



ESAW
CHRISTMAS
SURPRISE
2013

EARL OF SEACLIFF CHRISTMAS SURPRISE 2013

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Mark Pirie (Friend of the Family)

A. Stanley Sherratt

Short Stay (Friend of the Family)

Earl of Seacliff Art Workshop

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*You may be a boy and you may be a girl
You may be bald and you may have a curl
You may dance a jig, waltz, or do a twirl
But wherever you are in the world
It's Christmas Surprise from the Earl*

MICHAEL O'LEARY

My poem *Flip Side of the Ballad of John and Yoko* was written the day John Lennon was shot and this year is the 33rd anniversary of that tragic event. Below is an excerpt from my forthcoming autobiography, 'Die Bibel: The Authoritative History of Michael John O'Leary, Earl of Seacliff', which describes the circumstances around the writing of the poem:

I wrote 'off the cuff' the moment I heard the news that Mark Chapman had murdered John Lennon in New York City: *Que pasa New York? Que pasa New York? Hey, Hey!*

It was a great shock to me and many of my generation all around the world. That night I went to the Captain Cook and met Peter Olds and we had a wake for John in remembrance for all he had done for us over the years. It is interesting that Bob Dylan, not noted for his eulogizing other artists of his generation, has written a song, 'Roll on John', in praise of Lennon for his 2012 album *Tempest* – everyone copies me eventually!

FLIP SIDE OF THE BALLAD OF JOHN AND YOKO

6pm News, Tuesday, Ninth of December, 1980

“We have just heard from New York

Ex-Beatle John Lennon was shot today . . . !!!!!”

i

There I was sitting on a sofa
In one of the southernmost cities of the world
Listening to the radio whilst thinking about cooking tea

Well, how can you be honest about how you feel?

I'd just turned the station over
To get the “real” news of the world
When I heard the words written above: well fuck me!

What else can you do but swear at a time like this

I am thinking about my mother, his mother
Two of the responsible for bringing us into the world
And now John, you're gone! There's only me

Yoko and me, and the rest of humanity together in grief and love

Yoko's in a black scumbag, I left the sofa
Wandered aimlessly around the room the day you left the world
Your death is a climax of events forcing mortality on me

Everybody's talkin' 'bout Pol Pot, Nazism, Socialism, I.R.A.
and junkies

Give me a chance, brother
You have helped me understand this world
Now you're dead, am I enslaved or freeeeeeeeeeeeeeee!!!!!!!!!

Fuck the revolution, we have bred another generation

ii

When it all began, I was just another
Beatle fan. A teenager from the other side of the world
Looking for something more interesting than school's authority

Distances travelled in space, time and sorrow add up to one thing

Your songs and books helped me discover
In myself, what all the education in the world
Could not; that I could write and illustrate my own story

Knowledge to one is ignorance to another, unless there is love

1968, Hey Jude, the death of my father and mother
Like a lost black sheep I entered the outside world
Sold my records, went to work in a dark, thankless factory

If a person makes enough of one thing, he or she becomes a thing

While I got lost in nothing, you found your lover
For whom you left the Beatles, left the wife, shocked the world
Yoko, through the years of illusion, offered you reality

Eternity may be a stone in Wales, but it is now we must live

And so, lest the press smother
You and your love both withdrew from the world
Which had built you a boat of fame, then left you all at sea

How many oak trees have been allowed to grow from the acorns?

“Just like starting over”
Is not starting over, you are now dead to the world
Sean and Yoko no longer have the shade and strength of their tree

That fallen tree made them a house which they must make a home

iii

We were always a decade away from each other
Yet we were of the same generation
You were the spiritual pathfinder
I followed to the point of penetration
And I never lost you, but let you go

It was not lack of love, but life itself, caused the separation

Now you too have joined the dead and living dead
Who haunt and torment my existence

On this quaint and sadly crazy planet on which
To live is not just to breath, but an insistence
That each such breath is a test of courage and will

Which we understand at a metaphorical distance

Christ!

I know

It ain't easy!

BRIAN E. TURNER

SNOW

A : It is snowing.

B : Yes

A : What colour is the snow?

B : Black.

A : It's a black snow day?

B : Yes.

A : What do you know about the colour of snow?

B : I have studied at the ac-ac-academy.

A : You've read the books?

B : Yes.

A : What do they say?

B : They say that snow is black.

A : Do you see the snow?

B : No.

A : How do you know it is black?

B : I have imbibed the eminent monotonies of Professors Belcher and Wattman. I have conducted an exegamination of the factorials desiring the stricture of divers fundamentals such as quantum, quacks and drakes of various colours and emotes, muons, bisons, bosuns, elephants and etcetera, omitting the construence of disorder, and under what conditions they are entwilled together in a thread of logic. I understand the mechanicals of the univalve and how the word turns.

- A : You can prove all that?
- B : I have a piece of paper from the offal board of professors saying that my studies are complete and by decree my ducktorial status is confirmed.
- A : Is that your decree on the wall?
- B : Indeed it is.
- A : But I cannot read it.
- B : That is because black words are printed on black paper.
- A : Can you change the background to white?
- B : Of course not. If I changed the black to white Professors Perlman and Pilcher would treat me with disdain.
- A : That is a way of thinking.
- B : So you say. Do you see the snow.
- A : Yes. Outside the window.
- B : What colour is the snow?
- A : It is white.
- B : What gives you the authority to say that?
- A : I do not profess to know.
- B : That is not good. You need to study the eminent exegesis of knowledge and then the snow will turn black.
- A : I see.
- B : Will you do that?
- A : Perhaps not. It's just a matter of thought. Throw away your decree.
- B : I cannot do that.
- A : Why?
- B : Because then the snow could be white.

F W NIELSEN WRIGHT

WAHINE

We did think twice whether to face
Such rain and gale force
Winds as inch deep drenched
The pavement and threatened to wrench
The massive steel and concrete building loose
From its base. This was as close
As the car would take us. We plunged into the rain
And staggering in the wind, stumbled, rather than ran
To reach shelter. As we and our colleagues sip
Our morning tea or coffee over desultory gossip
About this atrocious weather that still continues
Unabated, we hear the indifferent news
That the *Wahine* on her voyage across the strait, unable
To enter harbour in such a storm, has been disabled
And is drifting without power or help through the heads
But is in no immediate danger, the broadcast adds.
We had spent the night before wrecking our love
On one another's bones. We believed
Too readily that all was well, all shipshape,
Regardless of the storm whose vehemence and sharp
Onset intermittently we felt
Through concrete. We joked about the geological fault,
Rumoured to lie below the hillslope,

Which one day carrying building and all could slip
Catastrophically. We had awakened at six,
Two naked bodies in a single bed, had sex
Anew to the lash splash of the storm, with no thought
Beyond. Hours later we learnt with shock that
The *Wahine*, overwhelmed by an exceptional wave
Had sunk in the harbour. Just as conclusively we've
Become strangers. Fifty lives were lost
Within sight of the city viewers. The last
Of the wreckage was salvaged the other day.
That's how we watched our love die,
Uncomprehendingly, though in full view
It happened. Tell me, what became of you?

DUNGBEETLE ISLAND

I

The Staten Island ferry
Runs frequently, is free.
And there you have the Statue
Of Liberty looking at you,
Some three hundred feet in height
From foot to spiky hat.
A little taller stood Pharos
Lighthouse far welcoming seafarers.

II

So built our great commander,
The legendary Alexander,
The city and therewithal a mole,
The Heptastadium by name.

A marvel seven furlong long
Does with another so belong
That ran nearly a mile
Seaward to Pharos isle.

There Ptolemy the Second
Erected,
First of its kind
On Pharos, a lighthouse enorm.

Ships led home free from error,
A fire by night, by day a mirror
That the sun's rays reflected.

III

To later lighthouses a model,
An image most potent of icons,
The structure to a mountain likens
Achilles Tatius, that in the middle
Of the sea almost reached the clouds.

So far below the building flowed
The waters that it seemed a shape
Suspended high above the surface,

While on the mountaintop there rose
A second sun whose rays
So to the harbour serve as
Guide for incoming ships.

IV

But tenth century earthquakes
Weakened foundation and stonework,
So that in the twelfth century
The lighthouse fell in ruin.
But later still a fort replaced it,
Reusing rubble to modern times that lasted.

V

Arab geographers in later times
In different, that is legendary terms,
Describe Pharos, a watchtower from
Which might be seen what threats from Rum?
What ships, men? all bent on assailing
Arabia from Byzantium came sailing.

So the vast mirror, used before as
A beacon, turned fantastic spyglass,
By bringing distant prospects close
Did Mussulmen enable
To see as far as
The emperor's palace in Constantinople.

VI

So speculation ran to excess
With these geographers, the myth
They entertained, that Pharos
Had been erected along the axis
Of earth and rode as its foundation
A gigantic crystalline crab,
Zodiacal imitation,
Sculpted by ancient polymaths
After its heavenly counterpart.
But some authorities, not Arab,
No crab, but scarab, it report.

GALLIPOLI: The Ballad

Russia, Dostoyevsky's country of soul,
The German interventionists assail,
With long range cavalry trample its soil,
Its cities besiege with troops hellbent on conquest.

Puts up stiffest resistance, the Nyetcong,
Running though hills and forest supply trails.
Their armoured trains, wood burners, rule the rails
As Lenin, Stalin, Trotsky, ply controls.

For Russian independence sounds the knell,
Unless by capturing the Dardanelles
We break a way to ship heavy supplies
To Lenin, staunchest of Britain's allies.

So Churchill. Straight the British high command
To occupy Gallipoli peninsula
Launches a landing force by Anzacs manned,
Warriors from lands remote and insular.

Eight months of battle, unrelieved attacks,
On and by Kemal Ataturk's stout Turks
Still show along the shores and heights entrenched,
Anzacs in blood and sweat and downpour drenched,
No passage won to bring the Russian lion
Supplies, but dupes of destiny rely on
An Alexander or Napoleon.

(From *The Pop Artist's Garland*, HeadworX, 2010)

MARK PIRIE

CHRISTMAS PORTRAIT, WITH POHUTUKAWA AND SUMMER DRESS

Wellington Harbour in day-
Light, birds singing; gently
Blows the harbour breeze,
Cooling a small girl's way.

Above, rimming the tips
Of the houses, bright red
Needles of pohutukawa trees;
The birds emit summer lisps,

And this small girl is on
Her walk to Christmas trees
And tinsel views. She gladly
Thinks of presents upon

Her way. Her mum holds her
Hand, knows the way to town,
Guides her to the crowds;
A flowery print dresses her.

ODE TO THE “PHANTOM”

(Chris Martin)

The Phantom “Tom” couldn’t handle a bat
He wasn’t the brave bunny: that was Chats!
Yet he deserves a line or two all the same;
Quite often he helped us stay in the game.

“Tom” the Phantom was the work horse
Of our team, charted a lengthy course
In his Test career, and came up trumps:
A dependable bowler, quiet, no bumps.

Injuries seldom kept him back. They say he
Was first a Hippie with long hair, but Let it be!
“Tom” took over two hundred wickets
that few will better; he was the man we
all want in our side; admirable to a tee.
His ride’s now over, let me clip his ticket!

Chats = Ewen Chatfield

KIERAN READ : TAPE MAN *

*(Written after observing Kieran Read's tackle on
Quade Cooper during the 2012 Bledisloe Cup Test,
Eden Park, Auckland...)*

No need to 'Bring back Buck',
Now Kieran's in the ruck.

Read gets there, hits em' hard;
No need to 'Bring back Buck'...

Read's our man; a taped up
Buck – rock solid at 8.

No need to 'Bring back Buck',
Now Kieran's in the ruck.

* Kieran Read's taped-up head brings back memories of former All Black Wayne 'Buck' Shelford famous for the 'Bring back Buck' signs over the past twenty or more years.

(From Sidelights: Rugby Poems, The Night Press, 2013)

DOCTOR WHO

(A 50th anniversary triolet)

Doctor Who turns fifty;
O to be a Time Lord,
He regenerates, never dies.

Doctor Who turns fifty,
But it's very hard work:
Cybermen, aliens, Dalek...

Doctor Who turns fifty,
O to be a Time Lord.

PARK SONG

Sitting in the shade,
a tree speaks of summer's gone.
In view, a boy and family play
where I used to as a boy.

With friends no longer in
touch, we would carry my gear bag
down to the park, then hammer
in wickets with the tip of a

bat handle. We used tennis balls taped
to swing; but a stray hit ended up
on the motorway below. *Six and out!*
my mates would call,

excited to draw a loose shot.
Those summers still seem like
yesterday; the old tree speaks
of them under the shade.

SHORT STAY

A SHORT STAY

lb
me?

Mis-hit.
Sh**!

dissent:
sent

You blind?
Fined

O:
Caught.

(From *The Short Stay Anthology of
Shorter Cricket Rhymes*)

A. STANLEY SHERRATT

MĀUI'S CONQUEST OF THE SUN (No. 7)

O stay thy rapid flight O Sun,
For scarcely is the day begun,
Than quickly fades the feeble light,
And greyness deepens into night.
Thus people of the earth had prayed
For longer sunshine, lesser shade.

Great Māui to his brothers said:
“We'll snare his fiery orb, so red;
Make lengthy ropes of flax, and strong,
And come with me to right this wrong.
We'll travel nightly, sleep by day,
Towards the East, the Sun's gateway.”

One morning when the Sun arose,
It felt a snare around it close,
It struggled vainly to be free,
But Māui held it cleverly.
He smote it with the Magic Jaw*
The more it struggled to withdraw.

He smote it till it cried in pain,
And humbly begged him to refrain;
In future it would slower move,
And promised greatly to improve
If Māui would his actions cease,
And let it go its way in peace.

So Māui's weapon ceased to fall
Upon the vanquished, glowing ball.
The snares were freed so that the Sun
Was free its daily course to run.
So very feebly on its way
It moved to give earth longer day.

**Jaw-bone weapon of his ancestress, Muri-ranga-whenua*

HINEMOA, THE MAIDEN OF ROTORUA (No. 27)

Out of the purple haze beyond the lake,
Clear and sweet as the sounds the song birds make,
Breaking the silence where the earth met sky,
Came the sweet music of Tutanekai.

Dusk little maiden heard those notes and knew
Just what the player hoped that she would do.
Chieftain, her father, had foreseen her flight,
So all canoes were guarded through the night.

Soft summer zephyr smote the maiden's brow,
Whispered, in passing, a suggestion how
Aided by gourds to serve as floats she might
Swim cross the sleeping lake that summer night.

Soft as a shadow moved she to the brink,
Slid like a nymph into the wat'ry link,
Guided by music which her lover played,
Swam Hinemoa, strong and unafraid.

Straight 'cross the vast expanse that starry night
Moved the fair maiden like a water sprite.
Swimming and resting she pursued her way
On through the gloom to shore where safety lay.

Trembling and chill, she felt the waters shoal,
Joy filled her heart that she had reached her goal;
Weary and cold she trod a native path,
Leading, she knew, to tepid swimming bath.

Soothing and warm, the waters eased her pain,
Brightened her spirits, which were on the wane:
Soon would the light at dawn invade the sky,
And to her side would come Tutanekai.

Dawn saw a slave approach a drinking spring,
Passing the bath he stood a-wondering,
Whom could the stranger be who bathed so soon.
Who but a fairy bathed so long ere noon?

Back to the village sped he, and his cry
Brought from his hut the Chief, Tutanekei;
Found in the stranger there so sweet and pure
Fair Hinemoa, maid of Rotorua.

Great was the wedding feast they held that night;
Joyous dancing in fires' ruddy light:
Gayest of all beneath that starry sky
Were Hinemoa and Tutanekei.

(From *Polynesian Legends*, Earl of Seacliff Art Workshop/
HeadworX Publishers, 2013)