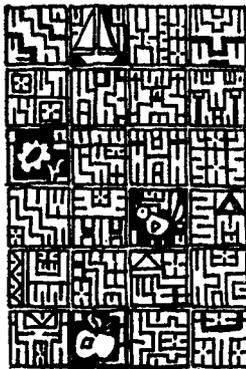

NOTES & TOPICS

Letter from Australia

A Curious Case of Censorship

By Roger Sandall



MAY I POINT out that Bryan Wilson's analysis of secularisation [ENCOUNTER, October] overlooks one of the more poignant features of the modern scene? I refer to the new role of anthropologists as custodians of primitive religion, and to the conversion of ethnographic research institutes into bastions of religious

faith.

I do not mean to suggest that every bright-eyed PhD candidate in anthropology today sees himself in a priestly role, or that he feels inspired by a religious vocation. At first most of them are as sceptical of sorcery as of perdition. But the creed of what George Feaver has called the New Tribalism is a proud creed, and its gods are jealous gods.¹ Syncretised with the pride and jealousy of the Old Tribalism the result is a powerful anti-secular endorsement of totem and taboo. Of course it is still possible to be both an anthropologist and a sceptic. Nevertheless both individual scholars and indeed entire research

ROGER SANDALL lectures in Anthropology at the University of Sydney. Between 1965 and 1973 he made more than a dozen documentary films for the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies. After being shown at the Venice Festival in five successive years (1968-1972) these became quite well known abroad, and special screenings were held at both the National Film Theatre in London and at the Paris Cinémathèque. But for the reasons he discusses in his article they are now virtually banned in Australia.

organisations are finding that the price of an accommodation with science has often to be paid on bended knees.

Take, for example, the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies. This was set up in the good old days when social scientists were less apologetic about their trade, and primitive religion was still something to be studied rather than endorsed. A culture was dying; and the Institute was to record what still survived. It was in this spirit that a series of films were made showing Aboriginal secret ceremonies—films which it was hoped would provide a secure observational basis for future research and a useful educational resource for Aborigines and Whites alike.

But this was not to be. It seems that realism can be just too realistic for its own good. Like most modern documentaries the films stick close to actuality. Unlike most modern documentaries this very feature was a bedevilling handicap. For surely, it was argued, if the original actuality were an awfully secret affair, shouldn't the alarmingly realistic film facsimile be secret too? Such was the feeling of old tribesmen adhering to the Old Tribalism. In recent times such a view had scarcely affected the march of science in Sydney and in Melbourne; the physical universes of tribe and metropolis were distinct, and their respective ethical universes were too. But now things have been changing. What if a secret ceremonial scenario were sent back from the film labs in Sydney and projected to the wrong people out in the bush? The ubiquitous projector made this possible. The thirst of Aboriginal communities for films of all and every kind made it probable.² To forestall such an eventuality restrictions were put on the distribution of the films to ensure that they would never travel unchaperoned beyond the city limits.

SUCH RESTRICTIONS satisfied the pride of the Old Tribalism—a pride of exclusiveness. But soon the New Tribesmen pointed out how unfair and wrong it was to allow white women and children and uninitiated men in Sydney and Melbourne to see the films while their black compatriots were forbidden. In sharp contrast to that of the Old Tribalism the pride of the New Tribalism is egalitarian; and as our civilisation has often

¹ George Feaver, "Wounded Knee and The New Tribalism", ENCOUNTER (February 1975).

² Not long ago an SOS came in from a remote Weather Station which was under siege and being stoned by angry Aborigines. The projector with which the meteorological staff had been entertaining the local community had broken down during a show, and they had had no substitute with which to appease the frustrated audience (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 October 75).

METHUEN

Man and Work

Literature and Culture in Industrial Society

DAVID MEAKIN

Apart from being a major preoccupation of sociologists and philosophers, the changing role of work has had a great impact on European literature, and it is here that David Meakin concentrates his survey, at the same time integrating the views of social thinkers with those of the more literary

figures on whom he focuses attention. His aim is to increase the awareness of the student of literature of the importance in his studies of this vital aspect of society.

£5.00

University Paperback £2.50

Before the Industrial Revolution

European society and economy 1000-1700

CARLO CIPOLLA

The purpose of this book is to provide an overall view of pre-industrial Europe, and in particular a fresh interpretation of the characteristics and evolution of its economy and society. The documentation of these developments is based upon an analytical structure of economic theory that gives the book great coherence and clarity. Professor Cipolla shows the student of economics how much the historical record can illuminate the basic

concepts of modern economic analysis, while enabling the student of history to bring an analytic framework to the data of the past. Finally, the author shows the complexity of the factors at play in the development of society and emphasizes the subtle but substantial role of the cultural environment and of human motivation.

£6.25

University Paperback £2.90

TAVISTOCK

Psychiatry in Dissent

Controversial issues in thought and practice

ANTHONY CLARE

In this book the author attempts to place the current assault on psychiatric theory in the context of psychiatry as it is actually practised. He is harshly critical of many fashionably held views on

the causes of mental illness and of its management. 'I regard this book as brilliant, timely, well informed and extremely well written.' Anthony Storr

£7.50

Social Science Paperback £4.00

When Marriage Ends

A Study in Status Passage

NICKY HART

This, the first detailed analysis of the process of marital breakdown at the individual level, makes essential reading for sociologists, social workers, marriage counsellors, doctors, and lawyers at a

time when divorce rates in this country are ever-increasing.

£6.50

Social Science Paperback £3.25

METHUEN and TAVISTOCK are the Academic Division imprints of Associated Book Publishers.

found, this is an emotion which is much harder to satisfy. Those who most strongly feel it are apt to strike all-or-nothing attitudes: if all cannot share equally, then none shall share anything at all. And so it was to be. Driven by the threats of the New Tribals and their white devotees, fearful of alienating the Old, the Institute proceeded to extend the parochial ethical scheme of Aboriginal society (with all its prohibitions and resolutely anti-feminine rules) to the Australian nation as a whole. Henceforth only mature males with impeccable *bona fides* would be allowed to see the films.

The Institute had been set up to "do science", a secular activity. Yet in a curious way it has ended up "doing religion." In its own eyes the Institute may have seen itself as a producer of scientific records; but in the eyes of Tribalism, both Old and New, its true role was that of a manufacturer of religious artifacts. And having become an archive of sacred objects it was hard to refuse doing priestly duty as their vigilant guardian as well. In this way a scientific body found itself gradually moving from the world of fact to the world of faith—and from the dull routines of research to the higher excitements of revivalism.

REVIVALISM is a notoriously emotional business, and it was only to be expected that some of the more ardent spirits should have been carried away. Out in the bush, zealous young white converts to the New Tribalism took it upon themselves spiritually to fortify Aboriginals whose faith was on the wane. I remember one evening hearing an old Aboriginal stockman complain about the nuisance of local sorcery—he had been a victim of "bone-pointing" that very day. A young white enthusiast from the city gently corrected him. It was patiently explained that whatever its discomfiting effects on individuals, bone-pointing played a vital cultural role in stiffening social discipline and ensuring community respect for traditional rules. The old man shut up, put on his hat, and went silently out into the night.

But it was not in the bush, it was in the nation's Academies, that logic was stoically pushed to an extreme. If *films* could be banned, then why not *books* as well? Didn't they too contain illustrations of sacred *didgeridoos* and *churingas*?

³ *The Institute's Philosophy and Function*. Steering Committee Report. Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies (Canberra, August 1975), p. 53.

Couldn't they also make public and known what must never be seen or shown? Pursuing this line of thought one scholar at the University of Sydney, reviewing a new book of ethno-archaeological research on "The Foragers of the Australian Desert", drew the sado-masochistic conclusion that

"In fact I myself have no business looking at this book and will immediately consign it to the deepest box in the darkest available cupboard; I fear that not all other Europeans in the area who may have purchased it will do the same. . . ." *Mankind*, December 1971, p. 157.

Such zest for intellectual self-immolation gave the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies pause, the more so since men and women of similar opinions loomed increasingly large among its younger membership. Now it has tried to come to terms with current events in a document which sets forth *The Institute's Philosophy and Function*. And it is encouraging to see that its tone is not wholly apologetic. We are told that if the Institute is to continue to do scientific research rather than to become some kind of service agency for Aboriginal communities, or a super-secret repository of Holy Objects, then

for the time being it must be serviced and operated by people qualified to do so. Aboriginality *per se* is not a substitute for qualifications, training and experience in the *techniques and processes* of human biology, archaeology, archival work, bibliography and the like.

All of which is clear enough (despite the evasive definition of science as consisting of *techniques and processes* rather than an attitude toward truthful explanation which scientific methods embody and express). But will the Institute have the courage of its revived secular convictions? Those whose ears are sensitive to religious overtones can only read what follows with misgiving.

The Committee believes that the Institute can assist greatly in providing Aborigines with a repository of knowledge which can assist in the confirmation of those aspects of Aboriginal life and culture that are central to the whole concept of Aboriginal identity.³

It remains to be seen how anthropologists will succeed in combining the central western tradition of disinterested inquiry with the "confirmation" of Aboriginal life and culture—especially when the confirmation is of patently false beliefs about oneself and one's community, and archaic patterns of the sacred and the profane.

Edith Sitwell

Fire of the Mind

Edited by Elizabeth Salter and Allanah Harper

The first anthology of Edith Sitwell's prose and poetry, which moves chronologically through the aesthetic splendour of remembered childhood in *Colonel Fantock*, through to the elegant clownishness of the *Bucolic Comedies* and *Façade*, and on to the vision of horror and hollowness of *Gold Coast Customs*.

Compiled by Allanah Harper, her lifelong friend, and Elizabeth Salter, her secretary, friend and biographer, this is a book that will deepen understanding of one of England's foremost poets.

£7.95

Walter Sickert

Denys Sutton

'A storehouse of absorbing information. It gives us a vivid portrait of the man, helps us understand his ambiguities, and, at the same time, establishes his artistic relationship to the age in which he lived and worked.'

Peter Quennell, *Financial Times*

'A straightforward account of the life written without whimsy or fantasy; better still, it is never marred by the kind of pretentious art criticism which is the ruin of so many books about painters.'

Quentin Bell, *T.L.S.*

£10.50

Passionate Pilgrimage

Katherine Mansfield: a love affair in letters

Edited by Helen McNeish

The story of the love affair of Katherine Mansfield and John Middleton Murry — seen through her letters and the surroundings in the South of France which coloured her moods and her writing. Helen McNeish's photographs capture perfectly the atmosphere of the book.

£4.50

Michael Joseph

LITERATURE IN PERSPECTIVE

English Literature from the 7th to the 20th Century

In forty titles the *Literature in Perspective* series now covers the great names and movements in English writing from Old English Literature to W.H.Auden, giving an account of the life and work of each subject as well as surveying changing critical opinion over the years. Written in a clear, straightforward style without dogma or jargon, this series helps both student and general reader to derive the maximum pleasure from the rich variety of English literature.

A selection of titles:

Chaucer

M. W. Grose
£1.50 paperback

Shakespeare

Kenneth Grose
& B. T. Oxley
90p paperback

**The Metaphysical
Poets**

Jim Hunter
£2.80 and £1.25

Milton

John Carey
£2.80 and 90p

Blake

Stanley Gardner
£2.80 and 90p

Jane Austen

Norman Sherry
£2.80 and £1.25

Dickens

A. H. Gomme
90p paperback

Wordsworth

Margaret Drabble
£2.80 and £1.25

George Orwell

B. T. Oxley
£2.80 and 90p

T. S. Eliot

T. S. Pearce
£2.80 and £1.50

Henry James

Gordon Pirie
£2.80 and £1.25

James Joyce

Kenneth Grose
£1.25 paperback



Montague House, Russell Square, London WC1B 5BX

Literature & Criticism

The Improving Hand

Hardy the Poet—By ROBERT GITTINGS

DESMOND HAWKINS BEGINS his admirable new single-volume life of Thomas Hardy¹ by saying that “the writing of books about Thomas Hardy has become a growth industry.” Margaret Drabble, in editing a symposium of essays about Hardy,² not only refers to “the Hardy industry”, but prints a concluding essay with that title. TV and radio interviewers sooner or later always ask one a question on this “industry.”

The reason for the present spate of Hardy books seems to me so naïvely simple that I cannot imagine it will be generally accepted; this, however, is what I believe to be the cause. On 1 January 1979, everything that Hardy wrote, poetry and prose, comes out of copyright. Those who hold the copyrights are therefore furthering every kind of book using his work, and every kind of reprint and reissue of that work, before that date. As a secondary factor, those who are seriously interested in Hardy—such as myself—feel it as well to treat his life and work responsibly now, before New Year 1979 ushers in out-of-copyright Hardy to an even more bizarre kind of industry. What may we not have then?—a black musical based on *Jude the Obscure*; Giles Winterborne mouthing TV jingles, “If it’s wood, man, Then it’s good, man”; Henchard and the Henchmen hitting the charts.

However, for most of the recent manifestations of the present phase of the “industry” those who

care for Hardy can be sincerely grateful. It has already given us a great deal of illuminating scholarship and lively writing, two virtues that do not always distinguish literary industries. The fairly new and lately very energetic Thomas Hardy Society holds excellent biennial summer schools in his native county, with lectures by an international team of Hardy experts. It has also very recently taken on the distribution in this country of one of the most valuable pieces of Hardy scholarship, Dr Lennart A. Björk’s edition of *The Literary Notes of Thomas Hardy*,³ the copious references to other literary works that Hardy made all through his working life, which Dr Björk has not only faithfully transcribed, but to which he has added an equal volume of his own notes. These latter show the mind of the novelist and poet at work in a way which will assist all future judgments on Hardy as an artistic creator and thinker.

PERHAPS, THOUGH, THE MOST healthy recent development is that Hardy as a poet is beginning to be treated as fully here as he has already been in the USA. Tom Paulin’s new book⁴ is entirely concerned with the poems. To crown this development, James Gibson, who knows more about the texts of the 950-odd poems than anyone else, has been given charge of the new and complete Macmillan edition.⁵

¹ *Hardy, Novelist and Poet*. By DESMOND HAWKINS. David & Charles, £4.95.

² *The Genius of Thomas Hardy*. Edited by MARGARET DRABBLE. Weidenfeld & Nicolson, £5.50.

³ *The Literary Notes of Thomas Hardy*. Edited by LENNART A. BJÖRK. Gothenburg Studies in English 29, distributed by the Thomas Hardy Society (Haselbury Plucknett Vicarage, Crewkerne, Somerset), £15.

⁴ *Thomas Hardy: The Poetry of Perception*. By TOM PAULIN. Macmillan, £7.95.

⁵ *The Complete Poems of Thomas Hardy*. Edited by JAMES GIBSON. Macmillan, £6.50.

HARDY AS A POET is still an area in which people can differ, dispute, form quite individual likes and dislikes, find—a familiar miracle this—superb poems which, they would swear, have eluded for years their devoted reading. Above all, and perhaps blessedly, as a poet he too eludes much academic and pontifical generalisation. We all know by now what a gaffe