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Westerly
a quarterly review

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*Line drawings by students of the Art Department, Perth Technical College.*
I'll always remember her, always, especially because it was not her fault, and really, I never knew her. That was why it was so horrible, like the thought of electricity in some part of your brain ... yet it was not only horror that I felt. It was like a branch that scratches your cheek, a leaf that cuts the quick beneath your fingernail.

Camouflaged among the mushroom patch of gaberdine coats and quietly respectable frocks and suits, I was not so very much higher than one of the pews or the altar at her wedding. Gracefully resting against the kneeling-rail she had seemed so large and so very lovely; her flow of hair and her cupping shoulders were astonishing to me. In memory the whiteness of her dress seems incandescent. All through the wedding I thought of her perfect body beneath that snow-like rustling material in which she moved or rested as easily as a swallow that glides through the darkening air. In all of her movements, though, there was something ominous, a kind of fatality. Sensing the fragility in her step, the near-overbalancing of her kneeling-down, I had that lost feeling I have sometimes experienced watching a ship move close into dock, its body catching the last of the light and its base and the sea beneath it completely hid by the cars and the timber and the junk on the side of the wharf.

So later I was not shocked when her lace was torn like a web and her veil was covered in blood as if some beautiful bird had been shot. No serious damage was done; there must have been far worse family skirmishes in her life ... but this one wrecked her utterly. I could almost imagine her leaving the stains of her own blood upon the brilliant silver crucifix that suddenly had caught her flesh just as the flash of tempers ended and the furious shouting ceased.

Of course I could not see her when we went to see them. They were not close relations. I heard my father offering help and them refusing. They blamed her for what was happening now; said it was "all her own fault"; said she was "putting it all on". I could scarcely understand what they were saying or that she could really be destroying herself and only for her own sake. It seemed unthinkable that anyone could refuse completely to speak or eat. Looking back, I can see that her people must have been half mad or extraordinarily stupid not to realise what was wrong.

Determined to catch a glimpse of her ... perhaps my last one ... I had wandered out onto the lawn alone and was heading for somewhere on the other side of the house. They had enormous grounds in those days; they really had money then. Their white house was cupped effortlessly by the wide and undulating...
dark lawn; it seemed like a daisy, a snow-drop. Its fragile white, somehow more deep and pure than ever in the day-time, was disappearing just perceptibly beneath the shadowy leaf of night. Both light and green are sinister at late evening... but everything seemed to increase that strange excitement which made me almost tremble. I felt on the verge of knowing a secret and yet I did not find out anything. I did see, however, what each one of us must have come to see: her... dying.

She was in the "sun room" near the fire escape. The jig-saw steps went skinfully blackly up into the twilight like a spider; and there she lay behind the great glass windows not far from the foot of them. She was like a saint in paradise trapped in a cathedral. It was not really a "sun room" she lay in, and of course at that time of day there was really nothing that could be called sunlight. The early moonlight slipped about her hair like dust, white dust, white as ever snow was. Her face was motionless and white though she was not dead. I stared at her and she may have seen me, though she made no sign. If she ever saw me she could not have failed to recognize what I was, an onlooker, someone who wanted to know what would happen next.

I was horrified, as horrified as when once I had thought that part of my ear had been cut off. I can even now feel my body being wrenched and tugged and torn by tumult completely alien to it, as half-mesmerised, I gazed at the total indifference of her quiet face. Like something heavy that cannot fall I gazed into the total stillness of her eyes... sensing only now and again that they moved. I thought how I might have felt sick at the sight of her pallid cheek that rested so uncomfortably low-down upon the pillow. She had obviously not eaten for some time. I remember the words of a neighbour whose husband had shot himself with a gun he used for hunting wild duck: "They know what they're doing. Oh yes, they know." If she was dying why in the name of God didn't she do something? I had often thought of that: what it means to die. I could not have born it so easily; not with such unearthly stillness. But of course they were not like us; she couldn't know what happened to those whose deaths were their own curse against God. It was not in my nature to believe that a person could die for love or out of disappointment... and I did not for one minute think her mad.

All of the world seemed turning into the texture of night. Far off over the lawn I saw a man's silhouette apparently moving towards where we were, and then it seemed to stop, pause, recollect; and suddenly swing away to nowhere... out of my memory anyway. Whatever function in the lives of others that wavering shadow had, he was only a passer-by that night, and he only passed by... yet glancing back to her who lay behind the glass, I think I saw her hand tremble in the chill half-light, and tight flesh struggle about the knuckle. She was cold and completely alone, I felt. Suddenly I felt rush through me like a great wash of salt water, an overwhelming sense of admiration for her. She was not like me, cold within myself, a person who could watch suffering thoughtfully, even with a sense of its own impersonal loveliness. Nor was she like them, people who could call it "her own bloody fault"... and yet, after all, weren't they in some way right to blame her, she who minute by minute was reaping her own death, choosing it against everyone she had ever loved, and who had loved her.

As if with a splash or gush of amber juice, suddenly the room lit up, and I hurried away frightened as the person who had come in waved at me angrily. I remember the silent shout on that unknown face, muffled now by memory, then by glass. I think she was being prepared for the night.

Hurrying frightened over the half-black green and dodging the leap and sprawl of shadows, I thought how I had never known anyone in any way like her. There was no-one even remotely like her: I was utterly amazed and lost somehow. Nothing like this, I felt, would ever happen to me again.
But now, knowledgeable with the kind of truths that slip between the revealing conversations at weddings and funerals and knowing only too well the mutual cruelty inherent in any family, I look back in confusion at that now trembling child, terrified in its stumbling race across the grass, back to the other side of the house. But chiefly I doubt her, her whole self and what she must have felt, knowing perhaps that unhappiness was not her sickness. I now feel sure she did not want to die and I think she must have felt her whole mind explode as there she lay unable to speak, not even capable of flickering one eyelid, still less of making any sign to tell them that she was not “pretending” or wicked or insane, but sick, and dying rapidly with every minute that passed.
POETRY FROM

BANGKOK

MALAYSIA

GHANA

PAPUA NEW GUINEA
Udon
for satish

Largely, this town has boomed to feed the needs of the U.S. military. Main street, probably nailed together yesterday, looks that way; only the Udorn Hotel is solid amid the make-shifts of converted hotels, massage parlours, pizza houses and bars.

Road to the base is likewise littered with assorted shops. G.I. friends sign me in. A piece of paper picked turns out to be a V.D. list of girls who are out of bounds for a whole week. Here needs are lusts because they have no leisure to be otherwise.

Where men are aliens in outposts of war and women are too poor to stay decent life is a drag and boredom breeds desire. When night falls relentlessly as the bombs they drop on Laos, Satish, you know that sex and war are wants to be assuaged first.

Phnom Penh

Embattled, the city shows no obvious sign of war. But queues of Vespas and Hondas, wide, bare boulevards, the silence after nine point to the plight of the reluctant Khmers.

The prince who trod the neutral rope so well and long, could no longer maintain his ploy. His marshals claimed, just before his fall, he was on a rope strung by Hanoi.

Angkor posters at the Hotel Royal warned “It is not safe to go to Siem Reap” in handwriting. Souvenirs of temple rubbings were poor substitutes for the trip. The only symbol that is ever stable I find where the Mekong meets Tonle Sap.
News

When he dropped in on us at dinner
And sprang on us what we hadn't yet read
In the papers, the news fell into place,
We took it in, dinner taking longer
That night—dessert wasn't omitted.
Because the news didn't come with the taut
Turbulence, the terse articulation
Of a telegram ineluctably
Singling out its victim by name and place
Should we blame teller or telling of the news?
Such bad news couldn't compete with the kind
Telegrams detonate, telling all
With word-by-word telling finality,
Nor with the completeness of tragedy
Greek or Shakespearian, repeatable
Fullbodied experience imagined through
And true precisely to the pulse, pitch and pith,
The light and dark, the dead calm and eddies—
The cool crystal pools of awareness transcripting
Transfiguring all: in the clean and still
Medium of a lit-up aquarium shades
Lurking in murky depths are picked out clear
And, framed and focussed for contemplation,
Understood. We cannot experience life
Like it is through life for like it is is
Nothing—the sense of something felt, nerves set
On edge, mushy anguish, sounds seeking tunes
And shape to become songs, sound and fury
Signifying nothing till measured
And rhythmed, patterned and sculptured by art
Into art articulating life.

Except to immediate circles—the son
Who got back from India by the last plane;
The old mother who mustn't yet be told;
The daughter who drove, surviving to begin
The nightmare of all her days to be,
All her days to be remembering that one day,
Till cruel time as usual prove kind in time—
The accident smashing two lives out of
Existence in no more time than it takes
For two vehicles colliding to be
Contorted hulks, was certainly tragic
But still an accident whose only meaning
Is its meaninglessness, whose moral
For all and sundry sound of limb and mind
Whose business or congenital itch takes them
To the road on wheels is 'Don't save on tyres'.

Perhaps the bearer of news found audience
Few but not fit—I might as well confess
That in lieu of spontaneous sounds of grief
I know of no ritual of respect
To hand; anyway there was no quorum
Then for its formal implementation.
The truth is, though they were relatives killed:
(Relatives related nominally)
Husband and wife killed, with a nice house bought
(Which brought bad luck, knowing ones now say:
Look at the garden's triangular shape!)
And two more years of working life left them,
I said it was tragic but didn't feel
All that I know in decency I should.
When later it was added that with death
Almost certain the mother managed
To pull off her diamond ring and gave it
To the daughter, I should have liked to know
What went through her mind and the daughter's,
Or what she said if she said anything.
Whether that tailpiece was fact or fiction
I felt too strongly then to question,
Not knowing what most I felt: admiration
For courage of cool collected presence
In face of approaching blackout; disgust—
Diamonds are forever not for fingering
By grubby ineligible fingers
Of bus driver, coolie, the common lot
And must be kept within family at all cost;
Three cheers for her doing the best she could,
Given such short notice, for the daughter
Surviving maimed but, whatever the court's
Verdict should be, forgiven, forgiven:
Casting blame being then impertinent
And time too short for all that's long-drawn-out,
That gesture was magnificently right,
Saying all in an unrehearsed rite
Of wordless blessing: take care; don't look back; live.
Cemetery Notes

Ugerminated seeds buried
In six-foot nursery beds—
Cubicles with owners names
Inscribed in cuneiform letters—

Wanted identified of destitutes,
Stow-aways and wash-ashores,
Orphans now tracing their descent
Below modest beds with no epitaphs;

Poverty and affluence
Are again here!

Here lies Mr Johnson
In military dress
There sleeps Mr Wilson
In civilian clothes,
And yonder folds Yawavi
An abortion expert!

Martin Manitsilele—a statesman,
Assassinated in luxury,
Stately buried;

Mwangaza Notsikulala—a thief,
Blood coagulation,
No compliments;

Alexander Rentisov—a spy,
Found in plane crash,
Rendered acknowledged services;

They were not here yesterday
When the wind blew
Over the same forget-me-not trees
Which have now become flowers
For the benefit of their souls
And shade for their bones.

We may meet here one day
In body or in soul,
And in retrospection, say
Old fellows, here we are again—
Our duties are done
But our next schedule
Still remains unknown.
Palmwine Festival

It was a lazy time in Avatime
A conglomeration of villages
Perched around a rocky mountain.
The inhabitants ascended and
Descended as time demanded.

They harvested what was planted,
And according to the season,
They could refrain from cultivation
As long as the rains divorced the sun.
They would mourn with palmwine,
And feed on food from their barns.

I went there in the company of my soul,
And just at the outskirts of the villages,
The wind brought me part of palmwine
Invisible to the naked eye,
And my nose received the smell
With the compliments of my palatal glands;
The mouth was jealous but hopeful
Of a combination of dregs and fragrance.

I climbed on and my knee caps cracked,
I saw the valley below and was nearer heavens;
Over here sixteen shade trees shaded the sun,
Supplemented by sixty-six palm branches;
And as ancient folk tales and epigrams
Unfolded with emotional ease,
I sympathised with written literature.

Palmwine greeted lustful lips and
Flowed down on acceptance, and
Liberal moustaches played dual roles
Of mouth's decorative and sieve,
Picking foreign bodies from palmwine;
Children heard stories of invasion,
And other ancestral roles
That made history happy.
ROBERT KENCH  Papua New Guinea

Whaam

(“I pressed the fire
   control . . . . . . and
   ahead of me rockets blazed
   through the sky”)*

Out of the sky
flashed
a plane

there was no time
to consider
dropping
the hoe
merely to watch
for a split
second
as the whole
world exploded
in a heat
   of madness.

*(from a painting by Roy Lichtenstein)
Askew suspected that he was the only person in the street to have spoken more than once to Mrs Bowd. Her arrival four years previously, when the terraced house opposite went up for sale, excited the usual gossip that accompanies change in a small town, and the neighbours had made it their business to discover all the business of the new resident. Nobody succeeded. Mrs Bowd kept everyone at a distance, either by ignoring greetings or, usually, by keeping out of sight. She emerged only to go shopping. Nobody called, except the milkman. No newspapers were delivered, no letters. And, as soon as the milkman had gone, the front door opened, a mittened hand shot out, grabbed the pint bottle, withdrew, and the door closed. More was seen of the cat than of Mrs Bowd, and Askew disliked cats. He particularly disliked Mrs Bowd's cat because it was the biggest, fattest and most pampered he had seen in a lifetime of avoiding every representative of the species. He was disconcerted by their independence. Their mincing manner resembled too closely that of those women who bothered him in the shop for expensive cuts of meat at offal prices. Besides, Mrs Bowd's cat provoked distrust. Askew, in fact, felt distinctly uneasy when passing the front doorstep opposite where, sometimes, it prowled ceaselessly as if impatient to return inside to saucers of cream and plates of titbits. It was a big, fat, ginger cat, and as it prowled backwards and forwards on the doorstep Askew would think he could hear its big, fat, ginger paws stamping. Askew tried to avoid turning his back on it. Occasionally, it would stare at him, narrowing its eyes until only two ginger slits remained, and hiss, and the fur on its back would stiffen, and Askew would quicken his pace, and speculate on the weight of its skinned and gutted carcase. Clearly, it was overfed. He knew definitely that it ate enough meat in a week to sustain a full-grown man. Usually, except when patrolling the doorstep, the cat sat in the front room on some high chair, or table, with its head and shoulders visible through the window. The heavy curtains either side, and the fastidiousness with which it composed itself to sit upright in the centre, made an almost regal picture. Askew had seen passing strangers stop and point and smile. He'd not heard of anybody who'd been inside.

His wife, Joan, said, “It stares out across the street as if it's watching us”.
“It's watching everybody.”
“It's watching us!”
“Close the curtains, then.”
“Not in the morning.”
“Ignore it, love.”
Joan busied herself pouring another cup of tea.

"Mustn't be late", said Askew, standing. "This is one of Mrs Bowd's days."

Mrs Bowd, a tall, plump widow, came up to him every other day in the shop. If he was serving another customer, she'd wait until he was available. "Good morning, Mr Askew! Half-a-pound of sirloin, and I'll have two lamp chops."

The old gimmer was as regular as a laxative! "You'll kill that cat with kindness, Mrs Bowd."

"Only the best is good enough for her, Mr Askew. I love little pussy."

Joan said, "That woman!"

"Customer!"

"She's a silly old girl."

"It's her money. She can do what she likes with it, I suppose."

Joan stirred her tea. "It wouldn't surprise me if all the money belonged to the cat."

Smiling, Askew put on his working overcoat. "I won't be late", he said, calling from the front door.

"Every penny!"

He closed the door, noticing the watchful cat in the window, and turned up the hill. There was, he thought, noting with approval the daffodils in his own tiny front garden, something horribly offensive about that big, fat, ginger cat, but thought no more about the beast until Mrs Bowd herself arrived in the shop. As usual, she was wearing a rust-coloured tweed coat and her extraordinary woollen, orange-coloured mittens, and she fussed about with a worn leather handbag while waiting for him to serve her.

"Won't keep you", he called, winking surreptitiously at a colleague.

Mrs Bowd scratched impatiently at her handbag, her eyes examining the display of meat, and she licked her lips, looked, and scratched, and licked, and said, "Can't wait long."

"Busy?"

"Nearly feeding time."

"Your lunch?" Askew knew she was referring to her pet monster. "What would you like today?"

Glaring, Mrs Bowd slapped her handbag onto the counter.

"You love little pussy!"

"I do love little pussy, Mr Askew, and we'll have half-a-pound of steak, and two lamb chops."

Askew was holding his favourite, reliable carver and, picking up a steel, gave it several energetic strokes, although the knife was permanently sharp enough to cut bone, and sliced a steak. "And two chops?"

"Lamb chops."

He glanced up as he cut and weighed the chops. She was watching his large, muscular hands. Her own long, thin hands were patting the handbag. Their eyes met for a moment, and she became still, alert, and turned away while he wrapped the meat. Blood from the steak stained the white paper. She put the parcel in a string bag, licked the ends of her mittened fingers, brushed the mittens, and gave him the money.

"Thank you, Mrs Bowd."

"She'll think I've been run over, I'm so late."

Askew picked up the knife again. "Poor little pussy."

"I love little pussy, Mr Askew. Good morning!"

"Good morning!"

She padded out of the shop, treading lightly over the sawdust scattered upon the floor, and left no visible tracks.
“Silly old fool”, Askew murmured.
“His colleague mimicked, “I love little pussy”.
“It’s as big as a horse.”
“You’ve told me.”
“You should see it for yourself.”
“She’s lonely, perhaps.”
“Silly old fool”, Askew persisted.
“She doesn’t look well, you know.”
“Nothing wrong with her, physically.”
“She was definitely off-colour.”
“Flu”, Askew said, unconcerned. “Perhaps.”
“Cat flu?”
They laughed until the tears ran down their bristly, red cheeks, and the young cashier shouted from his cubicle to be let in on the joke.

Four days later, during a slack period, Asked realised with a mixture of surprise and relief, that Mrs Bowd hadn’t been in the shop again. He’d not seen her pass by or, come to that, seen any sign of her in the street. Of course, that wasn’t unusual. She managed to keep herself to herself, and could have changed butchers. All the same, for a woman of such regular habits, it was surprising. Besides, he rather enjoyed teasing the silly old fool. “The poor old thing”, he amended, and went about his work.

“Seen anything of Mrs Bowd?” he asked Joan that evening as they sat in the back room watching television.
“Seen the cat”, she replied.
“Today?”
“In the window, but that’s mostly all I ever see. Why are you so interested?”
“Mrs Bowd’s not been in the shop lately.”
“Gone somewhere else?”
“Perhaps”, Askew said. “I’ll inquire.”
“Why?”
“Curious.”
“Thought you couldn’t stand her?”
“I’m just curious.”
“Curiosity”, Joan began, smiling.

Askew nodded. But it wasn’t until the middle of the following week that he was able to regard his preliminary inquiries as being almost complete. Finding the assistants known to him at the other shops, and finding the others from the butcher’s shops where he had no acquaintances, meant spending evenings at two pubs where the butchers of the town made a point of meeting. Askew was assured by all of them that nobody answering to Mrs Bowd’s description had even been seen at any of the shops. Of course, Askew didn’t want to make his inquiries obvious. That might have aroused mistaken suspicions concerning his private life. He had to wait for a suitable moment, capping stories about customers and their cantankerous ways with stories about Mrs Bowd. Besides, he enjoyed a beer, and wasn’t the kind of man to hurry over anything, but the number of evenings he was returning home late, or going out again after his evening meal, was upsetting Joan.

“Come with me”, he invited when she was complaining. “You know you’d be welcome.” And hoped she’d refuse.
“You know I don’t enjoy sitting in a smoky pub.”
“You know you’d rather watch television, love.”
“I’d rather watch it with you.” She frowned, her normally relaxed, lined face expressing disapproval, and turned away as he tried to placate her with a kiss.
“This will probably be the last excursion.” He felt too uncertain, too embar-
rassed by his own suspicions, to make his suspicions explicit. "Probably all over nothing, anyway."

“What’s all the fuss, then?”
“There’s no fuss, love.”
“You could just as well stay and prune the roses.”
“I’ll be back in time for the news.”
“Don’t be late!” She let him kiss her on the forehead. “Go on”, she said, facing him as he hesitated. “I can see you’re up to something.”

He smiled, briefly. “We’ll see!”

Luckily, the assistants from the two butchers’ shops which he’d been unable to check were present in the bar of the first pub, and he ascertained as smoothly as possible if either of them had served, or seen, Mrs Bowd. Neither of them had done so. Askew was satisfied by their assurances, since Mrs Bowd was a conspicuous woman—her orange-coloured mittens alone made her memorable—and he felt sure that once seen she wouldn’t be forgotten. He walked home slowly, measuring his paces down the hill to the narrow, terraced street. He wondered why he should spend so much time, and trouble, risking the happiness of Joan, over such a silly old girl as Mrs Bowd. Was it really mere curiosity? Or was he, in his late middle-age, experiencing an intense fellow feeling for the lonely and the old? After all, she could have fallen down in that peculiarly lonely house, and be dead, or be so badly injured, or so ill, as to be immobilised. And, all the time, at the back of his mind, was the vision of that big, fat ginger cat, plodding and preening. It was absurd! Surely, even if the silly old fool herself was dreadfully ill she’d manage, somehow, to send up a signal. How? Nobody called! Who’d bother to notice and to check? What had happened? What was going on in that strange house? He turned into the street, immediately aware that he was in sight of the cat and, sure enough, right in the middle of the ground floor window, occupying its throne, or chair, was the smug and crafty monster, it’s head turning as he approached on the other side, watching, always watching. But, because Askew was a cautious man, he resisted the temptation to jump to conclusions, to go to the lonely house and batter on the front door until it opened, or he heard a muffled cry for help, and smashed down the unwelcoming door.

“Well?” Joan asked, as he entered the back room.
“I’m in time for the news?”
“Couple of minutes”, she said from the sofa facing the set.
He hung up his coat on the hook behind the cellar door, and sat down beside her, puzzling.

“Well?”
“Problems!”
“Can’t I help?”
“No, love. Not yet, anyway.”

She took hold of his hand and cradled it softly in her lap. “Glad you weren’t away long.”

“So am I”, he said. One of the major obstacles in his investigations was his inability to discuss it with anybody, and seem sane. Even if he went to the police, what had he to report? That a regular customer had stopped buying meat!? Nevertheless, how was the silly old fool feeding the creature? How was she feeding herself? She never gave the cat tinned food. She’d boasted that little pussy lived on the best. And, if the cat remained, to all appearances, contented, and Mrs Bowd was still in residence, how were both of them, cat and crank, managing? Deep freeze? But nobody with a deep freeze went out every other day to buy fresh meat! And if she’d bought a deep freeze the neighbours would have reported the event. And what about little pussy’s milk? Unopened bottles weren’t littering the door-
step. Indeed, he'd confirmed that the milkman was still delivering to the house opposite.

"News", Joan announced.

"Oh, yes." Stolidly, he waited until it was over. "I don't think I locked the front door", he said, releasing her hand.

"You are restless! Leave it until we go to bed."

"I'll forget." He went out and opened the door and looked across the street. The house opposite was in darkness, as was not unusual, but visible in the light of the street lamp was the cat in its place at the window. Askew closed and locked the door. "That cat", he said to Joan. "It's in the window every time I look out."

"Not first thing in the morning."

"What time?"

"Early. When the milkman's in the street."

"Breakfast, I suppose."

Joan retrieved his hand. "Seen anything of her?" She felt his hand stiffen, but kept her own steady, and didn't comment.

"Who?"

Joan smiled. "Mrs Bowd, of course."

"No."

"Not been back in the shop?"

Askew shook his head. "It's odd, though. Her cat's still in the pink of condition."

"She's got fed up with you! Changed her butcher!"

Askew shrugged. "I'll tackle the roses at the weekend", he said. "Let's go to bed. It's been a long day." And, for the rest of the week, he tried not to think too much, or too often, about Mrs Bowd. He'd considered and reconsidered the few facts he'd gathered, and decided to wait; to see what, if anything, happened. But, all the time he was in the shop, he kept half an eye on the road—just in case Mrs Bowd should pass and so put his mind at rest—and cut his finger because he hadn't been paying attention to his work. It was while licking the cut that he recalled how Mrs Bawd had licked the ends of her blood-stained fingers. "Silly old fool", he muttered, concentrating on carving a side of beef. "I could have cut my own finger off worrying about her!" By the weekend, it was getting on for two weeks since he'd last seen Mrs Bowd, but the cat remained in conspicuous residence, and everything, Askew concluded, was in order, and yet he remained perturbed.

"Roses", Joan called from the kitchen.

"This afternoon", he answered, finishing breakfast. "After work."

"They should have been pruned in the autumn."

"Won't hurt", he said. "Where's my overcoat?"

"Where you left it!"

As he left, the cat was watching from the window. It was only its vast size, and idleness, he supposed, that prevented it from ambling across to scratch up his daffodils. He'd just like to catch it—once! There was still no sign of Mrs Bowd, and she didn't come near the shop, although he couldn't be sure that she hadn't slipped past when he'd been busy. Saturday mornings were always frantic. All the same, he felt sure that Mrs Bowd hadn't been out.

The sunny, spring afternoon was an invitation to work in the garden. Cheerfully, he unearthed from the shed the thick, leather gloves he used when pruning the viciously thorned climbers, found the secateurs, and plodded about the small back garden, cutting down and tying back, admiring his handiwork. He tried not to think of Mrs Bowd, or of her cat, and protracted the work in the garden until Joan called him for tea. He still had another two bushes to prune. "And I've still got to see to my knives", he said. He brought them home, wrapped in a special wallet, once a week to sharpen.
"They'll keep!"

Drinking his second cup of tea, he asked, "The milkman must see Mrs Bowd to get paid?"

Joan patiently shook her head. "No, he doesn't. He told me when she first arrived in the street that she'd arranged with the milk company to pay by cheque every month."

"Odd."

"That's why the milkman doesn't see her. She doesn't see anybody, as you know."

"Ever?"

"Never! He's told me so."

"Well", Askew exclaimed, thoughtful.

"Garden looks better."

"Needed doing."

"Finished?"

"Nearly."

"Your tea, I meant."

Askew stretched back in the chair. "Tired", he said. "No more, thanks."

"Forget it, why don't you?"

"What?"

Deliberately, Joan asked about greenfly.

And Askew, undeceived, told her he'd spray the bushes at the first opportunity.

"There's a new tin of spray in the shed", Joan said.

"Thanks."

Unaccountably, they laughed, and agreed that the roses should look wonderful in the summer, and Joan hoped, touching his shoulder, that there'd be enough to pick throughout the season for a vase in the front room. Askew promised. It was in the front room next morning, early, that Askew was forced to decide. He got up at the same time every day of the year, but on Sundays went downstairs first, leaving Joan in bed to enjoy a lie-in, while he made the tea. It was Joan's treat. And, as always, he relied upon the milkman to coincide the delivery of the milk with the making of the tea so that Joan could have the cream from the fresh milk. Askew, waiting in the front room while the water boiled in the kitchen, watched the road. He was wearing a dressing-gown over his pyjamas and didn't like to stand in full view of the street so he was standing back, and to the side, of the window where he could watch for the milkman without being seen. He heard before he saw: there was the rattle of bottles, the sound of the clanking van. He glanced, almost forgetfully, at Mrs Bowd's house. To his astonishment, the throne in the window was empty, just as Joan said it would be. The cat wasn't outside, either. "Well!" he exclaimed, and watched the window opposite and the approaching milkman. The milkman hurried from door to door, left a bottle on Askew's step, but as Askew was about to go to the door to pick it up, the milkman made straight across the street to Mrs Bowd's house, and Askew paused. The bottle was rattled onto Mrs Bowd's doorstep and the milkman continued on his round. The bottle had hardly stopped wobbling when the front door of Mrs Bowd's house was opened by a few inches. The bottle was snatched, whisked inside, and the door slammed. Askew could hear the noise thudding in his head as he tried to reconcile what he had seen with what his reason told him was impossible: the bottle had been grabbed by a paw, a big, fat, ginger paw; not a mittened hand, not a naked hand, not fingers at all. It was a paw! He'd seen the glint of the sun on the claws. Calmly, he opened his own front door, picked up the milk and went into the kitchen and made the tea. He'd not rush, or go wild, but would consider, carefully. He drank the first cup slowly. He was surprised that he wasn't surprised. He'd always expected
the worst, he supposed, and that accounted for his steadiness. Anyway, what he'd seen merely confirmed what he'd always thought about that big, fat, ginger monster.

"Good morning", he whispered, handing Joan a cup of tea in bed. "Lovely day."

Sleepily, Joan observed that he was getting dressed in his working clothes.

"You're not going to work today, you know. It's Sunday."

"Roses", Askew said. "I want to get them finished."

"You're not wasting any time!"

"I'll be in for breakfast." He put on his heavy winter boots. "Where did you put my pruning gloves?"

"Back in the shed."

"Good!"

"Two eggs be enough?"

"Wonderful!" He went downstairs, moving swiftly and quietly, out into the garden shed, and pulled on the thick, leather gloves. Then, from his wallet of knives, he selected his reliable carver.
Whyalla

Incredibly they pour
golden blood at high noon
outside the foundry its 110
red-faced earth spitting
heat like a plastic bag
snapped tight on your face

quick as a frillneck
the sun scrabbles
stops
stockstill when you look

and the sky is tougher
than fried barbed wire

and Company people expire
behind 2 feet woodframed fences
an Instant Society
(add Murray water
evaluate per standard B.H.P.)
climbs up the hill
£500/house/class/menopause

its sex as dull as
fine dust on hydrangeas
naked
sparkling in sweat
Spencer’s Gulf despairs a tide

only crows and zebra finches
relax in their feathers
the rest is preening for escape

and in the evening
above the town
a dream of water rises
from women fearing
sand on soft flesh
and the sterilising sun

Iron it is
hidden in red earth hills
mocking the weakness
of the flesh
that seeks it.
Concentration

You can see that I'm conditioned
its the old male bit again
stops me hearing what you say
when your land-lubber breasts
are bouncing on the waves
of your excited arms
and the nipples trace
exquisite reefs of terror
on the cotton of your shirt.

West Beach

In the Patawalonga sandhills
behind West Beach we were explorers
down the Murray dodging shovel-bladed spears
and throwing rocks at the flattened
kero tin and hessian shack
of the old woman in a long purple dress
broken silver pumps and black Quaker's hat
because she kept brown snakes
and red-bellied blacks
proffering delicate heads
flicking forks as we shuddered past
clay pipe yellow-white in her gums
squatting to stroke their long bodies
in her closed cracked hand.
England 1

August in Devon and the clouds
mottle like a wino’s face in muscatel
grass glows sulphate green
in the field behind our Council house

and a small flock of black-faced sheep
in a dead slow whiplash roll away
from the A379 to the South
and the airbrake squeal of a Mover’s truck
pulling in for a pint and a pork pie
at the Old Swan’s Nest

legs before eyes
skittering in knots
strung like puppets into one another’s fear
they jump in turn an imagined trap
canter to the North
stop and gaze
and graze

bob and jitter down towards us
a dribble of nerves as the Dawlish express
loud and hollow clock docks across the field
cuts the North side clean to the East and
B.P.’s holding tanks
White steel on acid green

but my son on his tricycle
leads the closing ones like pheasants
with two bits of wood he swapped next door
for Wind in the Willows and a Lego set
thin torso recoiling expertly
to each imagined blast

and I hold my breath in horror
as the shudder leaps among them
a stutter of the flesh and
Eichmann shrugging his shoulders
and the sheep looping
restless on themselves
in the middle of the field.
KENDRICK SMITHYMAN

In the Tropics

Like a planter, sinking Scotch and water
with whomever present, or in
absentia. That was their off-season
and I was out of place,
in the climate of their opinions
wearing tweed from a North Country market.
In the dark of it, who saw my shame
not to be Somerset Maugham, not to guess
what (conning apart) was devised
for me and mine, Pacific people
whose forebears differed?

Evening rains were many
snubnosed fish nibbling, poxing
the lagoon. Moored beside pontoons
highpriced yachts muttered about privilege,
their washlines crackled and flapped.
From a waterside gallery tides were signed
away, counterstamped by islands.
I bought assurance.

The hotel band's pianist went home.
Three guitars stayed, led by
a stylized broken-faced islander.
A waiter whispered, "... unreliable,
drinks too much, sometimes doesn't ..."
His unexpected talent, talked out from
a decadent Roman mask.
He is outcome, epitome.

Composite culture got him.
The last century's insolent
ultimate reduction, rock bottom
patchy. He is inward,
like Oistrakh—you think
that I exaggerate?

Very well, I exaggerate
monody of grievance. He gave up
the vocal. The other two, backing him,
deferred, let him go away giving form
to grievance for his islands' sake,
his lagoon's sake. Dispossessed, now and again
the Pacific finds out sounds
that sound like art. Like, someone
with a guitar working over
Mack the Knife.
White-Breasted Whistler

*(For students of Wyndham School, W.A.)*

Reading you my poems
on shaded grass behind the school
that tropic afternoon
I did not think to ask
the name of the bird
with the sweet whistling call.

If I had done so
you would have told me
its various names
—green honeysucker,
bush canary,
white-breasted whistler.

I will never forget
your bright faces
or how its short song
in the tree above
made each poem
seem harsh and tame.
ANTIGONE KEFALA

Botanical Gardens

Past the old trees, glass butterflies
fluttered their wings along the burning
surface of the waters.
The day was still.
Look at the dragon fly, you said.
See how it still holds on. Like us.
A little longer.
Only the shell was there, transparent,
full of the marvel of its hollow wings.
The fine leaves of the bamboo swayed over the lake
in the still silence, and the wings swayed too.
And on the burnished mirror that advanced
clouds travelled.
It was growing dark.
HAL COLEBATCH

Whales and Me

Everyone, it seems, has to write
a poem about whales
or Vietnam.
But I am too late, I trust, to catch
the latter.
What then of whales?

The skeleton of one
is large in my childhood
raised on a forest of poles
in a shed outside the old museum.
It came ashore,
dead, a long time ago.

Later, on a grey day of cold
far south I saw
a Catcher coming in, one gunwale
five feet under, where a bull
whale had turned
and split her like a peapod.

Seven years passed, and then
on another grey, but milder,
rainy day
I looked up from
dusty political journals
in the Adelaide public library
and saw out the window
hanging in the air
the giant and impossible
skeletons of whales.
I went to them, passed
between the plunging beaks of bone
and found, of course,
another museum.
Upstairs vast empty rooms
(alterations) and human skulls—
skulls upon skulls, painted skulls,
psychedelic skulls (distorted,
a notice said, by binding during life),
more skulls than I
could imagine
anyone wanting.

Beneath the gaze of these
I returned
to my political journals
(The artist, it is said,
should be politically committed).

And then, last month,
I saw a film
of whales being killed, rolling
down and being buried
in simple avalanches of blood and entrails,
sharks shaking as they tunnelled
into the bodies.

They are almost extinct now
and I have never seen a live one.

All rather prosaic. (It would be
more something to think about
if they found
whales in Indo-China suddenly)

Still, there have been dolphins
round my little yacht.
Dinghy Sailing

It must be hard to sail a boat without wonder—
a pure, child-like wonder at small things:
the colours of shallows over mudbanks, the wings
of cormorants drying on spit-posts, crabs going under
rocks, or simply blue spray and a sail full of air.
And it is impossible to sail without knowing
of breaking strains, and that just so much wind
will capsize a dinghy, and that nowhere,
for all the simple beauty and all the showing
of freedom, is any smallest estuary you can blind
with non-science, or lie to. Therefore when
I see men sailing dinghies there seem to be
with them and whispering at the edge of the sea
the last shadows of much earlier men.
Weather from a Library Window

We sit:
each place in the scaffolding of books
holds a man lit and pinioned;
each, between water-line and cloud,
stares on his slot of sky.
An air-conditioned monotone prevails
inside and out, all day.

The storm-front thickens, drags across
rain. With new eyes we know
ourselves in the glass, rain flowering
through the skull, trees tangled in our hair,
white birds aground on our shoulders in the lake.

Loving us better of a long headache,
shading days to a day of new definitions,
rain is the climate of the unborn word.
Byron Bay

down the banana terrace
of Saint Helena
more rapid than an eagle

against the bitumen
I crack what psalms I know
like fingers of a child

to have come so far
at the point of forgoing
  slam into air off the road
  the cumbersome stone fences
  don't move out of my way

& like a holiday traveller
I reach the sea deflated

the Julians rock offshore
situated with firmness

I am built more fiercely
at the point of dying
down the banana terrace
of Saint Helena
the nodes of wings
press on my spine
irritable for patience
Curious, to say the least,
finding in this flat, stagnant country
the ruins of a great, three-storeyed house, a literary institute,
three churches, the "Golden Sheaf Hotel".

A general store waits at the windy corner
beside a small stone box with pointed top.
Once, undoubtedly, a soldier settlement with convicts.
Over the river, the stone bridge still stands.

A place where history almost happened.
Walters' "Flying Machine" was a day's sensation.
It is still remembered how poor Walters with his preying-mantis legs
climbed a tall haystack and, standing with arms outstretched,
embraced a multitude.

Several times his wings flapped—a strange, metallic rooster.
Little boys in sailor suits cheered wildly, farmers snorted,
the soldiers by the fence twitched nervously.

The moment came, the clouds stood still as Walters sprang—and
spinning, tumbling, flapping, shedding screws and bolts
he fell, splintering out along the ground.
He never tried again.

A different century.
Nearby, among a tangle of grass, bones and paddy melons
an old sheep displays some passing interest. And beyond,
the meagre sand-hills hold back the sea.
Ballad of a Country Boy

I grew up in a townland of sharp tongues
Where the hills and the changing light
Dipped in the neighbours' talk until
I met the weather wherever I went
With a puff of cloud at the back of my skull;
For the sake of others I kept my peace
Though I often wanted to move away
Where the cost of acquiring a speaking voice
Might conquer my own timidity,
But the saying Yes to the terrified self
That the childhood stance might be undone
Took the sea and the turn of the stranger's lips
Capsized in the stare of a different sun:
That being said, what can I add
Unless I recall the dog at home
Who, having sniffed a strange place out,
With one eye drowsed but the other wild,
Took three half-turns and sat down.
Winter Solstice

These nights are cold and still
And something in me awakes
Listening like an animal,

Waiting for those times to come
Which belong to the blowdown of rain
And the hard, pure heart of wind

When the two trees in the garden
Fill out and the cats scamper
For shelter and I go crazy

With meaning, opening the door
To the neurotic girl who
Was so difficult to handle,

Who shakes her coat and tells me
Not to worry, she won't be long
Gathering her few odd things together

And stilts about from room to room,
Leaving a scent of broken things
Helplessly on the air,

While the two trees in the garden fill again
And the house is buffeted with returning rain.
Why Workers Join Unions

Introduction

Numerous studies carried out in the United States on workers in various industries across the country clearly show that workers join Unions mainly for economic reasons, such as higher wages and better working conditions (Viteles, 1954). Job security and protection against unfair dismissal, proper compensations for industrial accidents, longer annual leave, shorter working hours and other benefits prompt many workers to join a Union. Many workers also join, because they feel that through concerted effort they are better able to withstand employers' pressures and gain more concessions from them (Walker & Guest, 1952). A socialistic political orientation makes other workers join a Union as do some ethical and religious convictions (Faunce, 1967; Kuiper, 1967; Spinrad, 1960).

Estey (1967) points out that workers join a Union because: “it is requirement for getting or keeping the job they want” (p. 79). Acquiescence and conformity are also relevant, since many workers join because others do (Faunce, 1967; Spinrad, 1960). Psychological compensation in Union membership are mentioned frequently and Sayles and Strauss (1953) specifically argue that the Union gives its members a chance to vent their aggression.

It is often claimed that those workers join a Union who are dissatisfied with their job. This was found in the United States by Spinrad (1960), Sinha and Sarman (1962) in India and by Johnston and Gherardi (1970) in Western Australia. However, Stagner (1956) and Seidman et. al. (1960) contradict these findings, since many of their workers joined the Union on account of job satisfaction, which they mainly attributed to the efforts of their Union. Sharma (1969) in India reached similar conclusions.

Workers who are craftsmen are generally more eager to join a Union to protect their trade interests than are unskilled workers (Spinrad, 1960; Sharma, 1969). Apparently industries with a stable work force have generally greater Union membership than those with a fluctuating population, the building industry being an exception. Workers with a rural background are less inclined to join a Union than are those brought up in urban areas (Sayles and Strauss 1953). Differences in sex also influence Union membership, with males joining far more often than females (Johnston and Gherardi, 1970; Portus, 1971; Tannenbaum and Kahn, 1958).

Marital status is also related to Union membership, showing that married men are more likely to join a Union than are single men, the former treating a Union as a protection for their families. The workers' level of education is also associated
with Union membership with better educated workers joining more often than those with a lower level of education (Spinrad, 1960; Seidman, et. al. 1950).

The Present Study

The aim of the present investigation is to discover reasons which made workers in the building industry in the metropolitan area of Perth, Western Australia, become members of the Union. For this purpose a random sample of 190 members was selected from the Building Workers' Industrial Union of Australia, the W.A. Carpenters' and Joiners' Bricklayers' Union from a population of 4,761 members, choosing every 25th person. Up-to-date lists of names and addresses were supplied by the Union secretary. Data were collected by means of personal interviews carried out by five trained interviewers, all University graduates and all in the work force proper. A structured interview schedule was used and the interviews were carried out privately in the homes of workers in the evenings or at weekends. Each interview lasted between an hour and a half and two hours, and data gathered formed the basis of major research project now in progress entitled “Union Workers and Employers”. In all there were three questions relating to Union membership, asking first: “Why did you become a member?” then inquiring if the interviewee would relinquish his Union membership if this were at all possible and showing reasons for such an eventuality. Finally a list was presented to each respondent, giving reasons why other people join Unions and asking him to select those reasons which apply to him personally. The list contained a number of reasons extracted from research in the field.

Detailed information on the sample can be found elsewhere (see Johnston, “Some Characteristics of Workers in the Building Industry—Perth, Western Australia”, Journal of Industrial Relations, 1973, 15, 105-107) and for the sake of brevity all that can be said here is that immigrants formed 59 per cent of the sample and Australian born workers the rest. Nearly 60 per cent of all the immigrants came from the United Kingdom, 10 per cent from Italy, Yugoslavs and Dutchmen made up 4 per cent each, the rest being distributed between Spaniards, Germans, Americans and immigrants from Macedonia, Malta, Poland, South Africa, Hungary, Austria, Latvia and the Ukraine.

The age distribution of all the subjects is presented in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Australians</th>
<th>Immigrants</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 20</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-30</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51 and over</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reasons Why the Workers Joined the Union

Nearly half of the Australian workers and a slightly smaller proportion of the immigrants joined the Union because membership is compulsory under the operating “preference clause”, which allows only those workers to get a job in the industry and keep it, if they are members of the Union. Statements to this effect were given quite frequently: “You can’t start working unless you joined and paid your dues” and “You will lose your job otherwise”.
Next in order of frequency was acquiescence and conformity: workers joined because others do, as expressed in the following manner: "I go along with the crowd" or "I just follow the sheep" or "The boys said you have got to be in it, and I didn't want to buck the system". Workers also seem to form a habit of staying in the Union, if they had joined at an earlier age. This applies in particular to Australian workers who were made to join the Union as apprentices and kept on with their membership as a matter of course. One worker commented: "Sort of forced to join when apprenticed and kept on since then" and another added: "I was bulldozed into it as a second and third year apprentice by the Union representative." Reasons so far elicited were not significantly related to age, educational background, marital status or ethnic background. There were only six Australian workers and six immigrant workers who were dissatisfied with their job. They do not differ in their answers from those satisfied with their job.

Habit of a different form is typical of some immigrant workers. British immigrants with their long tradition of Unionism readily join a Union in Australia to continue that tradition. Of 67 British immigrants, 52 were members of a Union before emigrating to Australia. One worker from Scotland remarks: "It is the done thing to join a Union in the home country, one just follows this up in Australia. It is the right thing to do." Not only tradition but a deep belief in Unionism is also characteristic of these immigrants, who insist that Unions are an integral part of the working man's life and he should participate in it, because of the valuable work the Union performs. One man from England states: "It is a man's duty to be a member. You receive the benefits—the Union fights and achieves for you, so why shouldn't you show appreciation?"

A similar belief in Unionism is displayed by immigrants from other countries, e.g. Poland, the Ukraine, Italy and Hungary, but these immigrants have cultivated this attitude while living in Australia and assimilating ways of living typical of other Australian workers. The immigrants in question are generally older men with a long stay in Australia, often exceeding 20 years or so, and with practically no experience of Union membership in the countries of their origin. They, like the Australian workers of a comparable age, want "a strong Union" and believe that "the Union looks after you and is there for the protection of the workers in Australia". Incidentally older Australian workers must have inculcated these ideas in the immigrants, since both groups expressed almost identical opinions on Unions.

Australians on the whole are more vocal in delineating the specific merits of Unionism and underlined such factors as the Union's role in defending workers against the victimization by employers, in securing adequate wages and improving other conditions of work. The Union was also considered a help "when you are in trouble" or "when there is strife". At the personal level the following verbatim answers seem relevant: "One should be in the Union for one's own protection, otherwise you would be kicked around by the bosses too much" or "The Union makes sure you get the correct wages and not more or less, as the boss would pay", and "I felt I was expected to join and I felt I had to have someone to fight for my rights". Answers of this kind come from respondents varying in age, length of stay in the industry, different educational background and marital status.

Two Australian workers of a more advanced age showed a more global conception of Unionism and urged others to join. They said: "The Union represents the workers, it is good value for money, it looks after the worker's interests", and "The Union looks after me and if you are not a Unionist you are a scab".

Certain specific benefits such as tool insurance or funeral benefits were mentioned only rarely by Australian or immigrant workers. The concerted effort of the Union was seldom mentioned as a reason for joining. When it did occur it generally took the following form: "I felt we could do better as a Union rather than working
separately, and this is why I am a member.” Political reasons and family background, e.g. the father having been a Unionist, contributed in joining a Union in only two cases of Australian workers.

To tap the attitude towards Unionism in a different way, the workers were asked a hypothetical question reading: “If it were at all possible would you stop being a member, if you could?”

**TABLE 2: Withdrawal of membership, if possible.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Withdrawal</th>
<th>Australians</th>
<th>Immigrants</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>78</strong></td>
<td><strong>112</strong></td>
<td><strong>190</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nearly one-third of the Australians would relinquish their Union membership if they could. Taking the age distribution of these workers (see Table 1), it emerges that for the groups of under 20, 21 to 30 and 31 to 40 half the workers want to leave the Union. Union officials in Western Australia are fully aware of the apathy and inherent contempt of the young workers towards Unionism (see Johnston, 1971), they blame them for undermining the tenuous popularity of Unionism in the community and call upon them to familiarize themselves with Union past battles and achievements, the fruits of which they now enjoy without due appreciation. As age increases, the inclination to leave the Union diminishes, shown by the fact that one-quarter of those between 41 and 50 years, want to leave, while just two workers in the over 51 age group want to do the same. Older Australian workers were found deeply committed to Unionism, as stated before, and this is reaffirmed by the negligible number wanting to withdraw Union membership.

The young workers gave a multitude of reasons for wanting to leave of which the following are the most typical: “I can’t see the good of it”, “Can’t see that it is much help, can’t see any benefit from it”, “Unions don’t do anything for us. They only come round once a year, when re-election time is on, so I’m not wrapped up in Unions much”. More explicit was another young man who said: “I would leave the Union mainly through lack of communication between the delegates and members.” High fees were responsible for the desire to leave expressed in the following manner: “Finance is the only thing, it is 30 dollars a year and that is a lot of money to dish out”, “or “They fight for higher wages but the fees go up immediately”. Nine Australian workers complained about the excessive rate of Union contributions. A tendency to withdraw membership was not related to job attitude, indicating that those who liked the job or disliked it, still wanted to leave. It was also not related to marital status or educational level.

Answers from the next age group were in many respects similar, but some of the men between 31 and 40 years of age gave additional reasons. One worker remarked: “The Union is not confined to carpenters, it covers other trades and it does not serve our particular trade properly.” Again these workers’ attitude to the job had little relationship with their attitude to the Union.

Workers between 41 years and 50 years of age also saw limited assistance given by the Union and state: “I would leave for sure, when you want help they are not there and couldn’t care less”, and “They never helped find me a job when I was out of work”. Others in the same age group were more concerned with the general working of the Union which they criticised: “Too many strikes caused by Unions,
they make too much trouble”, or “With the set-up it is not satisfactory and they are associated with politics which I don’t agree with”. One worker was more specific and added: “I have been to meetings and you don’t get a say.”

The two workers over the age of 51 wanting to leave were also unhappy about Union inefficiency and stated: “They are taking money under false pretences and never come round to see me on the job”, and “I am paying out money for no benefit”. In contrast to these answers is that of a worker in the same age group: “No, I would not leave, my roots are too deeply planted in the Union. I went into executive positions to keep the communist infiltration under control. But I also think that the members of the Union are a bit too timid.”

Of some interest is the group of Australian workers who are sub-contractors and thus being self-employed. There were five such men and three of them would withdraw from the present Union, two wanting a separate Union, catering for subcontractors, and the third thought that belonging to the present Union “was money down the drain”.

Amongst the immigrant workers there were eight self-employed men and five of them would withdraw their membership mostly for the purpose of forming a Union of their own. In general terms the proportion of immigrants who wanted to leave the Union was almost the same as the Australians, but there was a shift in age. More than half of the immigrants who wanted to leave were between 41 and 50 years of age instead of the younger workers in the Australian case. The reluctance of younger immigrants to leave may be explained on the grounds that they have had limited opportunity to acquire sufficient knowledge about Unionism in Australia, owing to their age and a shorter stay in the country. They join the Union because it is compulsory and leave it at that. The older workers with a longer stay in Australia and wider experience in Union functioning become more disillusioned and more critical. They, like their Australian counterparts, accuse the Union of inefficiency and the lack of assistance to members at the personal level. Such opinions were voiced by immigrants from Italy, Spain and Britain. One Englishman remarked: “It is like an Al Capone business, I can’t see any benefit from it.”

In addition to such complaints new ones were also made, criticising the Union for allowing unqualified workers to join its ranks. Two immigrants from Ireland saw this as their main reason for wanting to leave the Union. Resentment against compulsion was expressed in only two cases of a Spaniard and a Briton, both of whom wanted “a freedom to belong or not to belong”. One immigrant from Holland disapproved of the Unions’ affiliation with the Labor Party in Australia and was wanting to leave the Union because “I think it is stupid having to support a political party if you don’t agree with it”.

Of the immigrants over 51 years of age only two would be willing to leave the Union, one of whom sees no further necessity for it since he has now joined “the staff” of the firm which engages him. The other immigrant saw little benefit in belonging. The meagre number of older immigrants wanting to relinquish their membership, is again a clear indication of their pro-Union orientation, which was already highlighted and quoted with the same beliefs held by Australian workers of the same age.

Only one-fifth of the immigrants of 40 years of age and under would leave the Union, and expressed their displeasure in the same way as the Australians of the same age group: “It costs money and you don’t get anything for it.” Others accused the Union of “meddling in politics”. Quite a few of all immigrants also thought that the fees were too high relative to services rendered, but only three of the immigrants opposed the compulsive aspect of Unionism. Coming as they do from various European countries with quite different experiences of Unionism, one
would expect them to be more frequently concerned about the freedom to join or not to join.

Summary and Conclusions

In order to find out the reason prompting Australian workers to join a Union, a random sample of Union workers in the building industry in the metropolitan area of Perth, Western Australia, was interviewed, using a structured interview schedule. Immigrants form 59 per cent of the sample and most of them come from the United Kingdom, the rest representing various other European countries. The most frequent reason for joining the building Union given by both Australian and immigrant workers was the obligation to join. Next in frequency was social conformity, making workers join because others do. Habit of continuing with membership acquired initially, while being apprenticed to the trade, was third in ranking order of frequency for the Australian workers. The deeply ingrained tradition of Unionism in the British immigrants makes them join Unions once they arrive in Australia. Their firm belief in the purpose and ideology of Unionism strengthens their conviction for joining. Other immigrants, particularly those who lived in Australia for a long time, and are advanced in age, also show a firm belief in Unionism. It is suggested that these immigrants have learned this philosophy during their stay in Australia from older Australian workers, who also show the same attitude.

Australians regardless of age delineated a number of merits in Union activity, both at the personal level and for workers generally, and these factors intermittently made them join the Union. Political reasons or family background seemed to have played a limited part in prompting Australian workers to join the Union.

The results of the study on the workers in the metropolitan area of Perth, Western Australia, show that reasons elicited for joining a Union complement those found by other researchers in the field. The merits of the present study, however, lie in the fact that some of the reasons are more pronounced than others, a finding which is absent in previous studies, treating all reasons with equal weight. Of importance in the present study are also the similarities and differences encountered for the Australian workers on the one hand and the immigrant workers on the other. From the point of view of assimilation it is relevant to note the influences that the indigenous working population exercises on attitudes to Unionism on immigrants of different ethnic backgrounds and age groups. In the same sense, the preponderance of British immigrants in the studied building industry, with their deeply ingrained ideology of Unionism, may have its own peculiar effects on the Australian workers and on immigrants from other countries lacking such a tradition.

To explore deeper the attitudes of the workers towards their Union, they were asked if they would withdraw their Union membership, if it were at all possible. Such an approach to Unionism was not used previously. Nearly one-third of Australians and the same proportion of immigrants would do so. The reasons given were Union inefficiency, high fees to be paid and meagre benefits received. The younger Australian workers are far more eager to leave the Union than the older ones, the latter seeing great advantages in Unionism. With the immigrants the pattern is slightly different regarding age. The younger immigrants with limited experience of the functioning of the Union, join and stay in the Union, until they learn more about it, and then they want to leave it for reasons similar to those given by the Australian workers. In addition, some immigrant workers wanted to leave because the Union allows unskilled workers to join its ranks, and only three of them would stop being members on account of compulsion to join, although many more initially joined for that reason.
REFERENCES


Discussion

The kitchen curtain slowly
lifts, billowing
so slowly,
as we discuss again our
'situation'
carefully
choosing words to say as little
as possible
not noticing
the altered weather until
a door slams shut.

Agreement

'Well, then', she says, 'we do agree? . . .'

And I remember, of a remote
and cliché-ridden honeymoon
locked in an out-of-season seaside
town: the wind, the interminable wind
('It'll ease today', our saddened landlord
each day said.), and those long wind-blown
afternoons spent wandering the shore
looking for something to look for.

Separation

Today we decide to tell the children.

We find them watching two toy-like
spacemen cumbersomely perform a task
on TV's version of the moon.

They absorb the news, are quiet, watchful.

Surrounded by their costly litter,
the astronauts salute their flag
standing stiffly in the lack of air.
D. S. LONG

we have harvested too much
this year
already the birds
watch us eat
through the thin glass

narrow furniture
should be kept
for silent guests

to get to sleep
place a knife between the sheets
sleep quietly
  a house helps
  try four walls
  a basement and ceiling
ask for blood
in the morning
call all the scars dreams
  above all
  avoid getting up on the wrong side
  conversely
it is just as important
to get down
on the side nearest the world
a sky deepening over our house
the black closet of the stars
& winter informing us
fireplace and hot soup
the collection of pine cones
and a hand cut on ice

at this time
stones are our best poems
moist songs
scraping the leaves of autumn

& later the songs of summer
frozen on the grass
voices breaking while I walk
a warm heavy ship
waiting for spring
Song for Dracula Retd.

The sages you scared throw away their rosary,
You're a tired vampire willing to recuperate.
At parties you find girls whose behind turns
Owl, winks, takes off in the general direction
Of Brigadoon.
In the bathroom you imagine a sexy sinew
Your mouth in the mirror is a common view,
You chuckle at the fact your canines are missing,
Truth of the matter is, you've run out of wing.
As you bid goodbye to the host at the door
You wish he were Karlof in a disguise you adore,
You walk all the way to the citizens' subway
Sleep all night grown accustomed to light.
19172—Incident on Firth Street

The witch, all little stars
drum-beating with her heart,
sneered down from the top-hatted chimney
where the constabulary, stork-perched & incoherently irate,
were trying to make her vacate: "Yes,
Guardians of the Law,
you say your lives are clean...
clean perhaps as a new-mint new penny,
British government debased forgery
all tarterd up to dull the thoughts of simpletons...

but you are not as clean as silver mined
out of the armour jewel-crust on Lucifer—

you could not be as clean as the vast airless moon
was tillthespacemen came...

i know, for i have been,
my wings have brushed the cobwebs from the
corners of the sky

& even in your cells, whose slippery steps are not yet
cured, I hear,
I could if anger summon such parades of toads with ruby eyes,
great cats incensed with heat,
or incense—covered sword-horned cavalcades,
that you would wish you were just citizens,
not those who, being Law, think you've put yourselves
beyond the Law,
and by this boast have entered all unwittingly
the realm where rules MY master,
Chaos' first-born son."
Days, like snails, have crawled across the acres of dishevelled grass that are my garden. Like snails. And each has left a track as though to show beyond a doubt that it has passed.

Grass? Did I say 'grass'? No, not acres of dishevelled grass, for grass is green and green is hope.

Days, like snails, have crawled across the sandy windswept shores that line my life. Like snails they wanted water, and sensed the presence of the sea—receding.

Night fell, and there they lay and gasped, all caked in grit, all dry, all desperate, and days, like snails, are empty shells that litter the lonely shore.
Myth Criticism as Discipline

It seems strangely forgotten nowadays that a myth is a work of imagination and therefore a work of art.


The modern critical interest in myth derives partly from the anthropologists and psychologists (Frazer, Freud and Jung), and partly from the philosophy of Cassirer, continued for English-speaking countries by Suzanne Langer.

As a term myth is not easy to fix, having become a favourite and loosely used term of modern criticism and pointing to or hovering over an important area of meaning, shared by religion, folklore, anthropology, sociology, psychoanalysis, and the fine arts. It is now taken for granted as component of literature, providing some plots and much ornamental imagery. In some of its habitual oppositions, it is contraposed to 'history', or 'science', or to 'philosophy', or to 'allegory' or to 'truth'.

Myth appears in Aristotle's *Poetics* as the word for plot, narrative structure, or fable, its opposite being logos. 'Myth' is narrative, or story, as against dialectical discourse or exposition. It may also be seen as the irrational or intuitive as against the systematically philosophical, it is the tragedy of Aeschylus against the dialectic of Socrates. An interest in myth and poetry is as old as Plato's *Phaedrus*; his myths are mostly allegories, frankly invented, with an $X = Y$ relationship. For example, in the "Myth of the Cave" (*Republic*, Book VII), the cave stands for the world of appearances, or the sun for the Idea of the Good. Yet the mainstream of purely literary criticism, derived from Aristotle, is largely neglectful of myth. Aristotle seems to have forgotten the mythic origins of Greek tragedy, and explains the recurrence of the great mythological stories by the fact that it is only in a few families that such terrible deeds and sufferings have occurred (*Poetics*, 13). As Graham Hough suggests, from this comes the habit of taking the mythical element in literature for granted.

Myths in the sense of primitive and anonymous legends about gods, heroes, external nature, etc., have often been regarded by modern men as mere fantasies and legends, expounding the deeds of supermortal creatures or as primitive explanations of natural phenomena, inferior to the explanations supplied by reason and experiment. Here there was adequate material for the construction of imaginative stories—the personification of sun and moon; the rites concerned with the solstices—events analogous to the pattern with which man was familiar but expressed in a form designed to explain how the world came to be the kind of place it actually was. It soon became clear that no story was as meaningful as the one which was expressed in the terms of real people. For as men listened to the recital of the myths and legends of their race they gained a sense of harmony with and place in the universe as it affected them. The elements became less hostile and there was a
promise that existence would continue and that they and theirs would also triumph over hostile environments.

Above all myth stood for a story which represented some aspect of the life of Nature in symbolic form. The chief stages were recognised as: Creation, Struggle, Establishment of Harmony, Death and Re-creation, the cycle occurring again and again, as it did in the animal realm and with man himself. The rites and stories connected with them mostly represented the death or departure and the renewal, resurrection or return of some person or persons, on whose life and vigour the growth and fertility of crops, trees, and other vegetation are believed to depend. The tales of Adonis and of Persephone suffice to show the kind of myth which accompanies such rites.

Myth continues in the Neoplatonists, reappears in the mythographers of the Renaissance, to acquire new force with Herder and the German Romantics. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Age of Enlightenment, the term had commonly a pejorative connotation: a myth was a fiction—scientifically or historically untrue. But already in the *Scienza Nuova* of Vico, the emphasis had shifted to what, since the German romanticists, Coleridge, Emerson, and Nietzsche, has become gradually dominant—the conception of "myth" as, like poetry, a kind of truth or equivalent of truth, not a competitor to historic or scientific truth but a supplement.

The proposition that the prophecies and miracles set forth in the Scriptures are the fiction of poets, and the mysteries of the Christian faith are the result of philosophical investigations and Jesus Christ is Himself a myth, both began to gain their followings. Since men cannot, however, live by abstractions alone, they have to fill their voids by crude, extemporized, fragmentary myths—pictures of what might or ought to be.

* * * * *

A general definition of myth is given by Mark Schorer (in his *William Blake*) as:

>a large controlling image that gives philosophic meaning to the facts of ordinary life . . . All real convictions involve mythology . . . Wars may be described as the clash of mythologies.

A myth, in the broadest usage, is any idea, true or false, to which people subscribe. Because the myths that were sacred truths for pagans were falsehoods for Christians, "myth" sometimes means any imaginary person, place or thing, or idea, such as the myth that the majority is necessarily right, the myth of democracy, or that of totalitarianism. Myth, too, can be used to refer to any fictional world, even a highly detailed one that is alleged to be historical. Thus, one can talk of the "myth of England" in Shakespeare's history plays—where English history is seen through the eyes of a playwright.

The Cassirer view posits that myth is pre-linguistic, or at least an independent symbolic system, developing in parallel with the growth of language itself. For myth is not bound to language, since it may be painted, acted or danced and critics try to help aspiring artists\(^1\) in many media in their search for a myth. Yet this is not of much use to the literary critic since he cannot concern himself with myth until it has been expressed in language. Excluding as far as possible, its epistemological, anthropological and psychological basis, it is our function to survey the literary importance of this way of thought.

Carl G. Jung, the Swiss psychologist, in *Contributions to Analytical Psychology*, postulates the existence of a "collective unconscious" in men's minds, an inheritance

\(^1\) Art, says Cassirer, requires a step back into mythical thinking; perhaps this has always been so since mythical thinking became obsolete but never has the step back been more consciously taken than in our times.
in the brain consisting of “countless typical experiences (such as birth, escape from danger, selection of a mate) of our ancestors”. These experiences, such as perception of the perpetual rising and setting of the sun, manifest themselves in dreams, myths, and literature. In The Ancient Mariner, for example, Coleridge treats the traditional (or archetypal) theme of death and rebirth. According to the theory as both writer and reader share unconscious memories, the tale an author tells, deriving from the “collective unconscious”, may strangely move the reader, stirring his own collective unconscious. As Maud Bodkin, in Archetypal Patterns in Poetry, puts it, there is something within us that “leaps in response to the effective presentation in poetry of an ancient theme”. Eric Fromm argued (in The Forgotten Language), that myths and dreams were “a language in which inner experiences, feelings and thoughts are expressed as if they were sensory experiences, events in the outer world”. That all dignify myth as a “language” which, properly understood, will tell us things otherwise unrevealed.

Perhaps the literary critics most interested in myth are those who assume the existence of archetypes—unconscious memories of the repeated experience of the race, such as birth, mating, death. They hold that a myth (like some dreams—for example, those of the Old Icelandic sagas) is not a mere fanciful creation but the expression of an archetype, revealing hidden attitudes and experiences.

* * *

There are many forms of narrative often loosely styled as “myth”. Some stories are simply märchen, fairy stories, told solely for the interest of the tale. Others have literary value alone and their gods, like those of The Iliad can scarcely be seen as great incarnations of inner and outer forces, often being given insignificant human motives. Legends are euhemeristic and often told largely as good tales for poets’ reference. With dramatic imagination and supple narrative they live as literature but not as myth. Others are allegories, where within narrative abstractions are made concrete, for the purpose of effectively communicating a moral, and as the ideas and characters interest us we absorb the moral they embody.

Just as on the one side myth could shade away into plain narrative, so on the other it could slip into allegory, a form in almost complete eclipse since the sixteenth century. Perhaps this loss of habit of mind is as well, since we have bypassed this uneasy balance of sermon and story and avoided a literary form which was the less effective according as it was better allegory. In the hands of any writer of imagination, like Langland or Bunyan, the allegory bursts at the seams, avoiding the careful parallels and concentrating on the concrete and dramatic and so approaching myth, as in Piers as the type of Christ.

The whole series—image, metaphor, symbol, myth—we may charge older literary study with treating externally and superficially. Viewed for the most part as decorations or rhetorical ornaments, they were therefore studied as detachable parts of the works in which they appear and so hastened their own demise. Modern views, on the other hand, see the meaning and function of literature as centrally present in metaphor and myth. They see mythic thinking as a thinking by means of poetic narrative or vision. The result is that old literary distinctions, as between “form” and “matter”, or between texture and meaning, now blur, as we move towards both poetry and religion.

For many writers, myth is the common denominator between poetry and religion. There exists a modern view, of course (represented by Matthew Arnold and the early I. A. Richards), that poetry will more and more take the place of the supernatural religion in which modern intellectuals can no longer believe. But religion is the greater mystery and religious myth is the large-scale authorisation of poetic metaphor. And thus Philip Wheelwright, protesting that by positivists “reli-
igious truth and poetic truth are dismissed as fictions”, asserts that the “needed perspective is... a mytho-religious one”.

The awakened modern use of the symbols is to be found in the poems of Charles Williams where it is iconographic and not so readily able to convince imaginatively the uncommitted reader, and the clarity really comes from the overall system, rather than from the single images. This is a fault of much modern literature which has claims to be considered ‘mythic’ or ‘mythopoeic’, since its critics and interpreters abstract a system from the book and then rigidly impose the system back on the book to make it work. Obvious examples of this are the Byzantium cult in Yeats, the Homeric, Shakespearean, or colour schema for Joyce's Ulysses, or the Faulkner cult of bear-hunting associated with Ike McCaslin. While there is a scale in these failures to communicate meaningfully the whole objective correlative, and one need not accept all of Eliot's wasteland, or Melville's White Whale, the defects are most patent in those writers whose intellectual symbolic systems are the most rigid. A reader has the right to wish to explore sympathetically and yet not give himself away to a taut system.

For literary theory, the important motifs are, probably—the image or picture; the social; the supernatural (or non-naturalist or irrational); the narrative or story; the archetypal or universal; the symbolic representation as events in time or our timeless ideals; the programmatic or eschatological; the mystic. In contemporary thought, appeal to myth may centre on any one of these, with a spread to others.

The impression is often given that mythological power and literary value are usually at loggerheads, but this is not so. A myth cannot exist in thin air, as it has to live in a dramatic narrative and a narrative, in turn, can only live through words. Thus, to a large extent, if the work operates at all on the plane of myth, the greater it is as literature the more powerful and significant the myth will be. As Tolkien as myth-theorist has said: “The nearer the so-called ‘nature-myth’ or allegory of the large forces of nature is to its supposed archetype, the less interesting it is, and indeed the less is it of a myth capable of throwing any illumination on the world... When the fairy-tale ceased there would be just thunder, which no human ear had yet heard.” C. S. Lewis overstated the opposite position arguing that Keats's Nightingale, without the poet's words, was nothing.

“But in a myth—in a story where the mere pattern of events is all that matters—this is not so. Any means of communication whatever which succeeds in lodging those events in our imagination” is adequate.

Lewis, however, has a particular way of using the word 'myth' so that it can be applied critically:

Most myths were made in prehistoric times and, I suppose, not consciously made by individuals at all. But every now and then there occurs in the modern world a genius—a Kafka or a Novalis—who can make such a story. Macdonald is the greatest genius of this kind whom I know. But I do not know how to classify such genius. To call it literary genius seems unsatisfactory since it can co-exist with great inferiority in the arts of words—nay, since its connection with words at all turns out to be merely external and, in a sense, accidental. Nor can it be fitted into any of the other arts. It begins to look as if there were an art, or a gift, which criticism has largely ignored. It may even be one of the greatest arts, for it produces works which give us (at the first meeting) as much delight and (on prolonged acquaintance) as much wisdom and strength as the works of the greatest poets... It goes beyond the expression of

1 “In poetry the words are the soul. But in myth the imagined events are the body and something inexpressible is the soul.” (C. S. Lewis, 'Preface' to George Macdonald: An Anthology (1946), p. 16).

He also made the point that: “The only reason for reading a difficult poem is some assurance that it contains goodness great enough to outweigh the evil of its difficulty.” Theology, XXXIX (April 1939), p. 268.
things we have already felt. It arouses in us sensations we have never had before, never anticipated having, as though we had broken out of our normal mode of consciousness and 'possessed joys not promised to our birth'. It gets under our skin, hits us at a level deeper than our thoughts or even our passions, troubles oldest certainties till all questions are reopened, and in general shocks us more fully awake than we are for most of our lives.


Here the term 'myth' means something like 'story', and refers not to myths in the technical sense—like that of Prometheus—but to any story which awakens us as earlier myths are said to have awakened earlier people. To speak in this way is to argue from the effects rather than the causes, and it tells us something which we all know—that some works which we most admire—even if secretly, seem to defy formal literary analysis. Perhaps a solution is to say that the artistically superior version moves us more, stirring in us an increased awareness of the depths of life, of our own possibilities and limitations, and thus it reveals a hidden reality. The artistically (effectively) handled myth strikes us as meaningful, even though we cannot rationally explain its meaning, but it may be said that the poorly handled myth strikes us as meaningless and chaotic.

Lewis tries to take us beyond the word 'story', and finds two further reasons for his views in the 'novels' of Macdonald. (1), they depart from the canons of novel writing, to come nearer to fantasy; (2) 'sometimes they diverge into prolonged preachments ... which ... are welcome because ... the author is a supreme preacher'. Where Lewis stops, and that is really at the names of the works whose stories or myths he finds best, a certain intellectual responsibility begins, and that is in the opening up of a world needing challengers and explorers, to make fine distinctions in the world of 'story' and sensuous apprehension. Perhaps he did this best in his commentary on the Arthurian poems of Charles Williams, which allows us to begin to see what literary criticism can do to justify its existence, in the face of stubborn imaginations. It is to Lewis's credit that he drew such attention to the problems of narrative which are in need of considerable literary and aesthetic exploration, and one would give much for transcripts of his circle, the Oxford Inklings' debates, on these matters. Finally, as a corollary to Lewis's doctrine of imaginative apprehension, comes the idea that it is possible to have a great work that is not, in the usual sense, even decently written. This idea is at least a part of the reason for the present literary phenomenon commonly called myth criticism.

This branch of criticism has endeavoured to move away from the particular pages of a work and to illuminate it by means of analogues from other literature, legends or myths—from other languages and very different and often much more primitive stages of social evolution. Thus both Christie Mahon and Lord Jim may be seen as the figure of the miles gloriosus rather than as characters in their own right. But analogues are only analogues, and myth criticism, at least as it seems to have evolved, is not really criticism at all because it has no means to evaluate a particular work.

Primary mythologizing occurs in the beginnings of civilizations, as the awkward explanation-stories of people who can do no better—and these are the great root and reservoir of myth. But Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound* or Sophocles' *Philoctetes* have the deeply-symbolic power of myths, here simplified and concentrated into single situations.

A myth of the secondary type contains something symbolic which should not be either obvious or deliberate, and the significance must be 'deep in the image', if imagination and intellect are really to coalesce and there must be real and rich imaginative power in the presentation—as in *Beowulf*, *The Battle of Maldon*, or *The Winter's Tale*. It is this strength in the myth which may be termed archetypal, as it goes beyond the level of articulate thought.

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Since such a myth is in its nature a narrative, it creates a pattern of events. Once the spiritual searchings of a people have become crystallized into such a pattern, recognised by those to whom it is important, it can be found satisfyingly echoed throughout the world in great or small details. As man is the centre, so the myth-maker tells the story of man, whether Beowulf, Heathcliff or Captain Ahab, Taliessin, Ransom or Frodo. And those that accept the myth will accept also a pattern of history and space, in such a way that myth can be seen to be a kind of implicit, imaginative philosophy.

Literary and secondary myth really occurs where the two aspects, the object and its 'significatio' are completely one. Yet within this type it is possible to distinguish myths like *Paradise Lost* and *The Lord of the Rings*, where a fairly conscious pattern was in the author's mind as he organised and invented the story, and those like *Wuthering Heights* or *King Lear*, where the sheer power of the authors' imaginative realisation of specific people and incidents raise the stories up to the level the others started from and beyond. In this sense, most deeply-imaginative writing reaches up into what may be called this secondary myth. The kind and quality of the transformative imagination shown in these latter works is less frequent in the former type which is most the product of the inventive imagination. Some stories like *Moby Dick* might seem to belong to both categories.

In the case of these invented worlds there is no saying what the myth 'means', the very point of a work like *Moby Dick* being that it cannot be expressed in other terms. Like *Wuthering Heights*, it has an almost religious quality, similar to those of great ritual dramas, deeply important experiences that one reads and lives through again and again, to reach a kind of catharsis, so that the world rises purged and refreshed from evil, or to a calm of perfect harmony after a long night of storm.

Myths often evolve deep emotional response and arouse belief, and any similar tale made up by an author (such as those in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*) to entertain an unbelieving audience is similarly a myth. The continuance of artistic vitality in such stories is remarkable, particularly if they have a long cultural history. Thus the classical myths of Greece and Rome have had many renaissances in Western Europe in recent centuries. The perennial fascination of Greek mythology and a recurring reliance on its great imaginative situations can be demonstrated from the creative imaginations of moderns as varied as Anouilh, Banville, Camus, Cocteau, T. S. Eliot, André Gide, Golding, Lessing, Malraux, O'Neill, Valéry and Weil.

As with all rigid structures, there was for myth the very real danger that the systems would close and so cease to be accepted as binding by the whole society once social change took place. Gradually new generations derived less benefit from the code accepted earlier and pressures caused the framework to collapse at the point where reassurance was most needed.

"But if a myth ever becomes crystallized into a final form . . . then its usefulness as a connecting link with other periods of time tends immediately to disappear. As myth which demands to be accepted in all its details—whether it be a Homeric myth or a Biblical myth or a modern scientific myth—thereby abandons the method of analogy . . . (and) can no longer be regarded as a living creative symbol."*

It is hard to see how a study of myths is useful in evaluating literature, for good and bad literary works have been written on the same myth. There is considerable variation between the classical, medieval and modern French and cinema versions of the Orpheus story, and not a great deal of meaningful illumination is cast by comparisons across genres, forms and centuries. There are numerous dramas on the myth of Oedipus, but surely some are better than others.

Myth is in itself a kind of religious experience, the expression of a deep apprehension of the world by the whole of man's mind, imagination of will. And its reappearance may be a healthy sign, the way back to Eliot's "unification of sensibility", the coalescence of imagination and intellect, lacking since the seventeenth century. The denial by science and transcendentalism of the traditional symbols leaves very little indeed in place of the Christian mythology to satisfy the imagination. In terms of the Fall, the Crucifixion and the Last Judgement all time had been made into a significant pattern within which men could feel that their lives had a meaning, even as Christian thought had also organised space, into a series of ever purer spheres with the earth satisfyingly in the centre.

In such a position it would not be surprising if men were to start building private mythologies and symbolisms to give meaning to their experiences. As the traditional religion collapsed, the poet perceived his responsibility to make a world of true symbols, to make a system, as Yeats puts it, "to shelter behind".

One can make serious and almost diametrically opposite mistakes about 'invented worlds'. The first is to forget that all literary worlds are invented and that there have been many which have been wild indeed, for all their setting in a space and history ostensibly ours. What Leavis called the Great Tradition of the novel belonged largely in the nineteenth century, and this century has chiefly been one of experiment among the greater prose writers. The other error is to automatically prefer any invented world to one from George Eliot, or Arnold Bennett, admiring any such world just because it is invented and by calling this imaginative creation. The invention of a new world is only warranted artistically by the dimension of story, by the constant communication of urgency, of Chesterton's 'divine discontent' of the shock of clash between dead and live metaphor, of the nature and the quality of the life lived, of the large moral idea which may lie at the heart of the person or joint quest. The successfully invented new world which is presented with imagination bestows heroic quality on the central figure who battles for an age, for a community, even as did the ideal heroes of the Dark Ages. The last quality distilled from such works is that of the vision which makes the writing majestic and vibrant and justifies a technique which can in parts be merely large and expansive.

In the eighteenth century poets—apart from Gray and Blake—had little use for mythologies, but they were yearned for in the nineteenth century. The emphasis was on pagan and heroic legend—Hyperion, Prometheus, Baldur, Sohrab, Ulysses, Orion, Childe Roland, Sigurd the Völsung—as a generation began to suspect that it had been deserted by a God hitherto protective and all-powerful. From the need to be reassured, even by man himself, there came about no mere search for legendary material, but the discovery and creation of a specifically heroic body of myth. Of all the strands available, Biblical, Graeco-Roman, and Germanic, it was the last with its fatalism which gave perhaps the only answer to a universe that had become suddenly at the best indifferent, at the worst an enemy to be defied to the point of death. Browning's *Childe Roland* gives the heroic (and tragic) philosophy of defiance almost complete in an aesthetic code of behaviour entirely independent of any moral scheme. Roland makes the choice of failure, finding no other hope, and yet, even if it was the only course, because it was taken by free will, it seems victorious. As a poem it is a new myth of man and his place in history. Yet it is also

1 As C. S. Lewis observed of George MacDonald's mythopoeic mind, "the quality which had enchanted me in his imaginative works turned out to be the quality of the real universe, the divine, magical, terrifying and ecstatic reality in which we all live". (Preface, p. 21.)
2 Myth is a form of poetry which transcends poetry in that it proclaims a truth, a form of reasoning that transcends reasoning in that it wants to bring about the truth it proclaims. (H. and H. A. Frankfort, in *Before Philosophy.*)
a narrative and we are shown Roland fighting evil and crossing the plain, the “unredeemed landscape”.¹

In a comparable vein, in the twentieth century there were the poets of “The Apocalypse”, in Yeats and Eliot, Kafka and Rilke, Rimbaud and Hemingway and Charles Williams and Edith Sitwell, bringing myths and mythologies into their own as never before in sophisticated literature. Thus when in 1946 John Lehmann called for poets to create new symbols and myths, to give new lamps for old, “even if those symbols should lead us back to a rediscovery of the central meaning of Christianity”, his clarion cry had already been heard by many.

Today one cannot automatically create a myth and be assured of its acceptance, since the book has not the status of oral literature, and the cosmopolitan city has not the homogeneous society of the tribe or even the city state. Nor must the myths of one age be regarded as completely regulating the thought-forms of another age. Yet modern tales, like the anonymous and traditional ones, can often arouse deep emotional response and invoke belief. Since in the modern literary scene there is a dearth of usable traditions, a story which defines a large section of contemporary existence is likely to materially assist the establishment of conventions in the best of our literature. The patterns taken by contemporary myths are clear, as C. J. Wilson was heralded a new anti-humanist era which will restore the concept of Original Sin, while Philip Toynbee has attacked J. R. R. Tolkien for the accretion of myth around Christianity. To rationalist scientists and philosophers myth can seem little more than a primitive hindrance to reason, yet this is unjust. As Eliot said of Joyce’s myth, out of one small seed grew the instrument ‘for controlling ... ordering ... giving a shape and significance to the immense paradox of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history’. To speak of the need for myth, in the case of the imaginative writer, is a sign of his felt need for communion with his society, for a recognised status as an artist functioning within a social order.

In the late nineteenth century myth-criticism became a discipline, and by a series of bounds it has ensconced itself amidst the critical dicta as one pole of literary creation, the other being experience, reality or our sense of how things happen. After Fraser, Freud and Jung, Raglan and Bodkin, and now Frye who with ‘fearful symmetry’ follows the comparatavists and would offer us ‘a new scheme of classification which is an alternative to the old literary kinds’. For modern mythological critics do not so much regard myth as a contributary stream of literature, but as the main source from which all evolves, and we continually hear of “The Return of Myth to World Literature”.

While what Frye presents may be castigated as Wimsatt has done, calling the Anatomy “the summit of mythopoeic criticism to date” and

“some sort of maximum of hyper-Aristotelian, minutely subdivided conceptualisation, rampant pigeonholding, an earnest proliferation, a super-foetation of archetypal phantoms, of heroes, myths, modes, (and) cycles”,²

it is also part of a retreat from literature and its criticism, to imaginative metaphysics, and a manifestation of what in Meyer Abrams phrase may be indeed “the monistic compulsion of the human spirit”.

Yet Frye in his work on Blake, in his concluding chapter to Klinck’s Literary History of Canada, shows himself to be a fastidious and sensitive critic, and really aware of the critic’s business. He best defines his own position between grand schema and individual text in The Educated Imagination (1963):

¹ This dead landscape can be found in many places in the literature of the last century,—in Melville’s Encantadas, in Matthew Arnold’s “darkling plain”, in Eliot’s “Wasteland”, or in Tolkien’s landscape before Mordor.

The critic's function is to interpret every work of literature in the light of all the literature he knows, to keep constantly struggling to understand what literature as a whole is about. Literature as a whole is not an aggregate of exhibits with red and blue ribbons attached to them, like a cat-show, but the range of articulate human imagination as it extends from the height of imaginative heaven to the depth of imaginative hell. Literature is a human apocalypse, man's revelation to man, and criticism is not a body of adjudications, but the awareness of that revelation, the last judgement of mankind.” (op. cit., p. 44.)

Perhaps the fairest estimate of Frye is as a “poet-theorist”, whose achievement claims our attention more for its beauty than its truth, and which requires from us something like a willing suspension of disbelief.

It has been argued that modern man lacks myth, or a mythology, a system of interconnected myths. Other writers think of modern man as having shallow, inadequate, or perhaps even “false” myths, such as the myth of “progress”, or of “equality”, or of universal education, or of the hygienic and stylish well-being to which the advertisements invite. The common denominator between the two conceptions seems to be the judgement (true, probably) that when old, long-felt, self-coherent ways of life (rituals with their accompanying myths) are disrupted by “modernism”, most men (or all) are impoverished.

The consolatory myths and disciplines evolved by sociologists and critics are part of the intellectual retreat from reality, a longing for a “celestial spell” to help them to see life clear and integrated, to find the beauty of Malraux’s “recurring forms”. Myth critics, like existentialists, have a keen longing for the perdurable formulas and archetypes, for life’s possibilities and, like Wallace Stevens, wonder at “the mystery of art, as indeed of religion ... the revelation of something wholly other by which the inexhaustible loneliness of thinking is broken and enriched”.

The persuasions of the Myth critics can be explained socially and historically, as a decreasingly open society begins to assume the appearance of an alien continent and the liberal sensibility retreats into self-obsession. As Richard Close (in The American Novel and its Tradition) phrases it:

Many readers have in recent years formed a distaste for works of literature which are radically involved with the dilemmas of our time and their place and which draw too directly on the reality and the moral contradictions of human experience.

Hence their search, for themselves and their fellow men, is for a literary philosopher's stone to turn all conflict into golden myth. The sociologists have so mythologised society in terms of bogus dwellers in the House of Intellect, the Organisation Man, the Lonely Crowd and the modern mass media folk heroes, that the means for apparent self-appraisal and self-understanding are omnipresent in the form of suggested patterns. As the intellectual craves a coherence both cosmic and personal, a sturdy humanism emerges, in whose presence a liberal identity may be shaped, and the spirit saved by definition of the personality. The identity is best defined in terms of commitment, as modern society is taught to think of itself as friendly to ideas.

About the time of T. S. Eliot's withdrawal, between For Lancelot Andrews (1926) and The Idea of a Christian Society (1939), a group of writers already withdrawn into orthodox Christianity were beginning to become known as an English alternative to holding the centre. They sought to replace the humanistic with the pious, the broad public appeal of the novel with the more private iconography of fantasy. This withdrawal from the modern literary landscape was peculiarly associated with Charles Williams, C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien and earned the accolade of achievement by Leavis's estimate of their myths as being “the opposite
of spiritual health”. Auden, too, believes that the arts are primarily concerned with the praise and affirmation of personal being:

In a more or less static world, genealogy helps to define a person. But in a technological age such as ours, the modern poet tends to develop an over-personal style for fear of not being truly himself. It is too easy to become a mere member of the public.

It may be suggested that the Myth critic’s real significance has more to do with existentialist philosophy than with literary criticism and that the philosophical theory of existentialism has had a considerable influence upon myth criticism, especially in Europe since World War II. While a synthesis is wanted, the monism driving the critic is likely to derive rather from his private anxiety for coherence than from a plea for literary reclassification. Then, too, he has much in common with such polymaths as Bronowski, Riesman, Russell or Snow, who all exclude certain forms of analysis, in their desire to be comprehensive.

One of the great voids for twentieth century man is a sense of tradition or continuity—which lack has been to some extent filled by the breadth of the contemporary critical spectrum. This unconscious yearning also explains the retrospective historical dimension in so many new literary myths. The myth-critic and the writer become less concerned to probe social trends, and so become correspondingly the more under threat from the tyranny of the archetype. As communities grow more amorphous and inhuman, the individual matters even less and the pattern of events becomes everything.

The essence of literary myth is progress, or, more precisely, reversal and discovery, a history seen through an X-ray lens, revealing a more basic structure than the sociological naturalist mode of writing. It is the especial task of modern myth to select, to reveal (but only gradually and unobtrusively) what is beneath the surface and for the myth to succeed in its totality, it must never deal in the abstract terms of either fable or psychology. The mythical, or fantastic, is a mode available to some authors and the right readers, for whom it will generate power, while remaining concrete, and will present whole classes of experience, while throwing off irrelevancies. At its best it can not merely comment on life, but add to it. But in essence, the value of myth is not a specifically literary value, nor is the appreciation or codification of myth a specifically literary experience.
The question of Myth Criticism, I suppose, turns on what you think literature does. For my part I think that different kinds of works offer different kinds of experiences and that Myth Criticism can be a valuable tool to use on those works, not numerous perhaps but significant nonetheless, which have a strong mythical component, works like *Moby Dick* or the novels of Patrick White.

As Professor Ryan notes, the vogue for this kind of criticism is comparatively recent—if we set aside medieval traditions of criticism—perhaps because works of the kind which demands this approach have only become abundant recently. But today myth seems to offer to artists a means of valorising and organising a world which has become "weary, stale, flat and unprofitable" to the imagination. No doubt this vogue can be dangerous, especially to the critic: Jane Austen's novels, for example, would hardly be illuminated by a search for their archetypes. Nevertheless, applied where it is appropriate, some exploration of myth and symbol and some evaluation of their significance seems to me even more worthwhile than Professor Ryan suggests.

In the first place, the concern with myth gives the critic's work new importance, for it is evident that societies like Australia and U.S.A. which lack deep roots in a set of traditional values tend to rely for coherence and communal purpose on their symbols. Moreover, it is precisely the arts in general and literature most specifically which articulate these symbols generated by social and historical experience but present as it were only unconsciously as yet in a given culture. Once made evident, they become the focus of communal awareness and aspiration as, say, Moby Dick and his pursuit has become for Americans or, at a simpler level, the Man From Snowy River has come to figure in the Australian imagination. Yet so long as this mythic component is only implicit in a work it lacks its full power. So, the critic's task is to bring these myths and symbols to light and thus make available to the common man that communion in symbol which represents, perhaps, community at its "deepest preconscious level of acceptance" (Leslie Fiedler).

To illustrate. The history of the critical response to *Moby Dick* demonstrates the power of the critic to bring a work alive in the imagination of its readers, even indeed to give it a new life and a new relevance. Nineteenth century critics, it seems, reading the book in accordance with their sense of life, were confused by the alternations between statements of fact and what Evert A. Duyckink, for instance, writing in 1851, dismissed as "romantic fictions". But in the twentieth century as the world came to seem more and more "incorrigibly plural", critics began to respond to the novel's hallucinatory power, finding in its swinging pers-
pectives an experience which corresponds to and helps to chart modern man's ontological uncertainties. Thus even in England in the 1920's J. St Loe Strachey wrote in the *Spectator* that *Moby Dick* was an "uncanny throw-forward" to the world of *Ulysses* and *The Waste Land*. In U.S.A. the novel was used to illuminate the American experience, providing a generation in "search of a usable past" with mythical identity. As early as 1919 Mark Van Doren, for example, saw in Ahab's voyage an enactment of the "conflict between the ancient and scathless forces of nature and the ineluctable enmity of man", while Lewis Mumford read the struggle between Ahab and the Parsee as the conflict between East and West, black and white, which is endemic to American experience and literature.

Precisely, Professor Ryan might say. Does not this confirm one's fears about this approach? Isn't this to use the work for one's own purposes and to shirk the central duty of criticism, to bring intelligence and perception to bear upon a work to serve its ends rather than the critic's own? Undeniably, there is a tendency in the critics of the twenties and thirties especially to turn the novel to ends which, however laudable in socio-cultural or psychological terms, were ulterior to the work itself. At the same time, I think Lionel Trilling's point is well taken: the characteristic error of the middle-class intellectual is not this one of making the arts work to personal ends but rather his reluctance to connect ideas with facts; a reluctance which George Steiner has discussed also in more tragic terms speaking of the failure to deal with Nazism. The critics' personal investment in *Moby Dick* and the encouragement they gave to readers to become similarly involved opened up new possibilities for criticism and literature alike in the States and this in turn has something to do with the part both have played in debates about peace, racial justice and so on in recent years. Personally I should like to see these possibilities realised for artists and critics in Australia as well.

At this point, however, some definitions are in order, and it seems a pity that Professor Ryan did not offer some clarification of the terms under discussion. First, it is worth saying that "myth" and "symbol" are not necessarily synonymous, though myth may be, and often, is used as an "omnibus term for the linguistic fact in which mind and matter, spirit and flesh, are forever reaching the identity which is equally distant from scientific objectivity and romantic egoism" (Thoreau). Both myth and symbol, that is to say, raise an ontological question since they challenge the commonsense view that facts and objects are, as it were, dead in contrast to man's subjective awareness which is alive. For the symbolic consciousness all things are part of one vast field of force within which any one object, event or person may suddenly swing open to reveal intensities and complexities of experience far in excess of their actual significance. Thus myth and symbol point beyond themselves to energies which work in and through them and open out new horizons of self-understanding and meaning to the reader.

To distinguish. A symbol according to the Oxford Dictionary, is "something that stands for, represents, or denotes something else, not by exact resemblance but by vague suggestion, or by some accidental or conventional representation". In effect, "symbol" bespeaks a mode of perception. Hence Pound's definition, "a focus of complex experience in an instant of time". Moreover, this perception sees the world as plurivocal not univocal, since in symbolic discourse every object is both itself and points beyond itself to some more encompassing, more intensely, vital reality. In a sense, all poetry is discourse of this kind, ambiguity being its essential note as the poet interrogates and seeks to transform matter of fact in quest of some hierophany.

"Myth" performs a similar function, transfiguring the actual world of experience to reveal deeper meanings and mysterious forces at work. But where symbol is tied to particular objects or events or clusters of them, myth describes a series
of events or people in action, a series which adds up to an explanation of the way
the world is as it is. Usually myths are about the beginnings, narrating events which
took place in primordial time and so constitute things as they now are, providing
patterns for man's behaviour and material for his reflection. When a mythic pattern
underlies the action of a literary work therefore it can inform it with a peculiar
power. *Moby Dick* and *Voss*, for example, in structure echo the myth of the heroic
journey in which the hero descends into the depths, does battle with monsters and
returns with new life for his people. However much this structure is overlaid with
familiar facts, to reenact this story which evidently corresponds to traditional
patterns of dream and unconscious desire still has value of an imaginative and
psychological kind even for the contemporary reader. Reminding him of these
patterns and pointing to them at work in literature, the critic may thus enhance the
reader's experience, although—and this must be said against critics like Northrop
Frye—his work has only begun, not ended, with this identification of mythic
patterns, the real task of criticism being to explore the experience they generate.

The history of criticism of *Moby Dick* since the 1940s, to return to our main
theme, illuminates the value of this approach by means of symbolism and myth.
True, its dangers are also glaringly evident. In the first place myth can be used
for personal or even national aggrandisement. W. E. Sedgwick, for example,
comparing Melville to Shakespeare, finds in Melville's favour. "The Declaration
of Independence does make a difference", he declared, since Melville, he believes,
is more prepared to confront the demonic and destructive aspects of experience by
exploring the mythic dimension and creating in Ahab a character more "grandly
autonomous" than any of Shakespeare's heroes. Nevertheless in other critics the
value of the mythic approach also appears, above all its power to open out the
new horizons of self-understanding and of social experience implicit within the
work. So, *Moby Dick* has illuminated for many Americans the nature of their
present predicament in which, like the crew of the Pequod they may be shipped
aboard for a terrible voyage in pursuit of a non-existent absolute. Robert Lowell's
"Quaker Graveyard at Nantucket" in turn transforms this response back into
poetry.

But responses of this kind remain of debatable value since one must always be
wary of the attempt to turn literature into a kind of substitute religion. What
seems to me to be the central significance of Myth Criticism, however, is something
to which Professor Ryan pays little attention, its concern, namely, with myth and
symbol as forms of language. As Bernstein's researches into the field of socio-
linguistics suggest, what any group calls the "real world" is an imaginative construct,
largely unconscious, which is built upon the language habits of the group in
question. Thus different speech systems or codes of communication create different
orders of relevance and relation which express themselves in terms of symbols and
myths. Hence the arts constitute focal points, creative centres of communal aware-
ness, and at any given time there will be those artists who are engaged in reiterating
and renewing traditional myths and symbols and those, like Blake in his day or
White, Stow, Buckley and Webb in Australia today, who are making new imagina-
tive patterns which represent new possibilities of existence within our culture. In
this situation the critic thus becomes a kind of mediator as he comments on these
works, be they conservative or innovative in their tendency, and relates them to the
codes of thought and feeling which already prevail, helping readers to find by their
means a new range of imaginative and expressive possibilities. The critic concerned
with myth and symbol like this makes an important contribution, offering as well
as understanding a new kind of grammar, the grammar of myth and symbol, to the
search for a comprehensive philosophy of language and feeling so important today.

Further, to explore myth and symbol as part of a larger grammar of signification
is to bring critical attention back where it belongs, to the work rather than to its social or ethical implications. It is also to emphasise the fact, so often forgotten, that a work of art offers its own mode of perception, a mode that is different from other forms of verbal communication since it enacts what it means and its value depends upon the nature of the experience it offers. This, surely, is the crux of Wordsworth’s argument in the Preface to the Lyrical Ballads. Poetry, he argues is “well adapted to interpret mankind permanently” on account of the “quality and ... multiplicity of its moral relations”, that is, by the way the language bespeaks a man’s inmost sense of himself, what cannot be declared in prose. More, this kind of language, he says, lays hold of the objective world and brings it into a new, living relationship with subjective awareness. “Ordinary things” are thus “presented to the mind in an unusual aspect”, a “certain colouring of the imagination” being “thrown over” these things. This kind of language, I take it, is language as we have defined it working in the symbolic mode. A similar sense of art as creating its own kind of “livingness” also underlies F. R. Leavis’ assertion of its value in his latest book of essays, Nor Shall My Sword. When he insists upon the “complexity that attends the momentous” which demands the “attention of whole lives and the whole effort of others”, he is saying, in effect, that art generates a symbolic awareness. If, as he argues, the critic must reject all “posited goals” and all forms of the intentional fallacy to concentrate instead on taking “real imaginative responsibility” for the works he serves, then attention to the work as a total symbol offers a grammar of this kind of momentousness since myth and symbol bring into play concepts different in kind from those which pertain to logical meaning, energy concepts which belong to a performative utterance, the utterance of literature as well as of dream and religious ritual.

To take an example from Moby Dick, chapter 87, “The Grand Armada”. Here, the language, symbolic because multivalent and working as if it were poetry, gives access to a new kind of meaning, of a kind which it alone and no other kind of statement can provide and which defies statement in prose terms and can only be enacted. Quite evidently, the description of the “wondrous world upon the surface” and of the other below, even more marvellous, points beyond itself, echoing the intuition which is so strong throughout the book, “that we have hugely mistaken this matter of Life and Death”, that things physical are but shadows and shadows most powerful things. Calmly circling around some still centre here in the ocean yet surrounded by terrors, these sea creatures are caught up into some mystery of tranquillity and order and yet horribly vulnerable to some nameless and cruel force which also is intent upon them. So they become a locus of significance, provide another meaning which is both given and hidden in the situation and in the reader’s experience of himself, poised as they are “amid the tornadoed Atlantic of my being.”

But we still need to give some more precise account of the value of criticism which points up this kind of experience. Cassirer and Frye in their different ways imply that it is enough to identify this symbolic consciousness since that identification enlarges the understanding of the process by which the mind constructs its universe of meaning and discourse. No doubt this is important and W. E. Bezanson’s study of the construction of Moby Dick as a symbolic discourse is a model of this kind. But it is well to remember, as Ricoeur argues in criticism of Cassirer, that symbols work in a way that differs from most other forms of discourse, being essentially ambivalent. So the critic needs to beware of systematising his reading of a work and to preserve the enigmatic quality of the symbolic, that quality attributed by Heraclitus to the oracle at Delphi where the “Master does not speak, does not dissimulate, he signifies”. The symbolic, that is, must be accepted on its own terms, not reduced to something other than it is. This means, of course, that
criticism will have to become more imaginative, virtually an act recreating the original experience, like Charles Olson's book about *Moby Dick, Call Me Ishmael*. It is always the case that the critic's task is to give access to the work he is discussing, though with works of this kind he may have to revise his accustomed habits of mind and approach the position Yeats spoke of when he remarked that the poets "must take on their shoulders the burdens which have fallen from the shoulders of the priests".

But is this desirable? To the academic mind such an approach lacks rigour and precision and seems to sell the pass to the enemies of rationality. Yet many works being written today seem to demand response as much as comment. Moreover, as we have argued there is a grammar of symbol, admittedly not fully developed as yet, so that it is possible to discuss response with some discipline and precision. Moreover, we have come today to deplore prescriptive criticism. The task is surely to devise and refine new procedures appropriate to works of a mythic or symbolic kind rather than to treat them as if they were works of another kind. What is irrational or, better, non-rational, is not therefore put beyond responsible scrutiny. Certainly, the best way to create a false mystique of literature as untouchable mystery is to fail first to acknowledge and then to give some account of this mystery. It may be that the critic has it in his power to make available to our culture, impoverished generally in its response to symbol, a sense of the symbol as the imaginative space we are in need of in a world which seems oblivious of our presence. In this no doubt there is risk of turning literature into a substitute religion. But it was Arnold in the last century who foresaw the sterility of a culture with no sense of the numinous. In his essays, *Poetry and the Sacred*, Vincent Buckley has given an account of poetry which does justice to this sense without the lowering of critical standards which Professor Ryan fears and without turning criticism into theology on the cheap. In fact certain works being written today yield up their experience only to the reader who is prepared to enter into the dimension of symbol, an area largely neglected by a culture which puts a premium upon Cartesian intellect. The novels of Patrick White, for example, have been consistently misunderstood and devalued by critics applying to them criteria appropriate to novels of the Great Tradition, novels which are based on premises which White sets out to question. Instead of working to identify the familiar and to increase the reader's sense of control, White's novels create a sense of strangeness, and the critic ought surely to alert the reader to, not rescue him from, it. For, if the symbolist is essentially a subversive, taking familiar images and reassembling them in a way that is unexpected and disturbing enough to make it difficult for the reader to escape the questions he raises, then the critic should also be provocative, pointing up the activity at work in language and symbol and myth which raises these questions.

This activity, what it is and how it works, seems to me the central point of investigation for myth criticism in the future. It is at this point, no doubt, that criticism begins to shade into psychology and anthropology since its concern is with that awareness the symbol generates of some presence which is the measure of the human spirit though, as yet, the human spirit cannot take its measure. But that is another story.
Not so Fine a Country to Starve In

Peter Cowan, in his comment on G. C. Bolton's *A Fine Country To Starve In* (*Westerly*, 1, April 1973), suggested that, until the appearance of Bolton's book about the Depression, there had been "no real searching for what this time was like to the people who formed and were formed by it. The writers of fiction", wrote Cowan, "have borne more witness to it than the historians".

The quantity of Australian fiction about the Depression is, in fact, considerable. And it is interesting to observe that it is not only the historians who are, today, beginning to show more interest in the Depression years, for, within the last few months, Angus and Robertson have republished in paperbacks such Depression fiction classics as Leonard Mann's *The Go-Getter* and Kylie Tennant's *Tiburon*. It is to be hoped that Angus and Robertson will consider also, reprints of other important novels of the period, especially some of the work of Barnard Eldershaw, Vance Palmer and Katharine Susannah Prichard.

The purpose of this article, though, is not to discuss the better-known fiction of the Depression, but to draw attention to a novel about Perth which appeared in a limited edition in 1934, and which provides a fascinating fictional complement to Professor Bolton's *A Fine Country to Starve In*.

The first reference I remember finding to J. M. Harcourt's *Upsurge* was in the second number (December 1934) of the short-lived Melbourne journal *Pandemonium*. The unnamed reviewer (Mervyn Skipper, the editor, perhaps?) wrote of *Upsurge* (published in England by John Long, and released in Australia in April 1934) that it was an

"... Australian proletarian novel of considerable distinction which has been pounced on by the police in two capitals. The author, a young Perth journalist, has done his job with unusual skill. ... It gives a lively picture of the changes in morals and manners which are going on in this country as much as in any other and concerning which our romantic writers are as blissfully ignorant as so many Rotarians".

By the time this particular review appeared copies of *Upsurge* must have been in very short supply. Harcourt's novel had achieved the "success de scandale" which the book reviewer of *The West Australian* (2 June 1934) had suggested was the author's original intention, and the guardians of morality, both State and Commonwealth, had moved heavily against it.

Wherein lay the scandal? Although dates are not specified in the novel, it is obvious that *Upsurge* is concerned with events in Perth in 1931 and 1932, and with the "moral outlook" of sections of Perth society at that time. This is why the novel
is so interesting to read alongside *A Fine Country to Starve In*. Bolton, with the advantage of the perspective of the historian, has been able to weigh the relative importance of the events of those years; Harcourt wrote with passion from a committed viewpoint of what he saw about him.

*Upsurge* is by no means a great novel, but there is a fascination about Harcourt's vigorous depiction of the stresses which twisted society during the Depression. It is a novel full of people and of incident, in which the author uses a series of almost climactic blows and calamities to illustrate the buffeting with which society rewards the labour of the worker. For the most part, however, the incidents are eruptious only on the surface of society. Harcourt fails to burrow deep in order to expose the source of the canker, and, as a result, Perth does not emerge as a living, if diseased, city as does say, Melbourne, in Leonard Mann's *The Go-Getter*. Harcourt's characters tend not to develop. They are used, like the events, which, also, are random rather than causative, to create a broad and diffuse picture of social malaise. But then this is just the picture of the times that one gains also from *A Fine Country to Starve In*.

There is an epilogue to *Upsurge* which reads as follows:

"Later in the same year, at Berne, an international conference of peasant and proletarian organizations took place. A revolutionary upsurge in every industrialized country of the world was remarked. The Australian delegates observed that even in Western Australia, the least advanced of the Austral States, there was a definite revolutionary upsurge."

Perhaps this was wishful thinking by Harcourt. If one turns to *A Fine Country to Starve In*, one can find little, evidence to support the notion of revolutionary fervour in Perth in the early 1930's. Harcourt himself provided at least a partial explanation when, years later in *Overland* (46, 1970-1971), he confessed that *Upsurge* was written from a "fellow-traveller's" point of view. This makes the conclusion of the novel, with its prospect of victory for the proletariat, at least understandable, even if not strictly in accord with historical reality. More important, though, Harcourt's impressions of the Depression years, unlike those of many of the people interviewed by Professor Bolton, do not appear to have been mellowed by the passage of time.

"I may say of *Upsurge* (he wrote in *Overland* in 1970) that, despite its literary shortcomings, and God knows they were many, it was an honest fictional account of the Western Australian State of Denmark at that time."

*Upsurge* was the second novel by an Australian writer to be banned in Australia, first in Western Australia, then in New South Wales, and finally by the Commonwealth. The ostensible reason for the attacks on the novel was its alleged indecency, but Harcourt suggests that outrage at the political viewpoint may have been a stronger motive. The indignant reviewer in *The West Australian* on 2 June 1934 objected to both the sex and the politics.

"... indeed it would be hard to imagine a more thoroughly unpleasant set of people than are to be found in the pages of Mr. Harcourt's immature narrative of 'petting-parties', shopgirls' strikes, street-rioting—in which the police are made to behave like a lot of Bashi-Bazouks—Communist agitators, crude caricatures of magistrates and business magnates—the whole extraordinary conglomeration being liberally spiced with frankly erotic situations and choice specimens of schoolboy obscenities. Apart from this, the author occasionally, but only occasionally, reveals a certain grim power in his descriptive pieces ..."

The hero of *Upsurge* is the Communist agitator Riley, modelled, obviously, on Bagwell or Stevens, who receive frequent mention in *A Fine Country*. The villains are the magistrate Riddle, and, especially, the owner of a big department store, Paul Kronen. Harcourt introduces this magnate of commerce as follows:

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"The managing director of Kronen's Limited settled himself in his tilted office chair and folded his hands upon his stomach... His office was on a gallery overlooking the ground-floor counters of the great shop. Through the glass walls of the office he could see the counters stacked with merchandise, with tweeds and calicos, silks and cambrics, dress goods from every quarter of the earth. The counters were arranged in pairs, and black-clad girls hurried to and fro between them. There were over an acre of counters. Customers swarmed in the wide aisles..."

Older readers might guess as to the identity of the person Harcourt used as a model for Kronen. Harcourt, however, later claimed that it never entered the head of the Perth businessman whom he did use as a model that he bore the slightest resemblance to the villain of *Upsurge*.

Much of the novel is concerned with the wicked behaviour of Kronen—his exploitation and corruption of the workers, and the servile support he received from church leaders and the press. But the most effective and the most memorable passages are those which describe the street demonstrations and riots by the Perth unemployed.

In "Unemployment and Politics in Western Australia", an article published in *The Great Depression in Australia* (1970), Professor Bolton wrote that "throughout the depression the deadpan mandarin style of reportage favoured by *The West Australian* must have done a lot to take the sting out of even the most stirring clashes of the period". In *Upsurge* Harcourt injects the sting with as much venom as he can. Two examples might be selected from many in the novel to make the point. These are Harcourt's "fictional" accounts of two demonstrations which Professor Bolton discusses in some detail in both "Unemployment and Politics" and *A Fine Country*—the Frankland River strike of August 1932 and the Treasury Building riot of March 1931.

This is Harcourt's version of the Frankland River affair.

"The dust rose from the feet of sixteen hundred rebellious outcasts, unwashed and unshaven, who marched in column of four along the sandy track that wound through the thin forest of jarrah between the Brideways River relief camp and the township of Wilmot... From somewhere a number of red flags had been obtained and these were borne aloft at the head of the procession. As they marched they sang the songs of the revolution..."

[From Wilmot the striking relief workers went by train to the city where leaders were arrested and the rest of the strikers bundled out at East Perth Station.]

... In the street outside the station the Brideways River Army gathered pitifully in the rain, a leaderless mob of unemployed. A cordon of troopers rode through them, cutting them in half. Half of them streamed one way, half the other. The police herded them like cattle in a drafting-yard, turning small groups of them into lanes or side streets, harrying them, scattering them."

And, finally, part of Harcourt's description of the Treasury Building riot.

"The next moment the street was filled with shouting struggling unemployed and police. A park fence across the street gave way beneath the press, and men tore the pickets from the fallen lengths of fence to use as weapons. Whistles shrilled again and more police came running. Nearby the road was up for work on a watermain, and beside the excavation lay a heap of diorite and lumps of concrete and bitumen. In a moment the air was thick with a hail of flying stones. The street echoed with shouts, curses, screams, and cries of rage and pain and fear.

Yet more police reinforcements arrived, and, working to a plan, cleared a space of a few score yards before the Treasury steps. Troopers formed up quickly in the space and charged the crowd. The unemployed went down before the horses. A flying stone struck a trooper on the temple and he rolled..."
out of his saddle. Others were dragged from their horses. But the troopers reformed and charged again. Each time they charged they cleared a further few yards. Under the shock of the charges those who were unhurt began to struggle to get away, to break through the jam of humanity behind. The crowd surged and swayed like a wounded thing that cried out in its death agonies.”

Harcourt deserted this “least advanced of the Austral States” in the same year that *Upsurge* was published. His departure was not lamented by all. Indeed the *Daily News* reviewer of *Upsurge* wrote on 28 April 1934, that “if Mr. Harcourt felt as he writes about conditions and people he describes here, one can readily understand why he has gone to live in Melbourne”.

Harcourt’s fame (or notoriety) did not go unnoticed in the East. Katharine Susannah Prichard had hailed *Upsurge* as the first “truly working-class novel” ever written in Australia, and, mainly because of her tireless efforts, Harcourt was elected first president of the Melbourne-based Revolutionary Writers’ League. Harcourt was also a foundation member of the Book Censorship Abolition League, also Melbourne-based, which championed, as its initial cause célèbre, the novel *Upsurge* against the bureaucratic banners.

Since 1934 *Upsurge* has been more or less forgotten. The appearance of *A Fine Country to Starve In*, as well as other evidence of increasing interest in the Depression years, seems an appropriate occasion to draw attention once more to this novel about “revolutionary upsurge” in Perth.

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*NEWSPAPER REPORTS*

VERONICA BRADY

Return to the Centre:

Vincent Buckley's Golden Builders

Today, I suppose, writing poetry seems both an act of defiance and an act of irrelevance since it is all but impossible for an artist to give his allegiance both to the city and to his art. That was the central theme of *The Waste Land*, and Eliot's conclusions were negative. But now Vincent Buckley, in his sequence of poems, *The Golden Builders* (*Poetry Australia*, number 42), has taken up the theme, succeeding in my view not merely in making a poetic statement which is more coherent and more affirmative than Eliot's but even to some extent making it possible for the reader to believe both in poetry and in the city. The poetry is no longer hermetic; Buckley is a man speaking to men and his imaginary gardens have real toads in them. This sequence therefore is surely an important event. In fact it represents a victory over the Great Australian—indeed the Great Western—Emptiness which begins with the fear of reality and ends with subordinating the whole to its most trivial and sensational parts. Buckley has taken what is familiar, Carlton, Fitzroy, Parkville, the area around the University of Melbourne, with its factories, shops, Housing Commission flats, its hospital and its cemetery, and transformed it into a mythic city like Blake's London, a place where physical facts show forth the continuing radiance of the human soul and provide a context of continuity which also guarantees our belief in what lies beyond them. But it is the sheer conviction, imaginative courage and verbal power of the rendering which makes the words bite home and become actual. In this I am reminded of Blake who is a considerable presence throughout; in the personal stance—"I must create a system or be enslaved by another's"—which Buckley echoes, in the fierce precision of his craftsmanship, but most of all in the conviction that all the ground we stand on is holy ground.

This conviction, I believe, is vital to the success of the poetry. Turning the poet to the world about him, it delivers him from the subjectivism which has become a prison to so many other poets of the last two centuries, equally concerned to transform the world but unable to get outside of themselves. But it also carries weight in terms of actual life. Accepting Blake's dictum that he is "cursed who says a line is merely up and down", he takes the dingy suburbs as they are. Value lies within, in the human response not in physical appearance. Accordingly the change that matters, which will reconstitute the world, is a change of heart rather than of architecture.

These poems, then, are practical and positive human documents. This is suggested even in the title and carried on strongly in the opening sequence for the builders at work are to be found not only in the factories and streets but also in the lecture rooms and gardens as the imagination joins with the throbbing energies
of sunset to transform the world. Buckley is a religious poet, but "salvation" for him, as for Blake, means the expansion of human possibility which alone can rescue man from the blankness, boredom and insentience to which technology condemns him. And the way to this "salvation" is rehearsed first of all in the poetry, tentatively yet with a full sense of the privilege and panic of mortality. Even as the poem concludes we are still on the way,

"travelling towards my timber birthplace",

though it is the way to the place of Resurrection, "my Lord's grave". The religious language here is no evasion, no appeal to stock response. On the contrary it validates rather than denies matter of fact, the word "resurrection"—which Buckley, incidentally does not use—standing for the experience of sheer grace, the images of water and fire which enact a new life; the sea-horse, for example,

"dropping his children like seeds about him",

giving birth without pain as

"they float riderless in the water, drawn about him,"

into companionship which has no desire of possession, in a dance of lightness and ease like that of Dante's earthly paradise. Yet there is nothing impersonal about this conclusion. Indeed, one feels here the triumph of the self which has suffered through the action and so achieved its resolution—in contrast, again, with The Waste Land which seems to lack the personal pronoun. Focussing the problem upon the individual Buckley is thus able to reduce the problem, contemporary man's malaise, to manageable terms and even to suggest some relief. As the poem presents them his people are caught in conflict between collective and individual will. But where Eliot would have them more or less passive, surrendering to the Divine will, Buckley endorses Blake's view that God is and acts as men respond to his initiatives and take a hand in shaping the world imaginatively first but also physically. History then appears as the individual psyche writ large.

Everything about The Golden Builders is dynamic. Even the forces of annihilation are energetic:

"I dread the streets
flick, flick, the shadows go" (p. 50).

This world is a field of force, there is always movement, either nervous and pointless as the cars run

"... endlessly
with a stripped sound
on paced macadam." (p. 50)

or purposeful as heroic human figures resist the city, the dreadful living thing with its concrete buildings

"swerving slowly through space
the long cough
of crushed cities
they blind me
they respect nothing." (p. 51).

The environment is not merely our place here, therefore, it is also our antagonist bent on the destruction of what gives life value, the sense of reverence. To defend himself therefore man must become homo faber, he must make and then sustain a world in which he can worship, live with confidence in his possibilities.

What is at issue, then, is the nature of reality and of man's relationship to it, and while some may regard this as impure poetry, I see it as a return to the source
—originally the poet was also a shaman. Buckley works strenuously to reveal our ignorance and remind us of the false identity our culture would have us assume. "Reality" is other than we think. Projecting us from matter-of-fact into the mythic "Great Time" in which facts and values are once more unified, the poem shows a world that is integral. So it appears that the minimal life of our cities,

"so little air / left" (p. 51)

is the result not of physical but of spiritual pollution, of imaginative failure.

"The centre is displaced,
   two bodies where one could live
   each face
   heavy with damp" (p. 51),

the damp which preludes decomposition.

Textures here do not exist for their own sake, but as in The Waste Land they register moral states. But whereas Eliot's poem works mostly in monotone, Buckley's is dialectical, the forces of creation being as strong as those of decay. They triumph from within the poem while Eliot has to impose "salvation" as it were from without. Moreover in the struggle perceptions are purified. The flat resonance of metal is set against the roughness of stone, mist against light, and in every case what is strenuously strong prevails, so that the poem embodies an urgent sense of a self, stiff and unbending, which is driven imperatively to define itself against the surrender demanded by the general will. At times this self may appear as killer or criminal, and in this sense the poem has an Extremist tone. People like Pieter who appears with

"the scissors hung in his hand. Crying
   'Have I killed you, brother,
   O christ, brother, have I killed you?'" (p. 39)

are violent, but their violence is directed against the environment, not against people, and is a defence against its equally killing power to destroy the self. Walter, "ageing harmless male prostitute" (p. 45), the New Australians, unhappily at odds with their new country, all assert against its shapelessness their own style, whether it be Walter's dreams of grace or the

"... air of scent and pastry
   the bead curtains ... quick winking speech" (p. 40)

in the Greek shop. No one can afford to judge their violence. All are implicated. "I've burnt things too" (p. 54). Even burning off we discover ourselves as killers too, enjoying the destruction of the scorpions.

But the poem makes the violence work towards order, a new order, it is true, but one more consonant with man. The old shape of things must be destroyed because it reduces men to ciphers,

"in a million rooms, (listening to)
   the Seven O'Clock Early News" (p. 39)

and the world must be refashioned imaginatively to the shape of man's body.

The Golden Builders is thus part of the epic of non-compliance which keeps alive our hopes for betterment. The destructiveness it describes is incidental, the breaking and shattering, the lightning and thunder, which occur on the difficult passage in the myths of the return to the centre, and the pain is the pain of birth into a morally and therefore more humanly meaningful universe away from a world which reduces even death to something "flat, metallic". The High Rise flats may be guarded from the cemetery by
"flat green metal shields
like shock troops
along the railings" (p. 42),

but Buckley claims the privilege of terror for himself and for his characters.

The poem's preoccupation with death is thus an essential strategy. In a world
governed by machines death alone witnesses to the unconditional and un­
trollable. Hence the first breakthrough occurs in the "Practising Not Dying"
sequences where the protagonist confronts death and snatches his being back from
it. The high stakes here may seem distasteful to the rational and empirical mood
of our culture, but the excitement Buckley generates derives not from sensationalism
but rather from a sense of responsibility. Convinced of the moral value of what is
highly organised and profoundly apprehended he forces the reader to the situation
where to survive he must master himself also and begin to live with utmost
intensity. There is nothing gratuitous about this experience either. Buckley makes
it happen within the poem, using his language to present a complex, highly ener­
gised experience which mobilises all the senses, sets them in high definition and
combines them with intelligence and moral judgement. The tense and varying
rhythms, the sharp, precise images which alternate between extremes of experience
crack open conventional categories and challenge accepted perspectives. In the
swing from the girl on the way to the abortionist's to the Women's Hospital where
"once, I found my children" (p. 39), for example, or from the nearby school to
Pieter, the possible murderer, the resulting shock brings about something like that
favourable moment, the pause in which illumination traditionally takes place.

The poem's power to disconcert, then, is creative, not self-indulgent and the
stance of the "boxer's head / set at an angle", the "mouth muscling down" (p. 44)
defends individual value in a world in which machines tend to generalise experience
and provide ease rather than call for effort. Similarly the most important set of
images centres on fire, the painful yet transforming element, and the poem's high
points are those in which spirit kindles the body into new intensity—as in the
"Blake in the Body" sequence. Elsewhere Buckley celebrates the triumph of his
uncle, himself under

"the killing pressure of the brain
half blind himself" (p. 45)

who nevertheless manages to give utterance to his tenderness for his dying brother.
Laconic though it sounds his

"aagh Paddy. To see you like this" (p. 45)

is a heroic achievement and establishes the self-mastery and grace which Walter
later dreams of and which the sequence moves towards in Christ's words, "Feed
my lambs" which conclude this section. The struggle with physical limits produces
new splendour, the spirit's strength, and in this sense it is a Promethean poem. But
Prometheus here is a responsible figure, a craftsman whose material is the matter
of the world and who is at the service both of man and of the "God" who
guarantees human value.

True, this value is not just given, it has to be won. Hence Buckley sheers away
from the poise of Eliot's "still point of the turning world". Ease and rest belong
to death—this is the temptation in the "Practising Not Dying" sequence, to cease
from the struggle and surrender to the non-human energies of the universe, the
energies which drive the machines—and apathy, not suffering, is the real evil, for
suffering at least brings men up before the fact of their existence in face of a
world which seeks to rob them of this existence. Thus what may appear as melo­
dramatic, the emphasis on extreme gesture and situation, is actually a means by
which the poem affirms that the physical world can be mastered and be man's
good. It is the mind, in fact, not the body, here which can be the enemy, bending inwards into its own centre, into its own dreams of power—

“two figures dragging the third body
into the lane” (p. 41).

Its “eyes staring backwards / into the skull” (p. 43) create presences which have not validated themselves in the world of common forms, presences which corrupt—“on the telephone everybody poses” (p. 57). Buckley wants to rescue man from this servitude to abstractions and seems indeed to echo Marcuse's criticisms of One Dimensional Man. His poem takes its stand on solid things, “the choke of white bread”, rough walls, tough and pungent-smelling plants, things which bring a man back to his senses, reminding him of his limits, the limits which alone give him power to prove to himself. So even the faces he draws are uncompromising, the

“bones standing up / in the water of your face.”

Refusing the easy comfort of the aphorism, “the environment is inside me” (p. 40), he insists instead,

“you know the street
is full of false notes” (p. 40).

He wants to get back to the man who is born, suffers and dies, the tragic man, in short, who knows the saving weight of the physical world.

This is a poem, then, which moves resolutely away from the pleasures and comforts of dream. In fact its most desperate point is reached when the room

“tilts and goes
through draggings out and steel” (p. 47)

as the self surrenders to the forces of annihilation. But it is the order of work, the artist's responsibility to the work which is ultimately his life, which calls him back, up broken steps of the mind reflected in the verse itself.

“I can't
die
without
finishing” (p. 47).

The world is to be shaped still. Homo faber, it seems, is the name of the survivor and writing becomes a matter of ultimate earnestness, a means to survival. Hence the rejection of

“that ultimate stance of the poet,
the Montale watcher-figure” (p. 49).

No such detachment is possible here. The city and its inhabitants is not a cinematic spectacle to be enjoyed but an effort to be made. In mastering it imaginatively the poet defeats its random meaninglessness and gives shape both to his own life and, hopefully, to others' as well.

Evidently, this responsibility forbids self-indulgence. Hence the touchy recoil from any great sympathy with the poem's inhabitants. In a world so much at risk, a battleground between the forces of annihilation and creation, such sympathy would be an act of absurd triumphalism, for the poet is as threatened as any of his characters, as much killer as creator, with no ground to stand on but this common ground, the city dominated by the Vickers-Ruwolt factory

“mashing out its lengthening
masks of smoke
sulphurous Breughel-red swirlings in air” (p. 52).
This subjects the poem to the full pressure of history and so there are no easy solutions to be given. The poet stands on a level with his creations. He can only interrogate the workman on the scaffolding;

“tell me there, brother, do you have information re the New Order? Is that the word of life you tap on the steel core?” (p.52),

and even the conclusion of the whole poem is tentative. Essentially the action points beyond itself, to set the reader to work on his own, sending him back to search his experience.

This honesty of approach is both convincing and productive of response in the reader and of richness in the world the poem creates, for with his emphasis on objects and people rather than on comments about them Buckley lets them react on one another, thus setting up a world more unified and more resonantly intelligible than the world commonsense knows in which facts and values are kept separate. As a result the action proceeds as a series of explosions, of Epiphanies in Joyce’s sense, instead of by the development of a logical argument, and the cumulative effect depends upon the pattern of images. Central is the opposition of the Microbiology school to the Church and of the factories and housing commission flats to the cafes and shops and pubs. The Microbiology laboratory where

“... “white-coated demonstrators carry their phials in front of them like tulips and flick you with their eyes” (p.43)

is a parody of the old blue-stone church and of the Holy Thursday procession there that went “scraping its confident rough Latin” (p.47) along the rough walls. In the old church it is still possible to make a journey to the centre of oneself. There, “bodies / that wanted song and space” went

“singing inside their cramp” (p.47)

and the poet wrote his “proto-poems”, made his first attempts to master the world. In contrast, the scientists’ rituals are those of cruelty and forgetfulness. With their conviction that “men live by demonstration alone”, they are guilty of the refusal of life’s complexity. They are the watchers who recur throughout the poem who will not acknowledge, still less participate, in the sufferings of others. Yet they are responsible for the world they have made as they are for the dogs they use for their experiments whose “pause and gulping cry” (p.46) is echoed in the rhythms of the traffic. In their presence the poem’s movement slows down, almost overcome by the order they impose which reduces the colour, vibrancy and texture to abstractions.

In this way Buckley embodies his argument dramatically rather than didactically. The answer to the science which brings death—significantly the abortionist figures as a kind of engineer—is found in the sense of life which centres on the old church. Standing with its rough stone, “marble and sensual will” (p.47) in the smooth concrete city, evidently it serves a different purpose, providing a space where another style prevails.

“Wax set against the stone grain incense in the pores of plaster” (p.47),

it provokes the senses whereas technology makes for oblivion—as, for example, in the Muzak piped into the High-rise flats while

“distance screams in the head all organs ears eyes tongue fingers on splints of wire cut off from your body” (p.56).
But the church provides the "regions of reminiscence" Blake also valued. Here, celebrating Easter, men recall the myth of generosity and betrayal, death and new life, which echoes throughout the city and the poem, the myth which gives point and meaning to the otherwise solitary and pointless suffering of the individual. Rescuing from the "eyes staring backward" which go only "backward into the skull" (p. 41), the church establishes a community of recollection, of pain but also of hope in the story of Christ.

"... Arched and bluestone poverty
it gets into the skin. Remember me,
the organ sang, and I
stone, stained glass, hollows in the wood
Kneelers, remember me.

So it keeps track of you." (p. 47-8).

Structurally therefore, the church is a focal point in the poem, the cosmic mountain as it were which joins heaven and earth, a new dimension set over against the city yet which exists also within it.

Paradoxically, however, this dimension validates rather than denies matter of fact. Like Eliot's "infinitely gentle, infinitely suffering thing" it is a presence which pervades the city. It is there, standing "safely / as I turn to leave" (p. 47) as the poet is drawn by the temptation to death and is waiting to receive him back to life and its effort. It is there, too, as the girl makes her way to the abortionist and as Walter harkens back to his "golden days" (p. 38). There is a gentleness even in the movement of the verse as if to suggest that, vulnerable yet gracious, these people move to a different tune, to the cosmic dance suggested by the ceremonies of the church and its seasons. Against the "chop and change of the machines" (p. 43) they assert their claims, human, fallible, easily defeated, which are based on no more than the fact that they are human yet claim our reverence for that reason. The "crushed cities" which "respect nothing" (p. 50) are evidently no place for such people. They belong where men sing, move in procession, make poems, break through into another mode of being, engage in "Sunday work, Sabbath work" and hear Christ's words echo, "Feed my lambs".

What the poem enacts, then, is a world which exceeds the power of reason alone to comprehend, a world in which particular facts are significant by virtue of the relationship into which they enter, or are made to enter by the poet, with other facts and events; like Christ's death and resurrection or contemporary news items, the girl who burned herself to death at Melbourne University from loneliness, for example or memories of the poet's own. So "The Golden Builders" is not so much a description as an organ of reality dramatising the conflict between mind, wound tightly in on itself, "locked between my hands", and the incalculable life. This conflict issues in the section in "Micro-biology II" which begins with the image of the "sun rising from the children's hair" and in its structural, gnomic utterance gives a sense of language straining beyond its limits. Similarly, the pattern of images which sets fire against stone and describes muscles bending and straining in the agony of death which is also birth and, vice versa, records the triumph of the contraries without which, according to Blake, there is no progression.

Thus Buckley's poem demonstrates the importance of poetry, showing its power to celebrate and strengthen human freedom, dignity and risk. But it does this by bringing the reader closer to, not removing him further from, the physical world. Here, in the symbolic awareness the poem creates the four elements also come to correspond to the four seasons as it were of man's spirit; of the "sea-desiring air of love" (p. 48), of the purification of water which flows heavily on his hand reminding him of the saving weight of the physical world, of the solidity of earth, his place, with its pungent scents and rough textures into which he himself must
change at last and of the transfiguration of fire, annealing, energising, and kindling
the solid world into warmth and light. Validating these common forms, neglected
today, "The Golden Builders", however, avoids the opposite extreme of indulgence
in them common to much of the "Counter Culture", and subordinates sense
experience to the service of the person, using it to enlarge his sense of responsibility.
In this way Buckley manages to reconcile the passion for something altogether
different with an honest acceptance of the facts. This makes his conclusion quite
compelling. Driving away from the city on Sunday, the day of new beginnings, the
poem returns back, "towards my timber birthplace", not impelled by self-indulgent
nostalgia but rather by that saving memory which returns in order to take up
again with new seriousness the question which echoes through the poem and,
indeed, through all our lives, "am I free to mean something of my own?" (p. 41).
The recollection of the harsh strength of the earth reminds him of what is enduring
as against the transitory emptiness of the city. The church "in its fine-tempered
stone" "lives under the noise of jet planes and cars ceaselessly passing by" and as
he drives towards the hills the car "is filled with burning" (p. 57), reminding us
of all the images of fire, of the creative will in man, Blake's Los,—the "faces bright
with desire" (p. 48), the welding torch, the sun in the children's hair and so on.
"Sunday grinds on", man's effort continues to worship, to bear the privilege and
panic of his existence and give praise for it. The car "rides on its shadow", some­
thing in excess of the mere facts is reflected in the world as "my Lord's grave", the
empty tomb of Christ poses its question. The work of creation goes on, planes
fly, men travel to and fro, buildings rise and fall and are rebuilt. But as the poem
ends man begins to define himself differently, getting back to his roots, "my timber
birthplace" (p. 57).

Invoking the structure of myth and completing it here in this way Buckley shifts
the burden of his poem from his own shoulders without in any way robbing it of
its personal force. This, I believe, is a considerable achievement, given the diffi­
culties the poet has today in reconciling his longing for wonder with his need to
explore himself and the claims of matter of fact. He has escaped that melodra­
matic strangeness, that forced assertion of a self which finally has little to say for
others to hear and mars so much literature today. But he still has something
significant to say: our society, even the inner suburbs of Melbourne, can be the
stuff of art and our condition can be lived, not merely talked about. Boredom is
not necessary, but courage is. The concluding inconclusiveness of the action, in
fact, presents an equivocal sense of man as the images and music of the poem
point beyond themselves to a mode of being larger than the senses or intelligence
alone can comprehend. Incomplete, the road leads "to the long blue mountains"
(p. 57). Moving on this road, even in the midst of the everyday world, man yet
continually demands that being declare itself more fully and "The Golden Builders"
offers one such declaration. Yet Buckley knows that he has not received the final
answer yet and perhaps may never do so.

He stands, then, within that Romantic tradition which is in quest of the true, as
against the false, life. But he pays tribute also to Christian orthodoxy, and this
delivers his work from much of the wilfulness which is often the weakness of the
Romantic vision. There is, in fact, a largeness, a steadiness and an air of general
truth about this poem which makes it all the more impressive. The poet as Prome­
theus has here turned into the worshipper, though the object of his worship is that
which guarantees the freedom and responsibility Prometheus struggled and suffered
for, since in this world everything depends on personal choice, on the extent to
which a man is able to take possession of himself, his memories and his possibilities,
and relate them to the mystery of death and resurrection spelled out in Christ which
turns suffering into both accusation and hope, both for ourselves and for the fictions
we construct and by which we live. At the end, then, "The Golden Builders", like
The Divine Comedy or like The Odyssey, implies the need to have done with poetry. Given the choice between immortality and the return to the land of his fathers, Ulysses chose to return. So, too, with Buckley. The poem delivers us finally to the journey

"towards my timber birth place
and the wilderness of flies"

and also to the question:

“And my Lord’s grave? his grave?” (p. 57).

I have never made so many notes, asked so much advice, nor spent so much time in trying to review a book as I have done with this by Denis Kenny on “The Christian Future”. One would expect a book with such an important title and published by a university press to contain some argument, so when I could not find it on the first reading I went back to the book again and again. But whenever I thought Fr Kenny was saying something I found it flatly contradicted a few pages later, only to be re-asserted again and then rejected yet again further on. To speculate about the reasons for this chaos one would have to go outside the book and speculate about the personal struggles of the author, hardly the subject matter for a book review. When Fr Kenny suggests that the whole church should elect the pope, and that the candidacy should be open to laymen, he adds that “the prospective candidates would have to be rescued from the stifling subculture of seminary-Rome-chancery”. If his book is the result of his own experiences of the stifling subculture of his seminary, from which a part-time course at the University of New England does not seem to have rescued him, then Fr Kenny has made his point. One should certainly sympathise with many of the clergy who struggle in confusion today, but one cannot sympathise with someone who sets out his confusion under the title “The Christian Future” instead of writing an autobiography, and one cannot understand why the Queensland University Press published it.

Certainly, in the midst of his definite and *ex cathedra* assertions he does admit once that his views should not be taken as ultimate and absolute.

“It is not my aim to establish that this concept of Christ the free man is the ultimate and absolute description of Christ. No doubt, like all the descriptions of Christ throughout history from the New Testament concept of Christ as the lamb of God through to the contemporary Hollywood vision of Christ as the all-American boy, the concept of Christ as the free man is a historically conditioned one” (p. 166).

Placing together the “Lamb of God”, some freak culture-fashion and his own view of Christ also illustrates Fr Kenny’s historical perspective and style. Elsewhere he can cite as “a symptom of its acculturation to the consumer ethos in the Western world . . . the concept of the church as a spiritual gravy-train to eternal salvation”. “Ecclesiastical administrators see the maintainance of the schedule of this gravy-train . . .” (p. 248). I must point out that he is not saying that such use of language might be a symptom of “acculturation” to the consumer ethos: this is his own choice of language to object to the spiritual orientation of the Church. If there is one theme that keeps cropping up more consistently than others, it is the denunciation of the Church’s concern for salvation. “It is curious” says Fr Kenny, “that so often the Christian church shifts the focus of loving, creative, and reconciliatory activity away from the very practical and material areas in which Christ exercised it. The central concern is shifted to salvation, to the spiritual life, to people’s souls, on the principle and with the solemn reiterated warning that man does not live by bread alone.” (p. 170)

To the naive observer it would seem that this was on and off the main raison d’etre and pre-occupation of the Christian Church for the last two thousand years, so it seems strange to say that this conception of the Church—rather than Fr Kenny’s description of it as “spiritual gravy-train”, and his rejection of this conception—is a sign of “acculturation” to the consumer ethos of the Western world.

In many other places however, as for instance on p. 197, we find that “Fundamental to the task of theological renewal is the need for the church to achieve a cultural acclimatization”. Fr Kenny seems to say that he wants “cultural acclimatization” to the industrial, productive, entrepreneurial world, and he objects only to the “acculturation” to the consumer ethos. But I wonder if Christ when He pointed to the lilies of the field had some such distinction in mind. Nor does Fr Kenny draw any sociological distinction, beyond using these tags in a rather emotive tone. If one thinks that the “consumer ethos” demands clean air, safer cars and fair packaging, while Fr Kenny’s favoured "man the
maker of artifacts, man the creator, man the manipulator and transformer of his own environment and his own self" creates the Concorde and the coal hills of Wales, then his meaning needs more clarification.

But to return to his main theme, to his objection to the spiritual orientation of the church, it is on this ground again that he thinks the liturgical renewal in the church has not gone far enough, that "the liturgy of the church has resisted the process of renewal and is proving an obstacle to the church's accepting its proper secular role in the modern world... In the first place there is still the tendency to use the sacraments in a magical way. They still tend to be used as instruments for retailing of graces, they still tend to be regarded as having cosmic, other-worldly effects, and this results in a failure to develop and capitalise on their sociological significance and psychological impact." (p. 224)

It is axiomatic that the great majority of people must share these sentiments, since few other Christians beside Catholics, let alone those who are not Christians at all, would believe that Christ Himself is present in a very special way in the sacrifice of the Mass, and that His reception under the form of bread and wine has more than psychological and sociological impact: that it also has some significance for one's eternal life. Yet there would still be at least three differences between Fr Kenny and the great majority of people who do not believe in the real presence of Christ in the sacrifice of the mass: Few of them would put their case in such crude language in a book which aspires to be scholarly; fewer still would continue using the mass merely for its psychological and sociological significance, and fewer still would be Catholic priests.

It is when one tries to find out what Fr Kenny wants to put in place of the things he eliminates that one is really in darkness. The ideas of Saint-Simon's Nouveau Christianisme keep cropping up, which is natural in view of the fact that so many Christians today are "acculturated" (to use Kenny's word) to the Saint-Simonian idea of "world-development"—not that many such Christians would have read Saint-Simon. The direct influence of Berdyaev is more evident. He is not only frequently quoted but many of Fr Kenny's own sentences sound like paraphrases of him. Sometimes one gets the feeling that even St John, a favourite of Berdyaev, is quoted from Berdyaev's texts and not from the Bible. Certainly Berdyaev's "ethics of redemption", where redemption is a message of liberation, and his "ethics of creativeness" are hovering throughout the book. But Berdyaev's system and his more uncomfortable views are absent and only his phraseology is present. Reading the book one is struck by an odd and unexpected similarity between some of Berdyaev's phrases, when they are out of context, and the phraseology of contemporary well-to-do and spoilt American youth. For Fr Kenny seems to be "acculturated" to the spirit of that youth.

A spectrum of the American ethos which used to be the prerogative of American protestant and secular religiosity colours now some Catholic religious thinking, and exerts its influence even as far as Perth. In at least one local school the children are using an American Catholic book of religious education in which we are told that "Jesus' teaching grew out of his experience of the struggle for freedom. His words described how to live as he lived—free!" The same book also proudly reminds us, above a large picture of the Liberty Bell, how "On July 8th 1776 a bell rang out from the tower of Independence Hall in Philadelphia..." For "Home Activities" the children are asked to "Create a banner with your favorite definition of freedom..." (my italics) and after another lesson: "Take time this week to wish for as many things as you can think that you believe would help you or others to be freer..." (italics in the original). "Make up a motto that expresses either your own commitment to freedom or the commitment of someone you admire... you might make bumper stickers, buttons, or banners with your motto on them..." They are asked even to go around to the neighbourhood drug-store and gas-stazione asking people how they could be helped to be more free. How well one knows these children, and adults too, who go further than their own neighbourhood to do just that.

According to Fr Kenny, Jesus Christ "refused to accept the limitations of the human condition, was not content to accept a limited autonomy restricted with the boundaries of birth and death..." "...Whether taken metaphorically or literally, the accounts of the miracles establish Christ's independence of 'the laws of nature' and his willingness to violate them in the interests of human persons". "For the modern
Christian whose perspective is horizontal, the divine imperative stemming from Christ is precisely one of creative involvement and endeavour to bring about the future.”

Go and do likewise.

I must add that for some curious unexplained reason these visions are associated by Fr Kenny with the views of some modern Marxists. Indeed here and there in the early Marx there are hints of a Promethean vision, but Marx would have recoiled from such banalities as those expressed by Fr Kenny, especially by the refusal to accept the limitations of the human condition. In the last paragraph of this book on *The Christian Future* we are told that the choice is not between Marx or Christ. The choice is between Adam Smith and Karl Marx. What a choice and what a future!

Nevertheless Fr Kenny is attached to authority and to an infallible Church. Not that the Church has been infallible so far. Far from it. It has been especially misguided up till now in the areas to which it restricts its claim to infallibility, in the areas of faith and morals. Fr Kenny expects his Church to be infallible in empirical political matters. The church should act as the “conscience of the world”. Oddly enough though, in a particular war the church would not be acting as the conscience of the world if she exhorted the combatants to peace and reconciliation; rather it must make a judgment on which is the guilty party; only so would it be “functioning as the conscience of the world”. Let us not ask what has happened to the “loving, creative and reconciliatory activity” of Christ. Let’s not ask either why Rome should be the “conscience of the world” and not Canterbury, Mecca or Salt Lake City, in view of the fact that Catholics comprise only 18 per cent of the world’s population and Islam is the fastest growing religion in Africa. What worries me more is this view of “conscience”. Why should I give up my moral responsibility on secular matters to any body of men? According to Fr Kenny, the church is, of course, mistaken about the pill. Why should I then accept the judgment of “the conscience of the world” on political matters if on moral grounds I could not accept it? Could I refer to my own conscience against “the conscience of the world?” This infallible church will of course be the one reconstructed according to Fr Kenny’s proposals. As we remember the whole Church will elect the Pope, and anyone can run for the position, except that he will need to be rescued from the “subculture of seminary-Rome-Chancery”.

I leave the procedures to the imagination of the reader. But I wonder whether the clergy will be allowed to mention the papal election in their sermons or outside the Church—or would that be clerical interference in secular politics? We would indeed need a well-organised party which already embodies the “conscience of the world” in order to make the election successful. Personally I am not looking forward to a new reign of Saints.

Just one more word to the publisher. In my copy of the book pp. 203-218 are missing, while pp. 219-234 are duplicated.

*JULIUS KOVESI*
Lord Luck

Lord Luck drives a dove-grey limousine. His vest is made of all the flags in the world. He whistles between his teeth. Nobody has ever seen him smile or give way to a smaller car on the right. He is rich and mean according to some, others acclaiming him for the most benevolent of all big wheels. As he screams around a corner at night the butt of his half-spent cigar will fly out with a shower of red sparks. Thousands at his bidding speed and struggle. Some of them are happy. His good lady rides shotgun, with stars and diamonds in her hair.

CHRIS WALLACE-CRABBE
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