

H. E. Bates: a passionate and versatile Englishman

By MAURICE DUNLEVY

"If I claim nothing else for myself", H. E. Bates wrote in the third volume of his autobiography, "I will certainly claim that I am versatile".

It was a fair claim. He published his first book, a novel, in 1926 and when he died on Tuesday he had written more than 70 books, including about two dozen novels, several collections of novellas, about 20 volumes of short stories, eight volumes of essays, three of autobiography, several books for children, a play, and a survey of the modern short story.

Bates was best known as a popular novelist, but posterity will remember him as one of the best short-story writers of his generation.

Rural life

For about 15 years he wrote, with little popularity, sensitive short stories and novels, mainly about rural life in England and at the end of the 30s had appeared more often than any other writer in Edward O'Brien's annual anthology of best British stories.

In 1938 he wrote a novel, *Spella Ho*, which was republished in 1961 in a year and sold to the Atlantic Monthly for \$4,000.

In World War II he reached an even larger audience as he wrote, for the government, a series of

romantic, sentimental short stories about the RAF. Then came the first of his famous war novels, *Fair Stood the Wind for France*, which was followed at the end of the war by three novels set in Burma, *The Purple Plain*, *The Jacaranda Tree* and *The Scarlet Sword*.

During the 50s his fiction returned to its earlier settings, small-town and rural England, and out of this period came one of Bates' best novels, an autobiographical love story, *Love for Lydia* and one of his worst, *The Sleepless Moon*.

Novella

Disillusioned by criticism of the latter, he turned from the novel to the short story and the novella and wrote some of his finest fiction.

Then late in life he discovered a new mass audience with a series of Russian fables about the *Lazavsky family*. These were best-sellers in many countries.

Readers who know Bates only by his popular novels do not know Bates the artist. The artist is to be found mainly in the short stories and novellas.

The writer who had an uncanny ability to set a scene vividly in a couple of sentences and evoke emotion, mood and atmosphere with a few, spare, painterly prose appeals first to all five senses.

Many of his titles came

from Tennyson and so did much of his technique. He insisted that the short story was a lyric in prose and he wrote it like a poet. He also learnt from the cinema and what he learnt was "the art of telling a story by a series of swiftly implied gestures, swift shots, moments of exaggeration, an art in which elaboration and above all suggestion are superfluous and tedious".

Bates was always an artist but never a thinker. It is the business of the artist to entertain, not to instruct, to give pleasure, not to preach morals, he insisted and his best work is concerned with the psychology of love.

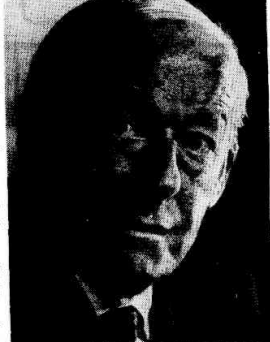
His stories are filled with slow-minded, lumbering courtship, many of whom are almost inarticulate, and with beautiful women who are voluptuous, sensual and seductive and usually escaping from boredom.

Originality

The great merit of Bates, Richard Garnett once said, was not originality but sensibility. This was true enough and like the Romantics, and the Symbolists he was proud of his ability to create stories completely from his imagination rather than having to rely on "chronicled realism".

Bates was born into the bores, bawling world of bootmaking in the Nene Valley in 1905, fell in love with the Midland earth on his grandfather's five-acre farm, grew up in an atmosphere of intense Methodist respectability, then revolted against it, tramped the bivouacs, motor-less roads of Bedfordshire, grew to love his blackberry hedges, river tow-puffs and woodland rides, then settled in a converted granary in Kent.

There he wrote every morning in "the worst loughand in the world" and grew steadily stouter



H. E. Bates

and more critical of urbanisation, industrialisation, standardisation and the welfare state.

He summed himself up in 1972 on the last page of his autobiography as "a passionate Englishman (with a profound love of Nature, of the sound and sights of the countryside, of colours, flowers and things sensually a half of pomp, pretence and bluntness; a lover of children and family life; an occasional breaker of rules, a flouter of conventions".

An argument for finding an alternative

By W. A. RUNCIMAN*

NOW that the report of the public hearing of the environmental issues raised by the proposed construction of Molonglo Parkway has appeared it is opportune to reopen the debate on this controversial issue.

Contrary to the original intention the report does not contain the verbatim statements by the objectors. This is a pity since the public is largely unaware of the nature, scale and effects of the proposed road.

Figure 3 of the Environmental Impact Statement shows how Lady Denman Drive will be parallel to a six-lane highway, complete with breakdown lanes, bicycle and pedestrian paths. This is engineering on a massive scale. For instance, it was brought out in the hearing that 800,000 cubic yd of material would be dumped in the lake, reducing the width by one third opposite Kurrajong Point.

On the Acton Peninsula a tunnel would be excavated by removing material from a ditch to the extent of 250,000 cu yd of loose rock and 130,000 cu yd of solid rock. The solid rock would need to be blasted and is bound to cause severe disruption on the Acton Peninsula. No wonder that one of the Commissioner's findings, not reported in *The Canberra Times* (January 26, 1974), is that "those who work and live in the vicinity of the Acton Peninsula will, during the construction period of up to 30 months, be subjected to

the disruptions and nuisances which accompany a major construction project. After completion the access to the lake will be restricted and instead of the relatively peaceful surroundings now existing there will be a six-lane highway with its attendant noise and air pollution".

The Commissioner has emphasised that "extreme caution should be exercised before departing from the plans that have been developed over years with a highly qualified specialist staff assisted by local and overseas consultants".

With this in mind it should be noted that the consultants Rankine and Hill in *A Road System for Canberra City, 1970* stated that "the corridor traverses the shores of Lake Burley Griffin for virtually the whole of its length and the roadworks must therefore allow the maximum possible area of the natural landscape to be retained". In the Molonglo Parkway proposal such caution seems to have been thrown to the winds.

The alternative routes suggested in the environmental impact statements were obviously unattractive and it is no surprise that neither the Commissioner nor anyone else supported them. Not being presented with the problem in detailed terms it is difficult to derive alternative solutions. The objectors at the public inquiry had great difficulty in obtaining relevant information before the closing date for submissions.

A complicating factor is the expected appearance in the near future of a trans-



A section of a scale model of the proposed Molonglo Parkway.

presented the traffic problems to be solved in detailed terms. With the limited information available I presented to the inquiry an alternative proposal which included various upgrades of existing and neighbouring routes. In the region of the lake, Lady Denman Drive and Clunes Ross Street could be upgraded to a dual carriageway four-lane highway.

Even adding bicycle and pedestrian paths, this means only one third of the incursion into the lake of that required for the Molonglo Parkway proposal. This reduced plan, similar to a suggestion made by the Department of the Capital Territory, is of major recreational importance and centres of attraction for visitors to the national capital.

I began to be concerned about the Molonglo Parkway because of the effect which it would have on my home in Aranda and work surroundings at the ACT and on the daily commuting journey. Now that I have come to realise the massive nature of the impact of the parkway on Canberra, I am trying to alert all concerned to the effects. The impact will be considerable for Canberra. Hospital even though road and pedestrian access would be maintained during construction.

It is really sensible for a city to create the wonderful recreational areas associated with Lake Burley Griffin and then let them be devoured by encroaching freeways? It is especially surprising that the parkway is being urged so strongly by the NDCG when the Minister responsible for it, Mr Uren, has very different views.

For instance in a recent speech (August 21, 1973) he said: "The Government is moving towards the position whereby in the middle to outer areas of our metropolitan areas we can accommodate the motor car by what we call circumferential freeways which divert traffic around central city areas".

"But let me make it perfectly clear that the Government is also moving towards a position whereby there will be no place for inner-city freeways".

This is the time for public discussion. To my mind the Molonglo Parkway is a particularly objectionable proposal and must be firmly opposed.

PROFESSOR RUNCIMAN is head of the department of solid-state physics in the Research School of Physical Sciences at the ANU.

highlights

The Day of the Jackal

Frederick Forsyth's brilliant account of the attempted assassination of former French President Charles de Gaulle is certainly well worth reading. As a political thriller, it is virtually in a class by itself. Subtle, fast moving, superbly written. The entire French background is convincing, and beautifully atmospheric down to the last whiff of Gauloise. Now must be the time to read this book, which has been on the market for some time, but only recently came to the public eye with the release of *Fred Zinnemann's* movie of the same name. *The Day of the Jackal* is available in the book department, under the Corgi label at David Jones at the Mall and the Plaza for \$15.55. Excellent reading, superbly researched with nothing left to chance, and definitely entertaining.

Elizabeth Arden's new "Skin Dynamics"

... Almost every week something new appears on the market from one of the reputable cosmetic houses but we have it on good opinion that this new Elizabeth Arden breakthrough definitely warrants a closer look. Skin Dynamics is a complexion renewal lotion — a periodic treatment to supplement regular beauty routines — in other words a complete treatment in one bottle, and best of all, it is suitable for every skin type, with the exception of extremely dry, fragile skins. This multiple action cleanser claims to be more effective than cleanser and masks combined, an excellent remedy for trouble or tired skin. . . . But the only way you'll know is to try it. . . . David Jones both stores have a trial size bottle, only \$1 and the normal 8fl oz jar, \$6.

Shirley Bassey live at Carnegie Hall

A two record album — a phenomenal recording of seventeen tracks from Bassey's established repertoire including *Goldfinger*, *For All You Know*, *I Who Have Nothing*, *Big Spender*, *Never Never Never*, all beautifully executed in her true inimitable manner. Also featured with her are *Woody Herman* and *The Young Thunder Herd*. Whether you're a Bassey fan or not, slip into the Record Bars at David Jones at the Mall or the Plaza and have a listen — no doubt you'll want to add it to your own private collection. Released by United Artists Record Inc, it sells for \$11.90 — a small price indeed for 2 albums of this calibre.

From the Babywear Dept we've got sheet sets and quilts

There's no doubt about it nothing is spared when it comes to the cot tots — quality coupled with brilliant design and imagination make them the most pampered sector of the community. And these cot sheet sets and quilts add to their baby bliss. The sheet sets, from none other than London's design, consist of a fitted bottom sheet, 38in x 36in top sheet and 14in x 12in pillowcase, all for \$5.99. They're made from top quality cotton and beautifully presented — trimmed with lace and delicate floral borders. Benefits of cot quilts certainly are apparent — light, warm but better still washable, they are attractively presented with several nursery rhyme character designs, just \$7.99 from the Babywear Departments at Both Stores. Mightn't induce the little moppets to sleep, but they will certainly make it more pleasant while you rock the cradle.

D.J.'s Notebook resumes on Wednesday, February 20

Despite the fact that Northern Australia is under a disaster and a few less dramatic traumas, D.J.'s Notebook will go to air Wednesday, February 20. Our delightful hostess, Robyn Gordon, safely returned from the Brisbane waters a couple of days ago and assures us that the 1974 content will be better than ever.

Jennifer



If you love good looks — and don't we all . . . you'll love these simulated furs — just arrived from Junior Look. They're the next thing to real fur . . . but at less than half price. And that's a reason to love them even more. From left, full length simulated kid, with simulated lamb trim . . . a mere \$52. 40's style simulated red fox jacket \$87. Full length simulated fox coat \$130. Just a glimpse of all that awaits you — at both stores . . . now.

junior look

DAVID JONES BOTH STORES