who, for a pause, didn’t know how to counter. ‘I’ll wipe my hands then we’ll talk.’ Using a corner of her lavalava, Filivai started wiping her hands clean of the sticky bits of leaves and oil. ‘How many years are you now?’

‘Fifteen.’

‘But your mind is much older!’ Filivai remarked. Peleiupu wondered how Filivai had lost her two top middle teeth; there was a thin, white, perpendicular scar on her upper lip also. ‘Your brain is much older.’

Flattery always embarrassed Peleiupu so she said, ‘I must go!’

‘Don’t go! I am glad you came to talk with me.’

A short while later they were conversing easily.

‘I have a tree,’ Peleiupu said.

‘What kind of tree?’

‘A ifi. I remember you telling my parents that in the olden days some trees had aitu or atua.’ Peleiupu paused. Filivai nodded. ‘My tree has one.’

‘Have you told your parents that?’ Filivai asked, as if Peleiupu’s revelation wasn’t unusual. Peleiupu shook her head. ‘You shouldn’t let them know: they are God’s servants and may not understand.’

‘That is why I came to you.’ No reaction from Filivai. ‘The atua in my tree reveals itself to me through the odour of the tree. Is that possible?’ Filivai nodded. ‘It is a kind atua; it heals my pain, always.’

‘It comes easily, doesn’t it?’ Filivai asked. Peleiupu didn’t comprehend. ‘You know, you see without knowing how you do it. It is a great gift,’ Filivai said. ‘From God,’ she added hurriedly. ‘Because of it most people will be frightened of you. Do your parents know about it?’

‘If you mean I have intelligence, then my parents know I have it, especially my mother.’

‘Is she happy about it?’

Peleiupu pondered for a moment and then admitted, ‘Don’t think so!’
"What about your father?"
"He knows but he is too busy with his books."
"I knew a young girl once. She had the gift too," Filivai said more to herself than Peleiupu.
"Were other people wary of her?"
"Yes," Filivai emphasised. "Yes, very frightened when they discovered she could see into the world of atua and aitu and other presences. A world outlawed by the Church . . ."
"What happened to her?" Peleiupu asked. She thought she could see tears in Filivai’s eyes.
"She is alive. She is a simple healer," Filivai said.
"And the gift?"
Filivai looked away. "I must continue with my work."
"I will go now," Peleiupu said, rising reluctantly to her feet.
"You must learn to hide the gift," Filivai said. Peleiupu glanced back at her. "Don’t ever try to destroy it. Or betray it. It is what you are."
"May I come and see you again—if I need to?"
Filivai nodded once. "I don’t have the courage and may not be able to help you."
"Thank you. I’ll go now."
"Don’t expect too much from me!" Filivai pleaded.
Peleiupu walked out onto the malae where the scramble of children was still playing lape.
"Pele’s in our team!" one of her friends called.
Peleiupu looked back at Filivai and found her gazing at her. Peleiupu waved once. Filivai nodded. Quickly Peleiupu decided what she had to do to survive, and skipped into the noisy game of lape, laughing and joking, a girl who appeared to be totally absorbed in the game.

The sun was setting. Two of the search groups had returned only to be instructed by a now panicking Lalaga to continue the search. (Mautu was due home from his fishing trip with Barker, and Lalaga didn’t want to face his wrath.) Some of the old women came and consoled her. They sat on the paepae, looking hopefully up at the bush and hills and mountain range that darkened, like a fierce tidal wave, as evening dropped. ‘She’s too smart, she thinks she knows everything!’ Lalaga kept saying. ‘She’s rebellious, disobedient, difficult!’ They nodded in sympathy but didn’t believe Peleiupu was like that.

Unexpectedly Lalaga saw Mautu by the kitchen fale, pulling his bush knife out of the thatching. She hurried towards him.
'I know already!' he called to her. In his softly spoken command she sensed an enormous anger. She stopped. He marched past her. She watched until he was at a safe distance heading for Barker's home. 'That's why she's like that!' she called after him. 'You always side with her!'

For a while, as the cicadas cried around her, she wept, more out of fear than anger. Then she wiped away her tears, returned and sat with the other women in the main fale and waited for Mautu and Barker and the search parties to return.

'Mautu and Barker told us to come home,' Arona informed Lalaga and the elders. They had their lotu, the young people served the elders (nearly all the old men and women of Satoa who hadn't gone on the search) their evening meal which they ate in strained silence, with everyone trying not to see the fear in Lalaga, then the young people ate, bathed, got into their nets and fell asleep easily, exhausted from tracking through the plantations and the bush.

Most of the elders tried to stay awake with Lalaga but fell asleep one by one as the night progressed. Beside the centre lamp, Lalaga kept her vigil. At times she prayed for forgiveness, asking God to save her daughter who she had mistreated. Every time she dared look into the darkness outside, unwelcomed images of a dead Peleïpu jumped into her mind and she would shut her eyes and pray more fervently.

The rooster's crowing unclenched in the centre of her head it seemed, and forced her out of her sleep. She was still sitting beside the lamp; the elders, wrapped tightly in their sleeping sheets, lay in rows around her; someone was snoring like a boiling kettle. Dawn was spilling out of the east and splashing across the sky. No Mautu. No Peleïpu. The raw touch of panic caught at her throat. She held back the cry. She staggered up, gripped by the most overwhelming sense of helplessness she had ever experienced. Her daughter, how she loved her! There were people washing themselves at the drums of rain water beside the kitchen fale. In the half-light she saw Mautu and Barker among them. Her feet started running, dragging her with them towards Mautu before she could stop them, and she watched them melt their quick prints in the dew-covered ground.

Mautu turned his back slowly, surely, towards her, dismissing her. She stopped. She looked at the other men. They looked away.

Barker stepped in front of her. 'Peleïpu is all right,' he said in Samoan. 'She is sleeping with her sisters.' Lalaga blocked her
mouth with her hands, wheeled and started hurrying back to the main fale. 'She came back on her own. We find her in the net when we return this morning!' Barker called.

She was ripping up the side of the mosquito net and reaching down at Peleiupu. 'Don't you touch my daughter!' Mautu's command stopped her. No one moved. Not a sound. As though Mautu's order had stilled everything. She again tried to push her angry outstretched hands down towards the sleeping Peleiupu. 'Don't!' Mautu's threat was final. She dared not disobey. 'Let my daughter sleep!'

Lalaga stumbled past him towards the beach. Mautu got a towel and, with Barker and the other men, headed for the pool. Once they were out of sight, the elders and their children dispersed to their homes, unwilling to face their pastor's anger. Ruta, Naomi and the other children made little noise as they put away the mosquito nets and sleeping mats and then went to the kitchen fale, leaving the spacious main fale to Peleiupu who was sleeping peacefully in the large net that was shivering, like a live white creature, in the soft breeze.

No one, not even Arona, would dare mention anything to Peleiupu about her rebellion. Not ever. They all sensed that Mautu wanted it that way. They also assumed, without asking Mautu or Lalaga, that Peleiupu and Arona were accompanying the elders and Barker to the Malua Fono and Apia. But from that morning on, they noticed that whenever Peleiupu needed to be chastised or disciplined—a rare occurrence—Lalaga left it to Mautu. 'After all, she is his daughter!' Lalaga told the Satoans.

GLOSSARY

| aitu     | spirit                  |
| atua     | god                     |
| fautasi  | long rowboat            |
| lape     | a ball game             |
| lotu     | church service          |
| ma'i aitu| illness caused by spirits |
| sanai    | ferocious demon         |
| sauaiti  | phantom, demon          |
| taulaaitu| spirit medium           |
| taulasea | healer                  |
In the Camp of the Chameleon

When the horse-drawn caravan arrives in town, it attracts people like children to a video game.

My wife sings, ‘I wish I lived in a caravan . . .’
I say ‘Didn’t your mother ever tell you, you never should, play with the gypsies . . .’

‘He calls to the stars,’ she says, ‘And they come to him. He gentles them in his hands . . . strokes the finer points. . . .’
‘He’s an astrologer?’ I ask.
‘Maybe,’ she says, as she unbuttons her blouse.
‘Maybe not,’ she calls, as she lifts up her skirts, runs out of the house.

Nights I’m alone, he isn’t.
Whistling, I go in search of the rover—down through the valley so shady.
He’s waiting for me. Has painted his face.
The colours stand up and are accountable: Red, Gold and Green.

I show him my gun. The Knight of Swords takes it away
The fire dreams. My wife dances barefoot.
He tells stories and the birds come down out of the trees . . He plays his fiddle. The note is for me.
I read it and believe.

In the morning when I awake, I’m alone,
holding the tail of a lizard
and it moves . . .
Framed

Turn out the light
open the door
put the chair
in the middle of the room
a street lamp shines
through the window
illuminates the space
you must watch
this space must be watched
at all times
for further enlightenment
listen
to the footsteps
have they stopped?
they have stopped
there are two guns
one fires
one shot only is fired

A True Story or,
how to take the stand in the Witness Box without lying and not have it held against you

He makes the first move, or maybe she invites him. It makes no difference. The fact is, it begins. He takes her hand, she looks into his eyes. Perhaps they are walking under the trees/the moon or they're in a restaurant and he turns, kisses her. People stare—only, she's been waiting for this moment. The next few days she is startled by the colour in flowers, plants, trees. Gazes at young children/birds.
Hears each sound as if it’s the first. Smiles, sings. She softens, eats little, glows. Waits. He rings, writes or calls on her. Or doesn’t. Everything is open to change; nothing does. It continues for a month, a year, sometimes five. She asks herself, *Is this love?* She reads poetry/doesn’t and is still confused. Grows older. One day they argue or maybe he/she makes the point; sharpens it. Leaves. It’s no-one’s fault, couldn’t be helped, one of those things. Basically, it’s the same old story, movie; video replay. Only the names are different. One morning, she steps in front of an express train to find out how much pain she is capable of not feeling.

Angelina

For two days she makes the journey
to the civil government with food
tobacco, clean linen

For two days she trembles at the door
while armed guards check the basket
the omelette she carries

Upstairs Lorca sits at a table
there is an inkwell, pen & paper
he writes nothing

On the third day the room is empty
she crosses herself. . .
leaves the basket on the table

Outside, a child runs across the square
Angelina crouches in the sun
remembers what he asked her. . .

Dogs gather at the fountain
from the olive grove (above the town)
she seems a shadow painted on the ground

*Note: Angelina was the servant sent by Lorca’s parents to visit him.*
The Find

They dug her up in Queen street. A fossilized colonial woman clutching a parasol, stiff and rigid in her flannel frock.

Pince-nez clay encrusted on the bridge of her nose, she was pointed toward Alexandra Park, English Setter fashion when the pneumatic bursts shattered the ear bone. A couple of spades and they wedged her out of the mould (intact)

and leaned her against the side of a Kenworth and then broke for Smoko,—propped there as though to advertise it.

She was carbon dated 1863, and by the salt stains on her handkerchief (tucked under the sleeve) she had either been crying or spending too much time with the boys down at the Whaling Station. Records failed to prove this. One thing remained a mystery to Authorities:

the stake, or rather, surveyor’s peg driven through the breast bone, attested to an acquisitive quarrel over which were her rights, and which weren’t.
Philopappou Hill

As if they could not lift themselves high enough children who unfold into fantasies
kites over Philopappou Hill
from string, pull cloud out of thin air
the way a comma tugs when the line runs out.
The clouds I spoke of, augmented, become italic
and passed through the stilled-serif of the Akropolis
as did the kites that worked the air bluish
like the freshly exposed socket of a bone.
As if they could not lift themselves high enough
where sideways
a 747 snipped to view and halved the sky
and cut the string that played the fingers that lifted
the hands that tossed the kites the children built.

In the half/turn
my profile pressed upon Philopappou Hill
I thought I heard some dog
even before I caught sight of it
and turned
to find this crumpled paw/like/leaf
had followed all the way to the next corner,
a no-account thing that gruffed the pavement.

Tame leaf,
you once let loose a tree on the wind
now abandoned by its tenants  
(a hovel of twigs with a sign out for Spring).

Mongrel leaf,  
you bounced for a bit at my heels, insistent,

till I cursed you away  
to leap at the nut-vendor man, handler  
of ferocious Pistachios and hot-breathed chestnuts.

Behind certain white walls you can hear  
the untroubled plumbing of the flute

and you would propose that here, the player  
transposed fingertips to a flock of Doves.

Or at certain quaysides,  
brake-drums within the throats of mules, screech.

On the sounding-board of these cobbled ways  
(that is) from the white/washed alleyways

noisy with the approach of mules: events of sound.

Then the heavy swallowing of the Bell-Tower  
makes solid the hour and you would conclude

that it was here all events had collected  
as though people, objects exchanged substances.

As the marble broke down against the skyline,  
broken, suggestive of an absent architecture—

the half-dome of the observatory rose, frozen,  
locked up the moon for the night on an empty sky

and the Akropolis, silent as a construction site,  
held down the curled blueprint of the stars

a tiny model made to house a universe, and  
over Philopappou Hill closed dark shutters of bats
closed the theory of darkness we call night
opened the small recognitions we call the stars
parted the vast separations we call the winds
revolved the minute gravities we call stillness.

>Ano Petralona, Athens—Hydra

Collect Call

I’ve been looking at you on the map now
for a few days ruffling the pages as
though water or the sound a train ticket
makes blown on headed in that direction
and am prepared to believe your life isn’t
as flat as all the highs and troughs which
protect the ordered colours where you’re marked
meeting know you’ll be round as a world
and not easily placed as you are at fingertip
an intrusion to put activity at a standstill
like this but if nothing else comes of it
I can say I have in this way located you
finding in the event that our reference points
are out of date of no further interest
than a catalogue full of strangers faces
shown to a friend moments before the embrace.
The Suit

A woman is ironing
the suit she knows
her husband will wear
to court his lover.

As she irons
she stares
out of the window
onto Cashel St,
winter, *circa* 1930.
Shortly
he will return.

Absent mindedly
she irons out
the creases
and hangs
the charcoal grey
with the daring
royal blue
pin stripes,
the chastened cuffs
and stained
armpits

on the wardrobe door

while
she imagines
her rival
in an anonymous
part of town
also balanced

between

the suit and the window.
Coming through the Slaughter

From the lookout on Mt Victoria
you couldn't read their faces
but you could see how the 'Invincible' dwarfed
the capital: leaning over the side
their thumbs up the same thumbs
the same bravado they took
to the Falklands.

That's the kind of image
you can put in your pocket
and take out to show people
in pubs and barber shops
I was explaining when we met
in the Pizza Express in Museum St.
We shared a Neapolitan divided
it up like the map of Africa.
I got the stereo you the bed
on through two bottles
of house wine. In between we talk art grinding
the pepper over the cheese and tomato
you say 'stuff the process I'll take
the product that's why I'm looking
forward to old age'. I think
of Gefn who Odin left because
she was too much in love
with beauty.

At the next table a sailor
pushes a handle across to a woman
waiting for someone else. 'Want
a kiss or what love?' no mystery
in the invitation nothing
to make you want to look
in the mirror twice 'just sit on
my mouth love I've got a long
tongue'. He leans his arm over
her against the wall 'I'm an armourer
on liberty my hands can do amazing
things blow a hole in the bottom
of the ocean no danger pluck
a canoe out of the water
with my little finger’.

Gefn towed Zeeland into the Ocean
so she could turn the mirrors
of the world inward and Maui
who fished up these islands
was laughed to death
by a fantail.

These are the demi-gods we understand while
No 736706 RN Armourer the ‘Invincible’
is stretching his hand under
the table.

Letter to Nia Jones

Geldof’s up and running
pork-pie hat drain pipes
miming obscenities. Beneath
him the Boots are spitting
he taunts them through
a dozen numbers and those
who can’t take it
are out. An arc hunts out a gold mini
skirt purple torn tights sweeps
across a razor ear-ring back
to Geldof who’s winning.
He tells us we’re in a rat trap
and the Boots applaud.

Packed into the darkness
we’re all doing it
and we’re all winning now
taking the piss out of ourselves
taking the piss out of the promoters
who are taking the piss out of us
because they've got the money.

Here we are having our pictures taken. Put me in your breech I want to be your bullet. The silicon chip inside my head. Yes I don’t like Mondays. On a night like this wind chill factor minus zero I deserve to be kissed at least once or twice and this is called the fine art of surfacing.

This is what it felt like I can’t make it any more precise. I leave it to you to make it intelligible. Please start divorce proceedings.

Cave Painting, North Otago

I

What was on the outside we can only guess.

The birdman rises on thin wings through the shadows, the uncertain green light

of a Californian gas chamber.

Sprayed on an urban wall to-day, you would see his fist punching toward the sky.
With a greasy crayon
the archeologist colours in
the chiselled bones.
As she works
she begins to reconstruct
how the world must have been on the outside—

the sun is increasing in power,
soon everything will become so clear
the furthest mountains and people
so familiar
the horizons will walk empty-handed

and the biographies

of flowers, stones and people
will sparkle equally brilliant
in the singular light.

It is a vision she understands
is impossible
she modulates the light

a shade darker
for the colour of blood
a shade lighter
for the flesh of stones
and in between
in a moment of carelessness
the jagged shapes
of the two shades
are fatally confused.

Sitting at home the archeologist
sets aside her work
and waits for her lover.

Outside, beyond the porch light
the sounds of fighting;
she hears threats, an injured voice,  
she opens the door; there is death  
in the air.  

At that moment  
the birdman enters.  

\section*{A Fathers Mystery}

It was the precise  
delivery which threw a frame around it  
told us all was well although  
George Johnson had the switch  
thrown on him his brains  
began smoking at the temples  
at precisely 6.30 a.m. their time.  
The next item was the dog trials  
from Cromwell the losers  
could shake hands before they  
interrupted the bulletin to say  
theyd got the wrong name  
it was William John Palmer  
whod got burned.  

Wed shaken hands  
at the station before I left  
the last time then I guessed as always  
youd have a scotch go to bed with  
Agatha Christie or as a way of closing  
the distance a Ngaio Marsh thriller.  
In any case someone always gets it  
in the first chapter and then the chase  
is on youd try to figure out  
the writers game and the writer  
would be trying to figure out  
the murderers game when I asked  
if you ever got nightmares
after the first chapter you laughed.

That frightened me as a child I
didn't understand the woman
had only been poisoned in our imaginations.
A nice clean distinction here
because we have to live this way
taking it on trust not knowing
whether that woman was poisoned
or died quietly in her sleep. Sometimes
you just can't tell the difference.
Thinking of you reading the thriller
it's the same and next time we shake hands
well both be guessing.

**WRITERS WANTED** Scandinavian anthology editors H. J. Pedersen and J. G. Rasmussen (5 Lupenvej, DK 2670 Greve Strand) seek MSS for a schools anthology—stories, poems, articles.
Small Days

We live in a new house. It is at the end of a cul-de-sac called Maxwellton Braes. Every house in the cul-de-sac comes from a different time and a different country even though they are brand new. The Simpsons have a Japanese style one, the Olivers are set up as colonials, and Mrs Marsha Ranson has a Spanish flavour to hers, with stucco stuff and vines all over it. My mother knows a lot about Marsha. She is divorced and the children live with the husband because she is a fly-by-night and an alcoholic. Her life has been sad even though she has been overseas and comes from a rich family, that taught her things. My mother says that at forty she has weathered natures corrosive effects remarkably and for all her faults she is a marvellous housekeeper and entertainer.

We have just moved from another city where me brother Delma and I have spent all our lives. It was much better there because of the big wild blue sea. The hills had gorse on them and the air stung. Boats had sunk in our harbour, and there was no fear of tidal waves. The kids at our new school don’t like Delma and I. They have secret names for us. I hear them whispering and it makes me so cross, that I cry. Delma and I have decided that people in this suburb are made of a very cunning sort of plastic stuff, that looks just like skin and they have glass for eyes.

Mrs Marsha Ranson is always drunk. We know because nobody will play with us and we spend alot of time spying her from the window as she wobbles and falls about the street. Our house is from no particular country. When my mother goes to the huge purple palace with lots of different shops inside, Marsha will often knock at our door and come inside for a little chat. I think she likes us. Anyway it is one of these nights that I would like to tell you about, after this night we made up our minds to move away.

As usual she was dressed in bitsy little high heels and her dress was feathery. Delma is always laughing at her big breasts. His face goes red and he almost looks hysterical. We had been
playing dress-ups when she knocked. Delma was the witch and I was Rapunzel,

Rapunzel, Rapunzel
let down your
short mousy brown hair
Oh no, Oh no witch
I've got no hair to spare.

She waltzed in with her breath stinking and her glass eyes glazing. She asked Delma for a drink because she's a boy and thirteen, ‘Sure’ he said, ‘you help yourself, mums pretty neat about that sort of thing, pour me one while your at it’. I let out a snigger at Delma trying to be big. Marsha then plummeted down onto our brown vinyl couch and kicked off her cork-heel shoes.

‘Oh God,’ she said, ‘Men, men are so, so lovely. All I want is to make love to some talented young man through the night. A man that writes exciting novels by day and doesn’t give a damn. Ignores the mundane, because God, you are all so mundane and sexless’. Delma nearly died from looking at her and I felt hurt at being mundane, whatever that means. I decided to change the subject because she looked as if she was going to cry; ‘Marsha,’ I said, ‘What have you been doing’.

She grasped my head and stuck it into her bosom like my mother does when she tells me home truths. She said, ‘You are so innocent and sensitive, you know little of men and their torturing. Everyone here is so prosaic, backward. They have their silly little games and wives. Little wifey, wifey. I need stimulus, because you see, I am different, but sad, so sad. The man I love, and I do love, when I love, like mad, does not even like me any more. What a laugh. Part of it, is because I had an operation on my breasts to make them smaller. It may sound funny to you but they were so large and cumbersome. Toppled me over. To him it meant that a big hunk of me had gone, as if my body was three quarters of our love and not just one quarter. Here I am talking to you children as if I were a milk bottle. So stupid, so stupid’.

Her face looked as if it were cut and in pain, the mascara was smudged and her lipstick ran about her mouth. Lush and red. She had a big persons face and a little persons cry and I felt that eventually she would ooze out of her dress and fall on the floor, like a raggy doll. Everything was getting heavy which is a word that Delma uses.
Next thing you know, Marsha wasn’t all drippy, but all perky and asking Delma if he wanted to dance.

‘May I’, she slurred, ‘put on some music’, ‘okay,’ Delma replied, ‘you wanna dance, we will dance’.

I decided it would be best to go to my room and for a while all I could hear was thumping and Marsha’s crazy laugh and Delma’s deep one. I got rapt up in this drama between my doll and its baby and it seemed like ages had passed before I heard another knock on the door. It was my mothers boyfriend Joe. Joe is an orthodontist and he fitted my mothers false teeth. That was how they got it on as Delma would say. I hate him, he appears out of my mothers room with a gin and tonic, his skinny chest heaving along with a thick night-time voice. He and mum dance alot to the ‘Best of Bread’. She told me, he was a ‘Zany little man with no back bone but good in bed’.

Joe immediately started talking and dancing with Marsha, as if he hadn’t come to see Mum at all. Marsha was getting very drunk and her hips were girating which made me feel dizzy. Delma eyes were sticking out of his head and his mouth was open like he was ready to catch a fly. We both sank back into the couch which seemed to be sweating all on its own. We tried to listen to their conversation as they danced slow and slopped words into each others ears. Joe was telling Marsha that he liked her body and the way she danced. Thats all I could hear because they were so revolting that I blocked my ears and went to the bathroom. I sat on the toilet banging my head against the wall, but I stopped when I heard the noise that suddenly broke out when Mum came home. She must have found them doing it on her bed. Every word she said was loaded and I could hear their voices falling about the house. Iv’e known her to get pretty furious when things don’t go according to plan, but this time her voice seemed to be slowly winding up. From very deep to medium deep and shaking. I went out into the hallway where I could hear her loud and clear.

‘Get out, get out Marsha you bitch, you remind me of some corny woman from a soap opera. I know that you are sick now for sure, doing it in front of the children. Prancing about with your fat body and straw hair. As for you Joe, Oh Joe...’.

The Perry Como record was stuck on one track and his crooning was more than I could bear so I went into her bedroom where they were all standing under a slutty red light. Marsha looked as if she didn’t understand a thing and Joe was laughing. I tried to change the record but getting past them was hard.
They kept changing positions, kind of shuffling about, like the wind up toys that children have. So Delma and I went to our room and snivelled in one bed together, until morning came.

The next morning mum was walking around like one of the ladies from ‘The Young and The Restless’, that are always being dropped by their boyfriends. She felt bad I guess because Joe and Marsha had come in, like it wasn’t even her house and done all that stuff. Then they left but I bet like two dogs with their tails between their legs. All day she would just burst out crying for no reason and then she’d cover her eyes with her blue vained hands. Delma tried to make her feel better by saying that at least she was capable. She would laugh, madly.

Maxwellton Braes has changed since that night. The Olivers colonial house has taken on a mucky look and the Japanese style one looks fragile and sick. No one is ever out on the street. I guess they feel their shoes would dirty the pavements. Mum went out and got her bright red hair cut short and it turned brown. She started wearing jeans instead of tight skirts and let her nails go to pack. She says, ‘I tried hard in a no mans land where everyone is dressed in a bloody military tracksuit, in which they puddle about, re-organizing their lives to suit the schemes and politics of damned American shows on the colour T.V.’ So we are leaving.

We never liked it here anyway. Everyone else’s mother has a fat ass and the sea is either still or dirty with puny little waves on top. The girls are all nice looking and well behaved. They have boyfriends at thirteen who are blonde surfies with cool voices and nice eyes. Their eyes look at the girls long figures and silk hair. They don’t know they are just plastic. Anyhow its best to think that when they laugh at Delma and me. Mum does not know it but I saw Marsha and Joe walking into her rotting stocco house. They moved like people filled with sticks.
Gordon Walters: Absolute Abstraction and 'Topicality'

In the 'post-provincial' atmosphere... Walters emerges... as an artist of lonely, persistent... vision. Working from the natural centre of himself and his location he was able to extend his language between folk motif, the geometricism of Mondrian, the 'effects' of Riley... while never losing sight of his own rigorous quest for synthesis....

Ian Wedde, 'Long Overdue Farewell to Mystic Provincialism'

The exhibition of works on paper presently circulating around New Zealand—the paintings are too delicate in texture to travel beyond Wellington and Auckland... shows Gordon Walters to be an absolute master in his art. The impression which the show gives is of an inevitable evolution of style, issuing in magisterial images. The koru is local, it is 'folk'; what Walters does with it belongs to the history of 'absolute painting'.

Variation of a Motif

Formal qualities are the chief virtue of Gordon Walters' oeuvre, but a special grace, not added but inextricable from the works, is their 'topicality', their use of an indigenous motif, the koru, taken from a number of Maori sources, most notably perhaps from rafter patterns.

Unthinkable without their Polynesian—and other—prece-
dents, Walters' koru themes and variations are nevertheless exercises in 'absolute painting'. Absolute painting, like absolute music, has no programme, only an inner logic in terms of which inventions can be devised and discoveries can be made. Indeed, the analogy of music can be applied rather aptly to Walters' works. The koru is not as it were a text of which the paintings and drawings are settings. The superb formal development of Walters' inventions turns on an exploration of the possibilities of one formal motif, treated in terms of two, or occasionally three, colours. There is in the exhibition no sense of empty repetition or of monotony. Each work is crisply itself, while taking its predestined place in the whole pattern of the œuvre. The exhibi-
Cat. 1. WAIKANAE LANDSCAPE, 1944/1945, black conté on paper, 560 x 361 mm. Collection, Mr G.H. Brown Auckland.

Cat. 7. UNTITLED, 1954, gouache on paper, 343 x 299 mm. Collection of artist
Cat.22. UNTITLED, OCTOBER
1956, ink on paper, 285 x 210 mm
Collection, Hilary and Peter McLeavey

Cat.34. DRAWING NO.14, 1965,
black ink on paper, 610 x 454 mm
Collection, Colin and Anne McCahon,
Auckland
Cat.49. GENEALOGY 1, NOVEMBER 1969, PVA and acrylic on canvas, 1217 x 913 mm
Collection, David and Gail Williams, Auckland
Cat. 77. KURA, 1982, screenprint, 555 x 445 mm
Collection, Auckland City Art Gallery
tion allows us to see the development of Gordon Walters’ pursuit of absolute form. Little groups of works, interesting in themselves, take on an added importance when we see them as works striving towards the central idea, the crucial motif, the koru.

The Development

Walters’ early realistic style is represented by one conté drawing, Waikanae Landscape—(Cata 1). This shows the influence of Rita Angus and of a faintly surrealist vision, but the coolly abstract treatment of the tree trunks suggests the later purely formal explorations. So also, perhaps, does the organisation of such geometrico-organic work as Untitled 1954 (Cata 7—colour plate) in which a variety of formal elements and a set of four colours are brought into an ‘absolute’ and inevitable-looking relationship. Items 7, 10, 12 and 14 in the catalogue pursue the same ends. Untitled 1955 (Cata 15), a kind of ‘piano keys’ image is less stark in its five colours than it looks in the catalogue’s black and white plate. But it has the sense of being about to move on to something else.

The two ‘studies’ of 1955, No’s 16 and 17 in the catalogue, are works of a strict geometical kind, severely rectangular, and are given their dynamic by their intense use of colour. These works seem to represent a path considered but not in the end taken.

Proto-Korus

Perhaps No. 18 in the catalogue, Untitled 1956, is the work which first shows a formal structure of the sort to end in koru motifs, but it is itself an ambiguous work (to be read, perhaps with Numbers 22 and 25). It is ‘ethnographic’ but not strictly formal. The ‘bubbles-on-a-straw’ works, Catalogue 26-28, show the conjunction of bar and coin spot, typical of the later designs, but are themselves too slight and too light-hearted to fit easily into a—tidied up—story of inexorable development.

The real proto korus in the show are Nos 20, 21, 22, 23. These I wrote a little unkindly of in my early survey of Gordon Walters’ work in Ascent, 1969: now I repent a little of my judgement. Nevertheless these loose, organic, almost informal developments of bar, turned-bar-end, coin spot, and occasional triangle, become magisterial only in the later precisionist works, where the line is absolutely straight, and the turned end, whether attached or detached as a coin-spot, is absolutely round.

Works such as Drawing no. 14 1965 (Cata 34) and Untitled
1967 (Cata 37), achieve the formal perfection which is now Walters' style—not just his 'trademark', but the real essence of his work.

The development of *Tawa* 1968 (Cata 69), with five red coin-spots on a black and white work, fixes the style, aptly. And the red, white, black triad makes possible such works as *Kahu* 1970 (Cata 73) and *Maho* 1972 (Cata 71), which explore verticality in an oeuvre arranged for the most part on a horizontal axis.

The horizontal *koru* and coin-spot paintings read as formal inventions, as formal as exercises in a musician's tone—raw. But they can also be read, as the artist indicates by calling one series 'Genealogy', as analogues of Maori *korus* and as 'unrolled versions' of those knotted spiral patterns (on canoes, etc.) in which the knots are said to stand for generations. The arrays can also be read as Pacific waves or banks of clouds on a horizon: and they are these things taken to a remarkable degree of abstraction.

The linear quality of Walters' work has a positive spatial effect. The ambiguities of field and image—what is foreground, what background, here?—work to present a visual space which can be taken in two ways. One reading proceeds along the lines of the bars, as though one were scanning a script, or music. The other reading, in terms of figure/ground, ground/figure, presents us with a very ambiguous spatial array. The paintings change and move in both spatial dimensions—the 3D and the linear—as we look at them.

It would not be too much to say that Walters develops his *koru* notion as rigorously and as fruitfully as Mondrian developed his 'tiles'. A comparison between the work of the two men is—now, in 1984—a proper one. Walters has a quality in his work which belongs to international painting, and not to what Wedde calls in the epigraph to this article 'provincial painting'. The 'topicality' is local: the rest is absolute.

'Absolute Painting', how absolute?

It is apt as well as interesting to recall, à propos of Walters' work, the only mention of the New Zealanders which the great Immanuel Kant makes in his aesthetic treatise, *The Critique of Judgement* (1790). For Kant the essence of beauty was freedom, in the sense of free invention. He was concerned with free invention as contrasted, for example, with the current eighteenth century concern for representation and idealisation. Kant cites as examples of 'free beauties' 'delineations à la grècque, foliage
or borders of wall paper, which mean nothing in themselves; they represent nothing, no object under a definite concept—they are free beauties. We can refer to the same class what are called musical fantasies (without a theme), indeed all music without a verbal text.' A little later he separates 'free beauty' from other kinds, sketching its possible conflict with them:

The beauty of a man . . . a building or a horse presupposes a concept of the end that defines that thing . . . much might be added to a building which would immediately please the eye, were it not intended for a church. A figure might be beautiful with all manner of elaborations and light but regular lines, as is done by the New Zealanders with their tattooing, were we dealing with anything but human figures . . .

The unfortunate thing about these paragraphs is, notoriously, the thinness of the examples, and the negativity of the second of the two passages. Wallpaper does not strike us as a thing of central aesthetic importance: nor does Kant's feeling that the moko is inappropriate on a human face much help to elucidate his notion of 'free beauties' as free, and free as being free from inappropriateness. Had Kant seen a Maori rafter pattern, and not a facial-tattoo design, then he would have been in possession of a very positive example of 'free beauty', and a non-trivial one of great power and usefulness.

The Maori rafter pattern throws a lot of light on Kant, and he—in a way—on it. Further, Walters' reduction of a local, topical, motif to a form with implicit rules for its purely formal development, amounts to a very good and clear example of painting which is both 'absolute' and 'free'. A Gordon Walters' painting or drawing represents nothing but itself, though emotional, affective and abstraction-as-mimesis readings (e.g. 'These are the waves of the Pacific') are not ruled out. Call an absolute painting 'Genealogy' and you do not make it less absolute, you simply authorise a reading. And again the invention, the formal development is 'free' in that it depends on nothing but itself: the motif and rules given, the works emerge in the oeuvre as possibilities selected from in principle an infinite set of possibilities. Invention ranges freely: taste selects what is beautiful.

The punctuation of a very formal koru work with a third colour element, or the use of five colour polychrome—as in Cat 77—returns painting to its form-and-colour dynamic. Two-colour koru paintings and drawings are totally formal in two dimensions. Why, then, the occasional three-colour work? The
three-colour, five colour works would seem, simply, to do justice to the further dynamic of colour, in a deliberately minimal way. Renaissance painting did as much as can be done with colour. It seems to be inherent in modern art to see how little—how significantly little—can be done with it, and how elegantly.

Ian Wedde in the essay from which we have quoted an epigraph wrote also:

Gordon Walters’ big retrospective. I’ll never forget this show . . . ’68, Matisse in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris; ’71 Rothko in Venice; ’83 Willie Seaweed’s potlatch masks in Vancouver. And Gordon Walters’ in the N.Z.G.—you stand in the midst of such shows and you can’t reach their circumference—their vision goes on expanding.

Without duplicating Wedde’s precise itinerary, I would like to suggest that his comparisons are by no means too far fetched.

NOTES

1 Ian Wedde, from the round-up of the visual arts, 1983, The Evening Post, 5 January, 1984, p.4. The present article derives from a lengthy viewing of the Walters’ works in the Manawatu Arts Centre, Masterton.
2 Catalogue, Gordon Walters by Michael Dunn, Auckland City Art Gallery. All references to works are by numbers in this useful and extremely elegant publication. See ‘Foreword’ by T. L. Rodney Wilson p.7 for the reasons for a curtailed exhibition tour.
3 Walters was influenced by New Guinea art as well as by Maori: see Dunn’s catalogue and article cited in note 5.
Reunion

Rosemary chose the cream linen suit. She’d been wearing a gingham frock the day of the prize. That was a penny for making up most words from the letters in Altrincham. ALTRINCHAM, wrote Mr Mann, who was the only one allowed chalk and blackboard. Rincham, trincham, she wrote. It was easy. Only ‘e’s were hard. If you made them narrow at the top the rivers ran together into an inky pool that Mr Mann didn’t like. Wasting ink. Rinc. Trinc.

‘Those aren’t real words, Rosemary.’
‘I know, Mr Mann. You said make up words.’
‘Proper words, Rosemary. Look: inch, ham. You see? It’s quite simple.’ Rail, trail. But that wasn’t making them up, and didn’t Altrincham have a ‘g’?
‘I’ve seen it on the buses,’ she said. Gingham, Altringham.
But Mr Mann wasn’t in the mood for further arguing. Not today, thank you.
‘I’m disappointed in you.’ He’d have thought this little exercise was well within her capabilities.

Hail, mail, nail. Main, train, rain. At playtime she’d sat at her desk showing the prize to John Moses. Showing off. It was a copper penny, 18 or 19 something. FID DEF IND IMP. John Moses said the image was Boadicea with a chariot wheel. She’d said no, for where were the knives? It was Rule Britannia and the waves. John Moses, 3, The Avenue, off Washway Road (the road to Altrincham), pummelled her with his clenched hands. She remembered that word being used. Pummel, pommel. That’s when her morning milk was spilt on the gingham frock. No mourning over morning milk. It ran down the groove in her desk top, flooding the inkwell, and she let the now pale blue flow into her lap.

‘Serves you right.’
She remembered too the sour smell, but that couldn’t have been right. It wouldn’t have smelt sour straight away. Perhaps there was a rank-smelling dish-cloth involved, before Mr Mann gave her a smock to change into. Smock, frock. Then she
wouldn’t and oh she could see him now defying her to defy him until she’d stood by her peg, arms upward stretch, to take the frock off. But it still wasn’t really changing into. Stupid Mann. Smock, smack.

Svelte she’d call herself now but it was skinny then, when her coat-peg was Dobbin the horse, between old Lob the sheepdog and Percy the bad chick. On the wall above, January brings the snow. February fill dyke. Chicken Licken goes for a walk and the sky falls. And Epaminondas, the butter melting on his head, by the great, grey-green, greasy Limpopo River. Oh, Epaminondas, you ain’t got the sense you was born with! But when she wouldn’t change her knickers Mr Mann said, ‘I don’t know what we’re going to do with you, miss,’ and the infants mistress said, ‘Contrary little madam.’

So it had been her own knickers she tucked the smock into at dinner-time when the rope cracked like a snake on the playground asphalt.

My mother said I never should
Play with the gypsies in the wood.
If I did, she would say,
‘Naughty girl to disobey.’

While the saucy girls, little madams, did handstands against the brick walls of the Jumbly Hall, their legs, jaunty as exclamation marks, sticking out from a flurry of skirt. Twenty, and thirty, almost forty years on, wearing a sensible jersey under the cream jacket, in a Jubilee Hall so much smaller somehow than the Jumbly Hall, cherry-ripe, cherry-ripe, ripe I cry, she wondered if John Moses would be there to remember them. He’d played chasing, there’d been that, surely, the infectious breathless excitement of being chased (chaste!) around the playground, and the blushing intimacy of prey and captor. She could almost hear him protesting, ‘Agreed, we used to kick a pill around.’ (Pill? Pillbox? Kick him in the pills?) ‘But handstands? You have me there.’

And clearly John Moses was going to be very much there at the feast, even if absent—another of the tricks it might be that he’d picked up out East. Like that standing at the foot of the stairs and her walking up (haughty, deliberate) to provide the tantalising, no, promising glimpse of her panties (they were called by then). A game itself prelusive of the ten years treading his fine line, tip-toeing among half-truths, when the very mention of the army (the manner of his leaving) or the Anna
May Wongs (posting with such indecent haste their letters from foreign parts)—she could smile now, would have him leaping out of bed, all injured innocence, eyes already wide with that manic look, ‘You and your mouth!’ That was his version of a school report: ‘Rosemary has a certain facility with words’ (facile, facetious), end of term condemnation or commendation from a later judge than Mr Mann.

High school that would have been, black gym slips with red girdles (‘I’ll put a girdle round the earth’ from the English Literature class), maidenly blushes at the buds spouting from their ribs. In the Jubilee Hall (where had the Union Jack gone?) Rosemary giggled against the rapid rattle of cups and voices, the returned travellers balancing sandwiches and careful words. ‘We wore green bloomers under those skimpy skirts,’ she wanted to say. Green girls on the green fields. ‘A G.I. on the bus remarked on my goose pimples. And touched me actually on the knee, as a follow up. I was obliged to move to another seat eventually.’ The small, affable-looking man handing round the plate of club sandwiches (and why ‘club’?) would make a suitable confidant. But there were rules about confidences. You learned that at school. She’d have said, ‘The G.I. could at least talk. He told me about Arkansas, pronounced Arkan-saw but the river different.’ There could have been a photograph in the Evening Chronicle (G.I. Weds Local Girl: Bride’s May Wedding) if she hadn’t been so backward in coming forward. A trance-outlandish delicious alternative anyway to the mundane realities of 3, The Avenue, off Washway Road (the road to Altrincham). Where the only romance had been the possibility of saying they were at school together. Sort of childhood sweethearts.

The small man, his bald head beaded with perspiration, was smiling. His plate could be the common denominator, a fragile link for their own personal rap session. (Rapt, rapture.) ‘Him and his mother and her precious Royal Copenhagen!’ she’d say. ‘I even spent the honeymoon on the floor so the old bitch wouldn’t hear the bed creak.’ That would take the smile off his face. ‘Talk about suffering in silence.’ Passive resistance or was it dumb insolence going for nothing on the floor polished to a high sheen by list slippers and the O’Cedar bottle (‘O, see dar lovely O’Cedar polish’), that one reckless slip and tip of their hips into the Welsh dresser laden with china, and the whole shooting gallery falling around them.

(The milk, blue as the milk of magnesia bottle, dripping off the desk, and letting it run.)
John Moses would have been just back from Fort Butterworth, Malaya it was then or Malaysia, and she free from the university and a discovery of the Mayor of Altringam (sic) lying in bed while his trousers were a-mending. But that was in another century, and far enough besides from Mr Mann and his cast-iron certainties. Exemplified in the sandwiches here, their contents semaphored on little flags (club-shaped, that was why), neat cross-sections and guillotined edges for their brief hand-to-mouth existence. Invalided home was his message, les sièges numérotés sont réservés pour les mutilés de la guerre. Blood poisoning, he explained, through pulling leeches off, not putting rock salt on them or applying burning cigarette or match. But there was the rival theory ('idle gossip' his mother had claimed, and was an adjective more ill-chosen?), troops selling their own blood, infected needles and hepatitis from Kuala L'Impur. Fort Bloodworth she'd thought lying there on the cedar-scented floor afraid even to cough, some honeymoon, not scream, not aloud, not allowed, the words flying away with her to some Malay or was it Malaysian go-down, Moses, way off in Egypt's land. 'I might even have called him my gypsy,' Rosemary rehearsed the line, 'when sentiment overcame resentment.'

Oh no Romany ringlets with that regulation short back and sides, but handsome enough any road out in his wide-lapelled demob. suit. If looks counted he'd make two of any of these puppets, primping and grimacing behind their women as if jerked by invisible apron-strings. 'I'm afraid he was more like a spiv than a gypsy,' she would explain to the bald, affable man now perspiring over rolls and pâté. ('Third Decade' in his lapel—God, he was younger than her!) 'I don't know if you recall the spivs?' Rings on their fingers co-respondent's shoes, and Paisley cravat or Windsor-knotted tie, though one was those little masonic men now with their bowler hats, and the other a soup. Well handsome is as handsome does but she'd been happy to play his little games, it takes two to, poised on the topmost stair in white ankle-length socks and the pretty hair ribbon, what, over a decade, Simon and Anna in that time, and always the black worm of doubt writhing, his sheer impatience, the Suzie Wong letters (from abroad!), and the blood poisoning, but, well, if you lit a cigarette the enemy was alerted, and where would you have found rock salt in the jungle? 'Why not,' Rosemary wanted to enquire, 'why not ordinary salt?'

Knowing full well there would be some explanation, here a cookery teacher (or was it domestic science now?) 'It's iodised to
prevent goitre,’ there glib plausibilities, ‘salt tablets, humidity...’—hail fellow well met, butter wouldn’t melt in his mouth, how could you believe again in his goings on? The patriot repatriated with his parade ground manners, ‘Jildi! Chop chop! Quick’s the word and sharp’s the action!’ all overlaying his own indolence and dolce far niente. (Though rumour said that was the hepatitis.) God, those Sundays. Don’t go bothering your father. Moses ensconced in his upstairs retreat (demob. grant paying for necessary alterations to the premises), once the children had tried to join in the one amusing game that mummy and daddy played, mummy in her gym slip and white socks for purity. No pleasure in the game if the children turned it into a game. They played Monopoly instead. Monopoly, monotony, and Sundays were a grey canopy hung with bells.

In the Jubilee Hall it was the old school bell that was rung, calling ‘First and Second Decades’ from their conversation pieces (‘But my dear, there was no social life,’) to pose, as quiet as little mice, please, for a ‘formal snap’. The all-too-present Moses was clearly all-too-absent. What you’d forgive for an accomplice (accomplished in complicity). But the bald man was photographer now! He might be induced to look at her snapshots later. ‘Isn’t it awful,’ she’d say, ‘you come to one of these affairs, all that time and trouble, and you’re wondering about the ones who aren’t here?’ And she’d show him Moses in the suit with wide lapels and those shirt collars that took so much ironing to keep down. Belle Vue Zoological Gardens and Circus it was on a bitterly cold winter’s day (so why did the polar bears look so miserable?), she wearing the full-length sheep-skin, collar upturned, and the children would be ahead in the dingy snow outside the dining rooms.

‘Can we go in?’

‘Ask your dad, then,’ the flunkey had said, with time enough to pass the time, ‘he’s got all the pennies.’

‘No, he hasn’t,’ Simon had said firmly. ‘Our mum has.’

‘Kids!’ the man laughed. ‘They’d get you hung.’

And self-inflicted wounds, Rosemary thought now. Weren’t they a shooting matter?

‘Cheese!’ said the quiet mice, hoping the photographer wouldn’t cut them off at the neck, and the bald man withdrew. (Would he think the circus was cruel?) He was off anyway, had packed his traps as surely as Moses (somewhere east of Suez no doubt), oh, even morning milk had gone down the drain, with twelve pence to the shilling, and those broken biscuits from the
Home and Colonial Stores. When you look back and regretfully wonder, the children acting as go-betweens up and down the stairs. 'Hitler was a corporal, too' was one message she'd sent and then turned the wireless up (on the Light programme) to mask the shouting and table-thumping, a far cry from vol-au-vents one way and Mr Mann the other, in his pin-stripped suit creased at the crotch. 'Where'er you walk cool gales,' they'd sung, under his baton (cool gales?) and 'Linden Lea' (but wasn't that German?), stomachs in, chests out, Miss Evans (had she died?) gazing round from her piano-stool under the Union Jack. 'Jerusalem', too, 'And did those feet...?' and look, Mr Mann himself, several sizes smaller in a grey suit with weskit and watch-chain, eighty if he's a day, surrounded as ever by his busy bees ('Have you got your thinking caps on, children?'). Liberation! Goodness, that was a bomber plane, or was it V.E. Day, and she'd wanted to remind Miss Evans about 'Night on a Bare Mountain', a '78' they'd say, shellac possibly. The Canadian Rockies she'd drawn, in 'musical appreciation', with Canadian Mountain Police and bears which must have been harder to draw than any bare mountain.

Mr Mann didn't have to tap his baton on the music-stand. A busy bee rang the school bell and against the obedient hush our much beloved guide, philosopher, and friend was being invited to deliver a few timely words. No need for veiled threats today, the floor in his possession, the gay (you would have said once) ladies and their strutting paycocks attentively silent, he wasn't going to talk for long, the lips said, prim and pursed, 'looks like a hen's arse,' Rosemary thought, 'that mouth, all prunes and prisms', and no mention in his address so far ('I feel very humble...') of John Moses, all censure censored, glimpses of notes like the catch of a song, dragged screaming out by his ear for spilling a girl's bottle of milk. They'd gathered along the playground's iron railings (which should have been removed for the war effort) to watch him running away in his first, as far as she knew, act of desertion, and the school caretaker cycling after down Park Road. Neither hide nor hair of him, nor mention either of the unmentionables, what would he call them, lingerie inspections, such a dear old man now, gabbling on. Perhaps she could catch his eye, 'And some of the ladies I'm pleased to say have achieved success, gratifying success, outside the bonds of marriage,' he might extemporise, and the busy bees would look sympathy, and the bald man, re-appearing, encouragingly at her, and Rosemary could ask him if he'd ever read Scott's
Heart of Midlothian where the Mayor of Altringam, sic, lies in bed while his breeches are a-mending.

KENNETH FEA

The Terrorist

Helen hesitated, her hand on the latch. Reluctant to open the door on the night and the rain she tried to convince herself she had imagined the brief ring of the bell. It could not be Ben. He might have forgotten his key, but it was Tuesday and only just after seven. Ben was working late. And it would not be Elizabeth because her daughter always phoned first. But she had not imagined it. To forestall another exclamation from the bell, too close, Helen opened the door, half-opened it. Beyond the street lamp opposite, the world was pitch dark and full of driving rain.

Behind her the house was quiet and warm, orderly and ordinary. The sodium light of the street lamp reflected in the road and on the path to the door. A figure was standing in the recess on one side of the porch. It was no one Helen knew.

Abruptly she said, ‘Yes?’ Inside the house it was Tuesday, seven o’clock. Ben was working late. Elizabeth would have phoned. ‘Yes?’

His face was in shadow. He wore a rain-sodden greatcoat, the collar pulled up. No hat. The light of the street lamp made a bright yellow splash on his hair which was lank and plastered down by the rain. One shoulder was raised as if he carried a heavy bag. But he carried nothing.

‘I am Franz.’ There was an accent. He inclined his head, a stiff little movement. Helen said, separating the words carefully, speaking to a foreigner, ‘There must be a mistake.’ He waited. Helen added, ‘I think you have the wrong address.’

The man who said he was Franz shook his head, slowly, just once from side to side. He ended the movement, of something like resignation, looking away into the night, out into the street and the continuum of the rain. The light showed a curious
mark on the side of his face, shiny and mauve. ‘The wrong house,’ Helen repeated.

‘I am Franz.’ He looked up at the unlit porch lamp, then in her direction. ‘Benjamin has telephoned to you.’

Benjamin. No, you have the wrong house. Benjamin? ‘Ben?’ But the man called Franz said, ‘You are Helen?’ And he made the stiff little bow again.

It was Tuesday. It was seven o’clock. There had been no phone calls. The rain was teeming down as it had done all day. The cold air was intruding. No one had phoned. ‘No. I am sure there has been a mistake.’

A car approached. Franz stood motionless until it passed. He held one shoulder humped up. The car swept through the pool of yellow light. The sound of its tyres receded. Then Franz said, ‘Benjamin has telephoned to you. He says I am able to wait.’

Benjamin says you are able to wait. Helen stared at him. I ought not to feel that I know you. She searched for something, for some words. But before she could answer she was startled by the telephone in the hallway behind her. Franz said, ‘Ah.’ She said, ‘Excuse me,’ but when she picked up the phone and said hello no one seemed to be there. After a long silence she put the phone down. The silence continued.

Franz waited in the no man’s land of the porch, neither in the night nor inside the order and ordinariness of Helen’s home. ‘I am sorry.’ Now she heard in her voice a sort of pity. ‘You . . . are an acquaintance . . . of Ben’s?’ What was it he wanted?

‘Benjamin has telephoned to you now?’

Suppose I just shut the door. Would you go away? Helen wanted to stop the cold creeping in to her house. But he was so patient. She said, ‘This is very rude of me.’ Was it safety he wanted?

In Helen’s life not so many doors had opened. This door opened on to a cold, dark world. There would be a simple explanation. It would turn out to be very ordinary. Franz waited. ‘This is very rude of me.’ Helen stepped back inside, away from whatever the door opened on to. ‘Please.’

She showed Franz into the room where the open fire burned. She took his coat, the heavy greatcoat that smelled of journeys. Ben had forgotten to phone. He had asked his secretary to phone. His secretary had forgotten.

She took Franz’s coat to the kitchen, to hang it over a chair to dry. A newspaper, folded up, was pushed into one pocket and
a corner showed a few words in German. She tried to remember something Ben might have said.

Franz stood in front of the fire, leaning forward, holding his hands towards the glowing coals. Helen saw that the raised shoulder was deformed. She was assailed by a sense of loneliness, of deserted streets and inhumanity. She put on the table lamp. And prompted by something glimpsed in the paper she asked, 'You are from Hanover?'

Franz turned to her. Down the side of his face ran a long scar. He smiled, gently. ‘No. I am not from Hanover.’ He paused. The coals in the fire settled. Then he said, ‘You are very kind in having me to come in. It will seem very strange to you.’ Helen stared at the scar. Yes, it will seem very strange. Later it will seem strange. The house floated in silence, isolated.

Helen made herself look away from the scar. She looked at the framed photograph on the mantelpiece over the fire. Ben and Helen and a younger Elizabeth. Three ordinary people, an ordinary family.

Franz said, ‘That is Elizabeth?’ he pronounced it ‘bet’ not ‘beth’. Helen said, ‘Yes.’ She ought to have been surprised or puzzled or alarmed. Yes, that is Elizabeth, my daughter, Benjamin's daughter. Helen stood alone in an empty street, in an unfamiliar terrible world. Franz said, ‘I wish that I could have met Elizabeth.’

‘You will not be able to stay long?’ Ben had meant to phone. On the wall, a calendar. By the framed photograph, a clock. Ben had meant to phone. A cold wind from that other world was blowing round her. ‘Franz?’ Franz what have they done to you? She moved a chair closer to the fire. ‘Franz?’ He sat down obediently. She saw how travel-stained his clothes were.

She said, ‘I will not be long.’ There was not much time.

In the hallway Helen paused. The light from across the street passed through a leafless branch to reach the frosted glass of the circular window in the front door. The shadow, distorted fingers, moved to and fro.

She went into the small room they never used. She parted the curtains just enough to see out into the street. On the other side, in tall shrubs on a driveway, there seemed to be a figure standing quite still.

Franz ate without looking up or speaking. Helen put a log, a gnarled severed limb, on the red coals. She sat down in the chair on the other side of the fire. In the bright flame Franz’s
scar shone. An hour passed and the flames in the fire died. She watched him.

There was a moment when he closed his eyes. It was as if he snatched a whole night's sleep in that moment. Then he looked at her, intensely. ‘You are so very fortunate. You and Benjamin and Elizabeth.’

Helen and Ben and Elizabeth. We are so fortunate. Why did she feel ashamed? ‘Yes. I know we are.’ Fortunate and ordinary. But fragile. There were questions. Questions Franz, questions. There was not much time. She heard Helen’s voice say, ‘There are questions I must ask you.’ As if she had been told to say it. One question. Many questions. Too many.

The house was suspended in space and time. The thread parted. Space and time were shattered by the violence of the doorbell. Helen’s questions were pieces of glittering glass, a thousand meaningless shards. The doorbell rang again.

She could not rise. Franz got up. He handed her the plate. His hand touched her shoulder. ‘Thank you for your kindness.’ Glittering pieces of glass. ‘No. Stay here.’ Her shoulder ached. ‘Don’t go back out there.’

The fire drew the cold night air, the smell of rain, past Helen as the front door opened. She heard voices. The door closed. The smell of the night persisted. She heard a car start up, reverse, move away. She was alone in an empty street.

When Ben came home he found Helen sitting by a fire that had gone out. She held an empty plate on her knee. ‘It’s very cold,’ Ben said. He waited. Then, ‘Are you all right?’

Thank you for your kindness. Helen turned to him. She said, ‘Be careful Benjamin.’ I don’t know you Benjamin. Be careful of the broken glass Benjamin.

Ben was holding Franz’s greatcoat. Suddenly Helen was running. Something fell and broke. She snatched the coat from Ben. She ran, threw open the door, out into the blinding night. Nothing. No one. She heard a voice crying out, ‘Franz.’ Another voice, Ben’s or Benjamin’s, ‘Helen.’

The rain washed Tuesday away. A sort of morning formed. Helen sat on an iron seat under the clock tower in the square. In the pocket of the greatcoat she wore was a newspaper in German and a used air ticket, a flight from Hanover. The rain ran down inside the pulled up coat collar. A man with polished shoes stood in front of her. ‘There are some questions we must ask you.’

54
ELIZABETH SMITHER

Bach’s little fugue BWV 578

What BWV 578 refers to we have now lost:
A day of grey sky, pale fog perhaps
In which the little fugue sounded a note
Of barges on a river, a small funeral
Which assembles under a minimal number of bells.
Nor can we tell if it was reduced
From something grander, though it swells
To its full extent it may be cut
Like a waistcoat from a trouser.
Perhaps in the end it is not scale at all
But the edge of the day, its work
Completed by three or occupying half a night
A small fugue well-lived equals an opera.

Listening to Für Elise

Perfection could be so easy
A novice could take these limber steps
Up and down the keyboard
To an unknown Fraulein Elise.

Was she so easily pleased it is
Possible for a child to play
This climbing on her heart strings
Up her ample bodice?

Or was someone privately courting
Behind the piano with Elise
While the child’s kept playing anything
Like a general direction to a cabman?

Through the park, my man, or round about
Use a little imagination if you please
Embellish your scales with runs
Improvises the way love comes.

55
Darwin's green bile

After meals for years he vomited
The bile of his discovery
Diagnosis: the wrong temperament.

Square peg in a round hole we call it
This gigantic discovery sitting on
The forehead of a happy temperament.

Wisdom in it? Nature's
Way of getting the message across
A man so mild, such a happy disposition

That the discovery would not go away
But leap over decade after decade
Being worn down by Darwin's reasonableness.

A small price for a kind of pregnancy
And the bile was clear, if you can call
Green clear, of impediment.

Picture of a mouse and a snake in a
natural history book

First it looks like an embrace
Then you wish the mouse is dead
The tail which comes out to the right of the picture
Gripping or has gripped in rigor a pebble.

No lover with so many coils has left
The head free, it is part of love's strategy
To preserve a look and wound internally
The mouse gazes in all its essence.

Love is not single, it is being held
A mistake the mouse registers
And there are experiences
Which we need to be embraced through.
The tail says different: self-love
Only of pebble-size, the ability to turn
Away the head from a consuming gaze
If it cannot save, gives reason.

That the snake uncoils is not shown
Or begins to eat. The head is larger now
Than the crushed body. Head and tail
Far-flung the corners of the world.

Death of a white bantam

for Joseph

Most days ignored its life consisted of
A small bleeping eye, a waddling gait
A charming stoicism or lack of brain
Causing it to perch in rain.

Sometimes I carried it on freezing nights
When my impatience froze to its coop
A Hollywood house decorated with
Leaf scrolls by an amateur naturalist.

It could not find its way there unaided
Though the door was open. Once falling
With it in my hands I managed to
Release it: chalice into dove.

Often it was not fed. Dined on what
The garden offered, what it dug
Out of the garden or bits of bread
Left over from school lunches.

On the last day I saw it it had flies
About it which it feebly pecked
It walked like someone in a maternity ward
Who delivers in the lift or on the floor.

I looked for it that evening. The rain was soft
It rolled from leaves, flax blades, shook
Itself, once weighted enough to run
The way feathers release themselves from dust.
moons up

moons up
over afternoon gothic
in delta
orca mountains
rise east
west plainly from
canty polders
returning
american barns
skinny wind bands
pintails under
a distant eye
and later centric
wash rocks just
off the point
what was it
the ten of spades
face down

yellow pencil

the tides tip themselves
on their heads
week and week

about
bright clean particular
but nothing hard about it
just the way things go

58
fuchsias
*wine-dark* (there it is)
in a blue
plastic
bucket
play of veranda palings
and the depth beyond them
growing
nearly a year old
this:
it’s good living
below fuchsia flowers
    brilliant divers out of the dark
    green feet first and coming down
how much
of the wording recurs
though we’ve changed houses

white whales on the water
under the bank
or mangrove flats
play or mud
depending on the week
don’t explain
your peculiar charm
(that quick view)
against the downroad
each working morning

move across
to the other window
to be shown
bright marigolds
pink petunias
a row of buckets
and the negative field
exhilarating
between the palings

oh hydrangeas
move compactly about
out front
deploy themselves
in tireless arrangements
of three
conspicuous for no reason
but the time of year
bunchy flowers to the ground
daleks

remove the clowns
what you’re looking for
is the dark
  green
its promise of depth
  (feet first)
in which to get every week
how you want it
reflecting white whales?
sure
and the white magnolia
and the fig tree in fruit
scented pelargonium
bougainvillea
more fervent perspectives
on a wish for movement
watermelon world

she sings fish are jumping
in your room birds ride

around the walls pink is
picking up the white cotton

is high diamonds rose and
why one of these days

the picture may be painted
melons sent flying hearts

and stars harm nothing you
care about more than today

wind water

know where they
go and her
there going when

and even how
they do so
long after the rain

the blow
takes ('with beauty')
a bright push

has them
fall spicule
in the sun
M iss Daphne Duckinfield upset him. She was two or three years older than the other student teachers who were straight from school and she had worn perfume until he had suggested that it was unseemly, still wore a smile which suggested that she was as sure of him as she was of herself. He supposed that it was a consequence of her experience as a receptionist in a city hotel. He had previously had a parish and had got the lectureship in the Philosophy of Education via church connections when his parish had been amalgamated with another. He had thrown himself in his new work, taking off his dog-collar and taking up linguistic positivism, and by the end of his second year, just after his thirtieth birthday, he realised that he made little distinction between reason and God. He lectured the girls, who all hoped to return to teach in the better suburbs, with earnest enthusiasm, his main themes being the relationship between knowledge and virtue and the moral responsibilities of the educated. He told them that the rejection of education by working class children and their parents was proof positive of man's fallen nature and refutation of all noble savages, wise peasants, or perspicacious proletarians. They were respectable and sensible girls and many went off to the inner city schools for teaching practice with missionary zeal.

But not, he suspected, Miss Daphne Duckinfield. He shifted his position in the desk to see her better as she drew diagrams, looked quickly away as she turned. She did not fit the pattern although she tried, her voice gone husky in the attempt to modulate her accent as he had suggested, her clothes professionally sober. She moved with the largesse of a healthy young woman so that, as she rubbed the board, bangles jangled and she vibrated in female abundance and bounty. Her smiles were unfocused as she performed, then she caught his eye and her explanation stumbled. He looked down at her lesson plan in the file on the desk, shielding it from the gaze of a girl who wore a red crash helmet and practised eructations, wrote:
‘Your class control is good but be watchful of soliciting cheap popularity by employing their argot.’

He got up and balanced down the aisle to the front, left the file. As he closed the door there was a burst of laughter as if Miss Duckinfield had marked his departure. He had no doubt that she had bribed the class to behave during his visit.

He found Miss Van Huysen’s class by the hubbub and was able to watch through a tear in the chart which she had stuck on the glass partition. She was a diligent, motherly girl who was never late with her assignments but had the unfortunate habit of letting her mouth hang open at each pause in her delivery. She seemed as unaware of her dismayed gape as she was confused by its emulation amongst the class who sprawled and chattered in front of her. She stood at the front and tried to get someone to hand out books but eventually had to do so herself, nervous between the rows of desks and of the gestures of the boys behind her. It was a senior class of the less academic. One of the girls had a radio earplug to which she was nodding, two boys read a magazine and nobody paid attention to Miss Van Huysen’s announcement of the page number. She gaped at them, spectacles catching the light, then went to the board and wrote it up neatly and a headline ‘The Stuarts’, spinning round once at something he did not hear. Then she looked at her watch and seemed to give up, sat on the edge of her desk. He watched her sadly: she was just the type of girl the profession needed. What little face she had would be lost if he intervened. It did not seem possible to tell her about her odd habit.

As he watched a boy went out to her, a large youth with the latest haircut who was joined by another, then two more. They crowded around the desk, pressing forward, and he suddenly understood. As he stepped towards the door, uncertain as to what he should do, he suddenly thought that if it had been Miss Duckinfield he would have done nothing.

Miss Van Huysen and himself were saved by the bell. Before he reached it the door flung open and the class jostled through, hooted and cat-called down the corridor.

Miss Van Huysen was in tears, her glasses amongst the litter of books which some had tossed in leaving. His arrival seemed to alarm her. ‘Oh,’ she said, tugging at her blouse. ‘Oh Mr Gar-side. I am sorry to be so silly.’ She fumbled for her glasses, dabbed at her nose with a ladylike handkerchief. Her anxiety transmitted to him.
'No worries,' he said. 'That lot are absolutely unteachable.' It made her cry harder. He stood by her for a moment. There was a chalky handprint on the back of her skirt. 'Look here, Ann, you go and get a cup of coffee and I will tell the Principal to give you relief and also what I think of him giving you such larrikins.' The words made him sorry for her. He held out a constabular arm to stop the next class who peered through the door, ushered her through and followed her, wide-hipped and stoop-shouldered down the corridor, rapped on the Principal's door in a state of excited indignation.

The Principal had a grey beard, a grave and tired expression as he listened to Geoffrey's indignation. After a while he took an apple from his desk, stood at the window and bit into it, palming his beard. 'Hopeless,' he said. 'Only here because there's no work.' He lobbed the half-eaten apple into his waste-paper basket. 'Your students have to be able to cope, you know.' He came back to his desk. 'Leave it with me, Reverend,' he said and took up his pen again.

'I have made myself clear. It was, I think, an indecent assault. I mean, they were, you know...'

'Did she say so? What did you actually see?'

'I didn't actually discuss...she was very distressed. All I could see was that they were pressing round her in such a way that...

'Pity,' the Principal said. 'I could do without one or two of those clowns. Don't worry, I'll sort 'em out.'

Driving back to the college he wondered if the Principal knew that he had been ordained, he also knew that he had never taught and that was why he had been unimpressed. All he had likely achieved was a poorer grade for Ann Van Huysen on the school's report. It did not seem just when he compared her attitude with Miss Duckinfield's with whom the Principal seemed favourably impressed.

The following week he timed his visit to coincide with Miss Duckinfield's gym lesson with senior girls and parked his car in the street. As he approached he heard the reverberation of feet, yells and shrieks, but even as he hurried forward there was a whistle blast and sudden silence. He paused by the round window in the door. The games teacher had taken over the lesson. Daphne Duckinfield leant on the wall-bars in a blue tracksuit and watched a demonstration of how to quell senior girls, pretended not to have seen him.

They were hanging from the beams and trying to pull up to
touch their chins to the woodwork, three rows in black pants and white teeshirts, legs flailing and kicking. Most of them bulged in clothing they had outgrown, all sizes and shapes of girls. The teacher strode amongst them, arms folded, yelling orders. With a bump an Indian girl fell, landed on her hands and knees, black pigtails hanging. Still yelling at the rest, casually, the teacher flicked out a gym shoe. Garside clearly heard the smack, watched the girl gape like Miss Van Huysen. The teacher, a small and wiry woman, gave Daphne a lop-sided grin, paced back and caught the girl from the other side. Whack! Another glint of conspiratory triumph. Daphne smiled back.

He turned away, looked at the packed streets below the school without seeing them, then he pushed through the swing doors. The teacher cast an eye at him. 'There you are, Miss Duckinfield,' she said above the rasp of breath. 'I will be in my room if they want any more. Linda, you come with me.' A girl with bright blonde hair dropped heavily, out of breath, flexed her arms and pulled up a shoulder strap, arched eyebrows all innocence.

'What for Miss?'

'What for, Linda? I'll give you what for. I'm heavy-handed with the light-fingered, I am.' She gave the girl a sudden shove. 'Right, beams away.' They thudded down, wringing hands, shuffled to the task. From the teacher's room four smart smacks rang. The girl came back, blue eyes glittering, hands rubbing her rolling buttocks, pushed amongst the rest.

He stood with his fists clenched in the pockets of his linen jacket and his suede shoes together on the polished floor and felt as if he might faint. Miss Duckinfield looked at him and smiled. A sense of evil filled him. The teacher came from her room, arms still folded, and stepped towards him. He went backwards through the door and did not look back. He drove through the city repeating The Lord's Prayer over and over. Not since he had been a student himself had he prayed so fervently.

It seemed in Miss Duckinfield's best interests to do nothing until he had seen her. He left a note on the board for the following evening.

The interview hung about him all day. After tea in the Senior Commonroom he washed, combed his hair carefully and re-tied his tie. In his study he arranged his chair against the western window, hers where the sunlight fell on his strip of carpet. He lit his pipe but could not read, listening to his married colleagues leave their studies down the corridor and trying to get clear in
his mind what he must say. The sunlight shifted. A fly buzzed. He got up to open the window and heard her heels clicking down the empty corridor. She was dressed as if she were going out for the evening. He kept his eyes from her, took the file and indicated the chair, determined to disturb her easy attitude towards him yet aware of the sussuration as she crossed her legs in the silence. Slowly, leaf by leaf, he kept her waiting. A palm tree rattled outside. He detected the faint smell of sandalwood about her, gritted his teeth on the stem of his pipe.

'I see that you found the sadistic attacks upon those girls in the gymnasium unremarkable?' Her grey eyes appraised his, then decided that he was joking and her large mouth slid into a grin.

'Happens all the time with that lot. They are a barrowload of ratbags.' Her arms were rather fat at the top, starred with immunisation. She was wearing large beads, held the loop to her mouth, smiling still.

'Wait a moment, Miss Duckinfield. I'm not joking. I take a most grave attitude to that episode. I thought it only fair to speak to you before I write my report. I fear for the effect of that school upon our students.'

'Okay, it's tough. She wallops the stroppy girls and the Principal whacks the boys. He sorted out those guys from Ann's class that you told him about.'

'But girls, Miss Duckinfield!'

'That's sexist. It's only fair nowadays.'

'Young women,' he said. She shrugged. 'What right, what moral right, have we to use violence, inflict pain and humiliation upon another human being, one of tender years given into our care?' Her elegant shoe jerked rhymically as she looked at him.

'Every right if they are inflicting pain on us. It isn't illegal and there's no reasoning with that lot, Mr Garside.' She held up a hand against the slant of sunlight to see him better. 'It works like nothing else. That Linda nicked an article of my clothing from the teacher's room. How would you fancy teaching all day without your underpants?'

'Miss Duckinfield!' He put the file on his desk. 'May we just stay with the general case? Of course violence is expedient. If that was all there was to it then the police would be empowered to beat offenders out of hand, so to speak.'

'But they do!'

'Perhaps in self-defence.'

'Don't you think panties are self-defence, Mr Garside?'
The police deal with criminal elements, not the young and immature.'

'Hey, some of those girls are bigger than I am!'

'Quite.' He watched the implication sink in.

'You mean that it's a bit freaky?' She twisted her lips. 'You mean old Wilson and Miss Richards are sick?'

'Wait a moment,' he said in alarm. 'I am trying to put the general case as a moral philosopher.' He flicked his lighter, puffed. 'I expect that in your previous occupation you must have encountered the association of this kind of thing with... ' She laughed briefly.

'You said "sadistic", right? You want to make a distinction between girls' bottoms and boys' bottoms? Okay, why? It was banter. She was enjoying it. He did not know what to say. 'You want to argue it's a moral distinction?' She was grinning broadly, expecting him to follow suit.

'Yes,' he said, then 'No!' She laughed aloud, got up and leant to open the window, posing, laughing still.

'Too much smoke,' she said, sat down and hooked an elbow, her dress taut as she regarded him. 'It's a problem, isn't it?'

'Not if you tease out the meanings properly.' It was a stock phrase, firmer ground. 'Ethically there is no problem. We have no right... .'

'But they prefer it to detention and they get bumped about at home.'

'Don't you see, Miss Duckinfield, that is the thin end of the corruption? Humiliating another person, hurting them? Evil is always seductive. They come to accept it, you come to accept it, but I do not!' His voice echoed in the empty building. They regarded each other. 'We must, absolutely must, set the right example in schools.'

'You and me, we're above all that, Mr Garside: that's it? We don't get a bit of a whizz... .'

'I will not discuss the matter in those terms!'

'But it's what you think, isn't it? I mean, I've got notes where you say that the majority are not capable of being moral but only of following rules and precepts. That's right, isn't it? Okay, well I've found it isn't too far out: it's pointless arguing with the likes of Linda; it's pointless appealing to her better nature because she hasn't got one. Okay, I apply the school rules, they work and that's all that matters. Where have I gone wrong?' He started, stopped, stared at her. 'It's all very well, the general case, except when your panties have been nicked or you keep
getting felt up like Ann. You want action then, not ideas, Mr Garside. It’s them and us, right? You don’t have to go on to that stuff about discipline leading to self-discipline, that’s just another way of saying one way or another you can cow people. There’s no use pretending that schools are democratic or a preparation for democracy. They are little fascist states where the kids either jump or get whacked, right?”

‘No!’ He found it more and more difficult to meet her insistent eyes. ‘No!’

‘Well what then?’ Her foot jerked in front of him. ‘You know what, Geoffrey? I think you’re screwed up on this one. You are not thinking straight.’

‘Don’t be impertinent. This is intolerable! I’ll thank you not to try to patronise me, Miss Duckinfield.’ Could she really know what he had felt? ‘I am telling you that inflicting physical pain on youngsters in public, especially on girls...’

‘Oh boy,’ she said, ‘Have you got problems! I should give up any idea of writing any report on this, Geoffrey. I can see the headlines now.’

‘I’m not in the least concerned with that kind of threat. I am concerned with my moral responsibility to you. That is what this interview is about.’ Her expression suggested that he had put himself at some mysterious disadvantage. ‘Let’s stop beating about the bush...’ Her laugh was incredulous. ‘Stop it!’ Her eyes were bright in the last of the sun. ‘I should fail in my duty to you, as I think that you fail in your duty to those girls, however trying the circumstances, if I appear to condone...’ She was shaking her head in delight at his discomfort. ‘...condone behaviour which I deem to be evil, not just immoral: EVIL!’ He was thundering as if back in the pulpit. ‘Stand up, Miss Duckinfield.’ The smile did not falter as she complied, stood in front of him in her summer dress. ‘I am older than you. I am stronger than you. I am better educated than you and I am in authority over you. You refuse to listen to what I tell you.’ It was as if she did not hear him. She swayed slightly as she looked down at him. He found himself yelling. ‘I am going to beat you for your obstinate impertinence!’ She was still unconvinced. ‘Open the third drawer down. Bring me the ruler.’ She turned towards the desk, smile gone loose-lipped.

‘Right-ho,’ he said. ‘Now you have some idea...’ She squatted, reached for the drawer. ‘No,’ he said. ‘I meant to demonstrate...’

The drawer slid. They both looked into it, their breathing
loud in the evening silence. There was a carton of paper clips, an unused brown envelope. Her knee touched his shin. She closed the drawer, turned, eyes wide, near him. She spoke as if to herself.

‘You old gripper.’ Stood. He looked up dizzy with heartbeats.

‘You misunderstand, Daphne.’

‘No,’ she said. ‘Nah, I didn’t.’

She picked up her file, banged his door. He listened to her heels echo away, then slipped on his knees, put his cheek to the seat of her chair, eyes closed. It was still warm.

The bluebottle began to buzz again, hit the wall, the window, fell silent.

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NEW ZEALAND
BOOK AWARDS 1984

The Minister for the Arts, in association with the NZ Literary Fund and the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council, is pleased to invite entries for the 1984 New Zealand Book Awards.

Four awards of $2,000 each are offered for the best books in the categories of poetry, fiction, non-fiction and book production published between 1 May 1983 and 30 April 1984.

For entry forms and the conditions of entry please write to:

The Secretary
NZ Literary Fund Advisory Committee
Department of Internal Affairs
Private Bag
Wellington.

Entries close on 1 May 1984.
For the first 15 years or so after the English missionaries arrived in Northland, the people there valued them mostly for the trade goods they could acquire from them: the spades, hoes, blankets, hatchets and muskets. Then there was a sudden change. From about 1830, Maoris became eagerly receptive to Christian teachings and many were baptised. By the early 1840s many thousands were enthusiastic converts, and nearly all had been influenced by Christianity to some degree. It was only in a few remote and relatively inaccessible areas that the people held entirely to their old beliefs.

This break with the past came after some 20 years of social turmoil. Maori life and thought had been greatly altered by the rapid acquisition of new resources (potatoes and other plants, pigs and horses), new technology (metal implements and guns), and diseases such as measles to which the people had no inherited resistance. There had been the unsettling realisation that they were not the only people in the world, that there were others living elsewhere who behaved differently, and were rich. When the northern tribes acquired muskets there had been an intensification of inter-tribal warfare, though the ethos and satisfactions of war were not what they had been now that guns often made it impossible to know who had killed who. Then the southern tribes began to catch up in the ensuing arms race. The northern tribes had reason to fear their revenge, and they were in any case tired of war; many of their young men were now more interested in the profit to be made from selling pigs and potatoes to the growing numbers of Pakehas. By this time it came as a relief to realise that the missionaries' god punished wrong-doers after their death, and that unsettled scores could quite honourably be left for him to deal with. It was clear that this god was very powerful, for the Pakehas continued to flourish. They avoided wars, they did not die of diseases such as the measles, and they had many possessions and much knowledge.

One of their most impressive skills was their ability to read and write. When the missionaries began to teach Maoris this in the 1820s, they were astonished and excited. To take speech from a human body and hold it on a piece of paper seemed an
almost magical thing, and old and young were eager to learn how it was done. Then the missionaries began translating and printing parts of the bible, and the Maori seized upon these books and read them with intense interest. Soon, some of the first Christian converts were taking the Gospel to other parts of the country, holding enthusiastically attended services twice daily in raupo chapels built by their congregations. These lay preachers were known as monita, or monitors, a term given them by the missionaries when they had served as assistant teachers in the mission schools. But this apprenticeship lay behind them now. Monitors were men of mana who preached and taught often in virtual isolation, with only occasional visits from the missionaries. Christianity had become a Maori faith.

Naturally, Maoris continued to hold to beliefs and customs which were not in accord with the teachings of the missionaries. Nevertheless their acceptance of the bible produced, or in some cases encouraged, profound changes in their society and thought. Among other things, there was a narrowing of focus, in that religion no longer structured their entire existence; chiefs lost in status, while slaves and commoners gained; and there was a new kind of concern with questions of conscience. More changes came after 1840, when some of the chiefs signed the Treaty of Waitangi and the country became a British colony. Once again, these men made this decision largely because of their desire for peace.

All this led to complex changes in Maori poetry. Some song types were performed less often, and others changed in subtle ways. The most ambitious kind of song, the waiata tangi, was the one that best survived. Waiata tangi had been sung at tangihanga, or funerals, to lament the dead, praise and honour them, and send them on their way to the next world. After the acceptance of Christianity the tangihanga ceremony continued, with some modifications, and waiata tangi were still sung; though eventually there were fewer new songs, and a greater reliance upon the old ones. Some of the traditional subject-matter had disappeared now that there were no more heroic deaths in battle to mourn, and no more enemies to be cursed and threatened with revenge. And as time went on there were fewer references to the figures in the myths, for in most cases the younger people no longer understood their significance and their roles in the poetry. But new material came from Christianity, all the more readily because the two systems of thought and belief were in some ways not dissimilar. Both were much con-
cerned with death and the fate of the soul; and though the Maori had believed that the souls of the dead went down to the underworld, they had also thought that the souls of some people, especially the high-born, made their way up to the sky. Where the dead had once been told in laments and spells to rise up like Tawhaki, they could now be told to ascend like Jesus:

Haere atu koe, e Kiri, ki Maunga Oriwa,
Te kakenga a Ihu, i whano ai ki te rangi!

O Kiri, go forth to the Mount of Olives,
Where Jesus rose up to the sky!¹

The sky had essentially the same significance in both religions, and Tawhaki and Jesus clearly had much in common, being glorious, sacred figures who had died, risen from the dead and ascended into heaven, thus creating a precedent that others could follow. It was not very difficult to replace one with the other.

For death itself there had been several explanations. The main figure held responsible was Hine-nui-te-po, or Great Woman of the Night; there was also, among others, the evil Whiro, who carried people off in his canoe. Hine-nui-te-po and Eve were seen to be similar figures, and Whiro and Satan were often identified. Whiro is one traditional figure that occurs quite often in the songs of this period, presumably because it was felt to be appropriate that a figure associated with the old order should be responsible for evil. Occasionally, though, Satan takes his place:

E hine, Marewa-i-te-rangi e takoto kino nei,
Kore nei, e hine, ōu tuākana, ōu tāina, i tipu ake ki te ao,
Tēnā ka riro atu i a Hine-nui-te-pō.
E hiakai ana ahau te wai roro i a Hātana,
E hiakai ana ahau te atua ngau kino
Nāna rawa i tiki mai te whetū me te marama.²

O my girl Marewa-i-te-rangi, lying here in this sad state,
Your elder sisters and your younger sisters, girl, did not
grow up to live in this world,
They were carried off by Hine-nui-te-po.
I am hungry for Satan’s brains,
I am hungry for that cruelly devouring spirit,
For it was he who came and took from me the stars and
the moon.

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While many nineteenth-century waiata include references to Christian beliefs, songs centrally concerned with Christianity seem to come mostly from the period of great enthusiasm, during the years from about 1827-48. A number of them lament the deaths of men who had been monitors.

*Lament for Hurae*

This was published in 1903 in the second supplement to John McGregor's untranslated collection, *Popular Maori Songs* (Auckland; pages 58-9). In the text given here, an error has been corrected from McGregor's manuscript in the Auckland City Library (MMS 15, pp.100-1; the writer is indebted to the City Librarian for permission to use it). The manuscript gives Hone Makareka as another of Hurae's names, but does not have his tribe or the poet's name. The song must have been composed long before it was published, then passed from one singer to another and sung at other funerals also. It is said to be a waiata tangi, though the lack of any obvious stanzaic structure and the use of repeated phrases would seem to suggest rather a recited song of some kind.

Often in laments there is reference to the things the dead man has done in his lifetime; in this case, the poet speaks of Hurae's work as a Christian teacher. He or she praises him, using conventional epithets ('my bordered cloak, a black petrel'), and gives a Christian explanation for the origin of death. Then he describes Hurae's soul as going north to Te Rerenga Wairua, The Leaping Place of the Souls at the entrance to the underworld.

When a person, and especially a stranger, was passing a tapu rock or tree, he would throw a green twig or a handful of grass upon the shrine as a propitiary offering to the spirit that inhabited it, reciting a spell as he did so; this custom was known as uruuru whenua, or whakaii. The souls of the dead were thought to do something similar, leaving behind them at intervals green leaves from their homes (leaves from forest trees, or bracken from the open country); for they were not familiar with the sacred places in the land over which they were passing, and they were anxious not to insult the spirits that lived there. The Christian teacher is seen as performing this ancient ritual, at the same time gazing towards the place where he will leap to the underworld, and there be united with the souls of his ancestors.
Lament for Hurae

Winds, gales, storms, keep blowing upon me, upon me! Blow upon the house of death, the house of mourning, In the absence of the monitor, The reader of the book this day, this day! Oh lost by me, lost by me is my bordered cloak, a black petrel! When Eve and Adam were enticed, the world came to grief. Oh come back to the churches at Haumia and Tawatawhiti! Turn back, Hurae, and greet us! You are making offerings, you are gazing towards your multitude in the distance.

He waiata tangi mo Hurae

Pā tonu mai nei, e te hau, e te ori, e te marangi, Ki a au ra ē, ki a au ra ē! E pā mai i te whare mate, i te whare tauā, i te takē o te mōnita, O te kaikōrero o te pukapuka i tēnei rā, i tēnei rā! I maumaua nei e au, ē, i maumaua nei e ahau Taku [ku]rupatu, he tāiko ra nge! I whakawāia ai ko Iwi, ko Arama, i hē ai te ao ē! Hoki atu ra koe ki ngā hāhi ki Haumia, ki Tawatawhiti! Tahuri mai, e Hurae, mihi mai i konā! Ka uruuru whenua, ka whakamau atu ki tawhiti, ki tōu tini ē!

Lament for Tamati Tarahawaiki

This waiata tangi is one of a small collection of Christian songs made by the Rev. Richard Taylor, one of the very few Pakehas to show any interest in them. The text is taken from Taylor’s papers in the Auckland City Library (Taylor MS 22, n.b. 8 [p.6]); for permission to use it, the writer is indebted to the City Librarian. A translation appears in Taylor’s book The Past and Present of New Zealand, published in 1868 (London; page 35), and it is explained there that Tamati (or Thomas) Tarahawaiki was one of the earliest Christian teachers of the Ngapuhi tribe, in Northland. The poet is unknown. Again, the content of the song is in many ways traditional.
In the first line, the words tē taka koe i a au, ‘you do not fall from me’, are addressed to the poet’s aroha or longing. In lines 7 and 8, Tamati is spoken of as a bird because of his eloquence as a preacher. He may be said to be a canoe because he had conveyed his people along the true way; having died, he is now travelling towards the setting sun. But there may also be a reference here to the small canoe in which the body often lay at the funeral and afterwards. This custom is referred to in the lines that follow, though the poet remarks with apparent pride that a modern, Pakeha coffin was in fact employed, one that had been shaped, moreover, with an iron ‘chisel from afar’ (which had probably been made from a nail). He is making the point, as the traditional poets often did, that at the funeral the dead man’s family had done all they could to honour him.

Tamati is seen as going up to Jesus in the sky. But while the idea of a room in the sky is new (the Maori had not had partitions on their houses), the phrase te tatau o te rangi, ‘the door of the sky’, is a traditional one. The idea of drinking the waters of life must be new, yet it fits most readily with the old belief that in the eternal heights of the sky, where death was unknown, there existed te wai ora a Tāne, ‘the living waters of Tane’ that were a source of life.

**Lament for Tamati Tarahawaiki**

How great is my longing for Tamati—you do not fall from me!
The book is giving thanks in the house
And I am seeking you there in the morning,
Searching for you amongst those at the front
As the third of Matthew is begun
And Paul’s glad tidings, that are a pathway for you!
My bird living in the hills is withdrawn,
My canoe soars to the west, dimly seen.
Where is Tamati, who went so suddenly?
He sleeps apart in the little canoe,
A foreign coffin that your younger brothers and your family
Cunningly fashioned, striking it
With the chisel from afar. O father in the dust,
Let your living spirit fly up!
Mount up, open
The door of the sky, and you will enter
Jesus’ room, that you may drink

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The waters of life! Those are the waters
For which the blood of the Lord flowed forth—
And it was you who spoke of this to the Maori world and me!

He waiata mo Tamati Tarahawaiki

Kāore te aroha no Tāmati, tē taka koe i a au!
E whakawhetai ana te pukapuka i te whare,
E kimi ana au ngā tūrangā i te ata,
E rapu ana au ngā tūrangā i waho ra,
I te ūmatatanga i te toru o Matiu,
Te rongopai a Paora, hei ara mōhou.
Unuhia noatia taku manu noho puke,
Taku waka rehurehu ka tiu ki te uru.
Kei w[h]ea Tāmati, i nunumi ake nei?
Moe kē ana mai i roto i te waka iti,
He kāwhena tipua na ō tēina, na tō w[h]ānau,
Nāna i rauhanga, nāna i patupatu
Ki te w[h]ao a tawhiti! E pā i te nehu,
Tākiritia ra tō wairua ora!
Kia piki atu koe, uakina ake ra
Te tatau o te rangi, ka tapoko atu koe
Te ruma i a Ihu, kia inu atu koe
I te wai o te ora! Ko te wai tēnā
I w[h]akahekea ai te toto o te Ariki—
Nāu i kōrero ki te ao Māori, ki a au na ē!

A loving lament

Again this waiata tangi comes from Richard Taylor; the text is in the Auckland City Library (Taylor MS 22, n.b. 8 [p.12]), and the writer is indebted to the City Librarian for permission to use it. Taylor published a translation on pages 35-6 of his book The Past and Present of New Zealand. The song is described as he tangi aroha na Rore mo tana mokopuna i mate, ‘a loving lament by Rore for her grandson, who had died’.

It is fortunate that we have Taylor’s translation of lines 6-8. They refer to an episode in the life of Paul of Tarsus, as recounted in the Acts of the Apostles, chapters 27 and 28. Paul had been a non-believer and had persecuted the Christians, but after receiving a vision he became a fervent convert and he travelled to many lands preaching the faith. Then on the way
to Rome his ship was driven before ‘a tempestuous wind, called Euroclydon’, and it was wrecked on the island of Melita. Paul and his companions were saved by the power of God, and he went on to preach at Rome. In this song, though, the disaster is seen as final. Rore’s grandson is identified with Paul, whose career he had imitated, and the shipwreck is his death.

It is of course a Christian practice to seek to illuminate contemporary events by finding biblical precedents, but the Maori had in any case done exactly the same thing with the figures and events in their traditional mythology: the main function of most of these stories was to provide archetypal instances, patterns of behaviour which people could copy, or rather re-live. In Maori poetry there had always been brief, elliptical references to archetypal precedents. The only difference now was that these Christian poets were referring to the stories in their wonderful book.

Richard Taylor explains that te taiapa kōhatu, ‘the stone wall’, refers to the walls of the New Jerusalem. The traditional Whiro occurs as the representative of evil, and Eve and Adam are held to blame for the existence of death. It is interesting that in this song, as in the first one given above, the biblical order of these two names is reversed. The Maori had always believed that it was a woman who had brought death into the world; in their mythology, Hine-nui-te-po had performed this role. Now, accepting the Christian story, the poets felt that Eve’s responsibility for the Fall made it appropriate to name her first in this context.

A loving lament

Rore

How great is my longing for my grandson!
I am weak and giddy when I stand.
You are gone in the midst of preaching
The Beginning, and John,
Corinthians, and Jude!
The anchors flew out and the ship stopped,
Then the wind blew, the Euroclydon,
And it was wrecked on the island of Melita.
You would stand in the hymn-singing row
Taking the class, holding the book
Of the great God who made us,
Jehovah, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost.
Climb up the stone wall
And you will enter the narrow way—
The way to Jesus is the true way,
That leads to salvation!
Whiro's room is evil!
When Eve and Adam were beguiled
They returned to dust!

He tangi aroha

Rore

Kāore te aroha i a au ki taku mokopuna!
Ārohirohi ana te tūranga ki runga ra.
E haere ana koe i runga te kauhau
I te Timatatanga, i a Hoani,
I a Koriniti, i a Hura rara e!
'A rere ngā puna, ka tū te kaipuke—
Ka pā ko te hau, ko Urokaraiona,
Ka paea atu ana te motu ki a Marita.
E tū ai koe i te kapa hīmene
Ki te w[h]akatū kura, ki te mau pukapuka
Na te Atua nui, nāna i hanga iho—
Na Ihowa, na Ihu Karaiti, na Te Wairua Tapu e!
Piki atu ra i te tāiepā kōhatu,
Tomokia e koe i te ara kūiti—
He ara pono anō te ara ki a Ihu,
Te wā ki te oranga e!
He ruma kino, ē, te ruma i a W[h]iro!
I w[h]akapōrarutia ko Iwi, ko Arama,
Hoki ana rāua ki te nehu e!

NOTES


The opening lines of a waiata tangi composed in 1897 by Tukuaterangi Tutakangahau, of the Tamakaimoana hapu of Tuhoe, on the death of his daughter. Tutakangahau was then an old man, and an authority on his people's history and poetry. His song is recorded in Elsdon Best's manu-
script papers in the Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington (notebook no. 1, p. 169). The writer is indebted to the Librarian for permission to use it.

DAVID HOWARD

Consecutive Sentences

1. Pierre Rivière (1815-1840)

A fistful of hair flares over
my mother's fractured skull
and little brother laughs

off his head

while big sister splits her sides

on my billhook.

Happy day! Holy joy!

Why did you do it?

Fire gazing,

I said to Satan: 'At their wedding
my parents had no banquet.
Since my birth they've slept apart...
What can I do?' He spat back:
'Marriage is but a ceremonal toy.'
So I ran with a rapier
stare that remembered
Mother's taunt: 'All you want's
your fun. She's a forward bitch
with a fine behind—Sulpice told me.'
And how our maid added: 'That's right,
hold your trousers tight.'
It's quiet now.

Why?

Today (March 7 1836)
a Le Blanc gendarme presented an order
issued by the Prefect of Calvados
whereunder he delivered up
Jean Pierre Rivière
to the Central House of Detention, Beaulieu
for execution by guillotine.

A fistful of hair flares. . .

2. *Egon Schiele* (1890-1918)
Every line implies
an intimacy
that can never be
realized. Beyond reach
the glazed model mocks
a medieval saint at prayer.
Her halo’s the picture frame’s
perfect veneer.

Because the heresiarch’s denied
a prayer candle
I wear my guardian’s hand-me-downs
and dance to Lehár
or Strauss. . .

Egon, get your shit together—
star-struck cesspools are an artist’s
glittering prizes: his face flickers up
from their facetious surfaces,
‘You corrupted a minor, right?’
I don’t know.

Two uniformed demons appeared:
‘These drawings are indecent—
you’ll hear from the Court.’
The judge publicly burned one study.
Savonarola! Auto-da-fé!

I dip my fingers in spit,
sketch seascapes (*Trieste, Venice*)
that fade into this cell’s overcast plaster.
The Adriatic swells in the folds of my coat
so I map the coast. Every line shows
an intimacy
never previously
realized.
3. **Ivor Gurney (1890-1937)**

Uncle Robert was a bachelor
who used to wash everything
after he'd dug the garden
those stones that showed
through the earth were scrubbed
then he'd give us flowers
if we promised not to put them on
Papist graves

Ivor was favourite
he sang with Madame Albani
but they said he done it wonderful
an unrehearsed piece
he was so scared
when he got home
he went into the spare bedroom
and played soldiers with Ronald

Private 3895 Gurney writes home from France:
You can image me at attention
next to the cookers!

But he remembers
how Taffy turned back:
‘Listen to that damned bird!
Its infernal note shrapnels my eardrums,
leitmotiv for the bombardment.

I can’t bear it.’

Then he swears
under his mustard-gas breath:
All lovely things must be laid up,
fragments for an abbey’s tithe-barn.
Sniped souvenir hunting at Ypres
an agnostic corporal calls on the Lord.
No official history of this November
will mention the guy with two stripes—
his honour’s earned by burning.
And I’ll forget my best friend,
the pair of us truants from too much
loving under an armoured sky.

I can see a cathedral through my cell’s grille

81
but there are no worshippers
gossiping on the porch.
Deus absconditus?

God's apparent
callousness clarifies to Fire!
And Beethoven's (Boche) 'Appassionata' explodes
on the keyboard of my ribcage.

...Nervous breakdown from deferred shellshock.
He doesn't attend the entertainments
arranged for patients, but composes
poems on toilet paper.

4. Ezra Pound (1885-1972)

'Hang it all. . .
a responsible citizen stops
an atrocity: pseudo-democracy
conquers when a nation's at war
against the girl-next-door's will.
If the pattern's complex
its origin's simple: ask
who rules your rulers! which jew
nominated that committee
chairman in the Pentagon?

I understand, I destroy
all that I touch. The Old World's sold
to Wall Street pinstripe:
the rose on a pimp's lapel.
I sell insecticide.

Yeats said:
'Don't get elected senator.'
But to return from Rapallo
as the city-state patrician—
what a sensation for this émigré
who excavates the skull, then reconstructs
an extinct animal: pioneer America
from blueprint newspaper!

'He's not fit to plead. . .
Questioned, he attempts an answer
then holds his head: a golden bowl

82
that fractures on ‘allied’ problems
There’s no connection.
Every logical inference rests
on an untenable hypothesis.’

(Dr Wendell Muncie for the Defence.)

Aux armes, citoyens!

*Il n'y a plus de RAISON:*

*Un rameur sur le fleuve des morts*

his coffin’s in a golden gondola
that follows Canto XVII:

In the gloom

the gold gathers the light about it.


BERNARD GADD

Hone Tuwhare in his Poetry

Hone Tuwhare may well be New Zealand’s most popular poet. His work is consistently anthologised. It has had its early publication in the more notable literary periodicals such as *Mate, Cave, New Zealand Poetry Year Book* (though not in *Landfall, Islands, Parallax* nor *Pacific Moana Quarterly*), as well as in the more fugitive ones like *Cook, Spleen, Motive, Northland*. It has appeared in newspapers, *The Listener, Te Ao Hou, Monthly Review, People’s Voice* and the *Whakatane Historical Review*. Robin Healey wrote, ‘There are few other poets currently writing in this country whose work has prompted such affection and respect’.¹

Yet the New Zealand critical response over the years, even more than is customarily the case, reads like school reports on a student whose promise is never quite fulfilled as the pedagogue has guided and anticipated. Tuwhare’s virtues and faults readily align themselves in his reviewers’ mind in opposing ranks. On one side his work shows ‘striking images . . . sure handling of satire and social comment . . . charming medlile . . . calling a spade a spade . . . great sense of humour’;² ‘natural imagery

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somehow instinct with traditions . . . irony, exactitude and colour’;³ ‘lyricism . . . an active participating voice’;⁴ ‘fleshy vigour and a raw informal dignity . . . dignified diction and colloquial tone’;⁵ landscapes ‘alive in the Maori way . . . vividly in touch with non-human life’.⁶ There is no doubt that the lad has shown progress over the years, shows ‘some solid success’,⁷ and indeed is ‘highly competent’.⁸ But his writing’s strength ‘lies in the warmth and undoubted felicity of the poet’s underlying personality’.⁹ On the other side, there is ‘much that appears forced or artificial’.¹⁰ There is some ‘gratuitous fakery’,¹¹ ‘inconsistency of mixture . . . an aureate preciousness . . . faults, imprecision and reminiscent sonorities . . . ’ Tuwhare is sometimes ‘self conscious . . . not so sure about what should make him write.’ There are ‘too many imagistic bits and pieces’,¹² Tuwhare ‘has taken no advantage of recent overseas developments: he certainly has the capacity for it’.¹³ In brief, ‘some of his poetry lacks the finer disciplines of the art’.¹⁴

The importance to his poetry of his Maoriness is agreed by virtually all. Indeed it has been asserted by the writer himself in his poetry. Yet what is this Maoriness? Is it a matter merely, as Davidson wrote, of employing ‘his Maori background’? Or is it, as Hone Tuwhare wrote, that ‘his voice is the voice of his culture’?¹⁵ And if that is so, what are the peculiar distinctions that Maori culture could speak in Tuwhare’s voice? Certainly Tuwhare celebrates the close-knit, nature-close, rural family life. And a simple poem like ‘The Old Place’¹⁶ gathers strength from its being a lament for the loss of what the old house and farm contained—a kind of life destroyed by the exacting domination of the city. There is anger at the dissolution of this life and at the assaults upon the countryside and nature it was founded within and upon. There are addresses to the dead at the wake and the funeral. There is sensuous—frequently onomatopoeic—imagery of a pantheistic-like animation of the natural world. There are the occasions and the oratory of the gatherings of the people. There is the sense of membership of a minority (‘Where have all the/ Maori gone for chrissake’¹⁷). There are the ceremonies, the customs, the folk-ways, the mythology, the public causes of the ethnic group and events and individuals associated with them. (The proportion of works overtly expressive of a Maori identity has doubled over the years from the first volume to Making a Fist of It yet still comprises fewer than half of the total.) There is empathy with oppressed or minority peoples or non-European lives elsewhere in the world. There is the sense
of an ancient past which is dead beyond reviving or even rediscovery, the sense of how the courage, the self-respect, the soul of a people have been afflicted, and the hidden, inward connections of its life ripped asunder (‘Fragmented, my soul lies here, there: in/ the waste-wood, around’). There are the poems inspired by traditional Maori poetry, and a single poem in Maori. But the fact that these all can be mentioned in such everyday lexis suggests that none of these things alone can be what is uniquely Maori in the poetry. Nor does the use of Maori language any longer mark out anything necessarily distinctively Maori in New Zealand poetry.

In ‘A Fall of Rain at Miti-Miti’ however, all of these (except the overseas reference) can be found working together to provide not a view of a Maori event but an experiencing of a Maori event in a Maori way. There is no narrative in the poem; it is drama. A woman’s, a mother’s, body lies in the church or in the House of a Northland marae tucked between ocean and mountain. The extended family cluster about the body. Each stanza simultaneously involves the reader in the unfolding drama of the remembered funeral service; embraces the reader in the emotion of the focal consciousness of the poem, in its rising, its climatic intensity of feeling, its catharsis in tears, all implied in the sympathy of the movement of the storm outside, together with the rise and fall of the grieving. The whole is constructed upon the framework of traditional Maori oratory with its greeting of the dead, of nature, of the living; the speaking to the deceased; the acknowledging of the unity of man and nature; the committal of the deceased to Te Po, the place of the dead, of darkness. The poem at the same time is exact to the recording of the senses of emotion-laden details, such as the puff of the candle-flame to illumine the stained faces of the whanau, details that also work symbolically in a traditional sense as with the wind signifying the life force, the mountains representing not just nature but a specific tribal landmark, the waves recalling the spirit’s leaping from Reinga. In no other English language poem does Tuwhare use so much Maori. And the use of it is to communicate a rapport with nature, with the intimate memory of the dead woman, a mother or a madonna figure to her people. The church serves as the node where the eternal, mythic, Maori cosmos and this time/place universe intersect and interweave, until nothing is meaningful if perceived from one only of these realms of being. And a tiny detail—a broken window—suggests the decay threatening both, a decay beginning in the drift of people from this
area and the consequent changes within the people and their ways of life.

It is a poem central to understanding Tuwhare’s work. It demonstrates that no listing of poetic attributes or qualities can come anywhere near the Maoriness—and that is the depth—of the poem. The Maoriness and the poem itself consist in a totality of tone, topic, structure, languages, handling, focus, the implicit and the explicit; a totality that catches as in quintessence the entire complex of the Maoritanga that breathes within Tuwhare’s poetry even when it is not ostensibly Maori at all.

Tuwhare is not only Maori, he is also insistent upon himself as being perceived as of the working-class. This seems to provoke some uneasiness among critics. To use the same sampling as before we find references to things like ‘socialistic camaraderie’, 20 ‘social concern’, 21 ‘social comment’, 22 ‘ideology and protest’. 23 On the whole, however, this aspect of Tuwhare and his work is ignored. Where it cannot be overlooked in poems, it is discussed in other terms. Yet for most Maoris to be working-class is inseparable from being Maori. It was and is for Tuwhare. ‘Speak to Me Brother’ 24 is a poem central to comprehending this in his work. The ‘I’ tries to engage his ‘brother’ in korero—not just talk but heart-deep talk. The rural, migrant brother’s newly sworn allegiance (he has enlisted to go and fight in Viet Nam) is to all that splits solidarity of kin with kin, kind with kind, human with human, humankind with nature, past with future; to all that mocks hope. The diction and the rhythm are colloquial, suggesting the social intimacy of kin, ethnic and class solidarity. But the reiteration of ‘brother’ with (in this linguistic context) its intensely, even hortatory, inclusiveness of feeling, and the concluding ‘you speak brother’, the appeal to the proverbial encapsulation of shared belief and past, powerfully urge the reader to consider whether the speaker and the silent hearer are not actually complementary awarenesses within a single consciousness. The consciousness of the poem is one that knows its roots and shaping, its place in our society and world. And it equally knows the temptation to lose the sense of a wounded or confined self in taking on an identity fashioned and conferred approvingly by those whose power commands guns and governments, to occupy the smoother, higher ground of New Zealand’s majority.

Grandiloquence is not far beneath the surface (‘That’s a big word brother, you lie it against a big hill . . . Let it be to the mountain, like the proverb tells us.’). The diction of the poem
acts as does that of a poem like ‘Cummings’,

which moves line by line from a rhetoric that turns the woman into an object, a shopping list or art gallery catalogue of Georgian sexuality, to the colloquial intimacy that conveys, in spite of love-making’s \( \textit{d\text{é}j\text{a}-d\text{it}} \), its nownness in the everlasting oppositeness of man and woman. And the man and the woman are set within a constellation of similarly unifiable contraries that the rhetoric posits: tragi-comic, stasis/motion, decorum/ecstasy, famine/feasting. This poem and ‘Speak to Me Brother’ indicate that the two dictions are not registers of different personae nor disparate voices, so much as words of a speaking that seeks to hold within its utterance an awareness of the fundamental character of conflict. The roots of both dictions are in the experience of growing up Maori. The same childhood, Tuwhare tells his audiences, which taught him the speech of social and class unity and that lit the conviction that things can be, must be better for ordinary people and for the earth itself, also included listening to the cadences and the sonorities of traditional Maori chants and of the Bible.

The mixture of dictions, the rapid switches in tone that disturb critics, fit together with what is the deepest Maoriness of Tuwhare’s body of work. It all is there in the very first poem of the first published volume, ‘Time and the Child’. Earth and sky, child and old man, perceiving mind and concrete externals, man and nature, renewal and dying, recalled past and future, informal voice and eloquent voice all ‘reel’ together. Each element remains itself, each is explicitly linked with its opposite, each defines, makes distinct, helps interpret its opposite. And each opposing pair ‘converge’ as a unity, one of a pair of contraries similarly counter-poised at a higher level of comprehensiveness—and so successively towards the ultimates of being and non-being. The whole is expressive of the life and the change and the growth of the universe, of the mediating and the creating and the redemptive and hopeful forces—anything but of the static, ideal Oneness of the Romantics. ‘It is almost as if Hone Tuwhare has captured the mauri’, as Hone Taumaunu wrote of another poem.

The final English poem in the latest volume, ‘The River is an Island’, derives its force from its grounding in this decisively Maori conception of existence:

You are river. This way and that
and all the way to sea two escorts
shove and pull you. Two escorts
in contention.

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Left bank or right bank, how can you be river without either? . . .

You’re a harbour; a lake; an island only when your banks lock lathered arms in battle to confine you: slow-release you.

Go, river, go. To ocean seek your certain end. Rise again to cloud; to a mountain . . .

you are ocean; you are island.

Tuwhare’s poetry, of course, has developed, has tried new things over the years, less (or at any rate not only) because of his own development but because of the growing willingness of some of the readers to try to hear him. But his work has never moved far from what it was at its beginning: the expression of a working-class originating Maori, of a uniquely New Zealand self.

**TUWHARE’S PUBLICATIONS**

*No Ordinary Sun*, Longman Paul, 1964 (enlarged, McIndoe, 1977)
*Come Rain Hail*, Caveman, 1970
*Sapwood and Milk*, Caveman, 1972
*Something Nothing*, Caveman, 1974
*Making a Fist of It*, Jackstraw, 1978
*Year of the Dog: poems new & selected*, McIndoe, 1982

**NOTES**

12. Tamplin, *op. cit.*, pp.4-12.
An account of cultural meaning is contingent upon a meaning of culture, and ‘culture’ has associations which are both prosaic and profound. As construed by empirically minded social scientists, it refers to any determinate set of collectively held beliefs and their accompanying social practices. In the lexicon of literary intellectuals, however, it is the weightiest, most valued word of all. It thus exerts an obstinate and irrepressible pressure. Even the effort to eschew its use represents an oblique testimony to its totemic function, so that a surrogate for its promise of transcendence will somehow be smuggled in. Amongst those for whom words assume a special status, culture is, then, not only a topic for investigation, but a resource for living.

What might be expected to flow from this distinction between the sociological and literary conceptions of the term are discrete methods of working, different standards of evaluation and disparate conclusions. Nonetheless their respective practitioners do share a common conceit. Each claims to be cognitively privileged, where the other may see only a recondite occupational
ideology (the modishly outmoded meet the savagers of mind, veneer versus sneer). In approaching Telethon, the tension between these modalities cannot provide a methodology, but it can define a stance, a stance for which Frank Sargeson’s fiction provides an indigenous literary precedent.

For in cultural terms, the crucial point about Telethon is that it routinely succeeds in catching up real feelings and human sympathies and routinely does damage to personal dignity. There is just enough in the way of authentic sentiments that to mock or otherwise belittle them violates a procedural axiom, common to the humanities and social sciences, of (some minimum of) respect for persons. Neither disdain for Telethon’s achievement nor indifference to its routinised indignities can constitute an adequate response. Yet, the traditional culture critic tends to see only the indignity and the empirical social scientist tends to exhibit only the indifference. The result is that the former is precluded from taking Telethon seriously, while the latter is precluded from taking ‘culture’ seriously.

The difficulty is this. A reading of Telethon which depends upon a prior identification of whatever cultural high ground is available, as a place on which to stand, can neither proceed nor succeed. Standing inhibits understanding—understanding how it is that a phenomenon like Telethon is possible. Here the task is to define the cultural conditions under which it can both take place and make sense. This is a specifically sociological problem, but then thirty years ago Chapman pointed out that in this country ‘each author is driven to be his own sociologist’. He succinctly argued that the most general technique of presentation chosen was that of ‘the participating “I” (a narrator), who tells his experience . . . from an angle of vision the constriction of which is in itself informative but negatively so. For a New Zealand writer to choose the technique of omniscient narration from a platform outside the action would disperse the emotional force engendered by participation and constriction while letting the writer in for the whole task of drawing the social diagram.’ In discussing Sargeson’s application of this technique, Copland argues that ‘his most distinctive power as a writer is to contrive situations whose symbolic implication is rich for the reader but more dimly, if at all, discerned by the actors. . . The problem is how to reconcile the authorial range and the character range’.

In Telethon the pattern of participation and constriction appears as the dilemma of ‘access television’ of achieving and
maintaining broad-based public involvement, but rendering it compatible with a system of organisation control and a strategy of professional dominance. The tensions engendered by these rival tendencies of action leave their trace in the narrative. The problem of reconciling authorial and character range can thus be transcribed as theorising the constriction as a basis for describing the pattern of participation, whilst yet detecting ambiguities and ambivalences in this pattern, and respecting them as indices of suppressed possibilities.

In terms of social structure, Telethon makes nothing happen; no social realignments of any consequence flow from it. What is accomplished on Telethon is the production of social sense, the creation of an external and collectively validated conception, not only of what the society is like, but of the forms of subjectivity appropriate to it. The practices through which this sense is generated are not to be understood as the negotiated consequence of spontaneously expressed public sentiment. But nor are they an unproblematic ideological construction, routinely emanating from an agency of the state, and functioning to uphold existing social forms. For in Telethon one can identify the symbolic representation of a social order that is both committed to capitalism and disturbed by its consequences. Both the commitment and the concern are displayed in the narrative. This narrative articulates with cultural practices wider than, and other than, those which are intrinsic to the medium or which derive from its specifically local system of control.

Telethons are not unique to New Zealand any more than cock-fights are unique to Bali. What is unique, and uniquely important, are their respective cultural meanings. Telethon engages with the historic presumption of cultural homogeneity and the present perception that it is threatened. It uses pre-existing sentiments and cultural resources, prizes them loose from their social location, transcribes them into the homologous language of money, and then redistributes them in a symbolic celebration of market values. The Balinese cockfight provides an instructive, if improbable, parallel. In a fine essay Geertz describes how for the Balinese it is, or more exactly, deliberately is made to be, 'a simulation of the social matrix, in which its devotees live'. The link is effected through the wagering which accompanies each cock-fight. Centre bets are always even money bets, whereas side bets are assymetrical, but the larger the centre bet the greater the propensity for side bets to be pulled towards the even money pattern. This is because the size of the centre bet is an index of the extent
to which the cocks are evenly matched. 'Deep' matches are those with large centre bets and in such deep play 'money is less a measure of utility . . . than it is a symbol of moral import'. Money gambling is a characteristic of shallow matches; in deep fights what is at stake is the status of the gamblers themselves. 'What makes Balinese cockfighting deep is thus not money in itself, but what, the more of it that is involved the more so money causes to happen: the migration of the Balinese status hierarchy into the body of the cockfight'.

In Telethon it is competitive giving which provides the link between the simulated and the substantive conditions of communal life. Financial contributions are evaluated by reference to the interaction of two criteria—the size of the donation and the perceived social status of the donor. Now a defining attribute of deep play as Geertz employs the term is that 'the stakes are so high that, from a utilitarian standpoint it is irrational . . . to engage in it at all.' How can a donation, for which the prospect of financial return does not arise, be conceptualised as deep or otherwise? It can be viewed as deep if it violates, in an upward direction, the expected relation between monetary value and the donor's social position. That expected relation in its turn is structured through the competitive character of the giving. This is expressed both in the explicit 'challenges' issued by donors themselves to others of comparable status to match or better their contribution, and in the interventions of media professionals in order to orchestrate the normative standards applicable to a given social category of donors. The incentive to go deep is further reinforced by the rising monetary tally on the national scoreboard, which thus serves as the functional equivalent of the large centre bet in Geertz's study. The possibility of altruism is thus forged into a structural simulation of the market, albeit through the interventions of agents of the state. Whatever the motives for giving are, they are publicly recruited as incentives for, and a reinforcement of, status competition. The movement is from gift to exchange.

In the contributions and representation of the larger corporations this movement is arrested. The conventional pattern is that corporate donors expressly refer to their subordination to Telethon itself, and by implication the social order which it symbolises: they are 'pleased to support . . .' or 'proud to take part in . . .'. An allocation from the advertising budget is presented as an expression of community values; there are no 'challenges' from Fletcher Challenge or our other big companies.
Moreover, the form of their contribution is as often in kind as it is in cash—the provision of facilities, materials, transportation and services. The commercial content, and intent, of such corporate practices is further sublimated, if not suppressed, by the interventions of Telethon’s media professionals. This occurs by way of the proxy advertising which acknowledgements of assistance represent, and through complicity in the calculated and contingent properties of corporate donations. There is no conscious conspiracy, merely a routine resolution of discrepant objectives. Corporate giving is predetermined (prior to transmission) so exhortation is inappropriate, but by comparison with individual and group donations it is substantial, so gratitude is in order. The big money helps to ensure that going deep is reinforced amongst those discretionary sources of donation which represent the target of Telethon’s presenters. The big companies do compete on Telethon, not through the conspicuous display of their economic power, but through the struggle to gain access and get mentioned during prime time. Naming their name is the name of their game.

Telethon collections occur at the workplace and typically derive their impetus from the actions of employees. The communalities which they express, and which have work groups as their focus, are visually displayed and/or verbally acknowledged in their Telethon appearances. Thus two or more employees are often present for the purpose of presenting their total donation or there is a verbal acknowledgement of indebtedness to co-workers. In the Telethon appearances of employees of small businesses and the individual branches of larger ones, such communal sentiments can and do spontaneously transcend the technical, hierarchical and social divisions characteristic of the world of work. The initial perception of such businesses is thus filtered through the metaphor of community. On Telethon the conflict of interest between capital and labour is either contained by this imagery or expressed, but controlled, by the symbolic invocation of a presumption of parity. This latter takes the form of a donation from management which matches, dollar for dollar, that which has been collected by the workforce. One might hazard the suggestion that it is amongst those (small) enterprises in which the communal claim seems most plausible that the parity strategy is least likely to be employed.

If the language of community can provide a grammar of commercial practices there is also a continuous translation of unambiguously communal activities into commercial values. In inter-
viewing participants the question sequence is characteristically 'who are you?' 'what did you do?' and 'how much did you get?' In effecting a transition between a given social activity and its fundraising consequences the tag 'athon' has become the conventional linguistic procedure. A puzzled correspondent to Ian Gordon's language column in the Listener was informed that it had no meaning, that it derived from Marathon, the Greek place name. He should have asked not for the meaning but for the use. The function of 'athon', as in bouncathon, jogathon, bikeathon (I have a list that goes on and onathon), is to mediate between diverse and otherwise divergent social practices and the homologous language by which they are measured and weighted. It is one of the ways in which money talks.

Whenever the social activity attendant upon fund-raising can be rendered compatible with the conventions of television entertainment it may be displayed rather than briefly described. The transition to the entertainment mode is signalled both verbally and visually—the printing of pledge names and acknowledgements on the bottom of the screen is suspended. The camera work indicates a more active editorial stance. The cutting is faster, cameras zoom, pan and track, production values (lighting and set design) are more in evidence. The ways in which ethnic minorities express their identity, or communal organisations their distinctiveness, is thus assimilated to television's entertainment code. Integral to the code is the star system, indicated by the presence on Telethon of professional, highly paid entertainers. Through its pattern of display Telethon posits the recruitment of the amateur and the unpaid to the same axis which professional entertainers occupy. Ranking on this axis is signalled not by the duration of the display, but by its temporal location. Amateur and professional alike get equal time but 'prime' time is largely a professional preserve. The surface structure of amateur, folk or ethnic expression may be little changed; the crucial realignment is contextual—performances are no longer *sui generis*. They are now located on an axis in which such displays are commodities.

The most highly ranked professional entertainers are the overseas guests, especially those who have their 'own' television show or series which has also appeared on New Zealand screens. Within Telethon's entertainment mode they are an expression of our cultural dependence and inferiority but they also participate as panel members and audience interviewers. When they are face to face with New Zealanders and New Zealand society
in this way then the rankings are reversed. Thus the promise of donations is often made contingent upon their behaving in ways that publicly indicate that they do not consider themselves ‘different’. A principle of ‘interpersonal’ egalitarianism coexists with a pattern of structured inequality and the instrument whereby such egalitarianism is accomplished is money. But not only are overseas guests (along with the indigenous professionals) constrained to act so as to minimise social distance; at the close of Telethon they are also expected to tell us how wonderful we are. In a similar fashion Telethon’s purported goal of collecting for the sick, the disadvantaged or otherwise dependent serves to tell us how lucky we are, and how healthy is the state of our social life.

There is not one Telethon but six. Each of the main metropolitan areas produces its own, and each transmits to a discrete geographical region. National coverage is thus all but achieved, only a handful of isolated households are out of range. Moreover the convention whereby the medium avoids signalling the conditions under which it is produced is itself suspended. Cameras, cables, lighting, overhead microphones and those who operate them all appear on screen. The institution of television incorporates itself into the displays that it orchestrates. Furthermore the network structure of control collapses distribution in space into allocation of time. Most of what is transmitted in a given region is also produced there, but a small proportion of each centre’s output is networked and thus can be seen throughout the country. In their network appearances the six centres do not so much compete as engage in a politics of display, in which each strives to show itself as the exemplar of communal enthusiasm. It is not distance which is signalled but a measure of distinctiveness, a distinctiveness bracketed and symbolically controlled by the new total on the national scoreboard which usually marks the return to regional transmission. Within each region the contrast between urban and rural donations ratifies and reinforces the fusion of community action and market values.

The way in which small towns and rural areas are presented on Telethon gathers the multiple meanings of community into a primordial image of social life. For a few moments of television time community as a finite geographical area, as an interdependent and integrated pattern of social relations, as moral and spiritual cohesion, are combined in a cliché that is still charged with utopian promise, routinely coined but not yet spent. On a per capita basis the donations from rural areas are dispropor-
tionately high. When so transcribed by Telethon’s presenters they become both a benchmark and a synonym for community. The Word is Made Cash.

Telethon is not an imitation of our social life but a way of rendering it intelligible. It simultaneously fulfils and betrays New Zealand’s dream of itself, for if its content communicates a promise of transcendence and of cultural equality then its narrative organisation signals the fact of control and of structural inequality. In our society each of these contradictory imperatives carries its own kind of necessity. It is in this sense that Telethon reproduces the social order of which it is a product. It enacts a truth of which its participants may not speak; it is our own double bind. All of Telethon’s participants, including those media professionals and others otherwise predisposed to critically distance themselves from the action, are constrained to act as if they are insiders. Conversely, all of Telethon’s participants, including insiders, are constrained to behave in accordance with the conditions of television production and the associated system of control.

It is just such a dilemma, if not the methods by which it is displayed, and the language in which it is described, that is a central theme of New Zealand’s cultural criticism. It is now more than thirty years since Pearson suggested that ‘local artists have a fear to appear in public without fulfilling every expectation of the audience, a craving for protective camouflage’; since Ollsen detected ‘a sense of insecurity . . . expressed in [a] remorseless pressure to conform; so that we may not say exactly what we mean, nor demand exact meanings of other people. . . ’; since Chapman referred to a social pattern that is ‘so homogeneous and hence so insistently demanding . . . that in order to see it, in order to write about it, it was necessary to escape. . . ’. Accounts from within the succeeding generation of intellectuals were marked by a shift in tone but a continuity of concern, by security of tenure but not peace of mind. For example, Wystan Curnow’s plea for the cultural benefits of psychic insulation confronted an institutional infrastructure with ‘a built in tendency to demand versatility . . . [so that the] chances are that the redundant instead of the rich, the reductively simple instead of the subtly complex, will prevail.’

In 1952 Pearson had argued that the New Zealander ‘will not even sing as he feels. . . . He is not so much singing as much as performing a tepid act of devotion to someone else’s performance which is public property and must not be violated’.
Wilmott's 1982 essay on New Zealand nationalism, the singer's gender has changed, the evaluation is more muted, the empirical basis is more explicit and the presumption of access to mental states is repressed. But the substantive point is sustained. Commenting on the television coverage of New Zealand's annual Country Festival in Gore ('The Home of New Zealand Country Music') he writes, 'The winner, a young woman dressed in yellow-tasseled cowboy jacket, jeans and boots sang sincerely of unrequited love in a twangy Tennessee accent, which moved the Australian judge ... to remark that in a similar context in Australia genuinely Australian songs from the outback are sung in outbackish accents'.  

A reading of Telethon which attends only to such cultural continuities is, however, incomplete, for the implication that not much has changed in deceptive. In the 1950s New Zealand lacked an indigenous sociology. In its absence Pearson and others were at once constrained to function as ethnographers and yet free to construct stylised images of our beliefs and practices that were determined only by emerging conceptions of critical taste, conceptions which their essays helped cast into shape. The underlying tension in these analyses was thus between the imperatives of ethnographic description and the impulse towards critical polemic; between the identification of social practices and a reworking of the cultural agenda. This contrast between sociological adequacy and cultural praxis was not so much resolved as managed by the emphasis on homogeneity. One effect of this preoccupation with the central features and centralising dynamics of our social life was to exclude just those counter-tendencies from which their own work derived. There was a disavowal of deviant possibilities and no measures of variance.

And yet the Chapman and Pearson essays have worn well. They opened a little window for the bourgeoisie providing illumination, a breath of fresh air and hints of escape. The obvious, but irritatingly intractable sociological point is that the social distribution of such sentiments is necessarily limited. New Zealanders are still a mystery to themselves. If this is rather less than a universally distributed and timeless character trait, it's also rather more than a chance remark, a mere figure of speech. What was then an occupational hazard for writers and artists has now entered the social vocabulary of their constituents. For in the thirty years since these essays appeared there has been an expansion both in the relevant (tertiary educated, middle class)
audience and in attempts to popularise the thesis that New Zealand culture is deeply flawed (e.g. Gordon McLaughlan’s *The Passionless People*). This constitutes a transmutation of the artistic frustrations of a handful of sensitive, intellectually ambitious individuals into the incipient ideology of a ‘cultured’ fraction of the middle-class. The homogeneity which once threatened artistic endeavour has itself become a routine target of criticism. What was once a defence against individual anxiety has become the ground for a collective project.

Compare this with a parallel development in Britain, the 1950s influx of writers and playwrights of provincial, working or lower middle-class origins, who were collectively labelled the Angry Young Men (although Shelagh Delaney was a woman). As their subsequent careers made evident, they had little enough in common. What their early work did share, however, was an exploration of the line of division between the working and middle-classes and the frustrations and psychic costs of oscillating around that line. That is, they dramatised what Hoggart investigate empirically—the dilemmas and difficulties attendant upon upward social mobility. As a result, they bruised the etiolated homogeneity of the dominant culture and gave cultural sanction to that structural readjustment of class boundaries which Young satirised as the rise of the meritocracy. In New Zealand, cultural centrality is located at a different point on a different scale. One way of characterising this difference is to appropriate a famous, if apocryphal exchange between Scott Fitzgerald and Hemingway. Gatsby’s creator observed that ‘the rich are different’ to which Hemingway responded ‘Yes, they have more money’. What Fitzgerald recognised—and of course wrote about—is a situation in which structural inequalities and cultural differences are mutually reinforcing, in which modes of sensibility function as the boundary markers of social class. Fitzgerald detected the forging of links between the aristocracy of manners and the accumulation of wealth in the America of the 1920s. So Hemingway gets the laugh, but Fitzgerald gets the point—except in the New Zealand of the 1950s. The very absence of cultural differentiation was no laughing matter for artists or critics. Yet what was then the condition of their frustration is now the subject of Foreskin’s lament. McGee’s hero looks back not in anger, but with a kind of loving. Compare Jimmy Porter’s role in the Osborne play: as his wife Alison says to her father, ‘You’re hurt because everything is changed. Jimmy is
hurt because everything is the same. And neither of you can face it. If one attends to the manifest content of the two plays there is a sense of cultural inversion, of protagonists with their signs reversed, of a difference in the source and social location of what counts as the dominant culture. Considered sociologically, however, the two works are functionally analogous. They speak for, and to, the still ambivalent, but increasingly self-confident social consciousness of the ‘new’ middle-class. ‘New’ that is, by virtue of their social mobility in 1950s Britain, and by virtue of their material and ideal interest in the forms of cultural capital in 1980s New Zealand.

New Zealand theatre does not, however, occupy the culturally central position that it has in Britain. In a country where rugby has been centre stage for most of its colonial history, the more orthodox conception of drama has occupied a precarious and peripheral location. McGee’s achievement in channelling the life that is leaking away from rugby towards the theatre may propagate some healthy growth at our cultural extremities, but branches are not roots. For the rugby fan everything is changed and for the theatre-goer everything is the same. And both must face it on their television sets. What is to be seen there is a continuity of content between Pearson’s singer of the 1950s and Wilmott’s singer of the 1980s. What is transformed is the context and conditions of cultural production. Their respective descriptions encapsulated the dynamics of this contextual change. Wilmott’s singer emulated not only the voice of her mentor but also her clothes. Commodification is all but complete.

So if, figuratively speaking, the rugby supporter is the historic custodian of the culture’s content, the theatre-goer is, figuratively speaking, the media professional in charge of the circumstances of its production. They must face each other on Telethon, where they are constrained to produce a collective text, to struggle for cultural convergence. But the membrane of our common culture is thin, and when it is stretched across a social structure that is undergoing change, then the strain is signalled in art, in practice, and in Telethon itself.

Consider, for example, Yvonne du Fresne’s The Book of Ester and Greg McGee’s Foreskin’s Lament. They seem to be linked only by their time and place of publication. Du Fresne’s novel is a mannered and somewhat opaque account of the inner life of a recently widowed housewife in rural Manawatu, prone to reflect on her Danish/French Huguenot ancestry. The text of McGee’s
drama is fevered and scatalogical, has mateship as its focus and a rugby club as its setting. Yet the common charge carried by du Fresne's plaintive 'No roots, no roots, no roots', and the aggressive desperation of McGee's 'Whaddarya? Whaddarya? Whaddarya? . . .' is not only a product of stylistic repetition. Like their exemplar, Hamlet's 'Words, words, words', they move in two registers. Their force derives from the way in which what is said interacts with how words work, a mutual interpenetration of text and world. Du Fresne writes as an outsider who has lived in New Zealand all her life, McGee as an insider who conceived and drafted his play in exile. Ester's complaint is that she, and we, are lost; Foreskin's lament is for what he, and we, have lost. Where these competing lines of sight converge is our present cultural location.

Compare this with recent events. In his perceptive analysis of the 1981 Springbok tour, Geoff Fougere like McGee detected, described and sought to explain rugby's loss of mythological potency. If the game is not yet a flaccid appendage on the body politic, it can no longer serve as the metaphoric equivalent of our collective existence. When, in Fougere's phrase, that mirror shattered, the ball also burst and, like its correlate in the evermore precarious public legend of the Waitangi Treaty, both the life and the hot air are leaking away. (One consequence is that many New Zealand mothers seem set to vote with their children's feet, just as many Maoris seem set to vote for their own hands.) If the outsider focuses firmly on the resulting cultural void, the insider rushes to replenish what is being lost with whatever can be salvaged and such other resources as are available. The outcome is a culturally emaciated but socially active and emotionally intense bricolage.

This is recognisably an account of Telethon. The same semiotic principle is, however, at work in the Grey and Mackelvie rooms at the Auckland City Gallery. The available wall space is spattered with pictures as in some demotic fruit salad. Locating the significant is like trying to isolate the ingredients in a blender. It would seem that culture too, abhors a vacuum. In the rarified atmosphere of our collective beliefs a blank piece of wall, a gap in the programme, a space for reflection all become causes for concern. Of course this explains too much and therefore too little. Nonetheless as a formal, attenuated sketch of the particular configuration of psychic states, social organisation and cultural images which is Telethon, it does probe at the empirically unob-
tainable, i.e. the shared motivational grounds of an institute of popular culture.

But all grammars leak. There are two related tendencies which pose threats to Telethon’s distinctive achievement, and both derive from the institution’s manifest success. Television in general, and Telethon in particular, are culturally central phenomena. They presume the presence of and are driven to locate, the middle ground of New Zealand life. But when things fall apart the centre doesn’t hold, and Telethon is edging closer to basic lines of cultural cleavage and hence social controversy. The objectives of the Family Trust which provided the rationale for the 1983 Telethon exemplified the dilemma. The ‘family at risk’ is close to home but home truths are, and must be, fudged. Whatever might be a source of contention—women’s rights, abortion, sex education and contraception for teenagers, euthanasia—cannot be included as an aim. No risks can be taken in defining the family at risk. The second tendency is the extent to which business interests now seek to encroach upon Telethon for their own particular purposes. I’ve sought to show how Telethon’s internal dynamic, and its accomplishment, is the product of a tension between the communal and the commercial. It is therefore vulnerable to its own version of Gresham’s Law—big money drives out little. Financially it may continue to prosper but at the cost of community involvement.

For Telethon’s sentimentality is a sublimation of dissent; a protest against a social order to which one has effectively capitulated; a celebration of values by (more or less) reluctant accomplices in their subversion. Such sentimentality is not so much the expression of a morality as a precarious substitute for one. It has no institutional foundations and few identifiable implications for action. If challenged, it slides all too easily the short distance into savagery. It is in this sense that Sargeson and McGee can be said to occupy different positions on the same axis. At its fulcrum, however, is sentiment, a point of balance between the mere celebration of savagery and the celebration of the merely sentimental. It is the most accessible location for authenticity that our culture permits. If these two authors must be placed on the opposing sides of this pivot, they are at their best when striving to reach it. It can be glimpsed on Telethon, amongst the children and amongst the losers, who between them manage to make moral seriousness a source of pleasure and to show that dignity need not be dour. It is underlined by their bewilderment when one or more of Telethon’s presenters behaves as small
children do when they know they are losing our attention. And it is confirmed by the glances of recognition that are occasionally evident amongst the handful of Telethon professionals who have not yet lost their way.

NOTES

2 Ibid, p.77.
5 Ibid, p.16.
6 Ibid, p.17.
7 Ibid, p.16.
8 Ian Gordon, The Listener, Jan 13, 1979, p.3.
9 See D. Pearson’s Johnsonville (Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1980), pp.147-166, for an exploration of the range of meanings in the local context. 
13 R. Chapman, op.cit. p.76.
14 W. Curnow, ‘High Culture in a Small Province’ in Essays in New Zealand Literature, p.159.
20 The paradigm case is however nineteenth century Britain, in which the public school system became the forcing house for such rapprochement. From there it is a direct line of descent to such strategic institutions of cultural determination as the Reithian and post-Reithian B.B.C. and the Arts Council of Great Britain.


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**Reviews**


There are many good poems and stories in this collection. It has 679 pages. It has a Contents with short biographical notes, an Introduction with a Note, a Glossary of Maori Words and Phrases, a Select Bibliography, and an Index in three different styles of type to distinguish authors from poems from stories. It is, literally anyway, heavyweight, at 2lbs 9oz. Do your own conversions.

*Title* first. ‘The Oxford Anthology of New Zealand Writing Since 1945’ is impressively misleading. The definite article before *Oxford* gives it an air of ‘The Oxford’ dictionary or companion. Marketing seems to be the only criterion. A more accurate title would be ‘An Oxford Anthology of New Zealand Poems and Short stories Published since 1945 by authors who have been previously Anthologised’. (There are a couple of minor exceptions to the ‘previously anthologised’ measure, though.) The Introduction takes up little room. Jackson writes briefly about the forms poetry takes, O’Sullivan briefly on the ways fiction reflects New Zealand society. Neither editor explains why these particular poems or stories were chosen, let alone why these particular authors were their choices. The only clue to the selections is in a ‘Note’ after the Introduction, where omissions are explained. Louis Johnson (always admitted by previous anthologists) withdrew himself. A story by Ronald Hugh Morrieson was refused by Longman Paul. And Curnow’s *Organo ad libitum* couldn’t be fitted in. A pity. That ‘Note’ is the nearest thing given as a guide to selection.

The anthology proper is in densely efficient typography:
poetry first, then prose, as in the Dewey Classification of most older public libraries. There are 43 poets, 34 short story writers; 73 writers in all, for four (Frame, Stead, O'Sullivan, Wedde) do both. The poetry selection is orthodox, but the last ten years have been silently simplified beyond recognition: Lauris Edmond and Brian Turner, but no Loney or Harlow. The prose selection has a restriction too. It is an anthology of short stories, not of prose fiction. The anthologists were lucky that all of our acknowledged novelists write short stories—all of them therefore qualify. In this context it needs to be repeated that the title's claim 'New Zealand Writing' is misleading: New Zealand has a fair amount of good history, say memoir and even criticism, which doesn't qualify itself for selection here. Again, no reason is given.

The 'Glossary of Maori Words and Phrases' will no doubt be helpful to many. The 'Select Bibliography' will confuse rather than illumine. It is very confused as much as very select. There are errors (incorrect entries for Manhire and Wedde, for example) and inconsistencies. Charles Spear's share in a 1930s novel is recorded, where Sargeson's and Frame's memoirs are by definition excluded. The choice of which 'small pamphlets' are included is inconsistent and unexplained. A couple of authors (Kathleen Crayford and Warren Dibble) miss out entirely, because they have published no volumes: any bibliographer would see that precisely as a reason for detail and help. David Ballantyne, who has published a number of volumes, is excluded entirely. Unexplained.

So this is a large, barely edited and all but unintroduced volume. The one running premise seems to be that there is safety in numbers. There are many good stories and poems in the collection. New Zealand publishers (and Oxford in particular) are very fond of anthologies. The equivalent fondness (presumably) of the marketplace must be the one plausible reason for the existence of this one. All of our universities and many of our schools teach New Zealand literature now, and no doubt they can be expected to be hospitable to large safe packages. Printing is by Hing Yip Printing Co. of Hong Kong. The price at $34.99, is a familiar marketing way (since 1945) of persuading the people it's cheaper than $35. Good luck. There are many good poems and stories in this collection.

Kevin Cunningham

It is splendid to have Baxter’s plays together in a single, handsome volume, as a companion to the Collected Poems. McNaughton’s edition ‘contains all of (them) that have been successfully produced, and a few shorter pieces which have been unjustly neglected’. In effect this means the exclusion of three ‘unsuccessful’ pieces, ‘Three Women and the Sea’ (1961), ‘The Spots of the Leopard’ (1962) and ‘The Runaway Wife’ (1967), as well as of several shorter items of the early 1960s that did not get produced; and the inclusion of two others, ‘unjustly neglected’, The Hero and Requiem for Sebastian. The rationale given is that Baxter preferred to write new plays than to revise existing ones, and that those that did not get off the ground provided materials for others that did. I understand though from Professor W. H. Oliver that several scripts in the Hocken Library collection are not inferior in literary quality to some of the works that are included, and seem to have been rejected for other reasons, such as personal sensitivities. There is then an implicit editorial conflict between presenting a ‘canon’ that will best serve the author and the reader, and providing a complete record of his development as a dramatic writer. This volume is of Collected Plays in the first sense. No doubt there were also considerations of what the market would stand; even with Literary Fund assistance the book is already fairly expensive.

The canon as here given includes two earlier works, Jack Winter's Dream (written initially for radio in 1956), and The Wide Open Cage (1959). Then there are thirteen others written between 1966 and 1968, as well as three brief mimes linked to his sojourn in Dunedin on a Robert Burns Fellowship and resulting interaction with Patric Carey and his Globe Theatre. Baxter’s shift first to Auckland, then to Jerusalem on the Wanganui River in 1969, put an end to his active interest in writing or revising plays and gave a new direction to his commitment to social action. Four of the thirteen, and probably also the only verse play Requiem for Sebastian, were explicitly designed for radio.

The timing is vital. He considered himself lucky in that local play-writing was still in a late-adolescent, pioneering phase, with much new territory still to explore. The symbioses his drama grew from were first, with radio theatre, and second, with the realm of high quality amateur theatre that flourished in the
time between the downfall of the New Zealand Players and the outward spread of the professional community theatres in the 1970s. No disparagement is intended in locating the plays as 'high quality amateur'.

And Baxter deliberately sustained only 'a sporadic liaison' rather than 'a marriage' with the theatre, feeling 'that to know "everything" about (it) . . . might lead me into a world of mirrors', and of narcissism. 'And even in poetry I prefer to work from a position of naivété and ignorance than to be using someone else's do-it-yourself kit and getting bogged down in style and fashion' ('Some Possibilities for New Zealand Drama'). His contacts were less with the theatres in which his plays were produced than with the directors, above all with Richard Cam- pion and Patric Carey, men who combined a drive for technical quality with a powerful hunger for the classical.

I can recall the excitement of the public performances of *Jack Winter's Dream* and *The Wide Open Cage* in 1959-60. Here at least (and at last), in differing ways, was the genuine stage magic: figures that lived, words that fought, images that buzzed, a dramaturgy of real daring. Both plays still stand up surprisingly well. *Jack Winter's Dream*, despite its obvious leaning on Dylan Thomas's *Under Milkwood*, especially in the voice of the narrator nearer the beginning, exploits richly the imaginative freedoms of radio drama, the euphonies of contrasted voices, and (in a sensitive production at least) avoids narrowly the perils of mawkish sentimentality because of its repeated insistence on the remoteness of the dream. ('There is no moon awake in the world where the dead miners stand, or where Jack Winter tosses on his time sheeted bed'). The frank poetical-ity of the invented idiom gives it a limited yet secure stature.

Charles Doyle in his Twayne series book on Baxter recognizes the importance of the comment, in the introduction to *The Sorefooted Man* and *The Temptations of Oedipus*, that 'without the dramatic role, life tends to be experienced as chaos. The unveiling of this chaos is perhaps the theme of all my plays'. The choice involved is between 'the freedom of an ac- cepted role, and the alternative freedom of being a man without a fixed dramatic role'. Finding a form appropriate to a drama centred on a preference for unfixity and chaos is not easy. Doyle's observation that 'none of his plays has formal distinction' is valid, but the form is usually to some degree appropriate. In *The Wide Open Cage* it is a succession of encounters, unob- trusively patterned, mostly between Scully and one or more
of the characters who come to spend time in his shack. The catastrophe seems not so much caused by previous events as triggered off by them on an expressionistic level—Father Tom’s assertion of the ordering power of his humanistic Catholicism in removing Norah provokes the counter-assertion of the destructive power of sinful drives, through the tortured alcoholic fury of Hogan. The essential polarity between sin (alcoholism, as sin against the self, and abused sexuality) and Christianity—usually Catholic—that provides a major axis for a number of plays, has here been sustained by Scully in a precarious equilibrium, and the wrecking of it brings about his death.

The characters are shadowy—Baxter spoke of finding them in, and projecting them from, his ‘menagerie of inner selves’, so that his women tend to be even more shadowy than the men. Scully the retired sailor, the dried-out alcoholic, the man who has returned from the depths by rediscovering his childhood faith, speaks often in what may be described as one of Baxter’s voices, and Father Tom O’Shea in another. Hogan, Ma Bailey and Norah are good characters, if somewhat flat. Eila and Ted, the pakeha late-adolescents, are at best negligible. Baxter came to see as a fault Father Tom’s rather too direct expression of ‘truths’ he himself ‘then thought to be (his) own view... Thus the play was stalled nearly every time the priest spoke. At best I had tried to give him poems to speak.’ He would recognize that the author’s vision should be expressed dramatically through the play as a whole. Nonetheless these attitudes come out at the beginning, in the ritualised confession sequence in Act III, in the closing speech, and do not seriously disrupt the coherence of the dramatic movement. The problem of creating an authentic dramatic language for his purposes was a continuing preoccupation. The ‘lowered street language’ Baxter claims to be using in this work is less fully realised than in The Band Rotunda, but usually works. Perhaps it was as outspoken as 1959 could stand. There is nearly always some edge to it, and a capacity to support telling images, as in Norah’s depiction of her ‘vocation’ as ‘to be a kind of human gumboot’. The verbal image of the cage, from the ars moriendi tradition, allows no simple resolving of the mystery of freedom, just as the skull on the bookshelf puzzles us with the mysteries of mortality.

The Band Rotunda is confirmed as the most substantial of Baxter’s plays. The alternation of episode and choric sequence that the author deliberately builds in creates awkward longeurs in performance (at least, this was the effect in the Baxter Play
Festival at Victoria University, Wellington, in June 1973), and perhaps it reads better than it acts. Yet despite this there is an awkward power, a sense of solid life, and of the pain of crawling between heaven and earth. Once again the violent outward events (Snow’s dispute with the Salvationists, his arrests, Jock’s attack of ‘the dingbats’ and abrupt death) come as shocks—not wholly unprepared for, but as chaotic eruptions out of the chaotic lives of the little group of alcoholics. Part of the strength is in the established persona of the ‘Catholic agnostic’ Concrete Grady, and his running argument with Christ:

Jock dead. Poor Jock. He was alive a minute ago. (Loudly) Where have you gone to? Can’t you see we’re all dying? We can’t do a bloody thing. We haven’t got the strength for it—or the brains. We’re too bloody tired to keep on moving. Come down from your bloody Cross! Come down. It’s time to be buried. We’ve got the hole in the rock ready for you. (He kneels and hangs his thumb knuckle against his chest.) In here. In here. There’s nothing inside us but a bloody great gap. Maybe you can see the sense in it. I can’t. You’ve been up there too long. Come down, you dirty mad old bugger! Come down and be buried! (He sprawls on the rotunda steps. Pause. Lights fade.)

This cry ends the action, set (as we’re several times reminded) on Good Friday. It disturbingly identifies Christ with that other ‘dirty, mad old bugger’, the sin-tormented Snow Lindsay, and transfigures the rotunda into a kind of empty church. This is rough theatre, but the living pain ought to, and I think does in performance, justify the roughness.

Two more of the longer plays, The Devil and Mr Mulcahy and The Day that Flanagan Died, likewise turn on the polarity between sin (alcoholism and sex) and Christian righteousness. The former I find embarrassingly strident, thin and formulaic, its central characters for once over-dominated by the demands of the plot. Despite fairly skilful preparation for it, Mulcahy’s dancing with Simon’s mother simply doesn’t seem a large enough crisis to provoke the catastrophe, Simon’s shooting his sister. The latter play is on the contrary too inchoate, and only achieves a kind of life towards the end when Flanagan rises from his coffin.

Patric Carey encouraged Baxter to experiment, as Giraudoux, Sartre and Anouilh had done, with the resources of Greek
tragedy, to unleash and give form to his own creativity. For a writer in a culture not classically orientated in any vital way, this could prove a road into remoteness, into echoes of echoes. *The Sore-Footed Man*, an imitation of Sophocles' *Philoctetes*, has some interest, especially in the character of the ‘politic’ Odysseus (‘But I didn’t know, and that’s the knife blade I walk on; darkness on each side of me and a blade of fear in the centre’), but too much of it is as long-winded and near-inert as Philoctetes himself.

*The Temptations of Oedipus* Baxter described as ‘probably the most developed play I have written’. It is in its way quite impressive, though again it may read better than it acts. It offers in the repeated confrontations of Oedipus with the Citizens of Colonus, Theseus, Polynices and himself rather a juxtaposing of embodied life-choices than a potent conflict between them. Oedipus is not shown to be tempted by anything either Polynices or Theseus can offer him—the ‘temptations’ are rather what he symbolizes, the acting-out of forbidden desires. Baxter comments that ‘Oedipus the yogi wins by losing to Theseus the Commissar’; but his choice is in the manner of a death already predicted, in the timing of an act of free choice intended to save his infant child/grandchild (who is not after all saved). The ending is enigmatic: the sudden onslaught of locusts and plague that prompted the sacrifice and self-sacrifice has abruptly ceased. Antigone comments, ‘Father would have been glad’; but Ismene responds, ‘Father would not have been. . .’

Baxter set out to forge ‘a prose rhetoric with some precision and some use of images’. Theseus is given a self-exposing ‘bureaucratic’, public rhetoric:

> The man who is behind you—my cousin Oedipus—committed patricide and incest in another land. The gods may indeed be angry on his account. But there is a ceremonial problem. Without ceremony the gods cannot be appeased. They gave us our ceremonies—our libations—our sacrifices—to save us from their anger. Thus the gods are kind . . .

From such smooth rationalising come betrayals and atrocities. Oedipus has more depth and reverberation: ‘Goddesses of judgment—you whose gentleness is the axe and the sword—take my son to yourselves’. Throughout there is a note of cool remoteness. Some of the choric speeches of Theseus and Oedipus are dangerously long-winded: Baxter never quite masters the art of making meaning dramatically.
The modern plays based on tragic myth, *The Bureaucrat* (from *Prometheus Bound*) and *Mr O'Dwyer's Dancing Party* (from *The Bacchae*), both suffer from the inadequacies of their language and of their equivalent situations, from uncertainties of tone and of attitude. Only the Cleaning Women in *The Bureaucrat* achieve genuine bite.

Of the shorter pieces, *Mr Brandywine Chooses a Gravestone* stands out as having the most satisfyingly coherent dramatic shape, the most sustained movement, the most authentically living voices, the richest uses of the freedoms of radio drama. Like *Jack Winter* and several of the other brief works, it launches into the realm of dream. Centred on coming to terms with imminent death, it compacts abiding concerns: Catholicism, alcohol, freedom, bonds of child with parent, husband with wife, love, and deficiencies of loving. Not the most substantial, this is the most nearly perfect of all Baxter's dramatic experiments.

He has been well-served in this volume by his editor, who has silently put the better plays first. McNaughton’s introduction provides useful information about the contexts of composition and production, and highlights ‘the process of self-dissection in the plays’ whereby alcoholism ‘serves as a catalyst for the interplay of secret selves. The process is not glamorized, it achieves no overt moment of truth, and its only end is solipsism; yet the value that is to be placed on the experience is ambiguous.’ Details are given of dates of composition, production and previous publication, and an appendix provides Baxter’s programme notes and introductions to the more prominent plays. The texts as far as one can tell are accurate; since revision seems to have occurred only to stage-directions, with very few exceptions, very few textual notes appear.

J. C. Ross

SOLO LOVERS, Rob Jackaman (*South Head Press, Berrima New South Wales, 1981*), 36pp, $8.50.

Rob Jackaman’s latest collection comprises three related sequences of poems. The first two sequences are concerned with the lives of two sailors, John Franklin and Donald Crowhurst. Franklin circumnavigated Australia with Matthew Flinders, fought at the battle of Trafalgar and died at the age of 59 seeking the Northwest Passage. Crowhurst died in the 1968
round-the-world yacht race having decided to cheat by sailing aimlessly around the south Atlantic until it was time to return as ‘victor’. The third sequence narrates the death of a contemporary love-affair. The poems in this sequence are addressed to ‘Mary’ and in them Jackaman seeks to contrast the sublime love associated with Mary the mother of Christ to the profane and transitory nature of love in the Twentieth Century.

The sequences are arranged symphonically, with major and minor themes linking them. The major theme in the first two sequences speaks of the need to risk death in order to live a complete life. It is at the limits of his endurance that Franklin is able to say ‘But still we push on turning/ Survival into a kind of victory’; and similarly Crowhurst caught in a storm says:

How can I

Turn round now, thread my way through
The maze of this journey, trade
Myself in for a suburb.................

No, look

  foreward yes
  yes foreward.

The minor theme, cleverly integrated in the two sequences as the memories of Franklin and Crowhurst, explores the relationship between love and death. In the final sequence it emerges as the dominant theme.

Integral to the text are a series of facsimile documents relating to the lives of Franklin and Crowhurst: these act as signifiers directing us between past and present, truth and fiction. As ‘documentary’ evidence they authenticate Franklin and Crowhurst, locating each in their historical context. This is important because the historical dimension is central to the tensions and contrasts Jackaman sets up within the major theme. Franklin is a recognizable figure in Western mythology; he courts danger to seek the truth about himself and indeed the universe:

But perhaps there’s an image up there
At the top of the world to embrace
and understand printed across the sky
Like Northern Lights; a place where a man can stand
And say, ‘This is my joy, my redemption;
This is why
the sperm burrowed into the egg’.

Who can say, without going there?

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Crowhurst, on the other hand, is a Nietzscheian games player. He is prepared to cheat in the round-the-world yacht race because winning and cheating are a matter of personal decision and taste: 'During his lifetime each man plays cosmic chess with the Devil. Each man can decide for himself who has won.' For Crowhurst there is no truth to be sought, no one set of values to live by. He jeopardises his life because it is less boring pitting his skill against the elements than living in the suburbs. Franklin's quest is Crowhurst's escape. It is, however, unclear how far Crowhurst's philosophy is merely a rationalisation, for there is a murky affair and the suggestion of an abortion in his past. It may be that his escape is from the past rather than boredom and his philosophy bravado in the face of tragedy.

The uncertainty surrounding Crowhurst's motives is deliberately created. As I read Jackaman the point is not that Crowhurst is a liar, as well as a cheat, but that knowledge whether of oneself or of a 'higher purpose' is chimerical. In this respect Crowhurst becomes a fitting symbol for the contemporary view that the search for knowledge is ludicrous. As such he represents the polar opposite to Franklin. This antithesis between the two characters is elaborated through the use of the facsimile documents. Initially, it seems, the documents establish the two men as credible historical characters but as the sequences develop it becomes apparent that the documents are not to be taken as 'authentic'. Our trust in them is undermined by the fact that Crowhurst keeps two logs, one which is false for public consumption, the other in which he records apparently genuine observations. What this does is to create doubt in our minds as to how reliable any of the documents are—a doubt reinforced by the disclaimer, on the acknowledgements page, that 'none of the characters in this book is real'. By the third sequence it becomes clear that the poet shares Crowhurst's Nietzschean philosophy. We are offered a facsimile page from the Book of Salomón ('Vanity of vanities. . . . all is vanity') suggesting that the pretence to knowledge is merely a function of our vanity. The use of the Bible in this context is bitterly ironic for in this third sequence Jackaman uses the idea that we cannot distinguish between fact and fiction to attack the Christian ethic—an obvious target for anyone who believes with Crowhurst that it is up to individuals to decide whether they have won their game of cosmic chess with the devil.

The final sequence documents the death of a love affair through the voice of one of the two lovers. Through the persona
of the lover Jackaman brings the themes of the previous sequences to their climax, or more appropriately anti-climax. Here love, and particularly sublime love as represented by Mary the mother of Christ, is depicted as just one more game in which the rules are arbitrary because we cannot know ourselves far less anyone else. So we find the act of consummation an act of destruction:

(But whose blood, lady, yours or mine?).
So pray for me now then
Mary
mantis
mater
misericordiae:
After coupling this
is my body.

We are left with the idea that there is no possible hope of communication or genuine relationship. It is our bodies we are left with and nothing else: ‘solo lovers’ precisely.

It will be apparent that Jackaman has attempted something very ambitious both in terms of the structure of the work and in its themes. The attempt is to be commended, more so because these poems contain many fine lines. However the sequences are uneven in their quality. The first two sequences are strong and the character of Franklin is particularly well drawn, but the last sequence is weaker both in its language and in terms of its place within the overall structure. Much of the language is a combination of the banal (‘You locked me deep inside you’) and high-church romantic:

you wore a gown
That shimmered off your shoulders
(Light in the diamonds of spray
Off the sea) a halo round
Your body like a memory
Or a prophecy fulfilled.

Of course the clichéd nature of these lines is intended as a
parody of the love poem showing the language of love and the sentiments it carries as tawdry. But the intention misses its mark in execution. I think the problem is that the deliberate use of dead language to convey a dead situation is too heavy-handed; we know the disappointments, perhaps the chronic failure of love, what we seek is fresh insight and a language to match. It is the failure to sustain a sufficiently interesting language which points up the structural weakness of the last sequence, for here the promise of the tensions and contrasts Jackaman has set up between Franklin and Crowhurst is never fulfilled. The leitmotif which unifies the first two sequences—the idea that we need to risk death in order to live fully—is simply denied in the final sequence. Both the Christian idea that it is through sacrifice that love is possible and the more contemporary idea that we need to take risks if we are to fulfil the promise of love are rejected. But it is precisely the tension implicit in these ideas which sustains the earlier movements. Without that tension we are deprived of the sense of possibility (imminent in the notion of risk) which is necessary if the poem is to remain alive in our imagination.

Hugh Lauder

THE GRAMOPHONE ROOM, Poetry and Fiction selected by C. K. Stead and Michael Gifkins (Department of English, University of Auckland), 78pp, $5.40.

    Baldy chips at fine-grained
    nature, says 'Making a poem.'
    'Like this,' he tells, carving small block bees.
    They already sprinkle his blotter
    like a smashed-in hive.
    (Vincent O’Sullivan)

Many would argue that a university environment has very little to do with real creativity, and that Creative Writing courses (such as the Auckland University programme which brings us The Gramophone Room) can produce only such esoteric crafting as O’Sullivan’s arch-academic Baldy’s ‘yellow-black neat-wingers dead as stones.’

It is perhaps inevitable that at least a few of the student writers will turn out rather to be students of writing, following whatever techniques, employing various devices, earnestly jumping through complicated hoops. Perhaps the problem is one of
motivation; some of the work in *The Gramophone Room* seems to derive as much from the doubtlessly exciting awareness of 'being a writer' as from the thing or circumstance being written about. And perhaps it is not surprising that the most self-consciously made work in the selection resorts to particularly dramatic or unconventional forms and styles: Gregory O'Brien's surrealist Catherine Deneuve; the 'reckless obscurity' of K. J. Cleland's 'Stage Directions'; Kerry Louise Harrison's laboured little suburban tragedy; or Markman Ellis's rather pointless Post-Modernism and painfully clumsy plagiarisms of Glen Baxter cartoons. However alongside such gratuitous displays are the stories and poems which validate the existence of a Creative Writing course, work which has skill and subtlety and something real to say.

'Pethya' by Janet Fullarton is a deceptively simple story which builds up to a final dramatic insight into the nature of communication and understanding. The story achieves a nice balance between the detail of its Greek setting and a purposeful development of the central character and incident. Despite an occasional awkward wordiness, it offers some taut and tenacious images: a crumbling farmhouse 'being allowed to die like an old toothless grandmother', the significance of a car door being shut, the closing insistence of 'the raised black shotgun pointing to the sky'. Mark Eade's 'Fragment' about his grandparents' bakery shop is another high point in the collection: an understated, casual little anecdote, skillfully controlled and unpretentiously moving. There is sensitivity both to the wider complexities of the grandmother's experience, and to the fine evocative detail: 'Inside the shop every man has his coins ready, clutched tightly or carefully shaken in his hand...'. Eade's work is also represented by a polished and powerful translation from Rilke. Garth Maxwell writes in a wonderfully manic, fragmented style. A ferry trip on the harbour starts off an avalanche of observed details—headlines, litter and streetsigns jostle each other into a vivid if tensely indirect statement. A similar cumulative collage effect is used for the poem sequence 'Music Lessons', where Maxwell maintains purpose and control by means of a framework of musical analogies and extracts. Rarotongan-born Poi Ngatokorua Teei contributes 'On the Same Side of the Street', a delicate child's-eye narrative with echoes of Frame and Ihimaera. This story is economical, direct, convincing; the voice and vocabulary are beautifully controlled. The larger issues behind the boy Ngatupuna's world are subtly but pointedly
suggested: the significance of his being named for 'the ancestors', or such details as 'Out of the armrests [of the chair] tiny straws poked their silly heads, like those that peep from beneath the scarecrow's hat in the Janet and John School Journal Book Three.' Teei presents an uncompromising picture of Grey Lynn/Ponsonby realities ('Ngatupuna dunked his piece of bread into his cup of tea... there was no butter on it because it wasn't Sunday') but the story's drama and appeal are in its sympathetic focus on the boy's personal situation and awareness.

There is great variety—of purposes, styles, forms, and quality—in *The Gramophone Room*, as perhaps in any collection of twelve widely different writers, and it is to C. K. Stead's credit that the individual writers are such strong individuals, defining and pursuing their own creative goals. Many of the students have successfully achieved the ambition denied to O'Sullivan's poor Baldy: work which can fly without unnatural effort, buzz with intensity, and sting with precision.

*Ronda Cooper*

**MILNER OF WAITAKI: PORTRAIT OF THE MAN**

Ian Milner (John McIndoe and Waitaki High School Old Boys' Association, Dunedin, 1983), 218pp, $27.50.

James Bertram in his excellent Foreword to this book suggests there was 'more than a hint of Ibsen tragedy' in Frank Milner's private life. The author writes of a 'Thomas Hardy' tragedy. Whichever writer you choose, there are all the classic elements of tragedy in this moving and compassionate account by Milner's son. The restraint and detachment of the book are the more remarkable in view of the contrasting values of the two men: Frank Milner, a patriotic British imperialist from the era of Seddon, Ian Milner, a 1930s Oxford socialist who was to become Professor of English at Charles University, Prague.

Outwardly Frank Milner's life was a triumphant success; inwardly there was storm and stress. The two elements are subtly blended in the book to create a portrait of a complex, contradictory character. Milner was born in Nelson in November 1875. His father died early and he was brought up by a dour and frugal mother, a dominating matriarch. A contemporary of Ernest Rutherford at Nelson College and at Canterbury College, he might also have carved out an overseas career but family pressures kept him at home. By chance, instead of becom-
ing a lawyer as intended, he found himself a junior master at Nelson College; then in 1906 he became Rector of Waitaki Boys High School, a position he was to hold for thirty-eight years.

Under his leadership the school moved from obscurity to international fame. Boarders were sent from all over New Zealand by parents attracted by Milner's reputation. The number of distinguished men produced by the school was impressive by any standard; so also the role he played on overseas trips, 'the silver tongued orator from the Southern Seas'. His speeches were acclaimed. In America he was tempted with offers of highly paid jobs and President Roosevelt welcomed him; in Britain royalty, writers, admirals, politicians all received him.

Waitaki was very much in its Rector's image. He was, reflecting his Puritan upbringing, spartan, frugal, ascetic; so also his school. But he was a man of aesthetic appreciation, so Waitaki had an excellent collection of prints of old masters, its buildings were as good as he could make them, trees were lovingly planted. He developed vocational courses, but literature was at the centre of his educational theory. He produced men who could express themselves persuasively in speech or writing. He was an Imperial patriot, so the school produced 'virile young Britons' in the service of Empire. World War I was seen in terms of Rupert Brooke's war sonnets: 690 Waitakians served, 120 died, 300 were wounded—'poured out the red sweet wine of youth'. So also in World War II. Though events overtook the Imperial idea, Milner did not abandon the ideas of his youth. He thought in compartments, remaining the patriotic imperialist while lauding the League of Nations; condemning the evils of war while glorying in Britain's military achievements; collecting trophies of war for the school's Hall of Memories.

Imperialism went hand in hand with the cult of masculinity, based on self-discipline and sublimation. Milner presented his own brand of sex education:

As he discoursed of 'wet dreams', lascivious thoughts, masturbation, young Waitakians listened rigidly, heads bowed in embarrassment or plain incomprehension. His basic remedies didn't change. Exercise in the fresh air, a cold bath or shower: this was the body's shield against temptation.

They should, he urged, find themselves 'a pure young girl' whom they would ultimately marry. One of the old boys is quoted,
recalling the early morning runs, followed by a naked plunge into the school baths, breaking the ice in winter. School folklore had it that the Rector’s young daughter, ‘that lascivious girl’, watched this ‘delectable’ sight from her adjacent window, noting the stripes from prefectorial beatings which adorned the many bottoms thus revealed.

Milner lived in a boy’s world. Another former pupil recollected him as ‘fundamentally innocent, a boy still in middle age, his eyes closed to evils and uncomfortable trends, substituting noble aspirations and the expression of them for more earthy confrontations.’ There are only three women in the book: his domineering mother who stopped him going overseas; his wife Violet who, because of her periodic bouts of ‘mental instability’ prevented his taking up attractive overseas openings; and his daughter Winsome. Against the image of Winsome as ‘that lascivious girl’, can be placed the glowing portrait by Charles Brasch in Indirections: ‘a high-spirited intense girl equally devoted to riding, swimming and tennis, and to poetry and romance. She saw whatever interested her in a romantic light . . . She walked in long strides like a man, badly, her shoulders hunched forward suggesting inarticulate passionate determination, but her small shapely head with delicate Roman nose, sleek brown hair parted in the middle and dark eyes that glowed smokily were all woman. She spoke in a low deep voice. . . .’* Milner, never very successful at communicating with his wife, seems in his gruff way to have been, like Brasch, under the spell of Winsome. His diary of an English holiday recorded an outing together on the River Cam: ‘acquiescing in Winsome’s wish devoted the day to a summer idyll-donned holiday gear—she hatless in white summery frock. . . the wench looked provokingly pretty. . .’

In 1932 Winsome, having completed three years at university, became attracted to a senior Waikato boy (from the description, clearly not Charles Brasch). Milner strongly disapproved: ‘The ensuing tension probably contributed to her breakdown.’ She was hospitalized with a schizophrenic illness: recovery was followed by relapse. Milner regularly visited her in Dunedin hospital: ‘Bleakly he traced the slow wasting away of mind and body. He could not even communicate with her, shut within the walls of broken selfhood. Only stoic will and disciplined devotion to duty kept him going.’


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He would go for daily jogs, returning bathed in sweat. ‘From the bathroom would come splashing and gurgling as he sported under the shower. And sounds of rhythmic slapping as if he were an American Indian in a chest beating ritual.’ If under strain he would come ten minutes late to breakfast, frowning, his chin nicked with his cut-throat razor: ‘his rages were awful to behold. . . .’ In December 1944 he dropped dead in the middle of a speech: his daughter, Miranda to his Prospero, died in hospital three years later.

John Owens

WHEELS WITHIN WHEELS, Bill Sewell (University of Otago/John McIndoe, 1983), $7.95.

Bill Sewell’s first volume of poetry Solo Flight (1982) contains a sequence on Richard Pearse, the eccentric New Zealand aviator whose strange genius never received recognition in his own time. Sewell’s poetry, rather than celebrating this gifted but misguided man, queries the urge that made him want to fly in the first place. In Sewell’s retelling of the story Pearse is half-crazy and socially isolated, by his own choice, from the small South Island community where he lived. Sewell sees in Pearse’s obsession to conquer space not the triumph of science and determination but, in microcosm, the wrong path man took at the beginning of the twentieth century, and which he still follows today. ‘God didn’t mean man to fly’, as someone whispers in a later poem. In the title sequence Sewell asks us to ‘watch how/ a hawk’s wings are/ moulded to the air/ Pearse’s arms are stiff’. Man was entering an element beyond his instincts, an element to which, in the natural order of things, he had no right. Pearse’s revenge for being ignored in his life-time, Sewell suggests, finds a macabre outlet on the slopes of Mt Erebus: ‘Pearse old spoiler/ was it you there/ whispering false instructions/ in the pilot’s ear?’

Wheels Within Wheels, Sewell’s second volume, opens with advice to another man whose urge for dominion of the air leads him to fly too close to the sun. Assuming the voice of Daedalus, the archetypal artificer and craftsman, the poet speaks to his wayward son in ‘Instructions to Icarus’:

this is a new dimension
we launch ourselves into my son

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let us not overlook
the hazards that lie ahead . . .

above all do not try
to outclimb the gulls
we are not yet fit
for the upper atmosphere

Pearse has become Icarus and assumes now a timeless significance as a symbol of man’s too greedy nature. The only flight to which man can claim rights is that of the divine artificer or poet. To return briefly to Solo Flight, we find in ‘Limits’ the theme that Sewell picks up again in the second volume:

. . . the father plodded along
just above the wave tips
(his middle-aged muscles
aching to keep him aloft)
the boy soared upwards
until even the gulls fell back

Icarus fell, and in the Icarus myth Sewell sees our own fallen world spiralling in a slow descent toward a maelstrom of political intrigue that augurs global catastrophe. It is our fallen world, in its very last days, that the poems in the first section of this collection analyse. Subtitled ‘Some Anarchist Visions’, the twenty poems describe a world on the brink of apocalypse, and Sewell continues to use the Icarus myth of flight and fire as a loose imagistic framework, while the birds of the air continue as a symbol of freedom from humanity’s cyclical rise and fall. Sewell’s is a bleak and desperate picture of a world in flames, and the following lines capture rhythmically the sense of the onward rushing inevitability of destruction he strives for:

summon from those
busy and echoing
dungeons every
profanity of every
prisoner in every
language others in
not yet deciphered
codes add to it
your maximum
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volume the world
outside is burning

THE WORLD OUTSIDE IS BURNING

This is no Biblical armageddon but one very much of man's own making. Sewell is quite explicit about his vision of a nuclear attack:

this time it's for real
the flash that dims the sun
to an ailing light bulb
the cloud that climbs and
climbs to dwarf all storms:
no placid coral atoll
but a thronging continent.

But as the title of the collection suggests, after the catastrophe the wheel turns again with 'the slow plod of oxen/ the plough curling soil/ and the afternoon aside.' Out of the fires of destruction struggles a 'phoenix freshly forged' whose appearance in 'Starting Over', one of the last of this group of twenty poems, merges with the image of Icarus on his way to destruction in the opening poem and thus completes this first verse cycle.

The second section of this volume called 'DIARY' begins with a sequence of seven sonnets, each of seven unrhymed couples, which examine the artist's own predicament as poet, and his attempts to make peace with his own vocation, trying to 'find some way/ of feeding a slow steady burn'. Again we see the poet as Daedalus the artificer, sometimes on the brink of despair:

... there's nothing to stride
towards though you copy out line

after line: the peaks are all worn
down and the sentences spin on

and sometimes on the point of epiphany: poetry in 'this unripe peach', which if we dare to eat sometimes yields 'unexpected utter nectar'. The other poems in this section are longer individual works, although they continue the theme announced in the title of all life as cyclical repetition, and the futility of the
dream of escape. Thus we get images of the carousel, the turning wheel, ‘sky & light & water’ revolving and poetry as the ‘echo’ the writer makes of the world around him. It is part of the human condition that gravity is omnipotent and we are caught, like the sky-diver, in perpetual free-fall:

scream if you will there
are no more strings
to pull and all
the time in
the world

The third section ‘WHEELS WITHIN WHEELS’ is a sequence of ten poems arranged as a series of meditations on the subject of time. Birds, tides, seasons, geological ages and perhaps least of all mankind’s futile machinations, are all caught: ‘we are all things/ are spun out into space/ and back’:

all these revolutions
wheels within wheels
earth moon and sun
the galaxy itself
signals to the body
to get on with the job
signals to the birds in the sky

These lines, from the last poem in the collection, gather together the various threads that run through Wheels Within Wheels and exemplify what Lawrence Jones, writing of Sewell’s first collection, called his ‘intentionally closed, tightly ordered and rigorously impersonal’ verse. (N.Z. Listener, 25 Sept 1982) Sewell continues to write in the ‘closed’ form of two, four or five line unrhymed stanzas; there is an almost total absence of the first person in these poems, nothing of the confessional poet and no hint of personal anguish at the enormity of what he depicts. The sequences of the three major sections unite as a thematic and symbolic whole: man’s urge to exceed his grasp leads him to reach for no ordinary sun, and the modern-day Icarus threatens more than his own destruction. While Solo Flight contains the seeds for this second volume, Wheels Within Wheels expands to surpass the first; here Sewell’s voice is steadier, more experienced and more controlled. If the astronomer’s attempt to order the heavens mirrors the artist’s attempts
to order his own immediate universe then the sixteenth century astrolabe, an instrument of carefully interlocking circles used for measuring the height and distance between the stars, is a fine emblem for the cover of this intricately wrought volume.

Elizabeth Crayford


After reading this book, and going back to it for tasting, I am still not sure I can explain its attraction. In the true spirit of a diary it catches the essence of a day—the weather particularly—and stays close to the shorthand of experience. But most diarists are men of affairs, or egoists with half an eye on posterity, or gossips with a love of scandal. And what is Dennis McEldowney doing in such company?

He is a good writer with—so far—one outstanding book. As editor of the Auckland University Press he is a literary person under an academic umbrella, a useful post for a writer with an inclination for portraiture. But this diary begins four years before his appointment to that position, and ends as he takes it up. He was still recovering from surgery which promised to lift him out of the sheltered and inactive life he described so well in A World Regained. With his widowed mother he went down from Wellington to Dunedin. There he found a part-time job with Philip Smithells, director of physical education at Otago University, and later became a librarian at Knox College.

The background, deceptively quiet at first, had a special challenge for a man still picking his way after long seclusion. Not only was McEldowney among people who worked for a living; he was working with them. And here, I suppose, we begin to see one source of the diary’s charm. Its author had known the world as if through the wrong end of a telescope, and had written about it; but now, still writing, he was a participant, a man who walked to work, or caught a bus like anyone else, and learnt to cope with people and problems, inseparable as always.

The release from invalidism, and the impact of a world now sharply in focus, have to be remembered before the character of the book is understood. But there is something else. Most diarists write constantly about themselves, so that the interest of their book depends to some extent on what they have done,
their adventures and achievements, their amorous exploits—or even, as with Parson Woodforde, what they have eaten, if eating is what they seem to do best. In all such books, however, the central character is on stage, and positive. Dennis Mc Eldowney manages to be present without asking for undue attention, as if he were accidentally in the leading role, and would not be surprised if someone else replaced him.

He writes about himself, certainly, but not with gusto or self-delight, or even introspectively. We are told where he goes, what he does, whom he sees: the details are selected and recorded, and he has opinions. But he is really an observer. He writes more freely of other people than himself. A reader begins to notice that Mc Eldowney makes friends quickly; and this seems surprising in a man whose acquaintance with human society had so long been peripheral. He is drawn particularly to literary people. Charles Brasch appears frequently, both as editor of Landfall and in a role slightly avuncular, played over tea-cups. Janet Frame is there too, Ruth Dallas, Maurice Shadbolt. . . The full list of friends and acquaintances is very long. A nine-page index is needed to tell us who they were and 'what they were doing at the time'.

The literary entries are tantalisingly brief. Brasch is often in a hurry; more than once I would have liked to know more of what he was doing and saying. This is true of other writers and distinguished persons. I began to wonder what sort of book might have grown out of the diary if it had been used as a source of material, not the final production. Perhaps the longer book is still to come, though I am not sure that Dennis Mc Eldowney would want to write it. He has already shown in these pages an engaging reticence, a characteristic which has to be suspended when a writer sits down at last to look searchingly at himself. In the meantime the diary is here, and should be read, not merely as part of a life story, but for glimpses of life and people in the 1960s, a decade now shedding its anxieties and becoming—for those who look back to it—a quieter and safer time.

Monte Holcroft
Book Notes


Here are two small but outspoken little collections, both with enough single lines and images to be memorable. Ms Goddard’s poems string together sharp images (a single girl anticipating ‘a cracked-up, low-blown affair/and the shells of two eggs in the rubbish can’; or ‘Jogging at Night’ and ‘The darkness slips behind like sand’) but only the eloquent ‘Winter Marriage’ coheres as a poem. We have a sense here of the chasms of despair, insanity and cruel disease just beyond the quotidian tightrope; while Mr Pritchard gives us the mature political reflections of a socialist equally disillusioned with Russia and England. His poem about the Computer Centre bomber (‘Resembling Stupidity’) is dignified and provocative; ‘Remembering the British’ ends ‘There’s no future/repeating tragedy as farce. It will afford/only this sense of ending, guilt, decay’; and perhaps the strongest poem unites politics with personal memory of the poet’s father, ‘dear dead daft dad’, in ‘Switching Off’.

D.D.

Recollections of my fellow poets, Count Potocki de Montalk (Prometheus Press, 1983).

Geoffrey de Montalk was a talented eccentric who left New Zealand in his mid-twenties to pursue the titles of Poet and King of Poland. In neither claim was he successful, and what was a fascinating folie in the 1920s and 30s degenerated into a display of tiresome egotism in the post war years. De Montalk’s little presses in Dorset and the south of France have poured out minor lyric verses and diatribes in support of his literary and monarchic pretensions and his neo-fascist obsessions since then.

Yet in the 1920s R. A. K. Mason and A. R. D. Fairburn found him to be a fascinating and stimulating companion, and Fairburn at least conducted a vigorous correspondence with him. In a literary climate where there was not much to encourage young writers, de Montalk’s exuberance delighted his friends, and in Fairburn’s case it influenced the lyric work that was to be collected in He Shall Not Rise. Now a little press in Auckland has published de Montalk’s reminiscences of those times and friends. It is sadly apparent that de Montalk has never come to terms with the fact that his place in New Zealand literature exists only because of his brief association with those finer poets Mason and Fairburn. That is galling to him, no doubt, but this little book could have told us much about the years in Auckland and London from 1920 on, and much about Mason, Fairburn, D’Arcy Cresswell and the lesser known figures such as Maxwell Rudd and Alison Grant (Mrs Arthur Waley). The book tells us nothing, unfortunately, that researchers have not already discovered; it makes tiresome claims for its author that have no substance, it is several times wrong in matters of fact, and it suggests that de Montalk, now approaching his
eightieth birthday, is locked in a time-warp in which he angrily imagines New Zealand literature to be exactly where it was when he left the country fifty-five years ago. The book is a disappointing, sad little volume.

W. S. Broughton

Correspondence

Sir: In the December 1983 Landfall 148, there was a 'Craft Interview with C. K. Stead', in which Michael Harlow asks the poet some crucial questions about his writing as a whole.

I would like to re-emphasise a single aspect touched upon by C. K. Stead: the importance of 'music' in poetry.

Mr Harlow points out 'Pound's disavowal of traditional stress count, accentual rhythm in favour of his advocacy of musical effects.'

In one part of the questionnaire Stead answers with: 'A poem . . . in a tight stanza form with lines, and end stops . . . is a kind of martial art; it's hardly music at all.'

I take it that what Stead means by 'martial art' is discipline—and that this kind of control constrains the variety of music a poem could develop.

Beethoven's 'Emperor Piano Concerto'—for example—could be taken as a specific analogy in which revolutionary rhythms have broken away from the formalism of his much earlier works.

In spite of all that has been said and done by Pound, Olson, Creeley and in fact by New Zealand poets working in 'open form' in order to enlarge the repertoire that is there to be tapped, I think really that the surface has hardly been scratched, and it is an exciting prospect just to envisage the range that could be developed.

Bill Leadbeater

Sir: In his Landfall review of my Selected Poems, Dr W. S. Broughton mentioned a 'debate' about the poem 'Dichtung und Wahrheit', correctly observing that it had 'distressed several commentators and has drawn one of Curnow's rare responses to his critics, in the Listener'. He had more to say on this subject, I think usefully, though it isn't my place to comment on that. If I chip in again, it is not another of those 'rare responses to his critics', rather to make the point that my brief Listener letter really wasn't one, either. In Dr Broughton's context, the precise nature of the 'response' was hardly in question. It does concern me, however, that nobody is encouraged to suppose that I ever defended the poem against, for instance, individuals who—for some private or partisan reason—pronounced it a 'personal attack', or whoever it was that added 'vicious'. Like any other remarks that might pass for criticism, those are matters of other people's taste, and strictly none of my business. It was only when somebody scolded a somebody for having reprinted the poem in a quite important anthology, that I decided my own attitude to it must be placed beyond all possible
doubt. I could not appear to have overlooked, let alone to have tacitly noted, an apparent (if covert) disposition to suppress the poem, or invite me to do so; fatuous as it was, the comic opera thought-policeman's 'Lapse of judgement, Mum.' So I wrote to the Listener, solely to point out, what should have been obvious, that the poem had been reprinted by my authority, could not have been reprinted without it, and would be reprinted again—as it has been, and will be, as suitable occasions arise. Subsequently, in the same journal, a respected son of the Presbyterian Manse and Oxford blethered about 'some old puritanical Anglican nerve in Curnow' and '... Curnow has chosen to stand by his poem...,' implying what alternative choice? Not to 'stand by' it? To suppress it? As if the heavens were thundering doom when it's only Father O'Blarney and Professor Oxtongue breaking wind again. What does one do? Deliver one's poem to the Public Shredder, apologising to one's deluded publishers and admirers? One last question, which is not a rhetorical one. Who or what, precisely, are they 'standing by'? Not a bad question, I think.

Allen Curnow

(The context of Mr Curnow's letter includes: review of the Oxford Book of New Zealand Poetry by Frank McKay in the Listener, 23 October 1982; interview with Tony Reid and review by James Bertram of Selected Poems 12 March 1983; letters to the editor of the Listener 30 April & 21 May 1983; review by W. S. Broughton of Selected Poems, Landfall 147 (September 1983), 362-71.)
Contributors


Kerry Louise Harrison. 25, born in Wellington, living now in Grey Lynn, Auckland with son. A domestic purposes beneficiary, she has just completed a B.A. in sociology.

David Howard. Born in Christchurch in 1959, working part-time for the National Library.

Vivienne Joseph. Works part-time in a bookshop in Lower Hutt and writes scripts for a children's programme on radio and also writes for School Journals. Her first book of poetry, A Desirable Property, will be published by McIndoes. In May she goes to America 'for my first dose of O.E. courtesy of Air N.Z.—my prize for winning the Short Story Competition.'


Stephen Oliver. A freelance broadcaster in Auckland. He has recently completed a novel, 1460 FM, and has published four books of poetry. A new collection, Earthbound Mirrors is to be released shortly from Horizontal Press, Box 33449, Takapuna, Auckland.

Margaret Orbell. Currently working on a book on Maori poetry, The Natural World of the Maori (with photographs by Geoff Moon) which will be published next year by Bateman.

Nick Perry. Born in England but grew up in Christchurch. Teaches the sociology of science and the sociology of organisations at the University of Auckland. 'My wife is American and our two daughters are cosmopolitan. I like jazz and dislike mowing lawns.'

Albert Wendt. Novelist and poet, at present the Professor of Pacific Literature at the University of the South Pacific. A new collection of poems Shaman of Visions to be published in 1984 by Auckland University Press.