

Play together, dark blue twenty

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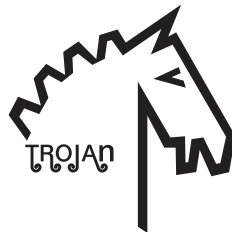
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Play together, dark blue twenty

Chester Eagle



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Author's note

This book was first published (1986) when I was working in Victoria's education system. I intended it to be, like its predecessor *Mapping the paddocks* (1985), an evocation of a past Australia, and I wanted also to make a contribution to the building of a state education system of quality and achievement. I hoped that those involved with government education would recognise the considerable qualities, mostly to do with pride, confidence, certainty and tradition, of the school described, and also see enough of the ways, many of them unattractive, by which a famous school's prestige was maintained to see the need to go in another direction entirely. In the weeks following its publication, I saw that what I wanted was not going to happen. The book created a certain *frisson* at the school in question and among old boy and old girl networks more generally, but as a contribution to the changes then taking place in the state's education system it had no effect at all. I am reissuing the book now as a record of a tradition, very powerful in its day, which has had some effect on our history.

I would like to record my thanks to Hilary McPhee and Diana Gribble, who believed in the book and first gave it to the public.

CAE

At the bottom of the hill capped by Victoria's Shrine of Remembrance sits our memorial hall. Heavy and imposing, it faces the clock tower. On the side next to the main oval – which we call 'the big ground', though it's small – hundreds of boys fight to get near the doors. The prefects can hardly push them open. We rush in, grabbing the friends we want to sit with, and for a few minutes the hall's filled with the sound of banging seats.

In the foyer, masters gather quietly beside the Roll of Honour, with the Boss, Mr Sutcliffe, standing apart. The names of the dead, set in metal, look darkly down. On Anzac Day a small flame's lit underneath. We've a way of doing things that's calculated to impress. When the school captain comes on stage, there's a hush. Prefects close the doors. The vice-master makes himself visible in the doorway, the captain motions us to stand. Grouped in our houses – Bromby, Witherby, Morris, Ross, Rusden, School – we watch our masters make their way down the aisle. They're relaxed, though there's a feeling that any unseemly action would be punished. The procession is long, and the Boss – a menacing presence – enters the aisle as the first masters make their way up the steps. When he reaches the position vacated by his captain, he glances at the music master, who strikes a chord on the piano, and we sing:

Play together, Dark Blue Twenty,
Long and little marks in plenty;
Get your kick, let none prevent ye,
Make the leather roll.
Mark your men, keen effort straining,
On the ball and show your training;
Still though short the time remaining,
Get another goal.

This is the first verse of the Games Song. Nothing in its diction, or sentiments, troubles us. A passion for sport's enforced on us, with an emphasis on teamwork and the bonding of males. Boys, we're to be transformed into men, and not a few of those who supervise this transformation are old boys. In room 21 the names of two of the men now facing us can be found carved into the tops of desks. At Winchester and Eton, we're told, the same thing's true on a grander scale. Future Viceroy's, Admirals and Prime Ministers have recorded, in wood, impulses similar to our own. Churchill himself, the hero of World War Two, has cut his name in a desk at Harrow. While we don't have the long tradition of these schools, we have as much as it's possible to have in Australia. We're Melbourne Grammar! Trebles are drowned in the roar of older boys as we sing:

None our ranks shall sunder,
Who will shirk or blunder?
If all are true
To our Dark Blue,
Our foemen must go under.
Honour ye the old School's story,
Those who played and won before ye,
Bear the Dark Blue flag to glory,
Grammar to the fore.

The tune is 'The March of the Men of Harlech'. At boat races or football games we repeat sunder and the words that rhyme with it in an aggressive shout forbidden at formal gatherings. One verse and chorus suffice; the Boss nods to his staff. They sit. He says, 'Be seated,' and we sit. If this takes more than a moment he glares at the offending part of the hall. We fear him too much to like him but there's no question he's equal to his task. He reads notices with metallic clarity and close attention to syntax. He's a firm believer in military training. 'This country does not possess a large standing army,' he says, 'and in the event of an invasion, cadet corps' - he infers the plural - 'together with the citizens' military forces would form the nation's second line of defence.'

It's frightening; we suppose it's true. The menace is Russia. 'It is not compulsory to join the cadet corps,' the Boss continues, 'but I would

urge you to consider whether it is not your duty to do so, and I wish to make it quite clear to you that the rewards and honors that this school is able to bestow will not be granted to anyone who does not see it as his duty to undertake military training.’

We know what - or rather, whom - he means. B.C., one of our leading sportsmen, has never been made a prefect, or even a probationer, because he’s chosen not to join the cadets. On Tuesday afternoons, when the rest of us parade, he walks down the slope between hall and the Steele ground, free yet excluded. Most of us dislike cadets, so it’s a measure of the school’s authority that when B.C. goes early, he goes alone. What would the Boss do if others joined him? One dissenter is useful, perhaps, as a lesson.

The Boss’s standards are made clear, as is his willingness to enforce them. In the end, this firmness brings him down, but on stage, in the hall, administering the oath of office to new prefects, his authority’s beyond question. He’s careful to avoid informal presentations of himself. We never catch a glimpse of the man as opposed to the office. He enters chapel behind the choir in procession with only the Reverend Brown, or the Reverend Whitfield, behind him. Church and State! A communicating Anglican, as he must be, he reads the lesson, and occasionally preaches, with the severity we know well. It’s said that he bans the use of certain hymns, such as ‘Safe in the arms of Jesus’ because they have a Salvation Army air about them. Though he watches us keenly, he never chats, and the thought of being summoned to his study is something we dread, since no good can come of it.

There are two other manifestations of the way we view him. They’re spontaneous, and never talked about. On Thursdays, when the bell rings for the end of school, we hurry to the chapel steps. Colonel Brady, a rotund gentleman who serves in the bookroom, patrols the quad, ordering us away from our lockers. Books from the last class have to be taken to the Head’s assembly. We crowd in the brick paved area between lamp post and chapel. Mr Sutcliffe stands, notes in hand, wearing gown and mortar board. When he judges that the last stragglers have arrived, he moves forward and his pupils, who one would have said

were too cramped to move, part like the Red Sea, closing behind as he reaches the steps.

At other times he catches us unawares by opening the Tudor arched door of the wing where his study's housed. The panes in the door are rippled, so there's no way of knowing he's there. Those with lockers near the door stop talking. We've been arguing about what we need for first period, and cursing our locks and keys, but with the Boss standing on the mat beside the artillery shell which is beaten as a dinner gong, our volubility's repressed. He stands at attention, books under his arm, before moving up the quad, allowing us to talk, if more quietly than before. A pool of silence moves with him. Groups freeze as he nears them, resuming their chatter when he's far enough away. A blind person could follow his progress through the quad.

Figurehead of the school, he's supported by house masters and house captains, school prefects and probationers, house prefects and probationers, coaches of teams and their captains, vice captains and third selectors. Power, duty and privilege are allotted to each level of organisation. Prefects are allowed to cane. Colours are awarded at the end of each season, which means that recipients wear on their blazers the badge in full colour and beside it an embroidered XVIII, XI, ATHS or crossed oars. Those who've passed their Intermediate may wear a cap on which the cotton book and mitre are replaced by a metallic silver thread, with our motto, Ora et Labora - pray and work - picked out in red. Gaining our Leaving allows us to get an order for a cap on which the silver's replaced by gold. These caps, and our blazers, are available from city stores which have been approved as suppliers, and it's pleasing to find, when we buy clothes, that the symbolism of badges and pockets is understood by those who serve.

The notion of service as an obligation is constantly held before us. The School Prayer says it thus:

May thy blessing and protection, O Lord, be upon us this day; upon our homes; and upon all for whom we are in duty bound to pray: upon the King, the Governor General of the Commonwealth, the Governor, and all who are set in authority under them; upon the ministers of Christ's holy religion, and the Magistrates who administer justice.

And that there may never be wanting a sufficient supply of persons to serve Thee, whether in Church or State: we pray for a blessing upon all places of sound learning and religious education, especially upon this school;

That those who are called to bear any office herein may always remember that strict and solemn account which they must themselves one day give before the judgment seat of Christ;

And that those who shall here receive the lessons of piety and knowledge may use the talents committed to their charge to the welfare of their fellow creatures and the honour of Thy great name. And this we beg for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

The prayer, compiled by Dr Bromby, our first Headmaster, was read at the opening of the buildings in 1858. Outside the Boss's study a Norfolk Island pine bears a plaque saying that it was planted by Dr Bromby, of whom the tale is told that he chased a miscreant into Saint Kilda road, gown flying and brandishing a cane. Our masters neglect to comment on whether or not he considered the sentiments of the prayer in that fit of rage.

The school's also served by faithful retainers known as the groundsman, the bursar, tuckshop ladies, and the librarian, and also, that part of it which uses the dining room, by a more rapidly turning over group of maids. These are the only young women in regular contact with the boarders, and a poor opinion is held of their virtue. Each night in term time, a member of the boarding house - School House - is detailed for telephone duty. Incoming calls for boys are discouraged. The telephone's in a cubicle near the Boss's office, and the boy on duty does his homework at a huge table in the Council Room, looked down upon by portraits of the school's headmasters. If he's lucky, matron or the master on duty will get him something special for supper. The disturbing part of telephone duty is that one has to take calls for the maids, and the callers have voices we don't normally hear. The maids frequently go out after these calls, and it's part of boarders' folklore that they aren't away very long. Sexually curious, we feel awkward as we call down the passage to Phyllis, Jane or Beryl that there's someone - we don't say 'a man'

- on the phone. When we're back in the dormitory, someone will ask 'Any phone calls for Phyllis?' and someone else will sneer 'Siph-phyllis, you mean?' but despite the scorn they're an aid to masturbation.

Thus the school's solemnity has its underside, kept well hidden. A boarder's expelled for having the contraceptives known as French letters in his possession; we discuss this in the Domain on the way to Friday dancing class. We've only rumour to go on, and T.S., who might have told us what happened, has already been removed by his parents. We wonder what they'll tell his home town, and how he'll feel, starting at a country school. Two years later, some junior boys mention to their house captain that a science teacher has been seeing them in the lab at times when there are no classes. The captain knows what to do. He tells them to meet the teacher again, stations himself so he can see what transpires, then reports to his house master. The teacher's not seen again. The boys are bound to silence. The whole school knows, yet doesn't know, what's happened.

Expulsion is the ultimate punishment. There are also lines, and canings to a limit of six cuts on the bottom. Boarders can be gated, and day boys brought back for Saturday detention. For boarders there's also the threat - and the reality - of a visit to one of the school's innermost institutions, the nefarious inquisition known as the East.

The East is a dormitory where the School House captain and seven henchmen sleep. The seven have no official standing but the next batch of probationers will be appointed from their number. When a vacancy occurs - that is, a member of the East is promoted - speculation's rife about who'll take the vacant bed. Somehow we seem to know who it'll be. The nominee is not so much approached as summoned; in living memory, only one person has said no, a heavyweight boxer who had enough status to refuse. A strange process takes place when someone joins the East, a procession which is also a transformation.

Picture the scene: the school's a bluestone pile, with one wing emphasised by a clock tower. There are four dormitories in this wing, called the First, Second, Third, and East. There's a locker room, also used as a boot room, before the First. The building turns about a stairwell, then there's a clean clothes room, an upstairs common room, and a last

dormitory, the North. For some reason, there's been a shift in power. Years ago, according to old boys, the North terrorised the school. By our time, the day boys have got out from under. Now it's only the boarders who are terrorised, and it's by the East. They watch everything we do and the least sign of nonconformity brings a narrowing of the eyes which means 'Do that again and you'll be summoned,' The interviews we dread are sometimes held in a tiny study downstairs but more often take place after lights out. Then, after a rumble of anger in the far dormitory, we'll hear a member of the East open their door and shout a name. The victim has to leave his bed and face the seven who verbally assault him in a shouting session filled with hate. If he's not suitably contrite, or broken, there'll be a follow-up session. We sense the nights when the East's going to get someone, and we lie in bed wondering who they'll scream for. One thing we're sure of - we hate them too much ever to join them.

But they are the way, and the initiation; boarders don't get to be prefects or probationers unless they're first members of this clandestine organisation. When they choose their next member, he strips his bed, leaving his blankets in an orderly pile, and, clutching sheets, pillowslip and pyjamas, makes his way down the aisle between the beds, scrutinised by those he passes. He's been one of us, he's to be one of them, but until he closes the door he's vulnerable to judgement. If he comes from the North, he has to pass through his own dormitory and three others before he's there. If he comes from the Third, he's only to go next door. The chosen look embarrassed as they make this journey. Something about them pleads with the people they pass not to hate them. Nearing the door which they'll have to open on nights when they, as tipstaff, summon slackers for their mauling, the change takes place. Some decency, some approachability, is shed as they prepare to bully. Making our beds, we hear the door shut, quietly, and know that the trick's been done again. We'll use the new member's nickname or Christian name warily because he might turn on us. He'll judge the deference in the way we speak to him. If he resents some liberty, we'll see the narrowing eyes, and we'll withdraw, having caught the warning.

Our fear shows in the way we pass jam at table. Picture the scene: on the opposite side of the quad from the tower, there's a staircase leading to the dining hall. At the turning of the stair there's a composite portrait, every face in an oval mount, of the school in 1908. At the top of the stairs are two tiny suites of rooms - the housemaster and an assistant. The exeat book rests on a window ledge. The doors are bolted. When the kitchen's ready the doors open and we rush to six long tables. A prefect sits at either end, flanked by a probationer and a member of the East. The rest of us sit, ten or eleven a side, in descending order of seniority. The smallest sit in the middle. Jam and honey are set out in bowls. We eat quickly, and though it's permissible to sit after the dining room's risen for the second grace which concludes the meal, most of us prefer to finish and be gone. Thus there may be a queue - 'After you! After you!' - for the jam. It's at such a moment that the prefect, or, more dangerously, the East member, says he wants the jam. His priority's imposed on the queue. The cry 'Jam! Jam! Jam!' goes down the row. Three forms of request are used; 'Jam, please', for middle ranking boys; the surly 'Jam,' given by the East, which is at once translated into 'Jam! Panic! Jam! Panic!'; and the expression of humility required of little boys in the middle - 'Jam, please, no panic.' Boys with their eye on becoming East members refuse to pass anything to small fry unless they use this abnegating formula.

Conflict comes when boys at the top are kept waiting by persons trying to put jam or honey on their toast before they relinquish the bowl. This is when menace is transferred down the table in a series of orders - 'Jam! Panic!' - or by ugly looks. Such warnings are sometimes given unjustly, in that the junior person hasn't realised who's been kept waiting; he will then apologise. At other times, and particularly when the East's been active, the bowl flies from hand to hand at uncontrollable speeds, to the embarrassment of more benign prefects and the greater embarrassment of boys in the middle who find a bowl of honey pressed against their lapel or overturned in their lap. Accidents of this sort are greeted by laughter, with an ensuing frown from the housemaster, seated at the table which runs across the room.

Picture the scene. The walls are lined with premiership photos going deep into the nineteenth century. Athletes, cricketers, footballers and oarsmen, they stare from frames, capped, moustached, wearing knee length trousers which shorten as the years progress. They're in blazers with wild hair, hair watered, hair brilliantined. Their coaches sit sternly between captain and vice captain or stand in the back row. In 1931 Grammar took out the four premierships and the photos from that year are in one frame which hangs above the fireplace. Parents and grandparents of the present school look down on maids rushing trays to prefects, before whom empty plates are stacked. They serve. On weekends, when there's less pressure, boys in the middle may get their dinner first. At other times, seniors take their plates, then pass indifferently towards the middle. If one side of the table has an uneven number, a voice in the process of breaking may cry, 'Hey! What about me?' The prefect will say, 'You belong to the other end.'

Power's clustered, and may be arbitrarily employed, but most of the time there's security in our hierarchical system. We know who we are, and if we're exposed to others, they also are exposed to us. We know each other's sounds and habits. We've nicknames for each other of brutal aptness. Yet night after night, in our blue suits, we push in to dinner, with masters at the centre table. A hundred and twenty boys stand at their benches. Fred Jarrett, School House master, grunts; it's his call for silence. 'Benedictus, benedicat, per Iesum Christum, Dominum nostrum,' he says. We sit. The prefects on duty produce their rolls, calling names at speed. We answer 'Sir!' The meal won't be served until the rolls are finished, so the prefects hurry, answers coming two or three names behind the call.

'Baillieu, Bodinnar, Brown,' says the prefect, and they answer 'Sir!' right down to 'Whitehead, Wiseman, Withers.' Missing a roll call is serious. Boys arriving late are greeted by Fred's 'See me after.' They're caned, or gated. When the senior roll's completed, Perry, the junior boarding house, is called. Their voices come out too loudly, or in falsetto. There is general merriment when someone's voice goes wrong, though we dare not, in the presence of masters, squeal as we would if the same vocal accident occurred in the shower room. Fred glares in the

direction of any exuberance. The serious business of eating has to start, and we're our own enforcers.

There are few leisurely moments in our cycle. Between the end of classes at 3.30 and dinner at 6, some of us would like to read, and others to explore the city, but sport's compulsory. Boarders turn out four times a week, cadets consuming the remaining afternoon. Even the day boys have to turn out twice a week, getting their names marked off or they too will face schoolboy justice. This is meted out in the boarders' shower room because it's an echoing cavern and the amplified sound of a caning finds its way into the quad, warning slackers to beware.

Six of the best, touch your toes! *Whack, whack, whack!*

Our school contains hidden reserves of cruelty. In Divinity one day, Jack Brooksbank, a small man and an old boy, one of whose sprinting achievements still stands in the records, breaks his boredom by posing a problem. 'You're flying through the New Guinea mountains,' he says. 'You're well below the peaks and you're losing height because you're overloaded. You've got some Japanese prisoners on board. Do you throw them out, or do you take the risk?' He puts it calmly so someone says, as he presumes he's intended, 'Chuck'em out.' Jack looks at his class. 'That's what we did.' Our stomachs quiver. The lesson - lesson? - and the way we view our masters can hardly recover. Why does Jack ask us in Divinity, a lesson we thought secure? Shrouded Papuan mountains and plunging Japanese fill our minds. Jack stares glumly at his class. 'Page sixty-four,' he says. 'Who'd like to read?'

Jack teaches in room 17, where boarders do prep at night. Across the passage, Bertram Charles Sydney Stedman Southwell takes Latin. He's another athletic old boy and a veteran of the war before Jack's. 'Why do we have to study this stuff?' we ask. Bertie's the most unflappable of men. 'It teaches you to think,' he says. 'It gives you a lot of history.' We know Gaul's divided in three parts, it doesn't seem important. 'Isn't there anything else?' we say, wanting to unwrap the mystery. 'It's a discipline,' Bertie says. 'Once you learn to master one thing, you can master anything.' We scoff. 'It helps you with your French. It gives you a grasp of grammatical structures.' We draw comfort from the fact that we're

not part of the tiny group doing Greek, and we admit that, as part of Classical A, we're better off doing Latin with Bertie than we would be with Tickle Turner, who takes Shell A and the Remove next door.

Tickle's wastepaper basket is of laundry size, and he has a wooden paddle, somewhat larger than a table tennis bat, with which he administers ... it's hardly punishment ... his attentions on those who can't answer questions, or fail to attend. Boys in his classes claim, and their reports are backed by generations of old boys, that he makes malefactors put their heads in the basket and, while teaching Latin or History, pats the bottoms thus made prominent with his paddle. A variation is to make boys bend across his lap for the treatment. The laughter of old boys, hearing that these things still go on, somehow validates his practices. They laugh in the same way about Jack, and Mossy, as if they're well known steps. Pilgrims in reverse, they make us know that they've been where we are and that our broken drama, full of hostility, jockstraps and uncertainty, is the major formation we'll undergo. They know because they're through.

We're still in it and the greatest luxury we can aspire to is a share of one of the studies in the clock tower wing, beneath the dormitories. There are ten of them. Number 10 belongs to the East, 6 to the School House captain, 5 to the captain of the school. Studies 5 to 10 are 'report to' addresses; the dignitaries who occupy these cells pin notices on boards ordering wrongdoers or non-attenders to report to Study 7 at 12.30 Tuesday. Those who've reported cross off their names. Those who don't are warned by friends. These notices are often written on the back of school dance tickets, access to these cards being a sign of power. Studies 1 to 4 house sixth form boys without office. These cubicles are bleak, but private. Being able to make others knock before entering is the greatest privilege of a communal existence.

We shower together. We piss at a common urinal. We shit with a cement sheet between us. This endless proximity makes us acutely aware of each other. Sitting in the toilet with the door closed - we've found, on cadet camps at Puckapunyal, that army dunnies have no doors - we know who's entered the room to wash his hands, or who's pulling up his pants in the adjacent cubicle by the characteristic sounds; the habits; the

coughs; the unmistakable way of walking. There are those who turn the taps on full, those who wash in a trickle. Some flush the bowl before adjusting their clothes, others do the opposite. Some stare hard, others look away. We're naked in front of each other from first shower in the morning to the putting on of pyjamas at night.

Picture the scene. It's almost half past seven. We lie in rows, asleep or waiting to get up. Rising before 7.30's not allowed, except to go to the toilet. Few of us need to. At the half hour, the early risers go down, towels over their shoulders or about their waists. School towels are white with a blue stripe so you have to remember where you put *yours* on the rails. Showers are turned on. There are four of them, and - another of the school's institutions - two cold showers beside the door. One's turned on at the outset, ready for the final plunge, because if we wait until twenty or thirty bodies are under the carefully adjusted showers, the change in pressure will cause us to be scalded; the major crime of the shower room is to alter the cold water without warning.

The cold water's on full pelt. It splutters inconsistently so that anyone passing is likely to get an icy sprinkle. The first eight boys shower comfortably, passing each other soap, but as the numbers increase the struggle for water develops. Tall boys lift their hands to the rosette to divert water down their arms. Smaller boys squeeze in the middle. Late arrivals are ordered away with cries of 'No room! Only four in that one, get in there!' The next shower will have reasons for keeping the newcomer out but one way or another he breaks in where he's not wanted, squeezing his shoulder between one boy's shoulder and another's back. We turn so the left shoulder gets water, then the right. By 7.45 there are thirty of us, graziers' sons and future captains of industry, arched backwards, bellies out, male caryatids around a column of water. The cavern's full of steam. The cold shower's belching. Late arrivals toss their towels on the others. 'Anyone getting out?' Someone says 'I am!' and heads for the door. No-one gets away without a plunge in the freezing water. Attempting to escape will bring the wrath of the room on the slacker's head. Those who enjoy it shout 'That wasn't very long!' at those who don't. We dab our bodies and paddle through the pool above the drain before drying our feet at the door, leaning on the panelling as we

pull a towel between our toes. As 7.55 approaches, the late starters are less fussy. Pounding upstairs, slippery naked, towel in hand and genitals jiggling, they make the lino wet for those coming down. The stairs are dangerous. People slip. If we're not at roll call we'll get belted. Gated. Made to do something obnoxious. Panic takes over. Those still asleep are stirred to life. 'Jesus!' they shout, pulling off pyjamas. Those going down in blazers are shoved aside by these anguished souls. Shower's compulsory! The hubhub in the shower grows, then there's a decrescendo as taps are turned off and the flood gurgles down the drain. The secure ones, dressed, mock the endangered before making their way into the quad.

Picture the scene. We're a group in grey trousers and black shoes, taking the sun in the brick paved rectangle. If it's gloomy we gather near the door to Fred's room at the foot of the dining room stairs. Dishevelled figures bursting into the quad with their buttons undone or combing their dripping hair are greeted by nicknames called derisively. Will the prefect appear before the last of the sockless boys with soaking shirts? If the prefect's late it's part of the game to laugh at him; we're masters of the art of judging danger. We crowd into room 13, where Fred takes maths, the late arrivals answering from a cluster at the door. 'Baillieu, Bodinnar, Brown ... Whitehead, Wiseman, Withers?' Sir! Sir! Sir! We file up for breakfast, glancing idly at the boys of 1908. The door's bolted. Those who are sockless or have no laces rush to their lockers; all's to be rectified before Fred glares around, mumbling '*Benedictus, benedicat, per Iesum Christum, Dominum nostrum*', and bidding us sit by doing so himself. At 8.23 he'll rise, repeat the Latin formula and we'll go back to make our beds. Once school's started, the dormitories are out of bounds. Our beds, neatly aligned, will be without us until we've said Amen to the prayer that ends the compulsory hour and three quarters of prep.

Our days have a sameness which concentrates our lives on schooling and sport. Left to ourselves, we might become indifferent, so every effort's made to see we don't slack. Around the walls of the memorial hall and in many of the classrooms there are honour boards inscribed with the names of sporting captains, house captains, winners of scholarships, and those who've taken exhibitions at the matriculation exams.

When an exhibition's shared, the bracketed names attract the abbreviation aeq; every two or three years the gold leaf man comes to update the boards, and there's a feeling that the school's caught up with itself. *The Melburnian* records the most minor sporting achievements and the membership of the school's innumerable committees. Receiving our copy at the end of term, we look eagerly for any mention of ourselves. We're guaranteed two mentions in our careers because House Notes conclude with a Salvete for new boys and the term 1 issue has an impressive Valete for those who left the previous year. The entry for a successful boy might read:

10465, ent. 1945, I.C. 1949, L.C. 1950, Matric. 1951, Rusden Schol. 1948, Witherby Schol. 1949, Public Schools Club Bursary 1952, C'wealth Schol. 1951, Marian Flack Schol. 1952, Sgt. 1951, Cdt.-Lt. 1952, Dramatic Society Committee 1952, Sub-Editor 'Melburnian' 1952, Games Committee 1950-51-52, Athletics Team 1949-51-52, 3rd Man Athletics 1952, Ist XI 1951-52, V.-Capt. of Cricket 1952, 1st XVIII 1950-51-52, Capt. of Football 1952, House Probationer 1950, House Prefect 1951, School Probationer 1951, School Prefect 1951, Captain of Morris House 1952, Captain of School, 1952.

There are also sad one-liners for the undistinguished:

10888, ent. 1943.

Beneath our success or lack of it, there's striving. Otherwise we're slack. The East keeps boarders on their toes, but ultimately we enforce everything on ourselves. Ridicule belongs to everyone with a tongue. We hound each other in a world that's too small. We're full of hero worship and loathing. Some of these ugly emotions are channelled into Jew-baiting (Vot you vant, Yid?) but the school's a battle of wits, and Jewish boys do well in exams (few of them star at sport). Our violence is emotional since fighting is non-existent, and would be stopped if it began. We've a detestation of delinquency, which belongs on the other side of the city. Our sadism shows when someone we hate gets belted. Behind the goals, or watching the Head of the River, we distort the Games Song:

None our ranks shall sunder. *Sunder!*
Who will shirk or blunder? *Blunder!*
If all are true
To our Dark Blue,
Our foemen must go under. *Under!*

We're at our worst at the boxing finals. These are held in the memorial hall, turned for the occasion into a stadium. The boarders watch from the balcony, unceasing in their barracking throughout three-minute rounds. The lightweight bouts are boring because little boys can't do much damage. The heavyweight bouts are best. Even those who hope the Games Committee will strike boxing from the list of the school's approved sports find their bloodlust rising when a knockout's near. Referees stopping fights because someone's getting hurt are despised by boarders, who like to see a beating made absolute. Rugged in our greatcoats because the balcony's freezing, we roar the nicknames of boys we want to win. It's a bestial display, but not as cruel as the things we do to each other in private.

One of our number's slow to mature. His white body's offensive to those whose genitals have assumed the size they'll have in manhood. When he enters the shower room, a deafening squeal rises from the bodies crammed beneath the nozzles. The falsetto alludes to the undeveloped condition of his organs. Since nature has as yet denied him this means to status, he tries too hard to earn respect; it's taken as axiomatic that he's wet, our commonest condemnation. He's also known as Hairless. Scarcely a minute goes by without someone insulting him. Sensitive or coarse, we're alike in using him as a whipping boy. He goes on the offensive, using our nicknames with the contempt we reserve for him, but it doesn't work; his standing's so low that nothing he says has any bite. This goes on for a year and a half, until the change occurs. This too's remarked on. If the masters know about his persecution, they do nothing. Prefects and probationers do nothing to stop it. The rest of us indulge ourselves without restraint. In private contact - borrowing books, comparing homework - we're civil because he's intelligent and better disposed towards us than we are to him, but the moment other boys approach, he's pushed to the edge of the group. If he breaks down,

it's never in public. He returns from holidays with a tan on his face and a happiness in his voice that soon disappears. We tell each other that we'd hate to be K.P. because of what happens to him, but we don't modify our treatment.

We comment endlessly on this person's person, because there's no way of accepting his immaturity in our masculine rituals. In pre-match, half time and three-quarter time exhortations made by captains and coaches, from the First XVIII to the lowliest house thirds, one phrase is never omitted – *guts and determination*. 'It doesn't matter how good you are, you can try!' The opposite of trying is *slacking*, and it's unpardonable. When Grammar's down against Scotch, we think guts and determination will bring us through. All we can do, as spectators, is sing, and if the Games Song doesn't sound very convincing, some prefect's sure to move through the crowd urging us to *put a bit of effort into it!* The school's most famous coach is Bully Taylor, a legend for the premierships he's brought us, a rotund man who knows old boys and their wives, and the parents of his teams. Shrewd and jovial, he's our miracle worker. He pleads with teams to *turn it on* – an expression no-one else has the authority to use. His warm furry voice is heavy with sentiment, and we hang on every word. Navy Blue must beat the Prezzies!

Scotch is the school we fear. They outnumber us, and there's something flinty and determined about them which we find hard to put down. The Geelong schools don't trouble us, and we've got the edge on Wesley and Xavier, but Scotch, with its redbrick buildings and its ovals running through parkland to the river, is a camp as strong as our own. Grammar-Scotch games draw hosts of old boys, and are the acid test of our teams. Bully's in demand throughout the games. At Scotch, parents bring their cars up to the ground, and since opposing parents get there first, they add to the home ground advantage. Our First XVIII rarely plays home games at school because Bully, who's developed players for Melbourne, is able to get us the Melbourne Cricket Ground. It's ours.

Australian football began with a rambling game of keepings-off between Scotch and ourselves which was played in those sections of Yarra Park now occupied by the Melbourne and Richmond grounds. Grammar won, we note with satisfaction. We chant behind the goals:

Who are? We are? Grammar!
Wesley kids add 'Pooftah!' but listen to them:
Wesley with a razzle, Wesley with a dazzle!
Wesley with a razzle-dazzle, zip-bom-ba!

Xavier says 'Xavier, Xavier, yah yah yah!' and Scotch have a song 'Cardinal blue and gold' which we never hear them sing; we don't doubt our superior station. Strangely enough, not everybody shares our opinion. We notice, one Monday morning, that an Argus reporter called Percy Jones has criticised the playing surface provided for a Melbourne game, chopped up, he says, by a schoolboy game. What cheek!

Nor does the cry of 'pooftah' trouble us because we're obsessed with masculinity. The slightest sign of its absence, even in those who've physically matured, draws ridicule; thus one of our number's nicknamed Poof because he has a weak-wristed throw - like a woman, we say - and is a bookworm. Many of us read almost as much but call it *swatting*. This is our way of dealing with femininity in ourselves; our ambivalence about homosexuality is shown in our treatment of Homo Harry.

Harry's a man in his forties who sells papers at Spencer Street station. Sunday's his day off and he spends the mornings and sometimes the early afternoons on a bench beside the Wadhurst ground, which means that boys from Perry, the junior boarding house, must pass him as they go to meals and chapel. Harry knows most of us by name, and we greet him politely. 'Morning, Harry.' We also grunt 'Homo Harry' in our recently acquired baritones when we're at the edge of his hearing; thus we attack him for what he stands for while accepting him as a person. Those he's fond of talk with him. We know he's lonely. He lives in Port Melbourne and when his welcome's exhausted, he excuses himself by saying, 'I'd better do a bit of work in the garden.' He invites us to visit him, but we can hardly see Fred signing that exeat! The invitations continue to be issued, and Harry sits on our benches Sunday after Sunday, tolerated by our masters. At Spencer Street we call 'G'day Harry!' and he greets us. Standing among his papers, he wears a grey dustcoat. He has a red face and fair curly hair which may once have been beautiful. Seeing him on the narrow path that leads to Perry can be unsettling; the responsibility's too much. One afternoon, two of our number ride to Port Melbourne

with a camera. On their return, they go to the darkroom. A few days later, a photo appears on the notice board showing a single fronted weatherboard. We know whose house it is. Between verandah and gate there's a plot of earth which could be traversed in two steps. One of the photographers has drawn attention to this tract with an arrow, above which is written 'the garden'. We laugh ourselves silly, but the photo stays up for days, turning into a rebuke. We say it was rough on Harry to do that, adding our proviso that he brought it on himself. The garden! We take it down to examine it, and put it back. The photo becomes crinkled. Eventually it disappears.

We've a code which discriminates between what's mentioned and what's not. Many of our masters saw war service, but are reticent. On the other hand, they make a feature of the fact that Colonel Brady, our bookroom assistant and Monday night master on duty, was, like Winston Churchill, at the Battle of Omdurman. Williamson's *History of the British Empire*, which we study in Intermediate, has told us about the Sudan, and Mafeking. We imagine it must have been grand to charge a bunch of dervishes. Can the Colonel tell us about Sir Winston? Sadly we realise that the old man has no recollection of the Prime Minister. Excusing him, we say that there must have been a lot of confusion at Omdurman, but something important's slipped down the cracks of history. The Colonel, who pretends to be ferocious, is a soft old man who knows we ask him for permission for things other masters don't allow. Sometimes he gives in and we head for the Jolly Roger cafe twenty minutes before dinner on a Saturday 'just to get the *Sporting Globe*, sir', chuckling about whatever it is we're up to, but puzzled by the gap between the impressions formed by Williamson's *History* and the stout old man in the Sam Browne belt who's given the honour of leading our Anzac Day parade. How did the Colonel come to be superannuated at our school? No-one says; the topic's closed.

The same disparity between war's passions and its aftermath is brought home each year when the school provides a Guard of Honour for the Old Contemptibles' march from Flinders Street to their service in the Cairns Memorial Church, East Melbourne. A pipe band and a

platoon of cadets accompany them. They're grey haired men in unimpressive suits. Since no more peaceful place than Flinders Street on a Sunday could be imagined, we wonder why they need a guard, and how our presence can do them honour. The Reverend Hagenauer - not an Anglican, thank God - preaches rabidly anti-communist sermons.

We come away convinced that people want another war, and it sickens us, since we know that our rifles and bayonets aren't simply ceremonial. When the Korean war starts, Jack Brooksbank pins cuttings on a cupboard, so we'll know what's happening - the Communists are over-running a country that wants freedom. The waves of Red Chinese are made to sound worse than the dervishes who trapped General Gordon; it's a depressing and unstable world!

The Boss, who's clear about it, says fear can be mastered. He makes a practice of taking a maths class from time to time to see what our scholarship's like. He has a store of short cuts for doing problems, and an amazing ability to factorise. He thinks nothing of tackling seven or eight digit numbers in his head. He tells us, speaking as informally as we're ever to hear him, 'In a war one often finds oneself marching for hours at a time, and I made it my practice, as a way of getting mental exercise, to factorise the identification numbers each man had stencilled on the back of his pack. God knows there was little else to do. It was a good exercise in concentration, and I found it helped immeasurably to steady my nerves.' We look at our merciless Boss. He has, on the back of his head, a small circle where no hair grows. It's the size of a two shilling piece. No-one tells us what's caused it, but it's sometimes offered as an excuse for something we resent about him - he uses perfume! When he comes to the door beside the artillery shell and makes his way up the quad, he carries with him not only his pool of silence, but an aroma we don't associate with men. Some sneer at this, others excuse it on the ground that it's a medication he uses to stop his bald spot spreading. In thinking of him as being unmanly, we don't stop to wonder why he needed his mental arithmetic as he marched to the line. We can't imagine our Head as a young man, any more than we can think of Hairless having balls. Things are as we see them and we're ferocious in our judgement.

We scrutinise our masters, mocking their idiosyncracies. They've nicknames which sum up how we feel about them. Once accepted - and we're loath to let anyone in the club - masters acquire a personal history which is passed to each influx of new boys who are thus disposed, favorably or unfavorably, towards masters at the outset. Apparently powerful, they live an existence which we describe for them, and must sometimes wonder what they've done to be unpopular. Our harshest treatment is reserved for outsiders who try to make friends too quickly.

Picture the scene. Lights are out and the master on duty strolls through the dorms. If it's Lippy Fell or Happy Gaynor, they've already been through, chatting, and then, after supper, they come back to say goodnight. All's dark except for light from the distant street. They navigate by touching the bed ends in the long aisle from First to East. We're cheeky, but affectionate, and their 'Goodnight' is answered as warmly as it's given. We sleep more easily because they've been through. But a young man comes to the school who's been educated at Melbourne High, a place we respect because they have a football team and gain almost as many honours as we do. He makes himself too friendly with the senior boys, calling them by Christian names as if he's known them for ages. Our masters address us by surname. The new man has to be taught a lesson.

He asks to do duty in the boarding house - for experience. Fred allows it. He does the late night patrol, someone in the East involves him in conversation. The door's closed behind him. Beds in the earlier dorms are rearranged so aisles lead to walls. Light switches are taped. Blinds are pulled down. He can't get out, he gropes in the dark, we pretend to be asleep but make it clear, by snickering, that we've got him where we want him. He doesn't do house duty again and when his time's finished, we hint at what we've done to more tolerant masters; we sense, behind cautious replies, that they don't entirely disapprove.

We're more forgiving with our own. We've a master called Harry Lambert who has a room upstairs at Perry. He's an old boy of Wesley, not one of us, but near enough. He has a big head of well-tended hair which bounces when he plays football with Dick Potter, another junior housemaster who, not long ago, was full forward for the First XVIII.

They kick the ball prodigious distances and run rings around us when we try to get it off them. They handpass to each other, showing off, but they don't mind if one of the present XVIII gets the better of them. It's part of the game.

Harry comes home late from a party. He blunders about the first floor, looking for a bed. It's Friday night, he falls into a bed, vomits, and goes to sleep. He's there in the morning, fast asleep. Word's around the house in minutes, masters get him to his room. Someone cleans up. We laugh as we go to breakfast. How long before Harry'll be sighted? We learn that Mouse McKean, Perry housemaster, wants to see him the following morning. The interview takes place. Harry stays on. No-one thinks any the worse of him. The incident's added to the personal history we'll pass on.

Dick Potter injures his knee in an accident. He could have been full forward for Melbourne, he claims. The court awards him six thousand pounds. We think it's just.

There's a network of old boys who train at school. Names we know from the sporting pages are attached to young men who strip in our changing rooms - league footballers, Olympic athletes. Nor does the school have any difficulty when it needs architects, accountants, or others with professional skills. Benefactors are there when a new wing or a racing eight's required. Something's always being paid for by old boys. We wonder how schools exist without a supporting group. We sense that it will continue. Melbourne University expects big things from us. Trinity College is a place we share with Geelong Grammar and suitable outsiders. As we have Merton Hall for our female counterparts, Trinity has Janet Clarke Hall. The Parliament of Victoria and the board rooms of big companies are places where we're represented as of right. We've complete self-confidence because there's no-one to whom we defer.

Yet the school insists that it doesn't exist for the wealthy. The Boss reminds us that our parents have made sacrifices, and it's true. Many of us have humble origins, yet something happens when we put on the blue suit and cap. We feel sorry for boys who come for the scholarship exams on a Saturday in second term. There's something forlorn about them as they leave, winding their way down a drive which isn't theirs, uncertain

of their fate. Once they get in they're indistinguishable from the rest of us. The unsuccessful are forgotten until the following year when we'll see another group of boys in foreign clothes hanging around room 13 where the tests are administered, or making their way out of the grounds where we play house cricket, and suffer at fielding practice.

At 3.30 each day, half the school goes home while the rest change for sport. When no nets or wickets are available, School House has fielding practice. This begins at 3.45 when prefects and members of the East order us to the far side of the Steele and ends with Catch'em and go. Catch'em and go consists of our leading cricketers hitting the ball high across the ground. If we catch it, we throw the ball back and run for the shower. This ritual of dismissal begins as early as 5.15, which means that for the fortunate there's no rush to get dressed. For those who can't hold the ball at the bottom of its parabola, the agony's prolonged. It's common for those who're dismissed early to return to the locker room after their shower to watch the last three or four - the wets - spill catch after catch. When the clock nears six and there's danger of being late, the catches are made easier - and the flow of comment from the sporting heroes administering the practice ensures that those who are left are made aware that they're getting easy treatment. 'Here, see if you can catch *this!*' When the last catches are taken, tormentors and tormented shower, then rush for the stairs. '*Benedictus, benedicat, per Iesum Christum Dominum nostrum,*' Fred intones, and the boarding house sits down. 'Baillieu, Bodinnar, Brown,' calls the prefect. 'Sir! Sir! Sir!' Food's served. When bowls or trays are empty we lift them in the air above our shoulders, not ceasing to talk. Maids take them away to be refilled. It's all over in twenty-five minutes, then Fred stands. The dining room rises. The night's begun.

Half an hour till prep. Roll call. Five minute break. Prep. Roll call. We indicate whether we're going to bed, or working on. This third session of study ends at ten. Matric boys with studies can get another hour if they draw their curtains and stop chinks of light getting under the door. The prefect on duty reads notices, the master says a prayer, then we pound up the stairs for supper. Since we're impatient for our milk, or cocoa, and biscuits, prayers are kept short but we hear them so

often they become landmarks of our days. 'Almighty God,' says Lippy Fell, 'forasmuch as without Thee we are unable to please Thee, mercifully grant that Thy Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts,' to which we add 'Amen'.

We say this word many times a week, and the cumulative effect is something we can hardly appreciate at the time, though we're aware of the majesty of King James' Authorised Version of the Bible. 'Let not your hearts be troubled,' says Jesus, and, 'If it were not so I would have told you.' The simplicity and power of these utterances come from some higher plane of existence than the world described for us by the *Herald*. Christ's authority is something we can hardly doubt, since it was perceived by those who crucified him, and since we feel it ourselves. Nonetheless, it must reach us by an acceptable route, and that can only mean the brand of Anglicanism in force at our school. The Pope's claims are ridiculous, above all his claim to infallibility. *That* we won't have a bar of. Low church or sectarian protestants are worse, as is made clear one night when another student teacher supervises prep. Picture the scene: forty boys in grey trousers and khaki shirts are doing trigonometry or reading *The Mayor of Casterbridge*. A thin young man's on the platform, answering our requests with a sweet simplicity which is his characterisation of piety. Our masters have a brusqueness and a knowing humour which gives us certainty. It's 8.45, he calls the roll, looking up at every name. He's getting to know us, which we think's a liberty. Let him stay on his side of the line!

The moment comes for prayer. Prefects, probationers and the other boys from studies are leaning against the wall. They straighten. The rest of us rise, standing in the aisles by our desks. Half a minute to supper! He starts, voice quivering with conviction. We see at once that he's improvising, instead of using *The Book of Common Prayer*. Where will he end?

He prays for everything he can think of. Peace in the world. Industrial peace. Families, morality, those who hear The Word from missionaries. Can't the captain drop a hint? He prays for fifteen minutes. We study him, praying privately in public. He lifts his head to study

us, heads bowed, keeping as still as we can; we can hardly kick up a fuss when God's listening. Finally he remembers that certain of our number are in the sick bay with measles, and he directs God's attention to these boys. 'May they be granted a good night's sleep.' It's too much, we burst out laughing. The sick bay's in the domestic wing, close to Matron, and the rooms of the maids. It's one of our stock jokes that boys in the sick bay are visited by the maids for their mutual satisfaction. No-one pretends there's any reality to this but when boys come back to their dormitory after a spell in the sick bay we tease them by saying that at least they'll be able to get some sleep. Our visitor's hit this point. Phyllis, Beryl and Wendy! We can't control ourselves. The outsider smiles weakly, aware that he's made a gaffe. 'I'd better bring this prayer to a conclusion,' he says, and does so. We say 'Amen', fighting to get through the door, we run across the quad on a high of hilarity. We pound up the stairs more noisily than we've ever done before. We can hardly pour our cocoa without spilling. How stupid is he? Surely he won't come through the dorms?

He doesn't. The house captain intimates to him what it is we've been laughing about. He sees the point, and doesn't ask for another session in the boarding house. The odd thing is that if he did, and conveyed to us that he knew he'd been ridiculous, we'd accept. There's room for outsiders to learn.

But they have to be initiated, and we're as hard on them as we are on ourselves. We've a science master called Bruno Brown, who's been around for decades. He retires. He's replaced by a Mr Jones, who's dubbed Spike, after an American bandleader. We've never liked Bruno much. He's a craggy man who comes into class one morning declaring that we've interfered with the equipment on the bench. We haven't. 'Who did it?' he demands. We're silent. He doesn't believe us. 'If I catch the person who touched my instruments,' he roars, 'I'll give him what's commonly called HELL!' We suppose he means a caning, we think he's ridiculous. Thereafter, when we want to mock the man, we say to each other, 'I'll give you what's commonly called HELL!' It's good for a laugh. Mr Jones does his best to be agreeable, but doesn't make much headway. His attitudes are more contemporary by decades than Bruno's,

but we don't accept easily. His blackboard writing's lousy. Though he apologises, and reads out the indecipherable words, we reject him. We think he's trying to grease his way into our favour. The school gives him leave to study in England. His letters, we're told by a master who's read them, show a remarkable development. 'About time,' we comment sourly to ourselves.

The Boss is sacked. It's the end of an era, though we don't realise it at the time. The story's this. We have dancing classes on Friday night at Merton Hall. Our teachers are Pansy Finlayson and his sister Janet; their ballroom technique's exquisite. Week after week the two classes, senior and junior, make their way to our sister school, around a corner of the Botanical Gardens. Melbourne's grandest trees shade us as we walk there and run home afterwards. The classes can hardly be free of tension since they're conducted in the way dances were then conducted; girls sit on one side of the hall, boys on the other. When Pansy lowers a needle on a 78, he calls, 'Modern waltz! Take your partners!' which means that the boys must cross the floor and ask a girl to dance. It's excruciatingly painful for those who're self-conscious, and that's most of us. Self concerned as we are, we're not unaware that the thing's even more painful for the girls who have to watch us advancing on them, wondering if they'll be picked by someone they like, someone they dislike, or be left on the benches. The hall's brightly lit and going outside's forbidden. Pansy and Janet move among the dancers, adjusting our contact with each other. A girl's left hand should be on the boy's shoulder, his hand in the small of her back. When our instructors move our hands, we find ourselves unexpectedly caressing our partners' bodies. Those who're too close are prised apart, those who are shy are told to get closer. It's not easy when we're struggling to make conversation, yet in the Parma waltz and the progressive barn dance we find some of our happiest moments, fond of our friends, fond of the girls, the sternness of our schooling forgotten in a dancing crowd. At other times the atmosphere's heavy and we move sullenly in circles, girls going backwards. Once in a while Pansy and Janet make us reverse roles so the girls will know what it's like to lead and the boys to be directed. We find moving backwards intolerable and wonder how girls can do it naturally. Once or twice a night, Pansy

orders the floor to be cleared. He shows us the steps in, let us say, a slow foxtrot. Janet shows us the woman's steps. They combine; it's perfection. 'Now you do it,' says Pansy, but we cry 'Exhibition!', having no intention of moving. Pansy smiles a complex smile - he knows how to give in, and he's got what he wants - and looks inquiringly at Janet. She moves into his arms, at once romantic and adopting a textbook position. Pansy nods and the gramophone needle's lowered, there are a few moments of amplified crackle and then he and his sister move divinely about the floor, bodies pressed in an intimacy we wouldn't dare attempt. We applaud when they finish, trying to make it ironical because they're showing off and we know it, but the fact is they're unbelievably good.

And there's the rub. Brother and sister, they don't have to worry about the complicated and contradictory feelings we're trying to control while, male and female, we make our learning moves together. It's too easy for them, they're above our struggle and it's maddening. Pansy isn't popular. Dislike isn't attached to Janet because she's not on the staff of either school. Tension builds up in the junior class but it's only on the last night that we realise how much more serious it is with the seniors.

Our instructors decide to combine classes for the last night, and make it an occasion. This means leis, balloons, and supper. Certain senior boys decide to add fireworks. Dancing starts. Crackers go off. Boys appear in the doorways and disappear. Crackers explode on the floor. Dresses are damaged. Miss Ross, Headmistress of Merton Hall, appears in the doorway, and is jeered. Pansy can't control us. Janet has no authority. It goes on for what seems ages. It goes to the heads of bigger boys. Small fry leave early, convinced that such goings on will bring retribution. It's Friday night.

On Sunday morning the house captain, who's also the school captain, summons boarders to room 13. The Boss wants to know what happened at the dancing class. Certain boys are to be questioned. Since we've no contact with the Boss on Sundays, except in chapel, it's ominous. During the week, more questioning goes on. Then the Boss calls a formal assembly. We guess what it's about, so there's no pushing and fighting to get in the doors, and none of the usual suppressed hilarity as the masters make their way down the aisle. They reach the

stage in silence and the Boss, coming last, is the embodiment of justice and power. We sense there'll be no forgiving. He addresses us. Certain events have taken place which have brought great shame to the school. The future of the dancing classes is still to be decided. The future of the malefactors has been settled. He has notes in his hand, from which he reads. Certain boys, and he reads their names, will go to his study directly after assembly to be caned. Others will leave the school immediately but will be allowed to return for their final exams. A third group will leave the assembly at once, never to return. He reads their names. We watch them, shocked. How do they feel, kicked out in front of the school? There isn't much more that could be done to them. They're pale, and we're glad we're not in their shoes as they go out. What'll they say when they get home? Are they too big to cry? We don't really want to know, it's awesome. A caning, ferocious though it's certain to be, would be better. The Boss leaves the hall in stony silence. We melt away. Reports filter back to the boarding house about the beltings - who got how many, and how much they hurt - but our minds are more occupied with those who've gone home. A dark silence settles on the school. Lessons proceed normally, the exams approach, but we're in a state of shock. It'll be New Year before the thing's out of mind and the expulsions forgotten,

But the Boss has miscalculated. Parents think the punishments are too severe. The Council considers what's happened and decides that it's unable to back its appointee. The Boss calls an informal assembly - that is to say, one of the gatherings where he faces the school alone on the chapel steps. We sense it's going to be painful, but we're excited. What's he going to say?

The Red Sea parts, he mounts the steps, gown and mortar board in place. Council has seen fit to overrule his decisions. Those who've been expelled will return. We're quick to calculate that those who've been belted can't have their punishment retracted. It's obviously painful for him, but there's no loss of self control. 'I am a proud man,' he says, 'and I was deeply ashamed when I had to apologise to Miss Ross for the behaviour of boys from this school. The apology was accepted, but it was very difficult for me to make that apology on your behalf.' We don't

find apologies so difficult, and aren't very sympathetic; it's also embarrassing because we sense that our stern, unyielding Head is appealing to us. 'I will take up a new position next year,' he says, and it hits us that he's resigned. 'It is a type of work which is not familiar to me. I will be working in a stockbroker's office. If you are having trouble with your lessons in your new classes next year, I would like you to think of me, because I will be learning new lessons too.' He considers us, we consider him; it's a moment of truth he handles with icy dignity. We're still. He is, we sense, recording us for his memory; it's his last moment of power, though he'll be farewelled and given presentations. He steps down, the Red Sea parts, we wait till he's clear, then we dash everywhere. The Boss has been kicked out!



There's a year's interregnum while the job's advertised and filled, in which the vice-master, Mossy Grenness, takes over. He's a bulky man with a weak voice who teaches the higher forms maths. To the boys he's colourless and uninteresting; we cope by imitating his feeble squeak, but have no idea of his opinions or abilities, and are a little surprised that things run as smoothly as ever despite what we perceive as his lack of flair. Then an appointment's made and we're given to understand that we're lucky to have attracted Brian William Hone, former Sheffield Shield cricketer, Rhodes Scholar, and presently Headmaster of Cranbrook, a small school set in Sydney's wealthiest area. He sounds all right, we await his appearance.

At our next assembly, he enters as the Boss did - last in the line of masters. He's a big man, clumsy looking, but alert. He speaks with a rumble which has trouble getting out of his belly. He isn't as fierce as the Boss. We're disconcerted to find that he wants to talk to us. It's not something we're used to, and senior boys resent it; he shouldn't come over the line! Small boys are overawed, not least because he's damnably hard to follow. After the Boss's clear definitions, he offers an ambivalent world of suggestions, and manages to convey without actually saying so that the school he's inherited is less than perfect. We could understand

if he came in with fresh orders, but he implies that there needs to be change in us. We can't dismiss this as cheek, because he's the Head, but we're puzzled; within a few minutes of his first assembly he's nicknamed Babylon (babble on) and it sticks. The cruel, sporting boys who've thrived under the old regime tuck their chins in their chests and make burbling noises to express what they think of him. Yet he changes nothing, and this non-exercise of power is more disturbing than the relentless rule we've known. There's a feeling of disappointment in the school and the sense that something tight is being loosened.

Babylon starts to talk about house choral competitions, and we discover that Albert Greed, the music master, is going to retire. Praise is lavished on his work, but he goes. It's said that he 'taught the school to sing', and we wonder what more Babylon expects of us: nymphs and shepherds? Our singing with Albert has been a raucous form of fun. In the memorial hall he teams up with Charles (Chazzer) Howlett, our French master, to teach us 'The Marseillaise', and we make the rafters ring:

Aux armes, citoyens!
Formez vos bataillons,
Marchons, marchons,
Qu'un sang impur
Abreuve nos sillons!

It's more fun when we squeeze into a little room at the Lodge, far enough from the main school to make uninhibited singing permissible. We stand on the driveway, waiting for Albert to approach with his pigeontoed walk. 'Lovely morning, sir?' we say, hoping he'll say something mockable. 'Delightful!' Albert replies. 'I hope you're all in good voice!' We tell him we're in marvellous voice and make cock-a-doodling noises as we file inside. Albert opens his music. 'A nice rousing one to start with,' he says. 'The Camptown races?' It's not a question because he's strumming the introduction, so we open our songbooks and roar:

De Camptown ladies sing dis song,
Doodah! doodah!
De Camptown racetrack five miles long,
Oh! Doodah-day!

We like being negroid for the length of the song, just as we enjoy stamping our feet to ‘The Battle Hymn of the Republic’:

He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored;
He hath loosed the fateful lightning of his terrible swift sword;
His truth is marching on.

The word ‘chorus’ is an incitement to raise our voices even louder, and if Albert tells us a song’s touching, we lavish mocking sentiment on ‘Annie Laurie’ or ‘The Banks of Allan Water’; we can’t help noticing, not that it worries us, that maidens have a terrible time before they die – or dee, as Scots apparently say. Our appreciation of foreign cultures is very much on the hoots mon level, but what do Scots expect, with their Bonnie Charlies and their Rabby Burnses and the rest of them? We have a picture of them, wild as Macbeth, rolling up with bagpipes and swords for clan battles in swathes of mist; the bright air outside the Lodge and our well trimmed fields will do us, thanks very much. Albert’s not very demanding. We give him ‘Little Brown Jug’ and ‘Massa’s in de Cold Cold Ground’ when he asks us; they’re all in the *Oxford Song Book*, with its supplement of Melbourne Grammar songs and the school’s shield and mitre stamped on the cover, so we suppose they’re approved by someone, and they give us a chance to sing. In chapel Albert teaches us anthems, and Blake’s ‘Jerusalem’; anything we’re familiar with gets our support, to the extent that we listen to, and come to like, things that are sung by the choir – ‘Jesu, Joy of Man’s Desiring’ is one of Albert’s favorites. The climax of our musical education comes when, for a special Christmas service when we’re getting ready to pack our cases for the holiday, Albert springs on us some of Handel’s *Messiah*. It blazes with an exultation which proves that God can, when he chooses, let the splendour of heaven be glimpsed. It’s a vision which keeps peeping out of our chapel services, intimating that someone, somewhere, knows things we can’t see. The holiday’s a welcome release because what Handel’s done is an act that’s impossible to follow in our daily routine.

Breaking up for a holiday happens in stages. At 3.30 on the last day we slam our lockers with ‘Thank Christ!’ or ‘Good riddance to bad rubbish!’ ‘Have a good holiday, sir!’ we shout across the quad to masters popular and unpopular. The day boys drain away in minutes, a few of

the boarders are picked up. The rest of us hang around the locker room, asking each other where we're going. For many of us there are further stages - we're staying with an aunt in Caulfield or Toorak till mum and dad come down to take us home. Some of us have to get up early and catch a train; in later years we fly, because plane travel's coming in. At dinner that night the numbers are halved, and we squeeze into fewer tables; there aren't many masters either. The table on the quadrangle side is known as number 1, and it's to this table that we reduce as the numbers fall. We ask the master on duty to set his alarm for the time we need to get up for our train. There's no rule, in these dying hours, about how early we can get up; one or two lonely souls have the shower room to themselves, savouring the flood of warm water. There's no shouting, no cries of 'Hairless!' as K.P. comes in. In fact we rather miss the jostling and the rising excitement; getting to roll call builds more tension than the fear of missing a train. Dressed in our blue suits, we leave the sombre buildings and wind our way down the drive where Dr Bromby chased his pupil, to catch a tram in St Kilda Road, unless a taxi's been organised. The school's dark and empty. We're leaving.

As we find our trains, we think of the kids who're still asleep in the dormitories, or are wondering how they'll fill in the hours before it's their turn to peel themselves away from the organisation which runs our lives. Studying the people who press down the train's corridor looking for an unreserved seat, we realise that however much we hate each other at times, we much prefer our own kind. Our suits set us apart from other travellers and we wish we didn't have to wear them. Sometimes people make conversation with us, asking what it's like to be a boarder. It's okay we say, disguising a reality we couldn't express if we wanted to. The trains are crammed when they pull out of Spencer Street, but tiny hamlets like Mooroopna and Minyip drain the carriages so that, approaching their terminals, they're almost empty. This is when Melbourne Grammar drops away and a wider reality takes over. We take off our ties and coats. We roll up our sleeves. There'll be no-one at Warracknabeal or Wangaratta to report us for being out of uniform. Our mums and dads are there to meet us in their utes, their trucks, their powerful, gleaming Customlines, and we're rushed home. Kids

who were in the dormitory last night will already be in, or on their way to, Gunnedah, Bombala, Balranald, Sydney, outback Queensland, King Island, Fiji, or the little hamlets around Ballarat where they went to school before they made the step to Melbourne. The brotherhood's dispersed.

Sometimes we stay with each other. More often, we try to fit into the communities we've come from. It isn't easy. The wide wheatfields, the cattle runs, the country businesses, have a different rhythm, different values. They're less intense, they almost insist that nothing happens, though trains steam in day after day with news from the metropolis. One sign that we're out of range of the rules we know is when our train slows down as it comes in sight of the redgum belt along the Murray, and gangers who've been working on the line roar 'Paaaaaypah! Paaaaaypah!' as we pass. Those who've no use for their Sun or Argus toss it out the window. If the train's going slowly enough, the paper left behind by someone who got out in central Victoria is pressed into the hand of a figure in blue singlet and battered felt hat who's already equipped himself for the afternoon smoko by lighting a little fire and hanging a billy above it. If it's after four o'clock there'll be no more work done that day.

Our fortnight at home seems like endless boredom at first, then it's something we cherish as we learn to love, again, the places where we grew up. Infinity's in the air, the mountains, the plains. Time's only hold on the sluggish rivers is a seasonal ebb and flow. The Murray's low, and clear, or it's a muddy flood. The Goulburn runs a-banker. There's fog blanketing the inland, or a blazing sun. The sheep are to be shorn, the harvester made ready. Our towns have shrunk, and their shops hold nothing. The movies in the hall are pathetic. Local radio's hick. The streets are full of whackers, but though they ask, 'How'reya gettin' on at school?' they don't show any inferiority. They've got a firm hold of what we've partially let go, and really, it's we who are being put to the test; where do we belong?

The fortnight ends. The cases are repacked. Mum and dad give us extra money and tell us when they'll be in Melbourne next. They make phone calls to check the times of train or bus. At 5.30 they come into

our rooms, tenderly calling us to wake. We're awake, sadly aware that we're leaving the country we love. We put on our blue suits, and our navy ties with royal blue stripes which mean we're members of School House, those who have two homes and none. Dawn pours pink light on our gum trees and paddocks, dirt roads and little rows of shops, as we're driven to the lonely junction where we'll meet our bus. It comes out of nowhere when we're sick of staring down an empty road and have started to wonder if we've missed it. If that happened we'd be a day late, but there's no attraction in that. Once the suit and tie are on we're back.

We gather in the locker room, unpacked for another term, perching, those who can fit, on the bins where we throw our dirty clothes. They're empty, because we've been away. Who takes the dirty clothes to be washed and who sorts them into the shelves of the clean clothes room is something we're not curious about. Unmarked clothes are sometimes left on a table in the middle of the room, but although some of us are slack about sewing name tapes on things we buy during term, the mysterious sorter seems to get it right. Mistaken attributions are rare, though people in a hurry to make roll call sometimes grab the nearest singlet or socks; it's something we joke about. O.R., our latest sleeper and the most spectacular sprinter for the 7.55 roll call will say, 'Oh, by the way, _____, I've got one of your shirts on.' The reply will be something like, 'See it goes in the wash, I don't want your sweat all over me.'

We live with sweat, and the mud of our fields. Our sports lockers, which are never locked, are housed in a gloomy passage between notice board and outside world, or, the remaining twenty or thirty, in a room already devoted to a urinal, basins and cubicles. It's said of one young man whose interest is in the arts rather than competitive games, that he sits down to piss; this rumor, together with what the rest of us deem an affected voice, causes him to be dubbed Middlesex. The smell of this multipurpose room can leave no doubt as to which sex is in occupation. Each locker's crammed with boots, socks, jockstraps, shorts and two footy jumpers - navy for school games, royal blue for house matches.

These garments are washed on a most irregular basis; the room stinks of our training as much as it does of its other functions, and stinks only slightly less in summer. It's a room where we're always hurrying. The clock tower's just outside and we can see its western face if we crane our heads while we're pissing.

Being late's a sign of slackness, the least retribution for which will be a lap or two of the oval. The darkest, most painful torment of our winters takes place on the Wadhurst ground after an hour or so of exercises and round-the-ground, which means pairing off with someone you have to beat each time the ball comes near. The better players get most of the round-the-ground, which is to some extent enjoyable, while the less talented are sent behind the goals for exercises administered by the East. 'Down! Get your elbows on the ground!' they roar, sneering at the unsupple who can't touch their toes. 'Fingers! Knuckles! Palms!' they roar, and we strain to reach the grass. 'Okay!' they say, by way of relief, 'Cycling in the air!' and we lie on the damp ground, pedalling furiously. There's a range of torments for our stomach muscles and our backs, and we're shouted at if we can't do them. When it's fifteen minutes to six and we're exhausted, the captain yells, 'Everybody here!' and we rush to the centre. 'How'reya feeling, _____?' he says, singling out someone whose face is red. The question in our minds is - how many laps? The captain says, 'Four laps tonight, you've been pretty slack.' We groan. 'Whaddaya think we are?' The East glares, the captain says, 'If I hear *one* word out of anyone, they'll do an extra lap. Come on!'

We run. It's wiser to get near the captain because the East bring up the rear, shouting at those who fall behind. Besides, if we adjust our pace as he speeds up, the laps are easier to manage. We begin slowly, a hundred boys in shorts and boots, faces red, knees red, muddy, hair tangled on our foreheads. Our boots squelch as we round the Perry corner. In Saint Kilda Road the cars swoosh past, starting to switch on their lights. The school's a dark mass on top of a rise. We're calculating furiously - thirteen minutes to do the laps, sprint for the shower, dry ourselves, get those suits on, and sprint for the dining room, with a belting the prize for being late. 'Stretch ya legs a bit!' the captain yells; he's in the First XVIII. We try to stay with him as he runs. Sometimes he

stations himself beside the pack, commenting on our efforts. We count the laps. Sometimes his torment's shrewder; he doesn't announce how many laps there'll be, and when he passes the point where he'd start his sprint if there were only going to be three, we groan. Four! But the East are at our heels and we run. There's an opening in the fence where we leave the Wadhurst oval for the driveway, and when it's a hundred and fifty yards away, the captain yells, 'Sprint!', the East yell, 'Sprint!' and we sprint!

The best athletes aren't necessarily first through the opening because to be small and light can be an advantage in the heavy going, and desperation drives those who know they're slow at dressing. Filthy from training and red with exertion, we hurl ourselves at the opening, making a new sound as our studded boots reach the drive. We fall on the bluestone steps near the locker room and drag off our boots. Gear's hurled into lockers to be untangled next day. We grab our sports towels, which are only slightly less smelly than our sports gear, and rush for the shower. 'Four to go!' yells someone who's looked at the clock. Shit! We take our dash in the cold shower and rush upstairs. Suits on! Ties! Hair! Tangled shoelaces cause anguished cries. 'Two to go!' The last to dress are still in the locker room when the clock starts to chime the quarters; that means there are just so many seconds left to be at the dining room door. If it's bolted when we get there we wonder why we rushed. If it's open, we know why - because Fred's coming out of his rooms and making his way to the head of his table. '*Benedictus, benedicat, per Iesum Christum, Dominum nostrum,*' he mumbles, and we sit. Picture the scene: a hundred and twenty boys in blue, with white faces and black hair, blonde hair, and the energy of youth. We've got blue diaries in our pockets, or our lockers, and they're full of tonight's homework. Latin translation. Algebra. Euclid. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Montcalm, Quebec. 'Ode to a Nightingale'. *Let there be no moaning, when I shall cross the bar*. *Practical Physics*, by E.D. Gardiner. Avogadro's hypothesis. Atomic theory and the ideas of matter it replaced. The formation of crystals. Causes of World War One, Danton, Robespierre, the guillotine. *A Tale of Two Cities*, Madame Defarge. Thomas Hardy, Walter de la Mare, the end of year exams. At Intermediate level we're streamed into Classical

A, B, C or D: Shell A, Shell B and the Remove. At leaving and matric, it's results that count, and the school knows what it wants. We've to do as well as those who came before us, and better if we can.

We might, if we try hard enough, be one of the great years of the school.

Our masters are relaxed. Old men, many of them, they're sure of themselves, as are those who've seen war service; they give well worn lessons in well-tailored suits, undisturbed by aberrations of particular groups or years. It's all happened before. T.P., our cricket captain, is called on for an answer in French. He stands. His fly's undone, an erection protrudes. Bovril, our teacher - Major C.C. Covill - says, 'I think we might excuse you, T.P. Perhaps you could be ready for the next exercise,' and calls on someone else. We crack up. T.P. sits, red faced. Bovril, whose face would be black no matter how often he shaved, doesn't allow it to go on. He's explicating subjunctives before T.P.'s got his fly done up. We pass the event into our repertoire of stories, admiring Bovril for his calm; God knows we need someone to get us out of messes.

Our masters' sayings are collected. Shovel Austin teaches commercial subjects to the Remove. 'Shovel' refers to the unlikelihood of his stories, which we regard as bulldust; thus, if someone's exaggerating, we gesture violently as if being smothered in this substance, and call for a shovel to dig our way out. The rejoinder 'Shovel' is often heard in our conversations, indicating disbelief. Someone in one of the lower forms starts a collection of Superb Shovelisms, and each class coming back from the Lodge adds more. Joffer Jukes, in *Modern History*, is another trove of quotable observations. He's scornful of the modern world and there's a sense of regret in his voice when he names Louis XIV: 'the Sun King', says Joffer sadly. The rise of trade unionism is something he views coldly. He uses the term 'the worker' with inverted commas in his voice. 'Flapdoodle word, of course,' he adds. There are no heroes on the Left in our teaching, though Joffer admits a certain inevitability in the move towards Italian unity from Garibaldi to Cavour, perhaps because he thinks these figures didn't foresee what the emergent nation would become. 'Nationalism!' he sneers. 'It's like one rooster getting

up on his dunghill and crowing that his dunghill's higher than the rest!' He admires Metternich, and has, we suspect, a sneaking sympathy for Bismarck's blood and iron. The First World War's an endless trough of folly. He surprises us one day by producing a red, white and blue rosette, and ribbons in the same colours. They were worn, he says, by revolutionaries at the height of the guillotining in what's now the Place de la Concorde, and thus represents the things we might expect him to detest, yet he fingers them so tenderly, and follows them with such affection in his eyes as we pass them around the room, that we see how much he loves the past, for all the insanity of its processes. 'How did you get them, sir?' we ask, and he tells us, then puts them away, and when we look at him next, it's with changed eyes.

We've another history teacher called Lippy Fell. Lippy's unpopular. Somehow, over the course of a couple of years, he makes the transition to popularity. He's got thick lips, a limp, and his neck's bent over. When his body's troubling him, he uses a stick. He has the droll humour of our most experienced masters. A small man, he's been a Commander in the Navy. He says nothing of this part of his life, confining himself to Luther, Calvin, Leonardo and other figures of the Renaissance and Reformation. We're incredulous as we hear about Savonarola, Galileo and the Spanish Inquisition, but they're familiar figures in the calendar of Lippy's life, and he refuses to get excited when we say, 'But how could they claim to be *Christian* when they ...?' We've read Shaw's *Saint Joan* and we find it hard to understand this violent, gothic Europe with its mingled saints and butchers. One day Lippy takes us to his room above the Boss's study to play us music of the period we're studying. We listen dutifully to his 78s, but they give us no insights at all.

They're finished five minutes before the end of the period. It's sunny in Lippy's room, with its wooden floor, rug, and single bed covered in white. We look at our watches, he looks at his. 'I'll play you something else,' he says. 'It's by Purcell. Don't laugh at it, it's my favorite piece of music.' We imagine something dramatic like Tchaikovsky, or the trumpets and drums of Handel, but it's for harpsichord and is, to our ears, so much meaningless tinkling. We try not to smile, but the lack of effect is clear. Lippy puts the record away in his cabinet. We thank him for play-

ing it, and it's genuine, because he's given us a glimpse of himself, and we need these glimpses because for the boarders especially, these masters we watch so closely are the models we're given for our development, and we have to know what we think of them.

There's a practice in the school of balancing masters' tables at the edge of the platforms from which they look over their rooms. The idea is that an incautious movement by the teacher will make his table fall, sending books, compasses and the rest onto the floor and allowing us, hypocritically, to assist the master in restoring order. It's a good way to throw a lesson off course. It happens to Lippy one day in an unexpected way. Lippy's limp is caused by some deformity of the hip which allows him to do what none of us can do. He sits on the edge of desks or tables with his game leg thrust before him, and the good leg crossed over. It's precarious, and when he does it, he has our attention entirely. He does it one day when a previous class has set the table trap. The table slips from the platform and Lippy slides off. He hits the floor with a thump that sickens us. Startled, we laugh. His neat, fair hair's flopped over his forehead. His bottom and back must be in agony. The laughter's only a nervous reaction, we're as shocked as he is. No-one moves, then V.M., our sharpest humorist, and the last person one would have expected to act, rushes out to pick him up. Dusting him down he says, 'Are you all right, sir?' and we hang on the reply; he really is ours, and we belong to him. 'Thank you,' he says to the boy who helped him, using his surname. 'I lost me balance somewhat.' We burst into laughter and put the table and books back in place as quickly as we can; Lippy's never been loved like this before!

Thus the custom at formal assemblies of the entire staff passing down the aisle is a process of review in which we extract some essence from each master as he passes. They're more than men, they're reputations created by those they've taught. Picture the scene as they walk through the school, two banks of boys and a central aisle. Some of them had their names recorded on the honour boards when they were at school as we are. The stage is empty except for the school captain and the seats they'll sit on; the same seats as ours, wooden banks of five with seats that hinge. We bang them down and bang them up as assemblies begin and

end. The masters are in the foyer, then Mossy leads the parade, with the Boss, or Babylon, bringing up the rear. The sun streams through lead-light windows. Rafters glow from light reflected upwards. We'll sing the Games Song, then the Head will read his notices.

It's in formal assembly that we're most fully compacted into what the school's supposed to be. Prefects are strategically placed at the ends of rows. The men look down on the boys. There are few women in the school. There's Betty Elliott, the librarian, and Mrs Howlett, who's married to Charles. We find it hard to imagine what we know about sexual things happening between them. She's tall and strict, while Charles is forever breathless. He dashes into class and dashes out. One day he bursts on a scene he doesn't want to see. An elocution teacher visits us occasionally, forcing us, to our embarrassment, to round our vowels. She takes private lessons with those whose pronunciation is judged to be too awful; it's a fate we pray to avoid. D.L., a barrel-chested rower, is instructed to attend such a session. The teacher, despairing of making D.L. breathe properly, says that if he places one hand on her back – thus – and one hand on her stomach – thus – he'll feel her diaphragm move as she speaks. The boy, thanking God there's no-one to see him, puts his hands where he's told. Charles bursts in. 'Oh dear,' he says, with the embarrassment we know well, 'I *do* beg your pardon!' When he enters assembly, we look at his sleek black hair and his quick eye movements, and whisper to each other, 'Oh dear, I *do* beg your pardon!' and he's somehow *ours*, caricatured it may be, but stolen from himself for us to play with.

Dogger Banks is in the procession, a freewheeling character who seems sincere in Divinity. Bully Taylor's there, his gown green with age, or, as we say, mould. His thick lips match the bags of flesh under his eyes. He preaches for the Rusden house service in his characteristic rumble, delighting us by looking at his watch and saying, 'I'd better finish quickly so we can listen to 'Take It From Here.' This is a British comedy show which causes those of us who haven't radios to cram into studies or corners of the common room occupied by those who have. Bully rotating his bulk towards the altar for 'Now to God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, be ascribed as is most justly due, all might, majesty,

power, dominion and glory ... ' is one of the school's more paradoxical sights, since we're convinced the old rogue doesn't believe a word of it. He owns a boarding house in South Yarra where ex-public schoolboys spend some of their single years, and from what we hear about girls visiting the bungalows or being escorted up the back stairs, it seems that Bully's been a lad in his time.

Wally Ricketts is in the line, our rowing coach; he tells us that Ricketts Point, near Beaumaris, is named after a member of his family. We notice how affectionately he refers to his wife and feel sorry that he's childless. His crews, we think, are his boys, and he spends long hours on the river, chugging behind them in a motorboat and calling through a megaphone. When we win the Head of the River, Wally's radiantly happy. It makes us think there's life after youth to see him, hair dishevelled and face flushed, clapping the shoulders of his oarsmen as the Captain of Boats holds aloft the cup. The other thing that makes Wally proud is when the Professor of Chemistry at Melbourne University tells him he can always recognise Wally's students in the lab because they're so well trained; repeating this to his matric class, Wally lists the things that students from other places do, and we can't believe anyone could be so silly.

The line moves on. It's the thread of power, the common purpose that holds us together. Scotty Olsen, who's a Captain in the cadet corps, jams his finger in the breach of an antitank gun. 'Oh sheet, chaps!' he yells, 'get my finger out! Oh sheet, chaps, excuse my swearing but the pain's excruciating!' We know what he means because we've nipped our fingers in the breeches of our rifles - .303, leftovers from the First World War. Someone gets Scotty out. He gushes gratitude, a man unused to pain. We're more used to it because if we're belted we have to straighten up without crying and face the boys who'll get it next. Boys who've been belted can't help showing their bums in the dormitories, and showers; often the person who caned them's there. Bruises lie across the fleshy part of their buttocks; we acknowledge the prowess of the prefect by his ability to make these blue lines. The masters who are most remote are the ones who don't involve themselves in this struggle. Hec Wallace.

Twaxy Smith and Sizzle Smith, a benign man who juggles chalk in his cupped hands while he tells us how to write an essay. In a way we teach ourselves; we're competent, and the collections of past exam papers tell us what it's all about. Some of our masters edit text books while others have been on exam panels; there's a sense that, as with reading the noticeboards, you've only got to follow the signs and you'll be all right.

Two tall men are next in line, a generation apart. Yofty Franklin, brother of Lofty, a former Head, teaches maths in a dusty gown. He has a system of keeping us on our toes by giving marks for good answers and deducting them for silly ones. 'Don't guess!' he says. 'Think.' 'Do I lose a mark, sir?' asks the boy he's spoken to. 'Not this time,' says Yofty, and 'Well, anyone?' He raises two fingers, we rack our brains. 'Three!' he roars, it's his maximum. We sing out answers, if they're stupid he glares. 'Three!' he repeats until someone gets it. 'Three marks, Chambers,' Yofty says. 'And your answer helped him, Hornibrook, so you can have one.' Hornibrook and Chambers seize their diaries. In the first lesson each week Yofty records how many marks we earned the previous week. Yofty has a bouncing stride and hair as blonde as his late brother's, whose portrait's in the Council Room. He's genial, and when he demands of someone, 'Now whatever put an idea like that in your head?' it's a challenge. He's got thick fingers and his work with protractor and blackboard compass is clumsy, but when he asks what sort of geometry we think could be constructed on non-Euclidean axioms, or talks about parallel lines meeting at infinity, he leaves most of us behind. Infinity must be a strange place, we think, if it needs mathematicians to say what it's like.

The other tall man is John Hunt, the Enthusiast. He has a carefully groomed moustache and colourful bow ties. Aware, perhaps, of being different from the men who've recruited him, he tells his first matric class that 'where Literature is concerned, I'm an *enthusiast!*' He's given himself a nickname. As he moves about the school, books under arm, or down the aisle at assembly, we nod briskly to each other as if we've just uncovered a jolly exciting poem. We perceive that for the Enthusiast, literature - Literature - is an aesthetic experience, different from the mere enjoyment of well chosen fare that's been our experience to date.

We're ready for something more than the imperial adventures of Lord Macaulay and Sir Henry Newbolt. We've outgrown Kipling and the haunting mediaevalism of *Morte d'Arthur*, we think, we're ready for Shaw, Galsworthy, a little, just a little, of the bawdiness of Chaucer, and we're ready, above all, for the power of Shakespeare, who really is as great as he's cracked up to be. 'Don't just read the books on the prescribed list,' says the Enthusiast. 'Read other books by the same authors. Read about the period. Give yourselves a context.' We know he's right, and shrewd enough to know that it'll pay dividends as well as contribute to our liberal education.

Few of our masters have teaching qualifications. The age of the Dip. Ed. hasn't arrived. They're expected to know their subject, coach a team, and not be too squeamish about chapel, where, when they're on duty, they'll have to read the lesson. This is something we like done well, because the Beatitudes, or Saint Paul's Epistles to the Corinthians, are more than a measure of reading ability, they test the stature of their readers. If a man can't make a decent fist of Ecclesiastes or Christ's parables, there isn't much in him. We marvel at the Sermon on the Mount, with its sublime injunction to lead a life we've no intention of leading. 'Why take ye thought for raiment?' says Jesus. 'Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.' We can't help noticing that heaven, if Milton and many of our hymns are to be believed, is organised in hierarchical fashion, and that's certainly true of chapel, where exits and entries are made in order of seniority, which equals power. When the choir leaves, the Boss follows, then the Reverend Brown. Then the school captain and his prefects from the front rows, right and left; then the house prefects and house probationers in the rows behind. Then the East, their eyes searching, then those without position. Angels and archangels we're not, but principalities and powers we know only too well.

There's much that we don't understand, despite the ordering of our days. Fred's always leaving his maths classes on business to do with the boarding house; since our meals arrive on time and in quantity, we're incurious. He comes back saying, 'Any questions?' but we ask few; we

assume that neglect is the lot of classes taken by Fred, and he's quite affectionate when he's there. The mystery about him, for us, concerns a Wadhurst mistress called Miss Peters, who sometimes sits at the masters' table. We call her Min, after Minnie Peters in *Ginger Meggs*, and we can't for the life of us see what Fred sees in this spectacled woman with greying hair who's at an age we don't associate with romance. Nevertheless, on the nights she dines in hall, she often sits with Fred afterwards, talking - we presume they're talking - in his tiny study at the top of the stairs, with an even smaller bedroom opening off it. We cannot imagine what they find to say to each other, yet, when we go up for supper there will be a crack of light under Fred's door which we take to mean they're still talking - we suppose they're talking. In the dormitories we speculate; we assume we'll marry one day - not too soon, please God and the French letter - and have kids, but the emotional life we associate with what's to come is something we can't place in our guarded, bluestone world. If Fred loves Min, or finds her interesting - if she - could anything be more amazing? - loves Fred, like Fred, or finds him interesting, how can they pursue whatever it is in the tiny room - rooms? - at the top of the stair? It's not love's world, it's the office of our supervisor and besides, there's another master in the room next door. You can't be close to someone when the world's wrapped round you like that!

It's a grim world, and Fred must know it. If we come back late - from *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, staged by the Alliance Française, for instance - and the East's raging, the sound in the quadrangle's deafening. Abuse, insults, questions designed to confuse the victim, echo around the walls. Moonlight shining on our darkened school makes it forbidding to enter at the best of times, and frightening when the inquisition's at work. How can Fred not hear? He must. The noise must sneak through the casement where the exeat book's left for him to sign, and must creep, like the light from his desk lamp, beneath the study door. He approves, then, if only tacitly? Or does the house captain, in those private discussions we know take place, tell him who's being done over and who's to be done over next?

We're not told, and we know better than to ask.



We're favoured to win the Head of the River one year, but Xavier beats us. It's in the pre-Babylon years and the coach, the Boss, their wives and the crew have a dinner reservation, and tickets for *Annie Get Your Gun*. The celebration continues, despite the defeat. The actors know the crew's in the audience. They must also be able to see, if the light goes far enough into the stalls, a contingent of boarders, also in suits. An actor finds a chance to improvise. 'Nothing can *save-ye*,' he says; the crew laughs, the Boss laughs; watching him, we think he's on the verge of turning human. Then Annie reaches the musical's best known line: 'And they'll call it bloody murder 'cause you can't get a man with a gun!' The audience laughs on cue, the Boss as heartily as any, and we know by his reaction to this carefully planned breach of taboo that he is like us beneath his mask, and we must therefore presume, since we don't consider that he or the school could be hypocritical, that his sternness is a strategy which will work ultimately for our benefit. His discipline's thus made secure.

We know our old boys are successful because they have dinners in London. O.M. dinners are held in Brisbane, Adelaide, and other provincial places, but to have them in London means more. England's where cricket began, and the tests are played, though the world's not yet so small that we can send our teams there. We play Sydney Grammar and Saint Peter's, Adelaide, and sometimes Brisbane Grammar. They're Anglican schools, and when we see their caps and blazers around our pavilion, we know the federation's small. There's an in-house feeling about these games, they don't matter in the way it matters whether we beat Scotch, Geelong Grammar, et al; they're visiting partners from leagues we're gracious enough to admit as equal to our own. When they've gone, we'll return our attention to beating the people who want to upset our supremacy, something we pretend not to doubt: we have to stay on top!

On the first Thursday of third term, the Boss mounts the chapel steps. Our footballers have been to Brisbane. He reads the scores dryly,

they've won well. The Boss lowers his notes. 'While our team was in Brisbane,' he says, 'something took place which I would like you to think about. One of our senior players was walking through the city when he was accosted by a man who was in a downcast, indeed a derelict, condition. This man asked the member of our team for whatever coins he had in his pocket. It was clear that he wanted to spend whatever he was given on drink. He remarked that he'd chosen our team member as the object of his advances because he recognised the blazer pocket. He had himself, many years before, been a triple-colour sportsman of this school.'

The Boss, stern moralist, concludes, 'The lessons to be drawn from this encounter are obvious.' He folds his notes. The mighty have fallen, and it could happen to us! In the dormitory that night we agree that it's strange, and coincidental, that the triple colour sportsman accosted by the alky was C.D., whom we regard as a larrikin for all his sporting prowess, and as a young man who, given the wrong circumstances, might fall in the same way. Not like, we say piously, T.F., a prefect who embodies all the virtues.

A year passes. T.F. goes to university, C.D.'s our house captain and, such is the way our honours are distributed, much else besides. A rumour reaches the Second dormitory. Lights out's well behind us, we've finished talking about the maids. Someone says T.F.'s in jail. We don't believe it. Our informant's sure. T.F.'s in jail. 'He's in Pentridge this very minute,' says a voice from the darkened row of beds. 'Something to do with car stealing.'

We like cars, they go with manhood. Our last two school captains have had cars, they're our next and approaching stage. But to steal them? That's American, we read about it in magazines. Local delinquents do it too, in Footscray, Collingwood, Fitzroy - but not us. T.F.'s in jail? Our informant says he's sure.

This is not easy to deal with, and not only because of the fall of a former great. People who don't like our school say of its bluestone, 'Just like a jail.' They've His Majesty's Prison, Pentridge, in mind, another bluestone establishment on Sydney Road, the road to the country's first

penal colony. The other side of the Yarra. Jail. T.F.'s in a cell? Poor, poor T.F. We snuggle in our beds, promising ourselves we'll avoid that fate.

We never talk about the Boss once he's gone. We've no information, and we're incurious. His portrait's hung in the Council room, looking down on boys who mind the phone. What would he have said if he'd heard the maids? We know he's been a moral man. It's always been a mystery to us that his garage holds a small English car of the sort that our grazier parents and our wealthier young old boys wouldn't consider owning. Babylon puts a fat new Chrysler in the garage, and it seems more appropriate. He's different in other ways; if he sees us in St Kilda Road, he gives us a lift, and talks; he actually wants to know what we're thinking. Coming to the top of the school as he takes over, we're aware that we're a generation, and he's curious.

Anti-communism is the current of the time. Australia, like America, is afraid. We've beaten one enemy to find a more powerful one emerging. How soon will it be before they get the bomb? There are said to be spies passing secrets, and we've got enemies within who are more loyal to Russia than they are to our allies. Mr Menzies understands their warped, despicable minds. He puts a bill through parliament to outlaw them, but it's challenged in the High Court and found unconstitutional. The opposition, or No vote, at the ensuing referendum is led by a man called Evatt, who's said to be brilliant. He's been through Fort Street High School, and his pronunciation's awful. At least Mr Menzies can speak the King's English! The referendum's defeated, the communists are legal, we're in a parlous situation - enemies without, enemies within. Europe's not much help because it's corrupt. The Russians are squeezing Berlin, and Vienna, we learn from *The Third Man*, is a dirty place. Orson Welles and Joseph Cotton are big. So are William Walton who's written *Battle for Britain* music and Laurence Olivier, who's done wonderful things with *Henry V*. Olivier turns the play's most famous elocution into two commands: 'Once more!' and 'Unto the breach, dear friends!' We find this surprising, but our masters, who impress us because they know so much about Melbourne's history, say it's genius. The Enthusiast urges us to see Shakespeare, but most of us are happier with *Oklahoma* and *Annie*

Get Your Gun. Donald Peers is on top of the country's first hit parades, which we listen to in the minutes before dinner on Sunday nights.

There are only one or two portables in the boarding house, though most boys with studies have a set plugged into the mains. T.P., our cricket captain, is popular when he enters the quad with his portable. He puts it in the doorway leading to the tower and joins the mob for quad cricket, at which he doesn't attempt to star because his glory's gained elsewhere. Quad cricket is one of the school's oldest institutions, hallowed yet frequently outlawed. It's played using the lamp post as a wicket, and the lamp post, a former gas lamp now possessing an electric bulb, is another important institution. It's where we stand when weddings are being celebrated in chapel. We're curious about weddings, and press to see the bride and groom, but the code of restraint says we're to approach no closer than the lamp post, and thus, over decades, hundreds, perhaps thousands, of bridal parties have emerged from chapel to the tune of Mendelssohn's march to find a line, two or three deep, of boys in suits, hair slicked for dinner, staring at what they imagine is their future.

We have the idea that handsome men get beautiful women because they deserve them, and often enough what we see shows it's true. Morning suits, dinner suits, elaborate gowns and coiffures pass a smiling verger to face confetti, though it's frowned on, and flashlights. It's what ought to happen, and it does. They're old boys, these men who're getting married, and their brides, we imagine, are from schools like our own. We see their faces in the social pages and it makes us feel good, even if we mock it as being just too-too-Toorak. The sporting greats of other years are the ones who interest us most, because they're the testing point; we don't expect them to end up with bags, and they don't. Young men and young women, they glow as the organ swells to send them out to face the photographers, and their families spill out to surround them. We put aside bat and ball to stare; sometimes, just as the excitement's flagging, a man from the kitchen beats the artillery shell to call us to dinner, and we leave the quad to the newlyweds and the booming of the gong.

The trouble with quad cricket is that the southern side of the quad has lots of windows. Hitting this wall on the full is out, but every now and then someone can't control his desire to execute a pull to leg, and a window's broken. The glass has to be paid for, but it also means facing Fred, who bans the game. It's never officially de-banned, so there's a delicate process of sneaking the game back, which involves a few boys playing sedately through one of Sunday's more desolate hours. If a master passes without comment, it's assumed that we're within the law, though ultimately it's Fred who has to show by hurrying from the bottom of his staircase to the masters' common room while the game's in progress, that he's turning a blind eye.

The ball's bowled from a concrete drain cover in the centre of the quad. There are no runs. A batsman's in until he's bowled, l.b.w., or caught. Caught on the first bounce is out. Whoever fields, bowls. It can be played by two people or a hundred and the more there are the more exciting it is. Some of our most intense involvement with each other takes place when a crowd's playing. This is when big-hitters lift the ball onto the roof of the Boss's wing; it bounces down the slates to the corrugated iron over our lockers, and the ridges make the ball bounce unexpectedly; packs try to mark it, as in football, but if they're tricked by the bounce, the batsman keeps his wicket. A safe shot's underneath the lockers or through a doorway because the ball can't be caught. The game's a leveller because it's impossible to stay in for long, and lowly first years can catch members of the XI. The outgoing batsman gets the ball and there's an intimate moment of distrust as the ball's handed over and the bat's handed back. Small boys field close so they can get a bowl, while big boys call for big hits, yelling at the tops of their voices as the ball bounces around the verandah. Old boys smile when they come on the game in progress, and Lippy, and Happy Gaynor and other masters who take house duty, grin as we let them through. 'Like a hit sir? Oh, go on!' Only Max Haysom plays, and he's too good, flicking the ball where we can't catch him.. He makes sure that it's a little boy who gets him out, and for this we forgive the perfection of his style. The man plays district cricket and lets us know it.

We're good on scores and records. They're printed in our diaries, and in *The Melburnian*, and we're made to learn them. The house captain comes down to Perry at the start of the year to dictate lists of names. We go to study 10 for an appointment. Standing with our backs to the door, we solemnly name our oarsmen and First XI. They ask who's captain of athletics but if we're alert we say, 'Hasn't been appointed yet.' Initiation over, we rush to tell others what we've been asked. In later years, when we're senior, we'll expect *our* names to be known. A trick of the East is to point to one of their number and ask, 'Who's he?' As we state the surname, the young man may be discerned to blush; self consciousness doesn't altogether die at the dreaded door.

The East has another door, rarely used, which gives onto the passage between the dormitories and the classrooms which look down on the quad; sometimes, if East members are running late, they scuttle through this door to reach Bert Davie's Commercial Principles & Practice class, startling day boys who don't know what lies behind that door. Boarders, sharing with their tormentors a shameful secret, don't tell them. How lucky they are to escape at the end of the day to a normality we're denied.

Day boys can go with girls to picnics, Portsea, or films at night; to the races with their parents. They can live unregulated by roll calls. Most of all, they can escape the feeling of being owned. There are many friendships in the boarding house, and none of us are quite out of touch with each other, but the demands of a crowded life turn us against each other. Fish in a bowl, we swim in a water that's not of our making, contributing to communal tensions while unable to know how to escape them.

We play chess. Most of us know the rules, if we see people playing, we stop and watch. We see moves we think should be made. 'No advice!' says the winning player, but we give it anyway. If one player's unpopular, we barrack for the other. Eight or nine boys may finish up grouped around a board, contributing their passions to the rationality of the game. One Sunday Hairless is playing. A crowd gathers, standing behind the players, kneeling on the table, standing on chairs. The board becomes a theatre for our contempt, and the pieces players. He has to lose, but his opponent isn't very good. Then Hairless makes a

mistake, exposing his Queen. Everyone sees it except his opponent, who fingers pieces which can only make innocuous moves. Our tension rises. Hairless could be destroyed at a blow. We know he'll shift the Queen next move. There's shuffling and coughing. Swearing. 'Can't you see what to do?' someone demands of the nong. He can't. B.W., a future racing driver, jumps from his chair, plunging downward through the viewers, seizes black's rook and swipes the white Queen from the board. We yell in exaltation - Hairless has been beaten! - then burst into wild laughter as the pressure's released. The room's in turmoil. We run downstairs, still shrieking. Even our victim manages a smile; the thing simply *had* to be done!

We're generous to each other with money. We lend each other books. We're never so lousy as to refuse help with homework, that's a common struggle. When people put false addresses on their exeats we shut up, and if someone comes back with an exeat unsigned, there's always someone with mature writing to do the job. We might hate each other but we're not mean.

Only vicious. The struggle to survive can't be lost, we've got to stay on top. Insults. Observations on each other's eating habits, mannerisms, genitals. Ridicule. Enforcement of normality, breaches of privacy. We've inherited the British practice of those who're being ruled ruling each other. There's a right and wrong way to do up our shoelaces and to write our names in books. *Latin for Today's* turned into *Eating for Today*. We sneer at each other for practising flamboyant signatures, though we all do it.

MalVercoe - named after a well known ventriloquist - gets us to buy *The Paths of Gold*, a descriptive list of great names in English Literature. In its way it's not unlike the lists we have to recite in study 10. Cowper, Goldsmith, Addison and Pope are all presented to us with the same polished completeness of honour boards or lists of exhibitioners. These have succeeded. They are great.

There's a poem Mal likes called 'The Crane'; it begins:

It stuns the rapt attention,
And it lifts
More than its load of many tons ...

We ask why it doesn't rhyme, and Mal says it's modern, and we have to come to terms with it. We're used to iambic and anapaestic feet, but Mal says it does scan after its fashion, even if it's not as obvious as 'The Lake Isle of Innisfree' or Irish poems by AE. We sense we're near some mystery. Modern times? That's Chaplin, and machinery. Lippy gets someone from the Italian consulate to show us films about Renaissance painters. 'Listen to the reverence you can hear in the voices,' the Italian tells us. 'You mightn't understand what they're saying but you can tell what they feel.' We think this is wonderfully Latin, though it won't earn us any marks at the Exhibition in December.

Three times a year the seats in our hall are stacked and relays of boys carry desks for the term exams. When there's a hold up we sit down in queues like stalled automobiles, calling loudly down the line or chatting intimately to the boy next to us. If it's sunny, these moments are delightful, and there's no announcement we welcome so much as our masters telling us that the room we're in is to provide desks for the exams. Exams are three hour affairs, taken very seriously; other times of the year when the hall's cleared are the boxing finals and the school dance, which the Boss describes as the social highlight of the year. Addressing us from the chapel steps he instructs us on our choice of partners. There is nothing wrong with people who attend government schools, he emphasises, but their values are not the same. 'Your partners,' he says, 'will normally be from our sister schools, that is to say schools whose values and emphasis on religious education are of a kind with our own.' He moves from the desirability of choosing girls from Lauriston, St Catherine's and Merton Hall to our duties on arrival. 'You will find that the official party is seated immediately inside the entrance, and you should at once introduce yourself and your partner to the host and hostess for the evening. This is likely to be the President of the Council and his wife, but if it is not possible for them to attend then I and my wife will perform the task. Those of you who have not previously attended the school dance may feel a little nervous about making these introductions, but I can assure you that I and my wife, if we are acting as hosts, will do our best to put you at your ease and wish you an enjoyable evening.' True to his word, the Boss and Mrs Sutcliffe greet us and our partners with regimental

charm. The hall's bright, the floor polished, the band in white tuxedos. Balloons and leis are signs that we're festive. As the night wears on, and supper's finished, streamers are given out so that, somewhere about half past eleven, they can be thrown over the rafters to trail on either side to the floor. Masses of them clog the movement of our feet and brush our shoulders. The floor's littered with this brilliant kelp and we're radiant. 'Goodnight sir, goodnight Mrs Sutcliffe!' we say as we go to our taxis or our parents' cars, the prefects and the leading sportsmen having, in many cases, organised vehicles for themselves, perhaps a party to go to. The solemn school relaxes as cars reverse in narrow spaces. Half an hour after midnight, they're gone. The boarders will clean up in the morning.

The boarders are used to this kind of festivity. Isolated as we are, others too are isolated. If a girl's school within the Boss's sphere of approval is giving a dance, they ring. The house captain announces at the end of prep, 'Sixteen blind dates next Saturday for Merton Hall. Who's going to be in it?' Groans, no one lifts a hand. 'Should be a good turn,' he says, to no effect. Fixing his gaze on a popular boy he says, 'What about you?' using a nickname. 'I'll be away for the weekend,' the boy replies, but he's written on the captain's list. 'What about you?' to someone else. If the school's not close the excuse is 'I don't know where it is,' but the name's added. Once the ice is broken with names that carry status, the list is more easily filled. Hands creep up. 'Okay then,' says the captain, 'here's the list,' and he reads. We know who's on it, but we need to be reconciled to what's happening - we're going out on Saturday night for the embarrassments and pleasures of a dance. It's another test, it's what we want, it's what we dread.

There's nothing wrong with being blind dates. They need us as much as we need them. Since the numbers are even and everyone's attached, however tenuously, to someone, there isn't the ordeal of crossing the floor. We're usually agreeable, the girls know each other, we can listen to them. We know each other, they can listen to us. Half an hour after the thing's started, we're happy. An important matching process is taking place, as the Boss has made clear, yet we don't experience it that way. For us, it's the question of age. There'll be mistresses or masters at these dances, sitting in corners, talking, if there are two of them, or

staring bleakly at us if there's only one. We pity these guardians of our state, they're the embodiment of loneliness, and we're never alone. We've got our youth and our unknown futures, but for these private school teachers life, or Saturday night, is sitting in a corner. 'Blue moon,' says a record, 'You saw me standing alone, you knew just what I was there for.' We nestle against each other, scarcely moving. The last song is Al Bowley singing 'Goodnight sweetheart.' It's the era of Jolson's revival, but he belongs to the more vigorous part of the night. We part, the hall's darkened, we find our way through a school that's not our own until we reach the street. How are we going to get home?

Melbourne has a species of tram known as all-nighters, but they're hours apart. We find a railway station. It's black. It occurs to us to ring Fred. 'Report to me when you get back,' he says affably. 'I'll be in the Council Room.' We run through the night, enjoying Toorak and South Yarra. When we're puffed, we walk. Entering the Domain gates, with their coloured coats of arms, we feel we've had a good night. Fred asks. 'It was great,' we say. We eat the leftovers of the masters' supper while we chat to Fred. Though he's been up for hours, reading beneath the eyes of former Heads, we don't think of him as being lonely like those mistresses in the corners of dance halls; Fred's been at home; Fred is, in a way, our home.

He's authority, and it's the soul of our existence, even when it's mocked. We tell the story of K.McA., a former house captain who was also school captain. Using the darkroom one day, he heard a knock. His offices being what they were, he felt no need to answer. Another knock. Moving to the door, he's reported to have roared, 'Well, fuck me dead, it's Foreskin Fred, the bastard from the bush!' and to have opened the door to face his housemaster; it is, in our mythology, the classic confrontation of anger and forgiveness because there was no destructive explosion. The incident was overlooked. Revelling in this tale we neglect to observe that the blunder was only forgivable for someone of K.McA's standing. Small fry would have fared less well. In authority systems a figure, once promoted, must be supported or dismissed.

Babylon parts the Red Sea, but it's custom, not done in awe. He takes the field in an enormous cable-knitted jumper to watch the First XI practise. Standing six or seven paces from the stumps, he observes the back of a spinner's hand, and the footwork of batsmen. His counselling rumbles across the field, though those who are close to him find him hard to follow. As archetypal a teacher as the Boss, he wanders about the practice nets, having plenty to say. Boys who are trying to bowl out a friend, or flailing at balls from those they hate or fear, are likely to find Babylon roaring 'Splendid!' and pointing with jovial intensity at what's been done right - or he may stop the action to analyse a failing. These visitations make us feel awkward because we're not on his wavelength, and it can be embarrassing when the school's most senior person looms behind the umpire of a house thirds game to tell the captain how to set his field, or to demand of a bowler, 'Now what are you appealing for?'

That he has a superior mind, we have no doubt, but we wish he'd convey his wishes more clearly. What does he want of us? In later years he creates a private room for the sixth form, furnishes it with armchairs and stocks it with magazines designed to link us to contemporary debate - *The New Statesman & Nation*, *The Scientific American*, and so on. He has a plaque mounted on the wall, quoting the prophet Micah: 'What doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?' This is not, we sense, the Lord God of Hosts, nor is it the God of Abraham, or Saint Paul. This is a God who takes pride in the autonomy of his creatures, and it's not a voice we've been trained to hear.

The Reverend Brown encourages us to ask questions about the Bible, and gives fascinating answers, but it's hard to see how anyone can unify that compilation. Job's God is a bastard, testing him to the limit, but then Job's an almighty whinger. Only Jesus comes luminously alive. When he says, 'Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father, which is in Heaven,' he's simply confirming what the School Prayer expects of us, but it's the impossibility of his teaching that's so inspiring because he lived up to it and - this is the hardest part of Christianity to understand - died for it. The saga which begins with Christ's entry into Jerusalem and Last Supper,

and ends with the ascension into heaven, is too much of a fable. The teachings, yes; the need for salvation - no. Though we've guilt enough to know what Hamlet means by 'Use every man after his deserts and who shall 'scape whipping?' our shortcomings are temporal, not cosmic. That part of religion's a fraud, and those who killed for doctrinal purity were insane, more sadistic than we know how to be. Thus the chapel enshrines an ancient understanding of which we're prepared to swallow only doses, yet it's this same hieratic, blood-drenched part of the faith which gives us our vantage point for looking down on Baptists, Seventh Day Adventists and other *low* Protestants whose churches are plain. A bare table and a conscience isn't enough!

Yet our superiority's restrained. It mustn't be allowed to show. One of our number hears a day boy tell an old woman on a tram that she's stupid because she can't work out her change. What sort of name will the school get if we speak to people like that?

The name of the school's important. The Boss lost his job trying to preserve it because the dividends matter more. Ahead of us, as we sit in our classrooms, are the stock exchange, board rooms of directors, chairs in science. Leading surgeons drive, with their wives, in Bentleys to watch their sons' matches - or rather, to watch us *strive*. It's the dynamism that has to be kept alive, or we, not our foemen, will go under. Thus the stories have to be told and retold - how Dr Bromby chased his pupil - and each generation has to be made to earn its colours. By forcing us, when we're little boys, to revere them, the big boys put pressure on themselves to succeed. If they're dropped from teams, they've fallen. 'The crew's not settled yet,' our oarsmen - we call them bargees - tell us. 'Wally took _____ and _____ with him in the launch, and when he got up near Scotch, he put them in and took out _____ and _____.' How many weeks to the Head of the River? We wonder how Wally can contemplate changes at so late a stage; why, we've already learned the names! Our crew's beautiful when it takes the river on boarace day - the white arms, navy singlets, the well-slicked hair, the cox with his megaphone strapped to his head. The blades stir the water like an eight-legged crab, then the order's given to pull and the crew takes our hopes upriver. When they return to view with the race nearly over, coloured

flags are held aloft in the referee's boat to say which station's leading, and a gun goes off when they pass the judge who, a moment later, hoists a coloured ball to signal whether north, centre or south station has won. We rush about in excitement after the races, not caring what we look like; it'll be on the back pages the following day. Old school ties abound in the city. Shops owned by private school families will put the six crews' colours on display. Coloured rosettes, like Joffer's souvenir of the revolution, are on sale at Princes Bridge but we don't wear them because our uniforms do the job.

When we cross the city, they make us strangers. At football grounds, we stuff our caps in our pockets, resuming them near public transport. We don't actually expect people to snatch them but it's wise not to tempt. They're not bound by our rules. We wonder why so few of Australia's test cricketers have been Grammar men; there's a feeling of naked energy in the cruder suburbs, and greater exposure to fashion. Things we wouldn't dream of are spawned there. Standing in the queue for a film, on a Saturday night, we're disgusted by children with mohawk haircuts rushing past us to the ticket box. How dare they? And for that matter, why let them in? We're vindicated when the manager leads them out, clutching their grubby sleeves. Back to Footscray, we think, where you belong.

We're not teenagers, we're boys becoming men.

We laugh loudly, showing off our balls. We jostle, doing the same. Our bodies are changing before each other's eyes. We know what everyone's like inside their suits. When we hear someone chuckle during the night, we know what he's doing. Most of us wait for our morning erections to go down before we shower, but some are more flagrant. Swollen skin at the tips of our penises means we've been masturbating. When we sit warmly in classrooms, our trousers bulge. We can cope with it in each other, but if it happens in a tram, it's awful. We dry our shorts, socks and jockstraps in the boiler room, a smelly turret beside the upstairs locker room. On cold nights we go in there to warm ourselves. There's a weak globe just above head height, but mostly we gather in the gloom, pressing against this heat source while from the many pipes dangles the gear we need dried out. Boys rush in to finger their socks

and jockstraps, taking them if they're dry. Others stay; it's a democratic little cave where ridicule's less frequent than elsewhere, because to be there is to be out of sight.

A couple of paces from the turret is a window giving onto the roof. It's open much of the time. It would be easy to step out, except that there's no reason to do so. For an agile person it would also be possible to scramble up a pipe and reach the crenellated parapet above our dormitories, but again, why would you want to do it? Roof climbing isn't a recognised escapade. Then D.Y. sees a further possibility. He creeps, bent low, behind the parapet to the hidden side of the tower above Happy Gaynor's bedroom, and opens the window. He climbs the next stage, and the next. The clock excites him. He studies the mechanism while it's chiming. D.Y.'s an oddball. His mother lives nearby, and we're not sure why he's a boarder. Does she think the school will discipline him? D.Y.'s a frequent victim of the East. He isn't academic, but he's quick, and he's strong. He says he wants to get his Leaving, then he'll leave. He isn't interested in matric. 'What good's it going to do you?' he asks. We think it's obvious, but he's counting the months, then the weeks, till he's free. As third term grows warmer we realise we're going to miss him; he's crazy but needed because he's funny. He's one of our escapes, if we only knew.

We're standing outside the dining hall one night when the clock starts chiming and it doesn't stop. It chimes throughout the meal. It's funny at first, then it drives us mad. Eventually it's fixed and things return to normal. But the malfunction keeps occurring, and some of us, overhearing D.Y. and his companions, realise what's happening. He's jiggering the clock! It's kept secret, but when the start of morning classes is accompanied by twenty minutes' chiming, or a meal's conducted to the sounds of the clock, those in the know search out each other's eyes. D.Y.! We expect him to give himself away, but the face beneath his red mop is innocent. He's acting well.

The last day approaches. D.Y.'s been counting down. 'In nine days I'll be out of this bloody place,' he says. Eight, seven, six. The final morning comes. Assembly's held. Only those who're going to get an award will stay for speech night the following evening. Cases are packed,

the day boys are dwindling. Within minutes, or a day, we'll be in trains, planes, or our parents' cars, heading for Hamilton, Tamworth and Echuca. D.Y.'s asked his mother to pick him up at 11. At two minutes to the hour he moves around the locker room, saying goodbye. We're going to miss him. Suddenly he throws a leg over the sill and scrambles through the opening. A minute and he's back. In the meantime, his mother's parked her Fiat 500 at the base of the tower. 'Seeya fellas!' shouts D.Y., crashing downstairs. His mother's folded back the Topolino's canvas. D.Y. throws his case behind the seat and gets in, his red hair the brightest thing in sight. The clock gives the ching-chings that mark the quarters. He's timed it perfectly. The hour's into its twenties by the time his car enters the declivity beside the hall. From the locker room, we watch him go. We imagine his grin of satisfaction as he goes through the gate. Does he tell his mother? He's frank enough. He's telling the school, that's for sure. Stick it up your arse! It's a marvellous exit. Someone gets the groundsman and the noise is stopped. The school's hollow, the year done. We wish he was coming back. He's had a victory which those who get first class honours won't have had. Gunnedah, Balranald, and Sydney, here we come! We'll leave a shell, well mocked by D.Y., but we'll bring it to life again next February, and that means giving it our lives. We're overshadowed by D.Y. Other boys know the trick, but it's never done again.

The clock resumes its job, the groundsman prepares his wickets, the seasons progress - cricket/rowing; football; athletics; cricket/rowing. Speech night, the school play. Dance. Terms 1, 2, 3. The Melburnian. The following will report to study 6 at 12.30 Tuesday. The Games Committee has made the following appointments. New boys will face the East, having learned what's important. Prefects, probationers, the crew in order of seating. Inside the bluestone pile, which is black in rain and grey in sunlight, the striving will go on. Colonel Brady will order us from our lockers. 'Get up to the assembly,' he'll say, the man who was at Omdurman but can't remember Churchill. The chapel doors will break open for brides and grooms. Flashlights will flash. Quad cricket will halt as we press forward. The shell at the Boss's door will boom for meals. Rolls will be called. Sir! Sir! Sir! D.Y.'s beaten us. His miniscule

car's out of sight before his effect's died down. The clock's never the same for those who heard it when it ran berserk. D.Y.'s left us uncertain as to whether we want it to behave properly or not.



There are two prep schools - Wadhurst for day boys, and Grimwade, which has a dining room and dormitories. From tiny tots to the transition to Saint Kilda Road, it's a home for boarders, as it was once for the Grimwade family, who still have members at the school, just as there are Millears to explain why one of the four houses is Milliar. When a boy's proposed for Grimwade, his parents meet the Principal, Mr Down. Unless the father's an old boy, they don't know that the iron-grey man who interviews them is nicknamed Fluff. The principal's office overlooks the drive, which encircles a Norfolk pine. The principal takes down particulars, and announces fees. There's a fee to have the boy's name put on the waiting list. Parents and child are shown about, the boy wondering if he'll get in, and whether he wants to; it's so empty. He's never slept with twelve other people, and in a first floor room at that! From the dormitory windows a bizarre house can be seen, with enormous grey birds on the parapet; they're storks, but the boy doesn't know that. He wonders if they'll make him dream, and whether the bleak room he's being shown can be the venue for the midnight feasts he's read about. Will there be a Billy Bunter, a school bully, and hampers full of food? Mr Down and the matron don't look as if their lives include such fiction.

Parents and child go back where they came from, then the letter arrives. The boy's to be enrolled. Fee. Name on every item of clothing. Needle, thread, name tapes and buttons should accompany the child. They're packed. Boot polish and brushes are also on the list. They're bought. Mr Down doesn't think the parents would have any of the textbooks, it's better to buy them at the school. They'll go on the bill. The parents agree. Boarders are expected on the Sunday afternoon, to give them a few hours to settle in. The parents hire a taxi, or bring the

family car up the drive, cases in the boot. They stop between steps and pine, and what's been a family gets out.

The boy tries to be brave. He doesn't want to cry. The door of the big house is open. The bow window on the left reminds him of when he came down for the interview. Now it's real. Mum and dad are leaving him. There are lots of cars, some of the parents know each other. Some of the boys go to the clean clothes room behind the principal's office and stow their things, leaving their cases to be put away. Miss Niblett, the clothes matron, a middle-aged woman with buck teeth, directs operations. The *old* boys - those in their second or later year - go through frosted glass doors to the communal part of the house without visible pangs of parting. For the new boys it's different, there are red eyes and white faces in the hall. Matron explains to a parent, 'They soon get over it, he'll be right by tea time.' The parents accept; for their sons, it's awful. There's a hollowness in their hearts which makes them think anything would be better than this. The time comes, the parents leave. They're tender, he cries, but he stops when he's shown through the frosted doors; his tears can't be shown!

This is the first lesson.

He's wearing navy shorts, navy jumper, blue shirt and tie. He notices slight variations in the navy socks with two white stripes worn by the boys around him; his, he's pleased to see, belong to the nicer sort. The boys' faces are as varied as their clothing's uniform; who knows what they're capable of? Frightened, he has a feeling that they'll cut loose on each other and have to be restrained by masters. The housemaster's referred to by older boys as Stan; he's a small, portly man with a black crest above his forehead which refuses to lie down. He comes downstairs to a flurry of 'Hello, sir! Have a good holiday?' which he deals with by asking after the boys' parents and home towns, which he names ironically, or deliberately gets wrong. 'How was it at Wycheproof, _____? No, I'm sorry, you live at Upotipotpon.' 'I don't live at Upotipotpon,' the boy protests. 'Rupanyup!' Those around him get ready to giggle. 'Ah, Rupanyup,' says Stan. 'Not Upotipotpon. How could I be so silly?' The circle laughs. Stan gives the old hand a new boy to look after.

‘Where’s Rupanyup?’ the new boy asks, and he in turn is asked where he comes from, and the ice is broken.

He’s given his bed. The dormitory’s windows are barred, and they give onto the house with storks. ‘Creepy! I wouldn’t like to go into that place,’ says the boy with the facing bed, and boys call to each other, ‘What’s your name?’ They tell each other. ‘Where do you come from?’ They tell each other. The names sound strange among the hard beds with their white covers. They bounce on the beds with their bottoms, trying them out. ‘God it’s like a rock,’ says someone, and an old hand tells them that the worst part of the mattresses is that the horsehair sticks into you. Horsehair? They’re back on their farms for a moment, and in their little country towns, then an old hand says, ‘I tellya what, ya wanta watch out for ...’ and names masters he claims are free with the cane. Cane? He hadn’t thought about that. ‘Does Stan give you the cane?’ he asks. ‘Sometimes,’ says the boy, ‘but not really. He’s got this stick inside his coat, he tucks it in his trousers, he makes you bend over and gives you a whack with that.’ He adds, as if it has to be added, ‘Doesn’t hurt.’

A stick inside the grey coat? That would seem to be the second lesson, and much nastier. He’s never smacked at home, and he’s mostly avoided the cuts at his little school. He’s never imagined that he could be belted on the bottom. He feels vulnerable to other people’s cruelty. Does Mr Down do it too? ‘Stan doesn’t really cane you,’ the boy in the corner says. ‘If he gets wild with you he rushes you through to Fluff, and you get six.’ A chorus asks if he’s had this done to him. He hasn’t, but he knows kids who have. ‘You get bruises on your bum,’ he says. ‘They take ages to go away.’ The new boys look at each other, wondering what their first crime will be; they’d better learn the rules!

Stan lines up his boarders for tea, keeping his coat buttoned. He says we’ll soon get the hang of things, and the old hands are to make sure we know what to do. He doesn’t want any sooks, and he doesn’t want us to be namby-pamby, but if we’re worried about anything, we’re to come to him. We turn right, and the lines march into the dining room, one, two, three. We stand behind our chairs. ‘Grace!’ say old boys as new boys start to sit down. We sit. Trays of shepherd’s pie are brought in. The biggest boy serves it out. At the two bottom tables the plates are

filled by Stan and matron. We range from eight to twelve; by the end of the year the biggest boys will be thirteen, their voices will be breaking and they'll be going to the big school. That's a year away. Stan patrols the tables, asking boys how they are. 'Have you got enough? _____ will give you more. He won't keep it all for himself, will you, _____?' _____ smiles on cue. 'I'll share it out, sir, don't you worry.' Stan has a menacing kind of banter. 'Worry? Why should I worry? I'd get out Little Mary Anne if I got worried.'

His stick's got a name!

He says we can play after tea, but we moon about, half-heartedly exploring. It's big, without day boys, and the doors are closed. We gather in the common room until Stan sends us to bed. Tomorrow night there'll be showers, he says, but since we've come from our homes, he imagines we aren't very smelly. This is a joke. We undress in front of each other. For some of us it's for the first time, we hardly know where to look. Some kids walk around with nothing on. Stan doesn't seem to mind. He tells them they'll catch their death of cold but since it's a warm night we know it's his form of respect for the modesty some of us feel. A week or two will fix that! Stan turns out the light and says goodnight. We're left to the dark.

English public school stories have prepared us for this, but it's startling when it comes. We don't expect not to sleep, we're tired enough for that. There's a feeling that we'll be changed in the night. Today, we still belong to our parents, because we were with them a few hours ago, giving us a link with the homes we left yesterday, or a week ago, if we spent the last days of the holiday buying clothes and visiting relatives. In the morning, we'll be in this new life, part of it, even though we don't know what it is. It would be silly to cry, because we're not afraid, simply unaware. The thing's got us, and it seems to know what it's doing. It's benign, yet threatening. There's trouble, and rewards.

And three weekends per term.

Stan's made it clear that we'll write to our parents, and we'll be allowed out on Saturday or Sunday, though not both, but that won't be for the first three or four weeks because he doesn't want little boys getting homesick. 'I'll know,' he says assertively. 'I'll know when you're

ready.' He's done it for years, we know he'll know. How come he's so wise? We sleep. The mattresses are only hard for the first few seconds. There doesn't seem to be any horsehair poking out. The lights in Balaclava Road are strange to those who aren't from the city, but if we put our face in the pillow it's all right. Goodnight, we say to each other. Goo'night, goo'night, goo'night. The house with the storks has a strange silhouette. The trams rumble. The streetlights are unblinking. There are sneezes and snuffles. Noses are blown to attract attention. Boys shuffle out in slippers even though we're supposed to go to the toilet before lights out; this first night Stan isn't being strict, but we hear him chiding someone: 'You know the rule, _____', and the boy's 'Sorry, sir, I had to go.' It's night, mum and dad are home. We'll see them in a month, if Stan thinks we've settled in. We sleep. Goo'night, goo'night, goo'night.

In the morning, matron tells us how to make our beds. Bottom sheet tucked in at the top. Top sheet tucked in at the bottom. Hospital corners. She shows us, then we practise. Then she announces a rule - we turn our mattresses every second day, window side one morning, wall side the next. Do it now, she says, and we wrestle them over, wondering why it's done. Matron says nothing about bed-wetting. Stan looks in; we sense there are lines of demarcation between him and matron. When the beds are made we go down for the first day.

There are many days. Years full of days. They begin with Stan saying 'This dormitory, *up!*' and up we get, to splash our faces in cold water and clean our teeth. We use our toothbrushes again after breakfast, and we clean our shoes, then Stan lets go of being housemaster and becomes the teacher of 5B. He teaches Latin, French, and English; we have Soapy Hewitt for history, and Basher Waite for science. Captain Evans takes 4B, and Fishy Herring 5A. Taffy Evans takes 6A, but hands it over to Harry Traynor, who's put in front of us at assembly in naval commander's uniform. He's to come back when the navy lets him go. The Boss himself takes 6A sometimes for a period of maths; we're always given warning.

We line up in a brick paved quad. There's a bell, and a noticeboard announcing the house on duty - Austin, Grey-Smith, Milliar or School.

We're addressed from a balcony. We peel off in lines. We sing in hall and have chapel on Wednesday mornings. The chaplain's Padre Johnston, he was attached to our forces in New Guinea. He's boring, and gives us a book of trite reflections he had printed for the fighting men. We can't imagine them kneeling for prayers as we do; he tells us that when he and his wife are worried about something, they kneel together and pray; we realise this means he does the talking.

There's a clock tower and an assembly hall, and a playing field. There's a tennis court, some high fences, and Caulfield on the other side. The city tram runs down Balaclava Road, and we can take it to the big school for matches, or to Balaclava for Saturday morning shopping. We can take it to the St Kilda footy ground, or we can catch a St Kilda Beach tram to the Palais theatre or the Victory to see *Anchors Aweigh!* and *Singin' in the Rain*. Without our parents, there's no other excursion, so we make balsawood models and aeroplanes powered by rubber bands. A newspaper's left on the common room table after Stan's read it. Boys who've been out on Saturday sometimes come back with the Sporting Globe.

The classrooms form a line with three transverse wings. 6A's perched above the quad; we play tennis against the wall. There's no library, theatre or gym. It's doubtful if the school possesses a projector; teaching's done by textbook and talk. There are tests. We parse, decline, and recite poems by heart. In hall, we sing:

Let every good fellow now fill up his glass,
Vive la compagnie!
And drink to the health of our glorious class.
Vive la compagnie!

Vive la, vive la, vive l'amour,
Vive la, vive la, vive l'amour,
Vive l'amour, vive l'amour,
Vive la compagnie!

Harry Traynor, when he doffs his uniform for a gown, often takes us through this song; he's written a book called *The Art of Speech*, full of diagrams of the upper palate, tongue and uvula producing vowels and

diphthongs. Harry's no intention of letting us speak poorly the King's English. He teaches us the songs of Thomas Arne, and *Heart of Oak*, by Dr Boyne:

Come, cheer up my lads! 'tis to glory we steer.
To add something more to our wonderful year;
'Tis to honour we call you - not press you like slaves -
For who are so free as we sons of the waves?
Heart of oak are our ships, heart of oak are our men;
We always are ready;
Steady boys, steady;
We'll fight and we'll conquer again and again.

It's as we imagine ourselves - ready for struggle, adventure, and achievement; we've got our medals to win!

Beside the chapel are two army huts, converted to dormitories. They're used by older boys who are above being frightened of sleeping away from matron and Stan. Tassels flying from our dressing gowns, we scamper in for the morning wash, with Stan, if he's about, berating the last in line; certain of us are slower than the rest, and Stan imposes an up-tempo regime in which everyone scurries quickly through their business beneath a hail of comment. We're constantly reminded that we're not at Upotipotpon, though he can be more deadly and name our real homes. It's sickening, as we're rushed past the steps where the annual choir photo's taken (Stan's the choirmaster) to hear one's home town named in derision. 'Come on, _____, you're not in Murchison now!'

We know, we know.

Stan has a set of anthems that he teaches his choir, who wear black cassocks and white surplices; the two senior members wear coveted red cassocks. Blonde, tall for their age, shoulders mantled with surplices, they look angelic, their trebles attempting 'Angels ever bright and fair' and 'O bright Seraphim'. We stand in awe of the chapel because we're not old enough to have doubts, and because the sweetest of our number look even nicer there than they do at sport, and much nicer than they look under the shower. Stan supervises the evening ablutions closely, telling us not to be shy and to hurry up and get under - or to hurry up and dry ourselves. He says we're not to be self-conscious if we see him

looking at us because it's part of his duty to see that our development's taking place normally. Since we look at each other all the time, we wonder that he excuses himself. He announces one night, on a visit to the first hut, that he thinks it would be nice for him to sleep there one weekend when there's an empty bed. We think poorly of the idea, but he does it, arriving for lights out in pajamas and silk dressing gown. We've seen him in these often enough but not with the intent, as it were, of being next to us. He lowers himself into the empty bed. Surely his own's more comfortable? He doesn't say much but encourages us to talk and we can't help noticing that there are some voices he likes to hear more than others. This goes on for half an hour, then he says goodnight. He's first up in the morning and we're relieved to hear that he's changed his mind about coming back. It's all very well for Stan but it isn't much fun for us!

It doesn't happen again. Stan becomes again the nagging supervisor we know. He doesn't seem to have many friends. The younger men who act as his assistants call him Sir or Mr Stanley, and Stan himself, when he's angry, threatens to rush us through to the principal's office, where, he says, he'll cause us to be given a thrashing by the simple procedure of saying to Fluff, 'Sir! Impertinence!' That, he assures us, will be all that's needed.

Fluff rarely canes anyone, but the knowledge that he can, and in the most solemn circumstances, puts us in awe of him. Those ornate front rooms have got us bluffed, and there's something about the presence of Mrs Down which suggests that her husband's a normal, or actual, man while we're unformed members of a tribe. The little appointments the school gives us are steps towards the adulthood we take for granted in our parents but which seems so far away, for us. We look out the hut windows in the morning to see Fluff strolling towards a corner of the garden, followed by his dog, throwing a ball into the air and catching it. We wonder why he does what he does. We can only think that he must go to the bushy spot for his morning piss, but no-one's ever noticed any smell in the corner. Sometimes he throws the ball high, giving every impression of being a happy man, complete in himself for two minutes of the day; we wonder about the book of sermons he's supposed to be

writing. Do sermon writers have pisses in the corners of their gardens, and beam on their dogs?

We suppose they do.

When third term's run its course, Fluff preaches his final sermon. We enter the chapel to find a blackboard and easel in the sanctuary. Three axe heads are drawn on the board, labelled CAPAX, AUDAX and SAGAX. They intrigue us throughout the service. Fluff addresses himself to those who are going on to the big school. They must be bold, they must be wise. They must have the capacity to do things. Capability, audacity, sagacity - we suppose he's got those qualities; we certainly don't question his right to give us the homily, because that's what he's there for.

Fluff belongs to the generation fond of saying 'As the twig is bent, so shall the tree be formed.' One song we don't sing is 'Forty years on,' but it's in the books we read about English school life, and we gather that grown men sing it when they return to the raftered halls of their boyhood. We know Fluff can't protect us at the big school but he's a reassuring figure at Grimwade, as he needs to be, because some heavy responsibilities are dropped in his lap. We observe a well-dressed woman at school one day, with two tiny children whom we discover are seven and four. Her husband's been posted to India and she wants to leave these boys at Grimwade. We're delighted to have these exquisite children to play with, but we feel shocked on their behalf at the loss they're undergoing. Stan introduces them at a pre-dinner assembly on the brick paved slope outside the bathroom. They're divinely blond, and their little white knees protrude between khaki shorts and socks kept up by garters. Stan gives us their names. The four year old gives a helpless, enchanting grin; the seven year old looks firmly above our heads. They'll be sleeping, Stan says, in the little dormitory near matron's room, a former bedroom of the mansion which has given our school its name. This bedroom is reached, not by the very public staircase of the 1930s extension where we live, but by an inner staircase once used by the Grimwades. We imagine that if they cry at night, matron will hear. Stan says it's unusual to have boys so young in the boarding house, and we mustn't be rough with them. We're to look after them, giving the

words an emphasis which implies that we too are in *loco parentis*. He need have no fears, we've taken them to our hearts.

Next morning at a school assembly, we sing, and notices are read out. Then Fluff calls the tiny pair to the stage. Taking the smaller boy in his arms and holding his brother's hand, he shows them to the school. The day boys too are told their names. It's very solemn. Fluff's in no hurry to let them go. When he does so, the smaller one hurries from the stage, making us laugh a little and love them a lot. It's a visitation, it's like having some select or blessed persons among us. Stan says we're not to spoil them and makes a point of chiding them occasionally with 'You know the rule!' but he doesn't pat his coat as he does for the rest of us.

'You know the rule' is one of his favourites. Finger upraised, or pulling back his coat to reveal the stick, he reminds us. If we break a rule after a warning, we're called to the front at a dinner assembly for Stan to bend us over in a flurry of simulated rage and give us two or three whacks on the bottom. It's meant to humiliate rather than hurt, and it's effective because it deceives us; if a boy cries as he goes back to his place, we despise him. We know it doesn't hurt all that much, so if a kid cries, he must be a sook. A sissy. The trick is in making us think it's the pain which is the punishment when it's the loss of face. Stan can be cruel on these occasions, though mostly he's respectful of our feelings. 'Oh look at him,' he'll say when a boy's struggling to hold back tears. 'I hope he won't turn on the waterworks!' We don't so much jeer at boys who break down as watch them closely; we're used to seeing each other hurt, because the discipline's done publicly - in a corridor, at the back of a classroom with everyone turning around, or anywhere in the grounds where Stan feels impelled to pull his stick from his trousers. There's a certain malicious satisfaction in seeing someone cry. We're curious. We need to believe that any of us could be made to cry with a few sharp whacks, otherwise authority's empty.

If they can't break us down, they can't bring us up.

We've a master called Taffy Evans who delights in teaching us mnemonic rules for French constructions. It's not clear whether he enjoys French literature, since he doesn't talk about it, but he brings us to enjoy our battles of wits with this obtuse language spoken on the other side

of La Manche, which Taffy tells us means a sleeve. We don't see much resemblance between the English Channel and a sleeve, but if those who live there say so, we suppose there is. Taffy comes late to prep one night, having had, as he sometimes does, a sherry, or port, with Stan. We've let ourselves into the room and we've started work. We're quiet. Taffy turns up, sees someone talking, and orders him out. We're shocked, it's manifestly unjust. The kid's caned and we can tell from the sounds that it's being laid on hard. The boy comes in, white-faced. Taffy gives us a few stern words of warning. We can smell his breath. As he comes round to look over our shoulders, we feel a revulsion; he's abused his power and we won't be able to trust him again. Fair's only fair if it's fair. We don't want alcohol mucking up justice. There's no point in complaining, so we'll have to watch out.

Taffy's good on French verbs. -ir, -re, -er. *Avoir, être, pouvoir, vouloir, savoir. Qu'est-ce-que c'est que cela?* The order of pronouns in '*Il le leur a donné.*' *Même* means even/the same/very according to where it's placed. *Le, la* and *l* apostrophe, which they pronounce uh-poss-trof. Monsieur et Madame Ravel lead the most dutiful lives, forever calling their dog and unpacking picnic baskets at the beach. We're oddly uncurious about France. It's obvious that the language is a living one, as Latin is dead, but we treat it as a vast puzzle, and a means to get high marks if we're quick at learning. We wonder why the British tolerated a French line of kings, and are amazed to hear that French was once spoken at the English court; it couldn't happen now! We had to get the Germans out of their country for them.

We think very little about Germany. The popular imagination hasn't started to revisit the war. Generals are writing their memoirs. Labor's still in power, they're slow to abolish rationing. The clothes list sent to parents says new boys must have blue shirts and white collars. This necessitates much searching through shops, and the purchase of studs. Fluff explains that when white shirts were hard to get, the school adopted a compromise. As the century presses towards its halfway mark we discard our detachable collars and buy white shirts like everyone else.

The Windsor knot arrives. We practise busily. Authority questions it, then accepts. We wonder what it'll be like when we reach the age of

bow ties, since it hasn't escaped our notice that they're worn at formal occasions, and it's whispered that self-respecting men don't buy pre-tied ties with clips at the back! We find it hard to imagine ourselves in long trousers, though we look forward to the day. Ian Johnson the test cricketer comes into our common room one night and it's clear from the way he talks to us that he's sure we'll grow into men; since he's played with Bradman and been to England, it's another visitation. We will grow up, and enter the world!

The school captain comes down to talk one morning. At a Grimwade assembly, with only Fluff and Padre for backing, he gives us tips for coping with the big school. The first danger is that, having been an important figure at the prep, we might have too high an opinion of ourselves, but that isn't the big worry because conceit will quickly be knocked out of us. The danger lies later, if we do well. We're likely, again, to get an inflated opinion of ourselves, and, since we'll be at the top of the school, there won't be anybody to knock us down. That's what you have to watch out for, says the captain. We're impressed. The highest of the high has told us to be humble. It comes as a shock, some days later, when the Padre, in Divinity, questions the advice. He says that when people are conceited, they don't realise it, so they can't detect the fault. The only basis for true humility, Padre suggests, is an awareness of one's smallness in relation to God, and this means staying in contact through prayer. Christ Himself has taught us how to pray, Padre says, and we join him for the hundredth time in 'Our Father/Which art in Heaven/Hallowed be Thy name/Thy Kingdom come/Thy will be done/On earth as it is in Heaven/And give us this day our daily bread/And forgive us our trespasses/As we forgive those that trespass against us/For Thine is the Kingdom/The power and the glory/For ever and ever/Amen.'

We're used to the word Amen. The assent it expresses is given not only at the conclusion of prayers but in our attempt at a unanimous click of heels when assembly's called to attention, and the willingness with which we obey the clock. We peep out the windows, geography over, Latin beginning. Lunch. Time to stop playing and do our hair for tea. Time to line up and listen to Stan. Time to say goo'night, goo'night.

Darkness means a chance for sudden bursts of song, whispered conversations, laughter. We'd love to have pillow fights but it's too risky. The vengeance extracted for this crime might be a visit to Fluff rather than a whack from Stan's ever present stick. We're not allowed out of bed at night for even the most innocent purposes, so when R.G. whispers loudly, 'Hey fellers, come here, I want to show you something,' we say no. He entices us by saying he's going to do something his big brother does. His brother's a triple colour sportsman at the big school. R.G. flicks a torch on and off. He burrows beneath his blankets, making a tent. He calls us by name, voice muffled. Light escapes, we gather at his bed. 'Get down so you can see,' he says, and we kneel more urgently than we do for Padre. R.G.'s small penis is erect, it's something we're used to in ourselves. So what? 'I'll show you what my brother does,' he says, and moves his hand rapidly up and down. Nothing happens. He dabs his fingers in his mouth and puts spittle on his penis. So what? He does it again and again, it's getting rather messy. The penis is red. 'It's not working,' R.G. says, 'but you ought to see it when my brother does it.' He names him by a nickname well known to us because boys from the big school call it when he plays for the school. 'All this stuff comes out the end of his prick, you oughta see it.' R.G. tries a little longer, but we can see it's a fizzer. We drift back to bed. 'You'll all be able to do it,' R.G. says. 'It happens when you get big.' So that's something else we'll have to deal with at the big school; we're glad we're still at Grimwade because what R.G.'s been doing looks unsightly. The immature body's nicer; amen, amen, amen.

Fluff talks about this at assembly one morning. Alone on stage, he tells us that bigger boys will find changes taking place in their bodies. They will notice, when they wake in the morning, that they have erections. He says the word boldly. They will be tempted to handle themselves. They should not do so. The phenomenon is perfectly normal. They should simply shower and dress, treating the matter without embarrassment. We sit still, embarrassed, but knowing that Fluff, who must have said this sort of thing before, will carry it off; we've also heard about wet dreams, but he doesn't say what they are.

There isn't anyone to ask. We're not curious about our futures. We hate people asking what we'll do when we grow up. Be grown up, would be our answer if we bothered to give it; what else is there to do? There's some penalty in being an adult, some loss; we don't know what it is, but it's going to come. Fluff tells us to enjoy our childhood and make the most of our chances to learn; exacting, yet also sentimental, he intimates that we're in some way to be envied. We can't see it, but know that it's because we've got what everybody hates to lose.

Childhood, tabula rasa, the start.

A life as yet unstained?



Little's said of the devil in chapel, and less of original sin. We gather that Catholics are embroiled in those things but Anglicans have too much sense. Catholicism's like some outdated passion from which we've been released. It's all to do with Henry VIII who wanted to have lots of wives, and it's to do with England refusing to take orders from Italy - something we can understand because Musso's armies fought for Hitler. The main thing from our point of view is that Anglicans, like Great Britain until recently, have a feeling that they're top dog. Since there's no-one looking down on us, we can cheerfully look down on the rest. We've no superior, and even though America's now more powerful than England, we see it as a folksy place, exciting, sentimental, and corny:

In a cavern, in a canyon,
Excavating for a mine,
Dwelt a miner,
Forty-niner,
And his daughter, Clementine.

Oh my darling, oh my darling, Oh my darling, Clementine!
Thou art lost and gone forever,
Dreadful sorry, Clementine.

This is one of the few songs we sing right through, and the last verse is odd:

How I missed her, how I missed her,
How I missed my Clementine!
But I kissed her little sister,
And forgot my Clementine.

Oh my darling, oh my darling, oh my darling, Clementine!
Thou art lost and gone forever,
Dreadful sorry, Clementine.

We find, when we study our song book, that there are many disconcerting things in last verses. After the moral uplift of 'John Brown's body lies a-mould'ring in the grave/His soul is marching on' we don't know what to think about 'We'll hang Jeff Davis from a sour apple tree/As we go marching on.' Worst of all is our Games Song, making connections we don't dream of, since Grimwade, like the other prep school, Wadhurst, doesn't have cadets:

Some, in strife of sterner omen,
Faced the Empire's stubborn foemen;
Fought, as erst their sires - her yeomen;
Won the deathless name.
Praise ye these who stood for Britain,
These by foreign marksmen smitten;
Praise them, for their names are written
High in storied fame.

The chorus changes too:

None their ranks could sunder;
Who could shirk or blunder?
So stood they true
To the old Dark Blue,
And all their foes went under.
Honour ye the old School's story,
Heroes who - her sons before ye -
Died or lived, but fought for glory,
Honoured evermore.

These sentiments, like our intimations of sexuality, are put aside as not for us - not yet. We've got the Under 13s and the Under 11s against Caulfield Grammar, the only one of the second string 'public' schools

with which we have contact, because they're near. We think Haileybury, Trinity Grammar and the rest are pale imitations for people who can't have what the big six have, but don't want to be in state schools. Their fees are lower than ours, but why pay at all if what you get doesn't count?

The big school's in a commanding position. St Kilda Road, which we think is Melbourne's artery, runs past the gate. Toorak and South Yarra nestle behind. The Domain, which includes Government House, stretches from the school to the city. Once there, it's a short walk to Parliament, threading one's way through the professional suites and company offices of Collins Street. The M.C.G.'s just the other side of the Botanical Gardens. Sometimes, dawdling home after a game, we're still in the gardens when the bells sound, meaning that the gates are going to be locked. The gardens close at sundown and on gloomy Melbourne days it isn't easy to know if the sun's actually set. We climb a fence, taking care we don't tear our suits. We run the last hundred yards to the Domain Road gate, the chapel square with its patch of lawn, the quad, the lamp post, the sombre two storey buildings with windows picked out in white. Home. Dinner. Sir! Sir! Sir! Supper. Working on, or going to bed. Master on duty. Goodnight, sir! Goodnight _____. Dark. The clock. Whispers. Oh shuddup _____. Pull your head in! I would if I had one like yours. Lights in Saint Kilda Road. Trams. Silence. All nighters, morning.

At Grimwade, the environment's suburban. Houses stretch to Port Phillip Bay, repetitive and uninspiring. The city's distant. On a boring Sunday afternoon we get Stan's permission to go to Alma Road to buy lollies. A double header ice cream. We go in groups, or pairs, and the walks provide us with our most intimate moments. It's on one of these walks that some of our number discover an enchantment. We've been passing the home of a doctor whose back garden contains a miniature train. The doctor invites boys in and gives them rides. Word gets about, others knock on his door. Perhaps he's found an appreciation he needs; he lets these boys have rides too. For a few Sundays, groups go to the doctor's for a secret, wonderful hour, the doctor sitting on his engine,

carriages full of boys, and other boys, ice cream in hand, waiting their turn.

Stan finds out. ‘When I give you permission to go to Alma Road,’ he says, ‘I’m giving you permission to go to the milk bar. Nothing else. So see you go *straight* there and *straight* back again. Do you hear?’ He taps his coat. We hear. The doctor’s train is an episode. We won’t be there again. Alma Road becomes even more boring.

At one corner of our playing field, there’s a tennis court, with hydrangeas outside the fence. If the ball goes through a hole in the wire we have to push among the hydrangeas to find it. If it’s hit into a neighbour’s yard, we’ve had it. They don’t let you in, and we wouldn’t be game to jump the fence because they’d complain to Fluff. Mrs Down likes her tennis too, and sometimes ties a card to the gate saying that the court’s booked from 3 till 5. Occasionally she arrives with friends without prior booking and we’re kicked off. The adults are nice but we know what we have to do. She’s Fluff’s wife, after all. When we have it to ourselves we struggle against each other on blazing Saturday mornings and moody Sundays. The games we play take on the colour of the changing weekend. Sport’s desultory in the afternoons. On Sunday we play rounders, keepings off and French cricket, a game of wits which involves hitting the other player’s legs with the ball. The game’s intimate, and isn’t played at big school. Friendships are formed in this game. On a summer evening, after tea, we run about the playing field like spirits released. Stan comes out to watch, sitting on brick steps. We hurl the ball to our friends, yelling names. Others try to get it off them, also yelling names. Our voices are unbroken. Nicknames, born in ridicule, take on a bonding force. We cry to each other for the ball, making position in empty space. We run at the furthest flanks of the field, we cluster in knots. The ball goes in the air, we mark it as if it’s a football. It’s thrown in a huge parabola towards Orrong Road. Stan considers us. The clock’s white face looks down, the hands seemingly immobile. Will Stan call us in? He senses when we’re getting ragged and takes us in our bloom. ‘Time for showers,’ he calls, and we say, ‘Oh sir, five minutes more?’ He stands, beckoning with both arms. ‘All inside,’ he calls. ‘You’ve had a good time.’ The game’s deflated. ‘Two minutes more?’ we plead. The

last players cluster around the cricket pitches, as if the game's drawn in. 'That was good, sir,' we say, passing Stan, and he's complete, his black hair with its cocky crest as familiar as the bricks we tread.

Sometimes the Boss preaches, and he frightens us, though he tries to scale himself down for juniors. Word gets around when he's at Grimwade, and we ask Stan cautiously, 'Is Mr Sutcliffe having lunch with us today?' Stan knows what we mean. 'He's gone back to the senior school,' he says, lightening our lives. There has to be a Boss, but Fluff has enough authority for us. Though we have prefects and captains, sexuality hasn't darkened their offices. When we go to League matches we notice the elasticised garments worn under the players' shorts, and wonder what they are. Even our masters, when they strip to umpire a game, don't wear these things. Thus their private parts press against their pants or can be seen up the leg of their shorts; our underwear's loose in the old-fashioned way, though we're modern enough to laugh at the advertisements which can still be seen occasionally in which moustached men stand proudly in tight, long underwear. Having our watches, if we own them, on our wrists, and disliking the appearance of gold fillings, we think this sort of thing's archaic. The nation's about postwar reconstruction, although, not having been affected by bombs, we don't quite know what this means. Getting the Japs out of our system, perhaps. Strangely enough, little happens in those early postwar years. The masters come back to school. Cars are hard to get, particularly American ones, so that boys whose parents have new Fords or Studebakers seem to belong to the American half of the century whereas parents who bring their boys back in Daimlers, Austins, Vauxhalls and Morrisies fit more decently with the school. We were set up by a bishop! Our church is described as Episcopalian in America and we don't recognise the name, it's as far from Anglicanism as we are from Rome.

We notice that Xavier boys are swarthier than ourselves. Breeding lines that aren't ours have control of their bodies. What then will we be? At Grimwade there's no answer; it's our destiny to mature at the big school, to be swallowed up, and ultimately to reimpose the pattern on those who follow. Salvete! Valetе! One day we'll be in the Old

Melburnian's part of the magazine. We may, if fortune so treats us, be knighted and merit an obituary.

We may send our sons to school.

The O.M.'s tie is navy with yellow bands cut by a thin red line. When we see these ties in the city we feel supported. The men who wear them in Collins Street look as if they own the city, even if their faces sometimes display networks of red veins. These are the men whose cars fill the Geelong Road on boatrace day, sweeping past the busloads of boarders in a surge of power, trailing ribbons. Travelling to the Head of the River, we like to see cars that declare themselves – red and black for Xavier, green and white for little Geelong College, which has good crews; pale blue with a tinge of gold for our related school at Corio. Nothing matches the power of navy, but that's a feeling that has to be made good by our crews. We pack behind the judge's box at the Barwon, while the passengers in these cars settle more languidly on the southern side of the river, opening their boots and producing folding tables.

There's another type of person called by the Boss 'young old boys', and he speaks of them from the chapel steps. 'There is a social circle which you may enter when you leave school,' he says, 'and of course it can be very attractive at an early stage of manhood.' The danger he speaks of is associated with the motor car because, although the reflexes of young drivers are superior to those of older men, they lack experience, and may be tempted to do rash things. The heart of the matter, though, is a brashness which is likely to lead to behavior reflecting on the good name of the school. 'I can hardly expect you to remember my words if you are in an excited group acting in this way', says the Boss, 'but I hope I can temper your enthusiasm for rushing into situations in which you may act in a foolhardy manner.' We've some notion of what he means because we've seen young old boys acting like lords, and it doesn't appeal. The Boss is right.

Some of us grow old in the school; it's not uncommon for boys to take a second and third year matric so that, released from exams, they can concentrate on being prefects, captains of teams, houses, the school. They're a species of superannuated students who have the confidence of

their coaches and housemasters. We suspect the Boss, even, may unbend a little with his captain, who's carefully chosen; looking at the list of prefects towards the end of a year, we make it our business to find out who's returning. It's then easy to read who'll be captain; we understand that delicate negotiations take place with parents, because the captain's mother will have to make presentations, while the father, though paying the fees, can't subtract from the young man's glory. Babylon and his masters stand easily with these boys and their parents at sporting functions, or on Sunday nights after chapel.

Picture the scene. A low chain and a line of stumpy grey posts mark the edge of our oval. The chapel presses close to the grass. The lime-white boundary curves through practice nets by the hall. High wire stops balls dropping into Bromby Street. Bert Davie, the coach, watches Grammar, two for ninety, chasing Geelong Grammar's 138. The next batsman's padded up, bat in hand, navy blue cap on his head, his boots strigging the bitumen outside the pavilion where three rows of boarders sit watching the play. 'Shot!' we call, and 'Good throw.' We clap on cue. The school captain, a second eleven cricketer, claps vigorously, looking over his shoulder. We clap more loudly. We cheer when the ball reaches our part of the boundary. Someone tosses it to the visiting fieldsman, red faced under his light blue cap, Cambridge to our Oxford. The scoreboard faces us from the far end of the ground, numbers hanging on hooks. Those of us who've done scoreboard duty watch the operators to see if they make mistakes. We understand that in England the score would be given as ninety for two, whereas we put the cost, or is it the failures, first. A batsman goes out. We groan. Forty-eight to win. Our next man puts on - *dons* is the word - his gloves. He steps over the chain. 'Good luck, _____,' we say, using his surname if he's a day boy. The returning batsman's clapped. He disappears, returning when he's rid of pads and gloves. 'What happened?' we ask, and he stands by the end of a row, talking to those lucky enough to hear. The rest of us keep our eyes on the play because the East notices inattention. 'Shot!' we say. 'Good throw.' Forty-seven to win. We think the scoreboard's wrong. 'Can I check with the scorer?' someone asks. The East says no. The clock chimes. 'When's tea?' says an uninitiated rower. Afternoon tea means a

roll call for the boarders – an important one because it's conducted by the East – and huge teapots and plates of cakes for the players. Babylon enters the pavilion beaming, seeing humor in a passage of play that worried us because there was almost a run out. 'Silly fellow,' says Babylon, shaking his head at the batsman. 'What did I tell you about who calls for a run?' The batsman repeats what Babylon's told the XI. He looks sheepish, but Babylon's sternness is skin deep. 'He nearly got rid of you!' says our new Head to the other batsman, who is probably cursing. The young man nods. 'You get yourself a cup of tea,' says Babylon, knowing it'll be poured for the hero. 'I want to talk to your mother.'

At the M.C.G. we can't create this parkland atmosphere. The ground defeats us. The sound of passing trains echoes through the stands, drowning our cheers. The huge scoreboard's used, but, clustered behind the goals, we're too small a crowd to matter. There are no flags hoisted on the skyline. The rule about changing ends in a clockwise direction can't be enforced because it would mean going through the members, and it's closed; even the timekeepers, even Babylon and his friends, have to sit in the stand to which ladies tickets give admission. After each quarter, blue suited Grammar and grey suited Wesley thread their way through the deserted outer, as if in some game of Chinese chequers, until purple caps and blue caps are again behind opposing goals. The cheering sounds thin. Without the reaction from a packed, excited arena, the efforts of individual players seem lonely gestures. Yarra Park, which must, in 1858, have been enlivened by the troupes of boys making the game's first occasion, has consolidated itself into a concrete colosseum. The Southern Stand of 1937, a monster of the mass society, confronts the Members' Stand where, we gather, there are committee rooms, the Long Room, and offices concealing power. Few of us are members, but we know people willing to lend ladies' tickets; it's common for powerfully built young men, whose masculinity is something they're proud of, to present to the gatekeeper a ticket invalid over the age of sixteen. They're let in. Those who don't shave play the trick when they're at university; the bone-coloured gabardine and the blue cap are pulled out of the wardrobe and the young man who is nowhere else a boy gets into the ground this way.

The reason for the clockwise change-ends rule lies in the distant memory of cap-snatching brawls between opposing schools; the practice is almost defunct, surfacing occasionally at the boat races, to be frowned on by the majority as larrikinism, and thoroughly bad form. Charging down the embankment of the Barwon bridge onto hapless juniors of other schools is something that causes Babylon to despatch a prefect. 'Tell those fellows that if they don't get off that hill at once I'll have something more to say.' The prefect delivers the message more tersely. Names are taken in readiness. Our masters don't expect to handle public discipline; we're expected to manage that for ourselves. It's a trick that's neatly embodied in our prefect system, and is most strongly felt when we go in to lunch.

Picture the scene. It's twelve thirty and the quad's emptying because day boys are going to the tuckshop or unwrapping their lunches on seats beside the oval. The boarders, in blazers, khaki shirts and grey trousers, crowd the entrance to the stair. There's a delicate order of entry. Masters coming from the common room, or crossing the quad from the tower, are accorded priority. We part to let them through. They thank us, or, if silent, manage to return our respect. At close quarters we're fond of them, in their suits and sports coats, with their gowns hooked in the rooms they've left. If a boy's in the way they're likely to take him through with them rather than put him aside. When the masters are through, the goodwill's dissipated. The captain, vice-captain and prefects have priority, and it's given with bad grace. As probationers and the East move for the door there's a battle of wills, no-one prepared to push in front of them but quite a few of us pretending we don't see them. East members arriving late escape the jostle by staying within their aura, but have to take their turn. The hierarchy thus has pressure put on it without being overtly challenged. If the dining room's closed, the column halts, masters at the top, boys thronging the steps, others stalled at Fred's maths room and over us, at the turning of the stair, the school in 1908. When the door's unbolted, we push in, Fred says grace, yielding only to Mossy Grenness, the vice-master, if he's there, and we dive on the bread, which is followed by stew. The big teapots are emptied, we stand for

grace, and the dining room's rid of us for a few hours. We empty into the quad while the premiership photos hang, fixed, upon the walls.

Each year sees records broken. N.L., a giant from Geelong College, runs the mile in four minutes twenty-seven seconds. Is man improving? Two boys from Rusden fight out the house sports high jump, one doing the scissors, the other a new method which involves rolling over the bar. He wins at five feet seven. In America, a man takes the pole vault bar to twelve feet. The public school coaches agree that sport shouldn't dominate our lives, so it's decided that training for the Head of the River won't begin until term one starts. Rowing in term three's for fitness only; despite this treaty each school has a crew in preparation which looks suspiciously like the eventual VIII. An old boy who coxed the VIII takes over the crew from Wally. This new coach reads his literature class the first few pages of Chaucer's Prologue in what he says is the best he can manage of Middle English pronunciation. We've never heard anything like it and make jokes in an ee-ba-goom version of the sounds he's made. The Enthusiast explains that Shakespeare's England had a population of five million people and that Londoners were no more numerous than the citizens of Geelong or Ballarat, and much more crowded; we're appalled and delighted by tales of excrement flung in the street and pisspots emptied on unsuspecting heads. Those were the days, or were they? The performances of Shakespeare that we're taken to see are weakest when men fight. We cannot imagine how groundlings in the pit and fops on stage revelled in the contests of men with wooden swords, which we think are wet as piss. We ask the Enthusiast how Shaxper's players (Joffer's already told us he couldn't spell!) managed the beheading of Macbeth, but the greatest mystery, for us, is that Lady Macbeth, Ophelia and the rest of the women who lead stage lives as passionate as the men's, were played by boys with unbroken voices. We're used to the school giving scholarships to trebles and altos because they can sing with a voice nature's sure to take away and may not replace with a talent in lower octaves, but we can not see how Shakespeare could put his immortal lines in immature mouths. The anomaly's impossible to equate with the alleged greatness of Elizabethan England. Sons of a

country which has no confidence in its culture, we're puzzled. *Who will rid me of this meddling priest?* The whole history of England seems to be drenched by beheadings and battles, coronations and galleons bristling with cannons. Greatness? That it's exciting as well as turbulent is obvious, but it presents challenges we don't like to confront. *Nothing in his life became him like the leaving of it.* Joffer says Louis XVI tried to talk above the drum roll before they dropped his head in the basket. Who were these people who, to free themselves from monarchy, did what aspiring monarchs did, namely, behead a king? The idea of divine right frightens us, it leads to the madness of Lear and the bloodbaths at the end of Hamlet. Our Australian air, unable to support this magic, this charisma, *has* to be a better air to breathe.

Yet we're the heirs to this nonsense, and Cromwell and the puritans who smash statues and stained glass windows are worse than vandals because they bring doctrine to support their hate. It's distantly thinkable that someone might seek sanctuary in our chapel, but that they might desecrate it - no!

In form four we're asked if we want to be confirmed. This means taking an adult decision to enter the Church of England, which, it's presumed - not too many questions are asked - we entered when we were baptised. Those who haven't been baptised say nothing because, although it's been explained to us that there's such a thing as baptism for adults, we associate the ceremony with being a baby, and we're growing up. In an Anglican institution, one sign of this is confirmation, and we want it.

The Archbishop does the job.

Well prepared, we've satisfied the Reverend Brown that he can recommend us to the drowsy looking old boy who's Anglican Primate of Melbourne. Expecting Heaven to give us a glimpse of itself, we're disappointed by the man, who's said to be a renowned organist as well as leader of his church. After the laying on of hands as we kneel in pairs before the altar, we take our first communion, feeling the strange power of sweetened alcohol, and swallowing quickly the deliquescent wafer which represents the body of Jesus. The Eucharist! Thereafter strange transformations take place, and boys destined to be sporting

gods become altar boys, their most potent moment coming at the end of evensong when, the last hymn underway, they carry the candlesnuffer before the cross, and bow before dowsing the flickering lights. The week's done.

The year's marked out by visits from the Sears Studio man who sets up his camera and hides himself in black cloth to take photos. Crews, when term one ends, put out from the jetty one last time to be recorded sitting stiffly, blades poised, with the cox looking over his shoulder. Cricketers don blazers and whites for the traditional shot beneath the Witherby tower. School House is taken outside the Boss's study, facing Dr Bromby's pine. Chairs are brought from the studies and the benches are carried down from the dining hall. We wear suits, white collars, and take care with our ties. We wear school lapel pins and stern faces for posterity. We talk like parrots as the rows are put in place. Small boys gather at one side, waiting to be sat, cross-legged, at the feet of the mighty. The captain stands next to the photographer, of whom we know nothing except that he wears a hat, has glasses, and comes back every year. He wants to place boys by their size, the captain by their rank. While the compromise is hammered out, those in position smile, then stiffen. 'God, you look ridiculous!' we tell each other, and 'Say cheese.' The moment comes closer. Our facial muscles tighten. We crack our weakest jokes, laughing uproariously. The Sears man takes off his hat. We cheer. He dives beneath the cloth. We freeze. He pops out, opening his case for a plate. We know the ritual. He rams it in place, we tighten. He dives under the cloth. The captain walks to his place at the centre of the second row, there being no cross-legged boy to impede him. It's close! The photographer, having studied us through his lens, hands out orders. 'Shoulder to shoulder. You and you, swap places. No! You and you! That lanky fellow in the middle, stand up straight! Stop trying to bury your head in your shoulders. The fellow next to him, get your heels on the ground, stop trying to look bigger than you are!' The house mocks those who are reprimanded. 'Come on fellers, steady down,' says the captain, grinning broadly. Half the time we hate him but now he's popular. 'Steady down,' we tell each other, trying to find the face we've

practised. 'All right,' says the man from Sears. 'Are you ready?' He dives under his cloth. This is it! We slick our hair. 'Keep still!' the photographer calls, voice muffled by the cloth. 'Ready?' he calls. 'Right, here we go.' It's awful. Click! In a split second the Sears man pops his head out, cries 'We'll have another!' and dives back. It's the moment we've been waiting for. He says it every time. 'We'll have another!' we yell, beaming. Click goes the shutter again, and he's got his picture, the whole house smiling or at least presentable. 'What about another?' we sing out, but he's packing his things, he never takes more than two.

The proofs go on the noticeboard, weeks later, stamped in purple *Proof*. We study them, pin them back. We add our names to the list - we can order them unmounted, mounted with names, mounted without names. We pick mounted with names. We sense, however much we hate our faces and laugh at our friends, that the trick's been done again. History's grabbed us by the balls. The faces we've given the camera are the faces by which we'll be known. We've spent hours looking into earlier photos than our own, and now it's been done to us. We're on the record, frozen, cooked, embalmed. We're on the way to being entries in *Liber Melburniensis*. Judgement's been carried out. The school's claimed another year.

No-one asks how it's done. We submitted when we had our names put on the waiting list. We aren't important as individuals. Mounted-with-names photos have a little list at the bottom of the card - 'Left during year'. The names, without a face, have no presence. Boys doing matric say, 'Who was _____?' of some first year they never knew. Even those who slept beside him forget, beds aren't empty long. We jostle in the supper queue, leading lives of urgent involvement, yet those who go for reasons of their own vanish without a trace. Even their names, written on desks, are nothing more than a tiny part of the spiritual compost on which the school sits, solemn, menacing, black/blue/grey.

Picture it, if you haven't seen it, brooding over St Kilda Road, not big, but placed to make itself felt, an undistinguished set of buildings, but deeply entrenched. All cities have them - buildings with a bygone aura which makes you know that before the modern city was built, others held sway, and for all you know may hold power still, old power

and old institutions used by new people. Under the guise of tradition, generations of gardeners and cleaners, renovators and new-ideas men go through their motions; things must change in order that they may remain the same. Dogger Banks tells us that the memorial hall was built in 1930; knowing little of architecture, we're amazed. He says the architects went to great trouble to make it fit in with the school. 'They certainly did,' we say, and look at the building anew; there was a time when it wasn't there, and picket fences edged the playing fields, a time when the cadet jacket wasn't blue, when the Headmaster lived in the wing which now contains his study, a time when the library hadn't been donated. They had little enough, the boys of those days, because we don't think our lives are luxurious, and they aren't; the austerity's a form of bracing. It's dignity and assurance that the school keeps its eyes on, and its sense of its own importance. We are what we are because we believe in it, and the less it takes to maintain that majesty, the less vulnerable we are to loss. Who can show they're earlier and more central than we are?

It can't be done. Picture the school, brooding darkly on St Kilda Road. Listen to the clonk of bat on ball, the thump of footies booted hard. Touch the green fields, the turf wickets, impeccably rolled. Listen to the chapel organ swelling as Albert practises for Sunday night. 'Morning, sir,' we call as, clutching sheet music, he leaves by a side door that's never locked, the door we can use if we have to sneak in late. 'Good morning,' he says, pausing, pigeon-toed, in his rush to the masters' room. He doesn't know our names. We wonder what he thinks about, since he doesn't know anything everyone else takes for granted; does he really think Bach's better than 'Massa's in de Cold, Cold Ground'? We think Paul Robeson's marvellous, we don't quite know what Albert likes; he's a foreigner in our midst with his toccatas and fugues and his visiting violinists. There's some feeling he gives off that we're Philistines, and we respond by thinking he's a fool, even if he can read music and we can't, apart from the melody line of a song. We roar our loudest when, in the cramped room at the Lodge, he gives us John Peel:

For Peel's 'View Hal-loo' would awaken the dead
Or the fox from his lair in the morning.

We'll waken the dead for Albert! Does he guess what we're sniggering about when we sing:

For the sound of his horn brought me from my bed ...

We don't care as we would with a more manly master, of whom we've got a few. Jack Brooksbank would glare at us from under his eyebrows if we acted childishly in his class. Bully Taylor would rumble wearily, 'Come on chaps,' and we'd behave ourselves, thinking of his years of coaching and his South Yarra boarding house. Fred would grunt, and there'd be silence. Greasy Gardiner would continue his physics lesson with mechanistic logic, and we'd be caught. Wally Ricketts would threaten us with a belting, then drop into an anecdote about some industrial chemist who'd shown him over a steel mill. Mouse McKean would say, 'Come on, children,' coldly distancing himself so we'll squirm to get back into his favour. The Boss would quell us with his imperious dignity, and Babylon ... Babylon would talk our ears off, seeing some future we haven't thought of ... Babylon would make us feel, though his days as a South Australian and Oxford cricketer are behind him, that we're in some way old-fashioned. Yes, old-fashioned, though the future's in our hands.



We don't want to change. If we did, it'd mean that we'd been wrong, and our system's built on certainty. 'Name the crew,' roar the East. That's easy, we start with the cox, stroke, seven. 'Start at the bow!' they roar. 'Which way do you think the boat's going?' We blush. The things you have to know are secret knowledge which you acquire by listening to the right people and giving back what they want. The system can't break down, it can only change direction by saying it's doing no such thing. The Red Sea parts for Babylon, he rumbles the names of teams. Those who've played three of the five games get their colours. Oars of victorious eights are mounted around the school. The gong bids us to dinner. Babylon says nothing about quad cricket. His fat Chrysler replaces the Boss's English car. The Sears man comes three times a

year. The line of masters moves steadily to the stage, Babylon bringing up the rear as the Boss did. The hall houses boxing, the school dance, assemblies, and Albert's concerts. He teaches two of our number to sing 'The Bold Gendarmes' and we love it, clapping till they repeat the song. We leave the hall flushed with pleasure. Professor Burke comes down from the university to talk about architecture; we enjoy his mockery of Toorak Tudor and the State Theatre's Melbourne Moorish. We're not above enjoying the artificial stars of the State's ceiling, but it seems right that clever people should mock this sort of thing - it is a picture palace, and it *is* vulgar.

We follow Bradman's last tour of England. We wake up one sunny morning to hear that the Don and Arthur Morris have brought us a miraculous victory. Three for four hundred and five on the last day; it's never been done before! We watch Melbourne steal a premiership from Essendon, who'd had a cake made with 'Premiers' on it. We watch Coleman come and Jack Dyer go, Fred Fanning, Norm Smith and the Cordners. We watch our greats move into Melbourne's red and blue. We listen to the first Hit Parades. We read about the latest miracle cure for cancer - an unqualified practitioner from outback New South Wales says he knows how to do it. Those who've been treated by him swear by it. Australia wins the Davis Cup. We go on cadet camps to Puckapunyal; we're trucked to a barren plain to practise shooting. 'Hug your rifle into your shoulder and it won't hurt,' sergeants tell us. Puckapunyal's freezing and to our amazement we discover that armies begin their days at 6 am when an amplified bugle blows Reveille through loudspeakers strung about the camp. 'It'd freeze the balls off a brass monkey,' we say, falling into line; we've pissed but we haven't showered because the army's lousy with hot water. Some shave in cold water, most of us don't have to bother. A doctor tells us that when an army camps, the first thing it has to do is to dig latrines; urine's sterile, but shit has to be covered or flies will spread disease. Camp life, we discover, involves peeling spuds! We can hardly wait to get out of the place. Soldiering's for idiots who can't find anything better.

At school, the most unlikely people finish up in uniform. The Enthusiast's a captain, and Happy Gaynor also wears the Sam Browne

belt of an officer. This makes military training a little less frightening, but the full seriousness of it is brought home on Anzac day. The whole school forms up on the Steele – except, of course, for people like B.C., who’s chosen not to join – with our boots, gaiters and rifles. We fix bayonets, striving for a unanimous click! We present arms. The visiting dignitary salutes. We march past, jerking our heads to gaze into his eyes when the command’s given, ‘Eyes right!’ We put our rifles back in the armoury and file into the hall. After prayers, there’s an Anzac Day address, then the Chaplain reads the names of old boys who died in World War One. The Reverend Brown’s voice has a ghostly quality about it, as if he’s speaking from a tomb. Some of us count the names, others are too afraid. We sing:

I vow to thee, my country,
All earthly things above;
Entire and whole and perfect,
The service of my love.

Then the dead of World War Two have their names read out. We sing ‘O Valiant Hearts’, our best bugler plays the Last Post and the Reveille, and we file out. The rest of the day’s a holiday, but it’s had the guts torn out of it. We do homework, read, go down to the Jolly Roger to buy a Herald, which carries pictures and a description of the march through the city and the services at the Shrine. It’s a relief to put on our suits for dinner and to listen to a more natural roll call. Baillieu, Bodinnar, Brown? Sir, sir, sir. Whitehead, Wiseman, Withers? Sir, sir, sir.

First things, last things; no-one’s buried from our chapel and baptisms are few and far between. What does that say about us? No-one asks. We carry our confidence into services. The closest we come to acknowledging the unthinkable is:

Hold Thou Thy Cross before my closing eyes,
Shine through the gloom, and point me to the skies;
Heaven’s morning breaks, and earth’s vain shadows flee:
In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me.

The names of the authors are printed beneath our hymns, but we find it hard to attribute flesh and blood to these versifiers; there's more life, for us, in

There is a happy land, far, far away,
Where little piggies run, three times a day.

and

Like a mighty tortoise,
Moves the Church of God;
Brothers we are treading
Where we always trod!
or in profaner parodies such as
Nothing could be finer
Than to tickle the old vagina
In the mo-o-o-o-orning

which we roar, to the tune of Carolina in the morning, from the back seats of buses returning from Geelong; travelling in the dark gives us daring. We're not a dirty joke school, and initials - and those only in the day boys' toilets - are our only graffiti. Public toilets, where the full range of obscenity's displayed, shock us. We're told to stand for women on trams and buses, but the Boss makes a distinction: 'I do not refer, of course, to young flappers who are quite capable of standing, but to older women whose need is greater than yours, and for whom, in proper respect, you should give up your place.'

We flush beneath our caps if the women who take our seats look closely when they thank us. And they'd better bloody well thank us! We despise females who don't acknowledge what we're doing. We're fairly certain of gratitude on the No. 8 tram running through South Yarra, but in Brunswick and Carlton we only get up because we have to, though we're often rewarded with a warmth we don't get elsewhere. We suspect we're seen as curiosities. We're not afraid of Collingwood or Footscray, we just don't carry any weight in those places.

They're slums. The shootings we read about in *Truth* happen in Lygon Street, Carlton, and Gore Street, Fitzroy. No-one we know lives there. The Jewish people who send their sons to our school live in St Kilda, Caulfield, Malvern. There's some rightness in these suburbs, just

as the opulence of Toorak makes us feel secure in our position on a main route to the city. With that backing, we command what we see, not vice versa. The Yarra's ours because we row on it; others merely use it. The Domain's ours because we play football and cricket on the oval across the road. Government House and the Shrine are in accord with us, and pose no problem. What we don't own, we don't want.

The Royal Agricultural Show, one of the city's most popular festivals, is something the boarders can easily enter because it brings city and country together. We meet our fathers sipping tea, or whiskey, in the New Zealand Loan or Dalgety's pavilions, where they're entirely at home. Our fathers look after themselves well. We're used to being picked up in Bentleys and Jaguars if we're going somewhere with day boys. Our friends are good at imitating their fathers' voices if they want theatre tickets put aside for Saturday night, when, if the old man can be persuaded to pay for the outing, they'll collect. We don't expect our mothers to have that sort of influence; we sing

Praise Him for His grace and favour
To our Fathers in distress ...

not knowing what distress, if any, our fathers have been in, because we're incurious; it's our masters we watch, digesting and rejecting their mannerisms and outlook. We believe, for instance, that some of them could hardly exist outside the peculiarity of a school, perhaps only our school. In the dormitory one night, C.C., whose uncle's a judge and whose father's a senior civil servant, blurts out, 'If you look at our masters, none of them are really *men*! They've all got something wrong with them. Haven't they? You think about it.' We think. Happy Gaynor likes a drink. We call him Shick Dick, from shickered, meaning drunk. It's unfair, but when he goes to his room there's a relaxation in his movement and something in his voice we seize on. Shick Dick! Lippy Fell limps, and we wonder why a naval commander finishes up with a bunch of kids; has he run away from the action of the world? For each of our masters, there's something mockable. Fancy, for instance, rumbling around the corridors, fingers covered in chalk, like Yofty Franklin! Fancy walking as he does, as if he's just got off a horse!

We're much harder on our own peculiarities, never dreaming, however, that these failings, if that's what they are, are already set. Believing that we're still in the making process, we don't see that to a large extent we're already made. D.Y., in the year he learns how to interfere with the clock, remarks at table one lunchtime, 'You know, if you really look at these kids' faces,' and he waves, 'you can imagine what they're going to be like when they're old.' We hit that one straight back. 'Imagine what you'll look like in twenty years. A hyena, probably.' It passes for wit, but we look at each other, and he's right. The bones, and the beginnings of wrinkles, are there. The voice, the temperament - we've already grown up in some part of our being that's yet to declare itself. We sing:

Praise Him still the same for ever,
Slow to chide and swift to bless

-wondering what He's got in store; not another war, dear God, but what?

At 4.45 we turn out for footy on the Wadhurst ground; if an assembly runs late we go to the house noticeboard. Only old notices - relief! Then the captain bustles down the passage, notice in hand. We know what it is before he's found a drawing pin.

FOOTBALL TURNOUT

WADHURST OVAL

5.15

Half an hour of hell! Or thirty-five minutes, or forty. How many laps? Kick to kick, round the ground, or exercises? Round the ground for the better players, push ups for the rabble? We pull on our gear in the locker room. We clatter down the drive, trying to look cheerful. The captain emerges, footies under his arms. 'Everyone into the centre!' he yells; we rush. 'Round the ground,' he tells us, when he's glared us into steadiness. 'There's a lot of you, so keep it open. I don't want to see more than two people going for the ball at once, everyone else has to call for the ball, and lead! Right, where's a lead?' One of the East heads for open territory, calling the captain's nickname. The ball's stab passed and in a moment he's kicking to a prefect or another of the East. 'Where's a lead?' the captain yells, and we scatter, calling his name. He

boots footies left and right, then rushes out of the centre, calling for a pass; when deciding who to kick to, we go for strength. We mustn't disappoint those who can make things nasty. Thus in the swirling action the big names are kicking to each other while small fry gather balls the seniors have lost sight of. In a clamour of nicknames we move the balls around the darkening oval, copping abuse if our pass falls short of a champion. 'Into the centre!' yells the captain, and tells us how many laps we've to run. We look at the clock. 'Those who don't keep up are going to run another lap,' he threatens; we puff through the mud, legs red and knuckles white. Running past the Lodge we've got the clock in view. Shit! Seven minutes to shower and dress. We wish assembly had finished earlier. The Boss will be in his study or sitting by a fire with his wife while we ...

What *are* we doing?

Knocking at Fred's door to tell him we're back, handing in exeats to the prefect with the roll, we're giving up our right to be anything but what we're made. The boy who's been browsing in bookshops, the boy who's dined at the Windsor, has come back. When his name's called, he responds. We're careful about using Christian names, because they're intimate, and we keep our distance, even when we're pressed together in the shower. We've each got a future to make; we're bonded in that we're making it together, separate in that we're competing, not necessarily with each other but with the world in which we're to be established. We're not an Order, because we're in something we'll have to get out of one day when, sadly or with relief, we give up our locker, if it's in a good position, to a younger boy who's bagged it. We sing:

Those returning,
Those returning,
Make more faithful than before.

In our last term we sometimes carry ties that aren't school ties in our pockets and change them when we get out. Or we leave the school with a sports coat under our overcoat, or change at a day boy's house. We feel self conscious when we go to the university for *dictée* because, though almost all the students clustered around the door of Babel, the New Arts building, are in uniform, the university students aren't. They

have a freedom about them we don't share and, if the notices around the place are to be believed, hold opinions about the issues of the day, the main one being whether or not the peace movement is communist inspired. We keep ourselves aloof. We check our acutes and cedillas, and we return to school, stopping in the city for an hour. We'll get mum and dad something for Christmas if they give us money. The last summer has a mellow feeling about it. The school's fields have never been greener. Getting ready to go, we dig ourselves in more deeply. We talk more to our masters, we look harder at old boys. We give the little kids a hit at quad cricket; that is, taking a catch, we nominate someone smaller to bat. Why not? We've had our share ...

When the matric exams are coming up, we're given a week's swat vac, which we spend at home, some of us working furiously, others letting our minds go fallow so we'll be fresh when we see the exam papers. We compare timetables on the Sunday night when we're back. Everyone does English, and it's first. Some of us prefer morning exams, others the afternoons. We dread two papers in a day. We talk for ages about the ideal spacing. We put on our caps, we catch a tram. We have lunch in the city, thinking ourselves grand. We catch another tram - there's always someone who knows how to get to places - and we get out at the Exhibition, a gargantuan building in what we think's poor taste. It echoes. Our feet, thousands of them, because the city's sixth forms, in uniforms and not, are there, boom as we enter. The seats are numbered, we find our places. We study our neighbors, we look for our mates. There are stories about lemonade bottles with the answers written on labels which have been soaked off and put back on. Numerous other tricks, such as dates or formulae written on scraps of paper hidden in the barrels of fountain pens, are mentioned in the folk lore of examinees. No-one we know practises these tricks, but we're sure people do. We finger the exam booklets on the tables in front of us. There are tales of brilliant students who wrote two and a half books in three hours, while we're also puzzled by those who've got a first though they've only answered three out of five questions. How can this be? Surely you've to do what's asked? 'Read the paper,' we've been told. 'If you think it's hard, don't panic. Find the question you can do, and do it. You'll find,

as you get warmed up, that the other questions don't look so hard after all? We do it. It works! Who needs a lemonade bottle? We've been taught, we know what to do!

Some people dash in late. There are rules about having to stay for thirty minutes even if you can't answer a thing. At the thirty minute mark, some people leave - none of ours. After two hours, a different sort of exodus begins. There's a university exam at the far end of the building and the uni people make a din when they leave. The supervisor announces that as a compensation, our time's to be extended by seven minutes. Seven whole minutes! We look at the clocks. $5.15 + 7 = 5.22$. We divide the time remaining and work to schedule. We need thirty five minutes for the last question and ten minutes to look over. That means the second last question has to be finished by 4.37. We put our heads down, scribbling notes on the paper because afterwards, outside, we'll compare. What did you get for No. 3? The best brains are consulted anxiously. Calculations are reworked during intense, hushed arguments. Did you do the one on Calvin? I knew they'd have a question on that! We grab each other's papers to see which numbers are circled. We group and regroup according to the questions we've done. We clamber aboard a tram, still talking. We get another in Swanston Street, we get off in St Kilda Road, we make our way to the quad like homing pigeons, knocking on the door of the staffroom if our master isn't by the lamp post, asking, 'How did you go?'

We tell him.

We sing Kipling's Recessional; we are going down.

Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,

Lest we forget;

Lest we forget.

We join the Old Melburnians.

We wear the tie. We're out. We're through. We're done.

We go to an O.M.'s dinner and get drunk, but we're on our best behavior when we meet the Warden of Trinity. Ormond's full of Scotch chaps, and Geelong College. Trinity's got people from Geelong Grammar, even places like Haileybury. We've moved on, but we're still

at home. We buy gowns. We're fined if we don't attend chapel. Many of the hymns and psalms are ones we know.

The day thou gavest, Lord, is ended;
The darkness falls at Thy behest.

We're referred to, somewhat stiffly, as Trinity men. There's a gate-book which we're supposed to sign if we come in after half past ten. We do or don't, as we please. Who's to know what time we get home? One of our number doesn't get up one morning, doesn't answer the door when we knock. We get a ladder and peer in the window. He's in bed with a girl, fast asleep. Yes, Trinity's where we proclaim ourselves men. We start to get cars, we eat Chinese meals in the city. We argue with the theologs, amazed that someone could enter the priesthood - ministry, if you like - in this day and age. Christianity belongs to the past, and we're free of ours. It hasn't been hard.

We go to lectures, we bring friends back for lunch. We talk into the small hours, puzzling over law, history, philosophy. Some of us work hard, some don't. We know that if we don't pass our year we'll be sent down. There's an oak in front of the Clarke building and college lore has it that when the oak comes into leaf those who've been taking it easy must work. Exams are near. We pass, we return to meet another batch of freshmen from our old schools - young, brilliant, shrewd, naive, earnest as we were. We show the new chaps around. We ask them to our rooms for supper at ten, sherry before dinner. We like to hear them talk while they've still got what we're on the way to losing - the freshness of boys, the physical attraction of those in whom the thickening, filling out process isn't complete. They have their youth. We have the first year of a degree.

We're contacted by O.M.s who've gone into business. We're asked for donations; the school needs money for a music school. Babylon's getting his way. We drop in, a master says, 'Ah, they always come back,' and it's embarrassing because it's true. The tie's stronger than we thought. Our friends a year behind are now house captains, or in the First XI. The kids are still playing quad cricket. We watch indulgently. Grammar-

Scotch games drag us back, we chat with people we used not to like. We don't necessarily like them any better, but we've got each other fixed permanently in our pasts. We don't say 'class of' as the Americans do; we ask 'When were you at school?' and search for names in common, swapping names of those who're in England, Queensland, hospital. We see T.F. at university, we're not game to ask about the story that he was in Pentridge. He doesn't look hardened, maybe it isn't true.

One of our number who was in the VIII a few years ago takes over from Wally; we're becoming responsible for the school. It's our turn to look after its interests now that we're getting contacts of our own. We go to dinners in remote country towns, we have twenty first birthdays at 9 Darling Street, South Yarra, an address that's almost our club. We learn to play billiards, and squash, and go on pub crawls. The pass course is to set out from Flinders Street and have a beer at every pub on the way back to college. The honours course is to start at the college and drink our way to Flinders Street and back. People who do this usually make hurried departures from dinner, their gowns trailing, to chuck on the lawn outside. These departures are signalled by a roar which combines approval, condemnation and amusement. We're telling ourselves we play hard.

Wearing our O.M. ties, we go to golf days in Healesville. We drop in at Bully Taylor's in South Yarra to see who's on with whom. We drive around Melbourne passing beer bottles from back seat to front. We dine at the Windsor when our friends' parents are down from the country, or interstate; they call for Buring's Rhinegold and we think there's sophistication in having these bulbous bottles on the table. In Carlton, where we sometimes eat, the house red is served, if we murmur to the Italians, in thick china cups because of Victoria's licensing laws. We learn to like espresso coffee, it's more exotic than tea. It's something our parents aren't into, it's the drink of our generation. We're starting to arrive.

Looking back to the day when we left Grimwade, we don't question that we've had the best available path through those years. We've paid for our position and we've got it. College men don't take all the honors, but we're strongly represented, and when we talk to our friends who travel in from Glen Iris or Brighton, or struggle in a flat in Carlton,

we know there's strength in numbers. Trinity has tutorials, and a library, but its real advantage is its communal feeling. When you're stuck, there's someone to talk to.

And talk we do, hours and hours of it. It's not only late night philosophising, it's the smartarse rhetoric of future barristers running a debating society, and present or future grandees making after dinner speeches in which it's as obligatory to laugh at the right point as it was to turn out for football when the house captain could subject us to, or spare us, misery on the Wadhurst ground. The difference is that the clever have taken over from the physically adroit; our other flank, as it were, has moved forward. Trinity also has its senior student, and its Union of the Fleur de Lys, its teams, annual play, and common room dances. It has boisterous horseplay and long nights of study. It has fires in its rooms and when an overstoked fireplace - a favorite practical joke - causes a chimney to catch on fire, we gather around the oak rippling with merriment as the fire brigade jets water onto the alpine gables of Bishop's. 'Bloody intellectuals,' growl the firemen as we make it clear by our attitude that what's work, and danger, for them, is a sideshow for us. We take these curses as encouragement; it's what one expects of another class!

Noblesse, nonetheless, obliges, and we know we'll have to be more serious when we take up the positions we're preparing for; the hauteur so casually displayed, now, at Trinity, will have to be kept, then, for clubs and intimate gatherings of those in the know. At least we're well prepared.

Distinguished Old Collegians hover about our lives. It's said the Warden is against compulsory chapel and fines us regularly in order to make Council face the issue. We don't know if this is true. The Warden attends all services, owlishly considering the congregations; we know he's noting attendances and that his list of fines will be unchallengeable. We respect him for it because even dirty work should be well done; he's got a Council, as does Babylon, as did the Boss. Studying, as we do, Plekhanov's *The Individual in History*, we might ask if these authority figures are not, ultimately, the same man, but we don't. We've characterised them too strongly for that, seeing them as individuals rather than roles.

We do the same to each other, remarking most keenly on attributes and antics rather than what we're going to be.

We're going to be what we always were – little boys shaped carefully to replace a certain group of men.



Between Trinity and the Warden's Lodge stands the red brick chapel. It's said, and as regularly denied, that a wealthy Mr Horsfall had dinner with the Warden of the day and offered, somewhere down the port bottle, to build the college a chapel. The story runs that he woke in the morning to find that his host had rung the newspapers, ensuring that the promise would be honoured. Wily Warden! We think the chapel's ugly, but we ask ourselves if the present incumbent of the Lodge is as tricky as his predecessor.

Around the chapel are a couple of acres of grass, kept down by cows. Oddly enough, the area's known as the Bulpaddock, the last syllable being stressed. The Warden has several children, so that jokes about the bull paddock centre on his person. Distant, impeccably courteous, his contact with his residents is via meetings with the senior student, appointments in his office, and pleasantries exchanged at the chapel door. This is a mode of governing we understand.

Picture the scene. In twos and threes, young men with Trinity ties, and academic gowns wrapped about them, stroll down the path to their angular place of worship. Tutors wear their coloured hoods. The Reverend Bird and the organist have disappeared into the vestry. The door's open, but it's our style to linger. Rushing in is bad form. With the sun shining, and chit-chat sustaining the moments, who wants to go in? Sounds from the organ float outside. Sydney Road traffic adds a little to the scene. The Warden, being pleasant with whoever's willing to approach him, stands back. We know he's memorising who's there. The freshers enter first, then, the movement begun, the rest of us make circumspect approaches, standing aside for each other, and particularly for the women of Janet Clarke Hall, who wear mortar boards to hide a little of their hair. The tutors are drawn to the door; the Warden waits

a little longer, then enters. Those who come after must be considered late, which is also bad form. The organ swells, the Chaplain enters, and service begins.

It began six, eight, ten years before, a hundred years before, when our parents had their interview with Fluff, when the ragged pupils of Scotch and Grammar managed three goals in the course of two Saturdays in Yarra Park where now the Cordners, Norm Smith and Jack Mueller reign. Well underway when Colonel Brady did whatever he did at Omdurman, still in progress when bishops and Headmasters had their portraits hung in panelled rooms, it's a ritual, sacred and secular, invoking a long line reaching back to Adam, stretching from Moses to Bully Taylor and his boys whom he begs to 'turn it on' when Grammar's in trouble. Turn it on? Like the eternal flame, we never stop. We sing:

Gaudeamus igitur,
Juvenes dum sumus;
Post jucundam juventutem,
Post molestam senectutem,
Nos habebit humus,
Nos habebit humus.

This song has later verses too, and we sing them, after listening to the translations of Captain Evans, or Taffy Evans, or Albert Greed struggling with a language he doesn't seem to know much about:

Vivat Academia!
Vivat Professores!

We sing:

Vivant omnes virgines,
Faciles, formosae ...

We sing:

Vivat es Respublica
Et qui illam regit!

We sing:

Send him victorious,
Happy and glorious,
Long to reign over us;
God save the King!

Picture the scene. We sing, ten thousand of us, aged six to one hundred and sixteen: no, four, if we start with the toddling blonde boy held up by Fluff, benign patriarch, to nineteen hundred and fifty if we include Jesus as founding member of the club, and infinity if we take Jehovah as the starting point, as we've been taught. How majestic is the Bible! It begins 'In the beginning ...' and tells its Jewish/Greek/Aramaic story, settling on the divinely human figure of Christ crucified, a Gothic/Protestant/post-Cromwellian figure who hovers, Holman Hunt-like, about our counsels, our services, dispensing the medicine we can't take if we're to live profitable lives in the world we're being prepared for. Poor Jesus dies every day, his voice silently penetrating our lives:

Let not your hearts be troubled ...

We sing:

De Camptown racetrack five miles long,
Oh! Doodah day!

Jesus tells Judas he'll betray him; we sing:

I come down dah wid my hat caved in,
Doodah!
Doodah!
I go back home wid a pocket full of tin ...

Peter betrays Christ three times in the garden:

Oh! ... doodah day!

An ear's sliced off in Gethsemane; we sing:

Gwine to run all night!
Gwine to run all day!
I'll bet my money on de bobtail nag,
Somebody bet on de bay.

We sing:

Gwine to run all night!
et cetera, et cetera, et cetera ...

Christ resurrects, doubting Thomas pokes a hand in his side. We sing 'There is a Tavern in the Town'; we sing 'Rule, Britannia'; we sing 'The Lincolnshire Poacher':

Oh, tis my delight on a shining night,
In the season of the year ...

Albert says we're too noisy; we love to think of our voices raising
the dead:

When I was bound apprentice, in famous Lincolnshire ...

The Lodge rings with our raucous baritones:

Full well I served my master for more than seven year ...

We wonder, as if we don't wonder. where our apprenticeship will
lead ...

Picture the scene. We're lined up, this year's six hundred, the decade's
thousand. Our masters are gathering in the foyer. The boys who're to
be made prefects are in the front row, so the appointments are no secret.
It's not Anzac day, the lamp under the Roll of Honour's black. There's a
rumble of clatter, the bang of seats. Prefects move along the aisles, quell-
ing us with glances. Dr Bromby's pine stands darkly by the west wing of
the school, the playing fields are watered and mown. Rollers, light and
heavy, wait their call at the edge of the oval. The chapel door's unlocked,
and piles of hymnals sit on a table for Sunday's visitors, Saturday's wed-
ding. It's a quarter to four, the clock chimes the quarters. Trams rumble
in Domain Road. The Moreton Bay figs shade the lawns between our-
selves and the gardens. All's quiet at Merton hall. The O.M.s have had
a successful dinner in London. No-one's seized the Suez Canal. Russia,
as far as we know, hasn't got the bomb. Australia's on top in the cricket.
Wharfies are as troublesome as ever. The first Holdens are filling our
roads. India's got independence, communists are active in Asia - the Far
East. Melbourne ends in Oakleigh, then the villages start. If we fly, it's
in DC3s with names that end in -ana. No-one's been to the moon.
Sir Robert Menzies has yet to be made Warden of the Cinque Ports.
Chifley's been Prime Minister, and been tipped out. Melbourne's poet
is Furnley Maurice - The Victoria Market Recollected in Tranquillity.
Milk's brought by horses, bread in baskets. When King George dies, the
city's draped in purple and black. The Herald's full of an ex-communist
called Sharpley. New nations are springing up like weeds. We sing:

Oh, it's my delight on a Friday night,
With a bottle of Richmond beer ...

We laugh at ourselves, gay blades. Albert tells us to sing the right words or there'll be trouble. There's no danger in Albert but we do as he says because it's what we do. The masters gather.

The captain comes to the centre of the stage. We stand.

They file in - Joffer, Chazzer, Dogger, Greasy, Spike, Mouse. Yofty, Scotty, Fred. The Enthusiast. Mossy's at the front, Bovril's the skinniest. Aaaaarrgh, we think, hearing him in our minds. Lippy limps, Happy Gaynor stops himself from grinning. Wally looks as if he'd like to have his megaphone. Noel Austin, Shovel Austin, Tickle. Berty Southwell contrives to look dignified while having an air of a bird about to be surprised. Bert Davie - 'My son Brian' we say to ourselves, that being our response to him. The Chaplain. Jack. Max, Whizzer, Hec, Sizzle, Twaxy, Mal; one or two teachers whose measure we haven't taken, and last of all, the Boss, Babylon, the King.

Jehovah, Jesus, and the rest. The captain of Melbourne football team, the cox of the seventh VIII. The premiers of 1931, the photographers who've taken them. Down the years they march, these Men of Harlech, singing:

Hark! I hear the foe advancing,
Barbed steeds are proudly prancing,
Helmets, in the sunbeams glancing,
Glitter through the trees.

The file turns right at the foot of the stage. Those who're to be made prefects shift nervously in their seats. Mossy and those nearest him disappear at the top of the steps, emerging from behind the curtains which close to end the acts of *The Ghost Train* or Ian Hay adaptations of Wodehouse. Our humor's Blandings Castle, our mystery not far from Edgar Allan Poe. Mossy moves to the seat beside the Boss's, beside Babylon's, the other masters take their places. Be seated, indicates the Boss, nodding; be seated, he says, coldly, to his school.

We sit.

We kneel in chapel, we stand behind the goals, eyes peeled to follow the action in the middle of the Steele, the Wadhurst, the Domain. Fawkner Park, when we have to go there. Geelong, Xavier prep. We sing the Games Song, Albert standing at his piano but bending to strike a key.

Play together, Dark Blue Twenty ...

Bully's on stage, his thick lips moving; what's his singing like? We'll never hear it, there's privacy in numbers. What are any of us like? There's secrecy in uniform. Look at us, dressed by Ball & Welch, Buckleys, Myer - no baggy knees, no frayed cuffs. No shiny elbows, no lunch stains on our trousers; we're dry cleaned. The shirts are all white now that postwar austerity's over, unless they're khaki, the home dress of the boarders. Of the masters, only the Enthusiast's dressed with flair, his bow tie visible from well down the hall. We envy his skill with these things which, when we try to tie them, seem to point up and down instead of sideways. His cuff links are the biggest in the school.

Long and little marks in plenty ...

We never raise a fist to our opponents, on or off the field. It's unthinkable. The Games Committee eventually bans boxing. Those of us who're terrified of being punched by leather fists are secretly relieved; secretly because our fear can't be shown. We stand in the quad while the committee deliberates, saying, 'It's a barbaric sport,' but not saying that the primitive instinct it arouses in us is fear of being broken. The school loses nothing in banning the sport because our discipline's geared to obedience, not defeat, except those defeats which can be graciously accepted by a handshake or a speech after the match. When we use the en tout cas courts rented by the school in South Yarra, we have to rake and water the courts before and after use; we point out that if the court's raked after a game it doesn't need to be raked before, but it seems that others beside ourselves use the courts, and we often find them unraked. We take on the neglected duty without too much grumbling because it's what we expect to be doing most of our lives. Noblesse does oblige, even under the Southern Cross, which is part of our coat of arms,

because it's on Victoria's shield, and we're the state's premier institution for the young. The young, the young ... we sing:

Get your kick, let none prevent ye
Make the leather roll.

Getting ready for matches, we wrap bandages round our feet; they pad our boots and protect our ankles. Senior teams suck oranges at three quarter time and the firsts at half time too. The last words of every team with a quarter of football coming up are:

What are we going to do to them? (captain)
Bowl'em over! (everyone)

We're used to versicles and responses. We have them in chapel all the time:

The Lord be with you.
And with thy spirit.

We kneel, say amen. Stand, sing, pray. Learn our verses. Clap. Upon demand, we name the house probationers.

Mark your men, keen effort straining,
On the ball and show your training ...

We know all about that. Haven't we done fingers/knuckles/palms as many times as there are mitres on our thousand-capped heads? Haven't we lain, bums in mud, lifting our legs four inches above the ground for the thirty seconds dictated by the East?

We have, and we've wondered about our mothers, staying in Melbourne, week after week, while our fathers work businesses, farms, each caring, in their lonely way, for the sons they've sent away. We've thought about those things because they're natural, but we sing:

Get another goal.

We're often ashamed when we go home. Are our parents getting their money's worth? Are we, transformed, something they can love? 'Are those the manners they teach you at Grammar?' they ask, while at school it's 'Is that what they teach you at home?' We sing:

None our ranks shall sunder

We never sing the line in hall without repeating, in the echo chambers of our minds, the last word; there's an upper and lower case to our assertions. Heading for the shower in the mornings, we have to walk the long aisle between three dormitories of beds; four, if we're in the East. Some of us go towel over shoulder, displaying; it's said that F.T.'s brother, who left before we reached senior school, walked with a pair of footy boots dangling from his penis by their laces. Others move through, erections hardly softened; pricks are like reputations. It's a way of valuing ourselves, just as the masturbation which shows itself in the puffy skin at the collar of our mostly circumcised penises is a way of exploring the strange incarnation which has taken place inside our bodies. We're full of ... the Holy Spirit in chapel; in the dormitories, a grey-white glue that spurts at the insistence of our hands, or even, in the middle of the nights, our imaginations. We hate wet dreams just before we wake up because they haven't dried out by the time we get up; everyone understands, but it's still embarrassing. Have we then nowhere to go? We've sexuality without partners, a force without an answer.

SUNDER!

In chapel, we hear how the Angel appeared to Mary. How a star and three wise men attended the humble birth. How Mary and Joseph fled to Egypt. How Jesus, still a boy, amazed the Pharisees. How he worked with his father in a carpenter's shop until, the moment arriving, he began to teach. The story's sprinkled with the quaint Biblical expression 'in order that the prophecy might be fulfilled.' The Reverend Brown explains the Jews' notion of a Messiah, and blood sacrifice. Abraham and his son we find hard to swallow, but God intervened, providing a ram ... this time, He provided Himself:

Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us. Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world, grant us Thy peace.

We get a lot of amusement out of the capitalisation of the divinity, and out of the Thees and Thous in Shakespeare. 'Dost thou ...' and 'Art thou ...' we address each other in playful mood: 'Thou wilt find thyself in a heap of trouble if thou doest that!' It's a far cry from kicking each other under the table, as we do in our junior years. The spot where the

two benches meet is the worst place to sit because if there's an uneven number, neither end wants the extra person. Surreptitious shoving takes place, designed to move the unwanted person onto the other bench without attracting a rebuke from the top of the table, or the impatient eye of Fred.

Who will shirk or blunder?
If all are true
To our Dark Blue
Our foemen must go under.

At a set point in proceedings, the Boss nods to the front row and the prefects-to-be stand up. Like the masters before them, and all who've been made prefects since the hall was built, they disappear for a moment at the top of the steps, then take their place at the front of the stage. Each says, 'I' - and he gives his full name - 'solemnly swear' and he repeats the oath. When all are done, the Boss shakes hands with them, then they turn, giving no acknowledgment of the clapping, to make their way back to their seats. Authority's been handed on. We sing:

Honour ye the old School's story,
Those who played and won before ye.

Since they've been probationers for ages, they're quite used to their orders being obeyed, but there's a delicacy about giving instructions too soon after this public promotion. For a period of hours, even a day or two, they're our possessions, and we can ask, 'How's it feel?' or say, 'Prefect, eh? Congratulations.' They're bound to reply whether they like us or not, because what they've been given has been taken from us. Divinity, royalty, even in their lesser offices, are vampires to whom we're persuaded to yield. We sing:

Bear the Dark Blue flag to glory

aiming only for glories we've been told about, because what Handel unleashes in his choruses isn't attainable in the lives we've been given; we sing, drawing it out in a *rallentando* whether Albert's time beating allows it or not:

Grammar ... to ... the ... fore!

The masters file out while we stand restlessly. The school captain, if he has any messages, sits us down. Under the semi-supervision of our prefects, who're as keen to get away as we are, we rush from the hall. The doors are flung open on the oval side. 'Jesus!' we shout at each other, 'don't push!' or 'What's the hurry?' when we're all in a hurry, and all pushing; the tension has to get out, it's as sure as our shoes are black. We *don't* sing:

Some, in strife of sterner omen ...

Someone in the boarding house is given a description, supposedly written by a medical student, of the act of sexual intercourse. The narrator purports to be a woman, since as far as we know such things are not written about homosexual activities, and since it helps our imaginings to have it written in this way. We pass it around, excited. It's all there - not the situation, which we haven't experienced, but the excitement we feel about bodies. Some of us pretend we aren't interested, others don't believe it. 'I'll bet you couldn't read that aloud without getting a horn.' Someone takes the challenge. Standing at the front of the prep room - it's Sunday, we're in grey trousers after chapel - he reads. The woman in the story fondles the man's penis. She draws him into her body. The reader's trousers tighten; we point this out, laughing. 'I can't help it,' he says. 'What did you expect?' We're bulging ourselves. The story's thrown away, and doesn't reappear ...

UNDER!

Reading Shakespeare, we're struck by the word *lechery*; the self hate's something we recognise. And didn't the greatest of English writers say of lust in action that it was an 'expense of spirit in a waste of shame'?

STORY!

The poisoned cups, the swords through the arras in Hamlet, are no resolution to our problems. Passion's purple brim will kill us if we sip from it.

GOAL!

We've to deny what we know's inside us, and let ourselves be shaped by formulae:

HEROES!

The Reverend Brown shocks us by taking a boy outside to cane him. He has, till then, been perfect. His Divinity classes continue, rational and non-sectarian, but his other-worldliness is lost. Even Yofy only threatens.

FAME!

We don't throw dusters, or chalk. We'd be expected to own up if we did. When people are to be caned for not turning out twice a week, there's no argument; the roll's the record.

BLUE!

Yellow for Rusden, red for Morris, green for Ross, the day boys straggle from their tog rooms to be marked off by their prefects. They've got a soft life, boarders think. Their training isn't as tough as ours and when it's over they go home. On Saturday mornings, almost by reflex action, we pick up bat and ball and look for someone to have a hit with. Boys going into the city stand, in their suits, by the benches overlooking the Steele while those staying at school put on boots, and kick to and from the goal square. If our clothes get wet we hang them on the radiators, those of us who've got studies, or in the boiler room, that steamy turret opening off the passage to the lockers. Lippy's room, when for some reason he's moved from the airy chamber above the Boss, opens off the passage on the other side. When some cases of polio lead Fred to say that we shouldn't risk infection by mingling with crowds, which means we're not allowed to go to the grand final, we ask Lippy if we can listen on his radio. Generous Lippy says he'll be out all afternoon. Some of us go to the final anyway, putting on our exeat that we're visiting relatives. Others listen in Lippy's room, cursing ourselves for being unadventurous. What could you catch in a crowd, there's plenty of air between the germs! And aren't we exposed to each other's germs all the time; does Fred think he can seal us off from disease?

FOEMEN!

Those who go to the final come back hoarse. They're flushed and full of that roughened energy with nowhere to go we know so well from our afternoons in the outer. 'You should've seen it when Coleman got his hundredth,' they tell us. 'They went wild! Olly Grieve rushed over and shook his hand.' Yes, we heard it on Lippy's bakelite radio. We know

those amazing roars, we've often heard them on Saturdays when we've been idly booting a footy on the oval; swelling through the trees in the Domain, they've got a primitive power. We can imagine the crowds calling 'Barabbas' and 'Crucify him!' We're not keen on crowds, except our own.

TRUE!

Pansy Finlayson likes to see what books we've bought when we come back from the city. Sometimes we find our way to Margaretta Webber's, high on her eighth floor, but our favourite haunts are Cheshire's, buried in its basement, and Hall's, with a floor of secondhand books. Theology's being thrown out while Velikovsky's *Worlds in Collision* is most certainly in. Apparently there are factual bases for the miracles in the Bible. Having digested Bernard Shaw on the stupidity of Archbishop Ussher setting the date of creation at 4004 BC, we're sceptical. The Reverend Brown gets us to read *Your God is Too Small*, by J.B. Phillips, and confides to us one day, though he's not a gossipy man, that one of our masters wears red flannel underwear to ward off rheumatism. Who can it be? The Chaplain smiles, not saying. Yofty? Bert? No, not Bert. Bertie Southwell? Tickle Turner, Bruno Brown? It's got to be one of the older men; what else have they got locked away in their lives? Glory?

GLORY!

Colonel Brady pretends to read the paper while we do prep. He gets some of our names wrong when he calls the roll, but glares at us if we correct him. He knows who we are. We're the Boss's children, and he's there to keep us in order. We read *Back to Methuselah*.

DARK!

Somerset Maugham is a big name in literature, as is Huxley. C.P. Snow's yet to arrive. We hear Walton's *Belshazzar's Feast*. Sir Bernard Heinze conducts everything. The Microscope Club's revived. Debating teams consider the proposition 'That modern culture is decadent' and 'That vivisection is necessary to progress'.

BEFORE YE!

Trinity announces its scholarships. Matric honours and exhibitions go to our swats and brains. The one who does best becomes Head of the School, a sort of shadow captain, except that the honour's held in the

year after he's left so that while the position of power's always filled, the position of the school's leading intellect is always to be filled, as it were.

Love Me, Sailor's banned. We read the bits.

A horse called Bernborough wins race after race. Bradman makes his hundredth hundred, and retires. A little man called Hassett (Geelong College) takes over. The world spins on its way. In the upstairs common room we flip through *The Illustrated London News*, which is full of pageantry, castles in Spain, and Roman bridges. We sometimes look at Punch for the jokes. Colonel Blimp is an invention of the Australian - in fact a New Zealander - David Low. Percy Taylor describes the football in purple prose for *The Argus*. We sing. We oil new cricket bats, and the chaps in the XI play them in. We bowl. We stand behind the nets as our best bowlers try to hit Max Haysom's stumps. An English team practises in our nets and we see how much faster, and how much better they are, than our bowlers, or Max. We name them to each other, hoping the nets won't let the ball come flying through. It swings for them as it never does for us. They call to each other and joke like ordinary humans. Gentlemen in suits accompany them; we imagine them sitting in discreetly placed seats at Lords. Our groundsman, who's English, watches them keenly. They don't look at all like Dr Grace, who, with his bushy beard and colossal effrontery, would be our model for Dr Bromby if ever we tried to imagine him. Mostly, he's no more than a name. The Bromby tie has black stripes across the navy; without two white threads separating the colours you'd never notice the difference.

We read poems entitled *Non Nobis, Domine*. Et cetera. Not unto us, O Lord. We read extracts from *The Hound of Heaven*, by Francis Thompson. One of our masters remembers that years ago John Masefield visited the school, holding the hall spellbound as he recited *Reynard the Fox*. We know how it ends:

He passed the spring where the rushes spread,
And there in the stones was his earth ahead.
One last short burst upon failing feet -
There life lay waiting, so sweet, so sweet,
Rest in a darkness, balm for aches.
The earth was stopped. It was barred with stakes.

We know about Masfield. He admired the Anzacs – the finest body of men gathered together in modern times. They reminded him, he said, of the line in Shakespeare, ‘Baited like eagles having lately bathed.’

The poet, we notice, ran his hero to a dead end. No wonder he admired our soldiers. There’s another hunting poem we’ve read: *The Runnable Stag*. In this poem Masfield’s thirty hunters become three hundred ‘gentlemen’, and they chase their stag for thirty miles till the noble animal turns at bay, then perceives his only way out; he plunges into the sea, swimming till he sinks. We discover from somewhere that rutting, which stags do, is our word rooting – which we don’t. It’s all very morbid. Gil Crowther, who teaches Intermediate History, tells us about William Wilberforce and the anti-slavery movement. Though he focusses on the stamping out of this evil trade, we glean enough to let us picture brutal Europeans force-marching blacks to waiting ships. America! In *Argosy* magazine we read of a load of slaves allowed, though still chained together, to have a few minutes on deck. Bonded by more than their chains, they come to a common decision, and jump into the Atlantic. Empire, nations, greatness?

In matric we study Barnard Eldershaw’s *A House is Built*, and consider the cost of building anything. The school’s successful, so who’s paying how much for what? We can’t account because we’re inside the system and can’t see what it looks like; we only know what it knows, looking out.

We read *The Man of Property*, and *Loyalties*, and discuss whether Galsworthy’s a better novelist than playwright. We see *The Ascent of F6* at the university Union. We see *The Skin of our Teeth* and *The Lady’s not for Burning*. We read *Man and Superman*. It’s not easy to link Nietzsche and Clark Kent. We visit the art gallery and see Dobell’s Helena Rubinstein and one of Stanley Spencer’s modern dress pictures of Jesus. Nolan’s Ned Kelly hits us in an unprotected place. We’d like to sit up all night and listen to the cricket in England, but we’re not allowed, and besides, how can you hear through the static on short wave?

It’s said that there are people working on a new translation of the Bible. Why’s it needed? King James’s version is Authorised, so why

unseat authority? Ecclesiastes and the Psalms couldn't possibly be improved, even if we don't always understand them. The archaic diction is appropriate for religion, which should seem old, hallowed. How else could you say, 'O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt'?

In Lent, we're given cardboard to be folded along lines to form money boxes - for the poor, presumably. Of the church's seasons, the period after Christ's resurrection seems flat; he didn't do much, once he'd come back. Christmas and the crucifixion are the times that capture our imagination - and the teachings. Jesus is the historical figure we know best, ahead of Napoleon and Caesar. He's in our lives daily, saying, 'Blessed are they that mourn,' and 'Judge not, that ye be not judged.' He's an earlier, but spiritual Clark Kent, walking on water, throwing money-lenders out of the temple. His voice, absent from the earth for almost two millenia, rings with uncanny contemporaneity. 'Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.' He's so sublimely wrong!

BLUNDER!

One of the masters we know least well is Lou Clayfield. He's the editor of a volume of short stories. Since he's the means by which they reach us, we wonder where he gets them from. When Fluff retires he's sent to Grimwade - or that's how we see it; having left the place ourselves we couldn't imagine that a master from the big school could want to go there.

UNDER!

Another mystery is Hec Wallace. Our best mathematicians say he's a good teacher, but he steadfastly refuses to offer anything we can grasp hold of - pet ideas, affectation of dress. He won't let himself be a base on which we can build a legend. As his tall figure goes down the aisle at assemblies, there's no response we can make. How much are our masters paid? We hear that it's been decided that to attract, or keep, the best people, the school must match the Education Department. This puzzles us. Why would anyone who could be at our school want to teach in

those places? We get Weston Bate on the staff; he's from Scotch, it's as it ought to be.

SUNDER!

Rival streams, we feed into the murky waters of privilege. Our eights row strongly, coxes calling. Bats tapping in the block-hole, we wait. Our teams shower with the opposition. The scoreboards return everything to nought. Gordon Sargood gives what used to be Wally's crew to Tony Smith. Noel Austin replaces Bert Davie. Babylon says, on their retirement, that he's always felt somewhat in awe of Bully, Bert, Yofty and Gil Crowther, his four most senior colleagues. What can he mean? They seem harmless enough. Babylon manages to convey that one or two of the school officers he's inherited might have been better chosen, but they empty out, in time, and he copes with them while he has to. The strangest thing for us, when we take our leave, is to realise that we're bonded to a hundred other boarders and six hundred day boys whom we might never have known and - for most of them - would never have chosen to wear the same brand marks as ourselves. The years remaining, which seem to stretch to infinity because we've youth's confidence that we can't die, are already marked by an influence we're not ready to understand, even though we've been preached at four times, forty times a week for as long as we've been inside the gates, behind the book and mitre, inside the bluestone walls. We'll meet each other in distant places and say, 'Do you remember?' or 'I ran into _____ the other day,' and we'll bring out anecdotes or say, 'Good heavens, what's he doing these days?' and, strangest of all, we'll *want* to know.

The blue suit is something we'll never quite take off, or, if we manage to get out of it, anyone who knew us will be able to put a cap on our heads by saying, 'Are you going to the O.M.'s dinner?' Even if we don't go, the fact that we might means the mark's still there. *Ora et labora's* on our leftside ribcage and receding hairlines. We'll go grey and pick up knighthoods, or, renegades from what's happened, we'll bring the hauteur of our training to the causes of the Left. Eccentric, we'll become conservationists, hatters; comfortable, we'll breed racehorses and sweep through the city in chauffeur driven cars, unable to spit out the hook. We'll never hear 'The March of the Men of Harlech' without thinking

of those other words grafted onto it. We'll sing with voices which have first heard themselves in the Lodge, once Dr Bromby's house, where, with Albert at the piano, we've laughingly recited the names of those who, in whatever century it happened, borrowed Tom Pearce's grey mare:

For I want to go to Widdicombe Fair
Wi' Bill Brewer
Jan Stewer,
Peter Gurney,
Peter Davy,
Dan'l Whiddon,
Harry Hawke,
Old Uncle Tom Cobley and all,
Old Uncle Tom Cobley and all.

Babylon has his way, the school softens. Those who use it for their various reasons keep using it. Building appeals build buildings. Architects make them severe, rectilinear. No colour's added. *Liber Melburniensis* is brought up to date, Joffer being given time to finish the job. Anzac ceremonies go on. 'I am the Good Shepherd; the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.' The Reverend Brown, though he knows the service by heart, looks at his card before he intones, 'This is my commandment, that ye love one another as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.' Then the names will be read out, the names, the names: eleven of them for the Boer War, two hundred and ten for the first bloodbath, two hundred and fifty-eight for the second. The Chaplain will call and the hall respond:

The souls of the righteous are in the hands of God
And there shall no torment touch them.
Grant them, O Lord, eternal rest
And let light perpetual shine upon them.

The hall will sing, will sing, will sing. Solemnity restored, the hall will empty, but the names, the names, will stay behind, in gold leaf on those parts of the wall graced by honour boards. A few of us, in every year, will achieve this distinction. Are any of the soldiers' names on the

walls? We've never looked. We've never seen the things these ceremonies stand for defaced, nor heard them challenged. What we stand for's as strong as stone.

The Catholics have some idea that their faith is built on a rock. St Peter is apparently buried under the church that bears his name, it's the sort of mumbo jumbo you'd expect from people who sold pardons. The Archbishop of Canterbury, though he gets around in ridiculous attire, doesn't claim to be infallible. We're more impressed by St Paul, anyway, because he's as fine a source of rhetoric as the gospels. When he says, 'For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then, face to face,' we think we know what he means. Boys, we're tutored, cajoled, and we want to know for ourselves, but it seems that if we follow the teachings we've heard we'll become, simply, their continuation. Is that enough?

Depends, depends; we've heard that the wages of sin are death, but we hope to do better than that, or what's a Rolls Royce for? St Paul's hard on the flesh, it seems that it has to die if the natural's to give way to the spiritual. We hardly know how much damage he's doing us, but we can see that the mystery which is to occur, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, won't happen until the amazing second coming and the blast of the last trumpet; we're stuck, therefore, in this life, with our unredeemed selves, which is more or less how we want it.

A few of us are talking of Oxford. We've produced Rhodes Scholars. Yofty's a Cantab, Babylon and the Reverend Brown are Oxonians. The Dramatic Society puts on *Arsenic and Old Lace*, and the next year *Treasure Island*. We think there's an art in female impersonation, and admire those who can bring it off; how could you have a play without them? Apparently the prisoners at Pentridge are always looking for plays with male casts. It was no problem, we know, for Shakespeare. Brittainia's a *she*; Germany's a fatherland. The Nazis who were clever at making rockets have been allowed to work in America. We're backing the wrong horse, if we only knew it. No wonder Babylon thinks we're dated - or does he think the tradition can go on? He must; he parts the Red Sea and reads the lessons in that rumble we can only just get used to. He's comfortable when he says 'Your Grace' to the Archbishop, and it's England he wants us to visit. Must the century turn, then, about its middle, leaving

us pointed in the other direction? We certainly don't think so because we change to meet the times. The kitchen's modernised, the library's renewed. Our labs have everything we need. New rules for formal and informal dress bring us up to date. The waiting list's as long as ever.

We tickle each other's legs under the desks. We sing:

The minstrel boy to the war has gone,
In the ranks of death you'll find him.
His father's sword he has girded on,
And his wild harp slung behind him.

We borrow each other's protractors. We sing:

Oh, 'twas in the broad Atlantic,
Mid the equinoctial gales,
That a young fellow fell overboard,
Among the sharks and whales.
And down he went like a streak of light,
So quickly down went he,
Until he came to a mer-ma-id,
At the bottom of the deep blue sea.

We keep careful notes of the marks Yofty gives us; a smart answer gets us three. We sing 'Poor Ol' Joe', and 'Rule, Britannia'. We ask if anyone knows anyone we can take to the dance.

My father was a Spanish captain -
Went to sea a month ago.
First he kissed me, then he left me -
Bid me always answer No.
O No John! No John! No John! No!
Oh Madam, in your face is beauty,
On your lips red roses grow ...

Flanders poppies grew in the mud. We call November the eleventh Armistice Day.

Oh Madam, I will give you jewels;
I will make you rich and free;
I will give you silken dresses.
Madam, will you marry me?

We crowd around the lamp post, a long line, staring.

O No John! No John! No John! No!

The gong sounds, we take our eyes from the lighted chapel, the smiling guests, and we tread the brick pavement for our thousandth dinner in hall.

Oh Madam, since you are so cruel,
And that you do scorn me so,
If I may not be your lover,
Madam, will you let me go?

Baillieu, Bodinnar, Brown? Sir ...

O No John! No John! No John! No!

Benedictus, benedicat, per Iesum Christum, Dominum nostrum ...

Then I will stay with you forever,
If you will not be unkind.
Madam, I have vowed to love you;
Would you have me change my mind?

The plates are stacked in front of the prefect. Our appetites are too good to let us be fussy. He serves. If it's a Friday, we talk about the teams. Fred glares, we try to keep our voices down, but when we're excited the hubbub rises. Fred stands. *Benedictus, benedicat, per Iesum Christum, Dominum nostrum ...*

O hark! I hear the church bells ringing:
Will you come and be my wife?
Or, dear Madam, have you settled
To live single all your life?

Half an hour before prep. Books. Swat. Trig, translations. *How important were the witches in causing Macbeth to murder Duncan?* Five minute break. The house captain plays Al Jolson on his wind-up gramophone, the East crowds into his study. 'How I love ya, how I love ya, my dear old Swanee ...' Lippy lets the song finish before tapping on the door. 'Sorry sir!' Lippy says 'Break it up now. Shouldn't you be in your study, _____?' and _____ goes.

O No John! No John! No John! No!

Another forty minutes prep. Roll call. ‘Almighty God, forasmuch as without Thee we are unable to please Thee, mercifully grant that Thy Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts.’ Lippy’s off the platform before we say Amen.

Cocoa, biscuits, the dash upstairs. Night. The East rages, or all’s quiet. We settle in the dark. If anyone prays we haven’t heard of it. Goodnight sir, goodnight, goodnight. Someone talks. Shuddup _____. Oh shuddup yourself, I’m trying to find my keys. Well shuddup, you don’t need ’em till the morning. Oh shut your face I wanta know where they are. Night. The resurrection of seven-thirty assured, we give ourselves to darkness and dream, meekly trusting that nothing we did today will bring us a belting tomorrow. In chapel, it’s ‘I have done those things I ought not to have done, and left undone those things I ought to have done.’ Lying in bed, we hope not. When we bring our parents to see the school, we point, saying, ‘See that window, fourth from the tower? That’s where I sleep.’ When we come back, years later, with families, we point. ‘That’s where I used to sleep,’ we say, knowing there’s a fragment, a trailing cloud, as Wordsworth might have had it, in there, cowering behind the black walls that keep out the night, waiting for the morning, the shower, the dash to Fred’s room, the day’s lessons, the chimes of three thirty and the assembly, when, having mocked our masters’ swaying shoulders as they move with assurance down the aisle, we’ll wait for Albert’s beat, open our throats and sing:

Grammar ... to ... the ... fore!