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Issue The Second, September, 1998.

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Editorial

Putting together the second issue is somewhat easier than the first. There are lessons learnt from the process, heightened by the interactive nature of the medium, which also reflects back on policy.

It is reasonable to suppose from the nature of submissions that there are many writers on the threshold of the internet rather than actively using it, so that we have amended our policy and will take suitable hard copy submissions, but with no hard copy returns, advice being on screen. (Look for Mainly for Contributors.)

Format presents problems. For instance, "*A Clever Poet*" in the first issue was originally a scattering of words, to represent the ball in a squash court zinging around at all angles, but appears in html (hyper text markup language) as a mere dribble of words down the margin. Our friendly webmaster informs us that the text size chosen for the magazine, which seemed like 12pt for body text, 14pt for headings and 18pt for section headings, on our screen, would fill the screens of some browsers at four or five times the size! Some screens display Italics and some don't.

With readership at an estimated 200 for the first issue, so far, a hard copy magazine editor would be wondering how to pay the printers, but we are reasonably satisfied. It is a modest start, thanks to the generosity and talent of our contributors. We expect to do better next time.

The process of compiling a magazine on screen should be of some interest to readers. In the case of PP, it is not fully assembled until immediately before its successor is launched. What you have on day 1 is the skeleton, upon which the sinews and vibrant muscle are built, until on the eve of the next issue it emerges fully fleshed.

There have been several fascinating articles in the press about alleged collaboration between Australian writers and the Russians during the second world war and the cold war period afterwards. Yet to surface, are stories about a countervailing force raised by the American CIA through funding to other writers to fight against Russian influence, especially in the writers' organisations. It seems implausible now, but there were struggles to take control of some of the larger branches of the Fellowship of Australian Writers, in the mistaken belief that they exerted great influence on Australian writing and publication and shaped the opinions of the masses! Doubtless, the FAW was seen as something like the Russian Proletarian Writers Guild of the time, an organisation that controlled all aspects of writing, publishing and theatre for the Communist Party. (To appreciate the awfulness of the organisation, see Aleksandar Petrovic's film of Mikhail Bulgakov's, "The Master and Margarita", recently screened again by SBS, if you get the chance.) Apparently, some famous literary figures were bribed with free trips and overseas publication of their work. It should be pointed out that publication of a writer's work did not necessarily mean that the Russians received anything in return.

There was a great deal of silliness over the whole business, which doubtless will be repeated to large extent in the current controversy. We were too young to be involved at the time, but please be warned, if anyone offers to publish our work and offers free overseas trips, we will reveal the innermost secrets of the Fellowship of Australian Writers!

Dictatorship is not completely bad for writers. A former neighbour, writer and film maker Rainer Erler, thinks that having had the East German edition of one of his books, 100,000 in all, sold out in ten minutes, provides some claim to a world record! The sale was by party edict and the party booksellers dutifully obeyed. His only problem was that royalties could only be spent in that unfortunate country, and given the lack of consumer goods and the dreariness of the regime, this presented some difficulty.

PixelPapers 3 will appear on Christmas Eve, filling invisibly over the next two months.

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Poetry - Poems about Poets and Poetry

Crafty Fiction

Would-be want-to-be-writers,
burning with desire to achieve
a satisfying literary fullness
brimming with vintage skills
and labelled with accolades,
seek writers' workshops,
to sip exotic words and ideas
distil lacy verbal essences
concoct strong new cordials
refine old and hoary juices,

but too often they find
a would-be want-to-be-guru,
as empty as themselves,
mistaking longing gonging
of empty vessel resonance,
for heavy tones of repletion,
gathering, as empty vessels
around another empty vessel
for fancied magical osmosis,
fictionally filling full from empty!

Decent Exposure

A poet is an artist
painting with words
to shape and colour
with light and dark
cunning chiaroscuro
symmetry of form
balance
proportion and rhythm
titillating textures
mysterious voids
liquid languid line
but also like the model
nude for viewing on a stage
a poet is revealed

dancing naked on the page.

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Poetry - **Virgin Verse and Verse From the Pros**

Park Love

[Helen Jean Hagemann](#)

Like lovers do
once we parked in
wired valleys
shook leaves from lemon gums
hid in Cimmerian myth
stirred the river oil
while the motor cooled.

Obsessed with love
we warmed to faded sunsets
opened our ripe bodies
to the silky underworld
while the radio hummed.

Furtive we climbed
over bulging Holden seats
toyed with our bareness
tangled love in knots
while the wind wooed.

We claimed the back seat
a hard travesty
of lost space feet
and perspiration
while we pressed.

At midnight
flashing lights caught
us laughing
to cover our young bodies
blowing smoke rings
while we cooled.

.....

Saucy

[Helen Jean Hagemann](#)

This man with the sauce bottle
has great hands
his shirt a neon sign
but it suits his silver hair
carved, brushed skin.

I imagine undressing him
in a room
where he smiles
etches information
into our private sleep.

Perhaps we're drinking coffee
from each other's lips
buying chips and fish
enjoying layers of the day.

Then I return to my first draft
of *Lake-side Friends*.
The rest of my poem
I gift to him.

A Field of White Butterflies

John Kinsella

There is a lot of mystery in me ..
he explains, peering deep into my eyes.
As a child I would examine the smallest
things, things that would not ordinarily
be seen. My mother would tell the neighbours
that I was a daydreamer, there was no other way
of explaining it. That was in a very
cold place, high in the mountains
above Dalmatia in Yugoslavia.
I came here when I was eighteen
looking for work. I knew about
the languages of animals and plants.

Three seasons ago you couldn't
look at this paddock without seeing
a white butterfly -- consuming, crowding

even themselves out of existence.
Last season I saw two, two white butterflies
in the whole year. This year the Monarch
will come, mark my words --
wandering down over the hills, settling
pince-nez on the potato flowers.
You see, where people settle
imbalance follows, the air
being full of white butterflies,
or there being no white butterflies at all.

Ibis

John Kinsella

An ibis picks between thin veins
of grass surfacing on open ground,
I recently upturned, nourished in mist
and exhumed by the morning sun.

Stilt-legged it stalks on a pivot,
graceful in its geometrics.
It is difficult to pinpoint
the centre of balance,
which imparts a life of its own.

In flight it lunges slowly
as though it were not meant
to be airborne, its legs
tight outriggers, mouthpiece
a curved pipette
drawing and discharging
the grey-blue sky.

I also remain afloat
-- an ibis -- riding the crests
and troughs of a changing surface,
settling on aspects of thought,
treading lightly the outskirts.

FROM ESCHATOLOGIES, FACP 1991.

Dog Cemetery Corrigin

Dianne Beckingham

"Our darling Winnie',
forgotten the nights when
you barked at the moon;
'our favourite Sheba',
forgiven the time when
you dragged a sheep's head
under the house verandah;
'our trusty Rip',
who cares about when
you tore up the lettuce patch?
'Our faithful Shep',
now we laugh at the day
you stole the shearers' cook's chops;
'our cheeky Trigger',
fond memories of when
you bit the Bank Manager's bottom;
and for you too Mandy, Candy, Cindy,
Dusty, Jumbo, Gee Whizz,
Kelly, Brindle and Boss,
Paddy Wright's monument stands
with prettified borders and tiles
from Alan Henderson's hands.
Dear departed canine comrades
who would offer you less?

Esperance

Dianne Beckingham

This place seems all sky:
one vast superdome of blue,
and what is not sky
is sea
- turquoise shallows, ink-blue deeps.
What little is neither sea nor sky
is island, sand or wind.

'After You'

Dianne Beckingham

One country thing I love to hate
is a contraption called a 'cocky's gate'.
Strands of wire, levers and strings,

a barb or two to liven up things;
all based on sound physics
but like a mule it has a few tricks
to catch beginners and city hicks.
A scraping of knuckles, a crack on the chin
a spitting of teeth, a bruise on the shin.
Whenever I see this approaching fate
I'm the one who volunteers
a second too late!

Senryu
Dianne Beckingham

Horseflies provoke us -
we strike, slap, switch our bare legs
in bloodlust frenzy.

Hair
Tracy Ryan

The length
of my body is an odd
nudity, what is it
doing there, how
did the hair
get pared down
to just
these patches
we cultivate
like fetishes
meant to excite
when we want
to play animal
or we control
to stress and make
the difference
between sexes
as if otherwise
we couldn't find
ourselves.
I can't force
what once was
to grow now
in a strange season.

I'm caught
between
the dream of before
that paralyses
and the need
of my own nakedness
which is there,
which is there.

(FROM THRILLING DELILAH, FACP.)

Viewpoints

Jim Cornish

In middle life millstoned,
wage slaved, set in ways, often I'd sigh
and yearn for my salad days.

In late life scrap-heaped,
pensioned, lowly paid, sometimes I cry
and long for my salaried days.

Sailing, Sailing

Jim Cornish

From his desk the dipping masts beckon and wave their pennants, pass window after window mingling with street reflections, merging in the midday glow drifting through his reverie,

Down below in the lunchtime crowds he slips his berth, manoeuvres then tacks to windward on the sidewalk, luffs to Barney's Pies and Sandwiches.

Shortens his jib at the crosswalk, changes tack to Forrest Park, around the buoy at the Rose Fountain and drops anchor to leeward.

Briefly ashore for victualling and aweigh, dodging the boom, keeling to the windward tack, hauling through the beacon poles and buses. Weaving through the city fleet, down channel; landfall at the Federal Building, he'll cross the bar, settle for the homeward leg.

For tomorrow is Saturday and freedom, the real tug of sail, thrust of wind and slap of water on a hull.

The Wandering
Frances Sbrocchi

I will take the train
to the far edge and watch from the jetty
as the last tall stack
drops below the horizon

You are one
who wandered beyond the edge
and I stay here
chained to a small circumference

Watching, I too
know the wild
pull of tide
and of wanting

I turn back
to square fenced fields
pull weeds hoping
one day you will return

One day, you'll come
bringing me an exotic seed
a silver-flowering
that I may place
and wonder
where you found it

Porcelain

Frances Sbrocchi

You shape sound
and clay
singing and brown essence

A long time ago, I heard another song
I have forgotten it
but something tells me it is there
without need for resurrection

If I wait long enough
by the shore line
I may find it.

Was it enclosed in a cream-rose shell?
or floating in the seaweed?

Most Isolated

(Police spokesman: "Perth is the most isolated city in the world",
July 30 1998)

We who live in this city, so remote,
know what the rest of humankind can only
guess at - like the privileged astronauts
confined in a capsule, ever receding from
what (we hope) are the ranked attentive faces
at the control centre that is the rest of the world!

So we begin to think that here in spaceship Perth
if we file or paint our nails, hopefully
the heavens gazers down there on earth,
will marvel at our wittiness. Then,
if we alight on a discovered planet, we can
announce that each small step for us
is a giant step for the rest, still watching
left rooted to their revolving homespun sphere.
And so we strive to Keep Perth Clean -
only fools would foul their only nest!

Our greatest commentators, even our poets
my subversive and admirable brethren,
speculating on our future (compared to
the way we live now) have surmised
that, should some future interlopers set
foot in our City of Light, they well might
mistake it for another planet! And yet,
maybe they could recognise that we folks
haven't lost our simple homeliness, despite
our lonely but wondrous journeying.

Glen Phillips August 1998.

drowning ophelia: the madness poems

'Accursed be the sailors that brought this madman! Why did they not throw him into the sea.' (Tristan & Isolde)

1. My Incurrigible Great Aunt

She left her window open
for the boys to come to her
only fourteen and her mother
had caught her before

thought of an orchid's throat
and the wingspan of an eagle
before she chased the boy
through the window

didn't want a rampant flower as a daughter
her full petals
strewn across the floor
for all her sisters to see

when the doctor was called
she was sent screaming
to where incurrigible girls
were quietened during the day
and had their legs tied together
throughout the intimacy of night.

2. Asylum

The woman in the bed next to me
dreams of beings on the other side of the universe
chosen she is given unearthly powers
to rid the world of evil

She mutters to herself on cold days:
they can only be destroyed
by drowning dear,
their mouths filling with water
as they fall to the bottom,
dragged by their necks
with hessian bags full of the things
they had killed for

she tells me the contents of the bags:
here are some knives & guns,
but mostly the bags are full of attitudes,
their edges are rounded & seem harmless,
but are much heftier things that fall quickly

The woman sees herself
as the modern wife of Noah
she is nameless

it is always the wife of Noah
or Noah's wife
a body to hold his erection
a pod for his slimy seed

She has read the story many times
from the Gideon's in the drawer
the poor fools of nurses
think her religious:
She's always in the Bible
poor thing, there'll be a place
in heaven for her

She has given herself a name now
with her new powers
she refuses Noah as a husband
sending the old goat-fucker
hurtling into the water
with his pompous God

Is drowning a God also called deicide?

Her powers are great
she intends to bring back Cary Grant
to be her lover
and has marriage outlawed

You can see the happiness
on the woman's face
when she thinks of this
the atrophied muscles of her skin
break open like parting waters

Ingrid comes & goes
sometimes staying as long as 6 months
sitting up in bed
wearing her yellow helmet

she believes she lives in
a permanent danger zone

once an eighteen year old boy
just missed her
as he fell 10 storeys to his death

She always speaks to Friedrich
who is not allowed in the garden alone

he used to dig into the flower bed
with his hands
ruining the azaleas
searching for the bones of God

he believes that the bones
will be immaculate & huge

and plans to
reconstruct him
piece by piece

3. After the Op

After the lobotomy
the surgeon told her father:
She'll be alright. It worked.
Eight similar ops in the last fortnight
are all robots.

A nice man but busy
gloved hands full of God
and possible new commissions

Came out with only chinks of memory
little pieces of shrapnel
that were sometimes a blue dress on a seesaw
a spear through a cobbler's head
or mother propped up in bed

Came out and was no zombie
grew her hair back over her scars
just couldn't cry till she was forty
tried during Gone with the Wind
her girlfriend a mess of tissues

Didn't marry till she was too old for a child
couldn't pass on a head full of demons
listened to her mother:

Never tell anyone about yourself
don't give them a stick to beat you with

Did remember the day before the op
view from Heathcote across the water
yachts loose & white
like birds grown too heavy
with some flightless curse

Sixty three now
and writes for mental reform
survived a tumour
everyone so full of God's kindness
finding physical injury
easy to cry over

Sixty three now
forty years since she was committed
wears gold horseshoe earrings
and drinks cappuccinos on sidewalk cafes
wishes someday that she had all her memory
but most days it doesn't matter.

4. drowning ophelia

collected flowers for her own grave
crowflowers, nettles & orchids
imagined them floating above her
a petal-flimsy lifebuoy
that came apart on touch

her beneath the water
just inches below the surface
someone saying it was only a brook,
a brook shallow & clear
no one saying that most drownings
are in less than 12 inches of water.

Roland Leach (rleach@plc.wa.edu.au)

Snow White

It's not easy
living with the name Snow White
the beautiful little rich kid
who loses her mother at birth
is replaced with a neurotic stepmother
of the mirrors
& suffers a silent father who goes absent

white skin like snow
lips red like cherry
hair like night

you would think I had it all
but for the old witch
who thought I wanted to displace her

I told her
You can have father, I've no Electra complex
then she flew back to the mirror
loitering her eyes
with the prophecies of vanity

I knew my stepmother's aging madness
and was not surprised
when that fool hunter
came for my heart in a box

but I knew I was in no danger
I simply moistened my eyes
let my hair fall softly
& he ran off to take a deer's heart instead

Then there were the seven dwarfs:
the rumour soon got around
that I was living with 7 dwarfs
but no one cared
had they been a couple of feet taller
I would have been the village whore
but it seems size matters

Then I fell for the apple
I had been bottle fed
& everyone knows
(since Freud)
that apples are breast substitutes
so it was inevitable

I awoke in a perspex box
with some prince
breathing all over me
promising marriage & castles on the ground

I left the creep
boasting of his steeds & jewels
& returned to the forest
to search out a woodsman
who may have been heard
in another story

living happily for a while
with the man of the wielding axe

and the soft hands of night.

Roland Leach

Real Live

by Rob Finlayson

Read at the 1997 Festival Fremantle

This is a quiet thing, an ordinary thing, a not-too-much energy thing because I'm tired, soft, kindly, thinking of not-much-at-all thing, thinking of you and your hands and the way you walk, when I see you at a distance: it's a surprise and a delight, that distance, the shape of it, the unexpectedness of who-is-she? and I won't talk about that anymore, let it go, let it drift, the way your hair drifts over your face in the breeze, and the air takes the thoughts and walks them through the streets, past the ships in the orange halogen the whole night sky aglow outside your window, the fat hum of generators, scent of diesel, and softly, softly, past the man singing on the bus stop and the sun rising after the birds start singing, a few twitters, a burst of magpie, then the general chattering on about this and that, the best places for worms, the sudden appearance of humans in swimsuits, the rising cost of feathering the nest, the astonishing speed at which the grass withers and the flower falls, past the Lance Holt School kids duck-duck-duck walking down to the park through the architects and shipping contractors, only five hundred metres from the door to the railway line or so I'm told on good authority, as the yellow-yellow-yellow-rusty red-yellow-yellow-yellow train groans and squeals past the smell of fish and chips and a go at a cover of Coltrane's 'These Are a Few of My Favourite Things', and round, round rocks washed up with all that well-scrubbed glass and shell in just that patch just there, why just there, in the beach in the armpit of the South Mole pointing out to the long lines of lights in Gage Roads the way they meld into the stars and the huge throb of the ship and the tugs sliding past and the slippery ease of the pilot boat and the head of the seal eyeing you as you sit and your mind goes out, out, out to come back, back, back and say nothing at all, just smile and put your hands in my pockets, as words hum and thoughts want songs, songs, the way the body hums power and heat, the deaf harbour of health amidst the great voice of the hospital, nurses clumping tired across carparks, through corridors hanging in air, the soft, blue air cracked open like a nut until the doctor comes, caresses, cools, a silk sari, dreams of monsoons, cloves, mango, lime, falling into your mouth, your body open like a peach, as the window opens to voice: *piu quel amore, quel amore palpito, del universo, del universo intero, misterioso, misterioso altero, croce, croce delicia, croce delicia, delicia al cor*, and the cat purrs along your leg a living stole, the deep voice of animals, and dreams of numbats, wyolies, bandicoots, coming to you insistent and telling you 'this

place, this place here, by this shop, is where I lived and there, over there, along this path, I walked and found ants, these ants now eating this house, your house, remember me, remember me,' and the dusk comes stealthily, onto your eyes, we fall on our feet, wake so slightly we could be asleep, into the night's possibilities, into the cemetery and the graves of young, of old, over and over again, grandmother, grandfather, father, mother, sister, brother, daughter, son lined up, orderly, memoried, to be remembered, brought back, talked about, walked with through the streets they loved, built, died in, hand in hand, auspicious, pleased to see the living living well, happy, full, dancing at Wrightson's, South Beach, Mojo's, hearing drums at the shifts of weather, the lines crossed and movements noted, moving through town in solemn procession, the slow march, pleading, compassionate glances, dancing, hanging, the washing hanging, thwacking in the stiff breeze, smelling of sea and heat, it makes you love the town, the life, and the thick grip of coffee in your nose, the noise of the flowers growing wild on your floral dress and the arguments over green love gone brown at table after table, laughter, a dog barks, your hand turns the page, a voice calls, somebody sits down, an hour goes by, but you're busy, the kids are calling out in the yard, there's a scraped knee and the teenager's still in the shower after hours, and the phone calls from New York reverse charge from the eldest and someone says, a day's sail, and you're away and the sea's kind and your hand floats in the sky, thickened and fallen to earth as clouds stick to the mast, and lobsters climb up and nest in your soft throat, shedding their skins, naked, indefinite, forgetting themselves, their death, the long, long aria into rebirth, death, rebirth, as you slip naked into the sea, your belly white, like lambs upon the hills of Balingup, as flags crackle along bubbling bitumen streets, and you glide past enthusiastically travelling young Europeans and Japanese into the echoing halls of the supermarket, stepping into Valhalla, land of plenty, where there's everything and nothing in a realm of endless pleasure, you salve the scraped knee and tell stories older than this town as the footy murmurs from radios and tellys, the warriors in the colosseum eating lions, Christians, the news, and sailors roam the streets, their beautiful death docked in the suburb of the harbour, and it occurs to you as you put down your work, as the phone stops ringing, as the door closes, as you turn the key in the ignition and the engine dies, that this is it, this life, your life, is real life, and you're living it, right now, as the breath goes in, and comes out, as you get one, then another, then another, second older and your heart breaks and the years pour out washing, laving, with wild and sad and angry songs and shouts and murmurs of a creek creeping into a wetland, a vale of rushes and lilies and fish, the glance of a water rat looking into your eyes as it stops from licking its fur, and you're weeping, as life goes coursing through you in torrents, as a child walks in an adult and walks out a child, standing up, walking, through the streets, the aching, iridescent, sweet streets of your town, your life.

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Shorts - old and new

Power of Prayer
Lloyd Davies

The school I went to denied there was any conflict between religion and science. Each had its own place and was taught as such. Physics and chemistry were lumped together and called simply "Science". Religion as a subject was called "Divinity". Almost symbolically the school chapel was adjacent to the science lab, its grey limestone colonial gothic in tranquil contrast to the school's stark red brick.

Although the school forbade us entry to the lab until we turned ten and graduated to Second Form, we had some experience of the lab as "infants". The First Form room shared a common wall with the lab and for years we jumped and cried in feigned terror at the odd controlled explosion detonated by our neighbours. When they experimented with rotten egg gas we held our noses gasping and groaning. "pooh!"

We were not taught any science in First Form. The nearest we got was a bit of nature study -- flowers and trees, birds and bees -- very innocent birds and bees at that. Our teacher, a Mrs Gatling, the only female teacher in the school was a former missionary who had spent her life helping her husband teach savages to salute the flag, serve God and honour the King. When her husband died (school rumour had it he had been speared by Zulus) she came out of the jungle to teach us.

The voyage of the "Beagle" featured in a geography lesson and with it the name Charles Darwin. Mrs Gatling did not approve of Charles Darwin:

"He's the silly man who says we're all descended from monkeys."

Mrs Gatling was very strong on Divinity, particularly the bloody biblical battles wherein the Children of Israel smote their enemies hip and thigh. I shared with Mrs Gatling her love of these exciting passages and the wonderful poetic language of the old-time bible we were taught in those days. The first essay I ever wrote was a paraphrase of one of the glorious victories in which our side completely annihilated a vastly superior force of Philistines. It was the first of many such essays. I earned Mrs Gatling's approval by winning the divinity prize three years in succession.

It was important to earn Mrs Gatling's approval because religion was much more than just the subject, "Divinity". It was a basic guide to how the school operated. A traditional Church of England boys' school, it ran on the lines of an English public school. The old biblical maxim, "spare the rod and spoil the child", was one of its fundamental rules. During recesses the corridor outside the masters' common room shivered to the swish of canes and trembled to cries of boys in pain. The reek of stale tobacco smoke added a brimstone touch to this place of torment.

Mrs Gatling never entered the Masters' Common Room but often sent unruly infants there for punishment, in which she was a strong believer. I made certain I was never sent there.

Entry to Second Form meant leaving Mrs Gatling and the protective aegis of teacher's pet. There were compensations however. Divinity was now taught by the school Chaplain, a roly-poly man who had just come from Oxford with new ideas about the subject. He was very strong on the New Testament and the concept of Christian Love. He was not very strong on punishment but kept remarkable order simply by being so kind that no one had the heart to play up. He also used devices like holding little impromptu morality plays as part of his Divinity lessons and telling fascinating stories about everyday events happening to everyday people yet always subtly imparting some fragment of homespun morality.

The Chaplain's greatest innovation, at least for me, was his concept of prayer. Mrs Gatling, of course, had been keen on prayer -- very formal and conventional prayer. She adjured us to remember, at bed time, to kneel and say the Lord's Prayer to which should be added special requests to bless our parents and others near and dear to us. The Chaplain, however, believed that prayers should be

informal, offered up in a spirit of relaxation. Instead of kneeling at your bedside and gabbling through them because you were cold and in a hurry to get under the blankets you should get into bed, make yourself comfortable and: "have a conversation with God chaps. Treat Him as your best friend. Tell Him your troubles and ask for His protection for yourself and those you love. Ask for His help in defending what is right and resisting what is wrong."

I found this was a wonderful way of saying prayers. It helped me to relax, unload all my worries and forget the misfortunes of the day. It's true that I often fell asleep before the end but I always remembered where I'd got to and finished them off when I awoke next morning.

Of course we all looked forward to getting into the Science lab at last and making loud bangs and nasty smells to annoy the little First Formers we'd left behind. Disappointment, that common curse of childhood, dashed all our hopes in the form of the new Science master, Mr Jones. If using the rod on ten year old children was the guide line, Mr Jones must have been a truly religious man. Before the first lesson was over he ordered three of my classmates to report to the Master's Common Room at lunch time. They came out with white, tear-stained faces and the cuts they showed us in the change room were gruesome -- some even oozing blood. One of my mates said this had nothing to do with Mr Jones being religious. His old man knew Mr Jones. He hated teaching. He wanted to be an industrial chemist. He was only teaching us because there was a Depression going on and he couldn't get a better job. So he took it out on us.

We didn't think that was much of an excuse. We nicknamed him "The Snake". He was tall and skinny with glittering eyes that darted everywhere, never missing a thing, a long thin nose, a mean mouth that only opened to hiss at you and, boy! could he sting! "Snake" was the only name for him.

The Snake brought to an end my own angelic immunity from the Masters' Common Room. It was such a painful and humiliating experience I have suppressed the memory of the actual caning and what it was about. All I can remember is the overwhelming sense of injustice I carried away with me because I had been punished for something someone else had done but wouldn't own up to.

I could not relax that night when I said my prayers. For one thing it was too painful to lie on my back and I found it hard to pray lying on my side. To change from side to side I had to roll over on my stomach. In my conversation with God I just had to deal with The Snake. What he had done was wrong. It had to be put right. The only way I could think to do that was to give him the Gatling treatment. I called upon God to punish him for his wrong-doing. Out of respect for the occasion I referred to him as Mr Jones and not The Snake. With that happy thought I fell asleep.

Next Science lesson I sat uneasily on my hard jarrah seat in the second row and watched The Snake intently. He seemed unaffected by my prayers. That was not why I watched him intently. Everyone did that. A moment's inattention could evoke the terrifying command:

"Report to the Common Room at lunch time son!"

Watching The snake today wasn't all that hard though. He was doing an interesting experiment with a flask and a piece of phosphorus at the demonstration table at the front of the class. The purpose of the experiment was to show that if you burn something in a sealed container it will not lose weight because the gases produced by the burning cannot escape so all that you have done is to transform the object into the by-products of ignition.

He didn't worry our little heads by telling us that some of the matter does actually escape, being transformed into energy and escaping as heat. School science classes weren't into nuclear physics in those days and, any way, the lab scales wouldn't have been able to record such minutiae.

The idea was to get a flask and a cork, weigh them and record the weights in your science note-book ("Neatly, son. Neatly!"). Then a piece of pure phosphorus (which is always kept in water because it starts to burn once the air gets to it) is plucked out of its jar with a pair of tongs, weighed and popped into the flask then corked in:

"While we're waiting add the weight of the phosphorus to the weight of the flask and the cork and record it".

To show us how, The Snake left the flask on the demonstration table in front of us and strode over to the black board. The board shook with the fierce strokes of his hand. He underlined the total so hard that the chalk broke and fell to the floor. No one was game even to snigger.

By this time the phosphorus was beginning to burn and fill the flask with smoke. But, it seemed, not quickly enough for The Snake. Impatiently he strode back to the table, picked up the flask and shook it vigorously.

BANG! Glass fragments explode everywhere! Phosphorous smoke trails festoon the room, anticipating by fifty years the tragic end of the Challenger shuttle and the teacher-in-space. The kid in front of me screams. Rushes outside clutching his forehead. Others race to the back of the lab yelling:

"Water! Get water!"

I lean forward and try to beat out a patch of flaming fall-out with my science note book. The Snake dances up and down behind the table holding the front of his fiercely burning trousers. Phosphorus sticks to his hands they, too, begin to burn. All the time he yells at me as I futilely destroy my note book beating at the flames:

"Get back son! Get back!"

With a thunder of feet the others return with beakers of water which they hurl over The Snake. I leave my note-book to burn itself out and join the fun. Tacking on to the beaker-chain, I help douse The Snake with water until he ceases to smoke.

An ambulance took the Snake away to hospital. He didn't come back till the next term. When he did his hand was too badly scarred to cane anyone.

Prayers that night presented something of a problem. Did God really do that to Mr Jones in answer to my prayers? Or was it one of those things that just happen? And if He did, was that the sort of thing you could thank Him for? Still it was something you just couldn't leave out.

I stayed awake worrying about it until the solution revealed itself:

"Father please forgive Mr Jones for his sins" I prayed.

I then fell into a deep untroubled sleep.

The Copy Cat

Walter Vivian

I sold a nude.

I was on a high as I mingled with the crowd at the gallery. People sipped wine and looked at my work. I hoped to hear things that would massage my artistic ego.

You have to be an artist to know what it's like to sell your first picture at your first exhibition. Selling gives a sort of seal of approval that others think that you have made it as an artist. I desperately wanted to be a success.

"He's a very good draughtsman," said a tall bearded man. I had a sensation of pride and unbelievable pleasure.

"He's very much a copyist, though," said the pretty woman with him. "He draws well but there isn't much invention."

I could have cursed her for the pain of my deflating ego. It was a comment that had been hung on me more than once at art school. I'm honest enough to admit to myself that I had passing thoughts about the same thing. Somehow, I can always draw a good likeness but I find it hard to work my studies into successful and interesting compositions. Perhaps it was because as a kid I'd channelled my artistic urges into copying reproductions. The walls of my parents' house were richly covered with stiff little Rembrandts and Monets and Heysens, all laboriously copied by me from magazines and calendars.

"You're selling me. Congratulations." I turned to see Jennifer at my side. She kissed me.

"I'm going to miss that picture. It was one of my favourites," I said. It was true. My water colour nude of Jennifer was one of those lucky things where everything went just right. I'd been able to capture her slender grace and an air of vulnerability which caught at my heart strings. I didn't love her with any great passion, but we were lovers and had slept together in the last year of art school and for the past year. She had her studio and I had mine. We enjoyed each other's company and spent a lot of time together. She didn't like me seeing other women and got very emotional when I spent the night with someone else.

We wandered around arm in arm, looking at my pictures as if for the first time and listening for more comments. Jennifer began to snigger when an older woman remarked to her companion that one of my landscapes would match the family room. It was obvious that she was more concerned with the colour of the mount and the frame than the picture.

The crowd thinned out and soon there was nobody left in the gallery. There were three red dots.

"That's not a bad start," said Jean, the gallery owner. "You should get enough money out of those three to do something about your car. Perhaps more will sell during the week." She was a kindly, older woman, aged about forty, and I thanked her. Much as I'd have loved to do something about the gearbox of my old Land Rover, I had debts that had to be paid, first. We had another drink and packed up for the night.

Jennifer sat up in bed and read me the art critic's review in the morning paper. I was, "promising and technically competent but he has to draw on his imagination and use the artists' inner eye."

"That's a load of bull," I said.

Jennifer pulled a face at me. She looked beautiful with her long brown hair spread on the pillows.

I haunted the gallery on Monday and Tuesday but there were no more red spots. I was so depressed

on Wednesday that I gave up trying to work and drove down to the beach to spend the day swimming and sketching. On Thursday I stayed with Jennifer, half-heartedly reading some paperbacks and watching her throw pots on the wheel. We went out for lunch and had a carafe of cheap red wine.

"Where have you been?" said Jean, when I fronted up to the gallery on Friday afternoon. "I think you have a patron." She gestured towards my pictures. There were eight red dots. "Mrs Kerr seemed especially interested in your self-portraits. Said they are fine pieces of work. She wants to meet you. She'll be calling at four."

My two self portraits were brutally honest. They showed my red hair and my thin patch which I resented as I reckon that I'm too young to be losing hair. Whenever Jennifer wants to annoy me she runs her fingers around it.

I hung around the gallery with nothing to do but pretend to be a client when other people came in. I itched to work over one of my paintings, a reclining nude. I could see that I hadn't properly foreshortened the lower right leg. Jennifer was the model, again. If I'd had it at home in my studio it would have been out of the frame and on an easel.

After an hour of mooning around I could stand it no longer and went out to the bistro round the corner for a drink and a serve of quiche. Three drinks later, it was four o'clock and I hurried back to the studio. Jean was talking to an expensively suited, blonde woman.

"Here he is," Jean said. "Brendon. Come and meet Mrs Kerr."

Mrs Kerr offered her ungloved hand and I shook it. "I'm pleased to meet you," she said, fixing her blue-grey eyes on my hair for a moment before looking directly into my eyes.

She was a beautiful woman, with flawless smooth skin and a full, firm figure. She could have passed for twenty, but I noted that she had that telltale fullness under the chin which even thin people get in their late thirties. Hers was the sort of beauty that never faded.

"I admire your work, Mr Byrne," she said. "You have a distinctive style."

"Mrs Kerr has bought five pictures," said Jean.

"Thank you very much," I stammered. "Please call me Brendon."

"Do you do commissions, Brendon? Oils?"

I was nonplussed. I hadn't done any commissions for the simple reason that nobody had ever asked me. But I supposed that she meant sort of in principle.

"Yes," I said.

"That's very good. Could you come on Tuesday afternoon? Here's the address. I think a canvas about a metre wide would be most suitable." She gave me an elegantly printed card.

I could only nod dumbly.

"You handled the conte crayon on those self portraits very well, especially the hair. Goodbye."

Mrs Kerr smiled sweetly, pulled on her gloves and walked down the steps to her car. It was a cream Rolls.

"You're a lucky boy," said Jean, squeezing my cheeks. I thought she was going to kiss me. She gave me a hundred dollars advance and I took Jennifer out for a restaurant meal.

I could hardly wait for Tuesday afternoon to come around. At half past twelve I stuffed my easel, painting gear and three canvases into the back of the Land Rover and headed across town.

It was an imposing house in the best part of town, set in spacious grounds and with wide panoramic views of the bay and the hills. It was fenced by high wrought iron railings with stone pillars. The high gates were shut. For a moment I didn't know what to do and then I noticed a steel pillar at car window height with a built in speaker, something like a drive-in movie unit. I edged the Land Rover over beside it.

"Is that you, Brendon?"

I nodded foolishly and then said, "Yes."

"Come in and drive round to the right side of the house."

The gates swung open and I drove down the drive.

She was waiting for me at a little porch and directed me to park beside a clump of small native pines screening the view from the road.

"I'm so glad that you could come." She smiled sweetly, took my hand for a moment and led the way into a large airy room with full length windows overlooking a pool on a lower terrace and a stunning vista over the bay. The furnishings were sumptuous and old world looking. She pointed to a brocaded chair for me and perched herself gracefully on an elegant chaise longue with satin pillows. An older woman brought in a tray.

"Thank you mother. This is Brendon."

She offered no further introduction. I mumbled, "Pleased to meet you," and the woman smiled at me and left. We had tea.

"I want you to paint a picture of me as a surprise for my husband, so that there must be secrecy. I am prepared to pay ten thousand dollars. Five now and another five when it is finished, if it pleases me. There is five thousand dollars in the envelope."

I had an unreal hammering of a pulse in my head as the shock of it hit me and I felt the thick bundle of hundred dollar notes in the envelope that she pressed into my hand.

"Of course," I said. "I agree."

She helped me to set up my easel and paints and then stood in front of the chaise longue.

"I want a reclining pose here."

A sort of Madame Recamier, "I said, referring to David's well known painting of a French society beauty dressed in a long gown and reclining on a couch.

"No," she said, flicking open the front of her dress so that her full breasts thrust out. She dropped the dress to the floor and stepped clear, nude and very beautiful. "I had more Goya's Duchess of Alba or Manet's Olympia in mind."

She kicked off her shoes and posed herself against the cushions with great coolness, wearing only a pearl necklace, but a delicate blush spread from her face and neck to her bosom.

She was a truly beautiful woman and I felt a flicker of desire.

I was surprised for a moment but the situation was so familiar that I was quite self possessed. "Don't be embarrassed," I said, feeling a glow of embarrassment myself. "I've drawn hundreds of naked people. Old, young, fat, thin, unbelievably fat and unbelievably thin and even pregnant women. It's quite a clinical thing really. Like undressing for the doctor. I'll do some sketches first."

I worked away at my sketches and was soon absorbed. Outsiders can't understand how an artist can draw when faced with naked beauty, simply because they have never known the joy of rendering the complex curves of an arm or drawing a hand or a foot or meeting the daunting challenge to make an image invested with some of the life of the model. She was very pretty, her figure full enough to have interesting capes and bays, yet slender and graceful.

"Could I rest? I'm aching to move."

"I'm sorry," I said, and she stood up and stretched, in a most charming way, so that I hoped that I could store the image in my memory for future reference.

I showed her the sketch.

"It's the best drawing I've ever done," I said, and it was. I'd caught her with that faint tinge of embarrassment. It was a live drawing.

"It's exquisite," she said and kissed me full on the lips. In a moment my arms were about her and she pulled herself close. For the second time that day a heavy, ecstatic pulse yammered in my head. She unfastened my jeans and pulled me half onto the chaise longue.

"Shouldn't we take precautions," I stammered. "I think I've got condoms in the car." I was mindful of some of Picasso's erotic drawings with the artist in flagrante delicto with the model, brushes and palette still in his hand. I was still grasping my conte pencils.

She ignored me and soon it was too late. We lay in in a slack embrace. I dropped the pencils.

"Leave those please, mother!"

I scrambled to my feet, attempting to hide my nakedness and tripped over my jeans as the older woman retreated through the door.

Mrs Kerr resumed the pose. I pulled on my clothes and began to sketch in the outline on the canvas, using a light umber acrylic wash which dried quickly and would not stain the oil paint later. She acted as if nothing had happened. I sketched quickly but without the same sparkle as before.

"Can you come on Friday morning, Brendon?"

"Yes, but it would be better to have the same time so that the light is the same," I said.

"I'm sorry, but it has to be Fridays. My husband likes to leave the office early on Friday afternoons so that he is always there early on Friday mornings. Tuesday is my husband's club day."

She said, "my husband," in the same way as the Queen does when she's talking about Prince Philip.

"I think that is enough for the day," she said, putting on her shoes and house dress. "Leave the drawings and I'll keep them for Friday."

"I'd like to work on them in the studio," I said with some surprise.

She shook her pretty blonde head and that was that.

I drove back to the studio in ecstasy, thinking about getting a better car and one of those expensive, variable easels. Jennifer hugged me and we dined out at one of the best restaurants. Somehow, in the taxi home, we sort of drifted into an arrangement to get married.

On Friday, I arrived at the Kerr mansion at nine o'clock, my heart pounding with excitement.

When I saw Mrs Kerr waiting at the porch, I knew that I was in love. She was the most beautiful woman I had ever known.

I worked hard, blocking in the underpainting. As before, she pulled me down onto the chaise longue and we made love.

That was the pattern for the next three months of my life. As the painting progressed, my infatuation grew. I only seemed to live on Tuesdays and Fridays and spent the rest of the week thinking about her. Our lovemaking was always abrupt, almost explosive, and at her initiative. She would not let me use any endearments or talk about it. Afterwards, it was always as if nothing had happened.

When she greeted me she was warm and sexy and kissed me on the lips. At parting she was cool, offering her hand or her cheek to be kissed. I felt that I was being switched on and off.

My next exhibition was a sellout. As Jean said, "Once you get a few red dots, it gives people confidence that the value is right."

The more I captured the likeness of Mrs Kerr's lovely body, the more I realised how little I knew about her. From time to time her face appeared in the social pages with her husband, Wayne. He was a multi-millionaire, very big in property and mining and often in the news because of his involvement in huge business deals involving hundreds of millions of dollars. There was something familiar about his picture as if I had met him before. He was tall and seemed to be fairly old, in his forties.

There were no children. Mrs Kerr's mother lived with them. She managed to embarrass me at intimate moments on several occasions. I suspected that she could be spying on us but after a while I didn't care. They had two big Dalmatians which roamed around the grounds.

On about the tenth visit, we were making love when the older woman appeared at the foot of the chaise longue and said. "Wayne's home," and left the room.

We slid apart and grabbed frantically for our clothes. Mrs Kerr was tense and pale and fumbled at the buttons over her bosom. I caught the leg of my jeans and hopped to get my balance.

"Hide the picture!" Mrs Kerr hissed and I slid it behind some drapes. "What'll we do?" she moaned, clasping her hands in an agony of apprehension, for the situation was not going to offer any reasonable explanation without a picture.

"Pose!" I said, inspiration dawning. "In your dress."

I whipped a half finished sketch onto the easel, sketched in the outlines of the dress at lightning speed and began to block in a floral pattern.

Deliberate, slow footsteps approached. I could feel my ears burning with the heat of embarrassment. Mrs Kerr held her breath, her pretty face chalk white.

The older woman appeared in the doorway, the hint of a smile on her face.

"Wayne's gone. He had to dash home for a file. He said to give you his love. He couldn't stop."

"Mother!" said Mrs Kerr, breathing out in a long sigh of relief. I've heard people swear using the same tone of voice.

The picture was exquisite. Never before have I invested so much time in a painting and the more I worked on it the more I loved it and the better it became. It had everything, the soft rosiness of a beautiful woman, a gentle glow of light and life and an entrancing composition. It was substantially finished, as is any painting after a few hours, but I could have worked on it for the rest of my life, like Leonardo did with the Mona Lisa. It was my masterpiece.

I was deliriously happy. I married Jennifer, or rather, she married me and moved into my studio with her clay and potters wheel and a big brassbound steamer trunk of colourful old dresses and shawls that she collected from opportunity shops.

We both worked hard from first light until late at night. I produced a range of pictures and was pleased with the quality. I was surprised to find that there was something more to learn about Jennifer almost every day and my love for her grew. Not many man are blessed in having both a lovely wife and beautiful lover. Strangely, when I made love to one I thought of the other! I had no guilt because everything seemed to be so right. I never told Jennifer about it.

My heart was full as I stopped at the gates of the Kerr mansion. It was a beautiful day. The bay was a sparkling cobalt blue like in a Streeton painting. Birds sang and the trees blazed with scented blossoms.

Mrs Kerr was waiting for me behind the tall gate, the Dalmatians prancing foolishly beside her.

"I'm sorry Brendon. I want no more sittings. I'm very pleased with your work. Here's the money I promised you. Goodbye." She pushed a thick wad of notes between the wrought iron bars and I took it automatically, too stunned for words.

"But, I love you," I stammered.

She looked directly at me for a moment. Her face was slightly puffy.

"No,"she said. "Goodbye."

She turned and walked away with a slight, swaybacked carriage, the dogs jumping for her attention. I retreated to the wagon and sat stunned for a few minutes before driving back down the hill, tears in my eyes.

I called again on Tuesdays and Fridays for several weeks but Mrs Kerr refused to see me. The first time, she said, "It's over, Brendon. Don't come any more." After that the speaker at the gate was dead.

Jennifer and I had an exhibition at Jean's gallery. The critics were kind. and we were both selling well. I drifted around the crowd listening for comments. Two well dressed women were admiring one of Jennifer's huge, decorated plates.

"Cynthia Kerr's got one very like that," said the taller of the two, speaking in the exaggerated tones of the new and foolishly rich.

"I believe she's expecting to enlarge her household," said her companion. "And they thought that they couldn't."

I wondered idly about what they were saying, for they were obviously talking about my Mrs Kerr, who had a big house, anyway, but my attention was caught by Jean, the gallery owner, who beckoned me over to meet some people.

On impulse, Jennifer and I jetted overseas for nearly two years, to do the artistic thing. Our passports were valid from a student study trip to Bali and we had enough money. We backpacked through Europe and had a flat in Montmartre, then "rode the dog," travelling by Greyhound across the United States and took an apartment in an old hotel in San Francisco. We stopped off at Bali for two months, sketching and photographing as we trekked away from the tourists.

It was good to get back home. I was full of enthusiasm and the creative juices flowed. One night, I did a drawing of Mrs Kerr from memory, in the same reclining pose that I had studied for so long. It was not a very good likeness but it was an exceptional piece of work, with pleasing composition and full of life. It was good because I had nothing to show from my many hours with her. She had kept all the sketches and there was no chance that my painting of her would ever be shown publicly. I often thought of her, but no longer with yearning.

"Perhaps I'm drawing with my inner eye," I said to Jennifer. "I do believe I'm no longer a copyist."

We were waiting at the traffic lights in the high street when a cream Rolls glided into the lane beside our Range Rover.

"Isn't that your patron?" said Jennifer.

Sure enough, it was Mrs Kerr, looking radiantly beautiful. She stared straight ahead as if she knew I was gazing at her and was avoiding eye contact. The man beside her was Wayne Kerr, looking so different from the black and white photographs in the newspapers, for his hair was as red as mine. There was a child.

The little face that peeped out from the kiddy seat between the Kerrs was one that I'd seen thousands of times at my parents' home, a studio portrait of me as a two year old. The child was a replica of me. Wayne Kerr looked idly in my direction. He caught my gaze, and smiled and winked elaborately as if we were old friends or acquaintances, as he drove away.

Jennifer nudged me to indicate the lights had changed. I engaged the clutch and rolled the wagon forward, automatically. I was stunned.

"I'm sorry. I was thinking of something else," I said.

I knew that the Kerr child was mine. The patronage that had established my fame and fortune in the art world had not been for my artistic creativity. I'd been hired as the ultimate copyist, a surrogate father!

Next morning we called to have coffee with Jean at her gallery, to tell her about our travels and Jennifer's pregnancy.

"You'll find that parenthood brings a new perspective on life, especially for first time fathers," Jean said. "By the way, Lady Kerr left a note for you, Brendon. I think it's for another commission."

Sure enough that was it. Cynthia Kerr's fine writing on her card invited me to name my price. The memories of our encounters came tumbling back into my mind and I felt a surge of desire, despite myself and I knew that I couldn't resist. I wondered cynically how much a copy of the artist was really worth, especially if they were hoping for a girl!# (3915 WDS)

(THIS STORY RATED A COMMENDED IN THE CARSON GOLD COMPETITION, BUT I HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO PLACE IT FOR PUBLICATION. IT COULD MAKE AN INTERESTING FILM.)

The Truthful Politician

Walter Vivian

Honest John was a serious young man, who liked helping people. He was an active member of two service clubs, did voluntary work at the children's shelter and supported the church on the hill. John married, had children and a mortgage, was promoted in his job to be manager at the super market, lost a good deal of hair from the top of his head, and began to see that there was much injustice in this world and that things should be put right.

He decided that this was best done through politics. He thought about the merits of both the Fools' Party and the Liars' Party, realising that mostly they were very alike and were neither dishonest nor foolish for most of the time. The Fools had their moments of weakness equally in deciding policy and putting it in place. The Liars' infirmity was hardly noticeable as it only showed itself at odd stages in their activities and their supporters maintained that this should be sufficient to establish probity on the grounds that it was near enough, and besides, people believed them most of the time.

Honest John joined the Fools' Party, which was a pity, for the public were mostly charmed with the Liars, who had not been caught out recently, so that his political ambitions had a poor vehicle to carry them forward. He worked as a branch committeeman for two years and was soon the trusted branch treasurer. Came news of forthcoming elections and the branch cast around for a candidate to stand against the sitting member, Big Al Camino, who had a big reputation in the legislature and the councils of the Liars' Party.

"Our candidate won't have a dog's chance," said John.

The electorate committee, normally jealous and bitchy, had no applicants for the job and unanimously voted him the nomination to be their candidate.

Soon, the face of Honest John looked down from hoardings, lamp posts, public conveniences, churches, houses of ill fame, bus and rail stations all over the west end of the city. His bill stickers and Big Al's bill stickers fought a tacky war, trumping each other's bills by pasting over them in what proved to be a futile exercise, because the graffiti writers took part as a democratic third force and the posters grew beards, moustaches, spectacles, sideburns and crude captions. John's posters and Al's posters were soon lookalikes.

The campaign settled down to the oblivion accorded a one-horse race. Bookmakers offered as much as 20:1 on Honest John. The morning newspaper took a telephone poll and Big Al scored 48 points, undecided 41 and Honest John a mere 11.

A faint stir of interest emerged when the newspaper's political roundsman asked John's opinion about his own party's past record, and received a devastatingly honest reply, making his day. John's new fame for shooting his own foot brought him onto television and he was quoted nationally and feted for a week, before the national chairman, the Fools' Party leader in the legislature and the Fools' public relations consultant, each telephoned him in long calls of such vituperation and blistering

intensity that poor John was left white-faced and shaken and effectively silenced.

Another poll showed that 17% of the undecided had moved across to support Big Al Camino. John's meagre 11 points became the joke of the town. Eleven had only to be called to bring forth hoots of laughter and people having residences with that unfortunate number were saddened at the oft repeated, unfunny jokes suggesting that they might go into politics and would they like to back the loser in a two horse race? Bingo callers changed from calling, "Legs Eleven", to "Poor John's vote."

John's supporters no longer wore their badges. His committee rooms had an air of sad neglect and defeat was in the air.

Fortune and careless confidence took a hand on the election's eve. An auditor's report and some stirring by a reporter implicated Big Al in a four figure kickback deal. Al slumped five points and undecided gained five, but John gained nothing.

As if the fates were doubly cruel, Big Al was captured on radio and in the hearing of some eight hundred supporters at a fundraising ball, in an episode involving a grand piano, an anteroom, the Liars' charmingly gowned chairperson, some difficult underwear, an inexplicably live microphone and an honest and humane attempt to console a man deep in his cups.

In vain did Honest John point out that there was no evidence that his rival's implication in the kickback scandal was for personal gain, and on the other matter, it was unfortunate but they were both virtually divorced. His committee chairman threatened to shoot him if he did not shut up and John was pretty sure that he meant what he said. John shut up and was elected by a narrow margin to show the public's fierce dislike of immorality.

His term of office was a complete disaster, for he saw the truth clearly and told it. He quite clearly told the Liars when they were lying and the Fools when they were fooling. Worse, he congratulated them when they were not lying and fooling!

When Carlos Gottberg of the Liars' Party gave a strong address on urban renewal, John leapt to his feet, eyes shining, and congratulated him. The leader of the Fools' Party turned ashen, then bright red and sent his deputy to carpet poor John, pointing out that opposing parties, by definition, never had good ideas. In the intimacy of the men's washroom, the Liars' leader savaged him for being sarcastic. Political reporters scoffed at his naive simplicity.

Honest John said that:

Everybody had the right to work and the duty to work as productively as they could.

Everybody should be cared for and valued.

For streets to be safe and clean, there must be sufficient police, fire-fighters and health workers, for which people had to pay.

The environment should not be compromised but there was a cost to maintain it.

Energy conservation had to be practised as well as preached.

Politicians and leaders generally should set an example to the people.

Industrial action should not be allowed to place the welfare of others in jeopardy.

Policies should be based on facts rather than assertions.

Truth was not merely something that people believed.

Everybody had to contribute to the running of the state.

Honest John's impractical ideas were derided and he never got the hang of politics, not understanding that truth and politics were odd bedfellows. Even at electorate level, his blunt honesty upset many voters, who were used to their member taking up their complaints, no matter how outrageous or trivial they were. At the end of his term John was defeated and returned to his old job, managing the market.

But Big Al Camino married the Liars' chairperson and made a very public donation to a well known charity. Elected once more, he enjoys a big reputation in the legislature and the councils of the Liars' Party.# (1170 WDS)

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Page Three Writer/Reader Revealed

WATCH THIS SPACE!

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Articles old and new

Sherry-Anne Jacobs on Jessie.

Where did you find inspiration for Jessie?

I read a non-fiction book called THE RAILWAY NAVVIES by Terry Coleman, which went into the history of the building of the railways, especially the navvies who dug them (mostly by hand). He mentioned the women in one chapter and that was it. But it set me thinking about what life must have been like for the navvies' womenfolk. So I dreamed up a heroine and followed her into the story.

There is a very strong sense of time and place in her story. How did you research this?

By the book above, then by half a shelf full of research tomes. I have a huge bookcase full of research books, two metres high and four and a half metres long. I collect just about anything that might appeal. I also did a history unit at UWA to cover the main period of English history I'm interested in i.e. 1750 to date, and that was very helpful too. I'm glad you feel there's a strong sense of time and place. I try very hard to get into the era, so much so that when I was writing SPINNERS LAKE, set in the 1860s, I stood up from my computer and moved my 'crinoline' carefully - only of course I wasn't wearing one. Maybe it was a cyber-crinoline. When I write, I'm there, which is why I need an office away from distractions. If I write sad stuff, I weep, if it's humorous (I hope!) I chuckle.

Were there surprises in the research process?

No, not really. When I started thinking seriously of writing historical novels, I spent a couple of years setting up my research systems and trying to understand the broad parameters for my era. Then it's just a question of going in and doing it. I didn't get any surprises in JESSIE, in that sense, but I got one in my current work LIKE NO OTHER, set in the mid-eighteenth century in Lancashire. We automatically assume Lancashire means cotton mills, don't we? And yet, when I researched the history of my own town, Rochdale, in much more depth, I found it was the centre of the flannel industry long after cotton was flourishing around it. So I had to rewrite my plot background to cover wool-spinning and handloom weaving both. Very interesting.

How much of the story did Jessica's character write?

Oh, I walked alongside her all the way through it for the first version of the book. But there was ten years between that version, which got rejected, and the final version, which I polished greatly, since it was my 12th novel to be published, so I'd learned a lot by then.

Is this the beginning of a new series?

I hadn't intended it to be, but I've had a few queries from readers on that matter. Funny, I'd only thought of it as a single title, but they want to know what happens to the secondary hero and his sister and his cousin. Hmm. Maybe one day. But not yet. I've just had four book proposals accepted by my UK publisher, so am a bit busy for the next two years.

I first wrote this story in the late 1980s, and it was then called CISSIE. It was the second novel I've ever tried to write and although I was very pleased with my story, it didn't get accepted. At the time, I

couldn't understand why, but now I understand fully - I was still learning my trade. Great story idea, good characters, but unpolished writing and not enough tension. If you're in that position with your own writing, where you can't understand why you're not being accepted, I suggest you read my how-to book PLOTTING AND EDITING*, which explains it all more fully.

In 1996, I was drawing up proposals for two more novels for my UK publisher, Hodder & Stoughton, when it occurred to me that I might save myself time and trouble by rehashing CISSIE. In addition, I'd always retained my fondness for the tale and would be happy to see it in print. So I did a quick rehash of the synopsis and my idea was accepted. Easy, I thought. I'll just polish the story up a bit and there you are.

When I came to rewrite the book, however, I was shocked rigid by the placidity and linear plotting of my early writing. Going through JESSIE/CISSIE taught me exactly how far I'd come and emphasised what I tell to unpublished writers - there's a longer learning period than you think to becoming a novelist. (Some writers suggest a million words written, before you really know your craft.) Anyway, I set to and rewrote the story almost totally. It's the same plot, the same main characters, but oh, how much better it's told! And how much more there is in it!

The little chart below will show you the sweeping changes I made to the first few chapters of JESSIE as I added sub-plots and made the whole story more complex and gripping. I made similar types of changes to the rest. (The numbers refer to chapters.)

First Version (CISSIE) Final Version (JESSIE)

(about 1986) (rewritten 1996)

1. Agnes's story (Jessie's mother)

2. Jessie as a child

1. Jessie as child/goes into service 3. Elinor/Simon's story

4. Jessie goes into service/ Elinor's arrival

2. Jessie as teenager, railway arrives 5. Jessie as teenager, railway arrives,

Jessie meets Danny (later renamed Jessie meets Jared, Elinor is threatened with Jared) losing her home

6. Susannah moping, afraid of father, Jessie & Jared inlove

3. Danny proposes to Jessie, mother 7. Elinor turned out of her home, Jared

furiously proposes, Jessie & Jared seen together near the Hall, trouble brewing for Jessie

I love doing this sort of polishing work, using all my skills as a writer. I don't stop polishing until the story reads well and has tension, life and colour. I'm not only fanatical about getting the best possible product for each book, but also about trying to improve as a writer each time - and that added to the fascination of the exercise for me when rewriting JESSIE. I learned a huge amount about myself and my writing.

It took me just under four months to do this work, nearly as long as it takes to write a novel from scratch, but I was very pleased with the result. And, equally important, so was my editor.

Just after I finished the story, we found out that a novel had recently been published with CISSIE in the title, so I had to think of a new title for mine. I spent ages reading poetry and desperately searching for a suitable new title, then after several weeks, while the book was being edited, it suddenly struck me that all I needed was another woman's name, a fancy name that could be shortened like Cecilia/Cissie - and there we were, Jessica/Jessie. I laughed then at how slow I'd been to find a title. I suspect I'd had to allow time for the first title to fade in my mind.

I wanted the cover of JESSIE to reflect railway diggings accurately, so I sent the publisher some photocopies of 19th century sketches of railway diggings. I was very pleased when the artist used them, and pleased that the cover turned out OK. On one of my other covers, there is a wrong period bonnet for the crinoline gown the heroine is wearing and that really galls me!

PS I'd be happy to answer any questions from readers of JESSIE about that or any other of my books. Email the editor and he'll pass them on to me to be answered in the next issue.

* PLOTTING AND EDITING, by Sherry-Anne Jacobs, published by Training Publications, Prospect Place, Western Australia 6005, Tel: (08) 9227 3360, Fax: (08) 9227 3298. Cost approximately \$16.

Nuts & Bolts: Buying a Computer

A computer is a marvellous writing tool. It is far better than a typewriter and more flexible.

If you are prepared to risk buying secondhand, there are bargains to be had, with units selling for a tenth of their original price. However, it is a good idea to enlist the aid of a computer-literate friend to assist you in your purchase. If you know of a reputable dealer, ask him or her for a suitable machine and haggle a little. They often have some excellent trade-ins.

I have bought eight computers, secondhand, without mishap, acting on the assumption that if they work on a reasonable test, and the seller gives assurance that there is nothing wrong with the unit, then all is well.

My experience has been with Macintoshes which are accepted as being user friendly and therefore easy to use. (There are about eight computer platforms but really only two to be considered, for practical purposes, the Mac and the IBM or DOS style computer commonly called a PC, short for personal computer. The Mac is also a personal computer, but never mind.) Since the advent of the Microsoft Windows operating systems, PCs have become much easier to use.

Computers work with disks which carry a great deal of information. The so-called floppy disk is a thin disk of magnetic plastic material in a pocket-sized, stiff plastic case, so that it is no longer floppy and may be posted into the slot of the computer. It carries sufficient information for a moderate sized book or more, depending on size.

The hard disk is thicker and usually built into the computer. It can carry the information for a score or more books and several programs.

A basic unit for the beginner may be bought for about \$300.00. The Mac Classic 4/40 or the Mac SE 2.5/20 are recommended. (The 4 stands for 4 megabytes of RAM or onboard memory and the 40 indicates a 40 megabyte hard disk or drive.) This will run on system 6 and should have Claris 2 or Microsoft Word word processing packages. The price should include a printer, either an Imagewriter, that houses a ribbon to print dot matrix format to about manual typewriter standard, or a Stylewriter bubblejet which has an ink cartridge and prints at about electric typewriter standard. (There are other brands of printers which are compatible and comparable, and if they work, that's all you need.) This is a very basic outfit which will allow you to write very effectively with all the formatting and cutting and pasting options, but no colour and no internet.

The equivalent PC unit would be a 286, which has colour but requires a knowledge of the operating codes. Remarkably, writer Graham Nowland, who first introduced me to the internet, used a 286 at the time.

For \$500.00 to \$600.00 you may pick up one of the Mac 11 series, a 11si or a 11cx. These are much bigger computers, with colour, and a screen separate from the computer. Typically they have 5/80 and unlike the Classic or SE, may be upgraded to increase their RAM, preferably to 16 megs, for another \$200.00. These are quite good machines and will run Clarisworks 4 or 5 or Microsoft Word 5 or 6. You should get a bubblejet printer for the price. They can be used, with a modem, that will cost about \$200.00, to connect to the internet.

Comparable PC machines are the 386 and 486 series, which can run Windows.

A power Mac will cost about \$1500.00 secondhand, probably with a printer. They are much faster and can be upgraded with more ram to run more programs. Once you get into sophisticated software and operating systems that these machines run, you need to have at least 16megs of RAM with 32 being preferable. The 586 and Pentium PCs are comparable.

At this level, it is worth considering buying new machines as there are often marvellous bargains as bundles of computer, screen, printer and software offered. For instance, the latest, all-in-one iMac with built-in modem and CD but without a printer, costs \$2695.00.

If you wish to have work ready for a commercial printing house, be warned that they insist on laser print copy, which has cleaner edges than copy from bubblejet printers.

It seems to me that the more sophisticated your computer, the more time you will need to spend on keeping it going. Computers are far from foolproof and in terms of reliability are equivalent to the pre-Ford T model automobile, or for that matter, a horse and buggy!

Problems rarely arise in the hardware, that is the actual computer objects themselves, so much as the software or strings of code entered into computers to make them work. An electronic blip, current surge or clash with another piece of software only has to dislodge part of the code and the computer user is in for a rocky ride as things go haywire. This engendered one of the golden rules of usage: always save and back up your work so that you have a copy if anything goes wrong. It was brought home to me one day when I heard a distant squeal of brakes and an impact: the power failed instantly and two hours of creative work disappeared, never to be seen again.

Unless you are prepared to spend a great deal of money on advice and service, with some cowboys charging a dollar a minute for their aid, you have to resign yourself to spending time on learning the basics. After many hours of patient study you will have the humbling experience of knowing that you know less than the average ten year old! They grow up knowing that RAM or random access memory shows the brain power or capacity of your computer, computer code is in bytes, a thousand bytes is a kilobyte with two to three kilobytes needed to print a page of text, a thousand kilobytes is a

megabyte and a thousand megabytes makes up a gigabyte.

People are intrigued by the Mac and PC rivalry, despite the fact that the two are converging. It's analogous to the VHS and Beta conflict in video systems, where what seemed to be the technically better system lost out in marketing but is still favoured and used by professionals. To highlight the paradox, Apple Macintosh worked on four-digit coding for dates, right from its inception, so that it has no millenium or 2K (Year 2000 of course) bug problem, but you never hear about it in any of its advertising!

NEXT ISSUE, CONNECTING TO THE INTERNET.

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BLIMPS AND BLIPS - GOVERNMENTS FOR AND AGAINST THE ARTS by Woz

(Imagine if you will, a timeless, panelled interior, real offices with grimy glass panels and clerks scratching away with dip pens at high wooden desks. The boardroom is sumptuously decorated with pictures of past war heroes and notable battles, dominated by the portrait of Queen Victoria in her mature years. The chairs have cracked leather upholstery and there is a water jug and glasses on the polished wooden table. An ornate sideboard bears the silver and the port.

Australia Council

We were delighted to hear that this august body recently had a significant birthday, but shocked to find that 30 was being bruited as its age. Surely, we thought, a digit had been dropped in error, so that it should be 130 years of age, in contrast to the youthfulness of its chairperson, Margaret Seares. But no, the dear old Council is a mere stripling of only 30 years, despite its very, very mature ways of doing things and its very, very staid utterances from time to time. Congratulations from us, although we must own to some disappointment and chagrin at not ever being invited to sup at its board or to join in the wassailing.

Literature Board

Since our last report pointing out that chairman, Father Ted and two others gave New South Wales half the board places, we are delighted to report that Heather Nimmo of Western Australia, has been appointed to help redress the balance. Heather is a very experienced and successful writer and an excellent choice.

Ministers For/Against the Arts

During the gestation of this second issue of PP, Australia will go to the polls to decide on our next arts minister. (We have our editorial tongue pressed firmly in cheek.)

Will it be the unmemorable Senator MacMullan or the lamentable Mr Lee again?

Will we have another dose of the inert Senator Richard Alston? Richard has some quaint ideas on the arts, but having been privileged to once seeing him ambushed on the McFeast television show, we can only think of him with a chuckle, even in his nastier moments. Elizabeth Gore, as Elle McFeast, pulled him into her ample bosom, so that the surprised senator seemed to peep out from a nest of mushrooms like some wild-eyed woodland creature that you sometimes see depicted in children's picture books! He was nonplussed at the time and seemed displeased by the experience, but was back

again on another occasion, happily not for more of the same.

It is a shame that the arts receive little notice in the scheme of things, as a sort of optional extra, whereas mature minds recognize the prime importance of art in society. Perhaps it has been a great mistake to portray the arts as an industry, with some highly questionable figures to show economic relevance.

Wordsmithing at the Top

Our prime minister came to notice again when he claimed that Mr Beazley did not have the *ticker* to be Prime minister. Once again a novel use of language by the prime minister, or perhaps properly, his speech writers. In this case, the use of *ticker* indicates a fairly aged writer, for the term has not been in common usage for forty or fifty years, and even then was used as a synonym for the organ itself rather than for courage.

P.S. Since writing this piece I've noted *ticker* used by a newspaper columnist and a motor racing commentator!

Fulsome

Since noting the prime minister's misuse of the word, I've noted many others making the same error. *Fulsome* will probably soon lose its negative connotations through usage, in much the same way as *funk* has changed from cowardly to chic with the present generation.

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Goliardys - Saucy little stories or verse.

Joker

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Impressing & Depressing - the rise, fall, amalgamation and gossip about presses and publishing.

Sherry-Anne writes about her net publishing: -

"Did I tell you I'd just sold another e-book. My first novel ever published, PERSONS OF RANK, is out of print now in paper form, so I've done what everywriter longs to do with their first novel and rewritten/polished it. Then I've sold it for e-publishing. So that makes three e-books accepted. Two

reprints, PERSONS OF RANK and ENVOY, and one new one, my first children's novel SWORD OF AZARAY."

Death of AWOL

As you are probably aware Australian Writing On Line is no more. Maintaining the web site and distributing and selling small press books became far more than a full time job....unfortunately we had to pay for the privilege!! While we did have some success in promoting and distributing small literary presses we never broke even.

As a result we are currently chasing up money that is owed to us and over the next few months we will attempt to pay back all the publishers who have distributed or sold through us...either in returns or stock.

Thank you to everyone who has supported us over the past three years.

Note. If you wish to contact us use M.Roberts@isu.usyd.edu.au rather than the old awol email.

Mark Roberts

Opinion - readers views and feedback, especially with a literary flavour.

We await letters from "Disgusted of Dalwallinu", and others.

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[Contacts - URL's to visit on the net](#)

Andrew and Miles Burke have a site which is a gateway to other useful links and contains a great deal of useful information at [lit.bam](#)

[litdotbam](#) encourages members of literary organisations to send in material regarding their events to be distributed, not only to their own members via the e-mail mailing list, but to other interested people.

[Australian links](#) is a homely site with a lot of useful information.

[Westerly](#), Western Australia's literary magazine, has a new website.

[The Ozlit site](#) is massively comprehensive, with a huge database of Australian writers, but it is very, very slow.

[Fremantle Arts Centre Press](#) has a clear and simple site which tells all you need to know without distracting bells and whistles.

Prolific and successful writer, [Sherry-Anne Jacobs](#), has a prize winning web site which is well worth a look. It is a model of clarity, with speedy graphics.

[Web Wombat](#) is a recommended search engine for Australia.

Inklings: newsletter for writers. This excellent Canadian site emphasises technical aspects of writing, especially targeting and marketing. It's worth a look at inkspot.com/inklings/

Contributors

(Published contributors are invited to contribute their details to this section.)

Helen Jean Hagemann, is a student of creative writing at Edith Cowan University as well as a writer.

John Kinsella has published many books of poetry, as a visit to his web pages or the Fremantle Arts Centre Press will show. He is presently a fellow at Churchill College, Cambridge.

Tracy Ryan is a prize-winning poet and editor, married to John and sojourning at Cambridge.

Diane Beckingham is a well-known West Australian writer and teacher.

Jim Cornish is a writer of whimsical (and other) poems and co-author of a chapbook with Fran Sbrocchi, an accomplished and prolific writer and poet. They have recently returned from Canada.

Glen Phillips teaches at Edith Cowan University and has enjoyed creative fellowships in China and Italy. His next book of poems is to be published by FACP in 1998.

Sherry-Anne Jacobs has nineteen published books to her credit. She is presently on a working holiday in Kent with husband, David.

Lloyd Davies is a prolific writer of short stories with several anthologies to his credit. Presently, he is in the enviable position of awaiting arrangements for the production of a film, which was to star Nigel Hawthorne, based on his excellent story, "Pastmaster"

Roland Leach is a prize-winning West Australian writer and teacher.
(rleach@plc.wa.edu.au)

Advertisements.

Brillig

edited by Roland Leach

Brillig is a brilliant little magazine for secondary students. In quality and sophistication, it displays work rivalling much to be found in adult literary magazines. The slithy toves produce two issues per year.

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Richard Polden

In October 1996, photographer Richard Polden set off on an extraordinary adventure. Together with an international crew of men and women, he sailed from Fremantle, Western Australia, bound for London aboard the magnificent Endeavour replica. Two hundred and twenty-six years before, Cook sailed a similar route, limping home with a sick crew and a battered ship. By contrast the Endeavour replica's voyage was the start of her planned four year journey around the world. In dramatic detail, these photographs from the voyage capture the very essence of sailing on Endeavour.

FACP. Published in association with Sunday Times, Perth, on 18 March 1998

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