EUREKA STREET

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China in focus: Trevor Hay and Paul Rule

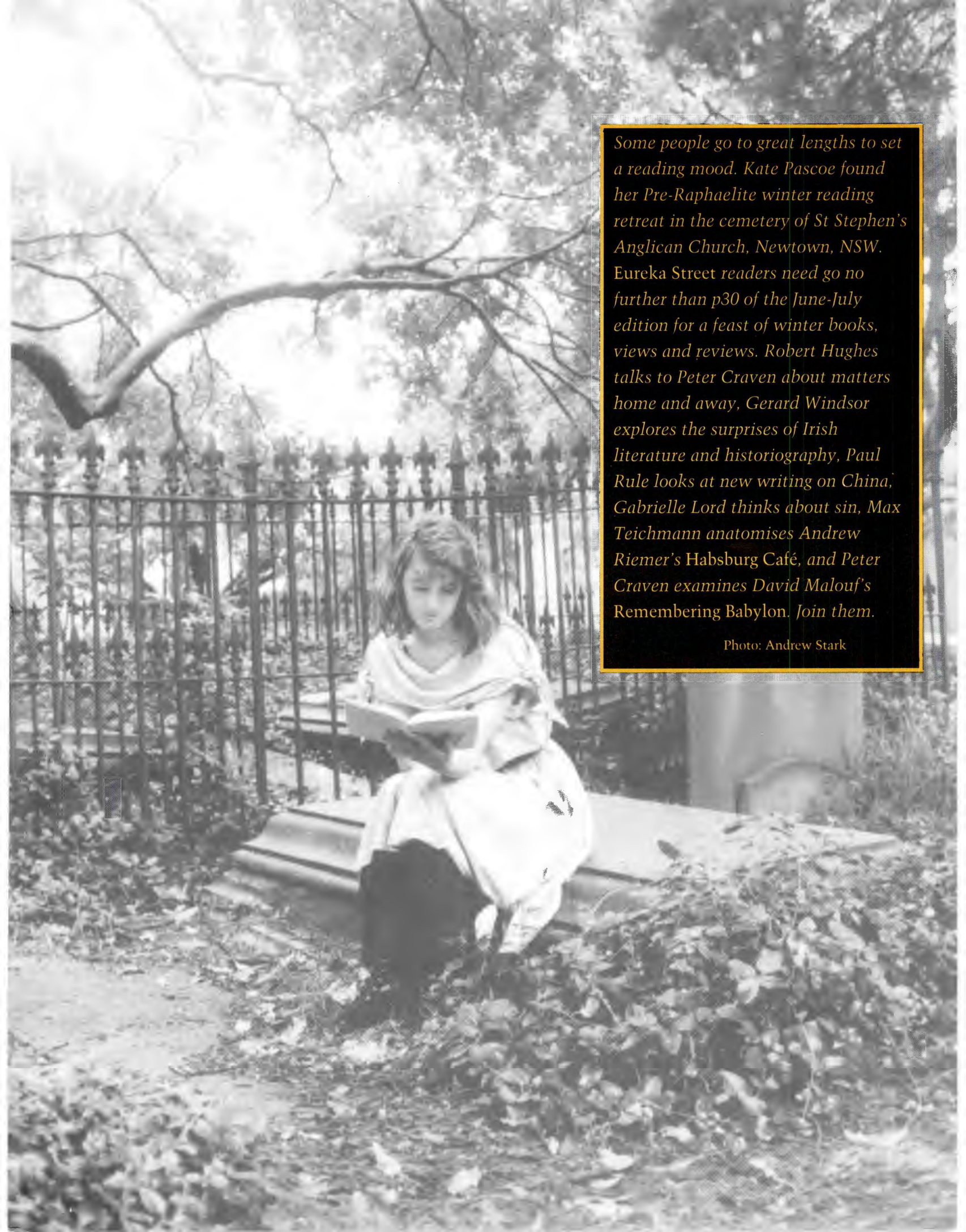
Rowan Callick on Australia and the Pacific

Fred Jevons and **Andrew Riemer**
on evolutions and revolutions in higher education

Susan Ryan and **Julian Disney**
on the path to a republic

plus a feast of winter reading

SBS TV Guide



Some people go to great lengths to set a reading mood. Kate Pascoe found her Pre-Raphaelite winter reading retreat in the cemetery of St Stephen's Anglican Church, Newtown, NSW. Eureka Street *readers need go no further than p30 of the June-July edition for a feast of winter books, views and reviews. Robert Hughes talks to Peter Craven about matters home and away, Gerard Windsor explores the surprises of Irish literature and historiography, Paul Rule looks at new writing on China, Gabrielle Lord thinks about sin, Max Teichmann anatomises Andrew Riemer's* Habsburg Café, *and Peter Craven examines David Malouf's* Remembering Babylon. *Join them.*

Photo: Andrew Stark

EUREKA STREET

A magazine of public affairs, the arts and theology

Volume 3 Number 5
June-July 1993

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In May, Eureka Street *won the Gutenberg Award, presented by the Australasian Religious Press Association, for overall excellence in Christian newspaper and magazine publishing.*

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TONY COADY

Bosnia's war

IN THE 1970s I was for a time chairman of a junior soccer team in Melbourne. I won't try to explain here how this came about, but it was an instructive experience, especially in the undercurrents and passions of multicultural life in Australia. There were kids (and families) from almost every ethnic group—Greeks, Italians, Germans, Scots, English, Spaniards and every variety of Yugoslav. I remember with a sense of poignancy my bewilderment not only at the deep and abiding resentments between the different Yugoslav groups, but at their one point of agreement—contempt for Bosnians.

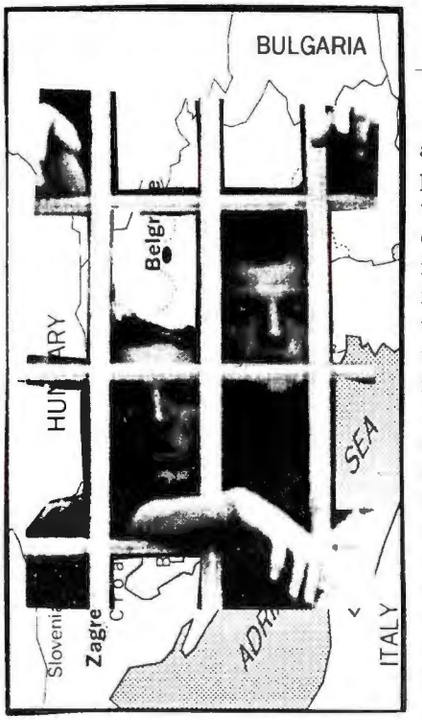
Later, when I visited Yugoslavia in the early 1980s, I was delighted at the beauty of the country and the hospitality of the people, especially the Serbs in Belgrade with whom we stayed. It was still, however, dismaying to find how deeply divided the country was and how much racial hatred persisted. The seeds of the present horrors were clearly perceptible.

What should be done to prevent the further slaughters of 'ethnic cleansing' in what was Yugoslavia, especially in Bosnia? In particular, what is the moral standing of military intervention to prevent further bloodshed? There can be no doubt that the sense of impotence that one feels on watching television reports, or reading graphic newspaper accounts, about the massacre and maiming of civilians in Bosnia, can readily prompt the desire to deal with the savagery by violent intervention; but would it be right for the USA, or the Europeans or the UN to act on this sort of desire?

If one is not a pacifist, the traditional outlook known as 'just war' theory provides a reasonable handle for discussion of the moral options. Essentially, modern just war thinking is geared towards wars between established nations and is highly restrictive in import. It comes in two parts: the *jus ad bellum* (concerned with when it is right to go to war) and the *jus in bello* (concerned with how one ought to conduct oneself in war). It tends to restrict the resort to war to defence against aggression, and, although aggression is an ill-defined idea in some respects, the general approach that sees war as a bad thing unless it is a last resort against an obvious evil like invasion is a mostly healthy outlook. Most wars, even where justified, involve appalling waste and destruction; they are, at best, necessary evils, like amputations, so we need a restrictive moral theory that helps us decide when we must resort to them and how their harms can be limited. Such a theory should go hand in hand with hard thinking about how we might limit the need for war and even eventually eliminate it. So just war theory should go hand in hand with peacemaking theory.

THE SELF-DEFENCE MODEL has been criticised for giving too much respect to existing sovereign states, and it is true that existing international law is perhaps excessively prohibitive of interventions by one state in the affairs of another, even though this attitude often makes a good deal of pragmatic sense. In the

case of the just war ethic, however, the self-defence model, even with its restrictive intentions, does allow for certain extensions, for instance, to helping others defend themselves against aggression, especially where they are your allies. More difficult is the case (or cluster of cases) where there is no attacking nation, but a government is slaughtering large numbers of its own population (as in Pol Pot's Cambodia) and what is called for is a humanitarian or altruistic intervention. Arguably, the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia and the Indian intervention in East Pakistan (later Bangladesh) qualify as such justified altruistic interventions, even though, as in all of life, there were mixed motives at work in both cases. More difficult again is the problem posed by the idea of intervening in civil wars, where the rights and wrongs on the opposing sides may be impossible for foreigners to unravel.



The case of the former Yugoslavia, and especially Bosnia, falls into this last category, but with an added and important feature that relates it to altruistic intervention: that there are large numbers of civilians who seem palpably innocent by just war standards but have become targets for the soldiery of all sides in the name of 'ethnic cleansing'. Women are raped and murdered, children slaughtered, families dispossessed and non-combatant menfolk gunned down. Are we justified in using violence to prevent these happenings?

The answer to this question falls, it seems to me, into two parts. The first concerns the matter of a right to intervene. The analysis so far suggests that, if the appropriate international authority could be organised, preferably through the United Nations, it would be morally licit to undertake a military intervention to try to prevent what are palpably war crimes on a considerable scale. Appropriate international authority may not be a *sine qua non*, as the case of Bangladesh shows, but it is generally important because of the dangers of unilateral efforts. Of course, methods other than lethal violence are broadly preferable and should be tried first, but there have been plenty of such efforts by the UN and by other agencies.

The second part of the answer concerns less the abstract question of right than the issue of consequences that can themselves raise crucial moral issues. Here it is less clear what armed intervention would involve. In particular, one must ask whether it would put an end to many of the human rights violations at the cost of prolonging the war, inflaming the hatreds even further, and eventually causing an even greater bloodbath than might eventuate if the present slow and frustrating path of diplomacy, economic sanctions and humanitarian help is pursued further.

Military intervention can only be an option if the intervening force has precisely defined objectives that relate to a plan for preventing the slaughter of civilians—by whichever side—and for so reducing the level of conflict and its prospects for success that negotiations can take place which at least take the Vance/Owen plan as a starting point. And all of this fairly quickly, for protracted involvement is neither feasible nor desirable. My fear is that the understandable wish not to risk American, European or United Nations lives unduly will lead to quick-fix solutions such as massive aerial bombardment. In Yugoslavia, this is unlikely to achieve either moral, tactical or strategic purposes. Air power will certainly have a part to play, but the sad fact is that considerable ground forces may well be required to achieve the required objectives.

In the meantime, there are some signs that the combination of existing pressures plus the deterrence value of the threatened use of force may be beginning to work. It is a well-known feature of deterrence theory that uncertainties about intentions can be as effective as certainties in changing responses. The very fact that a broad coalition of concerned states so disapproves of what the 'ethnic cleansers' are doing that they are prepared to consider their military options, even if they are still uncertain in different ways about their implementation, may be enough to restore some sanity and humanity to the struggle. We must hope and pray that this is so. ■

Tony Coady is Boyce Gibson professor of philosophy in the University of Melbourne.

From the publisher

WITH THIS EDITION OF *Eureka Street* comes an unavoidable price rise. The new subscription price will be $45 a year (or $40 concession for pensioners, students and unemployed). However, we are introducing a reduced rate for two-year subscriptions of $85 ($80 concession). *Eureka Street* regrets that it is necessary to raise prices at a time when the national inflation rate is about one per cent a year, but the increases are substantially because of a forthcoming increase in Australia Post charges. In the next year, our mailing costs will rise by at least 50 per cent and, for some destinations, by up to 150 per cent. Australia Post intends to replace its existing 'registered publications' category with a new schedule of charges for publications, 'print post'. The new schedule is expected to add a further $20 million to the net profit of $150 million that Australia Post made in its last financial year. ■

Eureka Street welcomes letters from its readers. Short letters are more likely to be published, and all letters may be edited. Letters must be signed, and should include a contact phone number and the writer's name and address.

Fair game

From Michael Costigan

Andrew Hamilton's comment on the Weakland affair (*Eureka Street*, May 1993) was characteristically thoughtful and fair.

I hope he will forgive my picking a couple of nits over his rather far-fetched comparison between this kind of episode, wherein visiting Catholics are accused of unorthodoxy and church leaders are challenged to prove their *bona fides*, and the famous (notorious?) exit of the late John Somerville from a football final long ago.

First, the preliminary final in question was in 1965, not 1962. Secondly, I believe it has never been proved, although I suppose it is probable, that Somerville received a 'king hit'. The strange thing is that none of the 90,000 or so people at the MCG on that September afternoon (the undersigned included) actually saw what happened immediately before the Essendon player's collapse.

If there is any point in invoking an event of this nature in relation to the Weakland visit to Melbourne, may I recall two others where the facts were more clearly substantiated—those involving John Greening at Moorabbin in 1972 and Gavin Brown in the 1990 Grand Final? I suggest that the comparison between Greening and Brown on the one hand and Archbishops Weakland and Little on the other is valid to this extent: true champions all, and all unjustly assaulted. Thanks be to God, neither archbishop—unlike the Magpie stars—had to be taken from the field as a result of the poleaxing.

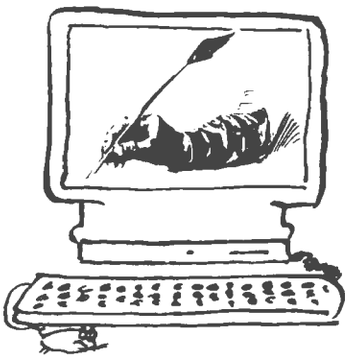
Michael Costigan
Kirribilli, NSW

The AFL statistician confirms that 1965 was the year of the preliminary final in question. Eureka Street *obtained the 1962 date from a Melbourne newspaper with a short memory.*

Oz for Oz' sake

From Gerhard Weissmann

Terry Monagle's article 'The Way Ahead' (*Eureka Street*, April 1993) on the future of unionism accepts the



economic doctrine that 'Australia must participate willingly in the global economy' and 'compete with other nations'.

It is a pity that Bill Kelty took that dogma, hook, line and sinker, straight from international capitalism. A moment's reflection would have shown that by plugging Australia into the global economy, the natural wealth of Australia is laid open to unimpeded stripping in the best Adsteam tradition.

The article makes the point that 'capital has become internationally mobile'. Well, Paul Keating helped this mobile capital to invade Australia by deregulating the banking sector and permitting the Reserve Bank to be virtually dismantled. Only now is the full damage caused by these acts beginning to emerge, and Senator Button's dismantling of the tariff system has aggravated the matter.

The article correctly observes that internationalisation of unionism is impossible. How could workers in countries with wages differing by a factor of 10 to 20, with one country filching jobs from the other, ever agree on conditions or wages?

The solution is to go back to the fundamentals as some countries and their trading blocs do. To preserve the integrity of a national economy, there must be a rejection of 'global competition'. Some price differential between local product and imports is inevitable. International capital can no longer be permitted to slosh around the globe in pursuit of speculative gains while it wrecks countries and nations' lives and livelihoods. The profitability of imported funds must be reduced by levies on funds when they enter and substantial withholding taxes on real and imputed profits when they leave. This only reflects the cost to this country of exported jobs, imported inflation and resource depletion, and the effects of waste and pollution.

If Paul Keating is going to lower payroll tax, he could do worse than to replace it with a foreign investment tax. After all, that is only in line with the greater independence and acceptance of responsibility for Australia's well-being that should follow from our becoming a republic.

Gerhard Weissmann
Adelaide, SA

Hall of fame

From Carl Henry Quaedvlieg

A decision by the archdiocese of Sydney to close the Chapter Hall museum gives rise to the possibility that objects of historical interest may deteriorate and go back to gathering dust.

On all accounts it is a unique collection of Catholic heritage, planned to be exhibited permanently in one of the oldest buildings in the grounds of St Mary's Cathedral.

Because of the closure, the historical objects may well be lost to following generations. The future population of Sydney and of the whole country may be able only to read about them, not see them for themselves.

It was a Bicentenary project and government financial support had been allocated to get it started. Surely corporate support should be sought to help save the Christian heritage. Christian heritage around the Mediterranean and in all of Europe was saved in the past through the efforts of monasteries, convents and churches. Today such institutions lack the finance and manpower.

It will be a sad day for Christian heritage if people in influential positions cannot muster enough interest to speak up in favour of reversing the decision to abandon the historical objects and thereby consign them to the dust heap.

Carl Henry Quaedvlieg
Randwick, NSW

Coming to terms

The Prime Minister's Republic Advisory Committee was appointed amid controversy and continues to be controversial. Committee member ***Susan Ryan*** *told* Eureka Street *how she sees it.*

Morag Fraser: *There has been criticism of the composition of the committee. Will the fact that the committee consists of pro-republicans work against the national interest?*

Susan Ryan: I don't think so. The task is to develop options for a republican head of state. If you ask people to perform that specific task, it is appropriate that they have some sympathy for it. Our committee has not been asked whether Australia should be a republic, nor what sort of a republic it might be.

We have been asked to look at the specific matter of the head of state, and asked to put up options for changing the Constitution so as to remove all reference to the Queen and the Queen's representatives, and replace those with workable, effective references to a head of state. We have also been asked to look at the Constitution, to consult with other Australians, and to propose the minimum changes that would be necessary. So it is a huge challenge but a very specific exercise.

Given that that is the nature of the exercise, it wouldn't make sense to invite someone who was committed to the maintenance of a constitutional monarchy to participate. That is not to say that there isn't a role for monarchists in the debate. But this particular task I think could only be carried out by people who were committed to the idea of achieving an independent head of state.

Some of the changes you have been asked to investigate seem quite straightforward, but there are obviously other, much tougher, ones. The question of the reserve powers of the head of state—how much of that is included in your brief?

We are asked to look at 'how the powers of the new head of state and their exercise can be made subject to the same conventions and principles which apply to the powers of the Governor-General'. Part of the powers of the Governor-General under the present Constitution include the reserve powers, and the reserve powers are somewhat mysterious creatures, since they are not written down in the Constitution nor anywhere else. They are an understanding.

I don't think it will be possible to meet term of reference number four without some discussion of what the reserve powers actually are, and whether under a republican system it would be appropriate to have what are conventionally understood to be very extensive powers rest with someone outside of the parliamentary system.

One of the big tasks of the committee will be to demystify the reserve powers. I am very conscious, as a non-specialist member of this committee, of the extent of mystification of the Australian Constitution and I don't think that is a good thing. I think that in a democracy the more people who understand the rules under which they live the better. And the more they understand, the better they can make up their minds about whether they want to change them or not. I think one of the reasons why the Constitution has been changed so infrequently is that it is an opaque document, hard to understand. It is not a document you would admire for its lucidity.

You wouldn't carve it on a monument wall?

You would not. So I do think that although the terms of reference are very tight and 'minimalist', to use the word the Prime Minister has used in setting up this exercise ...

Is it a term you find useful?

I haven't made up my mind about that yet. I think I am using it with irony. Because if you look at the terms, although it is quite clear that their intention is to keep a very tightly controlled exercise in place, there are aspects which will need further discussion—for example, the reserve powers.

And the other issue on the list: the implications for the states?

That's right. Now, at the outset of the terms of reference we are advised that there is no intention that the committee should examine any options which would otherwise change our structure of government, that is otherwise than changing our head of state. But term of reference number six is the implications for the states.

It's a bit like pulling a thread in a piece of fabric: you think you will just break the little piece of thread that is hanging down and you end up pulling out a lot more. I suspect that is what is going to happen as we examine these questions.

How is that process of scrutiny—pulling out the threads as you put it—going to be achieved without scaring the horses, alarming the electorate?

I think the overall purpose of the exercise should be quite reassuring even to people who don't want change because the purpose of the exercise is to develop an options paper. Now what happens to that options paper after it is produced is initially in the hands of government but ultimately nothing can change in fact without the will of the people being exercised.

By referendum?
By referendum, yes. And we all know how difficult it is to achieve change by referendum. So I see this as an exercise which should lead to a more informed, more imaginative debate, that can open up further areas for discussion and can clarify a lot of the motives of those of us who would like to see change. Those motives seem to have been misunderstood in some of the press comments, with an assumption that this activity is the exclusive domain of radicals and of people from certain ethnic backgrounds.

I have spent the past five years working in the business community in Melbourne, which I suppose is the most establishment expression of the business community in Australia. And I can say that there is a very intense desire for changing a lot of our constitutional framework because of the inefficiency of the current arrangements and because of the inevitable misallocation of public and private dollars that arises out of the kind of system we have. Look at it: six states, two territories, Commonwealth and state powers or regulations often overlapping, contradicting, a lack of harmony between many local government and state government requirements. All of these controls mean that the cost of doing business in Australia is much higher than it should be.

What are the trade implications of a shift to a republic?
I am not sure I am convinced that our Asian trading partners are very concerned whether we have an allegiance to the Queen of England or to somebody else. They are interested in what it is like to do business with an Australian firm, what the quality of the product is, the delivery time, the cost, whether you can buy iron ore cheaper from Australia or South America.

Is the republic a necessary condition for these changes, or could they be achieved in other ways?
The question really is about how you unravel the present framework. You have to start somewhere. I am aware that there has been critical comment about our starting with the head of state. But it is probably more sensible to start with the head of state, which is an easily understandable concept, rather than to start with federal-state relationships, which is an extremely complicated subject.

You can get a republic without changing federal-state relationships?
That's right, and in fact that's what we have been asked by the Prime Minister to propose for this stage of the exercise. We have been explicitly warned not to enter into the broader question of federal-state relations, and to concentrate on the head of state. However, to do that intelligently will require some reference to the federal environment in which all this is happening.

These are important external considerations. But what are the internal implications for the sense of national identity and civic purpose?
I think it is an opportunity for us to talk about who we are and what we like about ourselves and what we don't like about ourselves. Australians are not given to a great deal of self-examination. In the Bicentennial year there were some attempts to examine who Australians were 200 years after colonisation. Some of them were pretty superficial and trite, and some of them were pretty good. So it is another opportunity to do what Australians don't do very readily—consider the nature of their national culture (something the French do constantly) and the institutions that support it.

Something the Americans also do constantly, and with an array of symbols. We are not very readily accepting of symbols.
No. We are not a mass society so we don't need symbols as much as a mass society needs them.

What do you mean by a mass society?
We are not 250 million people. We are a small community , although we are inconveniently spread over a large land mass. We are an accessible society. We don't need mass symbols, nor these rather, in my view, vulgar Hollywood expositions of the presidency. We don't have to conduct our election campaigns entirely in terms of television images.

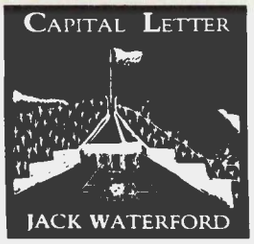
You have worked for a long time in the Australian community in various capacities, so you must have some sense of public reaction to the idea of a republic. What are your impressions of the support and of the nature and strength of the opposition?
I am much more conscious of the support than the opposition. Of course that is a personal anecdotal account of what has happened, from letters, and from comments from people on the street, since the Prime Minister made his announcement. Also, I have been in a couple of major business forums since the announcement was made and there is considerable excitement and support from what you'd call the big end of town.

I think many people would find that surprising.
Yes. The only reason why I don't find it so is that I have been working with big business as well as small business for a few years now and there are a lot of supporters for a republic from major corporations who say 'Yes, let's get on with it.' People sometimes underestimate the extent to which Australia has been an egalitarian society for a long time.

And the opposition?
The opposition expressed to me has been very muted. Some people have said you don't want to throw out the baby with the bathwater, or things aren't bad as they are so let's go slowly. It has really been more a voice of caution. No one has come saying Australia will collapse if we sever our ties with the monarchy.

Not even the National Party say that.
No, the mood for change is very clear, and I think that is where the Prime Minister has been so acute in responding to it. Politicians often take a long time to pick changes that are already taking place in the community. Demographic changes, generational changes, economic changes have all created an atmosphere in which people say 'We are an independent people. Let's have the appropriate way of expressing our independence.' ■

• Submissions to the committee—from either side of the debate—may be sent to Malcolm Turnbull, Republic Advisory Committee, 3-5 National Circuit, Barton, ACT 2600.



The details that got away

THE COLLINS AFFAIR IS A GOOD EXAMPLE of how the Australian system of government is coming under strain. In a complex and highly politicised area of administration, the government's primary focus—the march of technology—is proving to be beyond any power of government to control it. The transport and communications arena has big and powerful players who are close to the politicians and not averse to lobbying them. The politicians, in turn, are not averse to getting deeply involved in points of administration, to making erratic changes of policy, and then having periodic fits of virtue when they simply want to preside over the process.

Now add in some structural ingredients. One of the aspects of the public-service managerialism of the 1980s which is still in full flight has been a devaluation of experience and expertise. Policymakers are now rated for their capacity to imagine quick and dirty solutions, and to invent plausible rationales for them. The problem is accentuated by high staff turnovers, so that officers do not build up experience in particular areas, and by high mobility—the ambitious, wanting to move ever upwards, rarely hang around to see their quick fixes come unstuck.

In the Transport and Communications example, the four most senior officers of the department were all of good general ability and background. But none of them had worked in the area for more than five years, and these generalists were trapped by a lack of knowledge of detail. They did not understand the documents that they were presenting to the minister. The minister did not understand them either, nor did a personal staff of 14 supposed specialists whose function was to keep him out of trouble.

When it emerged that there was a fundamental problem, the minister blamed the department and a deputy secretary stood aside. Soon after, it emerged that there was another mess with yet another tender. Again, the minister had signed something he had not understood and again, it was the department's fault. This time the secretary was involved and accepted responsibility. He asked to be transferred but the request was refused by the Prime Minister, on the grounds of a good record in difficult times in the department.

They certainly have been difficult times, but the record of the department has by no means been as splendid as the Prime Minister might think. There have been plenty of other muddles. The Civil Aviation Authority, which also comes within the purview of the department, presents dilemmas of accountability that are at least as profound as those connected with pay-television. An internal review of one section of the authority, for example, suggests that staff do not know whether they are working for the public interest or for the client group.

Transport and Communications is an enormous department, with loud client groups and tens of thousands of employees in diverse areas. These areas were brought together by the creation of mega-departments in 1987, which was meant to streamline administration and to lighten the burden of Cabinet by considerably reducing the number of ministers—and the number of inter-departmental wars. The reorganisation probably achieved most of the advantages claimed for it, but there have been costs. One is that many departments are now so large that neither ministers nor senior administrators can possibly have a detailed understanding of some of the matters that come before them.

One of the supposed virtues of reorganisation was getting Cabinet down to manageable size—but since 1987 Cabinet has in fact grown from 14 to 19. Some departments have two Cabinet-level ministers who do not necessarily see department priorities in the same way. Throw in the Keating style—he is reluctant to use Cabinet in government—and you have a pretty mess.

At the opening of Parliament, the Governor-General promised yet another fundamental review of the public service. The service itself is attempting to settle the rules of accountability and issues of relationship to ministers, to Parliament, to outside agencies and to the people. These reviews will not be wanting for case histories in the past three months.

As well as the hapless Collins and his department, we have seen:

- The shifting of Tony Cole, secretary of the Treasury, allegedly for failing a loyalty test. Cole was doing his duty as a public servant—not to mention telling the truth to Parliament—in revising some evidence he had given, even if some political embarrassment was caused. Moreover, he did what he did after taking advice from the notional head of the public service, Dr Michael Keating of the Prime Minister's deparment.
- The amazing shifts and changes at Immigration, where officers have been moved from positions against the background of the Cambodian refugee case in the Federal Court in Melbourne, allegations of the destruction of subpoenaed evidence, and of institutional bias in the department.

The government continues to send mixed signals about its standards of ministerial responsibility and accountability, and its understanding of where the administrator fits in. The concerns raised by those mixed signals might die down a little as the government goes republican, and as it settles down for a quarter of budget negotiations. But the issue will not go away.

Jack Waterford is deputy editor of *The Canberra Times*.

Expanding the agenda

For more than a decade Canberra orthodoxy has ruled many social and developmental issues out of court. Now some cracks are opening up, argues ***Julian Disney****. So dust off your theories on regional development, state boundaries and the way we are governed. (Part two of an interview begun in the May issue).*

Julian Disney: For the past 15 years you couldn't really mention the words 'urban and regional development' in conjunction with each other. In polite Canberra company you'd be regarded as simply unsound. It was regarded as Tom Uren social engineering—a total waste of money and a classic example of what Australia didn't need.

Morag Fraser: *The attitude that sank Albury-Wodonga?*
Albury-Wodonga is an interesting example. Most people probably think it was a failure. But it's actually got one of the highest growth rates of any region in Australia. All they got wrong was the wildly optimistic growth projection at the outset. There is enormous interest in regional development, all over the country.

In some ways the most dangerous people with an ideology are the ones who are insecure and don't have the courage to challenge some of the precepts of the ideology. It's a bit like the zeal of the convert in a way.

Is that a response in part to desperate situations which force country people to look wherever they can, or is it a sign of a ground shift?
I think it's pushed on by the desperate situations, but I also think that they've always believed in regional development and now they think that there's a bit of a chance of action. When I first mentioned this four or five years ago on the AM program, just in passing, I got an extraordinary reaction, more than on any other issue, and from many different parts of Australia—Broome to Burnie. You could sense people were desperate for someone to mention the unmentionable. Subsequently ACOSS people were asked to all sorts of conferences by those whose profession was urban and regional development, people who had grown used to being regarded as pariahs.

So what do you see happening? Small, strategic aggregations of country towns and cities that have common interests?
The problem with smaller cities is that they'll always be very vulnerable if one or two enterprises close. I'm more interested in building the number and strength of medium sized cities with, say, 100-500,000 people. Also we should develop 'clusters' of cities and towns that are reasonably close to each other and, collectively, have substantial populations. The Ballarat-Bendigo area, for example, is one which just cries out to be developed that way. Another area is north east NSW—Lismore, Casino, Byron Bay, Murwillumbah.

What kind of industries do you see developing there?
Almost the full range. Its good climate and relaxed style of life make it suitable for industries that rely mainly on people and creativity rather than heavy plant and equipment. This applies to many 'sunrise' industries. It's also a good growing climate, especially for foods that are of interest to Asia, because it's sub-tropical. And of course, it can feed off the tourism boom that will continue in the Gold Coast. This, incidentally, raises the question of state boundaries, because they are a crucial problem in this context.

You want to change the state boundaries?
Yes. We do need to. I think it will happen but I don't pretend it will be easy because there have been many attempts to change state boundaries, and to amalgamate local councils, and they've all failed. I'd come at it in another way. All of the local councils, or most of them, are part of what's called an ROC—Regional Organisations of Councils. At the moment those bodies don't have much power. But I'd use the old Whitlam technique— power follows money.
If you just fund those bodies from the Federal Government to do certain things—starting with social and economic planning—inside 15 or 20 years those groups could have considerable power. You've got a problem then running them across state boundaries, but it's a lot easier to do something if what you're talking about is joint action between two regions which in fact are next to one another, rather than between two states, which are huge things.

If it is to happen from whom will the initiative come?
Alan Griffiths is the one with regional development tagged on his portfolio and he may take it seriously enough to do something.

Is there anything in his political record to suggest that he might?
He is an interventionist—that's probably as much as one could say at this stage. He's not a 'sit back and get the levers right and leave it to everyone else' type.

Are there many like that left?
Not, I think, many in the ministry, but there are in the public service. Many people in Treasury and Finance appear to have learned little from the recession into which their policies have plunged us.

But there have been shifts even there, such as Tony Cole's being replaced by Ted Evans as Head of Treasury.
Yes. In policy terms it is essential that the head of Treasury be someone who can dispassionately assess competing arguments and isn't the captive of an ideology.
We have paid a very heavy price for

ideological conformity in Canberra.

Evans is reputed to have concerns about unemployment.
A lot of these men came from quite straitened circumstances as children. That's often why they joined the public service.

But how does that dispassionate concern find its way into policy?
Well, John Dawkins will be the controlling force within that portfolio. He's a very strong minded person and he's in a very strong position with Keating. I've got a lot of time for what Dawkins has done so far. That is probably one of the bright spots—the fact that the portfolio is in the hands of someone who wants to do things and believes that there is a role for government.

That's one of the criticisms that people would have, though—particularly the aggrieved beneficiaries of his higher education amalgamation policies—that he does indeed want to do things but what he does scares the wits out of them.
Yes, like many big reformers he comes in and picks up all the tables and chairs and throws them everywhere. I think the main contribution he'll make is to break that tyranny in which bureaucrats didn't feel they could mention the unmentionable—you all had to be sound and follow the ideological pattern. In some ways the most dangerous people with an ideology are the ones who are insecure and don't have the courage to challenge some of the precepts of the ideology. It's a bit like the zeal of the convert in a way. Dawkins does want a range of points of view. So not surprisingly, he gets a bad press. But I think he's been very useful as a minister. And he'll in turn encourage others to talk about the front foot stuff—like active industry development—that we now need to help Australia ...

Some examples?
Wool processing, particularly our fine wool. A lot of it was just sent off and we got no 'value added', in the jargon of the day. Now they've encouraged a Spanish firm to set up here. They've given them some cash assistance, but they've also got a deal with the ACTU so that the company feels secure in its industrial relations matters. That was a condition of the grant, to get them started.

This won't be seen as just another route into the Victorian Economic Development Corporation black hole?
No, but the VEDC is a good example of how analysis of what went wrong was pretty much up the spout. A lot of people have spoken as if it shows that the government shouldn't be involved in things. It's equally possible to argue that it shows the government should be more involved in things.

With better experienced and equipped people being involved surely?
Yes. Either get in properly or don't get involved at all is the real lesson of Victoria. And don't kid yourself that you can escape political responsibility. A Henry Bolte would never have been caught. He would have booted Johns and the others out or—more likely—he would not have appointed them in the first place.

In many ways the failure of Cain and Bannon was that they were too nice, amongst the nicest you get in politics. That was their downfall. Also they were that new breed, the left winger trying to be economically responsible and trying to get the confidence of the business community. I'm sure a big factor with both of them would have been: 'I mustn't shock the business community by intervening. I must stand back and allow enterprises to survive on their own'.

Implicit in everything you say are fundamental and long term shifts in allegiances, alliances and congregations of political interest in Australia. The old definitions no longer hold.
I suppose we may be moving down the Republican/Democrat route where both parties are broad church. And of course Keating is talking about trying to move the ALP further beyond the unions, which is an interesting development.

Just as the unions are talking about moving beyond the Labor Party. But what of the other mooted ground shift: the move to a republic?
I have always thought we should be a republic but it wasn't high on the agenda. I think now it is more important because the symbolic effect is more than symbolic, if I can put it that way. It would mean a lot to our image in Asia. For them the notion of being part of another country is very confusing, and they have—Malaysia and Indonesia particularly—enough uncertainties about Australia anyway. The Prime Minister, to his credit, has brought the republic right to the front of the agenda in no more than three months by one or two speeches, while committees and organisations have been beavering away for decades without making a great deal of progress. That is not to denigrate their efforts, but you can see how national momentum can be set going by a few strong words from the top. It is essential, however, that this issue does not distract us from our major economic and social concerns, such as long-term unemployment and better trade performance.

I think the republican issue needs another year or so to work its way through. There is a danger if it gets caught up with other constitutional changes. There should be a short ... simple referendum on just that matter After that attention should be given to other issues.

So what do you see as the way ahead?
I think the republican issue needs another year or so to work its way through. There is a danger if it gets caught up with other constitutional changes. There should be a short, sweet and simple referendum just on that matter.
After that attention should to be given to other constitutional issues such as the balance of powers between the Commonwealth and the States, the role of Parliament and protection of human rights. ■

Julian Disney is professor of public law at the Centre for International and Public Law in the Australian National University. He was president of the Australian Council of Social Services from 1985-1989 and is currently a member of the Economic Planning Advisory Council.

Fibs and fables in Old Peking

We call it Beijing ... ***Trevor Hay*** *wandered down some back alleys and found that in many ways it is still 'Old Peking'.*

I SPENT A WEEK in Peking towards the end of March, a week that fell outside the city's go-slow on pollution, arranged for the benefit of the International Olympic Committee, and as a result there were few occasions when I could see anything from my hotel window but smog, shot through with a wash of febrile sunlight. At night the dust, rising steadily to meet me on the nineteenth floor, was hidden beneath a glittering cloak of fairy lights and neon signs. Out in Goldfish Lane an unbroken stream of yellow taxis inched round the corner and headed south for Tian'anmen, past a row of restaurants draped with curtains of little white globes, lifting prettily at the bottom, after the fashion of Chinese eaves.

In one of these restaurants, while I was being ripped off for a 'hot-pot' dinner, I reproached the proprietor for watching an immoral Western television program, in which a decadent couple were limbering up for a spot of bedroom Kung Fu. He asked me how old I was, then announced triumphantly that he was a year older, so it was OK for him to watch. That at least put me in a better frame of mind—me and everyone else in the place, actually. But I resolved to stay in my room at night, except for visits to the Peking Opera, and to eat room service cheeseburgers—even if they were served with a side-salad of cornflakes and red cabbage. I had come for the purpose of spending unhurried hours in bookshops, and wandering the old lanes, not for spending 80 yuan (A$20) on a bowl of old crab soup and a loess sauce. Anyway, if I wanted nightlife, I could always tune in to Larry London and the *Marlboro Hour* on Joy FM, China Radio International ('You gotta move 500 head of cattle 40 miles before sunset, but first you gotta move 'em out ...'). According to my hotel directory, if I did need to go out, there was an excellent baby sister service—'Whenever you need a baby sister, please dial 83.' No wonder the one-child family policy is in disarray.

Under all the sparkle, and the incongruous façade of this new tourist boomtown, as real and as shabby as the dust, is the remains of 'Old Peking'. From Goldfish Lane you can walk up to Wangfujing (Street of the Well of the Princes' Mansions), which for a long time was known as Morrison Street, after the Australian journalist and adventurer Dr G.E. Morrison, who used to live at number 98, round the turn of the century. The extraordinary 'hermit of Peking', Sir Edmund Backhouse, also cut quite a figure around here in those days. A little way down from the corner of Goldfish Lane and Wangfujing, on the eastern side, is the Eastern Cathedral (Dong Tang), St Joseph's Church, first erected by Father Verbiest in 1666, and rebuilt after the Boxer Rebellion. I peered in through the cast-iron gates on a Sunday morning, and was let in by an old caretaker. When I spoke to him, and told him that I had often stopped here over a period of many years, but had never been inside, he led me through a side door into the church. I stared for a

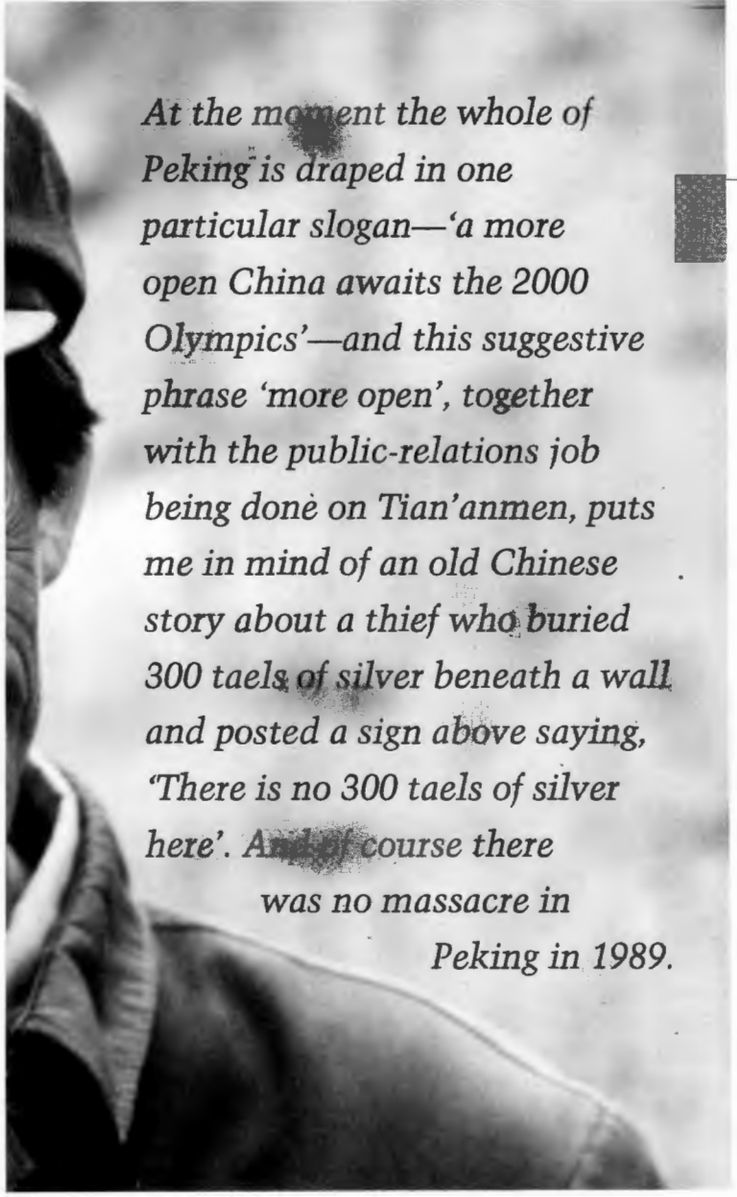


Photo: Mathias Heng

long time at the soaring pillars, decorated with black rosettes on a gold background—an opulent Eastern Christian effect, but reminiscent of Taoism, and the swirling rhythms of a Chinese landscape painting. There were gaily coloured patchwork cushions still scattered on the pews, and someone had left a bag hanging from a rail. The old man told me there had been more than 500 at the liturgy that morning. Outside the gates a crowd had gathered to watch a man sketching portraits from photographs.

A FEW HUNDRED METRES from the church, I took a look in a little shop selling hobby collectables—stamps and coins, mainly. I asked the proprietor if he had any tapes, or books, of songs popular in the Cultural Revolution. He said those things were very hard to get, and showed me instead a small pile of 'little red books', selling for about 100 yuan (you had to buy the larger edition of Mao's works and a little red book as a package deal). I still find it almost incomprehensible that these things could ever have become collector's items but it is certainly true, as reported, that Mao's portrait appears as a lucky charm in many Peking cabs, and the bookshops are full of recent publications about his interests, his reading habits, his knowledge of Chinese history and literature, his relationships with his generals, and so on. One very popular book declares itself to be the story of a man, not a god—but this is a highly ambivalent disclaimer.

THERE IS A FASHIONABLE preoccupation with great figures and personalities in China at present, including Nixon, De Gaulle, Eisenhower and Mussolini. Ironically, Mao himself strongly disapproved of 'the ideology of individual genius' which Marshal Lin Biao employed so effectively in making him a god—not so much because he did not want this kind of status for himself, but because he could see quite clearly how it was being used as a vehicle for Lin Biao's own rival cult status. That is why he recommended removal of the position of head of state from the constitution in 1970, and why, in a general sense, he adopted a populist and anti-bureaucratic stance on matters of power and authority throughout the Cultural Revolution. This was always a means of ensuring an ultimate and unique legitimacy for his own moral/political power, regardless of state and party structures which might advance the power of others.

Mao is still at it, in a way. His new legitimacy, as the subject of biography and as patron saint of cab drivers, is founded on a widespread and unique fascination not with his philosophy, or poetry, or his remarkable life and times, but with the perception that he was, and is, a mighty source of power and magic—a dragon. As for the party itself, he has left it with a terrible credibility crisis since 1971, and Lin Biao's alleged assassination attempt. Ironically, it is that very crisis which ensures that Mao's portrait will continue to brood over Tian'anmen. And the disappearance of those tens of millions of little red books is a potent reminder of the party's problem. For many Chinese it was not 1966-1969, including even the terrors of the 'Purify the Class Ranks Campaign', that destroyed their faith, but the extraordinary reversal of fortunes of Lin Biao, who had set the nation to the waving of books.

When I opened a volume of Mao's poetry I had found in the hobby shop, I saw that it was published in 1969, and contained a slogan in celebration of the Ninth Party Congress of that year. Before you get to the slogan you must wade through 21 photographs of Mao, and after it there are a further 17. But the 22nd photograph has been torn out. From examination of other Cultural Revolution materials I would say this is the photo of Lin Biao and Mao Zedong together, with Lin Biao's own calligraphy beneath, extolling Mao as 'great leader, great teacher, great commander and great helmsman'. It was at the Ninth Party Congress that Lin Biao was written into the constitution as 'Mao's close comrade-in-arms and successor', and after the congress he is alleged to have peddled the line of Mao's 'individual genius' in order to bolster his own position and that of his son, Lin Liguo. Lin Biao is gone, but Mao is still with us, and after the Eighth National People's Congress of March 1993, Mao Zedong Thought remains, along with party

Photo: Trevor Hay

leadership, the dictatorship of the proletariat and Marxism-Leninism, as one of the 'Four Cardinal Principles' of the constitution. But Mao now finds himself part of the moral/political legitimacy for a constitution in which the term 'socialist market economy' replaces the 'planned economy' of the first constitution of 1954. That may well be Deng Xiaoping's revenge.

The vandalism has not all been the result of ideology. Some of it has to do with feminine intransigence. I well remember a sentence in a Chinese textbook for the study of English: 'The Chinese government has torn down the traditional arches memorialising chaste and faithful women, because they are an obstacle to modern traffic.'

Chinese leaders have an external credibility problem to worry about too—Tian'anmen. Since they judge, correctly, that Tian'anmen Square is one of the few Chinese places that foreigners have ever heard of, and since it happens to be in Peking, a contender for the Olympic Games, something has to be done to project a more positive image of the square. China Airlines is doing its bit, by means of an in-flight movie entitled *Ah! Tian'anmen!*, in which the student demonstrations of the May Fourth Movement in 1919, the proclamation of the republic by Mao in 1949, and the 5 April anti-Gang of Four demonstration in 1976 are all commemorated as highlights in the history of the square. After that, the film goes on to show its recreational uses,as a site for kite-flying, Tai Chi and the waving of pro-government banners and slogans.

At the moment the whole of Peking is draped in one particular slogan—'a more open China awaits the 2000 Olympics'—and this suggestive phrase 'more open', together with the public-relations job being done on Tian'anmen, puts me in mind of an old Chinese story about a thief who buried 300 taels of silver beneath a wall and posted a sign above saying, 'There is no 300 taels of silver here'. And of course there was no massacre in Peking in 1989. But I am not denying that China is 'more open'. In one of my bookshops in Wangfujing there is a volume on the shelf entitled *The Nude in Contemporary Chinese Oil Painting*—with Western nudes. And you can't say that the locals are all that inhibited about looking at the pictures—in fact the proprietor has been driven to write on the cover 'Do not handle unless you intend to buy. It will cost you three yuan for every page you turn!'

It was a good time to be in Peking. The weather was not too hot or too cold, the malicious spring winds had not yet begun, and one morning on my way to the ruins of Qianlong's Summer Palace (Yuan Ming Yuan, a poignant but neglected reminder of the time when the Chinese depended on foreign troops, rather than indigenous planners, to destroy their cultural treasures for them) I discovered that the willows had been brushed with a faint green overnight and the magnolias had opened. On a day when the fabled Peking sky was liberated from filth for a few precious hours, I walked from the Southern Cathedral (Nan Tang, also a Jesuit church, and home to Matteo Ricci in the 17th century) down into the lanes of the Xuanwumen district. So much of the city has been mutilated, as has been well documented by Tiziano Terzani and Simon Leys in particular. Of course the vandalism has not all been the result of ideology. Some of it has to do with feminine intransigence. I well remember a sentence in a Chinese textbook for the study of English: 'The Chinese government has torn down the traditional arches memorialising chaste and faithful women, because they are an obstacle to modern traffic.'

But you can still feel the ghosts of the city in the 'hutong', the little winding lanes which flow into on another like drains, full of rich nutrients supporting a thriving, secret life. It was here, in a real Chinese house, with real Chinese people, that I collected my most valuable souvenir of the trip. I heard a man refer to his ancient and venerable Chinese leaders—the ones who are so eagerly awaiting the 2000 Olympics—as 'a load of old coffin lining'. That kind of thing is deeply reassuring.

I OFTEN FEEL LIKE TELLING TOURISTS to throw away their itineraries and go for a walk in the hutong, especially in the south-west of the city. Or they could read a book, of course. After all, as Geremie Barmé pointed out in his introduction to the Oxford University Press edition of Arlington and Lewisohn's *In Search of Old Peking*, much of the 'real' Peking exists only in books. But, unlike the Chinese, who love books because they are the only means by which foreign places can be reached, Australians travel instead. And these days we are no slouches ourselves when it comes to silly slogans. It would be infinitely better, for example, if we acknowledged that our real task is to become not 'Asia-literate' but simply literate. For my part I urge people who wish to enjoy Peking, and who are likely to be depressed by the sight of Dairy Queen, Chicken Skillet and Yoshinoya fast-

food outlets, to stay at home and read Daniele Varé's *The Maker of Heavenly Trousers*.

But there is another thing worth noting about the China Airlines in-flight film and its slick CNN-style of delivery (a young male and female presenter sitting at a desk, earnestly pretending to have a casual conversation). After the part about the square itself, we cut to Tibet and a view of the Potala Palace, gleaming supernaturally in the brilliant azure light on the roof of the world. Mary Craig, in her book, *Tears of Blood*, has noted the link between the shooting of Tibetan demonstrators in Lhasa in March 1989 and the shooting of Chinese demonstrators in Peking three months later, both a result of that dreadful anxiety the powerful feel when their power is threatened. And the same elegantly simple method is being employed to deflect attention from both events. In May 1991 the Chinese erected two giant gilded yaks in Lhasa, to commemorate the 40th anniversary of their occupation. No Tibetans buried here? Who would ever have thought that gilded yaks, the Olympic Games, a book of Mao's poetry and Tian'anmen Square had so much in common? ■

Trevor Hay is a senior lecturer in education in the University of Melbourne, and the author of *Tartar City Woman*, MUP, 1990, and (with Fang Xiangshu) *East Wind, West Wind*, Penguin, 1992.

The shell game is a numbers racket

THE EGG SHELL is one of nature's many wonders: its curvature reflects what Descartes called an equiangular spiral, a logarithmic curve. We find the same curve in the nautilus sea shell and, curiously, in the coiling and uncoiling of the fingers in our hands. All these curves are determined by the ratio 1:1.618, the same ratio that operates in the 'golden section'. That is, if I take a line AB, at what point (C) can I cut it so that the ration of AC:AB is the same as the ration CB:AC? We find this ratio in the sides of the 'golden rectangle' and the sides of an isosceles triangle with an apex of 36 degrees. The golden rectangle is that shape, pleasing to the eye, which is the basis for the architecture of the Parthenon in Athens and the National Library in Canberra. The secret of this ratio, however, comes from Pisa.

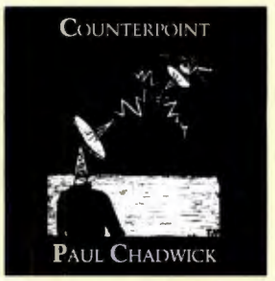
Leonard of Pisa, better known as Fibonacci, lived from about 1180 to 1250. He studied in North Africa and introduced Arabic numerals into the West. Like Archimedes, Fibonacci was a great mathematician, and in his spare time he entertained all comers with great feats of ingenuity.

One of his most celebrated puzzles was this: 'How many pairs of rabbits will be produced in a year, beginning with a single pair, if in every month each pair bears a new pair that becomes productive from the second month on?' The answer to this problem gives rise to what is now know as a Fibonacci sequence—1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21 and so on—which is formed by adding the two previous numbers together to get a new number, and repeating the process *ad infinitum*. Sequences of this kind, surprise, surprise, increasingly approximate to the ratio of the 'golden section'.

At a meeting of the Australian Hand Surgery Society in March this year, Stephen Coleman, of Brisbane, reported on Fibonacci numbers in the hand. The lengths of the two smallest bones in our fingers add up to give the length of the next bone. And when we add again, we get the length of the metacarpal bone, which joins knuckle and wrist. The ratio from one bone to the next is approximately 1:1.618. Furthermore, the thumb has an optimal projection from the fixed unit of the hand of approximately 36 degrees.

Fibonacci numbers appear repeatedly in nature, notably in the number of petals on a flower, the apparently random arrangement of twigs and leaves on a stem, the spirals in seed pods on sunflowers, on pine cones and pineapples, and many sea shells. Which is all another way of saying that we, though many, are one. Archimedes would approve. ■

—John Honner SJ



Principles are a last resort

THE DILEMMA IS SIMPLE. Journalists say that unless potential whistleblowers are assured of anonymity they will not disclose to the media information of high public interest. Lawyers say that unless the courts can compel full disclosure from everyone, justice cannot be done or be seen to be done. And so journalists continue to be sent to prison for contempt of court rather than breach clause three of the Australian Journalists Association's code of ethics: 'In all circumstances they shall respect all confidences received in the course of their calling'.

Let's accept the inevitability, in some hard cases, of clashes between these two competing values—the free flow of information and the interests of justice. The issue for discussion is what might be done to reduce an increasing incidence of confrontation. Since 1989 three journalists have been jailed for refusing to disclose sources, another was recently fined $5000, a fifth was threatened with prison and a sixth case is pending as I write.

Reform of both journalism and the law is needed, and in that order. Journalists are right, in principle, to place a high value on the encouragement of whistleblowing (witness the Fitzgerald inquiry, WA Inc. *et al*). The evidence suggests that those who are identified as having disclosed to outsiders that there is something rotten in an institution will be dealt with more severely by that institution than will be the problem they revealed. Some will argue that this particular justification for protecting source anonymity will be weakened by whistleblower-protection laws (passed in South Australia; close in Queensland; gestating in NSW; mooted in WA). But assured anonymity will always be a necessary precondition for some sources, argue the journalists. The law replies that this general public interest in information flow should not outweigh the need to do justice in a particular case.

When a person is defamed by an anonymous source, why shouldn't the potential plaintiff be able to find out who made the claim, so as to sue him or her? The journalists' reply is that they will stand in the shoes of the source. Sue us, they say, our employers have deeper pockets than any source and we will use only those defences which would have been available to the source.

But what if a journalist's silence may lead to a wrongful conviction, or a wrongful acquittal, because the identity of the source or his or her evidence is relevant? Here the journalists have no simple answer. They must either play down the relevance of the source's testimony—an assertion no one else is in position to test—or fall back on the general justification about information flow. These seem poor arguments to a person facing a murder charge, and to a court trying it.

The conclusion must be that there can be no absolute privilege for journalists to protect the identities of sources. But the law, which operates rather clumsily in these cases in practice, could be made more subtle.

Parliament could legislate for a US-style 'shield law' which would elevate the journalist-source relationship to a small group of relationships for which it already recognises a qualified privilege—lawyer and client, doctor and patient, and priest and penitent.

The New Zealand Evidence Amendment Act gives the court a discretion to excuse a witness from disclosing information if that 'would be a breach by the witness of a confidence that, having regard to the special relationship existing (between witness and source) ... the witness should not be compelled to breach.' The court must balance competing interests in disclosure with 'preservation of confidences between persons in the relative position (of witness and source) ... and the encouragement of free communication between such persons.' It must consider the likely significance of the evidence to the particular proceedings, the nature of the confidence and the special relationship; and the likely effect of disclosure on the confidante and others.

I said I thought journalism had to reform itself first. Parliaments and the courts will not ameliorate the effects of the law on journalists while they believe, as the High Court clearly did in the 1989 case of John Fairfax *v* Cojuangco, that 'an immunity from disclosure of sources of information would enable irresponsible persons to shelter behind anonymous, or even fictitious, sources.' The fear is not that this would happen in exceptional cases, but that it is, or might become, the rule.

Apart from a general effort to improve self-regulation, and therefore their own credibility, journalists might also try:

Being more frugal with promises of anonymity to sources, so that reporters are less frequently bound by the ethical requirement that may lead them to prison;

Assessing more sceptically the claims to anonymity by sources who are providing information not out of altruism but, say, to harm a political rival;

Negotiating with sources, prior to promising confidentiality, about whether their anonymity can be limited to a fixed period or until, say, their testimony becomes vital in criminal proceedings;

Corroborating the information from confidential sources with material from those who can be named: (this serves the reader, too, who must otherwise take on trust the motives of the unnamed source);

Considering, before publishing, whether the public interest in the information is sufficient to outweigh the countervailing interests in disclosure which might result from publication. ■

Paul Chadwick is Victorian co-ordinator of the Communications Law Centre.

MICHAEL MCGIRR

Our neighbourhood war

AT LONG LAST, there are signs of hope that the chaotic civil war on Bougainville, now entering its fourth year, may be capable of resolution. At the end of April, the so-called Bougainville Leaders Forum met on Buka island, just off the north coast of Bougainville. The four-day meeting represented a wide cross-section of the myriad interests on Bougainville. According to Sean Dorney, the ABC's Port Moresby correspondent, who was present, chiefs and leaders from the three-quarters of Bougainville back under the nominal authority of the Papua New Guinea government came to talk sense.

'I think it's the most hopeful thing I've seen since the PNG troops moved out in 1990,' says Dorney. 'These people are seeing a sensible course that steers somewhere less than absolute secession.'

The picture emerging is that most of Bougainville seems prepared to cooperate in some measure with the Port Moresby government of Paias Wingti. Wingti's Minister for Bougainville Affairs, Michael Ogio, chaired the meeting on Buka. Notwithstanding this, the meeting had a clear desire for Bougainville to stand on its own two feet. In asking the Papua New Guinea Defence Force (PNGDF) to remain as a guarantor of safety, the meeting emphasised that these forces were now there by local invitation to help with law and order. The long-term resolutions of the Leaders Forum look towards the return of provincial government on Bougainville, giving the island some autonomy while remaining part of Papua New Guinea.

Absent from the meeting, however, were leaders from the five central districts still held by strong factions of the Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA). Ironically, these groups are being bonded together by the current behaviour of elements within the PNGDF on Bougainville. In February this year, civilians were taken into custody when these forces occupied the Arawa hospital. Ken Savia, Minister for Health in the interim government, was tortured and executed. Others were raped and killed.

One person who has been caught in the grip between the BRA and the PNGDF is an Australian Marist brother, Bryan Leak. Until last December, Leak had been on Bougainville since 1985. In the months before the closure of the giant CRA copper mine in May '89, he experienced the build-up of tension as Bougainvilleans expressed resentment against the way their mineral wealth was being exploited, and their way of life disrupted, by the influx of workers from other provinces. These tensions spawned the violence that closed the mine. Opposition to the presence of PNG forces grew rapidly and, in an attempt to defuse the situation, they were withdrawn in March 1990, along with all government personnel, pulling the plug on many vital services. As 20,000 fled the island, Leak remained at the Marist Brothers high school in Kieta, helping to maintain limited education and health facilities.

Living under an ineffective interim government which was led by the shadowy Francis Ona, Leak used the boarding school to care for refugees and help absorb some of the effects of the massive dislocation of the civilian population on Bougainville. A lack of clear local authority triggered a further upsurge in violence, during which Leak put valuable stocks of abandoned office equipment, furniture and other materials into safe storage away from looters. He also managed the mission radio and coordinated the trickle of medical and relief supplies through the PNG blockade.

Both sides of the conflict on Bougainville have made threats on Bryan Leak's life. He has twice paid for his scrupulous even-handedness.

Early '92 saw the development of the South Bougainville Interim Authority, working to restore order and services in that part of the island. Central authorities, suspicious that PNG was using this development to create division and re-establish its control, reacted negatively and several BRA and political leaders, including Anthony Anugu, were killed. Leak had protested to Francis Ona about these unauthorised killings and was now accused of passing information out to the world. He was arrested and later released. After PNGDF landings at the Tununu mission near Arawa, the Catholic Church was accused of favouring PNG. Leak, together with the parish priest of Kieta, were arrested and taken inland to Marai. BRA authorities decided they could ill afford the bad publicity that would result from Leak's death. They arranged for him to be transported to the Solomon Islands, judging rightly that his concern for

Bryan Leak in Melbourne
Photo: Michael McGirr

those remaining on Bougainville would moderate anything he reported.

On 15 December, as Leak was leaving in the company of a BRA escort, together with a sick woman and her nine-year old son, their five-metre outboard was spotted by an Iroquois helicopter. These helicopters were given by Australia to the PNG government, on condition that they not be fitted out as gunships. The small boat headed back to shore. The helicopter chased and opened fire with an M16 rifle.

In Leak's words, 'we beached our boat and scattered, seeking cover in the light bush on the foreshore. The helicopter continued to circle, launching about six more grenades and spraying the area with bullets. The attack lasted about 10 minutes. PNG claims we fired first, which is not true.' Leak was unable to see if the helicopter pilot was an Australian. That night the group made the crossing to the Solomons under cover of darkness.

On reaching Honiara, Leak reported the incident to Australian authorities. Later, on 10 February, in the month that the PNGDF raided the Arawa hospital, he discussed it in person with the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Gareth Evans. Official expressions of concern over Leak's experience are apparently being ignored by the PNG government. Australia has not pursued the matter of the deaths at Arawa, and continues to supply $322 million a year in aid to PNG.

Leak believes that if the PNGDF intend to exact revenge on the people of the central region controlled by the BRA, then the opportunities for peace, such as those glimpsed at the recent meeting on Buka, will be squandered and the situation will continue to fester.

Both sides of the conflict on Bougainville have made threats on Bryan Leak's life. He has twice paid for his scrupulous even-handedness. His story, in a way, epitomises the difficulty of making complex judgments in this part of the region. The Bougainville Leaders Forum was highly critical of the role of the Catholic Church, especially in the period during which the local prelate, Bishop Singkai, inadvisedly accepted a ministry in Ona's interim government. Nevertheless, the meeting emphasised that there is still a role for even-handed church people in rebuilding village societies.

Above all, in an 11-page statement, the meeting has proposed provincial government be restored on Bougainville, with some prospect of extending this autonomy in the future. If Port Moresby maintains the current format of provincial governments, this should be easy enough. However, if Prime Minister Wingti goes ahead and modifies the whole structure of provincial government in PNG, then a special case will need to be made for Bougainville and perhaps for other island provinces. Such delicate arrangements, at least in the short term, just might offer release. ■

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ROWAN CALLICK

One island among many

Australians bristle when Britain or the US pose as an elder brother. But they often forget that in the Pacific they themselves are seen in this way.

I SHALL NOT FORGET the astonishment of a friend of mine, a Papua New Guinean artist, on our drive from Sydney airport to the city. It was his first trip overseas, and what fascinated him was not the place's comparative size or pace, but seeing white people working pumps at gas stations, and even collecting garbage. 'It just doesn't seem natural,' he said.

This is what Australia's sharpest South Pacific diplomat, John Trotter (at present ambassador to Fiji) calls 'the politics of disproportion' at work. Australia's all-pervasiveness in the region can lead to some strange misconceptions, as Australians and islanders continue to construct a relationship. Previously my friend had only seen Australians in positions of authority, at work or even in the home.

Australia's opinion leaders today are teetering on the edge of hysteria about how the country is perceived in Asia. Asides, half-formed notions and instant observations are seized on as evidence of warm acceptance, glum indifference, or rejection, as in any adolescent crush. But how is Australia viewed by its closest neighbours, in the South Pacific region that is its only effective sphere of influence? Most of the islands were colonised, of course, by more remote powers—Britain, France, the USA, Japan, Germany. Papua New Guinea was Australia's sole colony, though Australia did administer Nauru until its independence in 1968.

The official relationship with the region has grown considerably in the 25 years or so since the islands one by one assumed their independence, mostly with degrees of reluctance but some with a struggle. Today Australia is the biggest bilateral aid donor to virtually every independent South Pacific country, giving $322 million to PNG in 1992-93, and $92 million to other South Pacific countries. It is also the major trading partner for most of the islands, with total trade in 1991-92 worth $1.8 billion with PNG and $570 million with the rest of the South Pacific Forum countries (apart from New Zealand).

Such dollar power carries with it an inevitable resentment on the islanders' part at their semi-dependency, and the enduring suspicion that some islanders have about outsiders is entirely understandable. Pacific historian Professor Douglas Oliver writes of the mid-19th century in what is today Vanuatu: 'A favourite trick (of foreign traders) was to capture a community's chief and hold him as hostage until his people ransomed him with sandalwood. Then, instead of releasing the man he would be traded as cannibal fare to another island for more sandalwood.' Thousands of islanders were shipped round the Pacific as the demand for labour accelerated on coconut and sugar plantations. From 1875 to 1903, many Solomon Islanders and ni-Vanuatu were indentured, or 'blackbirded', to work in the Queensland cane fields. Their descendants, of course, remain there today.

As contact increased at every level with the island countries, they were gradually colonised, often with a degree of reluctance on the part of the distant metropolitan powers, whose traders' and adventurers' claims of hidden wealth in exotic parts were increasingly proving barren. The costs of servicing South Pacific outposts were high, the returns mostly negligible. The task of 'development' was largely left to the churches, which continue to provide many of the region's rural health and education services, and to the trading companies. Until 1899, even the administration of Germany's colony of New Guinea was deputed to the Neu Guinea Kompagnie. Between the world wars the Japanese South Seas Development Company effectively managed much of Micronesia, and Australia's Burns Philp (South Seas) Company Ltd, everywhere known as 'BP' (standing, some hard-pressed colonials complained, for 'Bloody Pirate'), ran much of the inter-island shipping.

In PNG today, some of that resentment at the imperious power of Australian commerce has been reborn and directed at mining companies (even though for the most part, ultimate ownership or control is in Canada, Britain or Germany). Mines that were once intended strictly as 'enclaves' providing the revenues to fund broader-based development, have proved to be the only economic growth points. This year, the mines are expected to provide 83 per cent of PNG's revenue.

Thus, at a time when the government's delivery of services has been breaking down, its role has been effectively delegated to mining companies. Bougainville

Huge expectations, beyond merely mining efficiently, are being brought to bear on the mining companies, which are mostly Australian-based. On them, perceptions of Australia itself are crucially hinging. And in this context Australia is seen as a little shop-worn, with its contribution largely taken for granted.

Copper Ltd was—understandably but perhaps fatally—reluctant to assume state responsibilities, especially since in less than two decades it had contributed almost $2 billion to national and provincial governments. A major domestic justification for the bitterly fought deal that gave the PNG government 15 per cent more equity in the Porgera gold mine was that the mine owners would spend 50 million kina on development projects over 10 years. Huge expectations, beyond merely mining efficiently, are being brought to bear on these companies, which are mostly Australian-based. On them, perceptions of Australia itself are crucially hinging. And in this context Australia is seen as a little shop-worn, with its contribution largely taken for granted.

From time to time, more exciting newcomers have entered the scene—most convulsively in the Pacific War, when many islanders encountered the material power of the modern world for the first time. In 1990 President Bush invited the island leaders to a 'Pacific summit' in Honolulu. Great expectations were held for proposed 'joint commercial commission' to stimulate Pacific-American trade, but it fizzled out; Washington's interest in the region largely dissolved with the failure of New York Congressman Stephen Solarz, who in 1989 led a delegation to the region, to win preselection last year.

It was American agitation about South Pacific security that in the 1980s drove the last major international review of the region's strategic significance. Alleged sightings of Cubans and Libyans in Vanuatu and elsewhere excited a brief interest in the South Pacific, with the Hoover Institute hosting a 'red orchestra' conference in Washington which in hindsight might have been titled 'red herrings'. Since the Cold War itself expired, there has been little reassessment.

Although Australia has expended considerable effort on brokering an Asian regional security regime, it has comparatively neglected the Pacific—though the Fiji coups and the Bougainville rebellion, overflowing into skirmishes between PNG and Solomon Islands, have underlined its fragility. Australia's provision of patrol boats to all the island nations has helped integrate the Australian Defence Force with the region, and the boats' radios are on the same wavelength—unlike, sometimes, the countries that operate them.

In the 1990s the region has turned towards Asia for aid and investment, in the hope that some of the thrusting prosperity of the 'Little Tigers' (South Korea, Taiwan) and the ASEAN nations will rub off. But so far the results have been mixed. The islands provide small markets, and except for PNG's and Solomon Islands' timber—now being logged at a desperate rate, principally by Malaysian interests—only modest resources. With the exception of fish; the seas controlled by the South Pacific Forum countries cover nearly a third of the world's surface. Taiwan has collected a few supporters, and Japan has given aid substantially but clumsily. Typically, Japanese aid has built hospitals, freezing plants and research institutes that have looked impressive but which the islands, strapped for cash, are unable to equip, maintain or staff.

Australia's own aid efforts have not been universally admired, either, though they have better directed to the differing needs of the island states. The big challenge ahead for the Australian International Development Assistance Bureau is to replace much of the $322 million annual budgetary aid to PNG with programs that are more specific in their aims and require more accountability from the recipients. Australia's official presence in PNG, then, will become more visible. The building of a massive, high-security Australian 'compound' to house aid and diplomatic staff in Port Moresby will not help mitigate the 'politics of disproportion'—though at last the Australian high commission building, which embarrassingly had dominated the government 'capitol' at Waigani, is now being shaded by the new Somare House (built by the Taiwanese, in the vain hope of gaining diplomatic recognition).

Canberra still faces a prickly problem in explaining to the islands—which continue to put more effort into expanding their already privileged access to Australian markets than into product development—that by the time the Australian barriers are fully removed, GATT may well have forced an international dismantling. But it is difficult to open the region to new ideas—it is suffering from initiative fatigue.

The Keating government includes, for the first time in Australia's history, a Minister responsible for Pacific Affairs, Gordon Bilney. At first, there was some disquiet in the region, where it was felt the appointment amounted to the islands being sidelined while the Foreign Minister, Gareth Evans, focused on Australia's main game in Asia. It will be up to Bilney to prove otherwise as he begins a series of visits to the island countries, whereas in much of Asia, personal relationships take priority over policy. Keating himself is virtually an unknown quantity. Bob Hawke was regarded as a bit pushy and Malcolm Fraser as aloof—though that suited the aristocratic Polynesians. But Evans is Australia's best-known politician by far, and is trusted.

BILNEY CAN EXPECT to encounter hostility from time to time. PNG's Foreign Minister, John Kaputin, has been involved in a spat with Australia over the deportation back to PNG of two Africans, and Nauru has taken Australia to the International Court of Justice, claiming that it has been inadequately compensated for the phosphate mining that has transformed the island into a moonscape. Australia would love to settle out of court before the next meeting of South Pacific Forum heads of government—in Nauru, in August.

The Solomons' mercurial Prime Minister, Solomon Mamaloni, last year broke off some defence arrangements after an Australian defence attaché visited the PNG border region the day before PNG military raiders killed a Solomons villager. But all was made up in April, when the Solomons obtained six new patrol boats from

Australia. Mamaloni, like other island leaders, is capable both of manipulating Australian anxieties about being identified as a Big Brother, and of attacking Australia to enhance his domestic prestige.

The best example of how fickle such official stances can be is Fiji. After the 1987 coups the relationship with Australia virtually froze, and Prime Minister Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara disdainfully told a group of visiting Australian MPs that the best thing Australia could do for Fiji was to accept thousands of Indians as migrants. Yet today, under coup leader turned Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka, the relationship is warmer than ever. Rabuka's first foreign visit as elected PM was to Australia.

At the unofficial level, regional relationships with Australia are more placid and enduring. Australian tourists feel at home in the relaxed islands' environment, though they sometimes fail to detect the subtle traditional formalities, and are inclined to be viewed as well-meaning but oafish. Many Pacific institutions, such as service clubs, sports associations and churches (the regional influence of the latter is often overlooked by Australians), are effectively branches of Australian parent organisations. Commerce leans heavily towards Australia, and the ANZ and Westpac banks dominate the Pacific. Islanders play the same sports as Australians, and where, outside Australia, would Slim Dusty be mobbed by fans but on a PNG tour? Rabuka ate Vegemite for breakfast on the morning of his first coup.

Negatively, there is a perception that Australia is stingy with its migration program; the South Pacific represents just 2.5 per cent of the annual intake of settlers. While the region remains a backwater, compared with Africa, in the attention it receives from Australian 'do-gooders', the non-government aid agencies, it is very much a focus for Australian carpetbaggers.

The ABC's new international TV service is directed to Asia, not the Pacific, and little information comes the other way: Australians remain largely ignorant of the region. An ABC radio report recently described Niue as being in the Indian Ocean. Keating welcomed the newly elected Vanuatu Prime Minister, Maxime Carlot, to Canberra last year by recalling Australia's sterling efforts to assist Vanuatu's drive to independence in 1980; but Carlot had been a prominent opponent of independence. Channel Nine created an international incident when it showed a photo of Vanuatu's Walter Lini for a story on Sir Michael Somare, who was watching the show at home in Port Moresby by satellite (the two men resent each other).

Although such ignorance is painful for islanders, whose own knowledge of Australia is much better, an over-familiarity runs the risk of appearing patronising: the same 'cultural cringe' issues that affect Australia-Britain and Australia-US relations, shade the Pacific's perception of Australia. The 21st century may see Australia becoming less liked, but more respected.

Rowan Callick writes for *The Australian Financial Review*.

VIEWPOINT

PAUL SINCLAIR

Playing the man

RACISM IN SPORT is in the news again, after newspaper and television reports of the abuse Aboriginal players receive, from other players and from spectators, in the AFL competition.

Apologists for this kind of abuse in sport tend to be justify it as a means of putting a player off his game—they claim, in other words, that it is a legitimate part of the general intimidation that occurs on the sporting field.

Gary Linnell, writing in *The Age* (19/4/93), called for racist abuse to be made a reportable offence. Insisting on the difference between racist epithets and taunts of the 'chewy on ya boot' kind, Linnell wrote: 'We pride ourselves on living in a supposedly enlightened society, one where most people strive for equality. Yet football remains curiously apart.'

But does it? Sport is played in a social context, and behaviour on the sporting field reflects broader social relationships. To claim that racist abuse comes from a marginal yobbo group is to miss the point. The European invasion and settlement of Australia were based on racist assumptions, and if our society is now attempting to become less racist, it is not surprising that football and other sports should reflect this struggle.

Racism in football is a source of anxiety for 'enlightened' people because it is antithetical to the qualities they believe sport is meant to foster. Australian sporting ethics had their origin in British school traditions, which assumed that common sporting experiences would forge a common cultural identity. The qualities essential to sporting success were meant to mirror those required for success in the wider society, especially in business and politics.

Yet sport does not suspend social and political conflicts, it reflects them, and bad feeling does not dissolve in beer after the game. Linnell claims that 'the culture of football usually encourages a player to turn the other cheek' to abuse. But Aboriginal footballers don't live in a society that leaves its racism behind the turnstiles. Why should they turn the other cheek?

When cracks in the mythology of a common identity appear, to dismiss them as the attitudes of a repellent minority is to leave the broader sources of racism unexamined. A black West Indian cricket writer, C.L.R. James, has written of his experiences in cricket from the 1920s to the 1960s. James was also brought up on the British sporting tradition. He writes that the belief 'soaked deep into me was that when you entered the sporting arena you left behind the sordid compromises of everyday existence. Yet for us to do that we would have had to divest ourselves of our skins.'

Aboriginal footballers face a similar paradox. The imagined tradition does not tally with reality.

Paul Sinclair shares a common identity with Essendon supporters.

Doing time, by degrees

Three years is still assumed to be the norm for a first degree. ***Fred Jevons*** *argues that the idea has outlived its usefulness.*

IF YOU HAD THE CHANCE to redesign the higher-education system, what would you scrap and what would you keep? When I think about it, as recent events have made me do more and more often, my thoughts stumble over two sacred cows: the three-year norm for a first degree and the teaching-research link.

We have fixed in our minds—it is part of our Anglo-Saxon heritage—that three years (or the equivalent of three years full-time study, to be more precise) is the right length of time for a first degree. During the past few decades there has been a rush to replace two-year diplomas with three-year degrees. 'Upgrading', it is called, but that raises the question of which way is 'up'?

It used to be considered a clever paradox to say that nothing has greater vocational value than a good liberal education. With last year's Mayer report, Putting General Education to Work, *it has become orthodoxy. In Mayer's key competencies the ideals of Cardinal Newman are still alive, dressed in the language of the new vocationalism.*

My contention is that the three-year standard has passed its 'use by' date. The people who cling to it don't seem to have noticed that university education has changed from an elite system to a mass system, or at least, they haven't taken the implications of that transition fully on board. When an activity expands to a new order of magnitude, it is usually not right to try to cling to the same fixed points as before.

Formerly—in the 1950s and '60s, say—a first degree was a qualification in a subject such as chemistry or psychology. People with degrees in chemistry or psychology could reasonably call themselves chemists or psychologists. Humanities degrees were not so very different because they were, for many students, a vocational qualification for schoolteaching. The situation is now very different, and the idea that some sort of end point is reached after three years is increasingly illusory. It is counterproductive to the achievement of lifelong learning, and to some other good educational aims.

Many of the students who come to university straight from school are not committed to university study as it used to be understood. Academic staff often say they prefer teaching mature-age students because older students are more committed and have made up their minds what they want. At Deakin, when we had fire in our bellies about the distance-education system we were creating for mature students, we used to say that 'education is wasted on the young'.

There are political and social pressures for universities to take more school leavers, however, even if this has to be done at the expense of mature-age students. And with youth unemployment so high, the reasons cannot be dismissed as 'mere' political pressure. So the urgent practical problem is how best to provide for these students.

Many of them have little idea what sort of careers they want. Only rarely will the jobs they eventually get be directly related to the disciplines they study at university: they may end up as travel consultants or equal opportunity officers. Industrial employers have often said that, except for a relatively small number of specialist jobs, they don't much care what their new recruits have studied at university, so long as they are generally well-educated.

In days gone by, one could rely on secondary schools to provide a good base of general education, but what secondary schools can provide is no longer enough for the greater demands of modern societies. Another two years of mainly liberal education is what many students would best profit from. But I can see no argument that a third year is necessary: to keep students of this kind in university for three years is not a good use of their time or of taxpayers' dollars.

Three years is not enough, on the other hand, to warrant the sort of qualification that a three-year degree used to represent. For that, a fourth year is now necessary. To call yourself a chemist or a psychologist, and to practise those disciplines, three years of study is no longer enough.

I would therefore divide the higher education system into two layers. The first two years would be taught mainly, though not exclusively, by people whose primary commitment is to teaching rather than to research. I would want students to be able to leave after two years, with an honourable exit qualification of a kind that doesn't yet exist and so will have to be invented. The main advantages that I see in such a system include an explicit commitment to liberal educational values, freedom from pressures from stakeholders, and a wider opening of the door to lifelong education. Another advantage, one that paradoxically is a conservative consequence of my radical proposal, is that

it would help to preserve what is best in traditional university values.

The teaching-research link

Traditionally, of course, teaching-in-association-with-research has been considered to be the hallmark of universities; it was what distinguished universities from schools and from non-university tertiary education. Teaching-in-association-with-research is a fine thing, but there are no unmixed blessings in this world. Even motherhood is something you can have too much of, and the same applies to teaching-in-association-with-research. The ideal is so firmly fixed in the minds of many university people that they look down their noses at teaching that is not associated with research. In my time I have come across many academics who take this view, but I have noticed a funny thing in talking with them: they change their tune when they have children of their own who want to become travel consultants or equal opportunity officers, or who go to university just wanting more time to make up their minds.

Even the Ivy League universities have academic staff who are not committed to research, and in their less glamorous way they are essential to keeping the institutions going. Many an undergraduate has had reason to be grateful to such academics, who have time to help their students while their whiz-kid colleagues are busy cobbling together proposals for collaborative research or dashing off to international conferences.

ONE OF THE BEST DISCUSSIONS I know of the role of research in universities is a short occasional paper released in July last year by the National Board of Employment, Education and Training. The paper, 'Research and Research Training in a Quality Higher Education System', by Dr Terry Stokes, puts due emphasis on the importance of research, because of the dynamic nature of knowledge, and on the synergy between research, professional practice and teaching. But Stokes goes on to say that 'teachers of more junior undergraduates need not be research trained or active [in research]. After all, the concerns of leading-edge research are largely incomprehensible to the beginning undergraduate.'

To that defensive statement I would add some positive ones. A good liberal education is more likely to be achieved in an environment in which liberal education is the major objective. In a research culture, research functions as a constraint on that objective in much the same way that professional bodies notoriously function as constraints on professional courses. 'Research' becomes a stakeholder in academic courses, and this helps to explain why liberal education has never scored more than patchy successes in universities. Core curricula and foundation courses have had enthusiastic champions but limited lifetimes.

That is a pity because, in a notable reversal of educational thinking, the vocational value of general or liberal education has now become recognised. It used to be considered a clever paradox to say that nothing has greater vocational value than a good liberal education. With last year's Mayer report, *Putting General Education to Work*, it has become orthodoxy. In Mayer's key competencies the ideals of Cardinal Newman are still alive, dressed in the language of the new vocationalism.

Many people can teach, but not so many can teach well. Good teaching is something to be valued in itself, and not merely as a by-product of research. On the contrary, a research culture often works against the interests of good education. Too often the unthinking assumption is made that teaching cannot be good teaching unless it is associated with research. That assumption is simply wrong, and it is based on a misconception about the relative values of the two activities. Research is not an intrinsically higher and more valuable kind of activity.

It is revealing to ask whether students and taxpayers get better value from mediocre research than from good teaching? I do not think so, but there is much confusion on this point among the post-1987 universities in Australia, as there is among the new universities in England that have been created from the former polytechnics. Institutional philosophies differ and are changeable, and they give confusing signals to their staff. The restructuring that I suggest would help to clarify the situation and to crystallise wavering staff loyalties.

The service station provides a useful model of education. When cars were new-fangled inventions and there were not many of them around, you had to fill up with petrol at the beginning of a journey. Now there are service stations everywhere. Similarly, education is now available everywhere and there is no longer any need to tank up once and for all at the beginning of life's journey.

Encouragement of lifelong learning

Lifelong learning used to be a visionary ideal but, within my lifetime, it has turned into a realistic objective. It is with us here and now, admittedly in an as yet imperfect way.

The spurious finality of a specialised three-year degree, sealed with a bachelor label, is if anything a hindrance to improving the prospects for lifelong learning. A good liberal education, by contrast, is the best possible basis for lifelong learning because of the emphasis it places on learning skills and on ways of finding out more for yourself. The very incompleteness of the knowledge base it provides is an advantage in itself because it acts as an encouragement to take up university education again at a later stage.

The service station provides a useful model of education. When cars were new-fangled inventions and there were not many of them around, you had to fill up with petrol at the beginning of a journey. Now there are service stations everywhere. Similarly, education is now available everywhere and there is no longer any need to tank up once and for all at the beginning of life's journey. For many people it may well be better not to have too much too early. From the point of view of students as well as that of the staff, education may be wasted on the young.

The nationwide Open Learning Project led by Monash University is making universities devise new degree structures. In this new and more fluid situation there is scope for changes of the kind I am suggesting. Monash itself has introduced a Bachelor of General Studies based on what Americans call a distribution requirement. Students take subjects from each of four major groupings, with the emphasis being on breadth rather than specialisation. The subjects taken need not go beyond second year level but they must span the major areas of knowledge. Three 'equivalent full-time' years of study are required because of the three-year hang-up, but in other respects the program is in line with what I am suggesting.

Whatever new degree structures other universities come up with, it seems to me that distance education and a two-year program sit easily with each other. For part-time students taking a 50 per cent load, a three-year program takes six calendar years. That is an awfully long time! Many non-academic difficulties can crop up during that period—personal or family matters, for instance—and these may interfere with further study. A four calendar-year duration would make the proposition less daunting to many potential students.

An honourable exit qualification

The biggest hurdle my proposal faces is one of appearance rather than substance. It is the difficulty of getting the two-year qualification accepted as one that doesn't look inferior. It mustn't look as though it is a failed BA or a consolation prize for a dropout from a BA. It is not sub-degree in anything except length, and length is no criterion of quality—after all, a program may need to be longer merely because the students are slow learners.

The experiment in England a few years ago with a two year Diploma of Higher Education was a flop because it was not adequately marketed. A trickle of DipHEs among a flood of bachelors was bound to be treated by employers and by students as a second best, suitable only for those who couldn't reach degree standard. For the same reason, one institution acting on its own in Australia would find it difficult to achieve the right kind of recognition and prestige for such an award.

A bit of encouragement from Canberra will be needed. The powers that be in Canberra are always proclaiming how non-intrusive they are but everybody knows they have ways of influencing institutions, and they would have good reason to promote two-year programs because taxpayers' dollars would be saved.

But what name would be used? 'Diploma' or even 'associate degree' don't sound nearly prestigious enough. Because all existing names carry misleading overtones, I think something quite new is called for. My best idea so far was triggered by the 1992 AFL Grand Final, in which my old Geelong loyalty to the Cats was pitted against my new Western Australian loyalty to the Eagles. The Eagles won. Eagles? Yes, EAGLEs—an acronym for Evidence of A Good Liberal Education.

Preservation of the best in university values

Finally, I come to a conservative implication of my radical proposal. I believe it is the best way to preserve what is best in traditional university values. The old tradition of the community of scholars, of dedication to research and of teaching-in-association-with-research, is an immensely valuable one. It is a precious treasure of western civilisation. Unfortunately it doesn't mix well with mass higher education. It is under threat of extinction by creeping dilution. I doubt whether it can survive the transition from elite to mass higher education unless it is protected by a division of junior teaching from teaching-in-association-with-research.

So my proposal is not at all an attack on teaching-in-association-with-research. On the contrary, it is an attempt to defend it, but on a scale that is more realistic both in terms of the resources available and in terms of the proportion of the student body which is motivated in that way.

Of course my division would not be impermeable. There are some immensely distinguished researchers who can also give charismatic lectures that will turn on latent enthusiasms in first-year students. But let us not pretend that all academics are like that. We know that they are not, and we know also that acting on unrealistic assumptions can produce counterproductive policies. Both junior teaching and teaching-in-association-with-research would benefit from the separation I am suggesting.

Professor Fred Jevons was foundation vice-chancellor of Deakin University and is now at Murdoch University.

ANDREW RIEMER

Canonically speaking

WHEN WE WERE UNDERGRADUATES at the University of Sydney in the '50s, Robert Hughes and I fell into the bad habit of cutting lectures. I would skip Marlowe and Shakespeare, Hopkins and Eliot, not because I didn't like them, but because I was young and had better things to do—and, anyway, we were all convinced that *they*, those people in black gowns who droned on and on, couldn't tell us anything we didn't know about Marlowe and Shakespeare, Hopkins and Eliot. Eventually I came to my senses; I started going to lectures, and at length became one of those people who drone on and on, though no longer in a black gown. In a rather different way Hughes also came to his senses, and took the first steps in the direction that would lead him to emerge as one of the best known commentators on art and culture in the English-speaking world.

A few weeks ago I came upon his recollections of those years in the recently published *Culture of Complaint*, an expanded version of three lectures he delivered at the New York Public Library in January last year. Subtitled *The Fraying of America*, it is a passionate, scathing attack on the barbarism of contemporary intellectual and academic life. The left and the right are equally reprehensible; separatist feminists, gay exclusivists and Afrocentrists are as much to blame as the moral right, those conservative troglodytes who would, given half a chance, wind back the clock to a WASP America free of gays, blacks and pornography. Culture, art, the humanities, and therefore the fragile equilibrium of a sane and just society, crumble under the bigotry of the thought police.

Hughes is by no means alone in lamenting the collapse of American intellectual traditions. His is, indeed, a position that is gaining increasing respectability as American society attempts to recover from the excesses of the Reagan years on the one hand and the virus of political correctness on the other. What may give his American readers some pause, however, are a few comparisons he introduces with the intellectual climate of contemporary Australia: 'It is probable that young Australians, away down there in what so many Americans still persist in imagining as a sort of Texas conducted by other means at the bottom of the globe, have a far better picture of the rest of the world—Near North included—than their American equivalents have or are likely to get.' (p88)

How has Australia managed to achieve such cultural maturity and to avoid the divisive and constrictive consequences of America's flirtation with politically correct doctrines or with supremacist xenophobia? For Hughes the answer lies in the difference between Australian and American educational practices. The education young Australians receive, similar to our education 40 years ago, does not produce ossification or provoke the discarding of unfashionable cultural models, but provides a matrix from which a mature culture might grow: 'When I was young I found that reading the 18th and 19th-century English poets did not make Australia invisible. Quite the contrary. It pointed me towards reading those Australian poets whose project was to describe Australian nature, history and social experiences in images that made sense to Australians ... It is a truism, but true nevertheless, that a writer should be open to all literature; that its national or tribal forms and sentiments should not be experienced as mutually exclusive. The idea that the ex-colonial must reject the art of the ex-colonist in the interest of *political* change is absurdly limiting.' (p92)

This leads Hughes to state his current position: 'So despite the present mania for disparaging Eurocentrism, I know I was lucky to get the schooling I did. It was broad, 'elitist' in its emphasis on performance, and rigorous ... If I now react against the idea of centralised, imperial culture, if I am more interested in difference than supposed mainstreams today ... the impulse probably began because Fr Wallace made me read Byron on Hellenism when I was 15.' (pp93-94)

FINE, SANE WORDS. The only trouble is that Hughes, who has not lived in Australia for many years, does not realise that Australian schoolchildren are no longer required to read Byron on Hellenism, and that undergraduates, when they decide to cut lectures, are likely to be cutting endless complaints about the Eurocentric inscriptions of traditional literary study.

I read *Culture of Complaint* in the week when that institution where I used to skip lectures, the department of English in the University of Sydney, put the finishing touches to a radical overhaul of its academic and pedagogic practices. The Sydney department has, in recent years, been regarded as something of a joke by other, more progressive institutions. The oldest and largest department in the country seems, from the perspective of Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth, to be trapped in a time warp. It continues, in the '90s, to teach courses similar in emphasis to those I attended (or skipped) in the '50s. Though much has, of course, changed in those

40 years, the department's academic philosophy seems to have remained remarkably consistent: the business of a department of English is to teach the major writers and major texts in a systematic manner.

Such practices are contrary to the spirit of the age. A group of professors who investigated the department on behalf of the Australian Vice-Chancellors Committee in 1991 discovered what seemed to them an extraordinary situation. They found that the majority of students, certainly those electing to specialise in literature written since 1500, were obliged to take 'core' courses on traditional writers and texts. Compulsory courses of this kind amounted to somewhere between a half and two-thirds of a year's work. If they proceeded to the honours year, those students—who number some 50 or 60 each year—were compelled to take a course in Renaissance studies, which represented a fifth of their honours work. In addition, the professors found, the department placed insufficient emphasis on contemporary theory, and made it difficult if not impossible for undergraduates to construct courses of study that would reflect individual interests and requirements. Though their brief was restricted to an examination of the final honours year, the professors' report condemned, at least by implication, the department's practices in most of the courses it offered.

Two years after that visitation, the Sydney department has mended its ways. It is about to come into line with the practices of other Australian departments, which are much closer to the practices of American universities of the kind Hughes examines in his book. From the beginning of 1994 the structure of core courses, and therefore the emphasis on what detractors always refer to as the canon, will disappear from the second and third years of the pass degree, and a thorough review of the honours school is likely to bring changes into that part of the department's activities in 1995 or 1996. After 1994, a student who has completed satisfactorily a smorgasbord of representative texts in the first year will be free to choose from a wide range of offerings with almost no restrictions and only minimal recommendations. It will be possible, in theory at least, for a student to complete a degree in English without studying poetry after the first year, without encountering 16th, 17th or 18th century literature, or indeed Marlowe and Shakespeare, Hopkins and Eliot, together with most of the 'major' writers of the old dispensation.

The reasons why a usually conservative and slow-moving institution became eager to embrace such a radical change—which makes its courses even more 'deregulated' than the practices of some of its 'progressive' critics—are, as is always the case, complex and contradictory. In part they have to do with the restructuring of the Bachelor of Arts degree, which reduces the amount of teaching time available to each subject. In part they are the result of personal ambitions—both fulfilled and frustrated. But the largest single reason is the adoption by the Australian academic community of those ideological assumptions that have led to the near-dismantling of the traditional humanities in America.

There is little need to rehearse propositions that are, by now, familiar to anyone interested in the current state of literary theory. They reflect the profound scepticism, indeed near-nihilism, of contemporary orthodoxies derived, albeit often remotely, from French literary aesthetics of the '60s and '70s. They insist that any notion of literary value is spurious, that all texts possess equal validity, that nothing is central, and therefore nothing is peripheral. Any notion of literary value, of traditions, of indispensable writers and texts is nothing but the imposition of the values of a particular class, group or cabal. Especially in a postcolonial society, the orthodox traditions of English literature—Eurocentric, patriarchal, undemocratic, discriminatory—cannot be allowed to continue to marginalise the interests of other groups.

HUGHES, IN COMMON WITH other eloquent critics of this new orthodoxy, is intent on disclosing the muddled thinking on which such assertions are usually based. He is quick to point out the modish claptrap to which the academic newspeak may lead, as in the following extract he cites from Gerald Graff's 1979 book *Literature Against Itself*: 'narrow canons of proof, evidence, logical consistency and clarity of expression have to go. To insist on them imposes a drag upon progress. Indeed, to apply strict canons of objectivity and evidence in academic publishing today would be comparable to the American economy's returning to the gold standard; the effect would be the immediate collapse of the system.' (p77)

Because the boundaries of literary study in America have been redrawn to accommodate such instances of radical chic, and because Australian academic culture is so depressingly imitative, the retreat from the canon, from the traditional practices of departments of English (in Sydney and elsewhere) will probably result in the wholesale abandonment of that 'gold standard'—the demand for clarity and accuracy in a student's work as much as the requirement that by the end of three or four years of study a student should be familiar with at least some of the major works of the various but related literatures in English.

Should this be a cause for distress? Hughes obviously thinks so, and I find myself sharing the distress. It is easy enough, of course, to represent these misgivings—Hughes' as well as mine—as the nostalgia of the middle-aged male. To mount a counter-argument is always difficult because it may so easily be made to appear retrograde and reactionary. An argument may nevertheless be found in one element in the debate which is almost always overlooked in cultural polemics or in the deliberations of educational institutions, though it does receive some attention in the pages of Hughes' book: the level of education university students (both American and Australian) bring with them from their years in secondary school.

Hughes cites some depressing statistics about the low levels of cultural literacy among American university students; these are mirrored, at least in my experience, by the situation in Australia. When university departments insist that the range of literature taught in English studies is too richly varied to justify their continuing to require students to study compulsory elements, and when they argue, moreover, that such compulsion is profoundly contrary to students' rights and privileges, the proponents of such views almost always fall back on the assumption that the groundwork for ensuring that a student exercises almost unlimited choice among rival courses in a responsible manner is laid during the years of secondary education. Unfortunately nothing could be further from the truth. 'Progressive' attitudes of the sort that are current in most departments of English, those which the Sydney department is about to embrace, are also reflected in secondary school syllabuses. Students do not, in my experience, bring to university anything but a pitifully vague familiarity with the traditional canon—in sharp contrast to the likes of Hughes who had, after all, read Byron on Hellenism.

That point needs to be stressed because most members of English departments, even those most vehement in their desire to save the world through the reform of the curriculum, would agree that the 'producers' (otherwise authors) of those texts who had been marginalised by the canon—women, blacks, working-class and regional writers—were themselves profoundly influenced by the writers of canonical texts, no matter how much we might lament the deleterious effects of such influence. As Peter Steele argued in these pages recently, and as Hughes argues in *Culture of Complaint*, Derek Walcott cannot be read, or at least understood, without an awareness of the traditions of European literature. To read him merely as a postcolonial voice is to limit and to misread him as grievously as Christina Stead and Patrick White are diminished and misread by those students who encounter them only in the cultural ghetto of Australian literature courses.

In this way, it seems to me, departments of English around the country are failing in their responsibility towards their students. The consequence of their ideological disinclination to prescribe, to privilege one discourse over another (to use the modish jargon often heard at conferences and in staff meetings) is to cast the hapless student adrift. Though there are always exceptions, run-of-the mill undergraduates—who constitute, after all, the majority—do not possess sufficient skills to enable them to construct their courses of study wisely.

ACCORDINGLY, GIVEN THAT human nature is inherently unadventurous, a likely result of the free-for-all of the kind that the Sydney department is proposing to introduce in 1994 will be to restrict the student's experience and perhaps to confirm narrow prejudices. How many 18 or 19-year-olds would choose to read *Paradise Lost* when they could opt for something like 'Postcolonial Fiction' instead? And finally, what will there be left once the canonical texts wither on the vine, and there is nothing to complain about when the margins have become the centre? The answer is, of course, that Chaucer and Shakespeare and Milton and Wordsworth will still be there, as will Marlowe, Hopkins and Eliot. They will still be read outside the walls of the academy, but they will be read less accurately and less sympathetically; their richness will have become much diminished because the universities, which should act as custodians of 'endangered species' will have abandoned that vital and honourable function. ■

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Don't end the revolution without me

'I CAN'T LET YOU IN unless you tell me your business. I'm not supposed to let anyone in unless they say who they've come to see.'

'We did say. We're here for the wake, mate. The wake for the communist bookshop.'

'I don't know anything about that.'

Sancho and I step back into the street to confer. We are not getting anywhere fast here. Specifically, we are not getting into this strange fortress known as Ross House, with its sliding glass door guarded by a kind of Rumpelstiltskin clone. Rumpelstiltskin, whose courage and ferocity cannot be gainsaid, is doing his guard duty from the other side of the door. As we gaze up at the fortress, wondering how its defences may be penetrated, he presses his face against the glass. Apparently, he hopes that a display of grimaces will suffice to repel our advances.

'I thought only banks and government departments had security doors and rent-a-cops who look like they've just kissed a gargoyle,' says Sancho. 'But this is supposed to the last resting place of lefty bohemia.'

'Everyone's got a security system now,' I reply. 'It's called the end of ideology.'

Sancho squats on the pavement and gestures obscenely at Rumpelstiltskin. 'Are you sure they actually want us to go to the wake?'

'The people from the bookshop? That's what they said when they rang. "A gathering to express solidarity for a threatened meeting place of the Melbourne left." Or something like that.'

Sancho rolls his eyes. ' "A gathering to express solidarity". You think that's an invitation to a wake? That's what comes of spending too much time with Irish Catholics.'

I ignore the ethnic aspersion and approach the door again. It opens to disgorge some of the occupants of Ross House, and Sancho and I sneak in before Rumpelstiltskin has a chance to shut us out. The latter now fully adopts the character of his namesake, and proceeds to act out his fury in a kind of war dance that involves much kicking of the wall and thumping of his chest.

Since only the wall is under immediate threat, we ignore him and read the names of the organisations to be found in Ross House from a directory posted outside the lift. The fortress does appear to harbour the remnants of lefty bohemia, and some of the mainstream left, but there is no hint of a wake for a communist bookshop. From A to Z (or at least to 'W' because there isn't any 'Z'), we discover *inter alia* the Albanian Migrant Resource Centre, the Alternative Technology Association, Australian Anti-Apartheid, the Gun Control Collective, the Housing Resource and Support Service, the Movement Against Uranium Mining, the Public Transport Users Association, the Retinitis Pigmentosa Society, the Scarlet Alliance, Sex Addicts Anonymous, the Victorian Macintosh Users Group and the Women's Information and Referral Exchange.

'Do you think Rumpelstiltskin is a member of Sex Addicts Anonymous?' asks Sancho. The aforenamed sentry is now hunched on the floor, moaning about his job or nothing in particular.

'I dunno, I would have thought the Gun Control Collective was more in his line. Or maybe the Macintosh Users Group.'

We decide to climb the stairs and try to find the wake by process of elimination. On the first floor we enter a large office hung with posters depicting threatened marsupials. 'Do you think you should be wearing a leather jacket in a place like this?' whispers Sancho.

If the environmentalist at the first desk we come to is offended by the sight of someone wearing animal skins, he does not say so. He also seems to know about the bookshop wake, and directs us back to another street-level entrance to the fortress.

This door is guarded not by a Rumpelstiltskin clone but by two women with extremely short hair and extremely large boots. We mumble something about the bookshop and they wave us towards the end of a corridor. After passing one room with a sign reading 'Kosovo' pinned to the wall—the Albanian Migrant Resource Centre, presumably—we enter another. It contains a blackboard with several rows of chairs arranged in a semi-circle, and an audience of two men and two women. Sancho glares at me.

'All right,' I concede, 'it isn't a wake. It's an appeal to the faithful.'

'So we're gonna leave straight away, and get a beer?'

'We are.'

Sancho whoops and sprints back up the corridor, swiping the 'Kosovo' sign from its hook on his way. One of the participants in the non-wake asks hesitantly, 'Uh, are you guys coming back? We'll be getting under way really soon now.'

I beam reassuringly and follow Sancho up the corridor. The women in boots seem happier to see us leave than they did to see us arrive.

In the pub we rationalise our lack of solidarity: 'Mate, you could see how it was shaping up in there, with all those chairs and the blackboard. Once they started talking we would never have got out without making a pledge or something.'

'Yeah, I know. Once I was trying to play pool in a pub where some old comms were having a meeting. They had an ideological split and lined up on two sides of the pool table, yelling insults at each other. It was really distracting.'

Several beers later we pour ourselves into a taxi and head for Fitzroy, in search of blotting paper. The restaurant of choice has no room for a pair of drunks, one of whom is wearing a sign round his neck that says 'Kosovo', though two doors up Gertrude Street is another eating house with empty tables. One of these tables we occupy, but the waiters stare at the 'Kosovo' sign and say nothing.

Sancho consults a menu: 'Geez, this is a Serbian restaurant.' ■

Ray Cassin is the production editor of *Eureka Street*.

PETER CRAVEN

Hughes' views

Peter Craven: *Can you tell me why you wrote* The Culture of Complaint?
Robert Hughes: It started off as a set of three lectures for the New York Public Library. Although I felt, and perhaps feared, that too much had already been said on the subject of victimology and political correctness and multiculturalism, nevertheless there might be some interest in taking a gander at it from the perspective of a working writer rather than [that of] an academic or a politician.

In practice, when you're talking about Jesse Helms on the one hand and political correctness on the other, you take a much dimmer view of the far right than you do of the left.
Yes, because I think the far right is dangerous in a way I think the fragmented and disorganised left is not. Whatever you can say about the American left after the death of Marxism, it cannot be said to pose a genuine threat to civil liberties, whereas the fundamentalist right in America does.

On the other hand the left, because they're so culturally active, obviously irritate you a lot.
What irritates me about the left is first of all the general drift towards cultural discussions based on minorities and victimology. I don't like the prevailing mode of essentialism, this thing which is very strong in American culture (particularly academic culture) which would have you believe you are essentially a white or a black or a woman or a gay ... I find this incredibly tiresome ... You end up with people not being able to talk very effectively together.

What you're attacking is essentially a rhetoric of victimisation.
It's actually a therapeutic rhetoric of victimisation. Part of the reason this has become so very strong in America is of course that America has always been obsessed with therapies of one kind or another. It's a highly therapeutised society. Henry Lewis Gates in *The New Yorker* took the point further than I did—of course Gates is no more a friend of Afrocentrism than I am, although he's black—Gates pointed out that the whole Afrocentrist thing and its various offshoots isn't just therapeutic culture, it is culture narrowly conceived *as* therapy. The idea is that you construct a kind of largely fictitious, feel-good history in order to discover not the inner child but the inner African, as it were.

Which is ultimately, of course, terribly condescending to the child.
I think it's condescending to the child. I mean I don't think of my inner child as a little piece of suffering protoplasm held in suspension. If we've got an inner child it ought to be more like the child in Blake.

You're very interesting in talking about your own education, your own Anglo-Irish, Jesuit ...
Yes, my Irish monocultural education, which I don't resent at all.

How would you sum that up? What do you think you got out of the Australian Jesuits?
A sense, first of all, that anything can be argued about, and that the basis of argument is not and should not be personal feeling. In other words—which is a styptic against this ghastly tendency that we now have to turn every argument into an *argumentum ad hominem*. Now in America this is partly an educational legacy, in fact it's very largely one.

That was not what I had—the assumption among the Jacks [Slang for 'Jesuit' at Sydney's Riverview College] and, indeed, among the general culture but particularly among the Jacks, was that if you made a proposition you should be able to defend it without invoking your, or anybody else's, vulnerabilities and feelings and so forth ... You banged away at it, like on a tennis court. Bang, bang, bang.

I was very impressed by the Jesuit you quoted over the Mapplethorpe case.
The great late Fr Tim Healy. He died just after Christmas, poor man.

He wrote beautifully lucid prose.
Tim became the head of New York Public Library ... He was an absolute voice of sanity, a deeply, deeply educated man.

One of the chaps you mentioned who taught you at school, a Fr Wallace, died recently, in the last month or so. Apparently very peacefully.
Frank Wallace, he's dead? I saw him in New York, God Almighty, just before Christmas.

He rang me up and said 'I'm in New Jersey. You won't remember me but my name is Frank Wallace. I used to teach you at the point of a strap how to memorise T.S. Eliot, you must remember me.' I said, 'Yes, I do.' And so I took him to dinner at the Century Club, where he put away an amazing amount of whiskey. We had a wonderful evening. Gee, I'm sorry that Frank didn't live to read my little encomium on him.

He's the chap who got you to read Byron on Hellenism
That's right, he was my English teacher. He was a wonderful teacher.

It's interesting, the way you talk about your schooling—you talk about it both as a colonial thing and an enriching thing. You say at one point, I think, that the ugly plaster saints in the Riverview chapel made the great cathedrals of the world legible to you.
Yes, to some extent they did because you learn from this a common ground of iconography. Let me give you the opposite case. When I was in Russia about four years ago—I was on a conference there in Sushdal—and there was this particularly nice and intelligent young translator who I used to go through my imported supply of Jack Daniels with in the evening. Anyway, after we had got back to Moscow from Sushdal I hired him, because I was doing a piece for *Time*, and said, 'For a bit of hard currency do you want to hang around with me for the next few days and do some translating for me?' and so he did.

We went to one of the major churches in the Kremlin. I forget its name but it's a very beautiful church, 15th or 16th century, with these rather splendid late Byzantine-style murals. I was gazing at these things in rapture—it's a fresco cycle of the New Testament narrative—and Dmitri (he'd never been there before) said after 10 minutes of silence, 'Bob, can you tell me something? That picture up there, who is that person flying over the rock?' Of course it was a scene of the Resurrection. I said, 'Don't you know?' He said, 'No, I don't know what any of this stuff is. I was never taught it.' That's what happened to two generations in Russia, maybe three. So consequently this stuff, which is totally fundamental to an understanding of Russian visual culture, was simply not accessible to him.

Those holy cards and Pellegrini plaster statues and so on were religious kitsch of a pretty low order, all those Jesuses holding a burning tomato representing the Sacred Heart and that stuff. But nevertheless, looking at them, at least I was taught the rudiments of Christian iconography. It came, as it were, in the bloodstream and I didn't have to study it specially.

It's interesting in the book that in some ways Australia is the kind of other society by which you measure America. You're extremely sympathetic to the Australian, SBS-style, adaptation of multiculturalism.
I am sympathetic to multiculturalism, broadly understood. I don't think of Australia as a kind of cultural utopia by any means, but I think there's a lot in Australian cultural life which is a good deal saner and more reasonable than the equivalents in the United States. Australia is not as polarised about these matters as America is. And on the whole multiculturalism seems to have been enacted in Australia without any real educational loss and without any social strain.

It does tend to work at the level where the Italians are pleased to watch their Visconti films and so is everybody else.
That's right, and, you see, that sort of relaxed and tolerant and eclectic and ecumenical atmosphere is what I take genuine multiculturalism to be intended to provoke, and that's why I'm in favour of it. The kind of multiculturalism people increasingly talk about in the United States, as I argue in the book, amounts to separatism. It's an essentialist separatism.

You mentioned at one point the way in which, for all their talk about victims the American universities, and I think universities in general, were quite cowardly when it came to the Rushdie affair.
Totally cowardly. They dropped it like a hot potato. There was no collective protest from American academe on the subject of Rushdie. It was an amazing abdication, in my opinion.

It's very interesting the way you say that what they're dealing with is a shibboleth of power because the left lost all power and therefore it was displaced into kind of cultural rhetoric.
That's right, I think that's what happened. I think we see the tail end of this in the way people who take upon themselves the virtuous mantle of leftwingers are spending their time in pursuits that Jonathan Swift would have loved: there was an anthology of essays on 'Madonna as Subversive', which appeared from the University of Georgia Press the other day. The impulses go back into academe where they can't be tested against the real world and then what happens is that class analysis and economic analysis, engaged with actual problems out there, tend to become volatilised along the line of gender and race, and not class and economics.

Of course, it's not always possible to separate these categories clearly, but the drift is pretty evident. Basically, American academics—I'm sure this is not true of Australian ones—are terrible conformists. Not all of them are by any means, but most of them, generally speaking, tend to be. There are fashions in academe just as there fashions in dress, or in art criticism for that matter.

We have a whole new kind of jargon, which curiously enough is a colonial jargon, this is the odd thing: you have all these people congratulating themselves on deconstructing cultural colonisation and doing it in a language which is not only totally colonial, namely the English/American rote application of Foucault, Derrida, Lyotard and so on, the *soixante-huitards*, but also doing it at a time when nobody in France takes all that post-*soixante-huitard* stuff seriously.

At one point you say of the people who talk endlessly with their Baudrillardian or Foucauldian images of Madonna—well, you say they're like Lourdes and Fatima and all that. You speak on behalf of aesthetic values and high art values to a mass audience. It's a total reverse of what they're on about.
It is a total reverse of what they're on about because I don't believe, for a start, that language is indeterminate. It can be ambiguous, sometimes, but actually I think texts do have meanings and I think the object of a text is to transmit meanings of which the author is fully aware. There are all sorts of subliminal things which the writer may not be [aware of], and quite often is unaware of—texts are better the richer they are, and that kind of thing. How anybody who presumes to be a serious writer could embrace that stuff about how language is indeter-

minate! Or, in Foucault's terms, replace the idea of the writer with something called 'the author function'. To me it's repellent and unrealistic. It doesn't accord with the way I understand works of art to act.

You also emphasise that no writer, no artist could cease to believe in questions of quality.
Absolutely, I don't believe you can. It's an absolutely straightforward and constantly renewed truth of human experience that some works of art move us more than others. There's a lot of play in that mechanism and a lot of room for disagreement on which they are and so forth. To say this is not to say: 'This moves me therefore it should move you'. But the fact of the matter is that the experience of the inequality of quality is fundamental to one's experience of looking at pictures, reading books and listening to music. Some things are better, do turn out to move you more, [and] to be fuller and richer than others, and the idea that this is some kind of oppressive illusion bearing in from unconscious constructions which have been genetically placed upon us, that this is just masculinity or femininity or class origins speaking is, I think, poppycock.

Why do you think it is contemporary America can't produce a great or putatively great political painter like Kiefer, say?
I honestly don't know. If I could answer that question I'd really be cooking the cat. There have been extraordinary political artists in the 20th century and certainly much earlier too, from Hogarth onwards; but there is absolutely no living American equivalent, no living European equivalent either, to a Goya or a Daumier or, for that matter, to a Diego Rivera.

I think it may have something to do with the cutting of the connective tissue between the past and the present. Great political art has to be great *art* first. And I think part of the problem and the relative ineffectuality of a lot of this stuff lies back in the kind of education that American artists receive. Besides which there are some political utterances in art which aren't necessarily perceived as art to begin with. There have been some great photographers whom I would probably now classify as political artists, but whether they thought at the time that they were making political art is another matter. I mean, was that really at the forefront of Walker Evans' mind when he was taking those photographs in the South? I don't know.

One thing's for certain: there are are an enormous number of people who now desire to have some kind of political utterance because there is such an impacted sense of disappointment with the larger cultural legacies of the last 15 years. There is that inevitable antibody reaction that has set in against that triumphalist conservatism, triumphalist laissez-faire.

It's interesting that in American writing, with people like De Lillo or Toni Morrison, you have people who have formidable contemporary voices.
Absolutely, you do. There are very, very good writers running around in America right now. I mean strangely enough not all the good writing in the English language is done by ex-colonials. Quite a lot of it is—what was that headline in *Time*, 'The Empire Writes Back'? But there are very strong writers in America at present. You think of Morrison or De Lillo, [or] De Lillo's great friend Paul Auster. I think people who are casual consumers of writing think that new American writing consists principally of people like Brett Easton Ellis or Donna Tartt; if there are people as dumb as that, they're missing out on the point. There are in fact extremely strong writers who have nothing to do with that sort of fashion for minimalism that came up in the '80s, and among those one would certainly number people like De Lillo or Auster or Morrison and quite a number of others besides. There's also a sort of big strong popular frame of therapeutic doggerel, of course—the sort of thing you get from Maya Angelou.

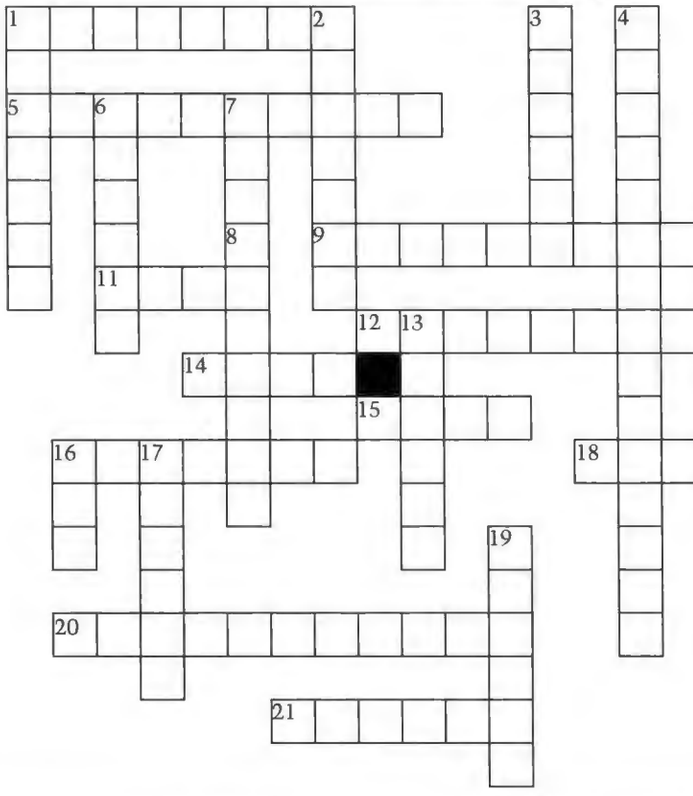
I heard her with Clinton.
Now there's somebody uttering sentiments which no decent person would necessarily disagree with and yet producing perfect doggerel. Or, for that matter, Alice Walker.

And The Color Purple *is supposed to be the most prescribed book in the United States.*
That's right, because it makes people feel good. I think it's rubbish, but there you are.

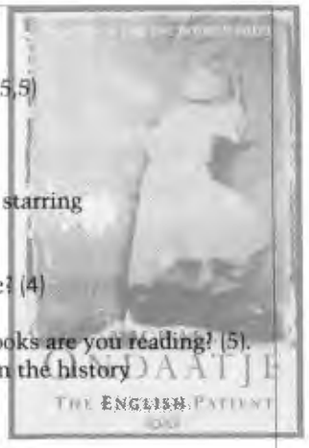
You took a very dim view of American Psycho, *didn't you?*
The dead are more alive than Easton Ellis. I took a very dim view of *American Psycho* and I took a very dim view of the fact that Vintage were taking it on. I thought there was a novel that was rather repulsively degrading to women. I don't invoke this category all the time, as you might suppose, but its callow sensationalised misogyny, its overblown sadism, was too much for me, and that was why, when Vintage published it, I withdrew my book of essays from them and it was published by Penguin instead. It wasn't intended as an act of censorship, obviously, it was just a feeble act of protest.

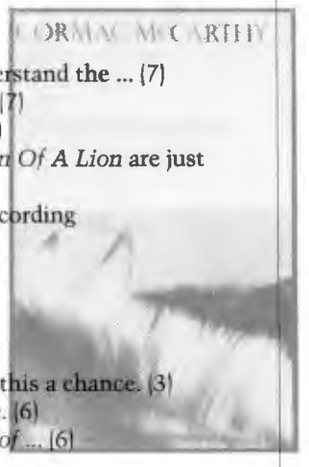
You say at one point that it would be wrong to think that in art all taboos are there to be broken.
I don't think it's necessarily the function of art to break all social taboos. One may or may not wish to do so, but there are things a society needs: it needs taboos and also it needs areas of exemption, where it can blow off steam.

Though I suppose with the great modernists in both painting and in literature there were representations of things which were seen at the time as deeply shocking and transgressive.
Shocking and revolting and so on. Now the conventional wisdom is that one's feelings about gross subject matter, like Mapplethorpe's, are exactly like that and in recoiling from them one is putting oneself alongside the people who thought that James Joyce was a blithering idiot.Well yeah, except that I would never be in favour of banning Mapplethorpe or anyone else. I'm totally anti-censorship in the field of the arts. In the arena of pornography, explicit pornography like for instance snuff films or child porn, there may very well be a case for it. But in order to conform with the First Amendment, which I hold to be a very good thing, I certainly would never be in favour of censorship in the arts. That's one of my beefs against political correctness—a lot of it is censor-



ACROSS
1 Foucault's swinging invention. (8)
5 Endlessly enchanting with a Blue River author. (5,5)
8 Shortest Picador title by Thomas Pynchon. (1)
9 Graham Swift lived happily ... (5,4)
11 Princess Leia sent postcards from here. (4)
12 This Picador author recently had a film released starring Dustin Hoffman and Nicole Kidman. (8)
14 What sounds like a title by Samuel Beckett? (4)
15 How many great novels did James M. Cain write? (4)
16 This front is remarque-ably quiet. (7)
18 If you are *Hunting For Mr Heartbreak*, whose books are you reading? (5).
20 Which Picador author drew the biggest crowds in the history of the Adelaide Festival? (6,5)
21 Tracey is a joker *Among Schoolchildren* (6)





DOWN
1 Bryan Appleyard helps us to understand the ... (7)
2 Spalding Gray kept one in a box. (7)
3 It's a *Great World* for David ... (6)
4 *Cinnamon Peeler* and *In The Skin Of A Lion* are just two titles by this author. (7,8)
6 Women and what go together, according to Candida Baker? (6)
7 As seen *On Television*. (5,5)
10 Ned Kelly features in this book by Robert Drewe. (3,8)
13 Byron is on *The Road To* ... (6)
16 P.J. believes we should be giving this a chance. (3)
17 William Styron gave her a choice. (6)
19 Marilyn Monroe was the *Queen of* ... (6)

To celebrate its 21 years of quality publishing, Picador is offering *Eureka Street* readers a crossword competition with book prizes to keep them reading right through to summer. The first correct solution opened will receive 20 Picador titles, the second 10 and the third, five.

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ship ... Often things which are intended to be affirmation-based, therapeutic acts do in fact turn into censorship.

You say at one point that you think the fundamentalists are going to rage all the stronger under Clinton, but is the feeling in America one of liberation akin to when Kennedy was elected?

No, I wouldn't say so. I think there's a lot of optimism about Clinton, a lot of goodwill towards him, but I don't think it's remotely comparable to that feeling of manic optimism and hero-worship that seized America with Kennedy. Nor, indeed, do I think it should be. It's early days yet but I've certainly got my reservations about the way Clinton's going.

It was interesting to see that against all the odds Keating got back in Australia.

I guess that they elected Keating having looked into the depths of the alternative.

You mention the republican thing in the book, which of course Keating has done more than anyone else to promote.

Certainly more than any Prime Minister. I think he genuinely believes in it too, such is my impression [on] talking to him.

Do you think it would be of more than symbolic importance for Australia?

I think it would be of somewhat more than symbolic importance, but let's grant that symbols matter. I don't go all the way with Tom Keneally who seems to have this idea in his head that as soon as Australia becomes a republic we're going to have this extra-ordinary efflorescence, that Australian culture will once more do its cyclical trick of Coming of Age with a capital 'C' and a capital 'A'. I think it's just one of those things that ought to be done in the interests of our own self-respect. ■

Peter Craven is editor of *Scripsi*. He spoke by telephone to Robert Hughes at his US home at Shelter Island. *The Culture of Complaint* is published by Oxford University Press, $29.95.

GERARD WINDSOR

Confounding the odds

Religion, Law, and Power, The Making of Protestant Ireland 1660-1760, S.J. Connolly, Clarendon Press, 1992. ISBN 0 1 820118 4 RRP $120.00. **The Great Melody, A Thematic Biography and Commented Anthology of Edmund Burke**, Conor Cruise O'Brien, Sinclair Stevenson, 1992. ISBN 1 85619 183 4 RRP $69.95. **James Joyce, The Years of Growth 1882-1915, A Biography**, Peter Costello, Kyle Cathie Limited, 1992. ISBN 1 85626 053 4 RRP $45.00. **Collected Stories**, John McGahern, Faber and Faber, 1992. ISBN 0 571 16247 6 RRP $29.95.

IN 1720 SIR JAMES COTTER, one of the last surviving Catholic landowners in Co. Cork, was hanged for the rape of a Quaker woman, Elizabeth Squibb. His estates passed into Protestant hands. Irish historians and commentators still disagree about the Cotter case.

Conor Cruise O'Brien has finally published his tendentious, if seemingly magisterial, 768-page study of Edmund Burke. Cotter appears early and O'Brien judges that 'Irish Catholics, on what appears to be good grounds, regarded his conviction and execution as a political judicial murder on a trumped-up charge'. Sean Connolly on the other hand, a historian who made his mark with *Priests and People in Pre-Famine Ireland 1780-1845* and whose ethnic background we may reasonably infer, says that 'Cotter was undoubtedly a Catholic troublemaker' and had 'quite clearly been guilty of rape'. In spite of his genetic affiliation Connolly is a major revisionist historian (current Irish revisionism, very grossly translated, asks 'was it all that bad, and are England and the Protestants really the cause of all Irish evil?'). So Connolly's attitude to Cotter is perhaps unsurprising.

Fanny Burney on Edmund Burke: 'Yet, at times I confess, with all that I felt, wished, and thought concerning Mr Hastings, the whirlwind of [Burke's] eloquence nearly drew me into its vortex.'

O'Brien, however, has long been an opponent of the simplicities of the nationalist/Catholic tradition, and his support for a buccaneering, alleged rapist is not so predictable. So neither tribal connections nor ideological sympathies alone are any sure guide to the way Irish historians might lean or line up. The analyst must take account of numerous other spoiling factors such as geographical origins, loyalties and bent of particular universities, attitudes to the problem of the North, and the traditional Irish sports of faction fighting, gossip, backbiting, calumny and detraction. Look at the issues that complicate the case of James Cotter. He may have been a rapist, but he was also a member of a colonised, oppressed people. Miss Squibb was said to have contributed by her own 'forward and indiscreet behaviour', but then haven't we heard that explanation before? Cotter's father had assassinated the regicide John Lisle at Lausanne in 1664 and been rewarded by Charles II, and the wife of the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland in 1720 was a granddaughter of Lisle. Sean Connolly is writing a book to disprove that there was a coordinated, consistent policy of oppression against Irish Catholics during the so-called heyday of the so-called penal laws, and that Cotter was at worst one swallow who didn't make a summer and at best a criminal fairly condemned, who might have been pardoned due to his rank etc but wasn't.

Conor Cruise O'Brien, on the other hand, is writing a book to prove that Edmund Burke's life was a long, consistent struggle against the arrogance of power, and that the wellsprings of this crusade lay in his radical identification with the Catholics of Ireland through his Catholic mother, a Nagle, and his originally Catholic but conforming, lawyer father Richard, who had in fact, while still a Catholic, acted for Sir James Cotter. Peace to the torn soul of Cotter.

To the outsider, Irish historiography is a beast of a peculiar colour. For example, it sends into a reverse spin that wobbly cliché that history is always written by the victors. In the Irish instance it is no easy matter to judge quite who the victors are. Maybe the colonisers were the victors until the partial independence of 1921, and presumably they still are in Northern Ireland. Yet the most influential brand of Irish history, and virtually the only one that ever got to Australia, was essentially a 19th century, Catholic, nationalist interpretation—the version, that is, written by the 'losers' long before they got the upper hand. In contrast, by 1993 when the Anglo-Irish are moving close to extinction as a separate species, an historical revisionism—which in many ways is a rehabilitation of that people, but not simply by that people—is firmly in the ascendant.

WHAT HELPS TO GIVE Ireland its unique status is that it shares the Western intellectual tradition but, as a relatively new nation, has no history of imperialism—a lurking bugbear everywhere else—that its writers now have to expiate or otherwise come to terms with. Irish people do have a long history of cultural colonisation—not least in Australia. But such impact is rarely seen as oppressive by either the Irish themselves or the colonies so affected. So Ireland is generally freer to set its own historiographical agen-

da. To the extent that America lets it, one might be tempted to add. Yet American appropriation of the matter of Ireland seems much more comprehensive within literary studies and biography than it is within history.

The nearest Irish equivalent to an imperial bogey of its own is the Catholic Church, and however much that church may be on the defensive it is not copping noticeably more stick at the moment from Irish writers and intellectuals than it has done for several past generations.

Behind this Irish revisionist enterprise there seems an unusually strong determination to give credit where it is due. Often enough this takes the form of reclamation, and it enriches particular traditions with the long lost or long outcast jewel. So Conor Cruise O'Brien is reclaiming Burke from Yeats' Anglo-Irish litany of 'the people of Burke, the people of Grattan, the people of Swift', and proclaiming his subject's Norman, Catholic inheritance, and nationalism unflawed by the anarchic destructiveness of Burke's contemporary and fellow patriot Wolfe Tone.

The hidden agenda, of course, is that O'Brien wants Burke as a progenitor in his own implacable opposition to the violent, bigotedly Catholic nationalism of the IRA. The problem is acute enough, and not only O'Brien's. No wonder the Irish have to shuffle and rearrange their past, for their own state traces its lineage to a republic asserted by force of arms and achieved by a continuation of the same violence. The embarrassment that will not go away for Ireland is that the only logical heirs of its founding fathers and what was called the old IRA are the Provos of today.

A similar adjustment of a tradition, via a reclamation, can be seen in something as apparently different as Peter Costello's biography of the young James Joyce. A dominant and acknowledged motive behind this work is to retrieve Joyce from caretaker literary imperialists, notably from Richard Ellmann, and to demonstrate how obdurately Irish Joyce is. 'It is important to realise' writes Costello, 'that [Joyce's] literary predilections are Irish and European. Though reared and well-read in the British literary tradition, he cannot easily be annexed to it; or to the American tradition, of which he read very little and cared less'. And just to let us know Joyce wasn't a freak on the Irish scene, Costello talks of his being recommended for the Nobel Prize by 'Desmond Fitzgerald, the Minister of Information in the government of the new Irish Free State. Like so many of his countrymen a man of wide culture ... he recognized at once Joyce's pre-eminent distinction and what his art should mean for their common country. He did not need the *nihil obstat* of a foreign court.'

THE RESULTANT WORK is antiquarianism gone mad. The genealogical tracing is the most extensive since St Matthew; it has nine pages of family trees, one of Joyce's genetic make-up, and a complete four-page appendix devoted to 'Joyce's Horoscope, Prepared with the assistance of Mr Austin D.F. Byrne, Irish Astrological Society' which prognosticates such qualities as 'a quick ability with finance, making and spending money quickly. Would have done well in commerce if they had gone into it'.

Unfortunately this all-encompassing and diligent exercise in learning does not issue in major new insights into the writer. Its frequent concomitants are logical conjuring and dubious subjunctives, such as that the nine-year-old James' 'parents may have come to mean much less to him emotionally than his masters and friends at school, the Jesuit fathers and Mother Church'. Presumably this is the sort of finding that Costello has in mind when he claims that 'even the most devoted Joyceans will be in for a few shocks in reading this book'. There is nothing shrinking-hearted about Costello. He does not blush to conclude one chapter with the rallentando that 'between Joyce and a true vocation there lay not only all those hardships of his family, but now in his 14th year the first stirrings of his body's rebellion. Within his budding glands the hormones were flowing.'

The admission of Joyce's European connection is hardly new, nor in fact arguable. But the point is worth noting that if a contemporary commentator has to allow some element in Joyce other than the Irish, the European is the one to go for. It is further seasonal reclamation. Europe has become, for the Irish, a way out of an impasse of isolation, alienation and oddity. Ireland has embraced the European Community with a fervour unimaginable in Britain. The stock phrase to suggest the fresh, demographically young face of Ireland is 'the young Europeans'. The orientation is clearly liberating. It allows Ireland to sidestep its age-old obsession with England and it provides a work-experience venue and eventually a market place for the highly technologically literate youth of Ireland. It can also be seen as a revival of a forgotten tradition, a tautening of slack ties that were tight once when Ireland's saints and scholars flooded Europe, when Paris, Salamanca and Rome were the nurseries of the Irish priesthood, when the Wild Geese spread the grey wing on every tide, and Patrick Sarsfield, Ireland's darling, fell at Landen, and when such mythic figures as the French upon the sea and the King of Spain's daughter were germane to the salvation of Ireland.

Mary Wollstonecraft to Burke: 'Reading your Reflections *warily over, it has continually struck me, that had you been a Frenchman, you would have been, in spite of your respect for rank and antiquity, a violent revolutionist.'*

In June 1991 Dublin held what was called an International Writers Festival. All participants had to address themselves to the theme 'Europe and its Legacy'. Generally writers plumped for the obvious response—the legacy was western civilisation—or the even more obvious one (writers being a righteous lot)—the legacy is Auschwitz, racism etc. Then came John McGahern, who was just enjoying his first taste of real fame for his novel, *Amongst Women*. The legacy of Europe ... he pondered. Well, when he was a boy in Co. Roscommon, and they used to boot the football around in Charlie the publican's field, a thundering hefty kick that went out over the boundary was called a Salamanca. That, said the older McGahern—and he said no more—was, for the young McGahern, the legacy of Europe. His *Collected Stories*, published late in 1992, refers to this memory in a 1985 story, 'Oldfashioned'; 'the word Sala-

manca, having endured for most of a century as a mighty ball ... grew sails again on an open sea, became distant spires within a walled city in the sun'.

McGAHERN HIMSELF is the most provincial of writers in a minimalist Faulknerian way, and at the same time he displays a sensibility that can only be called existentialist. Beckett may be some sort of mediating influence, but the manner is so consistent and natural that it is undeniably McGahern's own. There is a permanent acknowledgement of the allure of Irish romanticism, but it is forever a mirage. His story, 'All Sorts of Impossible Things' has a conversation in a bar about a young government agricultural instructor.

'They say he's coming up for permanent soon. Do you think he will have any trouble?'

'The most thing he is afraid of is the medical.'

Charlie was silent for a while, and then he said, 'It's a quare caper that, isn't it, the heart on the wrong side?'

'There's many a quare caper if you ask me.'

'But what'll he do if he doesn't get permanent?'

'What'll we all do, Charlie?' the teacher said inwardly.

Dissatisfaction, ache, bitterness, hatred, tremble through all of McGahern's fiction. There is alleviation there—in the quietness, the calm, the simplicity of the writing, and in the stoic acceptance that many of his characters reach, but there is a refusal to countenance any more positive a consolation. Visionary moments spell only one thing. A character goes out of a farmhouse in late summer:

It was a perfect moonlit night, the empty fields and beech trees and walls in clear yellow outline. The night seemed so full of serenity that it brought the very ache of longing for all of life to reflect its moonlit calm, but I knew too well it neither was nor could be. It was a dream of death.

McGahern might be extremely bleak but he is also the gentlest of writers, and the low-key way comfort is sought and allowed is moving. In 'Coming Into His Kingdom' a small boy whose mother has died is told the facts of sexuality by an older girl as they walk home from school together. He is overwhelmed with feelings of awe and disgust and curiosity in which the dead mother figures as much as the animals on his farm. The story ends with the words:

... he gathered himself to catch up with the girl so as not to have to come into the village on his own.

Significantly it is 'the village' that the boy is afraid to enter on his own. For all the postwar, alienated European sensibility, McGahern is another manifestation of assiduous Irish repossession. His most recent blurbs describe him as farming and writing in Co. Leitrim, and most of his fiction deals with life around the small towns of his own youth, in the same area where he now lives. He has laid out the main buildings, farms, boreens, families of Cootehall as precisely as Joyce did those of Dublin. Families called Moran, for example, the name of the chief characters in *Amongst Women*, occur in nine of the *Collected Stories*. The child, the son, the family unit, are taken apart and put back together time and again. Further, the dark absence hanging over the McGahern oeuvre is the dead, and lost, mother.

The blank in the past achieves such significance because it occurs in a world where the matriarchal tradition is so strong and where the mythic national identity is so bound up with the female figure who is both inspiration and siren, nurturer and destroyer. (Publicity shots for Annie Murphy's book about her affair with Archbishop Casey reproduce Annie exactly, down to draping of shawl, angle of pose, and heightened cheekbones, as Cathleen ni Houlihan, as modelled by Lady Lavery, on the old Irish one pound notes.) The mother who was only fleetingly there, the substitutes who cannot satisfy anyone, are genealogical problems not far different from the questions that ask which traditions represent an authentic line of descent, or which alleged guardians of the national flame are legitimate, or useful.

I would like to register one curiosity as a footnote and as a way of returning to my point about Irish resistance to predictable analysis. McGahern's work is replete with sexual relationships, and they are nearly all unsatisfactory. Yet the least suitable epithet to describe the atmosphere would be repressive or guilt-ridden (much less priest-ridden—McGahern has not a skerrick of interest in overt social or political criticism). Such adjectives however are commonly taken as synonymous with Irish, commonly among knee-jerkers addressing themselves to Irish persons, places or things. McGahern's fiction should obliterate such glibness. The poet John Montague, an older contemporary of McGahern's, came up with a refrain in the 1960s that should be known to all commentators on Irish mores and literature:

Puritan Ireland's dead and gone,
A myth of O'Connor and
O'Faolain.

But as an epitome of the stimulating perversity of Irish thought I can imagine nothing better than a poem that has achieved status as a national cultural icon—widely revered, constantly adverted to—as no other artefact has over perhaps the past two generations. Consistently for my thesis it is not by Seamus Heaney, but by the far less well-known Northern Protestant poet, Derek Mahon. Secondly, its title is a masterpiece of anti-heroics and de-romanticisation, a direct acceptance of the challenging charge that Ireland is an antiquated, irrelevant society. Mahon calls his master work 'A Disused Shed in Co. Wexford'. I find it impossible to imagine Australians allowing any analogously titled work to lord it in our cultural pantheon. For all the humble or technological nouns that crowd Les Murray's titles, for example, the effect is up-beat, and an only half jokey straining after the epic note. But no, 'Romantic Ireland's dead and gone', and for Mahon a shed is a shed and disused at that. 'Even now there are places where a thought might grow,' he begins, and he comes to one.

And in a disused shed in Co.
Wexford,
Deep in the grounds of a burnt-
out hotel,
Among the bathtubs and the
washbasins
A thousand mushrooms crowd
to a keyhole.

Gerard Windsor once did a postgraduate thesis on the 1916 Easter Rising.

PAUL RULE

Chinese roundabout

The Tyranny of History: the Roots of China's Crisis, W.J.F.Jenner, Allen Lane: the Penguin Press, 1992, ISBN 0 713 99060 0 RRP $45. **East Wind, West Wind**, Fang Xiangshu & Trevor Hay, Penguin, 1992, ISBN 014 015986 X RRP $14.95. **Chinese Roundabout: Essays in History and Culture**, Jonathan D. Spence, W.W. Norton, 1992, ISBN 3 393 03355 4 RRP $38.95. **Sojourners: the Epic Story of China's Centuries-old Relationship with Australia. Flowers and the Wide Sea**, Eric Rolls, University of Queensland Press, 1992, ISBN 0 7022 2478 2 RRP $49.95. **Policing and Punishment in China: From Patriarchy to 'the People'**, Michael R. Dutton, Cambridge University Press, 1992, ISBN 0 521 40097 X RRP $75.

THE VARIETY AND DEPTH OF recent Australian writing on China is well represented in this round-up, or rather, to use Jonathan Spence's expression, 'roundabout'. All the works except Spence's are by Australian residents, and even Spence has an Australian connection through a postgraduate student year in Canberra memorably described in his essay in *Chinese Roundabout* on his teacher, Fang Chao-ying.

One issue that all five works address each in its own way is the uniqueness of China, particularly in the post-Tian'anmen 1989 form of China's alleged inveterate and apparently inescapable authoritarianism. Bill Jenner, Professor of Chinese at the Australian National University, in *The Tyranny of History*, is the most trenchant, even bitter, proponent of some sort of historical original sin in Chinese political culture, which dooms it to repeated acts of barbarism:

'The state, people and culture known in English as China are in a profound general crisis that goes much deeper than the problems of a moribund communist dictatorship ... What ties all aspects of the crisis together is the past: what has happened in the past and the past as perceived. Today's objective problems, like the subjective ones that make their solution even more difficult than they would be otherwise, were created under two thousand years of bureaucratic absolutism. The history of tyranny is matched by a tyranny of history...'

Thus is the problem posed on the opening page, and the rest of the essay is devoted to demonstrating by reference to Chinese history, economics, sociology that China's lot is hopeless. The only future for China lies in a breakdown of political and cultural unity, a wholesale adoption of the new international economic order and the world culture of consumption and individualism. But, believes Jenner, tendencies already evident towards such a future are doomed to frustration by bureaucratism, xenophobia, a non-phonetic script and authoritarianism.

Jenner may be right about the direction China is heading. Shanghai today is like Tokyo in the 1950s, with all the aspirations and the technological basis for the creation of an economic miracle and a social monster. And other coastal cities and zones are close behind. But is this due to a vast cultural failure? Are China's borders totally artificial, its unitary government a mere cultural artefact, the result of some sort of massive confidence trick by historians and political ideologists? And, especially, are its problems of arbitrary bureaucratic injustice and the stifling of initiative, unique and the product of a unique culture?

There are many features of Jenner's reading of Chinese history that might be questioned. His notion that the last (Qing) traditional dynasty witnessed a decline in state power, and that the Mao dynasty restored Chinese autocracy seems quirky and few Qing specialists would agree with him. His views on Chinese law and policing are

The entrance to a Ming dynasty country prison. The figure carved above the gateway is a bi'an, *the child of a dragon, which because of its ferocious appearance traditionally has the task of social control. Photo: Zhao Fengshan.*

refuted on many points by Michael Dutton's *Policing and Punishment in China*. And the recent cultural explosion in literature and the visual arts, theatre and especially cinema belies Jenner's bleak picture of cultural sterility. But this is not the place for specialist sinological disputes.

More fundamental is an argument about the uniqueness of China's cultural bankruptcy. The analogy of original sin is an appropriate one to apply to Jenner's bleak view of China because in the original theological sense it emphasises a basic human tendency as opposed to one determined by history alone. Perhaps Jenner has not shucked off an unconscious Marxist legacy of his long years as a translator for the official Chinese press. Is China's problem the tyranny of history or the tyranny of people?

The roller coaster of change in China and Western reaction to that change indicate at least that it matters who holds the reins in Beijing. Most Chinese with whom I have discussed the future, are optimists about political change. Young Chinese in particular firmly believe there is no turning back, that political structures will sooner rather than later catch up with socio-economic reality. So they should, as good Marxists, as well as exponents of what Thomas Metzger calls Chinese 'epistemological optimism'. The pessimists largely come, in the West, from the ranks of former super optimists, journalists and populists (not, despite the constant claim by newly minted China experts, from the academic China establishment); and in China, from a small group of atypical intellectuals, such as the makers of the television series *River Elegy*.

ONE THING THAT academic experts on China all agreed on, before as after Tian'anmen, and on the basis of personal experience, was the bloody-mindedness of Chinese officials. In fact, it might be said that one of their favourite occupations was the swapping of horror stories about petty bureaucratic tyrannies and cadre arbitrariness. *East Wind, West Wind* is just such a story as well as an introduction to the Chinese as living people, not pawns in the great historical game.

As in his earlier collaborative work, *Tartar City Woman*, Melbourne academic Trevor Hay tells the story of a Chinese friend and colleague, mostly in the first person. It is a joint work in two senses: it is jointly written and tells their parallel stories of bureaucratic entanglement. Hay's own story of his futile and costly attempt to persuade Melbourne magistrates that it was possible that two young policemen might lie about being assaulted in their police station by a solitary man detained for an alleged traffic offence is familiar to readers of the Melbourne Age. But, curiously, it was the occasion for Fang Xiangshu to return to Melbourne from Nanjing to testify at Trevor's trial and thus escape his own bureaucratic hell.

East Wind, West Wind is mainly Fang's story of his childhood, Cultural Revolution experiences, studying and teaching in a Chinese university, his teaching exchange trip to Australia, his sudden recall and escape back to Australia. It is not a story of spectacular hardship or persecution but of stupidity, ill will and frustration. It is this kind of experience, which translates badly into the categories for refugees established by western governments, that lies behind the applications to stay in Australia by Chinese students and visitors. Fang's account is perhaps the best I have read in this growing genre, precisely because it is so low key and, dare I say, typical. I hope the minister for immigration and his officials read it.

Fang's vivid narrative which presumably owes much to Trevor Hay's literary skills, embodies the texture of daily life in China's big cities: the tea houses, student dormitories and overcrowded apartments, the problems of getting train tickets, permits for every movement, the strains on all personal relationships. But it does not amount to a world different from ours, merely ours writ large. If we had undergone invasion and revolution, if we had to feed and organize over a billion people in an area much the same as our own, if we lacked a strong legal and political tradition of individual liberties, perhaps our society might resemble the Chinese.

It is the contrast and interaction of the two societies that is the theme of Eric Rolls' *Sojourners*, or at least part of it. My expectations were high. Rolls has been justly praised for his lush prose and down to earth poetry. This book, the first of two volumes on 'the epic story of China's centuries-old relationship with China', has been more than 20 years in the making. It has involved research trips to China, to libraries and archives round Australia, and especially visits to the sites of early Chinese activity in Australia. I must confess I found the results disappointing.

The basic fault with *Sojourners* is its lack of historical method and expertise. Like Robert Hughes' *The Fatal Shore* it draws more heavily than it acknowledges on professional historians' work but conceals this in the text through lack of source references. But more seriously, it treats all kinds of sources alike and uncritically. Newspapers in particular are cited and quoted constantly as reliable mirrors of current reality, but China-coast English language journals and regional colonial Australian newspapers are notoriously difficult to use as historical sources. Extracts are quoted at tedious length and often seem chosen for their rhetorical rather than evidential force. No references are provided, even for claims that run counter to accepted wisdom and stretch the bounds of probability. These are not

an historian's sour grapes. The essays in Jonathan Spence's collection testify that stylistic elegance and a minimum of scholarly apparatus can go hand in hand with the highest standards of historical scholarship. But the reader has a right to know on what authority a controversial claim is made and this can only be done through a source reference system.

Another common fault of the amateur historian is to put it all in. The charm and the irritating features alike of *Sojourners* derive from Rolls' magpie method. I would estimate that only about half of the book deals with China at all, and much less than half with China in relation to Australia. There are interesting and lengthy diversions on topics such as Indian labourers, conditions on immigrant ships from Britain, tin mining, the overland telegraph, development of the Northern Territory and North Queensland, epidemic diseases in Australia; diversions often fascinating in themselves but irrelevant to his theme. Even those relating to the Chinese: on Chinese food, gambling, cockfighting, the opium trade and so on, are poorly if at all focused on the Chinese in Australia. Perhaps this does not matter but this volume might well have been half the length and told the great and timely story, justly called an 'epic', of the Chinese contribution to Australia's development, with more force as well as economy.

Rolls' bias is aggressively Chinese as well as aggressively Australian, but his sympathies do not seem to extend to Aborigines. *Sojourners* retails some of the most notorious furphies about Aborigines: their inability to stay in one place, lack of hygiene and, above all, their cannibalism which ignores the growing literature on the subject. He clearly dislikes missionaries, and his account of the Tianjin massacre is a crude parody, repeating the worst People's Republic of China propaganda.

He is at his best in narrating first hand experience whether of meals enjoyed in China and Chinese meals in Australia (we would expect this of the author of *Celebration of the Senses*) or the precise lay out of a stone-lined, Chinese-built sluice on an abandoned goldfield. Even here, though, his prejudices show. How many readers would describe the atmosphere of a yumcha meal in a Melbourne Chinese restaurant as that of 'library silence'? Melbourne Chinese, like their Sydney counterparts, believe in *renao* ('hot and noisy') as the criterion for a good time.

It would be unfair to list the many suspect romanisations and renderings of Chinese terms in *Sojourners* . Even the specialists often nod here. But I must, in the name of fairness, register a protest at Rolls' extraordinary claim that the late and undoubtedly great British-Australian historian of China, C.P. Fitzgerald, 'made the first serious European studies of China' (p380). Those despised China missionaries anticipated him by nearly four centuries. And parts of the long chapter on 'Opium' seem to me dangerous as well as misleading: the myths of the popular press are repeated as fact, and Rolls seems to have swallowed whole the official Chinese line that there is no heroin addiction in the People's Republic. More fundamentally, though, what does this topic have to do with China's relationship with Australia before 1888? Rolls' treatise is ultimately a ragbag, an annotated anthology rather than an integrated history. A fascinating ragbag and useful anthology, but not the definitive history of the Australian-Chinese encounter we are still awaiting.

A POLAR OPPOSITE TO *Sojourners* in the spectrum of Chinese history writing is Michael Dutton's *Policing and Punishment in China*. This is heavily theoretical as well as exhaustively documented, critically engaged and generalising history. The first two sections deal with the evolution of China's unique policing system, 'the policing of virtue' as Dutton neatly puts it, and her penal system; the last and longest discusses the current regime. The perspective is comparative and theoretical; Foucault and postmodernism as well as Marxism figure strongly. It is impressively rigorous in argumentation but hardly entertaining. One could open Eric Rolls' *Sojourners* at any point and read effortlessly; Michael Dutton's argument—or perhaps we should use the Foucauldian term 'discourse'—is so dense that it must be read consecutively and with concentration. It is, however, a very important as well as impressive work, with very wide implications.

To summarise crudely, Dutton sees China both as influenced by the past and transmuting past forms of policing and punishing into distinctly new forms. Both 'feudal remnants' and socialist transition must be transcended 'if (he says in the conclusion) the growth of the Gulag is to be halted'. Human rights in China can only be secured by concrete and specific social practices, not by reference to abstractions such as 'individualism' and 'socialism'.

China is not predestined by the weight of its history to administrative and moral tyranny (*pace* Bill Jenner) but it must escape from the use of the police to instil morality as well as social order, and of the courts and prisons to ensure conformity to an arbitrarily defined 'will of the people'. Hence the central importance of the spread of an adversarial justice system where the accused is not assumed guilty, of a written publicly available law code, of open fully reported courts, and of prisons inspected by impartial outsiders. Such a system may well draw on traditional forms (Indian experiments with the village *panchayat* system come to mind) rather than

European practices, but it must also overcome notions of collective responsibility and the conflation of law with morality.

China has always favoured the middle ground, the happy mean, and Jonathan Spence's *China Roundabout: Essays in History and Culture* is such in both style and content. It is as readable as Rolls' *Sojourners* but based on Spence's enormous erudition in Chinese and Western historical literature. Many of the essays come from Spence's masterly reviews in the *New York Review of Books* in which he manages both to do justice to the works under review and to make his own contribution to crucial contemporary debates. Some are from scholarly journals or collections, such as his 1967 *Journal of Asian Studies* article, 'The Seven Ages of K'ang-hsi'; 'The Dialogue of Chinese Science' from *Isis* 1984; and 'Western Perceptions of China from the Late 16th Century to the Present' from a symposium on *Heritage of China* . The last section, 'Teachers' includes notices, some previously unpublished, on his own formal and informal teachers, Arthur Wright, Arthur Waley, John King Fairbank and Fang Chao-ying.

Spence's interests, as represented in this volume, range from politics to art, literature to film, food to opium production (one might note that his classic essays on the last two topics are not in Rolls' extensive bibliography). However, one theme is common to all. China, the Chinese, Chinese history are for Spence part of a common world. The insights of Western poets help us to understand Chinese poetry; the experiences of European wars and revolutions, of the difficulties of life in a violent and changing world, give us an entrée into Chinese life in the 20th and the 17th centuries, into the philosophical dilemmas facing Confucius and the poet-painter Tao-chi (1641-1720).

A crucial role is played by those rare individuals who spent half their lives in one culture and half in another. Amongst the most riveting of his essays are those on Arcadio Huang, Mendes Pinto and Matteo Ricci.

'The Paris Years of Arcadio Huang' (originally in *Granta 32*) tells the tragic story of a young Fukienese Christian, brought to Europe in 1702 to become a priest, but opting instead for marriage to his beloved Marie-Claude and the post of assistant librarian in the King's Library, cataloguing the Chinese books brought over the years to Paris by missionaries. However his enormously fruitful collaboration on Chinese language and history with the brilliant young scholar Nicolas Freret was cut short by the latter's still mysterious imprisonment in the Bastille in 1714. Marie-Claude died after giving birth to a daughter in 1715 and the next year Huang himself, who had taken to describing himself in his journal as 'son Eminence Monseigneur le Cardinal de Fonchan Houange', died of consumption. His projected Chinese dictionary had only reached the 85th of the 214 'radicals' and even his daughter who carried his hopes for Sino-European understanding, died soon afterwards.

Mendes Pinto has had a very mixed reputation. This Portuguese merchant adventurer, one time Jesuit brother and friend of St Francis Xavier, was presented by Congreve in *Love for Love* (1695) as the very archetype of all liars. Others have accepted as literally true the stories in his posthumously published *Peregrinations* of mid-16th century adventures in the Middle East, Ethiopia, South-east Asia, along the China coast and in Japan; and his claim that this 'loyal vassal of the powerful ruler of all the nations and peoples of India and the land of great Portugal' had been 'captured thirteen times and sold into slavery 17 times'. Spence is rightly sceptical, and concludes that he probably never entered China proper (closed to Europeans in the 1540s and '50s) but suggests we read the *Peregrinations* as a magnificent work of fiction embodying much actual experience of Pinto and others and the reality of 'the awfulness and the holiness that were so intertwined in the great historical drama of Portugal's 16th century global explorations'.

Spence's essay on 'Matteo Ricci and the Ascent to Peking' comes from a 1982 symposium to celebrate the fourth centenary of Ricci's arrival in China. It tells the well known story of Ricci's long journey with many detours from Macao to Peking, and his even more arduous interior voyage into Chinese culture and mores. There is nothing new here for those who have read Ricci's journals, or Vincent Cronin's *Wise Man from the West*, or even Spence's own *Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci*. But the story is told with great verve and historical insight. Ricci is depicted as a great Renaissance European figure, exploring like Petrarch, the recesses of the human soul at the same time as he seeks new landscapes and new peoples.

Spence's achievement as an historian, perhaps best appreciated for its range as well as depth in his shorter writings collected in *Chinese Roundabout* , is his gift for combining readability with deep scholarship. Through the little events of life, the telling moments, he unveils realities from other countries, especially that other country, the past. He triumphantly exemplifies the motto of his book, taken from Wallace Stevens poem *An Ordinary Evening in New Haven*:

We seek
Nothing beyond reality ...
... not merely the visible,
The solid, but the moveable,
the moment,
The coming on of feasts and
the habits of saints,
The pattern of the heavens
and high, night air.

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MAX TEICHMANN

Danubian blues

The Habsburg Café, Andrew Riemer, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1993. ISBN 0 207 17414 8 RRP $16.95

FOR SOME REASON I expected Andrew Riemer's second book on Kakania—that semi-mythical world of Mittel Europa—to be a continuation of his first work, *Inside Outside*. That is, written with wry affection, a highly impressionistic yet integrated tale concerning his past life, his feelings about Hungary, his family; concerning Australia and being Australian; his psychic transactions with the world of Judaism from which he came; and that remarkable and inimitable phenomenon, the Habsburg Empire. This empire, for Riemer and for most of us, really means that of Franz Josef—1848-1916. The next 20 years turned out to be a matter of waiting for Hitler.

The Habsburg Café is a continuation of the themes of its predecessor and parent. It is the account of a personal, historical and political voyage of discovery, as the blurb says. But the effect is much darker. This is a troubled book—a kind of *Wizard of Oz* with a most lugubrious finale. The Wizard starts to look a little like Bela Lugosi, and jarring phrases and terms keep being repeated. In *Inside Outside* the 'Living Dead' kept popping out of the pages. These were the Australian-based contemporaries of his parents—principally Hungarian and Austrian Jews, predominantly women—who refused, or were unable, to identify with Australia and Australians (as Riemer and his parents, he said, at least tried). Instead, the 'Living Dead' filled their days with golden memories, and contempt for the colonial and derivative society of the antipodean philistines. They stuck together, repeating the same tribal rituals and social mimesis they had learned as children. They were Rip van Winkles who never awoke and never would. Australians became their Slovaks, Poles and Ruthenians. In *The Habsburg Café* it is Kakania that keeps blotting out the sun. Vienna is basically a theme park, while Riemer's native Hungary receives appellations like 'self-important', 'commonplace', 'decrepit', 'depressing', 'polluted' and 'needs a good scrub'. Doubtless true, but ... ? And then there are the dragons' teeth, at least for our sensitised traveller, of hypernationalism starting to sprout: anti-foreigner, anti-Gypsy and revanchist Hungarian sentiments.

The fact is that this time Riemer did not enjoy himself. He was homesick from day one. The Australian embassy was the place to let go; outside be demons, little ones but growing fast. And there are memories of childhood interrupted—hence permanent, indissoluble nostalgia. Last time he talked, it seemed to me, mainly of his father, whom he was idealising. This time the talk is of his mother—and the ultimate quest is not the place where she was born, but the place where she met and was courted by a 24-year-old 'rich' boy who rode a motor cycle great distances to see her. Great distances for Hungary. She was 16, the town was Sopron, their familiar tryst the water tower, and the neighbours exhibited all the excited prurience that young persons could wish for.

ASTONISHINGLY, Riemer does not seek out his mother's home town, the focus of so many imaginings and domestic apocrypha, until he is motoring back to Vienna, an accidental lift. Sopron is a dump. It does not fit the fantasy. And the house is not the same. But the water tower, which guides him to the nest from which his beloved mother would fly to meet her mate, still stands erect.

To return to Kakania—a jeering term invented by Robert Musil in *A Man Without Qualities*, to describe an empire crumbling and then dissolving under the weight of World War 1. 'The name Kakania combines scatology and nostalgia', though it might sound like Ruritania. Musil created it out of the familiar abbreviation, 'K.K.', standing for 'Kaiserlich und Königlich' i. e. Imperial and Royal. This was the legal fiction, post-1867, to placate the rebellious Hungarians, that combined the Habsburg Empire and the Kingdom of Hungary. But 'K.K.', pronounced phonetically, came out as 'Kaka'—faeces or manure. Musil's bitter little jest becomes Riemer's sabre.

SZEGED, WHERE HE TEACHES Australian literature and *Kultur* to young Hungarians, for the Australian government—a slightly bizarre attempt to plough the sea, I suspect he felt—does not charm him. The intellectual isolation seemed complete, and too many of the Kakanian buildings are just old reproductions. (Actually, I quite *liked* Szeged.)

There are three emotional highlights in Riemer's Kakanian sojourn that made me feel his psychic wanderings are not yet over. When showing a group of visiting Oz academics around, all bushy tailed and wanting to enjoy, he found himself bagging the 'sights' one by one, and the country; then moving to the hypocrisy and violence just under the surface of historic Kakania, *then* the nationalist intolerance, the anti-semitism that really took off when the last Emperor departed, and finally the terrible fate handed out to his people. All this time he was telling himself, 'they can't possibly understand,' and asking 'why am I doing it?'

But when the Oz embassy had a gabfest on Australia for the local bourgeoisie of Budapest, Riemer, when asked to speak, quickly moved into the tale of Kakania's odious past, and the fate of Hungary's Jews at the hands

of nice sweet people, rather like those in the audience. He finished in tears, amid stony silence.

Finally he shared a row in the Opera House with two elderly women, who reminded him of his mother, her friends and neighbours in Hungary. They were cultivated, tolerant, stoical and wise. They had seen it all. For the first time Riemer felt at peace; for the first time he realised how he had deliberately kept his distance from the inhabitants, for fear of—what? Betraying his memories, his *real* people? As he leaves his mother's town, Sopron, he declares that he, in a way, feels more at home there than anywhere else! What is one to make of all this? Is there a new Kakania waiting in the wings? Can we expect a third essay, ending 'Next year in Jerusalem'?

There are no simple answers, and Riemer is not alone in his dilemma. There is, first of all, the shock of realising the enormous change in the countries and peoples to which one returns after many years—they are different people, often unrecognisable. Especially when one's memories are those of childhood and what one's parents remembered. The dream is shattered and one blames the inhabitants. Also, Riemer is now perhaps more aware, more ready to declare his Jewishness, and the unique character and traumatic history of his race. To return to the land of past persecution cannot be a happy adventure.

Finally, the pull of Australia, with all its faults, is decisive. We have never had the deep hatreds and seemingly timeless animosities of so many countries, and, despite all the beatups, little anti-Semitism or hard-core racism—a precious condition. One doesn't know how Europe will finish.

The Habsburg Café is at one level a charming travel story, but it is an even more fascinating account of how one person tries to reconcile the different parts of himself to arrive at yet another synthesis. Not everyone makes it.

Max Teichmann is a Melbourne academic, writer and reviewer. His *Dictionary of Australian Politics* (4th ed.), co-authored with Dean Jaensch, is published by Macmillan.

GABRIELLE LORD

Satanic yardsticks

The Eleven Deadly Sins, ed. Ross Fitzgerald, William Heinemann, Australia, 1993. ISBN 0 85561 483 8 RRP $19.95

GEORGE ORWELL'S 'Distrust any writing that doesn't make pictures in your mind' has always stood me in

good stead. A child knows this is true of writing until he or she grows into the adult 'trance' in which the taste of nicotine and alcohol are found pleasant, and long words and intellectual obfuscation are found to be clever and desirable. *The Eleven Deadly Sins* is understandably a very mixed collection. The essays of practised writers—Gerard Henderson, Blanche d'Alpuget, Marion Halligan, Michael Sharkey and Barry Dickins contain expectedly good writing.

But some of the essays didn't make any pictures in my mind. Rosemary Sorensen's piece was of interest, but I nearly shipwrecked on the first paragraph and the tone of contempt in some places. A lack of healthy editing is evident in many of the essays.

So how do non-theologians write about sin in this most horrendous of centuries? Robert Dessaix deals with covetousness by writing a short story. (I myself deal with sin in novels, using my own 'sinning and sinned against' experience. For me, sin is easily identified in terms of a medieval definition of Satan 'as that spirit which uses the human souls as objects'. I sin when I use another human being in like manner. I've also noticed that sin is taught in families, informally and unnoticeably, in the same way as we are taught to speak—by imitation.)

Ross Fitzgerald kicks off with envy; starting with his early envy of his dead brother. The adult Fitzgerald seems to have quite forgotten the thoughtless cruelty of his parents, and assumes responsibility, as all good children do, for his perfectly understandable childhood reaction to his parents' canonisation of the dead brother. Much more interesting than intellectual theories about the origin of evil is the account he gives of slamming the pantry door on his claustrophobic mother who was thereby imprisoned all day until his father came home. This happened after baby Ross had been put on the pot and told to 'do his duty'.

Ross puts forward the Kleinian version of Freud's (I had hoped by now utterly defunct) 'wicked child' theory to explain how he could have done this awful thing to his mother: to anyone not completely dazed by a mid-19th century Viennese pedagogic theory, the baby's behaviour seems a natural, angry response to his mother's indecent desire to control the opening and closing of her son's anus.

If the reader can get past the determinedly jolly tone of this part of the essay and suspend just for an instant our society's completely unexamined belief that it is quite acceptable for one human being to impose his or her will on another (with violence if necessary) just so long as this other human being is small and defenceless, then quite a different picture emerges. A terrified, screaming woman? Hysterical by evening? A terrified, screaming baby, unfed all day, half-naked? I wonder what happened when Daddy came home?

It's not quite so funny when a reader comes out of the 'grown-up' trance and asks these questions. Babies can only react to new situations. I

learned something about Ross Fitzgerald from the essay, but not much about envy. By my Satanic yardstick, what Fitzgerald calls envy is using the other against 'other', finding self lacking in comparison, then, finding self hateful for this lack, self condemns self, then projects hate on to the 'other'.

Blanche d'Alpuget's vivid essay on lust, brilliantly lit and oddly distancing in its effect, similarly provokes a thoughtful reader. In her father's house, it is the 12-year-child who opens the door to the compulsive paedophile.

In this essay, I found out more about the 'protection racket' that we children of preoccupied parents carry out, protecting them—the adults—from ever discovering the truth about what happened to us while they were off having their affairs, doing their depression, chasing their ambitions, etc.

The protection racket ensures that adults never have to face the consequences of their own behaviour, or its effects on (their) children. 'I believed at the time—and still do—that ... it would have been tragic to arraign him for sexually molesting a minor'. Why would it have been tragic? And for whom? Whose voice is this?

And here I am, a 'crime writer' as they call me, (why don't they call us 'sin writers', I wonder?) asking questions about content when I'm supposed to be reviewing a book about sin.

I'M REALLY A 'family crime' writer, who uses her own experience and observations to make stories about what can happen to people who grow up in families. And, contrary to the myths, it's my experience that parents largely fail to protect their children. They do this by enormous dishonesty, by pretending to be so perfect that should they ever discover that their children, are simply ordinary human beings (read 'sinners') the shock to their angelic nervous systems might very well be fatal. 'I couldn't tell Mum, she'd die. I couldn't tell Dad. He'd kill me.'

This is not theory. It is only in the past few years that my child, now 27, has been able to tell me her truth. And that I have been able to listen without self-righteousness and defensiveness because I've looked within and seen I'm just another shambling old sinner, too. We're all taught about sin, but who teaches us how not to sin? We're taught that it's wicked to lie by parents who tell lies whenever it suits them; we're taught that it's wrong to be angry by teachers who are often so angry their faces are purple with it. We're taught that it is wrong to hate, but live in a culture that fosters hate in every possible way, from the virulence of Parliament to the racism inculcated in families and schools.

These essays are interesting reading, but most of the writers don't show us enough about their own sins, their cruelty of contempt.

Gerard Henderson's red-blooded and honest account of the early hatred he encountered makes his angry response to this perfectly understandable. I remember similar contempt and humiliation from my teachers. His essay not only discusses anger, it partly acknowledges the early set-up in a human psyche that creates an 'angry' personality. Marion Halligan's essay gives a handy check list of events which do, and do not, cause melancholy. This word could be called depression nowadays and is no longer considered sinful. Depression doesn't 'just happen'. It is the legacy of very early experiences.

As the delicacy and sensitivity of the human infant's psyche becomes more clearly comprehended, what used to be called 'sin' will be more and more commonly viewed as the natural outcome of psychological (and of course other) abuse. This is certainly not to suggest that sin can be renamed as psychology. 'Fallen' humanity is deeply flawed. What it does mean is that at last, our real sin can be exposed; that of refusing to look deeply and unflinchingly within our own hearts and minds, to see how our individual psychological set-up is hurting us and those close to us, so that it can be dealt with.

And in my experience, this can only happen by constant awareness of our complete dependence on the Source, however this may express itself. Otherwise, the human ego is in charge, and it is naturally a murderer. ■

Gabrielle Lord's most recent book is *Whipping Boy*, published by McPhee Gribble.

PETER CRAVEN

Singing in a strange land

Remembering Babylon, David Malouf, Chatto & Windus, Sydney, 1993. ISBN 0 09 182782 5 RRP $29.95

IN LESS THAN 20 years David Malouf has built up a reputation as one of the most significant writers in this country. From his first book, *Johnno*, with its intense evocation of a long-ago Brisbane and indelible friendship, through the lyrical frissons of *An Imaginary Life* and the intellectual intensity of *Child's Play*, the story of a sensitive terrorist, Malouf looked like one of the best things that had happened to Australian fiction since Patrick White, even though his was clearly a lyrical talent; a miniaturist who in Gide-like fashion made the novella look like a major form.

Then in 1984 he published *Harland's Half-Acre*, a book of actual novel length which recapitulated the Brisbane voice of *Johnno*, the voice of an observer at once celebratory and detached, and took as its subject the life of an artist. It was the gamest thing Malouf had done and, although it contained some of his best writing, it also exhibited a greater looseness of form and a tendency for the novelist to brood about characters less articulate than himself, often in overtly eloquent prose that owed something to Patrick White.

It became clear that Malouf wanted to take on the 'big' themes and that he was not afraid of the attendant messiness. *The Great World* in 1990 was some kind of culmination in that it took the Changi POW camp, archetypal to Australian memory, as part of its subject and focused on two contrasted types of the ordinary bloke. Many thought it a grand piece of work, though I must admit that I found it difficult to keep the characters apart in my head and the whole conception seemed inflated to me, as if one of nature's lieder singers were forcing himself to sing Wagner, against the grain.

Paradoxically *The Great World* gained Malouf international recognition and it's possible to see it as a work which, however unconsciously, caters to a British publishing notion of the Australian experience. Of course, there's no reason why great art might not be compatible with such considerations.

Remembering Babylon is equally ambitious in theme, if not in treatment. It's the story of a white man, long domiciled with the blacks, who stumbles into a Scots settlement in Queensland some time in the middle of the last century. Malouf actually quotes that weird sentence which is part of every Australian child's web of national legend, 'Do not shoot. I am a British object,' though his book is otherwise untrammelled by history.

Gemmy Fairlie, as he comes to be known, is taken up by the family of the children who find him. He is the subject of nasty controversy among fellow settlers and some persecution. He is protected by a well-to-do local woman and her beautiful young companion, though this in turn reminds him of the nearly unspeakable horrors of his British boyhood and his subsequent treatment at sea. He fades out of the narrative and comes to exist primarily as an object of contemplation and a symbol of poignant loss for Lachlan Beattie, who found him and took him as his own.

Remembering Babylon is a weird book, by turns lame and affecting. Although there are epigraphs from both John Clare and Blake ('Whether this is Jerusalem or Babylon we know not') the title seems to derive from Psalm 137 ('There by the waters of Babylon ... '). The psalmist swears 'Jerusalem if I forget thee let my right hand lose its cunning'.

It is a novella full of symbolic reverberation. Gemmy is a white man who has come to know the mysteries of the blacks' world, and his protector is himself a Scottish boy who has experienced himself as an exile. Such narrative as there is serves as a scaffolding for a good deal of brooding plangency, as mute male consciousness reaches out for a soul mate who can never be comprehended.

This has always been the heart of Malouf's subject though *Remembering Babylon* presents it in a colonial dress which runs the risk of making it precious to the point of tedium.

Part of the problem is that Malouf has not worked out a plot which will sustain the complex nostalgias and intensities that the prose bespeaks. It is not simply that he minimises the dialogue but that the central characters have little to say to each other that can be translated into an sort of action that does not take the form of lyrical embroidery.

MALOUF HAS ALWAYS been attracted to representations of epiphany but in his later work this tends to be linked to an attempt at the bigger canvas, which runs the risk of vulgarising the lyrical impulse and allowing it to degenerate into sentimentality.

By not managing to articulate a plot, however minimal, which will release the intense feelings between the characters he can make their relationship seem factitious because it depends so entirely on the novelist saying—sometimes gushingly—how they pined. This is perhaps only to say that his new-found realism (in this case the anti-romance of a colonial past) sits oddly with his characteristic prose poetry and tends to put the different elements of *Remembering Babylon* out of kilter with each other.

But *Remembering Babylon* remains the work of a significant writer with great gifts. At its centre is the portrait of a 19th century city boy whose experience is atrociously confined and who becomes, by calamitous fate, part of the doomed Aboriginal population of 19th century Australia, as if one kind of deprivation, European, urban and sordid, had a secret affinity with an innocence and experience only the whites could destroy. Gemmy's past is presented with an unbearable, nearly sexual intensity that gives the latter part of *Remembering Babylon* such a welling pity and terror that the whole book is transfigured. The last part of the book shows us the children in the late middle of life, one a politician and the other an eminent nun, and it is written with a glow that reminds us how confidently Malouf can write when his subject is not silenced by belonging to a different caste of humanity from the author.

It would be too simple to say that Malouf should forget about children and semi-children, noble savages of one kind or another, who are bereft of the power of speech and therefore make especially suggestive sites of contemplation or longing. But it would be good if he reminded himself that when he writes about upper middle-class Queenslanders no one can touch him.

Remembering Babylon has fine things in it. It is a moving book and therefore not an inconsiderable one but there are times when it seems to leap up and say to its massed international readership, 'Don't shoot ... I am a B-b-british object.' ■

Peter Craven is the editor of *Scripsi*.

ON THE RUN BOOKS ON THE RUN BO

The Oxford Literary Guide to Australia ed. Peter Pierce. OUP, revised edition, 1993. ISBN 0 19 553447 6. RRP $29.95

We need bigger glove boxes. Just for books. Along with the street directory, the accommodation guide and the first-aid guide we now have a glove-box edition of the *Literary Guide*. For my money, it puts pressure on the hitherto uncontested claim of BP's *Explore Australia* to being 'the complete touring companion.' Take some examples: BP says of Bourke, NSW, that it has four motels, a picnic races and is the largest centre for wool shipment in the world. The *Lit. Guide* says that it has been home, in turn, to the likes of Henry Lawson, Will Ogilvie and Breaker Morant. Now try Toowoomba: the flower festival, 28 motels and 'distinctive charm and graciousness' are only part of the truth. The literary traveller will also need to know that A.G. Stephens was born here, Steele Rudd was born nearby, Peter Porter went to school and Bruce Dawe taught here.

But the *Literary Guide* has uses beyond the glove box. Imagine the luck of a punter in Northam, WA, to discover that Trollope went to the races here in March, 1872. Or the frustration of a real estate agent on Sydney's north shore to find that Killara, Pymble and St Ives have no literary selling-points, whereas Parramatta is steeped in nostalgia. For the serious minded, Peter Pierce has provided an introduction that dwells briefly on the significance of 'the act of naming which symbolically transforms space into place'. But if you think the distinction between travelling and trivial pursuit is splitting hairs, then this book is lots of fun. It puts to the lie the claim of one Professor Cowling in 1935 that 'you need no Baedeker in Australia ... From a literary point of view, Australia lacks the richness of age and tradition.' Bulldust!

—Michael McGirr SJ

Sydney Downtown, Jo Dirks, Kangaroo Press, 1993. ISBN 0 86417 445 4 RRP $16.95

The cover of this book makes it look like one of those ghastly 'This week in Sydney' jobs that lurk around the reception desks of hotels. In fact it's a much more entertaining *omnium gatherum* of events that have transpired and personalities that have congregated in the inner Sydney area for 200 years or so. But the average tourist is too busy getting to the opal skymine to take time over this many anecdotes and details. Pity. Maybe that's why they all look so bored.

—Michael McGirr SJ

Michael and me and the sun, Barbara Hanrahan, UQP 1992. ISBN 0 7022 2484 7 RRP $22.95

Barbara Hanrahan's death in 1991, aged 51, was an artistic loss to Australia as she had worked successfully for many years in more than one creative field.

ON THE RUN BOOKS ON THE RUN B

Michael and me and the sun is autobiographical, dealing with Hanrahan's coming of age artistically and sexually in London in the early 1960s. Much of the book's appeal lies in the accurate evocation of that time, coupled with a candour and immediacy that reveal an original personality telling the reader what the author really felt rather than what she might be expected to have felt.

There are photographs of etchings, wood-engravings and lithographs done by Hanrahan in 1963 & 1964, including the etching that is the source of the title. It is a slight book in some ways but it lingers gently and poignantly in the mind.

—Nona Willis

Wilder Shores: Women's Travel Stories of Australia and Beyond, ed. Robin Lucas and Clare Forster, UQP 1992. ISBN 0 7022 2466 4 RRP $15.95

One does not try to make a three-course meal of canapés; similarly, an anthology is for enjoying in bites rather than at one sitting. Approached in this way, *Wilder Shores* yields its share of pleasures, its more mundane fare, and ,fortunately less often, its disappointments

The feminist journey theme described in the introduction seems artificially superimposed however, as there is little, if any, connection between the pieces selected from essays, fiction, diaries and travel journalism. No immediate lock—chronologically, geographically or developmentally—strikes the reader. It is possible the sense of dislocation thus produced is deliberate (form following function, perhaps?) as on a journey.

Marion Halligan's extract continues her love affair with food and France; there is the charm of Charmian (Clift, that is) and her masterly skill and control as an essayist. Dulcie Deamer disappoints with a dated ego-trip; Dora Birtles, by contrast, wears well.

Among a number of others, Blanche d'Alpuget, Janette Turner Hospital and most especially Drusilla Modjeska write with observations and insights which go much deeper than a travelogue and make the anthology worthwhile.

—Nona Willis

The Debt Boomerang, Susan George, Pluto Press, London, 1993. ISBN 0 8133 1475 5 RRP $29.95

Susan George's views about the international aid are anything but politically sound. She is very critical of government-to-government aid, for it seldom seems to reach needy people. She is critical of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund because she believes they are largely (if not chiefly) responsible for deepening and widening the threatening gap between rich and poor—individuals as well as nations.

According to the OECD, she writes, total resource flow to developing countries amounted to US$927 billion between 1982 and 1990. During the same period these countries remitted in debt service alone $1345 billion, $418 billion more than they had received—enough to finance six Marshall Plans. In spite of total debt service, including amortisation, amounting to more than $1300 billion, the debtor countries as a group began the 1990s fully 61 per cent more in debt than they were in 1982.

George fleshes out this skeleton in earlier titles now published here by Penguin: *How the Other Half Dies*; *A Fate Worse than Debt*; and *Ill Fares the Land*.

The imposed misery documented in these and similar studies tugged at the heart, clamouring for immediate relief. And because of vivid media presentation of war and natural disaster it was easy to miss the injustice that was causing the suffering. Easy, too, to overlook or underestimate the importance of hard thinking and of technical competence. Good will needs the support of sound ethical principles if people degraded by deprivation are to enjoy personal dignity and personal responsibility.

The Debt Boomerang shows how clear it is now that ill-treatment of the South has given birth to a monstrous threat to the North. Third-world debt is harming us; where other stimuli have failed, informed self-interest may turn the trick. Better that than no solution, because, as George says, the harm is palpable.

To echo David's words to Nathan: 'We are the people'.

—John W. Doyle SJ

MARK SKULLEY

The once and future kingdom

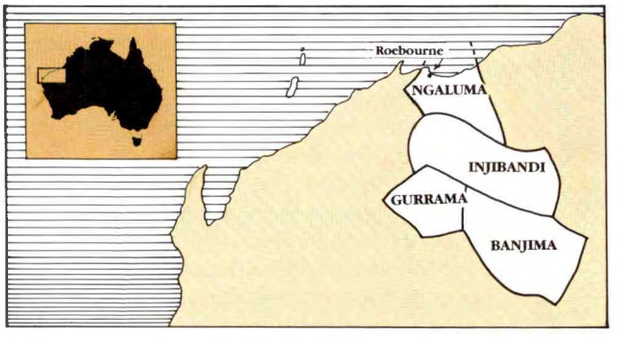
Telling his people's story: Robert Solomon, narrator of Exile and The Kingdom.

In the language of this country, the name of this river is Yarnda Nyirra-Na, 'Sun Mirror'. This is the story of the people who belong to the river, and the forces that took them away.

SO BEGINS *Exile and The Kingdom*, an extraordinary documentary film about the Injibandi, Ngaluma, Banjima and Gurrama tribes of Roebourne, in Western Australia's Pilbara region. The film tells the way they see their history, which for a white audience means that things are turned inside out. It should be compulsory viewing for any galahs still flapping around the notion that until white settlement Australia was *terra nullius*—no one's land.

Roebourne became known as a 'trouble town' in the mining boom of the 1960s. The reputation stuck after the tragic death of 16-year-old John Pat in a police cell in 1983—which, more than any other single event, led to the royal commission into black deaths in custody. But *Exile and The Kingdom* goes beyond breathless, 30-second television grabs such as 'The hot and dusty town of Roebourne will be known for one thing and one thing only ...' A white film crew, led by Perth independent filmmakers Frank Rijavec and Noelene Harrison, worked in collaboration with Roebourne's Aboriginal community for six years.

Rijavec first went to the town in 1987, with a brief for a film about relations between police and local Aborigines. The police video unit had already shot some 'pretty abysmal' footage, and the Aborigines were lukewarm about the idea. But Rijavec's approach was different: 'As soon as the question changed and it became "there is a chance of making a film, what would you want to say, what do you think it should do, what hasn't been done before?"—that was the starting point. In a sense, the elders have directed what they wanted to show.' Early worries about another cameraman looking for quick 'stories' eased after Rijavec went bush for four weeks and shot video footage at a children's cultural camp. A generator was cranked up at night,



and young and old liked what they saw.

The film begins with tribal elders journeying up the Fortescue River to the tablelands where the *Marga* (creation spirits) sang and danced the first Law ceremony, 'when the world was soft'. The ground became hard in a later age and the circular track of their dance was preserved in a remarkable rock formation. The initiation of young men into the Law follows, binding them to tribal country and their spiritual ancestors, and the relation between kin groups and the land is explained in clear, simple diagrams.

The violence and exploitation that began with the arrival of pearlers in 1863 is well-illustrated, using diaries, letters, official reports, photographs and film, mostly from WA's Battye Library. Many Aborigines chose to stay near their country by working on pastoral properties, and those unfit for work were fed at government ration camps on the tablelands until the 1930s, when the camps were shifted to Roebourne to cut costs. The introduction of equal wages for Aborigines in 1967 brought mass sackings of blacks on stations and they, too, drifted down to Roebourne. The iron-ore boom brought a depressing state-housing village near the town cemetery, thousands of single, boozing white men living in 'model' company towns—and no jobs for blacks.

The story is often grim: an elder is said to have died of a broken heart in the 1980s, when the WA government flooded a sacred valley to supply the mining towns. The vital natural water courses are controlled by the government, which is resisting a push by the tribes to regain a viable slice of their homelands. But *Exile and the Kingdom* is also full of hope, showing how the community has made headway against alcohol, and that increasing numbers of young people are going through the Law ceremonies.

The film's narrator, Roger Solomon, had his wild days during the bad times of the mining boom but gave up alcohol in 1984, after his nephew died in police custody. He began to work as an alcohol counsellor and together with his father, James, and brother, David, formed the Ngaluma/Injibandi dance group, which has revived many old corroborees. Roger Solomon, whose Aboriginal name is Yirra Bindiri ('Teeth Like Stars'), speaks with ease and authority in the film and co-wrote the script. He passed away at the age of 39, three weeks after attending the film's Perth premiere. The cause of death was mesothelioma, contracted as child from playing on a jetty used to load blue asbestos.

Another brother, Trevor Solomon, says the film brought 'everything out into the open' and the community are proud of it. 'Whatever we were talking about, we'd get the old people, we'd sit down and have a talk about it, make things straight by them and they'd allow so much to go out ... every time we spoke about anything about the land of anything we'd approach them first and get the AOK off them.'

The film premiered under late summer stars at Roebourne Primary School, followed by a two-week season in Perth and a performance by the 40-member Roebourne dance troupe at the city opening. Says Rijavec: 'A couple of very important people in the community have passed away and we were a bit worried about how people would feel. But in some ways, people don't feel too bad, they feel proud ... even the (direct) family. There's a record of some very special things that were said in a way that no one could say quite the same way again.'

One taboo the filmmakers faced was that no light could be shone on the *bundut*, the ceremonial singing and dancing for the public part of the initiations. The camera instead fixes on a fingernail moon in the night sky, and the sounds of singing and dancing do the rest. The film has traditional corroborees and story telling, snatches of church music and the 'one-string bush banjo'. It is a documentary worth seeing on the big screen, because the landscape itself stars through fine aerial photography.

The elders speak with the conviction of standing on their own turf, helped by a filmic rhythm that is closer to breathing than to the rapid-eye movement of modern film editing. 'The Law not belong to me,' says one elder, Alan Jacob, pointing to the red earth. 'Law written here.'

Exile and The Kingdom has been accepted into WA schools and will be screened during the Melbourne and Sydney film festivals in June, and on ABC television on 7 July. It has also been selected for film festivals in Bombay, Singapore, Auckland and Wellington, and for the Berlin-based Aboriginality Festival, which will tour other German cities and London.

There is no taboo against using John Pat's name in print, but he was related to many of the participants in the film and is referred to in conversation as 'the boy that died'. The Injibandi, Ngaluma, Banjima and Gurrama people know who that means. And they know their story, just like Aborigines everywhere know their own story. It is whites who have to learn, and this film helps.

Mark Skulley is a freelance writer.

• Film Australia is distributing *Exile and The Kingdom* on video. Their number is (02) 413 8777.

• Roger Solomon's family gave *Eureka Street* permission to use his name and the accompanying photograph.

God play

At Play in the Fields of the Lord, dir. Hector Babenko (independent cinemas). 'In Brazil filmmaking was never considered simply as a commercial activity. Movies are cultural events.' Brave words. But this new film by *Kiss of the Spider Woman*'s director, Hector Babenco, gives credence to his dictum. Hollywood could not have made it. True, Babenco engages the hot topics—the clash of invading and indigenous cultures in Amazonia, and religious colonisation (what we used to call missionary activity). But he does it with all the frayed, catholic wisdom of his South American and European inheritance, never preaching, never simplifying, always exploring.

He is supported by an intelligent, rasping script (by Luis Bunuel's scriptwriter Jean-Claude Carriere), and a rich cast of imported and indigenous actors. Tom Berenger, as Lewis Moon, the sodden, half-Cheyenne soldier of fortune, turned crusading Niaruna tribesman, wears his nudity with stolid grace, though he is more convincing paired with Tom Waits' braggadocio in the Eugene O'Neillesque bar scenes. The hapless missionaries are flawed but not made monsters. John Lithgow acts like an unredeemed John Cleese; Daryl Hannah's pale glamour is accomodated as a foil to the Niaruna's nakedness. Aidan Quinn is subtle, but Kathy Bates, as his deracinated South Dakota fundamentalist wife, is breathtaking.

—Morag Fraser

Sadly missed

The Vanishing, dir. George Sluizer (Hoyts), is a remake of a film, also directed by Sluizer, that was released in 1988. The first version, a psychological thriller that left audiences almost numb, such was the power of its ending, has since acquired cult status. If it hadn't relied on subtitles—the dialogue was in Dutch—it would undoubtedly have won wider acclaim. And money, which was surely the incentive for producer Larry Brezner to persuade Sluizer to do this new version.

So how does mark II stand up? It holds its own while the plot follows the attempts of an obsessed Jeff Harriman (Kiefer Sutherland) to find out what happened to his girlfriend after her mysterious disappearance from a roadside restaurant in Seattle. With the compelling acting of Sutherland, Jeff Bridges and Nancy Travis, plus Sluizer's slick directing, the ingredients for the success should be there.

Eureka Street
Film Competition

Ah yes, how the West was won—Tom Mix and Patsy Ruth Miller in the *The Fighting Streak* (1922). Tom's the one in the hat. Tell us what's he saying to Patsy and we'll award two tickets, to the film of your choice, for the answer we like best. Add her reply and we'll make it four. Send entries to: *Eureka Street* Film Competition, PO Box 553, Richmond VIC 3121. The winner of April's competition was R. O'Brien, of Camberwell, VIC, who thought Chaplin looked so surprised because he was 'behind on his travel plans'.

But the film's Achilles heel is its ending, which won't make you drift from the cinema with the same feelings of horror and uncertainty that the original evoked. Regrettably, in a world where script alternatives are road-tested before the final edit job is done, the demand for box-office acceptance has won the day.

Sluizer is risking a reputation, but he hasn't quite sold his soul. As with the first version of the film, he tackles issues such as the degrees of evil within the individual and the drive for knowledge—which may, after all, be two sides of a coin.

Despite being less subtle than the Dutch original, and despite its contrived ending, this version will probably win a new audience. It's just that, well, something has vanished.

—Brad Halse

Telling tales

The Miracle, dir. Neil Jordan (independent cinemas) has come to Australian cinemas at the same time as Jordan's more recent *The Crying Game*. I haven't seen the latter but by all accounts *The Miracle* shares its interest in the possibilities of relationships, including some that push the boundaries.

The film is set in the Irish seaside town of Bray (where Jordan grew up), during one of those summers that allow for whimsy. Jimmy (Niall Byrne) is the teenage son of Sam (Donal McCann), a given-to-drink Dubliner who is a saxophonist in a dance band that caters for the nostalgic middle-aged. Rose (Lorraine Pilkington) is Jimmy's best friend and together they idle away the summer, constructing stories about the people they see wandering around Bray.

When they catch sight of a beautiful, blonde, curvaceous, solitary and somewhat older woman (Beverley D'Angelo), they follow her to the sea front, plotting her past. Inevitably, they are drawn into a story that, to borrow Rose's phrase, is the oldest story there is.

There are dream sequences in the film; pretty obvious sorts of dreams, but the ambiguity they lend to the final sequence might even be worth it. And, for all the conventionality of the father's character, *The Miracle* goes on to depict a more intimate relationship between a father and son than is usual in the cinema. In a way, it is a

film about men's capacity to love and women's capacity for objectivity.

Niall Byrne and Lorraine Pilkington are very good actors and so is Dublin, from the Bray seafront to the Olympia Theatre and Fossett's Family Circus. And, as is Neil Jordan's wont, he uses music to wonderful, moody effect.

—Margaret Coffey

Spanish omelette

Jamon, Jamon, dir. Bigas Luna (independent cinemas) is a satirical look at contemporary Spanish culture, and comes across as a kind of crazy mix of Shakespearian tragedy and American soap opera. It is full of love, sex, passion, revenge and murder.

The beautiful Silvia (Penelope Cruz) is in love with, and pregnant to, spoilt rich-kid Jose Luis (Jordi Molla), son of Conchita (Stefania Sandrelli) and Manuel (Juan Diego), who own an underwear factory. Conchita disapproves of their plans to marry

because Silvia's mother, Carmen (Anna Galiena), runs the local whorehouse. To thwart their plans Conchita hires Raul (Javier Bardem), the archetypal Spanish lover who also dreams of one day becoming a bullfighter, to seduce Silvia away from her son. The plan fails when Conchita herself falls in love with Raul.

All the characters are in some way victims of their desires. Conchita pursues Raul and her fading youth, Jose Luis wants to break away from his dominating mother, and Raul is seduced by the lure of fame and fortune. The film ends in the best Shakespearian manner, with no one realising what he or she really wants until it's too late.

Jamon, Jamon uses obviously exaggerated Spanish stereotypes, and often treads a fine line between being just gratuitous and offering us a real insight into life in 1990s Spain.

—Tim Stoney

Amid the ruins

Sweet Emma, Dear Böbe, dir. Istvan Szabo (independent cinemas). You have to wonder whether people who devise advertising blurbs for films actually watch them. The still used in the posters promoting *Sweet Emma, Dear Böbe* is obviously chosen to suggest lesbianism—to titillate. Yet it shows the film's most tragic moment. Female friendship is a significant, but incidental, part of this short, sad film from Hungary. The main theme is collapse—personal, political, economic. If Charlotte Bronte's *Villette*, with its study of loneliness and mental breakdown, had ever been filmed it would have had a similar bleakness. Yet there is humour here, and a love of life.

Emma (Joanna ter Steege) and Böbe (Eniko Borcsok) were teachers of Russian under Hungary's former communist regime. Now no one wants to learn the despised language, and the two women teach English. They are just one lesson ahead of their students. They share a tiny room in a hostel, and life is a loveless grind.

Sweet Emma, Dear Böbe is simply put together and domestic in its focus and scale, unlike Szabo's previous work (*Mephisto, Colonel Redl, Meeting Venus*). Yet this low-budget film illuminates the mundane horror of life in Eastern Europe. 'Forget unselfishness, forget collectivity,' one of Emma's colleagues shouts at her. 'Forget these words. They've lost their meaning today.' There is a new cruelty about, and Emma is on a gradual fall into the abyss. The film is more about Emma than about Böbe, and Ter Steege's portrayal of her decline is up to anything Hollywood's better-known actors could turn in. Eniko Borcsok is almost as good. Their final, irretrievable descent is both inevitable and shocking.

—Margaret Simons

Formula fever

Indecent Proposal, dir. Adrian Lyne (Hoyts and Village). For anybody who has been in a coma of late, *Indecent Proposal* is about a happy but broke yuppie couple (Demi Moore and Woody Harrelson) who head to Las Vegas to raise the $50,000 they need to clear their debts. They blow the lot but a billionaire in the form of Robert Redford offers them $1 million to spend a night with Moore. They agonise for all of a few hours until the wife announces that she will go through with it for the husband's sake: 'After all, it wouldn't mean anything. It's just my body.' The husband sees green and the plot begins to sicken, but *Indecent Proposal* is notable because it represents two regrettable Hollywood trends.

It is essentially a remake, having the same basic plot as last year's *Honeymoon in Vegas*. Hollywood is notoriously short on ideas but remaking (mostly European) films has got out of hand, with the current rehashes of *The Return of Martin Guerre, The Vanishing* and *Nikita*. With one slight change, *Indecent Proposal* even has Redford delivering a speech lifted from *Citizen Kane* (the one about glimpsing a girl and thinking about her every day for the rest of your life).

The second trend echoes the Hollywood producer's conversation heard in *Annie Hall*—'I've got this idea and I'm trying to turn it into a concept'. The success of *Indecent Proposal's* 'concept' is that everyone knows about it. This film from the director of *Fatal Attraction* has two stars (and Woody Harrelson), luscious photography, a nice labrador dog, flash clothes and houses, and not much else. It will make an indecent amount of money.

—Mark Skulley

Strike two

Reckless Kelly, dir. Yahoo Serious

(Hoyts and Village). *The Empire Strikes Back* was a notable exception to the rule that second efforts are never as good as first fine careless raptures. *Reckless Kelly* is not an exception, and its shortcomings (or longueurs) have been fairly panned by most critics. But there has also been an unfair lack of acknowledgement of its occasional felicities.

My two sons (17 and 10) agreed that it wasn't a patch on *Young Einstein*, that the story bogged down in America and that it moved too slowly. They felt their money wasn't wasted, however, because they liked the political flavour—anti-corruption and pro-republican—and loved the Robin-Hoodish bank robbery scenes.

The sight gags aren't as good as *Young Einstein's*, and the actors' delivery is painfully slow—it's as though they're doing English sketches for LOTE speakers—but there's something disarming about Yahoo Serious. His best asset is a thin, sensitive face that the camera loves even though his acting is wooden.

Maybe *Reckless Kelly* just had to be got through, like most second novels, films, marriages and so on. Third time lucky, one hopes.

—Juliette Hughes

Manners 'n men

Simple Men, dir. Hal Hartley (independent cinemas). The simple men of this film run the gamut of feminine images from one Madonna to the other—from the veiled one of Catholic piety to the blonde one who sings. The images come out ahead, and the actual female characters do even better. *Simple Men* rests on the assumption that within two decades feminism has succeeded in changing everything about the world except, dammit, men.

Hartley is politically correct enough not to endorse this state of affairs but, fortunately, not artistically inept enough to apologise for it. Instead he weaves interesting, comic patterns out of it, rather in the way that Raymond Chandler was able to make amusing and instructive patterns out of something not funny in itself, murder.

The film's anti-heroes are two brothers (Robert Burke and William Sage), a failed criminal and a college drop-out, in search of their father, a '60s radical who has spent years as a fugitive because of a bungled bombing of the Pentagon. Dad, when he shows up, turns out to be a fraud—someone else bombed the Pentagon but he enjoys living off the notoriety. The search for him, however, is the means by which the bumbling siblings meet two not-so-simple women—Kate (Karen Sillas), who although unveiled, blonde and sexually active, has an iconic resemblance to the real Madonna, and Elina (Elina Löwensohn), who although a brunette has a more than iconic resemblance to the other Madonna.

The verbal sparrings of these four, and of a clutch of minor characters, are carried out in the artfully flat, deliciously cliché-ridden dialogue that Hartley has made his satiric trademark. I'm looking forward to the next product with the same label: Hartley-speak is addictive.

—Ray Cassin

Hell's gates

Best Intentions, dir. Bille August (independent cinemas). What *is* it about simple, halting piano chords that sends elegiac frissons through a film? They're used to great effect in *Best Intentions* but are hardly needed in this brilliant evocation of human efforts and weaknesses.

The acting is austere, naturalistic and compelling, and there is vast compassion in Ingmar Bergman's script, which deals with the courtship and early married life of his parents. His father, Henrik (Samuel Froler), was a damaged and complex man whose strengths and weaknesses hurt those around him as well as himself. The sorrow and the pity of unforgiveness reverberate through him and through the film. For these people there are no easy answers; platitudes are swept away as fears, verbally expressed, seem to become self-fulfilling prophecies or even curses.

There *is* a road to Hell here, and we see it in the tortured face of Petrus (Elias Ringquist), a child the Bergmans impulsively shelter for a while but ultimately betray through their fear and narrowness—a process begun by the bourgeois limitations of Anna Bergman (Pernilla August) and finished brutally by Henrik's panicky violence.

See *Best Intentions*—you'll never forget it.

—Juliette Hughes

Lost and found

The Stolen Children, dir. Gianni Amelio (independent cinemas) is a masterly treatment of child abuse, though it has none of the stereotypical implications that expression has attained in recent years. To begin with, the abuser of the two children at the centre of the film is not the standard father or male relative, but their abandoned mother, and the social arrangements of a partially disintegrated social order.

Poverty has provoked the mother into forcing her 11-year-old daughter (Valentina Scalici) into prostitution, and when the police arrest her and 'the client', the girl and her nine-year-old brother (Giuseppe Ieracitano) are sent to a church home in the care of a young *carabinero* (Enrico Lo Verso).

Rejected by the church authorities because the girl would be a bad influence, the two children are illegally taken by the irritated and confused policeman on a southward journey to their homeland, Sicily, where he thinks they will be accepted into an institution.

En route, the children and the young policeman, initially distant, if not hostile, open to each other, and the changes in their relationship are warmly but non-sentimentally portrayed by resort to the neo-realist traditions of the Italian cinema. Particularly moving is the way that the young boy, almost silent for the first half of the film, is transformed by the totally unmushy affection of the policeman.

Amelio's humanism, and the brilliant acting of the three principals, reveal more about the problems children face in contemporary society than 100 government reports or sensational television documentaries.

The film also faces the problem posed by institutional solutions to basically personal sufferings: it should be obligatory viewing for all current and aspiring members of the welfare bureaucracy.

—Tony Coady

Television Program Guide

Michael McGirr

Series

Rough Guides to the World's Journeys
You can't beat the smug feeling you get seeing other people's visions of Australia. The first episode of this British travel series is a bit like that. We see Year 11 kids in Cairns learning how to get rich by selling toy Koalas in Japanese. We also see Nicholas Redmund, reformed carpet salesman, now doing well as a hippy. Speaking of ecotourism, he ponders a weed, announces that survival is a matter of instinct, pulls out the weed and bites off the end. Then suddenly he emerges as the real Mick Dundee and says it tastes like parmigiana.

This show has the advantage of being slightly different. Not a whisper in it about Sydney. Instead, the presenters head to Melbourne, specifically to Ramsey Court, the most famous Australian address in Britain thanks to one innocuous bungalow which has appeared 2000 times in 'Neighbours'. But by the time you get to a Bachelors and Spinsters Ball in Ballarat, you may be feeling less smug. Screens every Thursday at 7.30pm (7pm Adelaide) until 15 July.

Derrick
Derrick, the popular German detective, is back in a 12-part series beginning on 9 June at 8.30pm (8pm Adelaide).

Nightingales
This sitcom about three officers working for a security firm returns with a Christmas episode on 22 June. No sooner have these chaps each given the other a carton of Benson and Hedges and complained about having to work over Christmas than there comes a knock at the door. Is it Harold Pinter or the Pope, they ask. It's a pregnant woman. Is the Pope pregnant? Etcetera. Screens every Tuesday at 8pm (7.30pm Adelaide).

The Great Commanders
As a man of 20 summers, Alexander of Macedonia defeated a far superior Persian army at the Battle of Issus and, as they say, the rest is history. If the tactics and psychology, or even the weaponry, of this encounter interest you, then 'Alexander the Great' screens on 27 June at 7.30pm (7pm Adelaide). For cold Sunday nights, 'Julius Caesar' appears on 4 July, 'Horatio Nelson' on 11 July, 'Napoleon' on 18 July and 'Ulysses S. Grant' on 25 July. There is no denying the expertise of these presentations, especially in their use of sources contemporary to their subjects. But they set out from the point of view that, however much technology has changed the art of war, the art of command remains the same. I did miss any expression of regret about that.

Documentaries

To Kill a Whale
The opening sequences of this film are disturbing. They show the waters around the Faroe Islands, Danish territory off the north of Scotland, turning bright red with the blood of slaughtered pilot whales. This has become a *cause célèbre* among environmental missionaries. Yet the 40,000 Faroese have struggled for centuries to coax a living out of their bleak environment and have long understood the secrets of nurturing a fragile earth. The annual pilot whale hunt, they believe, is part of an age-old rhythm. Kate Sanderson, an Australian who has married a Faroese poet, believes that environmentalists are tunnel-visioned in what they see. This documentary wants us to move beyond unreflective horror at the mere sight of seas incarnadine. Screens 1 June at 8.30pm (8pm Adelaide), repeated 20 June at 1.30pm (1pm Adelaide).

Under the Sun: Enemies of Silence
Two *mariachi*, traditional musicians, leave a small town in Mexico to find their fortune. One crosses the river to Texas, the other tries to join a band in Mexico City. But perhaps the most interesting part of their story is the range of heroes they encounter. Some transvestites put the former in contact with a 'coyote', an unlikely hero who gets him illegally to the US. More remarkably, the latter meets 'Superbarrio', a chubby wrestler who dresses like superman and gets around the barrios of Mexico City in a bright yellow van, galvanising support against the eviction of tenants. Screens 4 June, 8.30pm (8pm Adelaide).

Billy, How Did You Do It? The Billy Wilder Story
Billy Wilder's is the vintage story of a young German who arrives unknown in Hollywood and stays on to expand the whole art of movie making. In 1989, at the age of 85, he gave a substantial interview to the German director Volker Schlondorff, principally because he was so impressed with Schlondorff's own work, which includes *The Tin Drum*. This three-part documentary is the result. In it, both Schlondorff and Wilder emerge as wonderfully good-humoured and insightful human beings.

Wilder explains, for example, why he removed the mandatory doctor from an execution scene in *Double Indemnity*. 'I wish I could cut out some of my own doctors', he says. But the real reason is that he learnt never to repeat part of the narration. 'Everyone knew the guy was dead.' Wilder is brimful of such dicta. 'If they notice the camera, you're lost.' 'I like my philosophy with chocolate coating'. He never lets up. Even when he had to get Marilyn Monroe to repeat the line 'It's me, sugar' 83 times, he still had some wisecrack. The pick of the month. Screens 6, 13 and 20 June at 8.30pm

Film without Bounds: The New Hong Kong Cinema
Hong Kong produces 100 feature films a year. It is more prolific than Hollywood. Many of these are kung fu features, although now there is a drift to blend American screwball and police genres with the traditional swordfights and karate. Hong Kong is one place on earth where local films do better business than imported ones and it's worth seeing why. Even so, the makers of these films are not totally unfamiliar personalities. The leading director,

June-July

Tsui Hark, is manic in real life. The leading actor, Jackie Chan, is a good guy in real life for agreeing to have his makeup done on a mere pavement. And the glamorous female cop, Cynthia Kahn, tells us that she is not so tough and brutal in real life as she is in her films. Screens 7 June at 8.30pm (8pm Adelaide).

Ministry of Fear

This is the story of Boipatong, a township of 15,000 outside Soweto. According to one of its inhabitants, Kate Ngwenya, the name of the town means 'a place of hiding'. Here the promise of a new South Africa seems to have brought old rivalries into the open and tensions between Inkatha, the police and factions in the ANC are becoming increasingly complex. In an atmosphere charged with violence, we meet the Rev Peter Loving. True to his name, he preaches forgiveness.

We also meet the Rev Ernest Sotsu. In July '91, he witnessed the slaughter of his own family in his own house. He preaches liberation. Loving believes that the Bible is totally against killing, Sotsu that it is totally against oppression. While these two men happily share a car on the way home from yet another tragic funeral, there is no easy accommodation between two points of view, which are as old as the book itself. Screens 17 June at 8.30pm (8pm Adelaide).

Peter O'Toole

The man who appears so uncomfortably in this film is a far older and more frail relic of the one that filled the screen in *Lawrence of Arabia*. Complete with cigarette holder, O'Toole reads from the first volume of his memoirs, *Loitering with Intent*. These tell of a childhood in Leeds, dominated by both his father, a stylish punter, and by Hitler, who entered his imagination from newsreels. An interviewer accompanies O'Toole back to the site of his working-class Catholic childhood and finds the area largely redeveloped. But O'Toole was brought up to believe 'never submit' and at least this turn of mind lives on in a highly mannered performer. Screens 21 June at 8.30pm (8pm Adelaide).

Blast 'Em

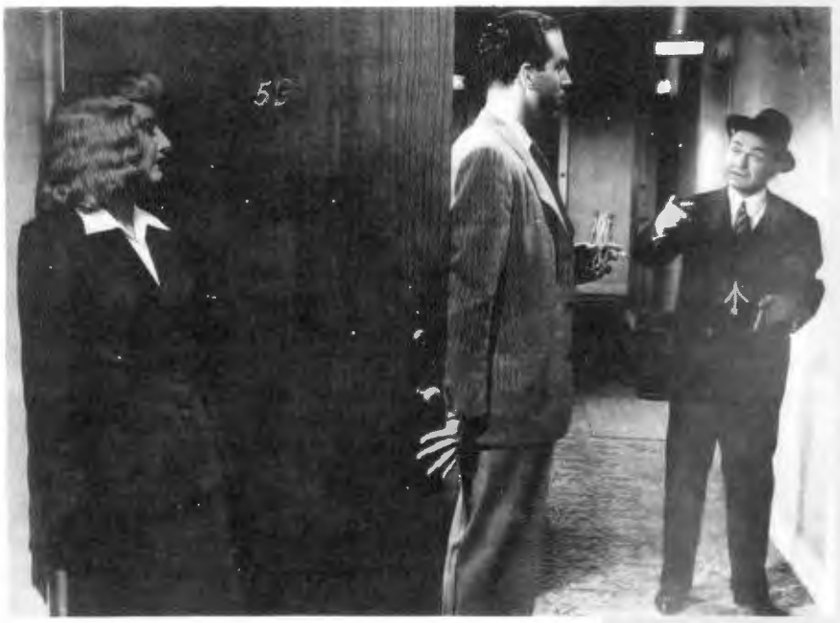
Assault photography is as aggressive as it sounds. There are people who stake out the rich and famous at the doors of their apartment blocks and then mob them shamelessly in an attempt to get a halfway decent photo to sell to a halfway decent magazine. Some of these *paparazzi* become celebrities in their own right, so we see famous photographers being mobbed as they, in turn, mob the real celebrities. Celebrities are obliged to keep changing their appearances in case interest in them wanes and a whole industry collapses. A little known photo-sniper in New York spends much of this film on the trail of one shot of the elusive Michael J. Fox. 'I have no sympathy for somebody who earns 20 or 30 million a year,' he says, somewhat needlessly. Maybe John Lennon thought his killer was a toting a camera. Screens 21 June at 11pm (10.30pm Adelaide).

Allied to the Mafia

To give him credit, Mussolini came close in the 1920s to crushing the Mafia in Sicily. This makers of this film believe that it was his determination to do so which prompted US forces to cooperate with the Mafia in their efforts to capture Sicily in 1943. Working hand-in-hand with the notorious New York gangster, Charles 'Lucky' Luciano, the American military government on Sicily installed numbers of Mafia mayors, giving the Mafia an initiative which, thousands of murders later, it has not lost for a moment. This is an opinionated look at a society that is so accustomed to murder it has 'made a cult of death'. Screens 28 June at 7.30pm (7pm Adelaide).

Films

June is the month of the Sydney and Melbourne film festivals. Not to be outdone, from 6 June SBS will screen movies every night of the week at 9.30pm. The list of offerings is impressive. Billy Wilder's *Double Indemnity*, *Ninotchka* and *Death of a Salesman* will be shown on 6, 13 and 20 June respectively, after each instalment of *The Billy Wilder Story* (see above). Jean-Jacques Beineix's memorable *Diva* is on 18 June and Volker Schlondorff's *The Tin Drum* on 27 June. A number of Francis Truffaut's films will have their Australian television premieres: *The 400 Blows*, *Shoot the Pianist*, *Jules and Jim*, *Soft Skin* and *Finally Sunday*. Other firsts include Fellini's *8 1/2*, Luis Bunuel's *Belle de Jour*, Lina Wertmuller's *Swept Away*, Doris Dorrie's *Happy Birthday, Turk!*, Bertrand Blier's *Too Beautiful for You*, Theo Angelopoulos's *The Beekeeper*, Jean-Luc Godard's *Pierrot le Fou*, Dusan Makaveyev's *WR: Mysteries of the Organism* and the Taviani brothers' *Night Sun*.



What is different about this door? Find out in The Billy Wilder Story *on 6 June. The scene is a still from Wilder's film* Double Indemnity, *which screens the same night.*

Laws unto himself

PAUL KEATING'S DECLARATION ON election night that his was a victory for 'the nice people' was a typically smart one. Who, among Labor supporters, wouldn't have felt that it was directed at them personally? In the warm afterglow of the election and the apparently seamless transition to the pre-republic era, it's become all too easy to think fuzzy thoughts about Australia and Australians. Keating himself has done nothing to deter this with his declared intention to lead a 'progressive, pluralist, fair and democratic' nation into the next century. Tolerant, liberal, middle-class Australia is feeling a bit pleased with itself.

Which prompted me to wonder how John Laws was coping. For years Sydney's undisputed king of talkback, Laws' morning show on 2UE is relayed to over 50 regional stations throughout the country and claims more than a million listeners a week. Listening to Laws for a short while is a good reminder that Keating's constituency doesn't consist solely of 'the nice people'. That Laws' perceived influence is unrivalled can be judged by the regularity with which both Keating and Hewson appeared on his show during the election campaign, by the huge sums that advertisers reportedly pay for the loan of his mellifluous voice and by the virulence with which so many otherwise well-balanced people hate him.

Laws himself describes the program as 'dial-in democracy' and 'government-rattling at its best'. Certainly, his listeners represent a sizeable chunk of 'ordinary Australia' and, to judge from his callers during the election campaign, many are Labor voters. It's a fair bet that they don't listen to John Laws to have their assumptions questioned or their world-view challenged. Laws is nobody's post-modernist—he believes in the Truth and, by and large, his faithful listeners believe in him. So how does the truth according to John Laws stack up against Paul Keating's avowed aim of creating a smarter, more tolerant, egalitarian, multicultural Australia?

On unemployment: 'People won't take available employment. [The] lack a work ethic—we can thank Gough Whitlam for that.'

On the clever country: '[As an employer] I've been infuriated by stupid things like training levies and other crap like that.'

On health care: 'Bruce Shepherd [is] one of the best blokes you could meet in a day's march.'

On migration policy: 'Ninety-seven per cent of the Turks that come here wind up on the dole. It's our money. 97 per cent on the dole. Plain bloody ridiculous. We're bringing in people from overseas to swell the dole.'

On AIDS: 'AIDS is a designer disease. Less than 500 people die from AIDS every year in Australia. But what is the most talked-about disease in Australia? You've got it—AIDS. Doesn't quite add up, does it? ... And of course two-thirds of those people who contract AIDS could also be immunised against it, simply by not sodomising each other.'

On government intervention in the economy: 'The less government intrudes on people's lives, the better their lives, and never forget it.'

On women: 'Gender equality! I mean, what crap is this?'

On unions: 'I suppose the AJA or some other union, or some other do-gooding group has dictated to them [TV stations] that they must use these expressions [i.e. "ethnic cleansing"].'

On Aborigines: 'It's much harder for Aborigines to get a job than white people, so we're told—but we have a theory about that as well.'

Thanks John, another time maybe.

Now it's not news that people don't necessarily identify with the fundamental principles, let alone the individual policies, of the parties they vote for. But the gulf between Laws' folksy vitriol and Keating's postelection penchant for idealism is stark indeed, and it points up both the dangers inherent in the Prime Minister's rhetoric and his skill in carrying it off so far. He has to try to bring with him not just the nice people, but also those who identify with Law's vilification of 'do-gooding misfits'.

LAWS INTERVIEWING KEATING before the election was a fascinating study in power. Neither was exactly timid, but nor did they display their usual arrogance or aggression. The size of Laws' audience supposedly supports his claim that the show is 'powerful stuff'. Keating's whole life has been about attaining and exercising power. Both recognise power when they see it, and accord it due respect.

The difference is, of course, that while Laws boasts of dial-in democracy, Keating deals in the real thing. Laws presents himself (perhaps fraudulently, but it doesn't matter) as simply the mouthpiece for all right-thinking Australians. He typically prefaces his most outrageous statements with the words 'Nobody could deny that ...'. What that means, of course, is that nobody who listens to his show would deny it. As a result, he's inevitably preaching largely to the converted. Which as far as wielding influence goes means he might as well be talking to himself.

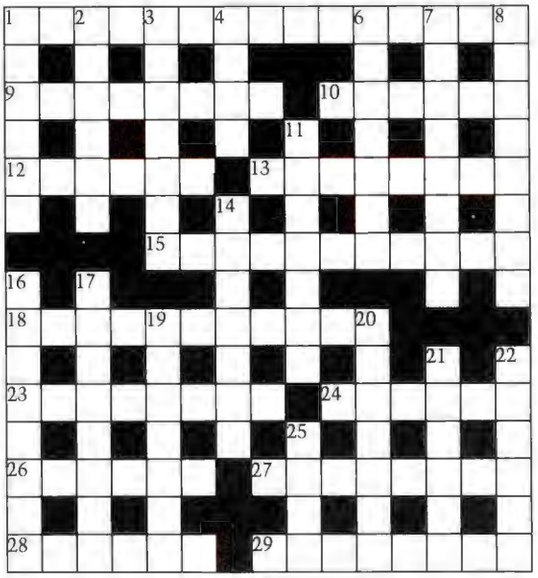
But Keating's baldly-stated intention is to actively 'shape Australia in the image of the modern Labor Party'. He's interested in changing people's minds, which is why he goes on the John Laws show. Keating has to convince or cajole enough people whose views on many issues he would personally find repellent, if he wants to put his program into place. It's the difference between bullying and leadership. It's not surprising that the do-gooders work themselves up into such a lather over Laws. He himself takes pride in presiding over 'the most complained about, abused, criticised, ostracised, humiliated, denigrated, powerful radio broadcast in Australia'. It makes sense to be frightened by people who perceive themselves to be simultaneously grievously wronged and powerful. In the privacy of your own home it's the only healthy response.

But although Laws' views may be an uncomfortable reminder of how thin the veneer of tolerance runs, they carry little or no clout where it really matters, in government. Laws may be highly offensive to many people. But if it's a question of whether his verbal avidity has any meaningful political effect, it's worth asking, when he and Keating get together, who is using whom more effectively? Whose vision is more likely to prevail? I know who my money's on. ■

Mike Ticher is a Sydney journalist.

Eureka Street Cryptic Crossword no.14, June-July 1993

Devised by Joan Nowotny IBVM



ACROSS

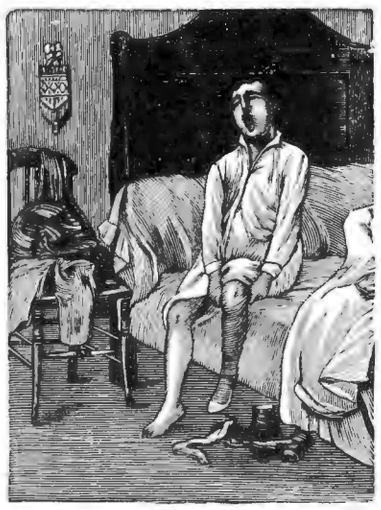
1 The team that broadcasts the state's glee cows the opposition. (4,5,6)
9 Having breakfast out, when Lent is over, is a riot! (8)
10 The blessed ones in fancy satins of red and black. (6)
12 The crescent-shaped oriental lunatic is not in charge. (6)
13 Awaiting expulsion he took wine in the English river. (8)
15 However, he notes Len's disturbed state. (11)
18 Magpies look for heather between the pass and the place of trees. (11)
23 Dance a measure at the game? The other way round! (8)
24 The mediation business? (6)
26 The state of this match goes back to the source. (6)
27 The ball wildly thrown? Ah! This team may blossom nevertheless. (8)
28 The doctor on the border will use the suction machine. (6)
29 The old instrument's breaking down. Let's pray the strings will still provide music. (9)

DOWN

1 Sounds entirely descriptive of 10 across. (6)
2 Inside MCG, sat in grandstand, thus satisfying long-held desire. (6)
3 What a boisterous lot! 'Cam the Blues', they keep shouting. (7)
4 Some games are not at home. (4)
6 The sailor, in solitude, sought seafood. (7)
7 Holidaying in Ghent, Len contrived to prolong his stay. (8)
8 Has anyone seen puss? Perhaps she'll be back, but I wait in anxiety. (8)
11 Number one goes up to the religious group—the part cut off from the rest. (7)
14 At midnight, lunges awkwardly forward, seeking to draw close for warmth. (7)
16 Because of fads of Library of Congress designs, a temporary framework was erected. (8).
17 You'll get nasty 'flu or die, unless you have this dental protection! (8)
19 For a start, Ivan must bring us into new greatness by inspiring us with grand ideals. (7)
20 Information display performed with the fingers. (7)
21 In part, screen co-religionists again. (6)
22 Swan song for a capital city? (6)
25 Regional city's favourite felines? (4)

Solution to Crossword no.13, May 1993

E	A	S	T	E	R	■	H	O	L	I	D	A	Y	S
X	■	W	■	D	■	■	■	P	■	D	■	V	■	A
T	H	E	S	I	S	■	T	E	N	E	M	E	N	T
E	■	E	■	T	■	M	■	N	■	O	■	R	■	C
N	A	T	I	O	N	A	L	■	C	L	U	T	C	H
D	■	C	■	R	■	R	■	Q	■	O	■	■	■	E
S	L	O	W	■	L	I	T	U	R	G	I	C	A	L
■	■	R	■	P	■	N	■	I	■	Y	■	H	■	■
C	O	N	F	E	R	E	N	C	E	■	Q	U	I	T
A	■	■	■	A	■	R	■	K	■	S	■	R	■	A
L	Y	R	I	C	S	■	C	L	I	N	I	C	A	L
Y	■	U	■	E	■	A	■	Y	■	A	■	H	■	L
P	A	C	I	F	I	S	T	■	S	T	U	M	P	Y
S	■	H	■	U	■	I	■	■	■	C	■	E	■	H
O	V	E	R	L	E	A	F	■	S	H	I	N	T	O



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