Experiment 3

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MARCH 1957.

1.
This issue of "Experiment" is the third in its history. History changes and some things come to an end and other things begin, eventually to disappear. Literary periodicals, like "Hilltop" and "Arachne" have within recent years come and gone; Their successor is "Experiment". How long it will live rests in the hands of newcomers to the College who take an active interest in literary activities. Like their magazines, our literary societies have not had a continuous existence, so there have been periodic revivals. The latest was towards the end of 1955, and a new literary periodical was included in the scope of the activities of the new society. Perhaps indicative of the enthusiasm of the group, who have since turned their ideas into reality, is the fact that the original name planned for the society was somewhat euphemistic "New University Wits", but the innate conservative attitude of the inaugural meeting substituted the plainer name of the Literary Society. The enthusiasm remained. The results you see before you in the existence of this magazine and in the flourishing society itself. What will be the results in about three or four years hence are in the hands of those newcomers to the university who are sufficiently interested in literature to support the society actively. Lack of support is the only reason for the death of college clubs. It is nevertheless evident that many students are interested in literature - a number large enough to support and run a permanent society. If the interest is sustained and new ideas are suggested from time to time, there is no reason why this ideal should not be attained. 

(D.G. J.)

The copy for this issue was encouraging. We are sorry we had to reject through lack of space some promising material, especially prose. But John Gamby's long short story seemed so good as to justify its inclusion, despite its length. Copy - verse, stories, translations, reviews, and critical or social comment - should be noie submitted for "Experiment 4" which will emerge early in the second term. 

(K.W.)
THE PICTURE GALLERY.

Too many dimpled smiles embalm this tomb
Where leisured courtiers, laced with gems,
Sharing a haunt of immortality, await
The fable of a prince's kiss to wake them.

A princess wrapped in a myth of Diana
Smiles through a glade of revels; horses shy
At someone in the shade, a nymph or maid
Crushed in the evergreen grass, assumes a sigh.

Trespassing a privilege of time to choose
It's cast, the visitor seems an immigrant of death.
Wandering with uneasy peace this catacomb of art
And wondering at the warmth of his own breath.

PETER BLAND.
CHILD ALONE.

by Angela Sears.

Philippa ran down the track to the beach, calling out to Mark over her shoulder - "Last one in's a donkey!"

She knew she was safe because Mark was behind her and the path was too narrowed by the gorse on each side for overtaking. They weren’t supposed to race - the old path was far too steep and was usually arange and stocky with mud because of the trickle of creek that usually ran down it. But today the ooze had been baked dry and crumbly by the sun and you just had to run, even though the knobbly clay hurt the underneath of your feet so that you had to bend at the knees with every step.

She could see the beach round the gorse no. About thirty more steps down to the flat rocks. She took longer, leaping strides, then tried to drag herself back and stop as she felt her legs overtaking her body. She fell on the sun-cracked track, hitting her side hard and rolling on down from the force of her fall, her towel sticking onto a gorse bush as she slackened their hold with the jarring of the fall. She fell down to the first smooth pumice rock on the beach and lay there still - her leg throbbing as if her heart had been knocked loose and was now beating in her thigh.

"Last one in's a silly donkey!" yelled Mark and his feet tore past her face, splashing and churning out into the waves.

It doesn't hurt at first, she thought, it never does when you first fall. It's afterwards.

She pulled up the side of her togs to see the graze. How did it bleed when her costume wasn’t torn? She hobbled back and dragged her towel off the bush where it had stuck itself open like a net over black-current bushes and went back to the rock, squinting at Mark out in the water and hoping that he could see her limp.

Mark had stopped running and was standing up to his waist threshing his arms around in the water and waiting for Philippa to charge straight in for a fight as she usually did. But today she didn’t run - but just stood there watching him.

"Ya! you old donkey" he screeched, and his voice sounded pale and thin in the sunlight.
Philippa flopped down on her tummy on a flat, pink lava rock and felt sick. "I'm going back" she called.
"Just cos I beat you, you stinker."

The pummice began to burn her bare legs. She lifted them up quickly and shoved the screwed-up towel under her knees. The sun was bad. She must go up to the house. She felt her hip where she had fallen but it still felt soft and ordinary. She thought of Mrs Robinson and her sunlamp treatment which was meant to burn away the cancer and how it ate away all the flesh and muscle instead. The sun was hotter than any lamp could be - and she stretched out her fingers in front of the sun and could imagine then with no flesh - just sagging, crepe-paper skin with maybe chewed bits and ragged black edges with her white bones showing through. She curled up her legs tight under her so that the sun could get at less and covered them with Mark's towel which was soggy and cool from having been dropped in the scum at the edge of the waves when he dashed in.

Philippa wondered how she'd forgotten for so many days about Mrs Robinson in hospital, and how Jane who'd seen her said that her eyes stood out like a frog's because she was eaten away after the sun treatment. But she supposed she'd forgotten for a while because the sea had been so warm and blue and other people who didn't have cancer in the family didn't have to worry and so made her forget too.

She'd forgotten for a while that day when she first knew... the day that her mother had come for the school medical check-up. The doctor and Mother hadn't realised that she had either heard or understood the... "And are there any family complaints, Mrs Ashenden? Any allergies for the records?" - and her mother's headshake, then - "Well, cancer is not hereditary, is it? Two of my aunts died of that."
"Perhaps you could tell me in here" the doctor said quickly, "while Philippa gets dressed in the other room."

And Philippa knew that cancer was hereditary and that she might have it in her.

Not long after her mother's death she thought she'd ask cousin what it was she'd died of. John had said "Oh, of T.B. or cancer or something. We went to the funeral." John had never heard of Mrs Robinson and never seen the horrible coloured picture of cancer in the American magazine as she had. He probably thought of it as measles or something. Philippa knew that it was cancer and not T.B. because Mother
had never coughed, but she'd always bruised herself easily, which Philippa knew to be the most dangerous sign.

She felt her bruise again. Still ordinary... or was it? ... and she pressed harder. Yes! That was it... all hard and tight. No, just a bone after all. But she mustn't press too hard or it might really start up.

Mark was zooming round the beach with a boy from next door. I mustn't let him know what Mother died of, she thought. If he ever asks me I'll say T.B. - not that boys get it anyway - its only women like mother and the two aunts and Mrs Robinson.

She picked up her towel and got up quickly, because the sun made you limp and heavy and if you didn't move quickly you couldn't get up at all. "I'm going home, Mark" she called. "the sun makes me sick." He and his friend were wading slowly out to sea. Mark didn't answer but pointed back over his shoulder and said in an intentionally loud voice - "Anyone'd think she was dying. Gee, sisters are stupid."

Philippa dragged her towel over her shoulder and walked slowly back, watching the glaring track carefully climbing round the smallest bumps. She wouldn't tell Mark that maybe she was dying. How like a martyr she was. She mustn't ever let the others know that she knew. It would worry them too much. Like Mary she must keep some things in her heart.
REMINDE RS ON FOOTWEAR.

Five thousand pairs of shoes for refugees -
The fittest gift for those who wander
Trying to acclimatise.

They should be waterproofed with linseed oil
Or blood will do (remove all plasma;
Let the residue congeal.)

They can be reinforced with wrought-steel tips -
You know how children scuff the leather
Kicking everything to bits.

They should stand up to wear. You see the ruts
By roundabouts - how giddy children
Centrifugal, grind up dust.

They must resist all climates, should not crack.
And here it's mild enough in winter -
Frosty once or twice a week.

On candied lawns some schooltimes, what appears
An intermittent code of sunlight
Dodges concrete thoroughfares.

Late morning warmth abliterates this morose;
Its content cannot be deciphered
For better or for worse.

If worse, all gifts are late for refugees
Who flee from no specific centre,
Who feel no need of shoes.

- Gordon Challis.
MIDWINTER: The Junction by JOHN GAMBY.

When I got down from the step of the truck I was cold, not in the stomach, for the driver and I had been drinking earlier in the afternoon at a bar in Taihape; when we came to the Desert Road and I began running up on the road on the western fringe of the King country, the other way, I ran doubling up for warmth against the winds.

I was then nearly south of the mountain, in the rain shadow of some pines at the roadside. The tussock was beaten down and white grass bleached under a box, under the table of low level cloud that reached out twenty miles from the mountain foot and broke off above and around; here the edge was shattered from time to time and restored itself, throwing down the copper light that the grass blades take sometimes. At the roadside the pine needles turned in the wind and my coat settles slowly and damply on my shoulders.

A Chinaman drove by to Ohakune Town with his cab steaming full of children. Some golfers in a station wagon were driving back from the course where they had watered all day at the nineteenth. There were two short convoys of Army trucks with cheerful drivers and dispirited men who spat over tailboards.

I might have been ankle deep in water; it lapped about my shoes and inside my shoes and flowed effortlessly like salmon over my instep. After a while my feet were numb, and when I wriggled my toes the water distilled through the laceholes and burrowed back into the wet leather to go round again. Wiggling and waiting I stood there until a modest sort of a man in an old car shot through with soft water rust and daubed with aluminium paint stopped for me.

It was as nearly the shell of a car as you could imagine, though the sight of the engine at my feet disarmed suspicion. The man was not at ease even in his own car, quick-mannered and shy, sometimes careless with the wheel, sometimes giving himself quite over to driving in the miserable road among the tufted hills.

I made pleasant talk about the car but he dissembled readily enough: all very well, but the rust was cross-hatching the shell all over, there was a whispering in
in his cylinder and no pick-up.

And he picked on an old Austin and pressed his foot hard down. He hunched himself happily when the car began gaining, and grinned when the engine beat harshly in his ears. He swung wide just before a bend, and was beating his way past when a great Buick jumped up and rushed right out to avoid us. My friend swung wildly in and the big car thrashed along the side by the bushes, and tore away beyond the frightened Austin in the rear vision mirror. My friend relaxed.

"Y'see," he said shyly, "no pick-up." And:

"I'm living in a private place down at the Junction. We've got little rooms of our own, my friends and me, and we get together nights like this for cards. Sometimes in our rooms, sometimes in the others - you know - for a change in the wall paper... the landlady cooks our meals but you can be late and get your own. It doesn't matter. It's a nice place and there's always the films."

Then I told him I was a 'varsity student going home and how I planned my journeys. While we talked we drove back past the firewatchers at Karioi, through the forest there, to the green belt of Ohakune Town. I had plans of buying a second class ticket and living on sandwiches and hard-boiled tea. We entered the town.

"I'll drop you here," he told me. "Going up the road. If you're at a loose end you could come up later."

"Look here," he said, "I'll tell you what. You could come up to dinner with us and we could all sit round the fire afterwards. It's a fairly decent meal. Not much of a place, but there's always the pictures."

"No," I said, "better not. I've got a fare to worry about."

"Look," he said, "I've been in a tight spot before now. I know how you can get left."

He put some money into my hand.

"Here.... I've no need of...."

The engine was running.

"No need at all for..."

The car moved forward and he smiled, ill at ease, carrying that advantage beyond reach and leaving me standing at the mountain corner.
The wet gravelled footpath to the Junction is two miles or more long. The wind off the mountain was blowing tirelessly about me, the fine stones chafed busily and the road turned aside perpetually, going west to come north. At the end, with a great turn about, it became the main street of the Junction. Behind the shops an engine was running slowly back and forth on one of the yard's lines.

In the station it was fire-lighting time and one of the men had boarded the engine as it went past, the jumped off with his shovelful of coals reddening in the wind. He passed by above when I was on the ramp and when I went into the Ticket and Waiting Room he was kneeling down in front of the fireplace and emptying the scuttle on them until the heat was filtering through a foot of cold carbon. Being pretty cold myself I went to a cold resturant for a hot meal. It was quite cheap, but I had to take a long digestive walk. Whenever I get something wrong with my body I think about sex to take my mind off it; this would be paradoxical enough, but at these moments it is better to keep fantasy.

Saturday night: The street was clear of men, but in some of the doorways they came and went and watched the very ragged sky. The trains had come down from the Park lightly laden in the rain, and the timber workers had laid bottles of beer under the trucks to cool in the winds of the viaducts. The men themselves had come fluming with money in the truck cabs, raving with secret laughter, to pass the money unblushingly, to lunge in the charities of the common women of the town...

Purely a matter of conjecture of course. What I did see, after a while was a Maori boy standing dead drunk under a falling verandah. His eyes were black with his generous resentment. He considered me, and swayed:

"O-o-o-h, you -----," he said at last, and paused for effect, "you ------ Pakeha ----."

And in his racial way he may possibly have been right.

* * * * * *

In the waiting room the coal was firing nicely and the canoes were holding a reunion. There were four soft wood chairs being sat on by women with flax kits and reinforced paper bags. Their men were sitting on the chair arms, their sterns sprawling over the narrow wooden strips. The children were in a row along the back wall like important African
Japanese ju-jus on a mantelpiece on Olympus.

By the hearth a wet Pakeha hiker was drying his gear. His skis were propped up against the coolest bricks; his sleeping bag, shaving gear, underwear, spare shirt and hiker's boots smoked busily in front of the fire. The maoris were embarassing him.

Just behind him a graceful woman sat, very hard fleshed. She was barely fifty, and her voice was youthful, but small lines of moko were hardening the corners of her mouth. She fingered the sleeping bag:

"That is a good cloth. Where did you find that cloth?"

The hiker sat astonished.

"In a shop at Auckland."

"My uncle had one with cloth like that once, when he used to go climbing, but that was years ago. You will go ski there? I used to... when I was a girl. Have you seen the hills all round, all the same; the rivers go deeper over on way.."

She had been born here; she had been away to school, and come back. Nothing new in the Junction that was good, nothing old that was particularly enduring, but she did not say that; she talked in light short sentences, solicitous of reply.

The door opened and the black-eyed boy came in. He walked straight to the fire and knelt among the hiker's belongings. Then he turned round, pleased with his place on the hearth, and offered the hiker the neck of his bottle.

"Ha...have a drink."

"There's nothing in it," said the hiker in understatement.

There was no bottom in it.

The woman caught at the boy's sleeve and turned him round.

"Tena koe," she said.

"Eh..." said the boy. "No."

"You heard me... you know what that is. You -"

"Don' know... no I don' "

"Listen," she said, "now listen. You hear me when I say it. Tena koe. You know that."

"Te...na koe."

"Now you listen," and the voice carried on; he listened in surprise while she spoke to him in Maori, something remembered from his childhood only. He sat lolling back and let the words pass him by, but there were phrases that kept recurring and she kept at him recalling until his good humour was unsettled again. At last he turned to her in the dignity of his manhood and said:
"Shut up."

The woman was silent. The hiker sat subdued, relieved that she had stopped talking. He had heard it without much understanding.

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The children sat among the brown bottles, shining with laughter in the shadows made by the blacklit coals. When the men went out to the edge of the platform the wind blew straight in, the fire changing in intensity, not flaring up.

The word got round and the railwaymen, being used to it, retired behind the ticket window. Many others came up the ramp from the Junction with a great deal of beer. The action got heavier and heavier, thick arms and lips and voices, blue streams of smoke when the lights were turned on, and after a while everyone seated on the floor near the fire disappeared under its black hood, and I lay looking down through the blue currents at the brown seaweed arms, the changing sealow women, the men in moments of action moving legless about and rubbing noses with the women.

Pretty soon I lost my balance and lay down on the floor. There was a pretty, Stringy waitress at the ticket window, come to relieve the staff while they went down to supper. She had small scaly arms and her mouth was drawn out in lipstick, and her eyes were restless.

There was an old man with a purple wedge for a nose, who came to the door and posed for a moment on the threshold amazingly drunk and full of football matches. He bailed up a great Maori and said:

"D' you ever play for Te Aute?"

"N... no," said the man, and fell flat on his face.

The old man knelt down and spoke at the back of the Maori's neck:

"Who are we?"

Can you guess?
We are the boys who make no noise
Ruck ruck ruck
Go go go
E... hoa the blowfly
Te Aute!
"No," he stood up. "Not me. Not this man! Not Te Aute. No no no no no no no." He paused. "No. Palm...erstonorth Bor Zoischool." He shouted it out:

"Doesn't anyone here ever play for Palm...

He stopped, seeing the woman at the window. She drew softly back, but he had seen her white apron and was not to be put off. He cut through a gap and went to the ticket office with a burst of speed.

"Hold on, girly, givers ticket."

"Where to?" she said unwillingly.

He thought it over. "The Park" he said.

"Uh.... three and six."

"First Class," he said. "I'm from Palmerston....!

'dyou know I was a wing at school when we used to play football there? No? Well, you can put a ring round that lady!

"I was only so high when I was running away through them and I played them before you were born...E...hoa the blow-fly. When I was a boy I could run rings round them and never thought..... twice about it. You can put your finger round that woman.

And why not? When I was a boy I went to as good school and God knows I was as good a home ..... better family than yours was and you could thank you stars if you ever had chances like mine...."

He took another look.

"If your daughter has," he said, "and you can stake your life on that, ny dear!"

"A...no," said the woman, and propped a wooden block behind the glass.

The man stared at the stained wood for a minute or two, and went to sleep.

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Down they went heavier and heavier, big hands settling on big bodies, seeing nothing with the lidless eyes, not the dead clinker in the fire, or the sleeping children or the open door refreshing the room. The young pakehas and the hairless young M Maoris went out to take the air.

In the theatre over the road the session had ended and the people came over to see their Saturday night express.

The man with the rusty car was standing on the platform, 13.
and he smiled, recognizing me when I came out. I walked to him and gave him the three florins.

"I don't need those you know. Thanks all the same."

He smiled again.

"The others didn't come. It was a good picture."

"See you," I said, and walked away. Did he think there might be something his best friends weren't telling him?

A man and woman were walking along the platform talking softly together. The woman's head was tilted a little back and she was engrossed in him. She was framing his thoughts for him as they were uttered and smoothing the talk a good three moves ahead. He was not thinking much about what he said; her skill was such that he had no need to.

As they passed the door he turned and watched the mountainous people who were left there, the protective arms of the men and the fat printed bodies of the women and the children's astonished, sleeping faces. And speculating on these he stopped talking.

The woman glanced at the door and drew quietly closer, tilting her head a little further back, recovered him with a small display of vivacity, pressing on his arm. He began talking again.

Down at the Refreshment Rooms I found a pair of children who had once lived a few doors from us. One was a dark boy, about twelve, the other a pale girl, very thin and somewhat older. I asked after the family, and they told me about their dead brother.

He had made a raft from some dead willow logs and stolen twine to float down to Wanganui; he started out one day telling no-one but his brother, and somehow managed to get through the rapids down-river. But he had only gone half a day when the raft must have quietly sunk somewhere in the papa gorges behind Tokirima...

(That would be the small one. There was an older brother who used to burn the Guy for them. When he was one of the fashionably wicked gang of boys he soaked the base of a totara tree with petrol and set fire to it. For a few years the tree stood through successive Guy Fawkes, but at last it became top-heavy without the big branches round the base and fell down narrowly missing the whole family.

The oldest brother had played football. He once missed selection for a Roller Mills team when they found he couldn't adjust to a wet paddock. The trial was played in six inches
of water. He was half-back and would lose his head when the ball floated from the wrong part of the scrum. After a while he seemed to stand flat-footed waiting for a favourable current.

"......Drowned," said the girl.
We went to see the train come in.

* * * * * * * * * * *

Between the gothic-grey arches the young men and girls ran along the platform to the Refreshment Rooms. When they had all passed and were dead-locked safely there, I jumped into a First-Class carriage and sat watching the platform through the window. Everything was purple. The purple stragglers returned with purple teacups and big purple triangular sand-wiches.

Before the train was properly started the guard came through and found me being asked to change seats by a man who had not even travelled with a coat to hang up and warn off the ursurpers. He asked me if I had a reservation and ... the upshot was I went forward to second class.

On the way through I met of all people, Kelvin, backing out of the Ladies' toilet. I dug him in the ribs and he gave a panicky grunt and almost re-entered to finish his apology. He recognised me and tried to explain how the situation had arisen. There was a party down in the carriage nearest the engine and he'd gone looking for the toilet.

"You are in the fourth carriage, at least," I told him.
"Maybe," he said, "It seemed a long way...."  
"Any way when you nudged me I thought the devil you know from the devil you don't and perhaps I (huc) appeared to dive back.

"Hee hee," he said. "Huc."
"How come you're going North," I asked him - "you don't live up this way."

"Oh no - this is a team for the Teachers' Colleges Tournament. At Auckland. Be in."

Down at the front, in the first two carriages, there was a party going full tilt two hundred feet long. The second carriage was all guitar music and heart's ease, but down behind the engine people were standing on chairs and craning their necks, and others were sitting wrapt in the aisles.

On either side the blankets brushed when we walked nearer. Then we shrank aside as the aisle-sitters yelled at us. With
his back to the engine, a colossal shadow stood with his feet on the arms of the seats. On the left a drunken ponderous lieutenant was getting the Word direct. On the right was a devious lieutenant, ghostly in his shirt-tails. But the colossus was beside himself in an attack of Poet's Head, a long way after Byron:

"I should have guessed her age at twenty-three;
A pure, refined and irritating person
- Not fair, but pallid; or pure, but white, a she
Not ravishing, but open to suggestion No no
no no person person cure on her son per no..."

The devious one, full of the spirit, was in a mood to absolve him, but the interminable colossus fell down on him, and went climbing the seats again.

"Thrown down," he cried, driving his pantherish, middle aged body to further efforts, "thrown down! Like -"

"A colossus?" asked the drunken one and fell down under the weight of the Unbearable.

"Right!" said the great man climbing past him, "Like the bitter-bodied thrown-down cast Colossus in the roads... the roads...in the Port of -"

"Rhodes," said the drunken son.

"That's what I told you... of Rhodes in the harbour...M. mouth."

The other pondered. "Rhodes, all the same," he said staunchly. He marshalled his thoughts and seated himself with abrupt dignity. His hands were clasping the colossal darkened foot.

The monster rolled his body above and arrogantly trod on somebody in the aisle as he desended. He trod on several of the other students and stood up and beat his breast howling:

"Travellers!" and tried to duck-walk along the arm of a seat. He fell carelessly to the flor, and began crawling back nearer to the engine. When he was half way there he stopped near a blanket, and knelt there in front of it.

"Hey," advised the ghostly lientenant.

"Wrap up." said the colossus softly, and crawled under the blanket.

************

"A good man if you get to know him," kelvin said, "though I don't think you'll be seeing him again tonight. I'll intro-
duce you to somebody. If I can find anybody."

The train had finished climbing and drew quickly into National Park, where it was stopping to take on water. The singing party in the second carriage had become a shouting and then a dancing party; when the train stopped they all conga'd out on to the platform, and some of us from the first carriage joined them.

They went it from one end of the covered platform to the other, their bodies in a great hip-rolling millipede, then went whooping forty or fifty yards into the open; but the second or third person in the line said;

"Hey look."

And some of the others said hey look, and the line broke.

The air was dry and the clouds were going away overhead. The moon ran among them undimmed by the thin shapes, racing to hold its place in the sky. The stars were very few and shone weakly.

There to the east was the mountain, grey with snow. The sky lay so deep around that no stars could shine there. Ruapehu, so clear and close after the high winds and rain that they might all step over as if to touch a cunning hardboard silhouette.

But the white earth was furled under our feet to break out beneath the feet of the explorers.

For a short time we watched. Then some laughed and we returned to the train, now ready to go again. Beside me a girl turned away.

"Have you two met?" said Kelvin.
"I don't think so," I said. I knew not. "How do you do?" and she knew not, for sure. She put it into words. "I haven't seen you around."

"Oh... on section."

I knew enough to say that. We walked up the platform. "What are you going for?"
"Badminton."
"Oh... I'm women's Hockey."

We entered the train.
"I should have seen you sometime," she said.
"You will... next term," I suggested.

She smiled, "Maybe," and looked for a seat. There were none, but the girl spoke to her friend who went away taking the blanket with her. Blankets seemed to count for a great deal.

17.
We sat down together.  
"What's your name?" I asked her. "I can't get to know you if I don't know your name."

"Nancy."

"And the other one?"

"Larcombe. And yours?"

"John."

"Smith?"

"No. Guess again."

"I can't."

We settled down.

"No blanket," she said softly, and giggled.

We talked together, and for a while after the train started I was able to tell her what was outside the window. The train was coming to the western edge of the plateau, moving into living bush. Then there was the long confusing trip down the Spiral.

We gave up talking in Raurimu, which is nothing to talk about, and made love. The moon outside spread a fine bubble over the stone shapes in the bush. Smoothly the carriage grew utterly dark and the train was moving more slowly on the weak roadbeds at the side of the Wanganui River valley. The weak river mist lay a hundred feet thick between us and the sky.

I sat wide awake with my arms around her listening to the Manunui straight, the bridge and the level crossings in town. As always the train was a little late. I got up and stretched. She opened her eyes. She too was wide awake.

"Where are you going?"

"I won't be long. I'm thirsty."

"Don't be long."

"No," I said, "I shan't be long."

A taxi was parked alongside the freight ramp, the driver out to the wide. There were some new street lights, stronger than before, but the ends of the street were obscured with fog.

At the east end, past the shops, the plane trees grew on both sides and the street lights were further apart. I passed the school and went down the short slope to the lower river terrace. The main road lay dead flat there.

The fog was growing thicker and the lights weaker. I was about five minutes from home. The air moved quietly by and the hills stood withdrawn.

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BASIC COURSE.

The field dressing is opened
By a quick tear from the corner
Your wounds will be shrapnel --
Superficial!

Shoot to kill, not to wound,
Cover from sight is not
Cover from fire if you're seen
Getting there!

Call out you movements,
Louder, men, louder,
I could drown you in my sleep!

The first principle is
Not to think, at all
Others, better than you are
Paid for it!

This is the Bren.
It can be fired at speed --
Keep still! even if it's an alligator
On your cheek.

In, Out. On guard,
Double there, Double
The last lot were ten times
Faster
Than you.

Robin Patchett.
ONLY A FEW

Only a few still feel
As a nation once felt; trembling
When first he rose, a comet
On the troubled heavens of Europe.
Pursued his path to glory -
Not alone but taking with him
A nation, downcast, trodden
With unjust treaties,
Enslaved.

Her fate moved him to pity.
All for the Fatherland!
Was his rallying cry.

Debased, disillusioned.
Hungry masses crying for bread.
Freedom.

He gave them all. He led
Them against oppressors.
With him at their head they
Stormed the enemy trenches,
Restored their country to God,
To its place in the sun.

He gave them bread,
Gave them hope, gave them freedom.
He gave them himself.

First there was glory,
Then came disaster and now
Only a few still feel
As once a whole nation felt.

Nevenka Hegedus.
SHADOW AT EVENING

By John Sadleir.

At about eleven o'clock, when he was half way through his fifth beer, the old man decided he would like to go outside and sit on the steps in the sun. He drained his glass and set it down on the bar, and the barman immediately unhooked the flexible pipe hanging from the edge of the bar, put the nozzle into the old man's glass and quickly filled it without saying anything. There was nobody else in the bar at that hour of the morning.

The old man picked up his glass and walked out of the bar. As he went out the door the barman looked up at him, squinting briefly through the thin smoke rising from his cigarette, but he didn't say anything.

Outside on the steps it was hot and the sun was bright. The old man eased himself gently onto the bottom step; then he carefully raised his full glass and sucked the warm froth from the top of his beer. Lowering his glass he clasped it in both hands and rested his forearms on his raised knees.

He looked up and down the road; to the north he could just see the intersection with the main street of the town, where cars and people were moving in both directions in a constant stream. He could see them very clearly because of the glare from the road which made his eyes smart, and also because the road was unssealed and a white dust-haze lay all along it; and his eyes were not as good as they might have been. But he could hear the hum of the moving traffic quite clearly; from time to time it rose to a throbbing roar as one of the big trucks passed through with a load of dirty sheep towards the yards of the freezing works, or towards the port five miles away on the coast with a load of wool bales.

In the wall of the hotel, a few feet above the old man's head, was a window with the lower half pushed up. The old man had been sitting on the steps for a little while when he heard the sound of a door being opened and closed, then he heard the soft padding of bare feet as somebody began to move about in the room above him. Soon the sounds stopped, but he
knew somebody was still there because he had not heard the
door opening for anybody to go out. His hearing was very acute.
Listening carefully he raised his glass of beer again and drank
down a third of it. Then as he lowered his glass, the girl in
the room above him began to sing.

From the deep beauty of the voice the old man could tell
it was a Maori girl who was singing. He knew the words of the
song off by heart, because at the time it was very popular
and frequently heard over the wireless. (Every night the old
man lay on his bed, listening in to his wireless until the last
station went off the air. On nights when he felt old or lonely
he would join in himself, crooning softly so that he could just
hear his own voice.) The song the Maori girl was singing was
called "Love me or leave me." She was singing it in a soft voice,
but the old man could hear the words clearly enough. He thought
she sang it very beautifully, with a touch of sadness in her
voice - just as it should be sung, the old man considered.

He took a slow sip from his glass of beer, and then in his
old, soft, old man's croon he began to sing in time with the
girl. He was singing very quietly, but he felt shy, so he
lowered his chin to his chest and sang to himself alone. As he
sang, he watched the tiny bubbles forming slowly around the
edge of his beer.

............. ...........

"He's really drunk!"
The old man stopped singing and looked up. He hadn't heard
anyone coming. Now there were two young men standing on the
edge of the footpath, watching him and grinning. They were
wearing dirty blue working trousers, and short, brown leather
jackets with collars lined with thick and grubby fur.

"What's that? What did you say? Were you talking to me?" The old man was annoyed because they had surprised him while
he was singing.

One of the young men glanced at his friend, then turned
to the old man.

"I just said I reckoned you were pretty drunk."

"No, I'm not at all. I'm very - completely sober," said
the old man.

"You're really drunk, singing to yourself like that. I
reckon you've had a few too many. Theis hour of the day too -
you ought to be ashamed of y'self."

22.
"I'm alright" said the old man angrily, then - "Why don't you mind your own business? When I was your age I - people used to mind their own business."

"Well, you know how times have changed, old man."

"I know times have changed," said the old man.

He wished they would go away. Usually he liked to be able to talk to somebody, even if the only people he had to talk to were young who were rude to him. But today all he wanted was to sit on the steps in the sun, drinking his beer slowly and listening to the Maori girl inside who was still singing "Love me or leave me."

"You must be pretty old."

"I'm old enough to know the difference between what's good manners and what's bad manners."

"No, listen. I reckon you must be getting on for eighty?"

"I'm pretty old."

"How old though?"

"Yes, I'm pretty old, all right."

One of the young men moved across the pavement and seated himself on the steps close to the old man. He winked at his friend who was still standing. The old man did not see the wink. He was staring down into his beer again, and feeling very sad because the Maori girl had stopped singing. He didn't even know if she was still in the room, because with the young men talking all the time he would not have been able to hear if the door had been opened for her to go out. After a moment he looked up at the young men once more.

"Where do you live?" he said.

"Well, we live up in the railway huts. Just past the station."

"You don't live there all the time, do you?"

"No, we get moved around a good bit. We won't be here long. They're just putting down new rails over by the freezing works."

"Are you two together all the time? I mean wherever you go?"

"Not a chance of it. In a couple of weeks we might be hundreds of miles apart- like we were less than a month ago."

"That's not much of a life," said the old man. He sounded sorry for the young men, having to lead that sort of a life.

"What's wrong with it? At least you don't get bored."

The old man gazed into his glass.

"When I was your age," he said, "I lived with my parents. We lived in an old house, big and old, with a beautiful rolling lawn running down to the banks of a wide, slow river."

"You must have been rich," said the young man who was seated by the old man. "Your father I mean, he must have been
pretty rich."

The old man appeared not to have heard.

"By the edge of the lawn there grew a long row of poplar trees. On summer evenings the poplar trees would cast long shadows right across the lawn."

The young men didn't say anything.

"The summers were very long" said the old man, after a moment. There was another pause, then the old man said -

"I never left the place till I got married. Thirty years nearly, I was there, and all that time I hardly spent a day out of the place."

"You must have been bored stiff," said the young man who was standing on the edge of the footpath. The other one said -

"Things must have been very different in those days, all right."

The old man looked up at him.

"I wasn't bored. There were fields all around the big house. I stayed there with my family till I got married."

"I don't know how you could stick it. All those years, and every day I suppose exactly like every other day. I don't know how you could stick it," said the young man who was standing. The old man glanced at him.

"Yes, I suppose every day was just about exactly like every other day. But I used to enjoy every, so it didn't really matter, did it?"

The old man looked at each of the young men in turn, and when he saw that neither of them was grinning anymore, he smiled at them. The young man who had been sitting on the steps beside him stood up.

"You wouldn't," he said, "be pulling our legs, would you, old man?"

But the old man no longer heard what they were saying for the Maori girl in the room above him had begun to sing "Love me or leave me" once more. He drained his beer at a gulp, and, as he listened, he watched the lacy streaks of foam sliding slowly down the sides of his glass.

One of the young men said -

"The poor old beggar's back in dreamland again, by the look of him."

They both looked at him for a moment, then they turned and quickly walked up the road towards the busy main street traffic way up by the intersection.
The old man lowered his head until his jaw was resting on his chest and then, in his soft old voice, he began to sing again, quietly, to himself.

THE CHERRY ORCHARD.

an epilogue

by JOhn DAWICK

Scene: Backstage of the Moscow Art Theatre. The opening performance of Chekhov's "The Cherry Orchard" has just finished, and the actors, still in costume, are laughing and talking amongst themselves. Enter the great director, Stanislavski, livid with rage, with Anton Chekhov.

STANISLAVSKY: (To the actors) The Moscow Art Theatre is ruined. Ruined, do you hear? We can never play before an audience again: you have murdered a deep and sensitive tragedy --

CHEKHov: (Patiently) Tragedy? My dear Konstantin Suasage, my play is no more a tragedy than you are Catharine the Great. "The Cherry Orchard" is a comedy - almost, I'm afraid, a farce.

STANISLAVSKII: Anton Pablovitch! What you have to say is completely irrelevant. Time and again what an author has written has turned out quite different from the original intention. True, your play has some comic characters
-- but what of the fool in Lear? Is Lear a tragedy?

CHEKHOV: (Smiling) No Konstantin. But in Shakespeare's play Lear is a tragic figure. Show me a tragic figure in mine.

STANISLAVSKI: (Turning to a small, elderly but beautiful woman whose face bears traces of tears) Mme Ranyevskaya! Has not the sound of the axe biting into the trees of your beloved orchard brought your whole life crashing down about your ears? What have you to live for now?

ANIA: Don't listen to him Mama. The cherry orchard's gone it's true. It won't come back again. But don't cry. You still have your life ahead of you, you still have your kind pure heart. Come away, darling, come away. We'll plant a new orchard even more splendid than the old one. You'll see it Mama, and you'll understand. You'll smile again, Mama, and Happiness, quite deep happiness will fill your heart. Come, Darling, Come!

STANISLAVSKI: Yes, go with her, Luibov. But you'll never understand, will you. The dream that was your life has been shattered and even a thousand orchards, each more beautiful than the last, will never restore that dream.

MME RANYEVSKAIA: Oh my orchard! My beautiful orchard! My life, my youth, my happiness - Goodbye, goodbye. (Breaks down. Music is heard in the distance).... Sounds like music somewhere!

GAYEV: Yes, that's our famous Jewish Band. Don't you remember, Luiba? Four violins, a flute and a contrabass.

MME RANYEVSKAIA: Oh! It would be nice to get them to come to the house, sometime. (Now perfectly happy.) We could have a party!

STANISLAVSKI: Ah, the party! There was tragedy for you. Dancing the Grand Road to that nostalgic waltz, playing silly little parlour games -

CHARLOTTA: Think of a card, my good M'sieu Pischik! That's right. Now shuffle the pack. Ein, zwei, drei. (Claps hands) There it is in your breast pocket.

PISCHIK: Fancy that!

STANISLAVSKI: - and all the time you knew that your orchard, your whole way of life was being auctioned
off. that any moment you would hear the fateful new-
LOPAHIN: When we got to the auction, (Triumphant)
He bid forty-five, I bid fifty-five. He kept on adding
five thousand each time and I added ten. It finished at
last - I bid ninety thousand over and above the mort-
gage, and I won. Yes, the cherry orchard's mine, now!
Mine!
STANISLAVSKI: Yes, Lopahin bought the orchard - Lopahin
the peasant's son. And what was he going to do with
it? Chop down the trees, lease the land for summer
cottages - summer cottages for little pot-bellied
businessmen and their silly painted wives -
MME RANYEVSKAIA: Summer cottages (Laughs) Forgive me, my
friend, but its so vulgar!
GAYEV: I absolutely agree with you. Don't you realise
sir, that this orchard is actually mentioned in the
guidebooks? For five hundred years it has illum-
inated the hearts of all who have gazed on its fra-
grant beauty, blossoming -
VARIA: Uncle, please!
ANIA: Dear uncle, you're at it again.
TROFIMOV: You'd better screw back off the red into the
middle pocket.
GAYEV: I'll keep quiet! Pot the red! Canon off the couch!
CHEKHOV: And you still maintain, Konstantin, that this is
a tragedy?
STANISLAVSKY: Of course it's a tragedy! What about Feers?
If what you wrote was a comedy why did Feers die at
the end?
CHEKHOV: But -
(Enter Feers, muttering, balancing precariously a tray
with coffee cups.)
FEERS: Madam will have her coffee here?
STANISLAVSKI: (Furious) But you can't come in now - you're
dead! DEAD DO YOU HEAR?
FEERS: (Vaguely) The day before yesterday?
VARIA: He doesn't hear very well.
STANISLAVSKI: This is impossible! Impossible I tell you!
Feers is dead!
CHEKHOV: It's no use, Konstantin, this is getting us
nowhere. There is only one way we can judge whether
our play is a tragedy or a comedy. (Turning to the
audience) Ladies and Gentlemen, what is your verdict?

CURTAIN.
This cover makes more urgent still their loves enigma.
With fond familiarity it reconstructs the props and
 tackle
Of their grief and so devines an inward theatre
For our private play, in preparation for the probing orchestra.
Everyman's Juliet has licence here, where the magic
Of a more than marvellous moon attracts a tide of unfulfilled
Desires and roses like red regrets graft their nostalgia
To that trellised balcony. How many unplayed parts
Leap to the same conclusion in this scented vault.
Cherishing deaths dark defeat, who formerly have fled
When deaths shadow crossed them in a crowded street.

Protecting the illusion of his innocence, a man might wonder
Why he lost the midnight passion of his star-crossed youth
And setting free his favourite ghost, discover its likeness
To the honeyed girl who smiles as she passes
In the morning train. She likewise, dreams of a demon lover
With manners like a movie star who, one day
Will mount her desires and ride them panting,
Until the stars explode. Once put on, the mystery decays;
While flesh assumes the flush of supernatural ecstasy.
Worshipping the sexual grail. Yet, never having understood
The myth, cannot believe it when the love potions fail.

PETER BLAND.