Nineteen Eighty-Three

A First Trade Union Annual

Nineteen Eighty-Three

A First Trade Union Annual

Lancashire Association of Trades Councils

Published by: Rick Gwilt, Arts Development Officer, Lancashire Association of Trades Councils, P.O. Box 71, Preston PR1 1DU. (Tel. 0772 54520).

First published May 1983

Printed, designed and typeset by Manchester Free Press (TU), 59 Whitworth Street, Manchester M1 3WT.

ISBN: 0 9508791 0 X

Contents

Illustrations and Photographs

Front and back cover photography: **Paul Salveson**

The Fat Lady Speaks

Fifty years ago, it was fashionable for authors from society's upper crust to write about women glimpsed from passing trains. Frances Cornford seems to have sparked it all off by asking

> O why do you walk through the fields in gloves,
> Missing so much and so much,
> O fat white woman whom nobody loves,...

To which the fat white woman replied

> Why do you rush through the fields in trains,
> Guessing so much and so much.
> Why do you flash through the flowery meads,
> Fat-head poet that nobody reads;...

Strictly speaking, it wasn't the fat white woman herself, it was G.K. Chesterton. And it didn't stop the rot. George Orwell, returning from his lone pilgrimage to Wigan, painted a pitiful picture of a working-class woman—seen from the train, of course.

The trouble with this view, based as it was on the sympathy of the privileged for the oppressed, was that it underestimated the forces of culture and community, the shared resources of courage and humour, the reserves of strength that exist below the level of sheer political misfortune. In South Wales, the miners were fighting back, and one of their number, Lewis Jones, recorded that fight in two fine novels, *Cwmardy* and *We Live,* even though the effort brought his early death. In Hastings, Fred Ball was beginning to uncover the life of Robert Tressell. In the North of England, men like Ernie Benson were active in the National Unemployed Workers Movement, and they lived to write about it much later.

Orwell's train of thought took him to *1984,* a world where lone pilgrimages were forbidden and political misfortune was total, where state control invaded the most private corners of our lives. For most people, reality has proven somewhat different, and *1983* reflects a world where Government has sur-

passed Marie Antoinette in its indifference to whether people eat bread, cake, sewage or radio-active dirt; a world where it is left mainly to the trades unions to fight for working and unemployed people alike.

Trade unionists and unemployed workers (many of them associated with the Federation of Worker Writers) are the authors of this book. It is, therefore, not an expression of sympathy for the oppressed but an expression of mutual solidarity by those who are the joint scapegoats of an evil government. The book does not put forward any political programme, although those who wish to explain away their own discomfort will no doubt find it convenient to dismiss it as "political". It is neither composited nor complete. There remain within it differences of style and emphasis, as well as possible items of controversy. The authors are representative of England rather than Britain, and a mainly white male-dominated England at that. Nevertheless, we would hope to improve the balance in any future edition and, given that this material was gathered in the space of a few months (and that we have been able to publish only a fraction of material received), it must be seen as a healthy sign of progress beneath the political surface.

Finally, it must be said that the editor of this book works full-time as Arts Development Officer for the Lancashire Association of Trades Councils, a post which is financed jointly by the Gulbenkian Foundation and North West Arts. This publication is also directly subsidised by North West Arts. Without this support, and without the backing of those trade unionists who give up so much of their precious free time to run Preston Community Press, it is much less likely that this book would ever have seen the light of day.

Rick Gwilt, Editor.
Preston, February 1983.

Orwell's Woman

I could have died
and the same train passed,
and the same eyes, some cold,
some turned away, those curious.

There was a dying into this
alive forever moment, alive
until the end of all such moments,
all such men. I am Orwell's

woman from the Wigan slum,
kept as few before or since,
even to the apron and the arms,
and my desolate knowledge.

O but I was young, however young,
and I was loved, however loved,
was not this mere and memory's frieze?
yet the wild hearts took me,

made me their stain upon a world,
their grief of everlasting: icon,
almost icon. Nor watched me dance.
They would not watch me dance.

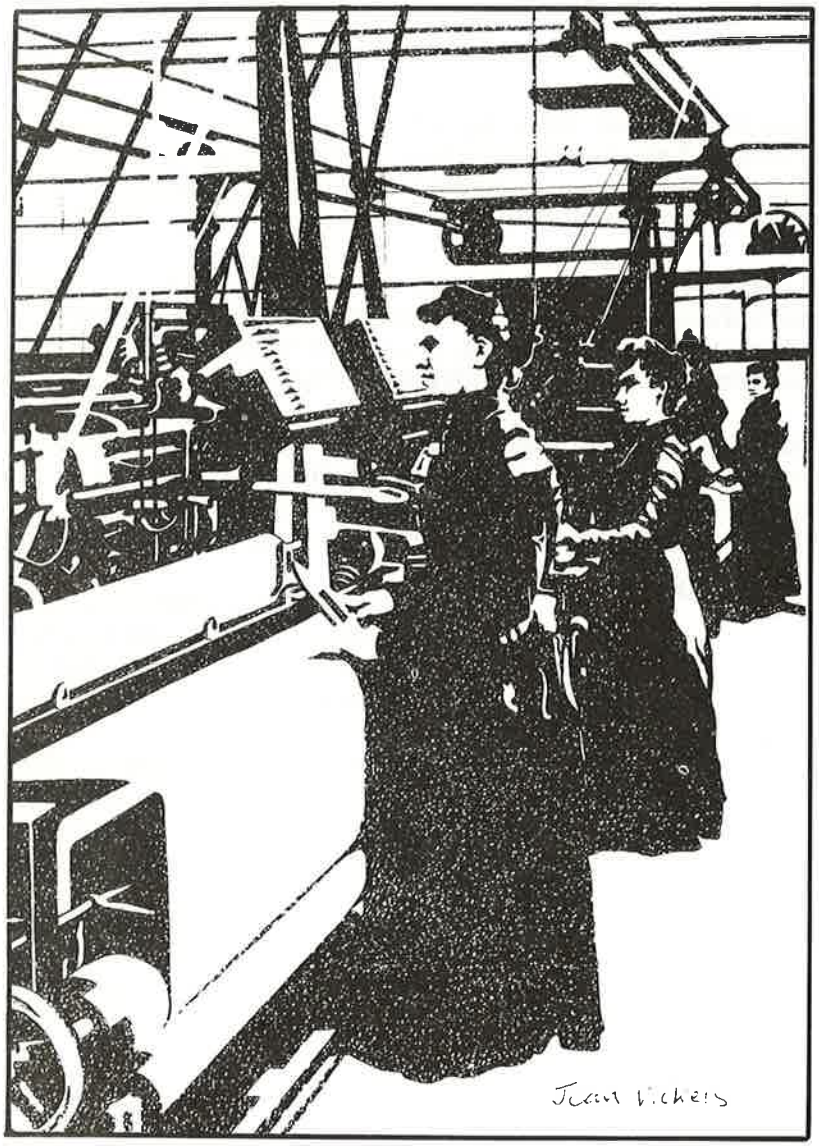
Was I imagined as finale,
goodbye to Wigan, 1936,
so real, so long? Names
forget me as I am remembered:

Orwell's woman, stooping still,
drained of all save desperation,
and the same eyes, some cold,
some turned away, those curious.

A decade, a decade and a half,
something like forgetting me occurred,
vanished like stigmata did,
like pitshafts from our landscape.

Now the old returns as the very new,
my wound is opened to the light again:
notebooks arrive, cameras arrive:
stick in hand I adjust the misery.

Joe Smythe


Jean Vichers

A Need

I find myself a prisoner of necessity
Trapped in a Babel of noise
Machinery conflicting with thought

Hands flat on blackened steel
Head bowed, back deformed
Half my life flows through stitches

Yet I have pride in the completion
Joy in the creation
Embroidery pleases the senses

And I am lost in the contradiction
Of loving and yet loathing
This need for creation

Sally Flood


Vedt83

I fought Norman Snow

The early sixties were a good time to be a Scouse in London. All of a sudden, it was very fashionable to be able to say you were from Liverpool, and I even knew one or two Mickey Mousers that were from Leeds. But myself and a few mates of mine were the genuine article and we wouldn't let anyone else into the act, even if they came from Birkenhead. And of course, it was all down to the fact, that four lads from Liverpool had made some hit records. The Beatles they were called. Remember? One of my mates was supposed to be a cousin of John Lennon, another was allegedly the cousin of Paul McCartney and me, with my hooter had to be a relation of Ringo's. Funny enough no one claimed to be related to George Harrison. Funny that.

Anyway, instead of us just being some lads from up North somewhere, we were more easily accepted as being someone. Or nearly, anyway. And as a consequence we met some very interesting people. But one of the most interesting people I met was an ex-professional boxer named Charley Burton. You most probably have never heard of Charley, even if you were a fight fan. But the same guy had three hundred and sixty four fights, professional, from bantamweight to middleweight and never got near a title fight. But of course that was in the hard times, in the 'twenties and 'thirties, when most fellows were just fighting to live.

I'll never forget the day I hurt him though. We were hanging around the betting shop in Fulham that he ran, which had become a habit with us because of the characters that popped in and out, and the conversation, which was mostly about some sort of villainy or other. Or it would be about boxing. And this of course Charley loved. He would go through all kinds of moves, jabs, hooks, blocks, feints, the lot: and generally his opponents always ended on the canvas, and Charley was the hero of Fulham.

But this day I interrupted him. I said: "All right Charley, you've had all this number of fights, but who have you fought who was any one?"

This got a bit of a laugh from my mates, but Charley just smiled, took his cigar out of his mouth, looked at the tip for a moment or two and said quietly, but with some pride: "I

fought Norman Snow".

This of course, made some of the boys near collapse with laughter. "Who the hell was Norman Snow?" gasped out Tony, between laughs. Now it just so happened that I had that week's Boxing News in my pocket, and funny enough it had Norman Snow's record in it, which covered a number of years and hundreds of fights. So I could afford to be a bit knowing when I said to Tony: "Wait a minute. He was a good light and welter before the war. He must have been a good 'un, he even fought Ernie Roderick".

Now Charley started looking pleased again, because he had become more than a little annoyed when the chaps started laughing and Mickey-taking. But I was waiting my opportunity for a right giggle, because I was sure Charley's name was not mentioned in Snow's record, which you will remember I had in my pocket all the time. So I got Charley to talk about Norman Snow and he went off like a good 'un. Snow would do this and Snow would do that, but Charley blocked this and blocked that and sneaked a few of his own punches in. He talked a great fight did Charley.

So after he'd got his audience back and he was happy with the centre of the stage, I, like a louse, pulled out my copy of the Boxing News. "Well here's a coincidence" I said, "Norman Snow's record is in here". I was watching Charley at the time, thinking I would catch a guilty look about him. But no, he was carrying it through. "Come on I'll sort the fight out" he said. Well he looked and we looked, but sure enough I was right. Charley wasn't mentioned. I started to laugh, seeing the look of confusion on Charley's face and that was the signal for everyone in the betting shop to start laughing and cat-calling old Charley, calling him a right old story-teller, but not exactly those terms. After I'd had my laugh, I happened to catch the look on Charley's face and I suddenly realised, he was *Old* Charley, and I'd spoiled his stories and made him the butt of cowboys who wouldn't have said boo to him in the old days. So I said "Listen Charley, take no notice of that, there could be a misprint and anyway most of these old records are incomplete. They're always making mistakes in them. We'll get in touch with Tim Riley the editor. He can put a correction in". I was saying all this to try to make it right for Charley. But I could see it wasn't working. The poor old bastard was near crying, and I felt sick about it all, as well. I felt that all I had to do was


Jeff 83

keep that paper in my pocket and Charley wouldn't feel like this. So after making a few more sympathetic noises, I made an excuse and left. The boys were still laughing.

I stayed away from the betting shop for a few weeks, knocking around the West End with some of the other scallywags. But eventually, I made my way back to Fulham to see how Charley was getting on. Surprisingly, he gave me a big hello and made quite a fuss of me, which to be honest, made me feel more guilty. So I hung around for a while chatting to him, but the talk didn't get to boxing. Just then, three fellows came in, and you could see straightaway it was trouble. The biggest started to slag Charley something terrible over some bet he claimed he had. In no time words had turned to blows. The big fellow threw a punch that Charley slipped easily, but the other two tried to grab hold of Charley, and so I even though I'm allergic to violence (I come out all cuts and bruises) had to make myself busy. I gave one fellow a crack on the chin and he went down, not surprising really. I picked on the smallest and he didn't see me anyway. Meanwhile, Charley is giving a really good account of himself with the big fellow so the other fellow turns on me. I tried to throw the head in on him, but would you believe, he beat me to it, and butted me. I don't know what was hurt more, my nose or my pride, but it was my nose that was bleeding. Fancy a Scouse losing at the nanny goat. And to a Cockney as well.

When I came to, Charley had knocked out the big fellow and even had the fellow who done me on the floor. I heard Charley say to him "You'd better be able to use that" then the geezer jumps up and punches Charley in the stomach. I thought he had punched him. Then the geezer runs out, and I'm after him. I chased him down Charleville Road and along North End Road but I lost him going towards Fulham Broadway, which the way it turned out was lucky for me.

When I got back to the shop, the other two hard cases had disappeared, but Charley was still on the floor. And old Charley really looked old. I knelt down by him and I saw all the blood from his stomach, and I realised it wasn't a punch that had put him down. It was a knife. He opened his eyes just then and said: "I really did fight Norman Snow you know". "I know," I lied. "I wrote to Tim Riley". "Good kid" he said. Then he died.

A few weeks later, I was in a pub next door to the Old Vic's

stage door, and an actor friend of mine who I was having a pint with introduced me to a chap. He said he was a producer. He had one of those superior attitudes and he needled me straightaway. "Oh, you're from Liverpool are you?" he said, speaking so far back his voice was coming from behind him. "I suppose you're a great friend of John, Paul and Ringo?" I felt like giving him a belt. Even he didn't mention George. "No" I said. "I never knew them. But I knew a fellow who fought Norman Snow".

Ed Barrett

No Rickets in Rotherham

I remember when
we first met,
shoulders squared,
when you put your arms around me
mortgages, gas bills, final demands
weren't real.

Now I come in
and close the door carefully,
take off the terrible overall
and we pretend that I haven't been to work.
The kids sit up to the table
and stare at their plates in silence
because you twist and distort
because the cornered dog in your eyes
snaps and strains.
We choke down our teas
and pray
that you don't start ranting tonight.

Inside my head I square my shoulders.

You sit in the same chair
day in
day out
smoking, looking at the wall
or you put your head in your hands
and cry quietly.

On open-evening
when I looked at Danny's book
under the title
"What Do You Want Most In The World?"
It said
"I want my dad to get his job back and
I want to bring sandwiches, not have free dinners"

And the Community Health man
says
"There are no rickets in Rotherham,
no evidence whatsoever of any illness
caused by unemployment..."

He ought to be at our house
at tea-time:
There's more than one way
of being crippled.

Ruth Shaw

GREETINGS
from the A.U.E.W.
Accrington District
* For Peace
* For Jobs
* For Freedom

Support the return of a Labour Government!

Ken Slater (Secretary)
Peter Billington (President)

BLACKPOOL TRADES COUNCIL
wishes
Trade Union Annual
1983 every success

May it be the first of many!

Les Wilson (President)
Fred Porter (Secretary)

Starve or Rebel

In December 1931 the Leeds Public Assistance Committee decided that they could not make a coal allowance at Christmas, for those on Poor Law as they had done previously, because the country was in such a parlous state and every economy had to be made. The Leeds NUWM went into action to try and get this decision reversed. There were of course some Labour Councillors on the PAC but they were at one with the Tories and Liberals regarding this economy.

The Communist Party supported the campaign for the coal allowance and extra relief for Christmas with great vigour. We helped to get out leaflets, and organised chalking and whitewashing squads to advertise a demonstration. We simply could not afford printed posters. In connection with this campaign I recall leading a squad to whitewash some slogans and advertise the demonstration near the Hunslet Rugby League football ground at Parkside. A cup tie was to be played on the Saturday afternoon, when a really big crowd was expected, so Friday night was chosen for the operation, which would leave very little time for anybody to obliterate our efforts.

Opposite the football ground was an old coal tip the top of which had been levelled off and a greyhound racing track laid, with a tall wooden fence all the way round it. The fencing was painted black, making an admirable blackboard for our message with letters 3ft. high, which couldn't fail to be seen by the crowds both inside and outside the grounds. The tip itself had sloping sides up to the fencing and the slopes were pitted with holes made by coal 'scratters'.

There were half a dozen of us in the squad, four to act as look-outs and two to do the whitewashing. One member of the squad lived within two or three minutes walk of the greyhound track and it was in his house that we mixed the whitewash. In the mixing of it we added some gold-size, which made it harder to clean off by people who might be minded to do so.

I undertook to wield the brush, while Johnny, another of the lads, carried the bucket. Johnny had a diseased hip bone which caused him to limp. I'd almost completed a really hand-

some job with the brush, when I discovered that the whitewash wouldn't be sufficient to complete the last word. There was plenty of thick sediment in the bottom of the bucket. What were we to do? Johnny supplied the answer. "There's nowt for it but we'll have to piss in the bucket". His contribution was very small and my effort didn't add a great deal, so we called for the look-outs to add their quota. Their efforts being better than ours, we had enough liquid to spare and were standing back to admire our handiwork when a dark figure appeared round a corner of the fence shining a torch and shouting, "Hey who's there?"

We all ran in different directions, except Johnny who ran alongside of me as fast as his limping gait would allow. Fortunately the copper cannot have noticed his disability and went haring off after the others. Then it happened. Johnny, who had been at my side one moment, suddenly vanished—he had stumbled into a hole dug by the coal-scratters. The bucket he had been carrying up-ended and showered him from head to foot with the remains of the whitewash. I jumped into the hole, helped Johnny to his feet, grabbed the bucket and made for the house where we had mixed the whitewash, arriving there pretty much the same time as the others. On our way there I hid the bucket and brush in a nearby ditch, to be recovered later. When Johnny entered the house the sight of him had the other lads rolling with mirth. Apart from all else Johnny stank like a polecat, and what a job we had helping to wash it off his clothes.

For this particular demonstration I had set my heart on getting a contingent of workers from Hunslet to march to the Town Hall Square, and on the day fixed for the demonstration a number of us gathered on Penny Hill. We had previously advertised that a meeting would be held there, and took with us some two or three dozen poster boards nailed to wood battens for carrying on the march.

Arriving at Penny Hill there couldn't have been more than half-a-dozen people apart from the seven or eight of us who had carried the poster boards, which we placed round the walls of the urinal.

I was despairing about getting a demo going when I mounted the platform, but as I got started a group of women who had just taken their toddlers to school for the afternoon session stopped to listen and inspired me to try and win them

to us.

Several knew me and nodded appreciation when I made a telling point. Some of them were carrying young children too young to attend school, whilst some had children in push chairs. Winding up my speech I said, "Not many years ago, possibly some of you during World War One used to stick white feathers in the coats of men wearing civvy clothes, because you thought they should be fighting for their King and Country. You thought that that war was fought to make this a land fit for heroes to live in. Today you should inspire your menfolk to fight for you and your kids. How about joining us on the march to the Central Public Assistance Office in town" (and I detailed our demands). "Why not shame those men over there", pointing to a group who had been watching us from the other side of the road, "into joining us?"

The response was marvellous. The women seized the placards, then lined up. We crossed the road and the women called upon the men to join us. I asked some of the men who might be ex-soldiers to organise a nice steady marching pace and to act as stewards if more people joined us, and join us they did. I felt we were the Pied Pipers of Hunslet as we marched, shouting the slogans and singing as we proceeded down Grove Road, Bower Road, Pepper Road, thence to Low Road, and on to town.

By the time we got to Hunslet Road there must have been some 800 people all marching in orderly procession. Policemen appeared to marshall the demonstration, but the ex-servicemen whom I approached did a wonderful job, and took a pride in what they were doing. Obviously they regarded it as really worthwhile. There were easily a thousand of us by the time we reached the Town Hall, where we got a thunderous reception from the crowd already assembled.

Stirring speeches were made from Vicky's plinth and it was decided to elect a deputation to the P.A.C., whose members were sitting at the time. However when we approached the door the police on duty refused to let us in. The deputation was still stood on the steps arguing with the policeman on the door when the head of the demonstrators drew level, and then Dave with a roar led the foremost demonstrators up the steps, shoving one copper on his arse, and then we were inside, bursting in on the Committee.

What a frightened bunch they were. Some of the marchers

had collecting boxes in their hands (the collections being to pay for leaflets etc.) and these they were shaking and adding to the din. George Martin (later Sir George), bleated, "Call the police". I grinned at him and said, "By all means, but we've locked the bloody doors from the inside so they can't get in". Councillor Bertha Quinn, pointing to the Tories, wailed, "You've started the revolution!" "Nay Bertha lass, when the revolution comes it won't be collecting boxes we'll have in our hands", I said.

Ernie Benson

I NEVER THOUGHT IT WOULD COME TO THIS. I BELIEVED THE NUCLEAR ARMS RACE WAS ONLY A GAME.

John Z De Lorean

Sing Loud Euphorium;
John Z De Lorean!
Hail, hail adorium,
John Z De Lorean.
Hail his emporium,
John Z De Lorean:
Gull-wing sportscorium,
John Z De Lorean
Solve unemplorium,
John Z De Lorean;
Joy! Joy and Glorium,
John Z De Lorean.
Gets grants ad nauseam,
John Z De Lorean;
Over Eighty Milleam
John Z De Lorean.
Give him some morium,
John Z De Lorean.

Can't have no morium,
John Z De Lorean;
What hope now forium,
John Z De Lorean?
Concordes ad nauseam,
John Z De Lorean;
Secret consortium,
John Z De Lorean.
Sing loud Euphorium,
John Z De Lorean!
Joy! Joy and Glorium,
John Z De Lorean!
Consortium Ad nauseam,
John Z De Lorean;
What is the scorium,
John Z De Lorean?

Wolf from the doorium,
John Z De Lorean:
Do you deceivium,
John Z De Lorean,
Official receivium,
John Z De Lorean?
Closed his emporium,
John Z De Lorean;
All unemplorium,
John Z De Lorean;
Drug squad notorium
John Z De Lorean;
Gull-wings no morium,
John Z De Lorean;
Sing in memoriam
John Z De Lorean
Sing it once morium
John Z De Lorean.

Les Barker

Culture Shock

Unlike the other apprentice boilermakers who went to the match, Trellie spent Saturday afternoons in the library. For three years he had been mining the shelves, hacking out random nuggets in search of that elusive vein of culture. It was while working a meagre seam in the Parapsychology section, squatting on his haunches to flip through the latest Colin Wilson, that he felt a hand on his shoulder and a refined voice cutting the air over his head. He looked up, half expecting to see Colin himself, but there was this oddly wrinkled character with thick hair and a deep tan. His mouth was opening and closing over flat, bright teeth like a row of bleached Victory Vs and in his lapel was a pink carnation which inclined Trellie to believe that he had just dropped in on his way from a wedding reception. He said he had met Wilson once, corresponded with him briefly, considered him a "frightful fraud" but hoped that the price of his letters would "augment" so that he could sell all five and buy one of Proust's laundry lists. Trellie stood up and felt his legs tingling under the iron grip of his heavy duty bike-clips. The man's name was Neville, a card was being extended, and he owned a signed first edition of *The Outsider* which he would be happy to let Trellie handle should he care to visit.

Trellie turned up the next day. It was a big house overlooking the park. Inside there were paintings and statues and plants and a deep, scented silence such as Trellie had never before experienced. He felt he was nearing his goal. Exactly what culture was he had only a vague idea. It included aesthetic thrills but also refined conversation, elegant manners and luxurious surroundings; everything, in fact, which he couldn't find at home or in the boilershop. They drank wine which didn't taste like Sherry but, mysteriously, didn't taste like Port either. Neville seemed to approve of his visitor's quest which, he learned, had started in early childhood. Trellie had never liked Tarzan, or Laurel and Hardy, or even the Three Stoogies. The films he preferred had heroes who played the piano brilliantly or could quote long pieces of Shakespeare without reference to the text. Similarly with Arthur Mee's Children's Encyclopedia, the only books in the house apart from the *Home Doctor* and the *Daily Express Book of the Garden.* It was

the section entitled *Immortal Masterpieces Which Have Enriched the World* which gave him a peculiar frisson. Curiously this wasn't so much a product of the works themselves, although there were whole sonnets by John Keats and blue-toned photographs of Michaelangelo's *David,* as of the enthusiastic, awestricken commentaries of Arthur Mee. Surely, he thought, if objects like these can move people like Arthur to deliver such extravagant praise they must be the most important things in the world. Later he wrote poems; it was easy. Then he started to keep a notebook of his own ideas alongside those of other great writers. Neville seemed greatly interested in all this and spoke at some length of his own passion for the nineteenth century French novel, particularly the *Rougon Macquart* cycle of which he gave an extended precis. Eventually Trellie left in a state of exalted fervour. Poised blindly on the precipice of culture he was somehow aware of the vertiginous, mind-warping prospect before him. His brain buzzed and flashed like a pinball machine as new cerebral circuits sprang into existence in an attempt to comprehend the experience. The world outside now had that flat, ordinary feel which he had come to know for the first time years ago after stepping off the Ghost Train at Blackpool's Pleasure Beach.

On his second visit, a fortnight later, he produced the notebook and read out an entry which had long puzzled him. The sentences had a peculiar property. Although they were written in English and although he had re-written them with the help of a dictionary, he still found them completely incomprehensible; they defied penetration. It had been a deeply disturbing moment in his life: his first confrontation with philosophy.

"Modern thought has realised considerable progress by reducing the existent to the series of appearances which manifest it. Its aim was to overcome a certain number of dualisms which have embarrassed philosophy and to replace them with the monism of the phenomenon."

Neville squirmed in his chair, arranging his arthritic hip in a more comfortable position. He regarded Trellie as he would one of the paintings on the wall.

'Monism of the phenomenon indeed!' he thought. 'Looks really are the only things worth bothering about; they can even compensate for this tedious adolescent thirst for cul-

ture.' He yawned politely without opening his mouth.

"It's from *Being and Nothingness* by Jean-Paul Sartre," said Trellie staring straight at Neville with a look of powerful concentration, a look refined by long study of books he couldn't understand. Neville sipped his '59 St. Emillion and gazed up into a corner of the room as if the sight of anything more interesting would be a dangerous distraction.

"Sartre has a strabismus, poor fellow. One wonders how he keeps his balance."

Trellie imagined an unreliable French motorbike.

"He lives in the Rue Bonaparte now I believe. I used to stay in a small hotel nearby, the Hotel Moderne in Rue Racine. I remember going there shortly after the war and presenting the concierge with a bar of chocolate. Her eyes filled with tears."

"But what does it mean?"

"Well, it's a philosophical statement." Neville paused reflectively. "You see philosophy is peculiar not only because it uses ordinary words in a special way but also because it manipulates abstract concepts for which there are no concrete correlatives. The English are essentially a positivistic and empirically minded breed disinclined to give serious attention to metaphysical speculation. What they fail to realise, of course, is that their apparently commonsense view of the world is itself a philosophical posture no more certain than any other. We have merely become used to it and somewhat seduced by the success of its application in science."

'Jeezus!' thought Trellie, 'it's just like a book!' He felt a strong urge to turn round and see if the words were printed on the wallpaper.

"No concrete correlatives?" he asked, going back to the point where he had lost track.

"Precisely."

He felt vaguely flattered but unenlightened.

"You should really read Hegel before tackling a work like that. It is virtually nothing more than an expansion of the Self-Consciousness section of *The Phenomenology of Mind.*" Neville realised that little of this would impinge on his audience but he liked to indulge an academic bent and caress complex notions like an actor as they emerged into language. Trellie felt privileged to be present at their birth; their meaning, however, remained tantalisingly out of reach.

Outside they heard the thwack of boot on football; it was a Sunday league match on the park.

'Were it not for this screwy little poseur,' thought Neville, 'I could be standing behind the rubber plant with my binoculars ogling those lusty thighs.' He gulped again at the wine.

"Why do you read such things anyway?" The working class! What a collection! They imagined they could pick up culture like a pint pot! Only the other day his cleaning woman had told him she was going to night-school to learn Russian.

"I'm interested in philosophy."

"Schopenhauer said that genuine philosophers were perplexed by the world whereas others were perplexed by philosophy. Now he's remembered as the man who kicked a noisy neighbour downstairs whilst extolling the serene resignation of the East... Excuse me a moment."

Neville got up with difficulty and retired to the upstairs toilet to fart. Trellie heard it distinctly. At first he could scarcely believe his ears, yet there it was, a real rasper! It was the kind which Ferny, his workmate, followed by sweeping an imaginary shotgun up to his shoulder. If it had happened at home his father would have said: 'See better now can yer?' But Neville had retired specifically for that purpose out of deference to his guest. Trellie felt the mysterious abyss opening up once more. Surely this too was an aspect of culture; one of the tiny elements of that complex fabric which couldn't be learned from books. Neville lowered himself awkwardly into his winged armchair.

"I had used to be greatly interested in philosophy until I discovered something even more rewarding."

Trellie felt he was on the brink of a great illumination. This certainly beat grubbing about in the library. On only his second visit he was about to be led into the inner chamber, the last secret recess of culture itself. His eyes seemed to be boring right into Neville's soul.

"And what was that?" he asked.

"Teapots" said Neville.

"Teapots!?" Had he heard right or was this French or German for some esoteric pursuit?

"Come into the library."

Hidden fluorescents illuminated forty-seven teapots on a shelf which ran right round the room.

"I thought at first it was just nostalgia, especially when I

found myself strangely ravished by this bright green creation designed in the shape of a sports car. The driver's head, do you see, is in fact the handle of the lid. And then I came to realise that I was entering a relatively unexplored terrain, a land of magical naivety. As a collector I couldn't help being excited by such a rapidly appreciating asset, but the artist in me also detected in these domestic icons an emanation of subdued, civilised joy which no-one, not even Arthur Mee, had yet sullied with their critical analyses. These artifacts radiate the creative delight of simple craftsmen, much, I venture to think, as might the fabrications of your own young friends in the boilershop. And, of course, they have the pragmatic solidity of all functional art. We might say," he added with a snigger, "that unlike the propositions of philosophy... they hold water!"

Trellie didn't know what to make of this. It certainly didn't fit any categories of culture he had come to recognise. Yet, like a faint echo of his childhood experience with the encyclopedia, he felt moved by this eloquent enthusiasm.

"Like great works of art they vary from the wittily inconsequential to the nobly sublime. Just look at this magnificent Georgian piece, worthy of Flaxman himself. Unfortunately my cleaning lady dropped it, broke the handle and crushed some of that beautiful snarling. Now, I fear, it is both useless and worthless and yet, as in some ruined Greek torso, one can discern the remnants of greatness."

Trellie took the battered relic and tried to feel vibrations.

"I bet Ferny could fix it."

"A colleague?"

"Best welder in the works. He can do aluminium gear boxes so that you'd never know they'd been welded."

"Are you sure? It *is* solid silver. Several jewellers have refused even to try."

"What do they know about it?"

"What indeed?"

This time, after Trellie's departure, it was Neville's brain which seethed with excitement. A fine, young craftsman was about to resuscitate that damaged masterpiece with a vivifying splinter of his own creative vitality. What was this mysterious rapport between the working class and the practico-inert? He fell asleep in the chair dreaming of Benvenuto Cellini.

Ferny, the man entrusted with this miracle, was nearly sixty. He was fat and hairy and possessed several attributes which Trellie found disgusting. He spat frequently, hawking up multicoloured gobbets of phlegm with an exaggerated rasping noise; he broke wind at will and used this gift to punctuate his conversation; the entire wall of his welding bay was covered with pictures of naked women, and he had cornered the works Durex market and sold an astonishing variety of products to customers from every department. He was also famous for his feats of delicate precision.

He pushed up his dark blue goggles and took the teapot with a look of contempt.

"Christ Trellie! My missis wouldn't give this houseroom!"

"It's solid silver. It's a work of art."

"Says who?"

"Neville—this bloke I was telling you about. He's got dozens of them."

"Likes tea does he?"

"He's a collector, a connoisseur. He's got paintings and statues and books too."

"His missis must get brassed off cleaning that lot."

"He's not married; a woman comes in to do it."

"Lucky old git! Well leave it with us Trellie. I'll fettle Oscar's brew-can for him. It'll be as good as new when I've finished with it."

Trellie picked it up on Sunday on his way to Neville's. In the cosy gloom of the lounge they unpacked it together, carefully peeling back layers of the *Sun*—an issue which seemed to consist entirely of page threes. The transformation astounded its owner. The crushed panels had been expertly pressed out and there wasn't a speck of surplus metal to show that the handle had been silver-soldered. The whole thing had been burnished and buffed to a dazzling finish.

"Quite extraordinary! Convey my congratulations to your young friend. And now for some tea!"

He scurried into the kitchen and returned with it on a salver alongside two bone-china cups and a plate of digestive biscuits.

"Earl Grey—my weakness!"

Neville had never tasted tea quite like it before but, after all, Burke or Boswell might have drunk from the same source. Perhaps the second would be better. He lifted the pot again; a

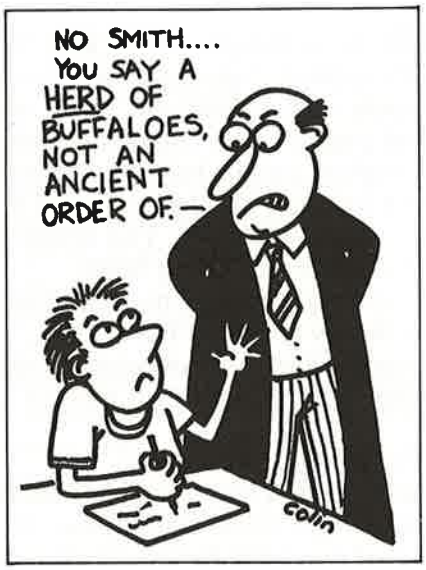
trickle momentarily emerged.

"Not leaves surely?"

Frowning anxiously he introduced a slender corkscrew into the spout and, after considerable manipulation accompanied by the growing stench of hot rubber, fished out a black condom which spread its soggy length across the silver tray. He reddened, paled, then lurched towards the stairs. Trellie heard retching noises followed by a flushing of the lavatory.

A few days later Trellie got a letter with something heavy attached to it. The text was in cursive italics framed tastefully by wide margins. It ended 'Thine, Neville' and mentioned a sudden holiday in Hammamet for an indefinite period. Neville looked forward to 'further stimulating exchanges' on his return. A postscript rhapsodized once more over the refurbished teapot and ended with the remark: 'Closer scrutiny of this eighteenth century masterpiece did reveal one modern accretion which I take to be spurious. Fortunately it was only glued to the underside and I return it herewith to your gifted colleague who, no doubt, has many objets d'art to which it could genuinely adhere.' To the bottom of the sheet was sellotaped a brass rectangle on which Ferny had engraved in his best Old English lettering: 'A Present from Blackpool'.

Ken Clay




A DIALECTICAL MATERIALIST YOU SAY—— GIE ME A CLUE?
WHIT TEAM DAE YOU SUPPORT
S.

Dinner-Break

On cardboard, pebbles and the peaceful grass,
for a whole half hour or so I can digest
a cup of tea, some bread and thoughts of you,
and let the other world go at its pace,
like Rimbaud's sleeping soldier laid to rest.

Midsummer cushions cradle labour, power
to make a job like this more than it's worth
and profit people that we'll never know.
A hundred feet above us soars their tower,
as we lie beyond the shadow of our work.

No wonder Keats and Shelley both pissed off
to live under the anis-coloured sun.
The flowering weeds are nodding to and fro
to listen for the butterfly and moth.
Summer is a-cumin in? It's cum.

Arthur Adlen

Leaders of Men

If managers were blades of grass
And foremen grains of sand,
One half of Swan's would be a field
The other desert land.

If tears could grant me heaven's gifts
Then I'd have some to spare;
If sweat cost thirty bob an ounce,
I'd be a millionaire.

But sweat, alas, is not the thing
To make your fortune grow;
The ones who reap the biggest crops
Are those who do not sow.

If wealth was measured out to each
According to his uses,
Then some in hats of green and white
Would need some good excuses.

Relations in the industry
Are not too good at all;
There's far too many referees
And too few on the ball.

And so I struggle through it all,
Still faithful to my Class,
But sometimes how I wish that I
Could be a blade of grass.

Jack Davitt

My Father

My earliest memories are of cold mornings and my old man pulling the overcoats off the bed so as we'd move a bit faster. Then we'd be quick about getting dressed and in no time we'd be off to our posh aunties in *Higher* Tranmere. Her son-in-law (poor bugger) would let us in and then my old man would leg it down the hill to Lairds before the buzzer went. The reason me old man had to do this was to prevent my sister and I being split up.

Anyway after a number of years he got married again and everyone would have thought life would have been a bit easier but it wasn't. He changed his job from labourer to dock gateman after being on the waiting list for 18 months, but even then he would go window cleaning after coming in off nights, sometimes he'd go and pick up some scraps he'd heard about while cleaning windows or we'd go down to the gas works for coke, but everything he did was always to get money for something we needed. He used to make my trousers, they were supposed to be short but always finished up somewhere near the middle or lower knee cap. I didn't arf get some stick off the other kids.

Things got a bit easier during the boom periods of the 60's and 70's but even then he never had a holiday and I can't even remember him being off sick.

Then came the magic time, retirement! when a man can do all the things he wanted to do and never had the time or money for. He spent the first six months worrying about how he'd pay the bills when his little nest egg ran out. But then he died before it did.

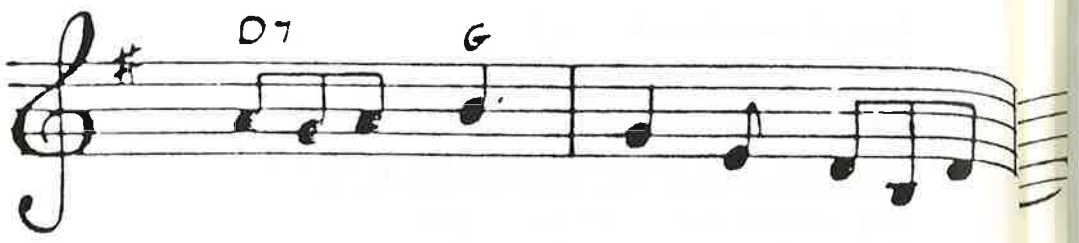
Tommy Burns

For Children

I would have these for children,
For their pleasure and their delight:
The sweet sharp smell of a field of clover,
A blackbird singing, swinging over;
The ripple that runs when a small breeze passes,
And the tide flows in on the waving grasses;
The marbled curl of a breaking wave,
Reluctant gift the green seas gave;
The tactile warmth of golden sands
Dropping soft through small brown hands;
These they should have, as of right,
For their pleasure and delight.

Joan Cubbin

Far Germany



Come all you young welders and listen to me,
You'll not make your fortune in far Germany,
The agents will rob you and cast you adrift,
Wherever you go lads, they'll give you short shrift.

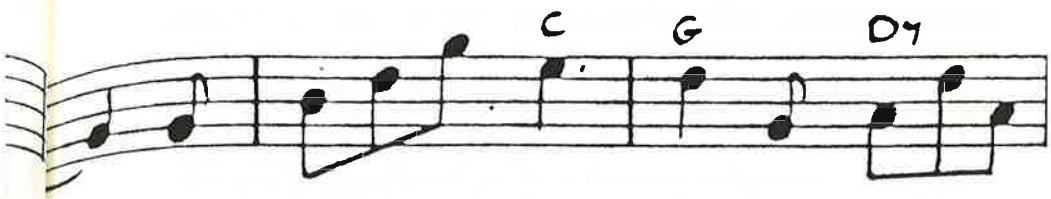
I came down from Scotland, my mate from Furness,
We travelled to Hamburg with just an address,
A dingy hotel in the grim Hanserplatz,
Our view the back alley, with dustbin and rats.

That cold Monday morning we went to the yard,
The test wasn't easy, nor was it too hard,
They gave us our numbers, our handshields and gear,
And told us, 'You'll graft boys, if you want to stay here'.

We grafted like navvies, in wind and in rain,
But that bloody Meister did nowt but complain,
First we were too fast, boys, then we were too slow,
Then our two-faced foreman said we'd have to go.

They told us no piecework was being worked there,
But that was a come on, a lot of hot air,
Ten meters an hour lads, that's thirty odd feet,
A strange kind of piecework, with no bonus sheet.

We packed up our gear, then we went for our pay,
The agent was out lads, the rest of the day,
A two hundred sub boys, is all we were paid,
No sign of our passports or the week we had made.



They sent us to Lubeck, we hoped to make good,
The test was a fix lads, they'd sold us a dud.
We drove back to Hamburg to get what was owed,
Another two hundred, then off down the road.

Through Holland and Belgium, and down into France,
Finding a contract was our only chance,
But too many cowboys had ruined the work,
Our last hope was shattered—no job in Dunkirk.

When we got to Calais, our money was low,
We slept in the car lads, two nights in a row,
Then phoning our families to wire us some cash,
We felt like two dossers, or some kind of trash.

The white cliffs of Dover, a wonderful sight,
That view from the ferry in morning's first light.
The lump in my throat as I fought back the tears,
'Twas only two weeks but it felt like two years.

We travelled for money, but came back flat broke,
Ambitions and savings had gone up in smoke,
So all you young welders, take warning by me,
There's no easy money in far Germany.

Bill Pearson

The Frozen Moment

It was a raw, keen, winter's morning in the shipyard and sounds carried further than usual, with the sharpness and clarity that is a characteristic of such days. As it was a Monday morning, the painter worked in that trance-like silence that is common to that first part of the first day of any week.

Like the other men working alongside him, the painter was deep in his thoughts to block out the harshness of his surroundings. He relived the events of the weekend and replayed them over and over again like a continuous video tape, editing out the less exciting parts, until he had distilled for himself a repertoire of experiences that gave him a glow, from which he drew a strength of sorts.

Every so often he was jolted back to reality by the sudden whine of a drill or by the clang of metal plates crashing against each other nearby. They were made noticeable only on account of their nearness to him, as all over the yard in fits and spurts, a multiplicity of sounds assailed the eardrums. The cacophony was made bearable because it represented work, and therefore a regular wage-packet.

Building a ship required all types of steel plate, and it was the painter's task to coat them with yellow chromate to prevent corrosion, well if not in truth to prevent it, at least to slow up the rusting process until the ship was launched and delivered. The metal was extremely cold to the touch and he continually changed hands. He was frozen numb to this routine. Hunched against the draughts in a passage-way at the tail-end of the ship, he sank deeper into despair as the morning wore on, and in these conditions, an eight-hour working day seemed an eternity. In such a situation, even the weekend fought a losing battle to keep at the centre of his thoughts. As time passed, the weekend could no longer stay in contention and gave up, leaving the painter with the blankness that only a wage-slave fully appreciates. "A whole week of this," he said aloud, "to support a table and four chairs." He was so filled with despair that he just had to stop painting for a second to recuperate. He straightened up, put the brush across the top of the paint-pot and shuffled to the ship's side. Leaning against the rail, he looked around him. It was an unusually quiet period in the shipyard as occasionally hap-

pened when holeborers went to the shoreside to change their drills and the caulkers to draw out new chisels. The caulkers used this opportunity to fix their air-hoses to the main air supply, (called 'the pig' because of the row of teats along its length, resembling a sow lying on her side). This contraption only emitted the slightest hiss which emphasised the quietness of the frozen yard.

Suddenly a lone voice rang out. Clear as a hammer striking unyielding metal and, as it was winter, the voice carried to the entire yard.

"Hi Ho o o o o o o o o o o..." The voice held the note long. Pure as crystal. There was silence, and then again the voice—"Hi Ho o o o o o o o o o..."

All the workers who heard it were instantly caught in its spell. They were transported back in time to the golden days of the Saturday matinee.

There are sounds which can trigger off memories, and this unknown singer produced such a sound. It is a gift which can unlock the floodgates, and he did. He struck gold with that opening burst of song. It contained it all, the cheap, sticky sweets, the stench of piss that nipped the eyes, the cinnamon fag burning, rather than being actually smoked, and the absolutely indescribable feeling of 'being in the gang'. Belonging. So potent is that experience that contrary to the Bible, when we are men, we don't put away all our childish things—indeed, some feelings we guard and nurture forever, and this emotion is of that kind.

The painter smiled and a good feeling flooded through him, and looking around, he observed that his workmates were also smiling. They smiled at each other without embarrassment, each understanding the other's thoughts. The voice had galvanised them all. They were all back with the seven dwarfs in "Snow-White".

The voice rang out again, but this time the singer wasn't alone. The entire labour force was singing now.

"Hi Ho, Hi Ho,
It's off to work we go.
We work all day, we get no pay,
Hi Ho, Hi Ho, Hi Ho, Hi Ho..."

Then the explosion of laughter roared out that welded each man to his neighbour.

"Aye, this is what it's all about," thought the painter as he

picked up his brush and resumed painting. The day didn't seem so cold now, nor as long.

The unknown soloist had created a magic, every bit as intense as Disney's, and for a brief period, made the brutal act of building a ship in winter tolerable.

R.A. Starrett

THE NATIONAL LEAGUE OF THE BLIND AND DISABLED

Founded...1899
Affiliated to TUC and Labour Party
Publication: The Blind Advocate **(quarterly)**

In the past, we have

1) created union organisation within the Workshops for the Blind
2) organised blind people's marches on London
3) campaigned for the municipalisation of the Workshops and for a minimum wage

Today, we are

1) defending our past achievements
2) joining with other trade unions in the fight on jobs, wages, privatisation and the defence of the National Health Service
3) working internationally to help other blind and disabled organisations to improve things in their own countries

We wish Trade Union Annual 1983 every success, and take this opportunity to thank all trade unionists who over the years have given financial assistance to ensure that our unique role continues.

Michael A. Barrett (Gen. Sec.) **Chris Hynes** (Pres.)
2 Tenterden Road, London N17 8BE

Flight and Darkness

Down the stairs at midnight—the black clock ticking.

The landlady snores fitfully under the stairs. With her mad husband and daughter she wanders hand in hand thru' the valleys of nightmare land. To their mad brains, all is at peace.

I am in the realm that lies between sleep and wakefulness. I feel the frightened grip of Mam's hand as I stumble on the stairs. In the seconds that follow we stand motionless, eyes wide, penetrating the taut darkness; ears straining and sensitive as an open wound.

The landlady stops snoring and the creaking of her belaboured bed-springs sound like cats being nailed to the floor. What if she awakens and the lights come on? What if her daughter cries out from a nightmare—how often we have heard her at night crying, after mistaking her own breathing for that of a man under her bed.

Now we're out on the cold quiet streets of Radford and Dad is struggling with the cases; one is heavier than the other and he limps. As he labours along his breath puffs and pants and his heart hammers.

The blank windows of the boarding house stare malevolently at us, and we turn around continually.

Once into the side-streets around the cigarette factory, we stand over a grate which pumps heat and an acrid tobacco smell up into the frosty night air—Dad lights up. What now? We all look up at him.

Here comes a Police car. Dad drops the cigarette, crushes it under his shoe and has a coughing fit. The coppers think it's funny and steal sidelong glances at each other.

It's not the cold, the fear or the tiredness in my legs, I can't stand—it's the humiliation. Being exposed to people's scorn kills me. I press myself into Mam's leg, to hide my face.

Poor old Dad is making every excuse in the book and the coppers have heard them all before. They keep threatening to take us back. In the end, with the righteous air of one bestowing a great favour, they allow us to carry on roaming the streets. Advising us to keep moving—don't they know we never do anything else?

Pete Hannah


IF YOU WANT A HOLIDAY, TRY PIRATING VIDEO TAPES - MURDER AND RAPE AREN'T RELIABLE ANY MORE.

Uncle Stan

How we envied Uncle Stan—
All us kids I mean—
What a life!
Manager of the Majestic,
Pictures all day long,
Free ice cream;
And paid for it too!
He had a car
And wore evening dress at work,
Or so his daughter said.

One day we went to see him—
My sister, Aunty Ivy,
Five cousins and me.
It was nineteen thirty nine,
A hot sticky day in July,
We rode on the top deck to Abingdon—
Half an hour flying a bomber,
Shooting down Messerschmitts
Into the cool green shades of Bagley wood.

The Majestic was small and shabby,
But Uncle Stan was large and smart,
He *did* wear evening dress.
With his Clark Gable moustache
And shiny black winklepickers
He was king of the street.

We met the ticket lady, the usherette,
The grubby cynical projectionist.
We peered through glasses at the arc lamp;
The mercury rectifier was best of all—
Just like Frankenstein used!
We saw the films, ate ice cream,
And at the end clustered in his office
And admired the safe.

We sat there, eating biscuits
And laughing at his jokes.
It was a golden, golden evening,
And he was Buck Jones and Spencer Tracy,
Hammond and Arsenal all in one.
We knew what job we wanted
When we grew up.

When I grew older I learnt
That the gold was a mask, paper thin
Over a lined forehead.
The Majestic did not pay,
The owners were good business men—
In a month they would sack him.
Then too, his wife was always ill, and every day
The war was drawing nearer.

When it came, he was, they say, glad to go.
He died in a Lancaster over Hamburg,
Not as good at shooting down Messerschmitts
As us kids.
And so he became a different kind of hero—
Or perhaps he stayed the same and we changed—
Us kids.

John Clifford


J. VICKERS

The Embryo Feminist Grandmothers

"Are you coming out?" "Borrow a purse, and we'll walk about." The girl looked up with a pleading smile, as standing on the bottom step she waited for an affirmative from the child who had answered her knock. "Alright, but I'll 'ave to close the door before I ask mi mam, mi dad'll shout if there's a draught." "Wait for me outside the toy shop, I'll only be a minute." She re-entered the house and closed the door, to emerge a short time after clutching a large purse. As they met the two girls gave a conspiratorial grin, and prepared to enact a fantasy composed by them some time ago, which was resurrected at intervals when more strenuous games were considered to be 'kid stuff'. Not another living soul was allowed access to their world. The rapport between them was perfect, they would walk around and around the block weaving their stories of domestic upheaval, husbandly chastisement, and even downright brutality. But their imagined pain was always soothed by a lover, who lurking in the background, was ever ready to carry them away to a better life. Of course they couldn't go. They must consider the children. Furthermore it would put an end to their game. What could they talk about on their excursions? Not happiness. It wasn't a talking point among the circles from which they gathered their material. No! Black eyes, torn clothing, drunkenness. These were meat and drink to these two lassies, and erstwhile lovers, dessert.

Their only props were, a real, mothers purse (a clasp purse was not suitable to their requirements.) This was held in the upturned right hand with the wrist just resting on the stomach. A handkerchief, which was carried in the left hand, was used profusely in the wiping of tear drenched eyes, or stifling of heartbroken sobs. The latter being the most favoured. The last prop earned them many a real live hiding, for they would each produce a pair of high heeled shoes, filched from their grown up sisters. The deviousness with which they smuggled these out was never matched on the return journey so that they were invariably found out, and punished accordingly. But their resolution never faltered, and they took their punish-

ment, if not quietly, at least stubbornly, and committed the same offence again and again. With these three aids, and their coats draped round their waists and tied by the sleeves, the stage was set, the drama about to begin.

The amazing thing about it was, that neither child had any first hand knowledge of the characters which they portrayed. They themselves came from very respectable backgrounds. They were though, obviously capable of eavesdropping on conversations which were certainly not intended for their innocent ears. Having stored the more lurid details, they proceeded to embellish them with a few of their own imaginings, which with a mixture of forbidden novels, and Mary Pickford films, made a marvellous woven tapestry of such violence, it made 'Dante's Inferno' look like an afternoon tea dance at the Y.M.C.A.

The girls differed on only one point, and that led sometimes to a punch-up of their own. Mostly though they were very tolerant of each others views. The difference lay in the way each girl approached the question of ridding themselves of the unwanted husbands. It was relatively easy for Alice because, being a protestant, divorce was acceptable. So that she was able to keep the drama alive with her many and varied reasons why, the money which lover boy was saving towards that end, always seemed to get spent at the last minute. Mon's problem was devising the means to overcome the teaching of the church on the question of marital disharmony. Being catholic, divorce was denied her. It was a most grevious sin to God's Holy Law; marriage remained 'till death us do part'. Searching for other means of loosening the bonds, she seriously considered murder, as the lesser evil, but the fact that she might hang rather dampened her enthusiasm for this way out. It did seem rather attractive though as she mulled it over in bed. She saw herself walking to the scaffold, wearing a brave and gentle smile, the one she'd worn throughout her trial; yet this would not compensate for the fact that she would be dead in the end. She wished to live on and take part in the action. "Not sit on a flippin' cloud looking on." "No!" The answer seemed to lie between tragic accident and fatal disease. Never was a man dragged back from the jaws of death more often than this fictitious husband. A living person could not have stood the pace. He would surely have died from exhaustion owing to the frequency with which he was

shuttled backwards and forwards between Oldham Road and the Pearly Gates.

Both girls overcame the immorality of adultery by ignoring it. They were not sure what constituted an adulterous relationship. Having been informed by their teachers that it meant living with someone else's husband, they absolved themselves from blame, firstly because they did not live with their lovers, secondly the men were single. So that even had they lived with them they were not committing adultery. The fact that their lovers were was not a problem for them to solve, so they ignored it.

Now! both having recently, surreptitiously read 'East Lynne' a fresh crop of adventures were open to them. On this particular night they began a saga which lasted at least six sessions. They'd gathered from the story, that if one had an illicit love affair, they could expect an illegitimate child. The means by which these infants were produced was still a mystery to them so that the first thing they must establish was how they thought it happened. After much deliberation they concluded that the doctor's black bag was the common denominator. What a feast they had with their inventions of situations whereby they outwitted the predatory physician, who seemed to pop up from nowhere every time they went out with their lovers. Even when walking in the country with not another soul in sight, lo and behold there would be the demon doctor, lurking behind a hedge, black bag at the ready, hoping to catch his victims unaware thus enabling him to hurl an unwanted infant into their unsuspecting arms. How tame and uninteresting, straightforward birth control seems after these experiences.

These kids had never heard of Sadism or Masochism, but there was more than a hint of it in their play acting. Mainly though, it showed their feminist tendencies in the determined way they overcame the obstacles, ever present in the life of a woman of the twenties, who was slowly emerging from her bondage and establishing her right to unfettered freedom of choice. They were unaware of these leanings towards liberation though. Especially on this particular night. For as they rounded the corner of the street they were confronted by two hysterical young ladies, painted and powdered and wearing their Sunday clothes, and clogs. The cries of the older girls reached a crescendo as the two culprits, shielding themselves

from the thumps and blows which were descending on their indignant little bodies, fled up the street to the shelter of their respective homes. After the older girls had vented their rage on their errant sisters they retrieved their shoes and departed for places unknown. Mainly Drake St. Leaving their mothers to finish off the punishment. It was easy after the storm of abuse which our heroines had just suffered. They being the youngest were let off lightly by their mothers, who were not harsh at anytime. So that a dressing down followed by a sugar butty was the only punishment meted out by them. The lecture usually ended with an entreaty to be good girls and play proper games like other children. "Think of something to play at instead of walking about all the time. The trouble with you two is, you've no imagination."

Monica Walker

On Meeting Old Flames

Perhaps it may seem strange,
but I've no sentimental wish,
To have my past served up to me,
Upon an antique dish!

A brief glance backward, now and then,
Is all I ever need,
To find yesterday's Romeos
have rather gone to seed.

They seem to dwell on memories
of our past indiscretions,
Or quote bits from their diaries,
that read like "True Confessions".

When someone starts to nudge and wink,
And remind me of the fun we had,
My cheeks grow pale, I cringe and shrink,
I grab my coat and run like mad.

This yearning for our salad days,
just simply leaves me cold,
Maybe we 'made it' then, but now,
he makes me feel so old.

So if I vanish from the scene,
Forgive me, it's because,
It could have been "What might have been",
But thank heavens, it was what was!

Rita Brewer

DEFEND OUR LOCAL GOVERNMENT SERVICES

NALGO Manchester Branch
Elliot House
3 Jackson's Row
Manchester M2 5NJ
061-834 6564

Roger Jones (Secretary)

A Letter

Mrs Thatcher I'm writing to say
You know nothing of the workers' pay
With your nose in the air and fixed smile
To be the lady is your style

You have money to kill and maim
When curing sick should be your aim
No waiting for the likes of you
You can pay to jump the queue

People's taxes pay to guard your son
When out in the desert having fun
Others' sons are sent to fight
Just because you think you are right

So Mrs Thatcher think again
And stop using workers for your gain
For you should be changing places
With the unemployment cases

Margaret Harding

Compo

'Course Freddie 'ad no need t' cross the shop doorstep, but when he saw all those soap-suds, well...

It was great: a kind of slide, then both legs up in the air. Only thing that spoilt it was 'im shoutin', "Compo!" before 'e 'it the deck. Said afterwards that that was a birrof a tactical error.

Some owl girl was nearest: "Ooer! Y' alright, son?"

"Me back! Oh, Christ, me back! Giz yer name 'n' address, ma."

The two cleaners gave theirs as well, and some catch-merchant sellin' gold watches at thirty bob each offered 'is, till he got told there was sod-all in it for 'im.

By the time the ambulance came there was a dirty big crowd round Freddie, most of them thinkin' 'e'd jumped off the roof.

"Gerrus me parish priest!" Freddie cried before they could move 'im.

Word spread through the crowd like a rat through grass.

"What's 'is name then?" they asked Freddie.

Freddie bit 'is lip. Another tactical error. "I dunno!" 'e cried.

"Amnesia," muttered one of the ambulancemen.

Father Flanagan got to the ozzie a bit puzzled. Only feller 'e could remember called Freddie O'Toole was some geezer 'e married off three years ago 'oo gave 'im the *Racing and Football Outlook* in a sealed envelope "fer yer trouble, Father". 'E'd never seen the heathen since. The doctors were a bit puzzled too, Father Flanagan found out, 'cos they could find nothing wrong with Freddie, even though he seemed paralysed from the waist down. Still, Father Flanagan realised, 'is was not to reason why the prodigal sheep 'ad returned to the flock, merely to kill the fatted calf in celebration of its return—or something like that—Father Flanagan was still confused, y' see.

Well the court cases follered thick an' slow, with some bastard of an insurance man thinkin' Freddie was 'avin 'im on. Tried all sorts t' catch Freddie out, 'e did: lovely women 'angin' round 'im and some geezer watchin' with a telescopic bulge detector; burstin' inter the lav when 'e was 'avin a crap; askin' Freddie's missus 'ow 'e managed to do this and 'ow 'e

managed to do that—'course that did no good cos she just put 'er 'and on 'er 'eart and said what did they mean "*after* the accident", Freddie 'adn't done a blind thing in the 'ouse since the friggin' day she married 'im. Sex went out the winder too, but rumour 'ad it that Father Flanagan got more than Freddie did anyway. Tetley Bitterman, Freddie.
Anway, t' cut a short story short, the case went all the way t' the 'Ouse of Lords, and Freddie, with Father Flanagan by 'is side, won it along with an 'undred grand.

Course, the insurance feller lost 'is rag, didn't 'e. "Alright, you bastard," 'e ses, "a hundred thousand it is, but you won't enjoy it. I'll be watching you every minute of the day for the rest of your bloody life."

"Ok, big licks," Freddie said, "you'd berra get y'self an aeroplane ticket then, cos me an' Father are off to Lourdes, prayin' 'ard fer a miracle."

Jimmy McGovern.

Seaside Town

Stretching back
The seaside town's lifeblood
Flows on tarmac veins
Sluggishly.

A hundred roads lead
To the heart that is beating
To the sound of slot machines
and bingo halls where student callers
Clickety-click
Their way through summer seasons
And a thousand teddy bears
Change hands.

Hear the crazy-golf balls hollow rattle
Through miniature windmills
and monkey's mouths—
32 over par. Never mind
It's the holiday mood—

And the whine of distant dodgems
Slowing down
Somewhere a clown laughs

See the crowds along the front
Lapping idly over stone shop doorways
Between the swaying postcard racks
And plastic world cup footballs

Over squashed chips
And shattered ice-cream cones

The white stuff melts
Into pavement cracks
Is licked by dogs

And the beach
The dark part for cricket
Where the spinning tennis-ball
Beats Jimmy's forward defensive
With the spade
And mother gets another try
Even though the bucket
Is scattered in the sand

A six into the sea
And the ball returns, heavy
And dripping like a sponge

And over there
In the dry cigarette-ended sand
Oiled bodies glint
In the occasional sun
That all day long is dodging
The next malignant cloud

The final sandwich is besieged
Transistors capsize and are filled
With sand

Periodically naked babies cry

Everywhere
Marauding wasps suck away
The final sweetness

And the inadequate sandcastle
Topples beneath the encroaching tide.

David Tunaley

The Great Outside Netty Revival

For the benefit of those not versed in the ways of Tyneside and Northumbria a netty is a toilet. It follows therefore that an ootside netty is an outside toilet. When someone says that they are journeying to the Great Outback it has a rather different meaning than it has in Australia.

Have you noticed the great revival of interest in these netties. You know, nothing stays out of fashion forever. Remember Teddy Boy suits and the even older Norfolk jacket. They came back. Take it from me, the outside netty is on its way back. The time is rapidly approaching when a young couple buying their first house will hear the agent, in a voice lowered to a respectful hush say, "And of course the property has an outside netty." The bride or the prospective bride will squeal, "Oh! Darling, do you hear that? It has an outside netty." Perhaps the husband will ask, suspiciously, "Is it detached?" Of course it is silly beggar, from the house, otherwise it wouldn't be an outside netty.

Then again old netties threatened by demolition will be saved by S.O.N.I.A. (Save OUTSIDE Netties Instantly Association.) Preservation orders will be sought and granted. Any day now I expect to see folk wearing lapel badges and T-shirts proclaiming, I've got an Outside Netty. Or hear folk on their way to do the necessary, singing Wood Glorious Wood because to be in vogue no plastic would be allowed.

But you know, people who find themselves in the position of possessing an outside netty will come under a lot of pressure. All sorts of rich folk will be trying to buy them and the more genuinely antique the better. I can see them saying, "If you sell me that nasty drafty old place I'll give you a thousand." Somebody else will commit sacrilege by offering a thousand and a new inside netty. It could be that the owners of such establishments might get a little suspicious.

Can you imagine the Duchess of Clawhammer telling her friends, "You must see my little place in the country." Can you see a procession of Rolls Royces and Daimlers and the like, queueing up in the streets of some colliery villages while their

owners take turns to use such a netty.

Then think of April or May when a half-asleep man sees his wife remove her wellies before getting back into bed. (Aye we're fussy about things like that in the North.) He says, "Is it raining out there?" "Raining?" she says. "There's a foot of snow out there. Why, are you going out?" "Oh! No pet," he replies casually, then asks, "does that back bedroom window over the Chrysanthemum bed still open?"

I had my eye on a nice bit of property with a netty but was gazumped. As I walked into the bar my mate handed me a pint, for which I was grateful. I could have strangled him though, when he said, "Bottoms Up!"

Dick Lowes

The Boss's Funeral

At the news of the Boss's death the crawlers showed their feelings in various ways so's the manager, Bear's Breath, would notice. Lappsey wore a black mourning arm-band, Creepy Bleeder allowed various grotesque expressions of personal loss to flit around his features, one or two had furrows on their faces like little dried-up water courses where once their tears had run, and others wore significant expressions like the tell-tale blanks in a lottery. The rest of us thanked what passes for Providence.

"I don't think we'll go to the funeral," said Preacher, "we know it all. 'We praise thee O Mammon, we acknowledge Thee to be the Lord. All Earth doth worship Thee, the Tycoon everlasting. To Thee all Devils cry aloud. To Thee all peoples continually do cry. Holy Smoke, Holy Smoke, Holy Smoke. London and the provinces even to the tail-ends of Rusticana are full of the majesty of thy...'."

"Bank-balance," suggested Soldier.

"Wonder where it's buried?" said Cockney.

"You mean the body? Oo bloody gives a monkey's!"

"The body be buggered," said Cockney, "I'm talking abaht the loot!"

"See, Jack," he went on. "It's gold they collects! Like yer countries. They digs it aht ov one ole and buries it in anover. Clever dodge, eh? Yer mere hanimals couldn't ov thought of *that* one!"

"Very true!" I said.

"Course," said Cockney. "Taint all *that* simple. Poor buggers av trouble keepin track of it all. Do your know they weighs people in an aht of the gold-minds, see, to stop the miners pinchin any, and every time they come up they av to cough up any gold dust they breaves in, and there's special lavatries and scientists puts all the shit through these sieves, see. Saves several ounces a twelve-month! Why, some of the poor sods shit theirselves cos they couldn't stop the wind blowin, used to waste ounces that bleedin wind! Nature's bloody cock-eyed when you fink of it, ain't it?"

"Thank you for the lesson," I said.

"Course, when you come to think of it," said Cockney, "it

might just as well be left where it was in the first place, cause anyway they used double entry in their trade books—I owes you and you owes me. So why shift it abaht all over the bleedin shop? But I spose if some silly bleeder wanted is gold quick-like, you'd ave to climb all the way down wiv a pick axe an knock a lump aht for im an there'd be a elluva hargy-bargy."

"You're right," I said, "no creature but Man could have thought of it."

On Wednesday Soldier came in with the Daily Sezwich and wouldn't let us see the report of the funeral but gave us his own version.

"They made a good job of im," he said. "The Archbishop sent flowers, Inspector Constable saluted, the bearers' haircuts, chins and boots were inspected, price-lists were distributed among the hired mourners and the band played Chase me Charlie, Chase me Charlie, I've lost the leg of me drawers."

"Come on, Soldier, don't sod abaht, let's have a butchers," said Cockney, but Soldier went on. "Lord God Blossom's death caused sensational repercussions on the Stock Exchange. There was an upsurge in tin, wheat was slack, copper eased, markets bounced, indices plunged, shares fell, shares rose, assets froze, prices thawed, ceilings were level, influences were being bolstered, slumps and booms alternated, gulfs were widening, prices between spot and forward contracts were fluctuating, there was cautious interest in futures, bankers were pessimistic, Bulls and Bears were in feverish activity..."

"... And Shakespeare had a fit," said Preacher.

Our own celebration of the death of Blossom—not a moment too soon for the good of the human race, said Preacher—took place on Saturday night at the *Fish and Fiddle,* and I was graciously invited to accompany Soldier, Preacher and Cockney, being nearly a grown man, they said. I don't remember an awful lot of detail about the evening until we got back, except that the other three made friends with some young ladies and at times they were all roaring their heads off at the bar while I sat in a corner alone for a while with two or three pints lined up in front of me. And then this lady, old enough to be my mother, with fuzzy blond hair came and sat beside me with a glass of gin and breathed all over me and started talking and rubbing her fingers up the back of my neck


JBH 85

and whispering in my ear would I like a nice time, she could make me happy dearie, and she took out of her handbag a photograph of a naked woman. She had it on her lap so that no-one else but me could see it and I felt myself blushing, but I couldn't take my eyes off it and suddenly Soldier has to come up and embarrass me.

"Hello, Ma," he said, "kidnapping? You can see 'e aint got the cradle marks awf yet! Nothin doin Ma. Think you'd better sod awf."

But I was even more embarrassed by her reply.

"Sod awf yerself!" she said. "What the bleedin ell has it got to do with you? E's full-grown aint e?"

"I dunno Ma, I never looked," said Soldier. "But e's with me and e don't need any nice times tonight!"

"Can't e talk for isself," she said, "and not so much of the Ma."

"Now, Ma," said Soldier, "you don't want any trouble, you can ave the rozzers down yer neck."

"Sod the rozzers too," said the lady, and then suddenly changed her manner completely.

"Ow about *you* then dearie," she said to Soldier.

"Sorry, Ma," said Soldier. "Love to, but I'm a married man with ten kids and they're all waitin outside for me."

"Tell that to the Bleedin Marines", said the lady.

"I'll tell you what, Ma," said Soldier. "I'll get yer a drink".

And he went to the bar and brought back a double gin for her. She accepted with graciousness.

"Gawd bless yer," she said. "Ere's to yer liver and lights, you're a nice boy."

"Yes, well, be a good girl, Ma" said Soldier, and I said goodbye and went with him to the others feeling we had done the right thing.

"You want to watch them", he said to me "or you'll finish up with the medicine-man".

"I know", I said, "I'm not silly," a statement he pretended he hadn't heard. "Anyhow", he said, "down to serious business. New glasses for everyone," he called. And we all filled up again. And the three ladies had fresh gins and Preacher raised his glass.

"Unaccustomed as I am," he began, "to delivering the customary oration at the funeral of the late unlamented Blossom, who unfortunately only died once—the very flower of the

compost—"

"—dunghill," said Soldier.

"—shiteap," said Cockney.

"—Nevertheless I must express my pleasure and I am sure everyone else's at this belated intervention of Providence on our behalf in plucking the said flower from the said compost—"

"—dunghill," said Soldier.

"—shiteap," said Cockney.

"and may we never hear his name further mentioned among us ever hereafter so help us—".

"—Swelpus—"

"—Sbleednelpus—"

"—Amen—"

"—Ah me—"

"—Ah sole mio—"

From there we went to a large room where there was a gramophone and before long the others were dancing, while I was allowed to rest on a large couch, and fell asleep.

Suddenly a loud voice woke me up. This voice belonged to a man who was walking around stripped to the waist with a quart jug in his hand a girl's arm round his neck. His cheeks bore a number of strange markings which looked for all the world like impressions of red lips which had been tattoed or rubber-stamped on, and there were two other men in the room in much the same situation. And this voice was saying "Come on, hit the road, Jack. Back to the workhouse," but I told them I wanted a party and Soldier said which party did I fancy and I said, Don't be so crude, I mean I'd like to dance and have some fun—they'd had *their* party, I said, and all *I'd* done was sit in a corner and talk to an old lady in the pub and then sleep on a couch. But they said there would always be another day, or night, that I had got a long life ahead of me, that we had to be home before daylight—and in any case I could always read about such things in books, and I said, Damn the books, but they replied that though this was a very sensible attitude they didn't want the bother of taking me home by force.

We got back to the workhouse, as we called it, sometime in the early hours of the morning and Soldier actually had a key and God knows where he had got it from and he let us in, all saying sh.... except Cockney who was singing 'Yes Sir she's my baby', and Soldier apparently felt obliged to say, Dry up

Cockney, we don't want the Red Queen bellyaching all over the shoot at ex 0400 hours in the morning.

"Don't bloody shout so, Soldier," said Cockney. "I'm not bloody deaf," although Soldier hadn't spoken a whisper.

I had a fit of the giggles, probably caused by that picture of the beautiful lady, not to mention the glorious death of Blossom.

"Deaf in one ear and can't hear out of the other," I said. "It's dark, I can't see," said Cockney.

"Of course it's dark," said Soldier, "but if you get out of the bleedin way, I'll put the light on!"

"*She* could ear a bleedin clock tick in Australia," said Cockney.

"Yes, and *your* clock'll tick if you hit the floor," said Soldier. "Stand up!"

"Who cares if she does hear!" I said. "I'm going to have another drink—I've got this bottle..."

"Put that bloody bottle out of sight," said Soldier. "Worst of taking kids out!"

"Soldier," I asked, "should it make your ears buzz like this, just having a drink?"

"*Anything* would make *your* ears buzz, Jack," said Soldier in passing.

Suddenly there was a knocking at the door.

"Who the bloody ell..." Soldier began, and then looked around. "Where's Preacher then?" he asked.

And it appeared that we had locked Preacher out, because we had forgotten that he was sitting on the iron stairs outside waiting for us to get Cockney sorted out and safely *inside.*

"I live here, too, you know," he said, when we opened up again.

"Well, then, for Christ's sake come in," said Cockney.

"What're you *doing* out there, anyway?"

And he started singing again and we suddenly heard Mrs Fryer's voice calling from upstairs.

"Who's that? What's all that noise. Did I hear *you,* Mr Parks?"

And Soldier cursing had to answer, "Yes, it's me, Mrs Fryer."

We could hear her coming down talking to herself. And then she saw us.

"I might have *known* you would be in it!" she said to

Cockney. "What's the *matter* with them Mr Parks, are they drunk?"

Cockney leered at her. "Ullo, little sweetheart," he said, "did someone git you aht of bed, then? Come on, giss a kiss!" and he lurched towards her.

"Ugh," she cried, "don't you come near me! Disgusting creature. What's that on his face?" referring to the lipstick.

"He bumped it," said Soldier.

Cockney wasn't listening. "May I have this dance Miss?" he said.

Mrs Fryer made a noise resembling a squeal.

"Keep away from me! Stop him!" she cried.

"Gawd," said Cockney, with extraordinary feeling. "That *bird!* I keep thinking of her."

"What *is* he talking about?" said Mrs Fryer.

"Let me and Preacher get em to bed, Mrs Fryer. They'll be all right in the morning," said Soldier.

"*Look* at him!" exclaimed the housekeeper. "Stop that awful noise, Cockney. However are you going to get him upstairs, Mr Parks?"

"Push im up," said Soldier.

I had another spasm of giggling.

"You kept thinking someone had run off and pawned your trousers, Cockney," I said.

"Yus, that's right," said Cockney. "Oo was it?"

"Shut up about em," said Soldier hastily. "You never lost no trousers, you silly bleeder!"

"I'm disgusted!" said Mrs Fryer, "*I'm* going to bed."

And she went off still talking to herself all the way upstairs.

Soldier turned to me. "That's er gawn! but for gawd's sake why do you have to let on everything, Jack? Talking about Cockney's trousers! E got em back, didn't he, so why mention it?"

"How did we get into that strange house?" I asked. I don't remember."

"All *I* know is," said Soldier, "I couldn't seem to get out. There didn't seem any doors in the place—only those damned mirrors..."

"Yes, there were," I said, "they were swing doors."

"Yus," said Cockney, "and they kep comin back at me and smackin me in the kisser. You can't blame *me*!"

"And there was this glass-eyed bloke," said Soldier, "kept

following me around, starin at me and I up an took a bleedin poke at im but is jaw musta bin made of cast iron. Here—is my hand broke, Cockney? It bloody well feel's like it!"

I laughed. All I seemed to be able to *do* was laugh. "You kept asking that barman if he thought you were a teetotaller," I said, "because he only put up a pint at a time."

"Even that copper looked as if e ad glass eyes," said Soldier.

"Why you silly born bugger," said Cockney, "that was when you it im."

"It im?" said Soldier. "I never did! Jesus! Did I it a copper?"

"You did an all," said Cockney.

"Never on your life I didn't!" said Soldier. "I only it women and children!"

"No praps I tell a lie," said Cockney. "It was that swing door what it im. Leastways, I believe it were a copper."

"No," I said, "that was you, Cockney. Look at your face!"

For some reason we were all now sitting on the stairs until someone decided we'd be better off in bed.

In the morning, which was about mid-day, I began to feel worried. Personally I didn't think anything could save our jobs after last night and I was horrified at the very thought of our goings on. Mrs Fryer was bound to report us. But when I got down to breakfast they were talking about their hangovers. It seemed to me quite irresponsible but I merely said that I envied them their calm.

"Calm?" said Cockney, "Oos calm? I gotta ead like an elephant's pulse. Bang! Bang!"

"I mean," I said, "considering she's bound to tell Bear's Breath."

"Tell Bear's Breath!" exclaimed Soldier, "Tell him what?"

"Oh come off it, Soldier," I said. "I mean about last night!"

Soldier laughed, and that didn't help.

"Is there any more like you down in the fields, Jack?" he asked. "Windy down there, is it?"

"I'm not scared," I burst out. "I've as much courage as anyone else!"

"Don't matter a damn about courage, Jack," said Soldier. "Even a rabbit's got that!"

"You want something else, Jack," said Cockney.

"What else?" I said from a great height, as if they were a couple of babies in arms who couldn't be expected to understand.


JBH 83

But they didn't take offence—just carried on eating their breakfasts.

"Aw me bleedin ead!" said Cockney.

"Don't bellyache," said Soldier. "It's worth it—we don't bury that old bastard every day."

"Do you remember me asking a question?" I said in a loud voice.

They all looked up and spoke together.

"A question? What question? When was this?"

"Oh," I said as sarcastically as I could, "I think it was sometime last week!"

"Last *week*?" they said. "What was e doin last *week*?"

"I'm talking about just now," I said. "Don't you remember I asked you, 'What else?' "

"What else what?" they asked?

"Oh dear," I said patiently, "you said I needed something else besides courage. Well, *what* else?"

"Oh Gawd," they said, "you ain't still on about *that*!"

"Yes, I am," I said. "What's to prevent her from getting us all the sack? And you sit there chattering about your ailments?"

"Shut im up," said Cockney, "an we can finish our bloody breakfast."

"Yes, well, Jack," said Soldier, "you see, we don't give a monkey's about it. It's all fixed."

"All fixed?" I said. "How can you fix it?"

"Well," said Soldier. "ow do you think we wangled the front door key, and gettin in at all hours, an ow do we know she won't tell? What else you want, Jack, is to know that she likes er drop of tiddley an we know exactly which. Who do you think that bottle of gin was for that we brought back? Us? *We* wouldn't drink that stuff if there was a bleedin drought! No, Jack, that was for er ladyship!"

"Good Lord," I said.

"Good Lawd, e sez," said Cockney. "Nah for Christ's sake settle dahn—and may we ave your permission to get on with our bleedin breakfast?"

"Bleedin grass is born to be green," said Soldier in reference to my coming from the country.

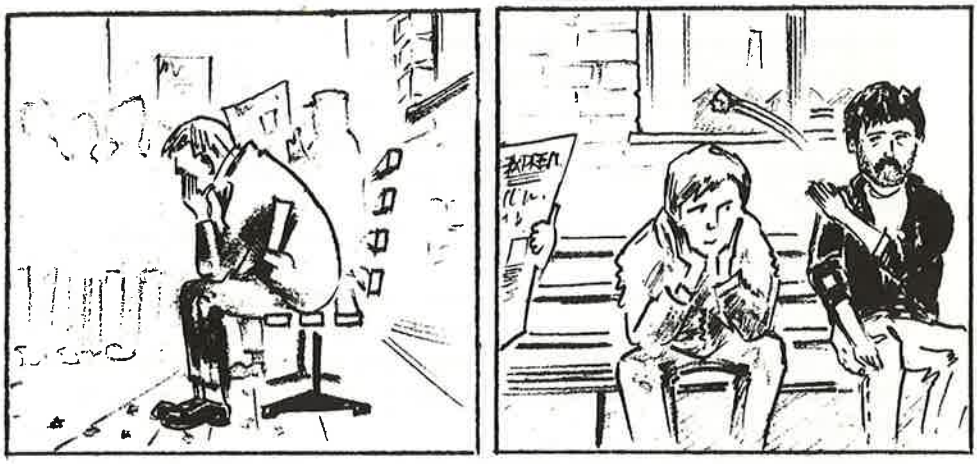
F.C. Ball

Lakeland Vision

Brief interlude in life's relentless strife;
A moment's pause to view a lake serene;
Suspended time, when Nature gives a calm to life;
And silence, deep, eternal, clothes the scene.

F. Hodgkinson

Black holes in the Universe



We learned of Auntie May's death on the Wednesday: I had just returned from signing on when Mother told me the police had called. Oddly enough, it was also the day Grub and I first spoke to each other.

I was sat upon the rock hard bench in the Labour Exchange, brooding, whilst awaiting my turn at the glass partition. I had almost convinced myself I was nothing but a scrounger, a parasite, a burden upon all the hard-working, decent folk; "After all," I thought, "I've been unemployed for over nine months now; I've reached the stage where I don't really want a job anymore."

He sat down on the bench next to me, interrupting my thoughts. I watched him out of the corner of my eye as he read the leaflet the fellah outside the main doors was handing out. He must have noticed me eyeing him; he screwed the leaflet up into a little ball, and tossed it over his shoulder.

"Bleedin' students!" he declared, looking sideways at me.

I had seen him before, he signed on on Wednesdays the same as myself. He usually had his oppo with him: a big, beefy bloke, with shoulder length hair; but this time he was alone. Mr. Gorman, or Gordon, I recalled the woman behind the glass partition calling him. I heard his oppo call him 'Grub'. I thought the name quite appropriate, as his appearance was

always on the grubby side: he wore the same clothes week in, week out: black leather jacket, off-white tee-shirt, faded denim jeans, and battered desert boots. He usually sported three or four days' growth of black beard; and the dirt underneath his fingernails would have filled a matchbox: presenting himself to the dole authorities as a man permanently on his uppers.

"I don't need no bloody student to tell me I'm a victim of capitalism," he continued. "Mind you, it might be a bit different if they started givin' out machine guns instead of bleedin' leaflets!"

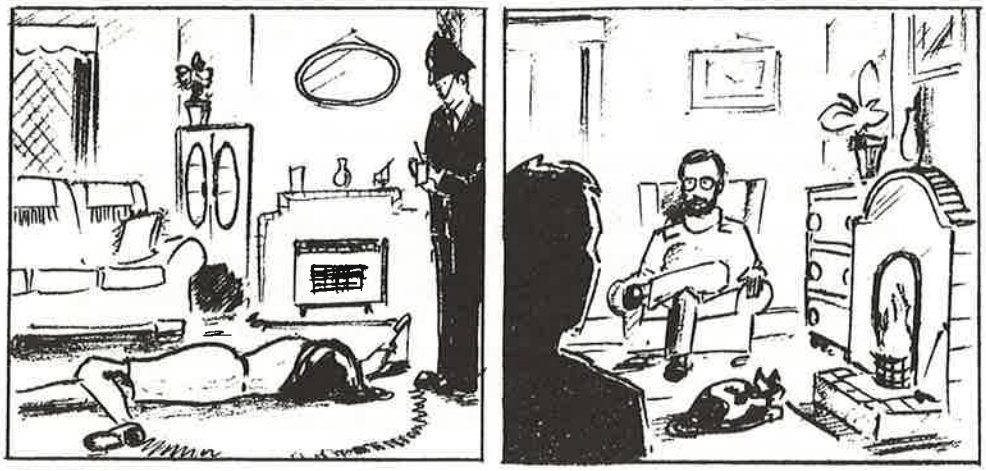
"God bless the unemployed," I sighed, fighting to maintain a straight face.

"Are you Scotch?" he asked, lowering his brow at me.

"No mate, I'm just government surplus," I replied.

He spread his outstretched legs, and stared down at the floor between them, no longer interested in continuing the conversation.

Auntie May was found on the Tuesday, lying face down on the Wilton in the lounge. The neighbours told the police they hadn't seen her since the previous Saturday. It was the milkman who raised the alarm, after finding Monday's delivery untouched on the doorstep. The police arrived an hour or so later; knocked twice upon the door; wandered around the outside of the house; and then smashed the front door in. No medical training was required to ascertain she had died as a result of a cut neck: the Wilton was ruined, caked with clotted blood: Uncle Frederick's bone handled open razor was locked

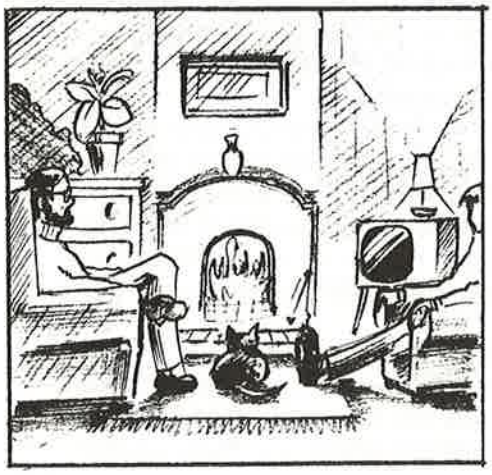


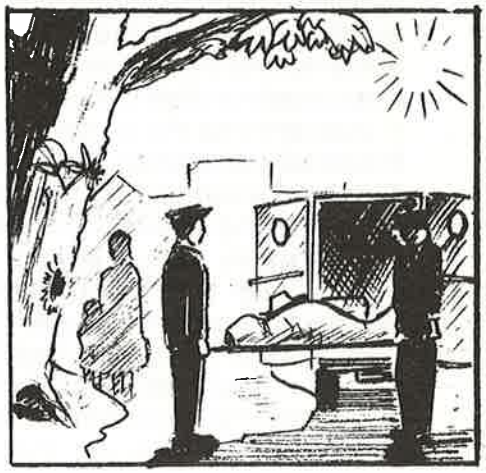
in her right hand. Given a short time at the scene it would have been reasonable for a relatively astute person to deduce the fatal cut had been self inflicted.

At the inquest the Coroner recorded that Auntie May had taken her own life, sometime on the Sunday afternoon, while the balance of her mind was disturbed.

Twice a week I go around to Sam's house. I met Sam in a betting shop a couple of years ago, and we've been the best of friends ever since. Sam is a lot older than me. I'm unsure of his actual age, but I think he must be at least fifty five. Sam has always been careful not to divulge his age, although he is most forthcoming in other matters, including the extremely personal. He is a very learned man, who often says quite profound things which I find hard to follow. For example: One day, out of the blue, he said to me: 'It is impossible to postulate the essence of cognitive existence: all one can say with certitude is that it is a state of being occurring somewhere between the day the first creature crawled out of the primeval soup and the day the Sun finally burns out in a splendid heliumic rush.'

I've learned a lot from Sam in the two years I've known him. He has travelled widely, and delved deeply into all manner of things: he is well read of literature; well versed in poetry; well acquainted with the scientific technology of today's world; his past is nothing short of a wealth of sexual experience; and he has dabbled a little with exotic drugs. He describes himself as being 'totally amoral'. When I informed him of Auntie May's





death, he asked me if there was a possibility of it being something other than suicide. I told him the authorities had declared it an open-and-shut case of wilful self-destruction. At that he tapped the side of his nose, and winked at me: 'In that case, if, shall we say, murder has been committed, then the killer, or killers, has, or have, every entitlement to claim a major victory over the cool, calculating, forensic machine of the police state.'

Mother often talked of Auntie May. She was a great Aunt on Father's side of the family. I had only seen her a couple of times; the last being at Grandmother's funeral, eight years ago. I remember her as a tall, thin woman, with long, greying, red hair. I could tell from her manner she was a person of means; she had a certain presence of being that overshadowed the rest of the family gathering. For the last sixteen years of her life she lived alone in a smart detached house in the Hale Barns stockbroker belt. She had lived a full life, sampling the dizzy heights of fame for a number of years; and whilst Uncle Frederick was alive she had gone short of nothing.

Uncle Frederick had bowed out with dignity; a fatal heart attack, whilst walking home from communion, on the warmest Summer's morning of the year, in the early fifties. He had made his pile in cotton after the first world war. He had amassed a goodly sum before he met Auntie May, in the early thirties. They met through one of Auntie May's musical escapades: she used to sing light opera on the music halls. She had an excellent soprano voice, and was well known throughout the land. Uncle Frederick was a tidy few years her senior; but a whirlwind romance culminated in marriage less than three months after their initial encounter.

Just prior to the outbreak of the second world war Uncle Frederick transferred all his capital to Canada, where he and Auntie May sat out the hostilities. Auntie May made an even greater name for herself in her chosen profession in the land of the maple leaf—it seems light opera was tremendously popular over there during the war years. She earned herself a tidy packet into the bargain.

As the war drew to a close they both returned home. They settled in Sheffield, where their collective capital was invested in a company producing cabinets for television sets. After a couple of years, or so, the interest alone on their sound

investment enabled them to pursue a somewhat more than comfortable existence. But, then there was a spot of bother: some scandal or other: 'indiscretions of a delicate nature', as Mother put it. They sold up all their property in Sheffield, and moved into the Hale Barns detached. Auntie May never sang in public again after their hasty departure from Sheffield: both she and Uncle Frederick retired from public life.

A few years after that Uncle Frederick passed on. Shortly after his demise Auntie May arranged for the capital to be taken out of the company producing television sets, and invested it all in government bonds of one sort or another.

When the Labour Party came to office in the early sixties Auntie May cashed in the bonds, and put the bulk of her capital into cocoa bean futures. Her money was to remain in cocoa, which provided a more than adequate return to meet her humble needs; until one of Uncle Frederick's old friends from the local masonic advised her fat dividends were to be reaped from an excellent little offshore banking corporation, being run at the time by a prominent British politician, and a gentleman of American personage who had earned himself an awesome reputation in high finance.

Eighteen months later the gentleman with the awesome reputation disappeared without trace, along with the money he was holding. Questions were asked in Parliament: the prominent politician pleaded ignorance; and Auntie May's money was lost forever. She spent the remaining years of her life living off handouts she received from the local masonic.

The local newspaper announced Auntie May's untimely demise in the bottom right hand corner of the front page: a thoughtful little potted biography, listing all her major achievements in the light opera field. They also put in a couple of lines about her losing all her hard earned savings in a business venture; although the offshore banking corporation wasn't specifically mentioned; as neither were the delicate-natured indiscretions.

I gave the funeral a miss: I had to sign on in the morning; and the Gillette Cup semi-final was on television in the afternoon; but Mother attended. She reported a good turnout. There were a number of coves from the local masonic there to pay their last respects, including an old Judge, who was purported to have been seeing rather a lot of Auntie May after Uncle Frederick passed on. There was also a smattering of

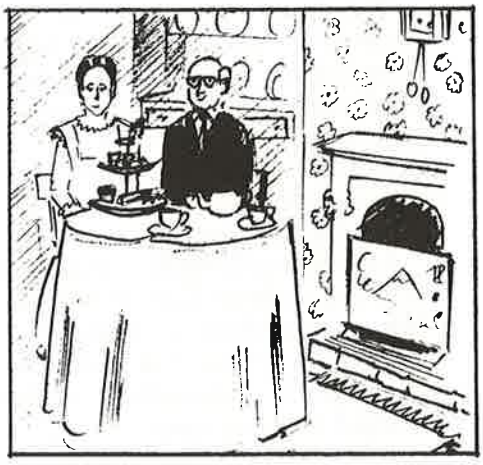
local dignitaries at the graveside: a couple of borough councillors, and a prospective parliamentary candidate. Mother and Auntie Dolly were the only relatives present. Mother said they were fussing all over them both at the ham and pickle tuck-in after the interment.

At the reading of the will it transpired that Auntie May had left the bulk of her estate to the old Judge. She left Auntie Dolly the grandfather clock; and Mother got the best china tea-set. She wasn't expecting anything, so it came as a pleasant surprise.

It was about a week after the funeral that I started having the dreams. They were frighteningly clear for dreams: the same details kept cropping up night after night.

It seems I had been invited to Auntie May's for afternoon tea. When I arrived at the house I was greeted by Auntie May and the old Judge. We sat down to tea and fruitcake at the front room dining table. During tea the old Judge happened to remark how youthful and vigorous I looked: Auntie May nodded in agreement, as she patted my thigh beneath the table. Much to my surprise she left her hand upon my leg, even when the conversation turned to other things.

On our second cup of tea Auntie May began to trail her hand up and down the inside of my thigh. Such familiarities inflamed my passions to such an extent that I found myself with an involuntary erection. I suddenly experienced an overwhelming desire to place my own hand upon Auntie May's leg; but then, just as suddenly, I froze in apprehension.



It was then I noticed the old Judge was looking at me with a hideous smile upon his wizened face.

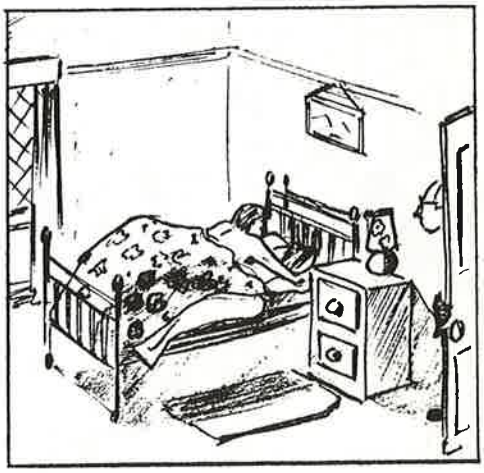
"Why don't you show the boy around the rest of the house," he suggested to Auntie May.

Auntie May took me by the hand, and led me out of the front room, up the stairs, and into the large bedroom at the front of the house.

Without speaking we both shed our clothes and lay down in each other's arms on the double bed, where we set about enjoying an uninhibited bout of sensual abandon. It was when I took up a position on top of Auntie May that I first felt the uneasy sensation that we were not alone in the room. Turning my head to the right I noticed the old Judge standing in the open doorway. The hideous grin had gone from his face, and in its place was a look of intense interest. Noticing I had spotted him watching us, he motioned with a nod of the head for me to carry on with the business in hand. To my surprise I found myself quite capable of doing just that, despite his presence in the room.

When Auntie May and I returned downstairs the old Judge was sitting in the armchair by the side of the fireplace. He beckoned me over to him. I stood in front of him, as he withdrew his wallet from his inside jacket pocket and extracted from it a five pound note. He held the five pound note towards me. I instinctively held my hand out for it.

"You will come back next week, won't you?" he asked,



before he released the note.

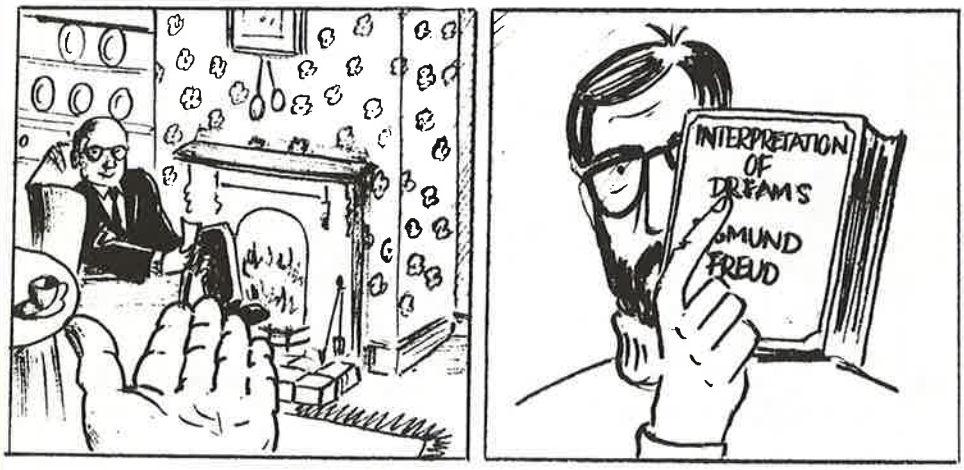
When I told Sam about the dreams, he said they had 'Freudian connotations'. He reckoned it was sexual frustration that was bringing them about; he said they were occurring because I had failed to establish a satisfactory sexual relationship. It's all right for him to say that; but where am I going to find anyone to establish a sexual relationship with? All the girls I used to knock about with are married off: I haven't got the money to be able to go gadding about the nightclubs and dancehalls: the only female I come into contact with, besides Mother, is the woman behind the glass partition at the Labour Exchange; and she looks at me as if I were something that had just crawled out from under a rock.

I wanted to talk further with Sam about sexual frustration, but he started rambling on about black holes in the Universe.

I went for a couple of pints with Grub this dinner-time. I met him down at the Labour. His oppo is back; it seems he's been down Birmingham for the last month; but he says there's nowt doing for unskilled workers down there either.

"How's it going, Jock?" Grub shouted across the street as he spotted me.

"Not ser bad, Grub. How'ze yerself?" I called back as I crossed towards them. Grub introduced me to his oppo: he's

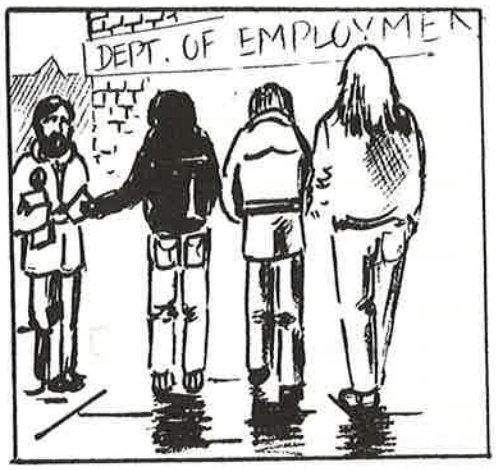


called Skid. The three of us went into the Labour together.

The student was outside again, handing out his leaflets.

"Roll on the Revolution!" Grub said, as he took a leaflet from him.

"Not half!" I thought to myself.



Story: Michael Rowe
Illustrations: Larry Snarr

The Sailmaker

One evening in the second dog
Revenge far out at sea
The sailmaker in the top messdeck
Collapsed of a sudden heart attack
And died.
He was laid out on the boatdeck
Between the pinnace and the cutter
With one sentry posted
To sail his last few miles.

Half past midnight
Middle watch
Starlit sky ice black
Sentry sat on a coil of rope
Shrank inside his duffle coat
Leaned his head against a boat
Wakeful eyelids slowly sloped,
Lowered by the ship's slow roll,
And while below the engines thundered,
Reluctant sentry softly slumbered.

Cold North wind riding past
High above the ship's main mast
Saw the sentry sleeping fast
Thought he'd give the lad a blast
Just for fun.

He crept on board by the quarterdeck
Up two ladders to the irondeck
Where sentry and sailmaker company kept
Between the boats.
Under the launch
Under the cutter
Caused a heap of dust to flutter
Softly stole across the space
Between the cutter and the steam pinnace,
Peered from round behind the mast
Sentry still was sleeping fast.
To smile on watchman's eyes tight closed
Sardonic North wind crept up close
Rattled covers on the boat
Sentry shivered
Clutched his coat.

Then back a few feet North wind stepped,
Crouching,
Paused to gather breath,
And then he sprang
And with a mighty shriek
Lifted high the whitening sheet.

Sentry wakened with a start
Felt a hammer in his heart
Lifted him on to his feet
Broke all records for the fleet.
Past the barge
Past the cutter
Throat constricted
Could not utter,
Reached the four inch,
Perspiration,
Heart still thumping,
Palpitation,
I've seen a ghost,
I've seen a ghost,
The sailmaker's
Between the boats.

The four inch gun's crew
Drinking ky
Thick sweet cocoa
Navy supply
To blunt Atlantic's knife edge cold,
Tiptoed round between the boats
To see if they could lay the ghost.
Wind departed from the scene
They found the sailmaker serene
Shroud in place.

They buried Sails that afternoon
A canvas shroud
Six inch shell for ballast
Ship's chaplain
White surplice blowing
Says some words that fall astern
Bugle call
Rifle volley
Beneath the flag the plank is raised,
The body plunges
Into the depths.

Weep not for Sails,
He knows no car infested roads
With engine roar and biting fumes
To deaden ears and harass lungs.
His is the resting place that gives
The solace where the spirit lives
And his soul,
If souls we have,
Can mingle with the sky and birds
Hovering above the spot
Where last farewells were made.
We do not remember him,
But he remembers us,
As we were,
A happy band
A common bond,
Not divided by selfish aims

Based upon material gains
We hope to make,
But joined in a communion,
Not unsullied,
Not without blemish,
But a communion none the less,
And if the spoken word was rare
Upon the shared and common air
Of brotherhood and suchlike things
That belong to men
But not to kings,
'Twas masquerade left unexpressed
What in our hearts was manifest.

Weep not for Sails,
He knew that magic moment rare
When humans for each other care
And now that we are split asunder
And 'tis the weak that must go under
He rises from his ocean bed
From whence the scene of war has fled
And knows serenity of mind
Which rightfully to humankind
Belongs
In life.
And to the passing ships he calls
"Ahoy there,
Did you find the golden fleece?
You look so fine ablaze with lights
But I can tell you of the nights
For they are times that I recall
When time for me became suspended,
To show a single light at sea
Would send you to eternity.
Ahoy there,
Did you find the golden fleece
That we sought in unity?
Or were you fleeced for gold,
One by one?"

And so he gathers to his breast
The elements for which we yearn,
The sea, the wind,
The rain, the sky,
The paling moon and shining stars,
And when the sun shines on the sea
And turns it to a burnished glass
And sailing ships in irons stand
And steamers turn the fans up high,
His spirit then with pleasure fills
And dances,
Not with daffodils,
For that's his loss
And ours too,
If we care not
Before the few
Sands
Run out.

He dances with the birds
That stand on inert wings
And call
A lonely haunting cry
That causes him to gaze
Towards the place
Where Revenge had stood
That final day
That she left him behind
And sailed into the distance.
And when the seas like mountains high
Rise up to touch the lowering sky
And clouds fleet foot before the wind
Race for cover on some distant shore
Then Sails can rise with outstretched arms
The raging elements to embrace
And revel in the ecstacy
That comes from nature's harmony.

No.
Weep not for Sails,
Nor for the others who were slain,
Was their sacrifice in vain?
That's the question to be asked
When next assembled at cenotaphs
To remember boys,
Nineteen and less
Whose fathers lived in idleness
Although it was for work they yearned
Whilst those above,
Vast wealth unearned,
To keep the world as they would have it
Did plot and scheme,
Of which the errors to redeem
The blood of boys aged nineteen
Was shed,
In oceans.
If you have tears
And those to spare
Shed them for those
Who in despair
Fall into the fascist snare
Of national this
And national that
The evil creed in a classless hat
Preaches
"For the common good
Workers must think with their blood",
Then to shed it in great spate
When they have fully learned to hate
Each other.

But better still
Weep not at all,
Unless each single tear let fall
Will bring to life
A little seed
Of understanding,
Then fan it to a gale, a flood,
A torrent for the common good,
To drown harsh rattle of fascist drumbeat,
Their substitute for human heartbeat,
In demand for universal rights
That will end forever blackest nights
When to show a single light at sea
Would send men to eternity,
And to bring forth a world of flowers
Of music, art, and tender hours,
When Revenge would never sail again
And co-operation would prevail.

But to bring this selfless world about
Each voice in unison must shout,
Weep not for Sails,
Remember him but do not weep,
In mid Atlantic he's asleep,
Think of present folk and then
Those to come, beyond our ken,
And a world in which the common folk
Have finally thrown off the yoke
Of masters.

Bert Ward

Notes on the contributors

Authors

RICK GWILT was a lorry driver and TGWU branch secretary before starting work for Lancashire Association of Trades Councils as the trade union movement's first full-time Arts Development Officer. He runs for Salford Harriers and is interested in the whole subject of trade unions and leisure. Formerly editor of *Voices* magazine.
JOE SMYTHE lives in Manchester and works as a railway guard. First published in *Voices,* he has since benefited from a three-month sabbatical from work, paid by his union, the NUR, to write *The People's Road,* a book of poems marking 150 years of Britain's railways.
SALLY FLOOD is a mother and grandmother who lives in Tower Hamlets, East London. She works as an embroidery machinist and is a member of the National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers. She is also a member of Basement Writers.
ED BARRETT is an unemployed Liverpudlian who has done a bit of everything in his time. Besides covening the Scotland Road Writers' Workshop in Liverpool, he is also Chairman of the Federation of Worker Writers and Community Publishers.
RUTH SHAW is 20 years old and unemployed. She lives in Rotherham and has been taking part in a W.E.A. class at the local trades-council-supported Unemployed Centre, entitled: "The Three R's: Rebels, Romantics and Reactionaries."
ERNIE BENSON is a retired member of the AUEW who now lives in Plymouth. Much of his life was spent in Leeds, where he was an active member of the National Unemployed Workers' Movement in the 1930's. His piece here is an edited extract from the second volume of his autobiography, published by People's Publications, 34 Fenham Road, Newcastle-upon-Tyne NE4 5PB.
LES BARKER works in Manchester Town Hall and is a member of NALGO. He seems to divide his spare time between recitals in Folk Clubs and running road races for the YMCA team.
KEN CLAY lives in Warrington, works in the chemical industry, and is a member of AUEW (TASS). He reviews books for the *Morning Star* and has had stories published in *Fireweed, Voices* and *Bark* magazines.
ARTHUR ADLEN is a member of the NUSMWCHDE who lives in Skelmersdale. He is a pipe-fitter by trade and normally works in the contracting industry. He is currently unemployed and is active in the running of the local Unemployed Workers' Centre.
JACK DAVITT was, at the last count, still employed as a shipyard welder on Tyneside, and is a member of GMBATU. He is perhaps better known by his pen-name, Ripyard Cuddling, under which he published the book *Shipyard Muddling,* from which this poem is taken.
TOMMY BURNS is a young, unemployed worker who lives in Birkenhead. He recently joined the TGWU. He came to write this piece through attending the

"Second Chance" course run by Liverpool University's Institute of Extension Studies.

JOAN CUBBIN lives in Ipswich and is a retired member of the NUT. She is active in the running of the local trade-union-sponsored unemployed centre, and is interested in publishing local material similar to this book.

BILL PEARSON is a welder by trade, although he has been unemployed for the past two years, and a member of GMBATU. He lives in Bacup, Lancashire, where unemployment is running at over 30%, and is perhaps better known around the folk-clubs by the pseudonym, Will Scribble.

BOB STARRETT is a house-painter by trade, lives in Glasgow, and is currently a mature student at art college. He has been a UCATT shop steward in the exhibition industry and in the shipyards, and was at Upper Clyde Shipbuilders during the historic work-in, producing cartoons for the shop stewards' "Bulletin". His work appeared in the TUC-sponsored "Race Against Time" exhibition, and the Scottish TUC is supporting a forthcoming book of his cartoons.

PETE HANNAH is also a house-painter by trade, but these days he works as a county council groundsman and is a member of GMBATU. He is married with two young children, lives in Nottingham and is a member of the local writers' workshop.

JOHN CLIFFORD lives in Birkenhead and is a member of ASTMS. Although he was born and brought up in the South of England, he has worked for Unilever at Port Sunlight for the last thirty years.

MONICA WALKER lives in Rochdale, is a retired industrial nurse and is still a member of her union, GMBATU. She is a member of Rochdale Writers' Group, which can be contacted through Commonword in Manchester.

RITA BREWER was born in Whitechapel, left school at 14, worked in shops, factories and offices and even toured with a theatre company as a dancer, before settling in at AUEW Head Office, where she has worked for 15 years. She is a member of APEX and of London *Voices* Group.

MARGARET HARDING is a state-enrolled nurse and a member of COHSE. She lives in Bristol and is involved in Easton writers' workshop, part of the Bristol Broadsides group.

JIMMY MCGOVERN was born the fifth child of nine in a Liverpool slum, left school at 15, and had a variety of jobs before training as a teacher at the age of 26. He started writing through Scotland Road Writers' Workshop, and is still an active member of the group even though he is now meeting considerable success writing for theatre and television. He is a member of both the Writers' Guild and the NUT.

DAVID TUNALEY is 33 years old, lives in Leicester, and is a member of NALGO. He works in a psychiatric hospital and is an active supporter of the health workers' demands for "better pay and a more responsible government attitude to the National Health Service."

DICK LOWES was born in 1927 in County Durham, and has lived since 1955 in Newcastle-on-Tyne. He is an AUEW member, having worked as a fitter in shipbuilding until being made redundant in October 1980. To avoid putting on weight, he first cut out a mid-day meal and, when this failed, took up running in sprint races. He has yet to beat anyone, but at least his suits fit once more.

F.C. (FRED) BALL was born in 1905 in Hastings, where he still lives. Although he is perhaps best known for his biographies of Robert Tressell, his story here is an episode from his unpublished novel, *Blossom Bros. and Smelswete,* based on the 13 years of his early life spent working in London for a well-known multiple grocer. Later, he worked for the Gas Board for many years and was a member of the GMWU. He still hopes to see "a working-class literature in depth and breadth."

F. HODGKINSON lives in Edenfield, Lancs., and is an NGA member. He has worked in Graphic Art and Industrial Photography, and is an advocate of retirement for men at 60.

MIKE ROWE lives in Manchester, where his story is set some ten years ago. He is a

shop steward and past President of the Lancashire Box, Packing Case Makers' and General Woodworkers' Friendly Relief and Burial Society (founded 1826). He recites his stories live, and one of them, *The Tea Machine* has been filmed.
BERT WARD was born in Middlesborough, in 1923. He left school at 15 to join the Royal Navy, and later worked in industry before attending Ruskin College and (at the age of 40) the London School of Economics. He now lectures at a college in S.E. London and is a member of NATFHE. His poem here is taken from a series called *Reflections on Revenge.*

Illustrators

EVELYN DUNLOP lives in Maldon, Essex. She works in the local Planning Department and is a member of NALGO.
ALBAN GORNALL lives in Preston and works as a fireman. He is a member of the FBU, and of Preston Photography Co-operative.
JIM HAMMONDS teaches trade union studies in Preston and is a member of NATFHE and of Preston Photography Co-operative.
ERIC LINDSAY lives in Preston and was an engineer and AUEW member before he was made redundant two years ago. Since then, he has been applying his artistic talents to Lancashire rural scenes.
JEFF PERKS is a film-maker and artist based in London. He is a member of ACTT.
GEORGE RAWLINSON is a member of NUSMWCHDE currently at Salford University as a mature student. He is the Chairman of Lancashire Association of Trades Councils' Arts sub-committee and a member of Preston Photography Co-operative.
PAUL SALVESON is a former railwayman and NUR member who now works in adult education. He lives in Bolton and is a member of ASTMS.
COLIN SHADDICK lives in Barnstaple and works as an ambulanceman. He is a father of 2 and is a shop steward for NUPE.
LARRY SNARR is an unemployed artist who lives in Darwen.
BOB STARRETT see under authors.
JOAN VICKERS is married with 3 teenage children and lives in Preston. She is secretary of her local Labour Party branch.

Postscript

We hope you have enjoyed the book. If you would like to order further copies, or to contribute to a possible Second Trade Union Annual, please contact the publisher.

Back in 1935 Jack Common condemned the notion "that culture is a commodity which can be transferred from one kind of man to another, not a grace belonging to a kind of life; and the worse conviction that if you do up a chap in your own duds you've done him proud. These beliefs have sprinkled Africa with gramophones and top hats."
Nineteen Eighty-Three reflects a different notion. It is a collective self-portrait by trade unionists and unemployed workers. Working-class writers present working-class characters—without the usual sense of apology. English literature will never be the same again!

£1.00

ISBN: 0 9508791 0 X