

## BOOK REVIEW

Robin Boyd, author of *The Australian Ugliness* (published in 1960), died at the age of 52 while checking the first proofs of his second book *The Great, Great Australian Dream* (Pergamon Press, Australia, 1972). He left the publishers a comprehensive "Note for Description" in which he described his book as "a cry of despair for Australia, and an hysterical joke about it. It is solemn social comment and it is wild parody. It is fictional and it is history."

In the opinion of Ron Kennedy, into whose hands the book came for review, it is "a tour de force in sustained hilarity." Moreover, as a relatively new New Zealander he suspects strongly that much of what Robin Boyd wrote about his Australia could apply equally to New Zealand. Therefore he believes that it is best to work on the principle that a closed mouth gathers no foot, and allow the book to speak for itself. Below is an extract from the first chapter of this delightfully satirical book.

# ON HOW TO RECOGNISE AN AUSSIE

"Australians . . . are an outdoor people, sports-loving and healthful in their pursuits. They are unpretentious to a fault, whilst also being the friendliest people in the world. Even those of you whom are not fortunate enough to have visited these shores on prior occasions may have met some of us in your Homelands; for since Australia is an affluent country many of its citizens are wont to frequent tourist attractions around the globe.

"However for those whom have not yet encountered our countrymen, the perusal of the following pages may be made more pleasurable if they enjoy prior acquaintance with as many as possible. To this end, just a few tips as to how to recognise Australians may be advantageous at this point of time. Fortunately, recognition is facilitated by their

distinctive individuality in Dress, a feature in which today there lingers the independence which marked Australia in the days of his Colonial Beginnings.

"Our little lesson in recognition may commence with the Senior Ladies, whom are seen in the greatest abundance in tourist centres. These folk wear hats created of felt or straw of many striking shapes and in great variety of pleasing pastel shades. In the Tropics the older Ladies wear also dresses made of light material on which the printed patterns of numerous small flowers delight the eye. Older Gentlemen, whom occasionally are seen accompanying the Ladies, wear grey felt hats made from the world-famous Australian rabbit. Wool being another staple product of our great Island-Continent, it is not surprising to find that many a Gentleman also favours light grey worsted

trousers, known colloquially as 'Fletcher Joneses,' as well as a white Fashion shirt under which the outline of a white athletic singlet may be discerned.

"On the other hand, when in colder climes abroad, the Australian Gentleman prefers a business suit worn over a boldly knitted 'jumper,' the upturned sleeves of which are to be seen protruding in a casual masculine way from the cuffs of his business jacket sleeves. This apparel is indicative of his wont to eschew, when at home, the decadent practice of central heating.

"Younger executive Gentlemen from the more tropical zones of Australia wear, in lieu of long 'Fletcher Joneses,' tight short trousers that display the manly thighs and generous lower abdomen that is characteristic of the Australian Gentlemen, being developed in the course of



his mateship with other Gentlemen of his own ilk. On his legs which protrude from the 'shorts' the young Gentleman wears white woollen socks and casual brown strap sandals. The socks and the 'shorts' are well separated, exposing a stretch of healthy tan on masculine knees which bespeak long leisure hours spent in sporting or aquatic pursuits or in beer gardens beneath the justly world-famous Australian sun.

"Above the trousers, whether they be 'Fletcher Joneses' or 'shorts,' the white Fashion shirt is worn tucked in tightly at the front and the belt is pushed down low, the taut material displaying to advantage the abovementioned pleasing masculine figure, whilst, for greater freedom of action, at the back the Fashion shirt is worn 'drooping' approximately ten inches below the trouser belt. The Fashion shirt's sleeves are worn rolled up high on the arms above the Biceps, which on Australian Gentlemen are in World Class.

"The beauty and attractiveness of the younger Australian ladies and girls has long been world renowned and it is not necessary for ourselves to speak more of this feature of our great Continent except to add that the young ladies are no less Fashion Conscious than the young Gentlemen. You will soon become accustomed to noting pleasantly the quantity of the quality cosmetics with which they 'gild the lily.' You will note also their unique ability to make a dress fashion persist long after it has been discarded Overseas, while keeping it looking fresh as a proverbial daisy.

"We trust we have explained enough about the visual characteristics of the Australian People to illustrate the qualities of independence and uniqueness for which the great Island-Continent is justly world-famous, and so without more ado we shall conclude this introduction and recommend that you direct your perusal to the first of five parts of this work."



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September 19, 1972

Mrs. Patricia Boyd,  
290 Walsh Street,  
SOUTH YARRA. 3141.

Dear Patricia,

I attach a cutting from the Hamilton, New Zealand 'Times' which simply reproduces an extract from Robin's book with a few interesting introductory remarks.

I take it you saw the reference in a whole full page article in a recent issue of 'Nation Review'?

Both Elisabeth and I will be in Melbourne at the end of this week and I shall certainly try to ring you just to find out how things are.

We are going to make the first royalty payment on 'The Great Great Australian Dream' at the end of our financial year as at September 30 and unless we are advised otherwise the cheque will be sent to your solicitors.

Kind regards,

Yours sincerely,

Andrew Fabinyi.



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