

# PÆAN TO RICARDO

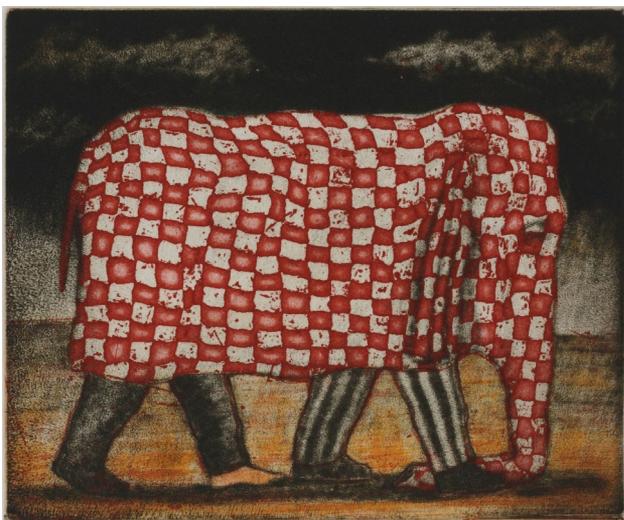
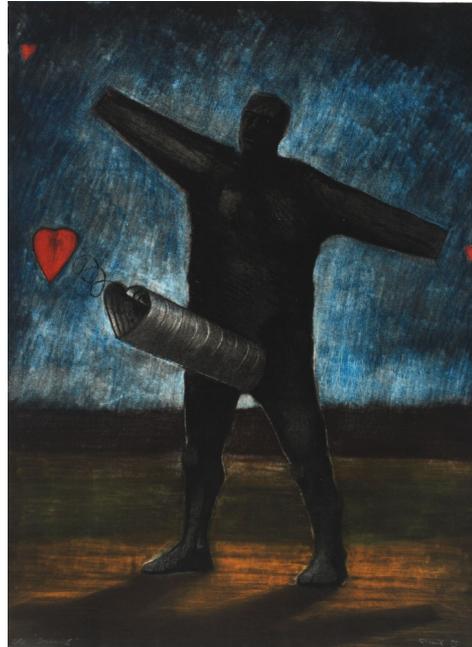
Behold the delights of the genius of folly  
where pleasure is madness & madness is jolly.  
The images taunt with inventions alluding  
to crazy compulsions and jovial brooding;  
untrammelled theatrical energies loom  
in a medium shot with convivial gloom.  
Histrionic buffoons skate their rituals on grease  
and re-settle their slapstick with hair-raising peace.  
Combinations of folk seek the cleverer, zanier  
choking of thought with intelligent mania.  
Reason and logic are harried from sight  
and their place is unfilled by appalling delight.  
Don't worry! The jest rings a gentle alarm  
because all that is crazy is turned into charm.

Consider the lustiest canine of art:  
every spot on the dog is turned into a heart.  
With a tail in the air and a hock to the rear,  
she goes huffing a kind of internalized cheer.  
Her demeanour is business-like, full of ambition—  
her trotting is willfully charged with a mission—  
and if she looks sideways, it's only to monitor  
those who might fondly but idly look on at her.  
Nothing distracts her. Her zeal is ahead.  
You have witnessed a dog with a heart in her head.



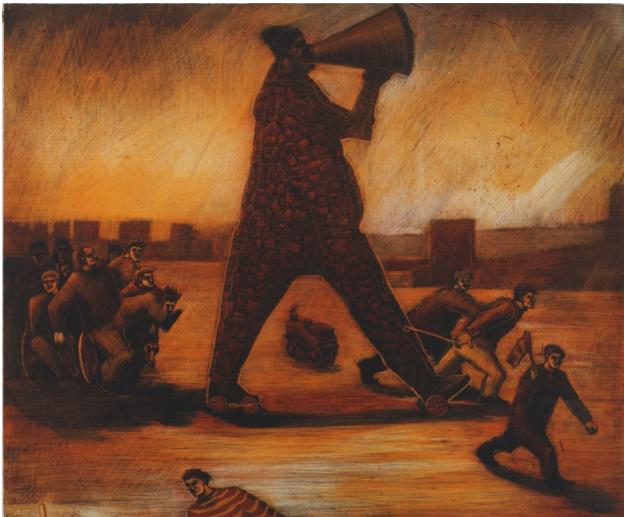
Or behold the most dreadful of squabbles in art  
as the conjugal unit has just sprung apart.  
The atrocious belligerents fight for the washing.  
The hoist and the linen go thrusting and squashing.  
No peg of a rinsed-out humanity saves them.  
The woman takes hold of the bedclothes and waves them  
while he, without chivalry, lances toward her.  
How futile the blockhead! He should have ignored her.  
But no, the man rages and rallies and she  
proffers goads to a temper that ought never be.  
So behind this ridiculous couple, these traitors  
to family values, a crowd of spectators  
assembles and rollicks with hideous laughter.  
Suburban contentment that all have been after  
is rent at the seams by a cynical struggle.  
Domestic protagonists fatefully juggle  
their passions while those who more idly observe  
are untouched by the guilt that they wholly deserve.

Over here there's a scarecrow who sports an erection.  
 Why not? If a scarecrow can feel no affection  
 it marries no purpose; its waving were vain  
 and the four other members would prod for no gain.  
 How a man is so melancholy standing alone  
 or in ministering seed so vicariously sown!  
 It were better to throb with the lusting for luck  
 and obtain on that pasture an aerial fuck.  
 But observe how this scarecrow is crafted with art,  
 how his penis is aught but a tube for the heart.  
 It's a hollowed-out chamber of plied corrugation;  
 each one is a pulse of the heart's masturbation.  
 The whole of his body is hollow as well  
 and performs the same task to project and expell;  
 because hearts can ejaculate also from hands:  
 the whole body means love when the penis expands.



Here's an elephant made from a human charade.  
 It's a circus of two in a half-wit's parade.  
 With a colourful mantle enshrouding the pair,  
 they advance as a spoof of the thing that they wear.  
 It's a chequerboard pattern that's cut to propose  
 that the one has a tail and the other a nose  
 or the one has a bum and the other a mind  
 as the first has the trunk and the last the behind.  
 But the trunk that's in front is in danger of trailing  
 and causing the pair an embarrassing failing;  
 since far from a forceful and serpentine member,  
 the trunk is a sock that they fail to remember  
 and stumble, it seems, on the pride of the show  
 to collapse both themselves and their gaudy rideau.  
 But before you shed tears for the imminent danger  
 take note of the eye that assesses each stranger  
 and warily judges the movements ahead  
 without any caprice but much prudence instead.  
 O theatrical gaze! What a sly calculation  
 reliant on humour through premeditation!

What novel technologies issue this glare?  
 Has a plumber converted a man to a flare?  
 He's a figure alight, some intemperate fool,  
 whom a porta-gas bottle transfuses with fuel.  
 With his striding he's hampered in moving ahead  
 in a circular hotplate with nowhere to tread.  
 Both his legs and his arms have a cramped disposition:  
 his glow projects passion, his stance inhibition.  
 No matter how hotly flames shoot from his hide  
 there's a stiffness arising from pressure inside.  
 Its release is the burning that roars in each jet.  
 The array has transfigured his whole silhouette  
 to an element studded with holes—each discrete—  
 but producing a sequence of faucets for heat.  
 What mechanical passion is forced from the rungs  
 with directional licking in standardized tongues!  
 In the desolate universe, distant and high,  
 he's an element fitted for baking the sky,  
 a contraption for having the ether well done,  
 for the grilling of air or for scorching the sun.  
 From the garland of jets in the skin's conflagration,  
 you witness the glare of the soul's immolation.



But what in the name of humanity's pity  
 parades on the fringe of a concreted city?  
 A terrible mannequin shatters the air  
 with a cone-shaped loudhailer to broadcast despair.  
 There are copious pages of text on his hide  
 but you see that the figment is hollow inside  
 as befits his impossible grandeur and bulk  
 and the gestures declaring authority's hulk.  
 Just imagine the stentor he forcefully blows  
 for announcing some message that everyone knows,  
 some ridiculous broadcast to landscape and towns  
 which his presence defines as the toyland of clowns.  
 He's a vehicle of pompous and arrogant stuff,  
 an imposing but vacuous trolley of guff.  
 What a poor simulacrum of walking! You see,  
 he is hauled by a string at a hole in the knee  
 and his predisposed feet are supported by wheels.  
 It's an odd kind of skating on rollers and heels.  
 There is nothing for helping his dirigibility,  
 just as there's nothing to feed his sterility.  
 Fat and pretentious, this emptiest ham  
 so persuasively trumpets the portents of sham.  
 He transmits to all imbeciles such information  
 as gratifies each selfimposed limitation.  
 They're proud of belonging to such a procession  
 as flatters their every impulsive obsession.  
 They never resent the compulsive intrusion  
 that casts both the ear and the mind in confusion.

The public is manically awestruck and follow  
the more that they know the contraption is hollow:  
they gather to swell and confirm the illusion  
and proffer momentum behind its diffusion.  
Publicity, this is your scandal. Your crooks  
go on dragging a dummy of counterfeit books  
and with garbled-up adverts and hideous ditties  
they effect the commercial expugning of cities.  
We know the agendas informing this toy;  
for the fraudulent horse has been salvaged from Troy.  
But if Homer had witnessed the hype and the cant  
in the media now, he would have to recant  
and rewrite our collapse using jokers and bods  
in an epic without Agamemnons or gods.



But the engines of warfare are borne in the air  
in an epoch where mania battles despair.  
An alarming invention is bombing a city—  
it hasn't a heart for the feeling of pity—  
a terrible reptile for plowing the sky  
and destroying the landscape and town from on high.  
It's a bird, it's a fish, it's an animal-plane,  
a mechanical beast with remote-controlled brain.  
It's emerged from a tinkerer's crazed sanitarium,  
destined for making the air its aquarium:  
see how the orb is its tank as it swims  
over many horizons that join without rims;  
it's a fish-tank for birds or a bird-cage for fish:  
it is neither for creatures who flutter nor swish  
but a steely, inflexible form of mutation,  
some anti-Darwinian classification,  
that plumets and soars by mechanical wishes  
that neither inhabit the birds nor the fishes.  
O reader-spectator, you're drowning with awe.  
Have you never inspected an airport before?  
What zoology docks at the passenger gates!  
It has swooped on the airport, then slithers and waits  
till ingesting a net-full of humans it roars,  
slithers backward, with fury runs skyward and soars.  
They're unfleshy and slippery and hardly corporeal.  
Rather than bird-like, they're more piscatorial,  
scaly and glistening with mirror-like skins.  
There is even a shine on their feathery fins.  
Even so is this sinister creature depicted  
deriding humanity's ground unrestricted.  
Malevolent, toothy and shot with ambition,  
to devastate towns is its aerial mission.  
Macabre is our humour! We relish despair  
in effect like a fish which is buoyant in air;  
for we hitch-hike on fantasy's gloomiest flight  
to discover its trip is *en route* to delight.

Ah Ricardo, your fantasy horrifies, thrills,  
both maintains a suspense and grotesquely fulfills.  
Glory be to your plates and the etching tool's kiss.  
There was never burlesque more enchanting than this.

Robert Nelson © 1993 Melbourne