

create a literary myth on a national basis—the very concept “nationality” is imaginatively very difficult for us to grasp—can only be regarded today as a quaint and wistful attempt to make time stand still, a survival of that refusal to grow up which was further evidenced in the fact that so much of the literature of that era was built upon the study of childhood. These writers found in the world of the child a sort of mirror of their own impotence and incompleteness.

New Zealand literature in the nineteen-fifties was not, however, cut off from overseas influences. Indeed, these influences were so strong that the great majority of library borrowings were of imported books, books written and printed in Britain or the United States. Books by New Zealanders—and this contributed to the stridency of their authors—remained substantially unread.

A difficulty, of course, was that New Zealanders who wrote books belonged to a curious special stratum of society which owed something of its character to the early associations of university life and much more to a keen sense of isolation and differentness in a fundamentally materialist community. What New Zealand literature lacked, as we can see now, being wise after the event, was a Kipling or a Maugham. While Dan Davin or Guthrie Wilson might at one time have seemed able to supply this need for a great popular writer, neither in fact did so. It was left to that curious person who for so long hid “his” identity under the sobriquet *Ignotus* to bridge this gap between the literati and the common man. “He” was, strangely enough, the first writer in the world to invoke deliberately the new techniques of gland surgery to change “his” sex in order to see life from the point of view both of a man and of a woman, a sacrifice to art which only a handful of others have cared to make.

—David Hall

OBJECTS OF INVESTIGATION

(From a *Brief Inquiry Into the Decline and Disappearance of Certain Academic Disciplines*, published under protest—circa 2054—by the Canterbury University College Press, lately moved from Riccarton to Springfield.)

THE march of mind continued well into the 20th Century, as an army of trained investigators jostled for objects of investigation, all convinced that to explain a thing was not to explain it away. The pressure of their inquiries reduced every man to a statistic. Against the established norms he could measure his glands, his footwear, his work, his wife, his dry rot. It was considered valuable to know how many bacteria were exchanged in the average kiss.

An example will show the trend. In Timaru during the 'forties a man built himself a rock pool and introduced two goldfish into it. He simply wanted to have goldfish in a pool. But such was the energy of the *zeitgeist* that within a month he was receiving correspondence from rock pools all over the country. He was caught up into goldfish societies, and in addition to meeting his goldfish for meals on Mondays and Thursdays he found himself meeting other goldfish feeders on Wednesdays. (And Saturday brought the official organ, *In Stagnant Waters*.) They discussed *The Problem of Sludge*, *The Liver Fluke's First Year*, *Tarnish on the Ventral Plating*. One day the gold-

fish were gone from the man's pool, leaving only the sludge. They had been explained away.

Now the same thing happened with every activity that humans in the country undertook. They worried themselves sick with *The Problem of Pleasure*. They couldn't go to picnics or a barn-dance without being aware of their contribution to *The Problem of Leisure*. In fact, they couldn't even build the barn without vast and penetrating analyses of the *Recreational Behaviour Patterns of the Sub-Industrial Community*.

After a time nobody kissed or worked or danced or kept wives or goldfish any more. They simply kept problems. A few children were born, but they arrived in a battered state, having already furnished information on *Pre-Natal Problems of the New Zealand Mother*, *Foetal Frustrations*, and so on. If they grew up, they became *The Pre-School Child*, the *Juvenescient*, the *Pubescent*, the *Adolescent*, the *Adult Male*. . .

Finally, of course, like the monkey in the story, nobody could spy anything but another eye through every keyhole in the country. Then they all laughed. They began living again a decent, ill-regulated, abnormal, maladjusted life.

—Augustus

UNPLANNED HOUSING

(From an untitled study in functionalism, issued by the Central Office of Political Instruction, 2054 A.D.)

NEW ZEALAND housing displayed a curious cycle in the two centuries between 1850 and 2050. As we pass through the lean-to villages and shanty towns of the 21st Century we cannot but wonder at it. In the North Island the townships of Walsh and Nash are striking examples of the reversion to raupo and punga roofs, and in the South the busy new community centres of McLagen and Holland illustrate the adobe construction. It will be remembered that the less well-to-do pioneers started in 1850 with these methods. But during the Victorian period and early 20th Century they developed a mania for building both houses and offices which would outlast their builders. For materials, brick, concrete and the now extinct forests of kauri and rimu were used.

It is a comical reflection that our ancestors of the early 20th Century led

lives so completely unorientated. No regulations seem to have been passed for their guidance. No planning committees sat on their problems. Nowhere is this more evident than in their favourite house design. There were large attics and wide halls. Spacious verandahs and balconies, sometimes both, indicated their careless attitude to civic duties. The head of the house (for there was then but one) evidently spent his leisure on one of those space-wasting structures, instead of at his compulsory union meeting or indoors at 7-8 television indoctrination. Indeed, it seems that there was then nothing to compel him to see or hear any politician if he should be so perverse as not to desire it.

The legislation of 1930-1960 was the beginning of the end of this wasteful output. It decreed that the tenant should have something more than the fee simple of any property. Since it was clearly contrary to public policy that anyone should make an income from rents the various administrations of those days set an example by building many thousands of houses to let, and resolutely losing money on all of them. The wheel then turned full cycle. Nobody has since built anything with the object of renting it to another. (In 1935 over 60 per cent of the total of occupied houses were provided by investors for the use of others. In 2035 it fell to 4 per cent.) The sensible modern viewpoint has prevailed of building nothing which will last more than 20 years. Indeed, for nearly a century successive research committees have been at work determining the very cheapest form of construction. Their deliberations have produced the modern house—slab sided, toi toi lined and punga or grass-roofed. It is not believed that anything less costly or more functional will be achieved. It is the culmination of a century of legislation and planning.

—John Buckley

PRE-MATRIARCHAL WOMAN

WOMAN IN MEDIEVAL NEW ZEALAND, by Smitene Thru, Claire Booth Luce Female in Applied Matriarchy at the University of Otahuhu. (Pub. by Paul, Caxton, Harper and Tombs Inc.)

. . . The medieval status of WOMEN was appalling and shall never, WOMAN willing, occur again. In political life

They were on sufferance—“The experiment of allowing women (sic) an equal voice . . . has now been in operation for seven years” (O. T. J. Alpers, 1902). In the home They performed the menial tasks—“(New Zealanders) defer in all things to their women (sic), who require this attention by debauching their stomachs with sickly and fictitious foods.” (W. D. A. Cresswell, 1939). And one of the glories of Her age, the late Alys Wardle, was contemptuously dismissed by another writer, A. R. D. Fairburn, as a “decent body” (italics mine). (It will also be noted in passing that each of these arrogant misters laid claim to no less than three Christian names, while the WOMEN had presumably to make do with one or two.)

From the newspapers of medieval New Zealand we can cull further clear evidences of this oppression. A study of the advertisements reveals that not only did man adorn himself with a variety of raiment which he expected WOMAN to wash; but also that, in order to keep Her enslaved at this disgusting task, he forced upon Her machines and gadgets calculated to lull Her into contented acceptance of Her lot. Some of these contrivances were named with typical arrogance by their male inventors *Dishmaster*, *Clothesmaster* (Note A), etc.; which makes it clear that cleaning was then a Feminine occupation. In other words, prior to the long-overdue Compulsory Dhotis for men Act of 1919, and the Confinement of men to Laundries, Catering Establishments, and Cookhouses Act of 2023, men were not only accustomed to deck themselves out like peacocks, but also to demand that WOMEN should care for these extravagant garments in the home.

A further study of the Press reveals even more sinister facts. Not only did the arrogance of the male ordain that one bridegroom was enough for every bride, instead of the two or three now found necessary; but there were, running loose, some several hundreds of men who had not, and had little intention of being, married at all. There is constant reference to those “baches,” a word which we can confidently assume to be a corruption of the even uglier medieval word “bachelors”; and they appear to have been so much in demand that they could confidently offer themselves for sale in conjunction with other household requisites. Thus, under the heading SWAPS, we find: “Bach, prefab. (Note B), cupboards, rangette, for new refrigerator.” *New Zealand Herald*, Circa 1953).

Finally, not for nothing were these medieval men known as Capitalists, since they demanded the capitals which are WOMAN'S inalienable right. I quote again from the *New Zealand Herald*: “Thanks to the 2 Men (sic) who carried me in when I fell unconscious through the roof. Signed, Mrs. Atta-boy.”

—Sarah Campion

(a) See also a talking machine called “His Master's Voice.” The word “master” was frequently on the lips of medieval men, whereas the word “mistress” had a derogatory implication, suggesting that men much feared the fundamental fact of Female supremacy.

(b) A corruption of “pre-Fabian,” perhaps; suggesting that an early 20th Century “bach” was considered as good as a new one.



“Recreational Behaviour Patterns of the Sub-Industrial Community”