# GODZONE:

# 6) AUSTERICA UNLIMITED?

GEOFFREY SERLE

WE HAVE COME a long way in the last thirty years.

Growing up in the 1930s . . . Loyalty to Empire was still the unchallengeable emphasis of school and society. History was English and Imperial History, a little European; Australia (and America) were only mentioned as part of the imperial story. English was entirely English literature, of course. (And at home we read *Pooh Bear, Peter Pan* and *Alice,* Kipling, Rider Haggard and G. A. Henty, *Chums,* the *Boys' Own Paper, Champion* and *Magnet.*) The newspapers were still chock-full of English and European news. On Anzac Day fire-eating generals would indeed tell us that Australia became a nation at Gallipoli, but went on to dwell on the glories of the Empire of which Australia was only a subordinate part and the inherent superiority of the Britisher over any other 'race'. (At the famous Presbyterian Scottish academy which I attended, the high-spot of the *Anzac* Day ceremony—can I be remembering correctly?—was the song 'For England' written in 1914—'England, Oh England, and how could I stay?). The blurred double loyalty characterized the great majority of Australians: at the State schools it was laid down that the flag to be saluted on Monday mornings could be either the Australian or the Union Jack. But while many Australians, especially those of working-class or Irish origin, had developed a limited sense of Australianness, ruling orthodoxy between the wars—partly in reaction to recognition of incipient subversive nationalism—put all the stress on Empire; there may have been more coherent and systematic indoctrination in the schools in this period than at any other time in Australian history. Certainly most of us left school with our hearts and minds

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centred on England and unbelievably ignorant, apart from a little geography, of the country in which we expected to spend our lives.

1940 and the Battle of Britain and 'There'll Always Be An England' was the highly emotional end of an Australian age. In December 1941, after a century and a half of protective coddling, we found ourselves out in the hard world, having to stand up for ourselves and think for ourselves. In innumerable ways the war cultivated our puny sense of national identity. A latent sense of tradition wells up in wartime: traditional military prowess was confirmed, we even managed to build tanks and aircraft. In the dark days of early 1942 there was serious discussion of the prospects of survival if we had to take to the mountains as guerillas; our hearts warmed even to corny old 'Advance Australia Fair' booming over the New Guinea jungle when H.Q. Signals turned up their receivers at news time; the widespread discussions of war-aims and the brave new postwar world were largely in terms of shaping a new Australia. Our observation of the Yanks and our assumed superiority as fighting men at least sharpened our Australian senses of difference and individuality, just as did the A.I.F.'s observation of the British in 1914-18.

Yet obviously the war also strengthened the sentimental British Commonwealth tie; briefly, the old double loyalty became even more intense. For it was the Commonwealth which had stood alone; many of us gloried in Churchill almost as much as any Englishman. And remember those millions of food-parcels we sent to the United Kingdom after the war? The development of independent Australian attitudes and the slide away from British dominance was relatively slow in the postwar years. H. V. Evatt's 'national' and 'independent' foreign policy and the development of diplomatic relations with Asia and the United States ran somewhat ahead of popular sentiment. We did our best not to recognize our strategic dependence on the Americans; even Korea, when it came, was a U.N. show and there was little sense of the commitment to the United States we now have. The foreign policy of the Liberals in their early years of government pendulated between Britain and the United States. Despite all the talk about being 'part of Asia', there was relatively little reaction in practical terms. But the props of our association with Britain were being steadily knocked away. We knew that in the modern world Britain could do relatively little to defend us; her proportion of our trade was falling and we were beginning to draw freely on other parts of the world for ideas; though still substantial, the share of British investors in the economy was declining steadily; we were even drawing as many migrants from continental Europe as from Britain. For the moment Australian attachment to the monarchy held as firm as ever,

taking on increasing symbolic significance as the other ties slowly loosened.

It had always been difficult to be naturally and unassertively and un-self-consciously Australian. Some, like Vance and Nettie Palmer, managed it. But in the declining days of Empire between the wars the sick irrationality of cringing colonials and nationalist strutters prevailed. On the one hand automatic deference to the imported product and assumption of Australian inferiority (whether it was a pair of shoes or a bottle of wine,* a bishop or a poet), on the other the loud-mouthed ignorant parochial boosters and isolationists. The United States went through the process once—it is a necessary stage of growth of new countries—but the clash was more vehement in Australia, perhaps because of our peculiar conservative-Protestant-middle-class-imperialist versus radical-nationalist-working-class-Catholic political division. So in the 1930s we had the sad reaction of P. R. Stephensen and his Australia First movement and the Jindyworobaks; on the other hand, the sheer unconcern and covert contempt of most cultivated Australians for the Australian writer and a built-in prejudice which prevented realistic assessment of the Australian situation in the world. The universities, which were so much a part of the Protestant imperialist establishment, have much to answer for in their long neglect of the Australian field of scholarship—though not men like W. Macmahon Ball who in the 1930s in the Institute of International Affairs and elsewhere fought for sanity, or R. M. Crawford and Manning Clark who in the 1940s gave Australian history its due emphasis. The universities still suffer from their senior men having had so little education or interest in their Australian environment—which may help to explain the apparent gutlessness and unwillingness to declare themselves of so many Australian intellectuals. But I have watched with interest the Australianization of many of my contemporaries now in their forties who grew up the days of Empire (though I can never quite forgive one for his automatic sneers at distinguished writers—never having read a line of them—or another for having held up the teaching of Australian history for many years at a leading university).

By the mid-fifties, however, the old polarity of attitudes had almost died out. Young Australians were growing up without those chips on their shoulders; however unconscious of their destiny they may have appeared, at least they were now naturally un-self-conscious unassertive Australians. The end of Empire and increasing consciousness of the political reality of Australia's position in the world seemed to be forcing the growth of a sense of national identity. The old political alignments

* The Adelaide Club is said not to have allowed Australian wines on its tables until 1945.

were changing; with the swing to the United States, the Labor Party tended to look to Britain as much as or more than the Liberals. Culturally, with the emergence of Patrick White as a major novelist, the paintings of Drysdale, Nolan and Boyd, Ray Lawler's *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll* and the development of the Elizabethan Theatre Trust, there seemed to be great progress. Indeed, in the last fifteen years there has been a remarkable development of a sense of history and tradition. Witness the study of Australian history (though few scholars have emerged yet into the twentieth century), the academic respectability of Australian literature, the foundation of National Trusts and scores of local historical societies, the demand of innumerable shire towns for a folk-museum, the folk-music movement, and the development of a large reading-public for Australiana of every conceivable kind. We even seem largely to have lost our appalling sensitivity to the comments of foreigners on our shortcomings.

BUT ALL THIS is peripheral. For a time in the 1950s it looked as though with great good fortune we might broadly keep to the road marked out over the previous century and continue to move to independent nationhood, gradually emancipating ourselves from British influence but maintaining a close sentimental relationship still, developing an independent foreign policy, and keeping control of a major part of the economy in Australian hands. That is all done for now. In the last decade American economic penetration has proceeded at such a rate, the Australian government has been so successful in identifying itself with American foreign policy and the Australian public has capitulated so wholeheartedly, that our future appears to be irrevocably linked. Few realize how far the process has gone. Although unplanned, the change in name of our currency is only too symbolically significant. We are happily—or phlegmatically—exchanging one neo-colonial situation for another. Australia has abandoned the prospect of independent nationhood; we are going to become just slightly different sorts of Americans.[1]

Over the last decade the government has been working towards—and it now seems it may be triumphantly successful—a general assurance from the United States that Australia will be protected in almost any circumstances. As part of the strategy, Australia has done what it could to encourage direct American involvement on the Asian mainland (just as postwar British governments did their utmost to involve the United States in Europe). It is worth examining the government's motives and the reasons why it has been so overwhelmingly supported. (Perhaps we shall not know for many years how much it planned and shaped, and how much it drifted into the situation. The combination of the inarticu-

lateness of Australian conservatives and the traditional secrecy of Australian governments—so unlike the open frankness of United States governments—leaves room for considerable doubt.)

The argument propounded by and basic to the thinking of the leaders and supporters of the Liberal, Country and Democratic Labor parties, is devastatingly simple and attractive: it is likely that sometime fairly soon Communist China will move south and directly threaten Australia, and our most practicable means of defence is to seek U.S. assurances of protection by giving full support to her foreign policies and involving her economically in Australia to the utmost. The argument has some logic behind it, is attractively commonsensical, is doubtless an honest statement of belief, and simple enough for everyone to understand. It is convincing to the majority of Australians partly for longstanding historical reasons. Geographical isolation has surprisingly produced as much or more nervousness as in the case of a small European power with a mighty neighbour on a land frontier; perhaps partly because our British migrants came from such a secure background. Again and again in the nineteenth century, despite Britain's overwhelming naval superiority, the cry went out that the Russians were coming. In the 1880s there were fantastically fearful reactions to German and French incursions into northern New Guinea and the New Hebrides. The White Australia policy was popularly seen as a form of protection against Chinese infiltration or peaceful invasion. From very early in the twentieth century fear of Japan influenced Australian policy fundamentally and held back development of independent national policies to a degree which historians have not yet recognized, and indeed there was good sense in the fear. Add to this the 'red menace' of the postwar years, combine it with the 'yellow peril' of emergent China, and it is no wonder that a propagandist like B. A. Santamaria has been so influential; but he has been only an extreme exponent of a view which most Australians were predisposed to accept. Another, rarely noticed, historical strand of thought has been the dominant assumption of conservatives, which again has been popularly accepted, that the main task of governments is to develop the country and populate it by immigration, as in the long run a basic necessity of defence. Certainly development has been accepted by all parties as a duty and a salve for guilt in the face of teeming poverty-stricken Asia, but its dominance in non-Labor thinking has been underestimated. Hence, over and above normal demands for economic development, there has continually been an added sense of urgency to import capital and keep the migration figures as high as possible. The assumption has been, and remains, that all domestic policies are subservient to this. In the postwar years this view has held as strongly as

ever, but has been immensely intensified by the assumption of urgency to attract American capital, to increase the American stake in Australia to the extent that it will have to be protected if necessary.

But there is an added dimension of historical inevitability about the Australian discovery of the United States. Despite the remarkable parallels in period and historical experience with Texas and the West especially, that discovery was oddly delayed until recent years by American isolationism, Australia's artificial concentration of economic and other interests within the Empire, and many other factors. There was little basic contact in the inter-war period, although the invasion of popular culture—Hollywood, Tin Pan Alley, the comic strip—had begun and various technological influences were having some impact. Now the recognition is becoming more widespread on both sides that the similarities run very deep, that Australia has far more in common with the United States than any other country except Canada. And we are becoming more similar, if only because Australia has now become about one-fifth Irish and one-fifth continental European in origin and one-third Catholic. It is probably true that most native-born Australians feel themselves to be much more at home socially with Americans than with most Englishmen. The postwar Australian migrants, who now make up such a substantial proportion of the population, are classically American in their assumptions too; in their contentment with higher living-standards, their political inarticulateness and conservatism, and their delight in escape from European controversies, even though to some extent they form a partly depressed and exploited working-class as they did in the United States. But the emergence of the United States as the dominant world power and its marked industrial and technological superiority has had a vast attractive power which has also basically changed Australian attitudes; for Australian materialists are natural worshippers of scientific and technological progress, gadgetry in all shapes and forms and the gaudy tinsel of progress. Until 1939 it was possible for most Australians to believe that Britain still led the world in this regard also. What has hit Australia in a big way, as Robin Boyd described so brilliantly seven years ago in his analysis of 'Austerica' in *The Australian Ugliness,* are many of the superficial trimmings of modern American civilization. The entertainment, hotel and advertising industries have succumbed almost entirely to the cheapest, most meretricious aspects of American life, and flaunt their debased, shoddy, second-hand gimmicks as 'everything desirable, exciting, luxurious and enviable'.[2] It is sad that the United States should export so easily so many of its worst features; and sadder still that these should catch on most readily in Australia.

BUT WE MUST ASK why there is so little overt desire now to hold firm to British ties and to resist the American intrusion. There were a few bleats in newspaper correspondence in the fifties but they are hardly ever seen now. The old imperialists are more noticeable in Canada now than in Australia. But whatever does the older, middle-class generation, including nearly all our leaders in public life, think about it all? There are shrewd realists among our rulers in politics and business who, regretful or not, believe they have recognized necessity, are going 'all the way' American, and know that they are deliberately casting aside the British connexion. Some of the more stupid of their followers see the issue largely as rejecting a Britain and a Commonwealth which is 'soft on Communism' in favour of American ideological purity. Both groups are open to charges of cynicism and hypocrisy in so far as they keep up the front of loyalty to the Crown and the Commonwealth. But to make such charges against the mass of Australian conservatives would be to fall into the intellectual's frequent error (about himself as well as others) of assuming rational coherence in the formulation of ideological belief, rather than man's infinite capacity for self-delusion. For most conservatives, surely, whether they have consciously tried to work out their position or not, believe or want to believe that there is no necessary clash in their loyalties to the United States and Britain. They are heartened by such semi-official statements as Sir James Plimsoll's 'We do not see our United States relationships as a threat to British relationships.'[3] Somehow, perhaps, they feel that what is happening fits neatly with the supposed American 'special relationship' with Britain—which has little reality. They reassure themselves that their sentiments toward Britain are largely unchanged, while refusing to recognize that American influence and penetration must have the effect of replacing the popular sentiment for Britain. In a few years they will be sadly shaking their heads and wondering whatever happened to the British connexion. What is most revealing, perhaps, is the near-absence of anyone advocating the British association against the American on ideological grounds (the British political tradition and values); seemingly Australian loyalty to Britain was overwhelmingly based on the ideology of Empire. It remains extraordinary that so few are thinking in terms of making special efforts to retain residual elements of the British association as a makeweight for dependence on the United States.

Probably the older generation, as well as the younger, half accepts the view that Britain is finished, is tired, old and aimless—the image which the press for some reason seems almost systematically to purvey. Britain allegedly cares little about Australia and will care less once she joins the European Economic Community, according to a widespread

view held by many of the pro-Americans, a view which neglects the substantial surviving military, economic, institutional and personal links. But it is true, of course, that few in Britain have more than a vague general sense of good will towards Australia. And Australia's friends in Britain are no doubt disillusioned too by our opportunism and lack of 'loyalty'! It is easier to understand the seeming lack of feeling of the younger half of the electorate, growing up as they did in the post-imperial age. But here, as on so much of this question, we know so little about beliefs and attitudes, in the absence of Australian sociology and the poverty of our political science and journalistic commentaries. It may be that there is a great deal of latent sentiment for Britain and the British connexion which only needs an occasion to display itself; it is hard to imagine what such an occasion might be, but I am not thinking of another royal tour. The Australian monarchy now does seem in jeopardy; it is probably true, if we had any sure means of knowing, that there has been an immense decline in the royal mystique over the last decade. But, extraordinary events apart, it will survive much longer than our local 'republicans' expect, as part of our self-deception while Americanization proceeds. There will come a point of crisis when the inconsistency and dishonesty of 'loyal' protestations will be exposed; the young may be expected to take full satirical note of the Establishment still accepting honours from the Queen. And we may even expect some of our present republicans (who are *so* irrelevant) to try to cling to the monarchy in a desperate attempt to thwart the total American embrace.

There may well be a strong reaction soon, a vehement anti-American protest, especially if the government continues to force the pace as it has recently. How strong and sustained that reaction will be, and whether in the longer run Australia has a chance of preserving any degree of national independence, will depend on the depth to which the sense of national identity has developed. There are grounds for pessimism here. The ruling age-group has such an in-built sense of dependence, is so little conscious of what sense of Australian nationality there is, and is so provincial in its assumptions, that it can be expected to continue to defer and stand aside. A good proportion of intellectuals, too, still find it faintly silly and embarrassing to have to think of themselves as Australians and will concur without protest.

It is impossible to make any predictions about the reactions of younger Australians. We know so little about beliefs and there has been such a vacuum since the decline of standard imperial patriotic rhetoric, that it is difficult to make any sure statement. What will the recent flowering of a sense of Australian history, the feeling for the bush tradition, Anzackery, and the rest, amount to in practical terms? How deep do our

roots penetrate now? Is there any popular sensing of Judith Wright's recent formulation: 'Where the American dream made use of the competitive individualistic element in life, the freedom of any man to become richer and better than his fellows by hard work and emulation, the Australian dream emphasizes man's duty to his brother, and man's basic equality, the mutual trust which is the force that makes society cohere'?[4] Is this at all likely to strike a spark in today's young suburban voter? It is almost precisely this question which Craig McGregor has also seen as crucial in that excellent chapter, 'The Beach Generation', of his *Profile of Australia*. He believes that the younger generation of 'sharp, up-to-date, ambitious, image-conscious', 'joyful materialists' are much more aware and tolerant and less complacent than their elders. He considers that idealism has diminished and that 'the present generation cannot help but reinforce the swing to opportunist values which has occurred in adult society', but that the 'egalitarian tradition' still survives, though in diluted form.[5] In short, it may be fair to conclude, there are admirable trends towards sophistication and internationalism, but the American current is running more strongly than the traditional Australian.

Australians must be in many regards among the least nationalistic people in the world and, on the surface anyway, most sceptical of patriotic gestures. It is very odd how little indoctrination is imposed on our schoolchildren, how little revered are the founding fathers or other possible heroes, how few care whether we have a national anthem, how casually Australia Day is taken. No Australian politician would dare to emulate Hubert Humphrey's sustained speechmaking on the glories of the American tradition; nor is a Bobby Kennedy likely to emerge as a focus for youthful idealism about the Australia of the future. The heart might warm to the cynical irreverence of one's countrymen, which derives largely from the relative absence in our history of those crises of defence of hearth and home which have produced the standard patriotism of other countries. Ignorant provincials remain in plenty, no doubt, even among the 'sharp' younger generation, who think Australia is immeasurably superior in almost every respect to any other country, but compared to (say) the assumptions of national superiority of so many Americans, Russians or Frenchmen, overall the Australian may now be comparatively modest in his pride. He has some vague consciousness of Australia as the lucky country compared to any other in the world, a country where he is well-off, has reasonable opportunities, where the kids are healthy, the climate good, and so on. The sense of racial superiority or racial antagonism hanging over from the days of Empire has been declining, but is being reinforced again by the Vietnam 'crusade'. The fundamental patriotism is there, at least in the

sense that young Australians are overwhelmingly prepared still to fight for their country, if necessary, and to defend what they have, as our troops in Vietnam no doubt believe they are doing. If asked, nearly all the younger generation would say they were Australian and proud of it. But the question rather is, when they have to make choices, whether that sense of independence and of an Australian tradition will predominate over the logic of satellitism. And the issue may never become absolutely clearcut. Indeed, it may well turn out that Australians will go on ever more proudly proclaiming themselves independent Australians, while steadily becoming more and more Americanized and dependent.

One fears that when the reaction comes there will be further polarization, coercion, and deepening bitterness on both sides. My particular fear is that it will be the radical intellectuals and academics who will suffer most, for they can be expected to feel and to express most strongly both their sense of Australianism and in other cases their resentment at the slackening of the British ties (for of all groups in the community academics are still more bound up with England and more under English influence than any other and full of outdated prejudices about America as well). They will agitate, remonstrate, petition and write indignant articles, and will be generally regarded as more and more subversive and untrustworthy. The universities have already entered a period of governmental harassment and interference, there is a growing mutual lack of confidence; they may suffer much worse.

If there is anything to my analysis, even Noel McLachlan might agree that there is a case for Australian intellectuals showing some concern for the 'national interest', and even possibly a case for some moderate nationalism! His remarks deploring the 'aggressive' nationalism of many Australian intellectuals appear wildly astray to me. For surely it is characteristic of the 'nationalist' intellectuals he is presumably referring to that they are invariably also internationalist in their views.*

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* It is doubtful whom McLachlan ('The Australian Intellectual,' *Meanjin Quarterly*, 1/1967) is referring to exactly, but he appears to charge many Australian intellectuals with having 'hoary nationalistic preoccupations' and a 'compassion which stops at national boundaries' and with being still strongly influenced by a pernicious form of nineteenth century irrationalism, a 'perversion of the intellect'. He may have in mind old Labor-A.N.A. or R.S.L.-Liberal types, but I cannot think of one intellectual to whom the charge sticks. If he is referring to intellectual 'nationalists' who would like to see an Australian identity freer of British and American influence, are absorbed to some extent in the problems of defining Australian traditions, and who may tend to be 'aggressively Australian' socially, he must know that such people almost invariably detest strident assertions of national superiority, tendencies to militarist aggrandisement, contempt for foreigners and racial prejudice, i.e., old-style European nationalism or the ugly side of *Bulletin* nationalism. They are almost invariably 'doves' on Vietnam, reformers of the White Australia policy, and less racially prejudiced and more internationalist than most.

IF THE OUTLINE of my argument is correct, then of course the present division between the major parties over Vietnam and the American alliance will become accentuated, and Labor will continue to be, as it always was, the 'nationalist' as against the 'imperialist' party. And if my assumptions are correct its only hope of gaining power will be by a moderate qualified attitude to the process of Americanization. It is more likely, of course, to be very hostile to various aspects of American policy, for the old-guard will find it difficult to adjust to the speed of events, and Labor is hence likely to continue long in opposition. Vietnam may or may not come to a conclusion soon, but in any case American-Chinese relations appear likely to be the main determinant of Australian domestic politics, as well as the main crisis in world politics, for the next generation. But however flexible the Labor party proves to be, it is likely to become a wider radical coalition, more like the U.S. Democratic party as against the Republicans, for the lack of attraction of the younger Australian voter to a party largely reflecting old-style unionism is plain enough.

The radical side of Australian politics will, of course, be super-conscious of the dangers to Australia of satellite-status. They will not be able to bring themselves to stomach the ruthlessness of the American military or tolerate without protest the growth of Asian hostility to Australia which present policies are encouraging. They will always remember the knife-edge nature of American politics, that it could so easily have been Nixon in the chair in the Cuban crisis, that it is possible that Reagan will be the next president; and they will know only too well that the race and crime problems may yet largely destroy American civilization. Yet, as always, the general view of a foreign country is a decade or a generation out-of-date. And Australian radicals appear to have a curiously blinkered, uniformly hostile view of the United States. Certainly that continental civilization is so massive and diverse that no mind can fully take it in. But Allan Ashbolt's *An American Experience*, for example, is a most curious one-sided view which is not entirely explained by the fact that it is based on observation of the Eisenhower pre-Kennedy era. He knows what other radicals know but somehow cannot absorb that America is part of all of us, is also the country of Faulkner, Veblen, Galbraith, Dewey, Barzun, Oppenheimer, Mailer—and Groucho Marx and Louis Armstrong. And yet, while almost all he says can be accepted, somehow he has been unable to see or give anything like due weight to the immensely impressive aspects of American society: the massive deployment of trained intelligence to combat social problems; the standards of excellence of universities, civil service and business; the reality of democracy (in the sense of mass-participation)

in a country where you have to stand up and be counted again and again and cannot escape; the independence of the press; the moving naïve idealism of a huge proportion of students; the status of the intellectual, academic and artist; the belief of the élite governing class in mass tertiary education and their respect for the educated man.

If we are to live on such close terms with the Americans, it is important that radicals update their views derived from Sinclair Lewis, Upton Sinclair, dos Passos and Mencken, realize what advances in liberalism there have been from the pre-war period, and understand that even darkest Texas and California, in spite of everything, can be and frequently are far more civilized than darkest Victoria. The Australian radical needs to acknowledge, in all humility, that American radicalism is stronger and abler and more courageous by far than Australian. There may also be great advantages to be gained from the American connexion if our political rulers and businessmen will take note of the customs of their masters. Perhaps then they will spend money on education and libraries as it should be spent; the presumably first-class brains of academics will be allowed to contribute to solutions of society's problems; education will be given several more years' span so that our resources of talent can receive proper training in breadth and depth; governments will encourage debate of public issues and supply crucial information in the old-fashioned democratic belief that discussion brings out the truth and reaches decisions of higher quality; business and the civil service will be smartened up, and rank inefficiency and discourtesy tolerated no longer; taxation will be increased to meet urgent public needs, by means possibly of federal aid projects; and the artist will receive immensely greater public and private patronage. So far these are not features of Austerica.

The universities stand to benefit, also, but they will probably remain the most Anglo-centred section of Australian society. That will be an excellent thing in many ways. However, imported English anti-Americanism, long-standing links with English universities and the inability still of many academics to get to the United States have resulted in widespread lack of appreciation, especially in the humanities and social sciences, of the massive North American contribution to scholarship. Our universities also stand badly in need of a lesson from American universities in the proper relationship between scholars, as reflected in their democratic system of departmental government (though not perhaps of university government as a whole) and the relative absence of status-nonsense as between professors and the rest. The universities might benefit too from observing the amount of work by American social scientists directly relating to current affairs. Helped greatly no doubt by

many Americans entering the field, they may begin to produce a few more men capable of contributing to the understanding of modern Australia. Maybe then we will have a better chance of understanding what is happening to us.

It will be seen from the last three paragraphs that I agree with J. D. B. Miller's comments, in the previous article in this series, on the potential benefits of the American association. But he seems to me to be irresponsibly complacent in so unreservedly welcoming what is happening, especially in his unargued assumption that 'the force of our own inertia and our sense of self-importance will be sufficient to prevent us from being swept off our feet.'[7] Craig McGregor is also quite unaware of any problem when he remarks: 'It would be as meaningful to argue that Australia is "Americanized" as to say England is. Beneath the welter of super-markets and drive-in beer-bars the individual flavour of the nation persists.'[8] For the essential fact which I believe justifies my whole interpretation is that Australia is more *vulnerable* to Americanization than any other country—Britain, European or Latin American countries, even Canada. For not only are we determined to be a satellite for strategic reasons, and cannot resist, even if we wanted to, American command of key sectors of the economy, but we lack an existing strong sense of nationality and any language barrier. Britain, France, Mexico, Canada, are all to some extent insulated from Americanization in ways we are not. What *is* there which might stop us going all the way?

Of course we never stood a chance of really becoming a nation, of making some highly individual contribution to mankind's story. With all its immense benefits the common language with two of the great metropolitan civilizations gave us little chance; and then we were historically too late to emancipate ourselves in time. We shall never be self-governing in the full sense—politically, economically, culturally—in the foreseeable future. We have been making the transition from a British colony to an American province, with only a fleeting glimpse of independence on the way. In many ways we shall be back in the inter-war period, but with rather tighter economic control, with as little free play in our defence and foreign policies, and with much less ease of social access to the society of our foster-parents than we had to Britain. We shall have special Asian interests (including close economic links with Japan) rather like Hawaii has. We can't beat them and we have to join them (we may even really join them), but we may be able to form a faction and keep clear of some activities: what the possibilities will be is a matter for urgent speculation. For some of us it will be a matter of trying desperately to preserve what we can of our individuality and

personality (Canada and Mexico may both have something to teach us). But most of us will probably regard what has happened as just one more turn of good fortune for that lucky country, GODZONE.

NOTES

[1] I agree very much with the impressive article by Neil McInnes (written from a very different standpoint) in *Quadrant,* Sept.-Oct. 1965 ('Australia—How Provincial?'). I read it for the first time while writing this article, and while it did not affect the broad views I held, it has influenced my thinking in some particulars, especially in this and the final paragraph. His analysis of the nature and increasing degree of economic control is especially noteworthy.

[2] Robin Boyd, *The Australian Ugliness,* Melbourne, 1960, p. 65.

[3] *Age,* 5 July 1967.

[4] *Preoccupations in Australian Poetry,* Melbourne, 1965, p. xxi.

[5] *Profile of Australia,* London, 1966, pp. 278-81, 288-92.

[6] London and Sydney, 1966.

[7] 'Other Places', *Meanjin Quarterly,* 2/1967, p. 126.

[8] *Profile of Australia,* p. 60.

# THE ALWAYS DYING

ELIZABETH MARSH

RAPIDITY of death can feel no loss.
It is the dying every day I care;
They call it growing in a dying child,
They call it changing in a dying man,
But all I ever was and am not now
Is dead as dust and yesterday, and spins
Out of all time and sense, out of the green world.

Memory is something else again, and fame,
The poem not the poet lives in words,
And what the spring proves and perennial,
Is birth and what birth murders in its leap;
The turned sod is not turned that way again,
Nor can compacted winters, nor new snows
Push sunward last year's snowdrop, last year's rose.

That also one cares less, since present spring
In beauty so replete, outfills the last.
But in oneself the wintered breaking down,
The change of mind, of movement, or of sense,
Makes sometimes poor exchange or absences,
Loss of things held most dear; and these I care:
It is the dying every day I care.