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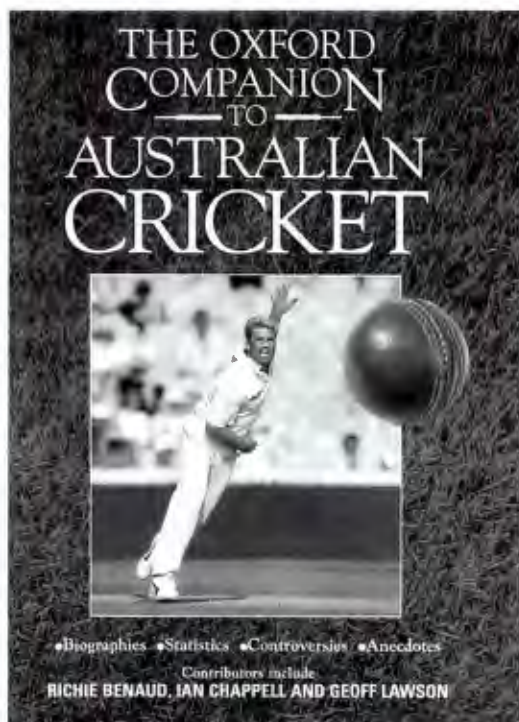


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A fine balance

EARLY IN THE NEW YEAR I had to queue to get into a screening of Baz Luhrmann's *William Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet*. The queue was urban, funky, nonchalantly dressed to impress, and nearly every member of it young enough to be credible in one of the two star roles.

They were impressed: you can tell when no one crackles the cellophane on their choc tops. At the end people sat in a hush while the credits rolled and rolled.

Luhrmann's version of the tragedy has its baseball cap on backwards, well and truly. It also exploits every technical trick a onetime music video producer has up his sleeve. It begins on a television screen, with a seasoned news announcer reporting that 'civil blood makes civil hands unclean' as the police helicopters swirl over Verona Beach/Mexico City and the young Capulet and Montague gangs stage a shoot out in a gas station. Yet the poetry falls naturally, as though it were the only fit medium for the gravity of the circumstances—vendetta, civil corruption—in which the young people find themselves. It flexes to voice their lyricism and their aspirations as well as their frustrations.

The film is violent, the imagery is post-Christian. Juliet's bedroom and her tomb are a clutter of kitsch madonnas, garish and outrageous. The Montague boys, Mercutio particularly, mix Ecstasy with their despair. Capulet is a city boss who takes saunas and beats his wife. And his daughter. The production is full of digital enhancement tricks and very clever visual quotation. Hoardings on skyscrapers are Shakespearean cues and quotes. Look sharp or you'll miss them. The guns have brand names like 'Sword'. Friar Lawrence experiments with herbal remedies which by any other name would be declared drugs, and young boys hang around him avidly. It could all go terribly wrong. Yet it doesn't.

WHAT LUHRMANN FIXES ON, in all the chaos of civil decay and youthful nihilism, is the outrage of violent death, and the counterfoil of that—the daunting preciousness of life animated by love. The film is not framed by any metaphysical securities. It is set in a culture which has turned belief into dross. And yet it builds its values as it goes. Every death registers. Each loss is incalculable. Tybalt, dying, wears on his face (it's a very fine piece of acting) the acute realisation of what he has done and what has been done to him. Mercutio's 'A plague on both your houses' is as unbearable in Luhrmann's late twentieth century metropolis as it was in Elizabeth's England—the judgment of a young man upon a society that has wasted him.

Luhrmann plays no tricks with Shakespeare's language—he's too shrewd a director. He cuts where appropriate, but mostly he lets the words carve out their passage. There is an audible intake of breath in an audience when they hear

language equal to their own imagining. It kept occurring throughout the screening I attended.

What is going on in this universal play/film directed by an Australian for an international audience of all ages is a rediscovery of the sacred. Luhrmann's film is an eloquent indictment of the mindless cinema trash that is marketed as entertainment. In this film mortality is taken seriously.

Luhrmann also understands what tragedy is about. When his Romeo, in high passion, kills Tybalt and then cries out 'O, I am fortune's fool', his offence is understood but not mitigated. The fine balance between personal responsibility and the forces that move us to action is held.

That's a fine start for the New Year. ■

—Morag Fraser

COMMENT: 2

MARGARET SIMONS

Against the grain

AT THE TIME OF WRITING, wheat farmers across Australia are either in the middle of harvest or mopping up afterwards. They will probably look back on this as a pretty good year, with the Australian Bureau of Agriculture and Resource Economics predicting that it will be the nation's second largest harvest on record—21.3 million tonnes, up 4.3 million on last year's excellent yield.

But in the heat and dust of the paddock, or waiting in the long queues to deliver wheat at silos, it has been natural for farmers to focus on frustrations and disappointments, and there have been plenty.

For a start, those queues at the silos were particularly long this year. In New South Wales, some vital silos closed down in the middle of the harvest, because they were full. The railways, although warned that the harvest would be bigger than usual, had failed to make sufficient preparations to cart the quantity of wheat produced. As a result, wheat sat in paddocks and farmers sat in queues, sometimes leaving their trucks in place overnight to avoid losing their spot. Meanwhile, in some areas the weather threatened to dump rain on the whole lot, dramatically lessening the value of the crop. Fortunately in most areas disaster was avoided, but you can imagine the stress of seeing up to eighty per cent of your annual income at risk due to someone else's poor planning.

As well, the size of the harvest highlighted just how little money has been spent on silo infrastructure, first by government bodies, but, since deregulation in the late 80s, by the privatised bodies that have taken over. Some vital silos were struggling to handle the bumper harvest with equipment that has not been updated since the change from bagged wheat to bulk handling, about 40 years ago.

Meanwhile, prices are all over the place. After a 30 per cent slide in prices over the last six months, in the final weeks of harvest the Australian Wheat Board

lifted its estimates of expected returns by between five and twenty dollars a tonne, depending on the grade. Australian Standard Wheat is now expected to fetch \$185 a tonne—down from the peak of \$245 last May, but better than expected at the beginning of the harvest.

But the money is not yet in the bank. The Board is emphasising that the rise in the Australian dollar, and volatility on the international wheat market, could see prices either rise or fall dramatically before the bulk of the crop is sold.

To add to the irritation, a Wheat Board officer was reported as criticising growers for not selling their crop on the futures market, which at one stage was fetching prices more than \$100 higher per tonne than the present Wheat Board pool price.

The criticism was irritating, given that right up until the harvest the advice to farmers was that prices would improve sufficiently to make the forward selling option not worth the risk entailed in the case of a crop failure.

All this was happening while the Wheat Board's plans for restructuring looked to be in chaos, with reports of falling out between financiers and growers' representatives over how the new Board will be funded and controlled. Meanwhile, the industry is preparing to face a National Competition Policy review towards the end of the decade that will put pressure on the Board's 'single desk' method of selling our crop overseas.

But out in the paddocks and in the silo queues, all the politics seemed a long way off. What counted was the bottom line return for each truck of wheat—when and if you could get to the head of that bloody queue. ■

Margaret Simons is a freelance journalist and novelist. She lives in wheat-country New South Wales.

S The trouble with small business

SMALL BUSINESS IS A TERM which, until recently, raised little interest or enthusiasm in Labor breasts, but evoked a fair measure of misty-eyed homage on the part of Conservatives. Small and medium-sized operations still employ half of our labour force—apparently—and have been creating many, if not most, of the new jobs Australia most certainly needs. But in practice neither party has done very much for small business. Leaving Labor aside (for they are late arrivals at this celebration of one variety of the little man), why have the Liberals dragged their feet, and what is Howard doing about this, having put such ideological emphasis on helping small business, during the election? The reality is that the Liberals seem confused or divided about the whole matter. They are for Big Business: *and* small business. Big graziers and agribusiness, *and* little farmer battlers. They think they can embrace both, though quite possibly they can't.

Economic rationalism sees no future in small anything—or in the urban equivalent of subsistence farming or family-type work environments. These don't generate the cash flow which interests the big operators who like to play with other people's money. There is a lot of capital stock, under-employed cash and labour locked up there—so dig it out and cart it away from the grass roots economy. And in this era of non-interventionist government, rulers, it seems, shouldn't interfere with change, no matter how malign, but instead should let the market sort things out. Which *means*, the big fish eat the little ones, over time. And the foreign fish (or are they sharks?) who now come in freely, because the nets have been removed, eat more and faster than anyone. You might say the Liberals had a problem protecting their core supporters before, but with economic rationalism and free trade their task looks impossible. See also Labor and its industrial workers.

This is where the hard, super-realist conservatives, such as Stone and Kennett, stand out from the soft, more old-fashioned ones, like Howard. Kennett accepts, with relish, all the ruthless implications of economic rationalism and the global market, and, psychologically speaking, is drawn to the rich, irrespective of where their money comes from, or how little tax they pay. Thus, when *he* urges tax reform, he doesn't mean taxing the rich. On the contrary, he means GSTs and other ways of milking the little people—including small business.

Howard, on the other hand, knows that if he is going to hang on to his main-stream Australia, including the ex-Labor battlers, he must protect their interests somehow. Pandering to the rich, especially rich foreigners, something voters associate with Hawke and Keating and will, quite soon, with Kennett—is not the way to go. Nevertheless, fastidious as Howard may be in this respect, so long as he accepts economic deregulation and tariff cutting, he won't be able to arrest the slide in living

standards and social status of so many of those who recently voted for him. The promised tax relief via the capital gains break on the sale of small businesses (under \$5 million) is only a sop and is already running into trouble about potential roting.

Kennett has a scenario different from Howard's or the old Labor Party's—one which is being talked up by important interests outside, as well as inside Victoria.

Calculating that there isn't going to be enough work of a conventional kind ever again, he sees Australia and Victoria as given over to developers, real estate giants, Supermarket empires like Coles Myer, Lowy, Gandel, the American chains, servicing a new mass-migration program. And conveniently, the 'race debate', to forestall thorough examination of mass migration and its consequences, good and bad.

Tourism, gambling and R & R will provide much of the new kind of work for our young. By analogy with other countries who have trodden this path, correlative sub-cultures of prostitution, drugs and crime would entrench themselves. Melbourne another Bangkok, Australia a new Thailand! As neighbouring countries struggle out of this form of

underdevelopment, we slide into it.

Kennett's ploy is to distract the dispossessed with events, constructions, cultural extravaganzas, 'happenings'. Whereas Labor tried padding the public payroll and continually expanding the caring sectors, all with borrowed money. That was certainly more humane, but self-defeating. Under either system, the rich get richer, the burgeoning poor poorer, the quality of life declines, and foreigners end up owning the lot.

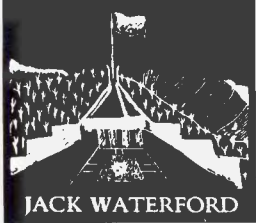
Where does that leave small and medium business, or, in the not-distant future, locally-sourced economic activities generally? Nowhere, is the answer.

THERE IS ANOTHER SCENARIO—a condition under which we, until recently, prospered, and sustained migration at a level which now only causes disruption. That is, one of the many possible varieties of protection. All hell would break loose from the media, the stock exchange and big players with overseas interests and allegiances if Howard or anyone else tried it. The big money in his Party would treat him like Gorton. His potential rivals, Costello and Reith, don't come over as either main stream characters, or even as particularly attuned to small business, or small anything. I may be misjudging them.

So John Howard, for all his benevolence, may find that benevolence is not enough. But for starters, he *could* crack down on billion-dollar tax rorts, clean up the corporate sector and wrest the supply of credit from the big banks. Labor didn't—and won't. Could a Liberal? ■

Max Teichmann is a freelance writer and commentator.





M Cowboys in the public service

MY MOST CHEERING READ for many a day was the NSW Independent Commission Against Corruption's [ICAC] report into the attempts to get rid of public servant, Des Semple.

Cheering but also depressing. The ethical climate of public administration, as preached by all too many of Australia's politicians and senior public servants, is changing so rapidly and self-confidently that sometimes I suspect that I completely missed the bus and the point and am now a fuddy-duddy relic of another time. One senior public servant, flicking aside some criticism I had made, accused me in the *Canberra Times* of hankering after a golden age which in truth had never been.

Every now and again, however, a report emerges which affirms that there *are* some enduring principles and standards of public administration, deviation from which—however much it might suit the political masters of the moment—is regarded as wrong.

In the Semple case, the way fixed to rid the Carr administration of a turbulent priest was to reassess his functions according to one of those mechanistic (but supposedly objective) formulae now much in vogue in modern higher management.

The public service head, Ken Cripps, unconvincingly portrayed in this drama as a lone assassin rather than as an agent of other parties, believed, wrongly as it turned out, that if the magic formula came out with a lower number, Mr Semple automatically lost his job. [He did later anyway, apparently for different reasons].

Mr Cripps called for such an assessment. Unfortunately, it confirmed Mr Semple where he was. Mr Cripps then instructed that the assessment be redone and indicated the result it was expected to come up with. Two junior public servants were unhappy with this direction—indeed they resisted it to a point—but, at the end of the day, they complied.

One of those involved explained, in words that would currently get her a public service medal in most modern jurisdictions: 'I didn't ask why because I was aware that if he [Cripps] was asking me to do that he had a reason ... It wasn't for me to know that reason and I wouldn't have asked.' And, later: 'I was in a very difficult conflict between loyalty and integrity ... it's very difficult; they are both very strong values and in a conflicting situation it is very difficult to know which is the value to uphold. I was aware that there would be other information which the commissioner had that I didn't have. I accepted that. In an office such as ours, it's a very pressured environment; there are a lot of complex decisions made all the time.'

The poor girl was crucified by the ICAC of course. Although she was not formally punished, she was treated rather more severely than her boss, who had had to go on other counts anyway.

One should not spoil the plot for those who want a good read (GPO Box 500, Sydney, or 02 3185999 and free); suffice it to say that on this, as on a number of other points, the ICAC confirms that carrying out orders in such a fashion amounts to corruption.

There's no reason why one should confine oneself to NSW. There's now a considerable amount of literature about the public trust—in Queensland, Western Australia, Victoria and South Australia with their various Royal Commissions into the 1980s,

and in the reports of the bodies which were set up as a result, in Auditor-General's reports at both state and federal level and in umpteen parliamentary inquiries.

They almost invariably show that rules currently being so lightly dispensed with are there for a reason, and that impatience with them as some sort of process-driven obstacle to bureaucratic efficiency is misplaced.

There are also as many current examples—of ministers leaning on tribunals, or sacking them, of the installation of mates on to boards and committees, of crude political rewards and punishments—which make it quite clear there are many good yarns to come. From the unapologetic defiance one gets when those concerned are taxed with their conduct, one knows that many politicians have not even a basic understanding of accountability and propriety.

From the unapologetic defiance one gets when those concerned are taxed with their conduct, one knows that many politicians do not even have a basic understanding of accountability and propriety.

Yet one would hardly think so from the leaderships. Australia is still fairly well blessed in that most senior bureaucrats and politicians are essentially fairly decent and honest. But most of the leaderships these days think that ethical conduct is something to be mentioned only in passing, and that too much talk of it is a sign that you are

looking for excuses for failing to deliver what the politicians want.

Some may be forgetting that for younger generations of people in government, a background culture of openness, fair dealing and neutral and independent advice is not the culture in which the young are now steeped. Nor, necessarily, the example coming from those getting the promotions.

The last head of the Australian public service, Dr Mike Keating, spent most of the opportunities he had to speak to his people in debunking the idea that public servants stood as guardians of the public interest. He also devoted not a little time to reminding them

that ministers had the last word and that public servants should not press advice to the point of nagging.

HIS SUCCESSOR, MAX MOORE-WILTON usually gives ethics a ritual mention, though his inability to see that simultaneously having three jobs for three separate governments posed a potential conflict of interest rather tends to undermine his authority. He also nags about results in a way that sends out very confusing messages. He told public servants recently that they lived in a process-driven culture suffocating under the weight of rules and regulations.

No one denies that processes should be reviewed and made more efficient. But the reasons they are there, and are even more necessary in these days in which public service bosses have unprecedented power and discretion, is to guard against misuse of the power and partial exercise of discretion. The more power the modern cowboys get, the more checks and balances are necessary.

Not everyone thinks that, of course. If there seems to be one field of bipartisan spirit across the Australian administrations, it is that most Auditors-General are getting to be too cheeky in asking tricky questions. In most jurisdictions, auditors-general are under heavy attack. One should defend them instinctively, even when they are wrong. They may be the last line of defence. ■

Jack Waterford is editor of the *Canberra Times*.

Now and then

From Cynthia Scott

As a person living in Tasmania, I read Prof. Pierce's article on Tasmania (December 1996) with interest, but all I can say is that it does not really portray the Tasmania I know, and I tried to work out why. Perhaps the clue is in the caption concerning himself: 'He is descended from Lt John Russell, the first Commandant of Port Arthur', so he began with his mindset (a word I got from his article) in history, not geography. But people who live here live primarily in geography and the present, not the past. Ross might change from a town to a village or some other title, but that's the way people there will survive until who knows what twist (anything from an agricultural boom to a computer/information haven) because they like living in that spot.

If history overwhelms the visitors, it doesn't the locals, because geography is nonjudgmental. History is another aspect of humans' lives, perhaps a more spiritual one, but we live in both spheres and balance them in different ways. For a 'Mainlander' coming from a warmer climate and an open skyline with few mountains there is perhaps a danger that they lump the geography in with the history and it all becomes oppressive, that the background to us becomes foreground to them. Perhaps when a writer says he smells 'the stench of prisonships' in Hobart that is because for him the history is more important and interesting—and fair enough, some writers are people functioning in that way, or perhaps that was the atmosphere in that particular novel. Locals would be more inclined to question the local sewage works for a spill or send the Dept of Environment out to check the ships in port. Which certainly is mundane, and not literature.

I have lived in Tasmania now for 34 years, and in that time I have seen it mirror the booms and busts of Australia, albeit on a smaller scale. 'Stasis, paralysis of will, the creation of a mindset that disables action' while having some of its origins in the history of the State is also a result of hard economic times in a changing world and the confusion that brings rather than the need to reconcile attitudes to the past, fascinating

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though they might be. All I can say perhaps is that you can't go to work (or stay at home) every day with a whole lot of manacled ghosts on your shoulders. Instead, you are more likely to look at a stunning view and be grateful for being where you are—if you can't enjoy the history, enjoy the geography.

A word of warning for the rest of Australia. Martin Bryant is a sad misfit who could live anywhere, and to feel perhaps the place came before the man is a little dangerous if society is ever to help people like him before they kill.

Cynthia Scott
Blackmans Bay, TAS

What about men?

From Malcolm White

The article 'Working for the man' (*Eureka Street*, November 1996) by Professor Wajcman was, I felt, an important and informed commentary on the contemporary home/work interface. If however it was meant to argue a case for women, its power for me lay in exposing the tensions facing men.

I believe it to be a false assumption that men, as distinct from women, crave power or success (whatever that is) through their paid work careers. This is to deny men domestic and filial feelings and aspirations.

Professor Wajcman deals with the workplace tensions very well; however, the workplace is only part of the picture. Deep in the consciousness

of men are, I think, underpinning notions of honour and duty. I suspect most men and especially fathers implicitly understand that when the chips are down they are expected to bring home the bacon. Ultimately society, and especially the extended family, will and do make very harsh judgments on men who fail to provide. Paid work therefore takes on a hard edge for men and it is little wonder it gets out of balance for some.

Many men would dearly love to spend more time with their families, with ageing parents and with friends and neighbours. They know however that in the present environment the innovation required to bring this about carries great risks not only for their careers but for relationships.

Professor Wajcman makes the point that many men who reach senior management positions have 'few domestic responsibilities' perhaps through the support of full time housewives'. Again I think there is a wider issue here. While it would be intellectually irresponsible not to argue for greater numbers of women in senior management positions, I think there is a need to understand that many men are impelled into these positions. Women more often have the flexibility, the courage and the gender support to say *no* to senior positions, opting for balance in their lives, especially when their children are young. Ultimately men have no such luxury.

My fervent hope is that the next generation of fathers will have more time to play with their children. I hope men will have more time for their partners, for their parents and for their community. Let us not fail to recognise, however, that at least one reason for men being as they are is the expectations of women.

I admire women for throwing off a role that was allotted to them. Perhaps we need to recognise that for men their time is yet to come but is no less eagerly sought.

Malcolm White
Launceston, TAS

What about men...

From Richard Manuell

The special supplement on work in progress at the Research School of Social Sciences, ANU (*Eureka Street*, November, 1996) was informative and provocative, particularly Professor Wajcman's insightful 'Working for the



This month,
courtesy of Penguin Books,
the writer of each letter we
publish will receive
two of the
Penguin '60s Classics

man'. Her approach to the worsening interface between work and home was splendidly lateral and set me thinking about the issue starting from square one again. I have no disagreement with anything Prof Wajcman said, but I would like to see some aspects explored further.

Many would agree there is a stability of sorts in the family unit where dad works, is away for long periods and usually looks after the outside of the home at weekends, while mum raises the kids and looks after the 'inside' of the home. Others will say this is merely recognising and perpetuating old traditions, but is it? Where mum works and dad is a house-husband, there are often suspicious glances when he arrives at school to deliver or pick up the school attenders, or dashes through the supermarket. House-dads usually do an inferior job at home overall—they can't help the home economy by making clothes for children or new curtains for the windows, even though they are becoming better cooks and bottle-washers perhaps. Children with house-dads seem reluctant to tell their friends that mum works while dad stays home. It is not an easy situation.

In dual career homes child-care is frequently referred to as a critical issue but probably the biggest conflict arises when one partner is required to change geographical location. This appears to happen more often to men and because they also usually receive a higher salary and have better long-term promotional prospects it is mostly the woman who has to sacrifice her job if she cannot arrange a parallel shift for herself. This can even lead to a family split up and all the misery that causes. Another aspect of geographical change is the challenge to family bonding, with some

younger children identifying more closely with their carers than their parents, making the shift a very sad time for the little ones.

In referring to the over-work pattern among especially the higher echelons of management, the impact of globalisation and the associated reduction in tariffs has been profound on the Australian community and there is more to come. Australia's secondary industry has almost been eliminated by this development and in order to remain competitive in world markets our primary industries, especially mining and agriculture, have been forced to automate and otherwise substitute capital for labour. The pressure on the remaining work force to raise productivity is huge. Management efforts to attract the few geniuses around by offering higher and higher salary

add to the stress of modern corporate and family life. Perhaps these external factors are really beyond our control and we'll have to wait until Australia's role in a brave new world is defined for us by others and we'll undergo a drastic revision in our standard of living. Perhaps as our use of freely available credit continues to explode as we all try to keep up with the Joneses (or is it the Simpsons these days?) the bubble of sacrificing family values to the god of material possessions will burst some day and bring us back to our senses.

These aspects of work and family need analysis too as well as equal gender employment opportunities. Where are we headed? Seems to me our society is becoming more stratified with greater disparity between rich and poor and with less and less contentment all round. I don't know the solutions but maybe these thoughts, taken with Professor Wajcman's new approach, can help someone else to better define the problem.

Richard Manuell
French's Forest, NSW



packages only heightens the internal job competition and pressure to work longer hours. Old values of company loyalty, for both employee and company, commitment to long-term goals, support for steady, unspectacular growth with slow and small share price rises, as distinct from achieving spectacular short-term share price rises, appear to have no appeal these days, adding to both family and corporate instability.

These pressures force displaced manufacturing personnel into service industries and the constant scramble between banks, insurance offices, credit suppliers and others to gain market prominence by take-overs, productivity boosts by down-sizing, customer stealing by offering all sorts of inducements to newcomers, (but nothing to loyal older customers!), all

Airport '97

From Geoff Hastings

I see no sound reason why Robert Crotty should despair about the proliferation of anti-Christian literature at airports. Surely the non-believers don't buy them, and most of us others are more concerned with

the Message rather than the precise space-time location of the First Noel. Certainly it would give the 'loophole' Christians a firmer raft for their scepticism. Perhaps Crotty will share the Confusionism 'That in education, perspicacity is everything'.

There is no doubt that this is the data generation and 'rubbish in rubbish out' means constant reviewing of 'Hard & Soft-ware'. For generations we have concentrated on the Feeding of the 5,000... having 12 baskets over is surely a miracle gone wrong... when the real miracle, as any pop-star, politician or Pope John Paul will certainly testify... is that Our Lord preached and was heard by 5,000 people in the open air without amplification.

Geoff Hastings
Watsons Bay, NSW

Do we sell?...

Well, what do you want to buy?

THE FINAL STAGES OF THE STRUGGLE for control of the Fairfax newspapers have begun and once again the public interest seems to have been neglected, if not excluded.

The Treasurer, Peter Costello, announced in December that he had approved the sale, by Conrad Black, of up to 25 per cent of Fairfax to the New Zealand-based Brierley Investments Limited (BIL). No notice given, no submissions sought, no indication of the process followed by the Foreign Investment Review Board (FIRB), which advises the Treasurer on how he should exercise his sole discretion to approve or disapprove a transaction under the Foreign Acquisitions and Takeovers Act.

Costello gave no explanation of how he reached his decision that BIL's assumption of control of Fairfax (if that is what occurs) would not be 'contrary to the national interest'. He said only that the proposal simply replaced one foreigner with another. Nothing in the Treasurer's statement tells us who controls BIL or, for instance, whether they have given any assurances about preserving the editorial independence of the Fairfax papers, chiefly the *Age*, *Sydney Morning Herald* and *Financial Review*.

The Howard Government has done nothing to articulate the basic rationale for restricting foreign ownership and control of media.

Its review of the cross-media rules, on the outcome of which the fate of Fairfax now appears to hang, is being run in private by a group of bureaucrats now that the Howard Government has reneged on pre- and post-election promises to hold an independent public inquiry. All these are characteristics of government decision-making in relation to the media for which the then Opposition castigated the Hawke and Keating Governments.

It was Senator Richard Alston, now Communications Minister, who chaired an inquiry which in 1994 was highly critical of the FIRB's secretive processes. One of its recommendations was that a revamped advisory body, the Foreign Investment Commission, 'prepare briefing material and recommendations and that this material be published prior to its dispatch to the Treasurer'. The committee thought the 'ultimate question' was 'the credibility of FIRB in future foreign investment decisions'.

In 1992, Costello joined the other MPs on the House of Representatives inquiry into the print media in recommending that the Treasurer publish reasons for decisions on foreign investment in media.

The Alston Committee, under the heading 'The way forward is to start again', concluded:

The ultimate check on any administration is public opinion and scrutiny. This is only effective if there are structures and systems to ensure that public is properly informed. Secrecy is an impediment to accountability which can divert and even corrupt decision-making processes. The safety net of a review by the Parliament has also been avoided by the present system for foreign investment [the then Treasurer, Ralph Willis, had refused to appear and had forbidden officials to provide certain information]. The withholding of material evidence only demonstrates the absence of accountability and heightens concern as to the effectiveness of the process and procedures observed in this case.



On the 'better late than never' principle, the morning after the Costello decision was announced, I asked the Treasurer's office and the FIRB for the FIRB advice to Costello over Fairfax and BIL. The answer from both was that it was confidential and would not be disclosed. This was traditional, they said.

I do not intend all this merely as a bleat about politician's cant. Why waste the space? The deeper issue is the way that public processes seem

to be getting weaker. The disdain of the Kennett Government for public processes may have inured Victorians to the losses. But the extent to which media policy, a federal matter, has 'gone underground' is an issue of great national significance. The extraordinary deal between News Corporation and Telstra to create Foxtel, the sale of the Sydney Showgrounds to Fox, design of the basic rules to govern the de-regulated telecommunications environment after July 1997—all these issues are shrouded to a greater or lesser extent.

Fairfax, like all media businesses, has public responsibilities. Because, as the 1992 inquiry concluded, the metropolitan press markets are not contestable, the existing papers display some of the characteristics of a common carrier. The 'product' Fairfax carries is a stable for democracy. Diversity is a prerequisite to media health. Yet the potential impact of media coverage on the electoral fortunes of any government gives owners unique leverage, and their interests tend toward greater concentration. The media outlets that might ordinarily watch, disclose and unsettle such cosiness are compromised.

All this suggests that we should err on the side of transparency in media policy making.

Instead it gets more opaque. ■

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

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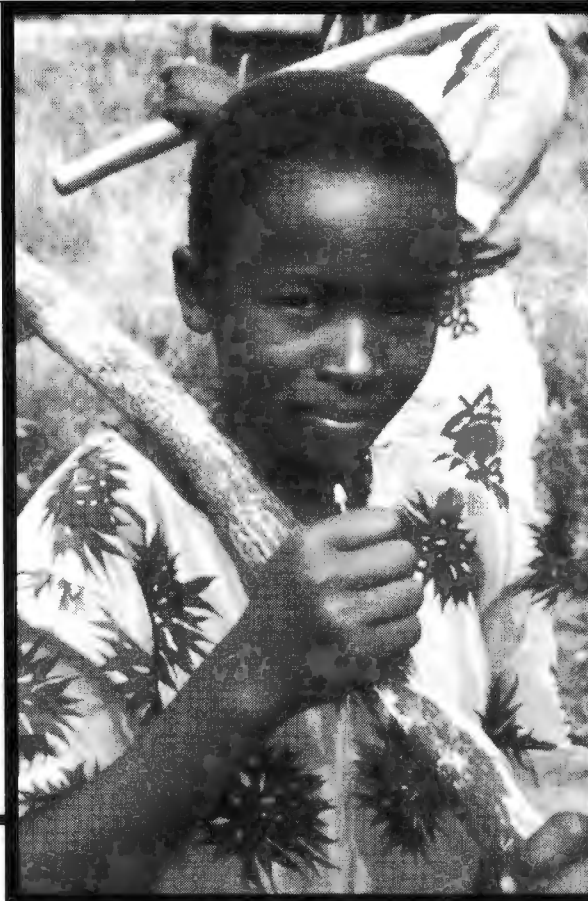
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Australia's entitlements

Frank Brennan warns of the dangers of a head in the sand attitude towards racism and inequality in Australia

RACISM WAS INHERENT IN THE DRAWING UP of the Australian Constitution. To say so is not to lay blame or to don a black armband. It is simply to state a truth about the times. But a century later, our changed national perspective does recommend a fitness about allowing the centenary of federation, the contemporary race debate, and the 2000 Olympics exposure to provide the opportunity and imperative for reform.

Between 1891 and 1898, there were three sessions of the Australasian Federal Convention at which elected representatives from each of the colonies voted on the clauses of the proposed Constitution. Individual rights, gender equality and racial equality were not pressing issues.

The Convention members had great faith in the common law, the restraint of politicians and the sovereignty of parliaments. Insofar as ethnic minorities were considered at all, it was to ensure that the Commonwealth could fulfil the role envisaged for it by the individual colonies which wanted to retain the right to exclude some racial groups from participation in the political process.

The indigenous people were even further from their thoughts: the new Constitution left the power to legislate for the indigenous people largely within the control of the States.

In 1896, a People's Convention was held at Bathurst, giving popular impetus to the movement for federation. Cardinal Moran attended the Convention. For ten years he had been a strong advocate of federation. In 1885 he had told the Plenary Council of bishops, 'It is by union for the common good, that Australia, under the blessing of God, will work out its destiny, not as a group of colonies, but as a nation.'

In 1896 he told the People's Convention, 'There can be no doubt that there is a Republican spirit abroad amongst us'. Quoting an English judge, he told the Convention, there must be 'thought for the poor and suffering, chivalrous regard and respect for women,

the frank recognition of human brotherhood, irrespective of race or colour or nation or religion'.

Many Convention

Members were opposed to a US-style bill of rights and the guarantees of due process and equal protection which were inserted in the US Constitution after the Civil War to protect Negroes in the southern states. Our Founding Fathers still wanted to be able to discriminate against some groups on the basis of race.

The issue came to a head at the 1898 Convention in Melbourne. The Western Australians were keen to maintain the power to exclude Asiatic or African aliens from the goldfields. Sir John Forrest told the Convention, 'It is of no use for us to shut our eyes to the fact that there is a great feeling all over Australia against the introduction of coloured persons. It goes without saying that we do not like to talk about it, but it is still so.'

He wanted to ensure that Chinese could be prohibited from travelling from one colony to another. Future Governor-General, Isaac Isaacs, from Victoria also highlighted that an equal protection clause would not permit the colonies to retain their factories legislation which allowed discrimination against Chinese. He asked members 'how they can expect to get for this Constitution the support of the workers if they are told that all our factory legislation is to be null and void'. The treatment of coloured persons was seen as a matter for the States.

Members were opposed to the Commonwealth's being able to impose uniform standards. Dr Cockburn from South Australia was particularly hostile to the proposed equal protection clause which was introduced in the US 'simply as a punishment to the Southern States for their attitude during the Civil War'. He thought the insertion of a clause guaranteeing equal





Many Convention Members [1896 People's Convention, Bathurst] were opposed to a US-style bill of rights and the guarantees of due process and equal protection which were inserted in the US Constitution after the Civil War to protect Negroes in the southern states. Our Founding Fathers still wanted to be able to discriminate against some groups on the basis of race.

protection and due process for all citizens would be an adverse reflection on our civilisation. People would say, 'Pretty things these states of Australia; they have to be prevented by a provision in the Constitution from doing the grossest injustice.'

The future High Court judge, Richard O'Connor, was valiant in defeat, pointing out that, 'We are making a Constitution which is to endure, practically speaking, for all time. We do not know when some wave of popular feeling may lead a majority in the Parliament of a State to commit an injustice by passing a law that would deprive citizens of life, liberty, or property without due process of law. If no state does anything of the kind there will be no harm in this provision, but it is only right that this protection should be given to every citizen of the Commonwealth.'

AT THE 1997 PEOPLE'S CONVENTION, indigenous Australians are sure to urge the adoption of a preamble describing the fullness of human history in this land and espousing the primacy of continued Aboriginal occupation and use. They are also likely to urge some positive reference to themselves rather than the constitutional silence which was the result of the 1967 referendum which deleted the two negative references to them.

Should the Northern Territory be moving towards statehood, Aborigines may also want some federal protection of their existing land rights which presently are immune from interference by the Northern Territory Parliament. The recent euthanasia debate in that jurisdiction highlights the irrelevance of

Aboriginal views and concerns to the majoritarian process of the local parliament.

Section 51(26) of the Constitution, which empowers the Commonwealth Parliament to make laws with respect to 'the people of any race for whom it is deemed necessary to make special laws', is an inappropriate head of power for the exercise of a specific national responsibility to our indigenous peoples. Many Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders think the Constitution should specify the Commonwealth's power and responsibility for Aboriginal Affairs.

One option recommended by the Constitutional Commission in 1988 was the omission of section 51(26) and the insertion of a paragraph granting the Federal Parliament power to make laws 'with respect to Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders'. The more explicit the power, the greater the likely perception of the constitutional mandate of the Commonwealth to legislate for Aboriginal affairs including Aboriginal lands and governance.

On the eve of the centenary of federation, we have an increasing need to espouse our commitment to racial equality and tolerance.

In the wake of the public debate on race and equality prompted by the remarks of Pauline Hanson, a bipartisan resolution was carried in the Commonwealth Parliament on 30 October 1996 reaffirming Parliament's commitment to the right of all Australians to enjoy equal rights and be treated with equal respect regardless of race, colour, creed or origin.

Prime Minister John Howard (slow to lead on the race issue) said, 'It is in the national interest to send a clear and unambiguous signal, particularly to the

*Photograph:
Sydney, 1996,
by Andrew Stark*

The 1997 People's Convention promised by the Howard government will be only one century too late to entrench the principle of non-discrimination on the grounds of race. And it is to be hoped that Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders will be permitted to choose their own delegates to such a Convention.

nations of our region, of the kind of society we are.' But then he dug himself and his ministers in a hole, refusing to subscribe to the voluntary code of racial ethics for Human Rights Day 1996, even though Tim Fischer, his deputy, had pledged support two months before.

The code was the initiative of two Queensland senators who received a complaint from Aborigines in the seat of Oxley in the wake of the declaration by Pauline Hanson that she would not represent people of their race.

The voluntary code places no limitation on freedom of speech but is, rather, a democratic enhancement of its exercise. It is no interference with parliamentary privilege but a responsible exercise of it. It does not derogate from the representative obligation of members of Parliament; it is a fulfilment of that constitutional obligation.

The Prime Minister claimed that the parliamentary resolution was enough. There was no need for a code. This plea of 'No need for signals; look at the substance' would be more compelling if the Howard government could demonstrate a commitment to avoid racially discriminatory behaviour at all costs.

The Hindmarsh Island Bridge Bill was recently passed by the House of Representatives. It precludes the Minister from taking any action under the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act in relation to any application that relates to the construction of the bridge. The Opposition has argued there is no need for legislation. The Minister can simply sit on his hands and refuse to issue a heritage protection order after duly informing himself of the facts. The Opposition further argued that any legislation which singled out the heritage of the Ngarrindjeri people should be non-discriminatory.

The Howard government would not agree to an amendment, proposed by shadow minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Daryl Melham, stipulating that the Racial Discrimination Act would prevail over the provisions of the Bill.

At the end of the second reading debate in the House of Representatives, Dr Michael Wooldridge representing the minister, told Parliament, 'The government's legal advice is that the bill is consistent with the Racial Discrimination Act'.

There must be doubt about the cogency of the Minister Herron's original advice, given his statement that 'the legislation is not discriminative because it does not stop anyone applying for a protection declaration. The only one it could be argued that it discriminates against is me, as Minister because it removes my right to make a protection declaration over the area.'

The government questioned whether the amendment was 'totally benign' and questioned whether a precedent should be set. But then within the week, the government agreed to the Melham amendment's being inserted in the amendments to the Social Security Act limiting welfare payments to new migrants. The government was anxious to give the signal and honour the substance that their legislation was not racially discriminatory. Senator Tambling, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Social Security, said, 'The government will not oppose this amendment. In doing so, however, I want to note very particularly that the government does not consider that the amending act ever was, or is, in conflict with the Racial Discrimination Act.'

If the legislative guarantee of non-discrimination on the ground of race is to be extended to migrants with limited welfare entitlements, then why not to Aborigines with limited heritage protection entitlements? If there is to be special legislation relating to Aborigines without their consent, it ought to be passed only with the assurance that it complies with the Racial Discrimination Act.

IT IS GOOD THAT OUR PARLIAMENT has spoken by means of the bipartisan resolution of 30 October 1996 pledging the nation to non-discrimination on the basis of race. But with the confusion over the application of the Racial Discrimination Act highlighted with the Hindmarsh Island Bridge Bill, the clearest signal to others and ourselves would be to guarantee non-discrimination in the Constitution. 2001 would be the appropriate time to rid our Constitution of its residual racism. We need a guarantee of non-discrimination along these lines: 'Everyone has the right to freedom from discrimination on the ground of race, colour, ethnic or national origin. This right is not infringed by measures taken to overcome disadvantages arising from race, colour, ethnic or national origin. Neither is it infringed by measures recognising the entitlement to self-determination of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders or protecting their sacred sites, native title, land rights, customary law, or cultural traditions.'

Such a clause included in the Commonwealth Constitution would permanently prevent the Commonwealth Parliament and government, as well as the States, from acting in a racially discriminatory way.

Failing constitutional entrenchment, the Senate Legal and Constitutional Legislation Committee ought to insist that all later Commonwealth Acts, like Commonwealth legislation prior to 1975 and all State and Territory legislation, comply with the Racial Discrimination Act. The only exception ought to be when the racial group which is singled out has given their consent. This is clearly not the case in the instance of the Hindmarsh Island Bridge Bill which, unamended, will put an end to the Hindmarsh Island saga only by starting another. Discriminatory legislation should hereafter never be an option.



The sky ain't the limit

Mr Howard should take out his pen and sign the code of race ethics, and instruct his Attorney-General's Department to withdraw racially discriminatory legislation from its armoury for solving problems like Hindmarsh Island, the out-of-town trout for the wholesale rolling back of the Native Title Act after the High Court's *Wik* decision.

Committed to cutting back the rights accorded to native title holders in 1993, Howard is very attentive to the demands of Western Australian premier, Richard Court, who requires greater 'workability' of the Act. Howard is committed to doing this 'in a manner that completely respects the provisions of the Racial Discrimination Act'—whatever that means.

It is time to act where our Founding Fathers failed; it is time to constitutionalise the rhetoric of our present political leaders. Discrimination on the basis of race should not be an option even for a popular Commonwealth government. Negotiation in good faith between indigenous and other Australians should be the first option whenever the post-colonial society is to impinge, for good or ill, upon the lifestyle and lands of those who have always constituted Australia, especially if Parliament is to limit common law rights as government is being urged to do in the case of native title holders on pastoral leases.

It is heartening to note that the 1996 Bathurst People's Convention, marking the centenary of the first People's Convention, resolved that the preamble of the Constitution should include recognition of the indigenous peoples and their rights after full consultation with them.

The 1997 People's Convention promised by the Howard government will be only one century too late to entrench the principle of non-discrimination on the grounds of race. And it is to be hoped that Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders will be permitted to choose their own delegates to such a Convention. ■

Frank Brennan sj shared the 1996 ACFOA human rights award with Patrick Dodson for his commitment to and work on reconciliation.

IN THE EARLY '70s, when America's National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) was developing the Space Shuttle, it promised that the new craft would slash the cost of transporting payloads into space from about US\$2000 a kilogram to less than US\$50 a kilogram, opening up new frontiers for exploration and exploitation.

Well, it hasn't quite worked out that way. In fact, judged against this criterion, the Shuttle program has been a worse than abject failure. At present, each Shuttle launch costs about US\$400,000, and each kilogram about US\$25,000 to put into orbit. Yet the experience gained in the Shuttle program is being put to use in new projects aimed at producing an inexpensive, reusable space vehicle as a replacement.

Failure is an integral part of the scientific method, and a necessary part of scientific and technological progress. But failure does not go down well with the bean counters and taxpayers who provide the resources for research and development.

The idea of a reusable, piloted spacecraft seems aesthetically and humanly pleasing. But, as many local government authorities have found, recycling can present all sorts of hidden costs. The Shuttle vehicles, for instance, had to protect and provide for human crews—at great expense—biological systems can withstand a far narrower set of environments than much of the physical equipment sent into space.

But other problems emerged in devising and employing materials which could be reused. The engines of the Shuttle, for instance, have to be completely overhauled after each launch. Many of the parts cannot be used again. Perhaps the most publicised expense is in the special ceramic tiles used to protect the Shuttle against debris in space and the high temperatures of re-entry (about 1300°C). These tiles have to be fired twice and tend to warp, making them difficult to install. After each flight, every single tile (of thousands) must be inspected and many must be replaced.

By the 90s, it has become clear that disposable rockets are a far cheaper method of launching satellites than the Shuttle. But times are changing. Satellites and the equipment they carry are becoming much more compact and much more numerous. The attraction of a cheap, reusable rocket is becoming greater. And NASA's experience with the Shuttle has put it in the pole position for developing such a launch platform. Three projects it has been financing all build upon that experience to get around some of the Shuttle's problems.

One of them, the Delta Clipper-Experimental (DC-X), takes off and lands vertically, and has been designed so that it can be made ready to go into space again within a day of landing. Already a vehicle has been built to show that this can be done, but it will be many years before the DC-X flies at the speeds and altitudes necessary to launch payloads into space. A second project, the X-33 VentureStar, is being engineered to take humans into space using a revolutionary new engine.

But the furthest advanced is the X-34 Pegasus rocket, built by the aerospace company Orbital Sciences. The rocket is pilotless and is launched in mid-air, like a missile from a plane. There is no need for expensive ground launch facilities, or to carry fuel to get the rocket off the ground where gravity is strongest. Already the system has been employed to launch a satellite using an expendable rocket.

The Pegasus project is also testing a new kind of insulating tile soaked in a silicone resin. These tiles are actually fired by the heat of re-entry. They form a rubbery, glassy substance which will tend to fill in any pits and abrasion caused by collision with dust and water vapour in space.

Remote control systems to guide these rockets now can use sophisticated, satellite-based, global positioning. These positioning systems, together with compact and powerful new sensors, also have accelerated the development of small, remote-controlled drones or pilotless aircraft.

Such drones can be used to provide a close up view of phenomena that satellites can only sense from afar. They can be driven through the clouds of erupting volcanoes and into violent, oncoming storms. Compared with satellites, they are cheap to manufacture and launch, so that countries like Australia can afford to build them. The Bureau of Meteorology is already collaborating in the development and testing of such a drone, and postgraduate students in aerospace engineering at RMIT are involved in detailed research in the field.

Much of this useful activity had its origins in projects connected with Shuttle program. So even though the program may not have achieved some of its stated aims, it has been successful in many other ways. Negative results and failures can be such important signposts in science that it is hard to know how to weigh up success—particularly in an economic rationalist era where success tends to be measured only by the bottom line. ■

Tim Thwaites is a freelance science writer.



THE CHURCH
BRIAN SCARLETT

Making godly men of them

*The change of Catholic Archbishops in Melbourne has signalled a shift in the way priests are to be trained. In some respects the changes represent a return to the traditions active in the seminary of Archbishop George Pell's youth. The new Archbishop began his seminary career on March 1st 1960 at Corpus Christi College Werribee, and he remained there until September 1963 when he was sent to Rome, to the Collegio di Propaganda Fide. **Brian Scarlett**, now Associate Professor of Philosophy at Melbourne University, was his contemporary.*

I CAME TO WERRIBEE on that day 37 years ago, and remained there for four years. I can therefore report what the now Archbishop went through at Werribee, though I make no claim that he experienced those years in the way I did.

In 1960 there was no shortage of vocations. The new intake was of 32 students, our ages ranging from 16 to 32, most between 17 and 19. We were pretty much self-selected, and there was little attempt to scrutinise our suitability. In my case what passed for psychological screening came after a medical examination. 'Have you ever kissed a girl?', the cagey psychiatrist asked me. 'Yes, doctor' I replied. 'Did you enjoy it?' 'Certainly'.

Then all was well: time to buy the ecclesiastical clobber, soutane, biretta, surplice, Roman collar, and a black tie for the outside world. I was referred to a cheap source of soutanes, a tailor in Bentleigh. I had never had a tailored garment of any kind until that one, and it cost me 17 quid—about a week of my public service pay.

We turned up at Werribee late in the afternoon. In the golden nostalgia-breeding sunset we lined up, clad awkwardly for the

first time in our clericals, for the daily quarter of an hour of spiritual reading—individual, but done in common. We were under The Rule and no mistake. It was a stringent rule. No smoking or drinking. No cars, motor-bikes or push-bikes. Nothing but water to eat and drink between meals. No visitors before Easter and thereafter no more often than once a month. No visiting Werribee, still less Melbourne, without permission. No radios, no newspapers.

In this framework of restrictions we followed a strict timetable. We rose at 5.55 am (with a sleep-in on Mondays to 6.25 am), and lights out was at 10.00 pm. In between we had four sessions in community in the chapel. After the midday meal we walked around in groups saying the Rosary. All up, about two and a half hours in formal prayer per day. Lectures took up the morning, and in the afternoon we had two hours of work, sport or recreation. On two afternoons a week that recreation was compulsory team sport, mostly football and basketball. On other days we worked in the hundred-acre grounds or wandered in the further 900 acres surrounding them. The rule required us to be out of doors in the afternoon.

Periods of study preceded and followed the evening meal. Meals were usually eaten in silence apart from the reading of improving works and the Latin *Martyrology*. Between night prayers and the end of breakfast we were required to be silent. This, the *Magnum Silentium*, was a rule of considerable weight.

We studied English, Church History, Latin and New Testament Greek, Italian Philosophy, Scripture, Chant and speech. Some did Hebrew.

The standard of instruction was uneven. Language teaching by the beloved eccentric, Fr Austin Ryan SJ, known to us as Ocker, was all one could wish. History suffered from the chosen text, Walker's *Outline History of the Catholic Church*, a pietistic waste of paper. The curriculum in English was good but the execution lacked a little: we spent some time reading *King Lear* in class, taking up the text each day at the point designated. Through some strange chance the word 'bastard' was never read out. Scripture provided welcome theological sophistication. We got the rudiments of form criticism along with some extravagant Daniélou typology. 'The scarlet cord of Rahab is a symbol of the saving blood of

Christ', said the Rector, Fr James McNerney SJ, known as Mountain Jim for his mystical enthusiasms.

Philosophy was taught through Latin scholastic manuals. They were all cribs of Aquinas, and since his Latin is not a whit harder than theirs, it was a case of preferring the monkey to the organ-grinder. Their main concessions to developments after 1274 were perfunctory statements of the views of the *Adversarii*. That said, doing philosophy in that style is a demanding intellectual exercise; it has some benefits, and I suppose we gained them.

There was a division of opinion on how closely one needed to follow the rule. Rigorists were called 'Lifers' and said to be 'on the life'. The theoretical basis of their position was that the Rule was God's will for us; 'keep the rule and it will keep you', they said. There was also a chance of being kicked out if caught in flagrant violation. Most of us, however, were latitudinarians to some degree, warning sagely of the danger of an attack of 'the screws'—scrupulosity, acknowledged by all to be a spiritual and psychological peril and likely to lead to an 'N.B.', or nervous breakdown—an inexact term for a range of painful phenomena.

Latitudinarianism had its benefits. Those who allowed themselves an occasional smoke found that no cigarette ever tasted better than one improved by

risk, and by conscious responsibility for what would normally be almost automatic. Tea and coffee improved beyond recognition when consumed illicitly. One genius invented the 'Calofactor', a device which would boil a cup of water in seven seconds, and he found a ready market for them. Boozing was unusual except on altar-wine bottling days. It too was improved by the heady combination of illegality and responsibility. Occasionally one would sneak out at night, perhaps to hitch-hike to Geelong for a hamburger. Then the soutane's blackness provided welcome camouflage. The soutane had other advantages. I found it possible to mooch piously around the grounds with a gun or fishing rod concealed under mine, en route to a little sporting recreation, without advertising what I was up to.

We were not, generally, utterly uncritical, 'lifers' or not. Told of a long dead spiritual director in a Jesuit community whose asceticism included drinking the swill from others' coffee cups, we concluded that the silly old coot should have been locked up. Few of us cared much for the appurtenances of the priestly life: enthusiasts for the liturgy were tolerantly referred to as 'litterbugs'. When some Vatican time-wasters ordered that the wine and water cruets at Mass were to be kissed by the altar server we did what we were told, but most of us knew that it was no way

for grown men to behave. We were amused and annoyed at having our private libraries censored and some items consigned to a section of the library known as Hell. (I lost *The Communist Manifesto* and an anthology of Asian philosophy.) Another irritant was the discovery that Fragonard's 'The Swing', a romantic piece of frippery in which a couple of gallants look at the ankles of a girl on a swing—had been excised from a book in the library.

YET WE WERE NOT, PERHAPS, as critical as we should have been. We little criticised our monastic regime even though, as priests, we would not live anything like a monastic life. This was, no doubt a result of a residual readiness to accept the wisdom of the Church—if it was wisdom. If you want pastors, is the way to produce them separation from the community they are to serve?

I think we had an answer on that point: we believed that we were not altogether lacking in relevant experience. Many of us had worked after leaving school, and it was routine to work for something like seven weeks of the ten-week summer vacation. Over four summers I was a mail sorter, public hospital clerk, storeman-driver, and psychiatric nursing aide.

But the priest is more than a pastor. The conception of priesthood that went unchallenged then involved a number of other

The class of 1960 (top left): Archbishop Pell, top row, second from the left; Brian Scarlett fifth from the left. Below: Not in the Rule—cooling off in the horse trough. From left: Jerry Byrne, now an engineer, George Pell, Bernard Mahoney, now Parish Priest of Bairnsdale. Photographs courtesy Brian Scarlett.



features. The priest was indispensable for the sacramental life of the Church and for its orderly government; that government had to be centralised and hierarchical; priests had to be celibate males. There was, therefore, a requirement for a highly disciplined officer corps who were doctrinally and politically reliable. To produce *that* result, monastic discipline might well be the best method. While all those desiderata are today under discussion, our starting point was to take them for granted. If we took a long time to deepen our understanding of what we were about, this is hardly surprising.

There was, as well, a certain appeal in the very masculinity of the life.

I recall, after resolving a crisis with the decision to stay, that this seemed to enhance my enjoyment of a newly acquired 1951 BSA motor bike. The bike was peripheral to my conception of a life *à deux*, but it was just the shot for a seminarian. Much the same consideration was at the back of my mind years earlier in my adolescent musings about what to do with life. A non-androgynous occupation seemed to be called for. By the age of 22 I had grown out of requiring such a thing in my life's work but was certainly not past enjoying it if I could.

The barrack-room attitude found expression in many forms, some of them hysterical, but most harmless. Beds were short-sheeted, odd objects such as rabbit traps and—once—a dead snake inserted in

them. Some memorable distributions of explosive touch-powder were affected. Tops of salt cellars were loosened and replaced carefully in the hope that a load of salt would be deposited into the victim's soup—while he was enjoined to silence. Each day a student had to run through the corridors ringing a bell to wake us up. Those whose birthdays fell during their tour of duty with the bell could expect to have a bucket of water thrown over them in mid-gallop. Since the bell ringing occurred during the *Magnum Silentium* the attack had to be performed and suffered in silence.

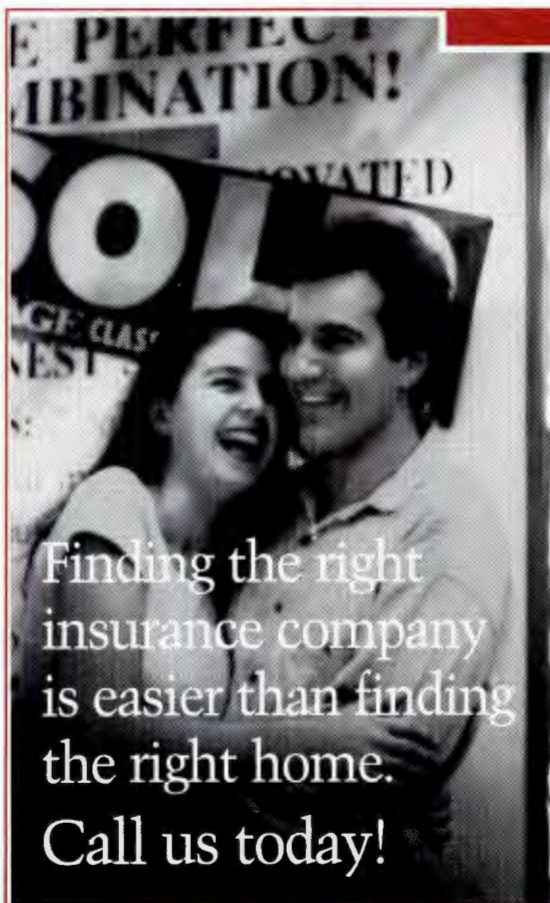
Homosexuality was little known to us. Most of us would not have thought of imputing a homosexual orientation to a fellow student. We obeyed the Threshold Rule, which forbade going into another man's room when he was in it. But we regarded the necessity of such a rule as a continental aberration, probably needed for the victims of ludicrous Minor Seminaries taking children from their mothers' knees, but certainly not for us.

We had no doubt that celibacy was possible and, for some, desirable. The more interesting question for most of us was whether we fitted into that latter category. The Diaconate, involving a formal commitment to celibacy, was sometimes called the 'de-knackerate'. We laughed in chapel during the community reading of the Prayer of the Six Sundays in honour of St Aloysius

Gonzaga: 'May we who have not followed you in purity.....' The prayers were not repeated in the following year. Part of the folk-lore of the place was that if a priest went wrong it was almost always Punch or Judy, but it was not the dangers of punch that were stressed. Going on vacation we were adjured to manage our relations with young women by the rule: *Noli tangere!*—don't touch. Fair enough for celibates in the making, that rule was not always easy to obey. Many Catholic girls—all stunningly attractive of course—regarded us as safe male companions, capable of affectionate relationships without complications. That took some learning for an 18-year-old.

Monks, but not monks, clerics but also sometimes clerks, barmen and truck drivers, we went along with what was required by the authorities as we tried to work out our own vocations. Each of us made his own decision on celibacy; as to the priesthood, we exemplified the debate and confusion that still occupies the Church. We went to prepare for the Temple Priesthood; we learned of the priesthood of all believers. I doubt that any of us in those days was vividly aware that Baptism is a more important sacrament than Ordination. Most of us in the end, priest or layman, came to realise the profundity of that truth. ■

Brian Scarlett is an associate professor of Philosophy, University of Melbourne.



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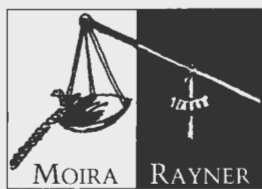
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Don't keep a good woman down

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HEN BETTY FRIEDAN WROTE *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963 she argued, quite simply, that women were people—no more, and no less—and that all the obstacles society put in their way, preventing them from being accepted as such, would have to change.

Feminism has since become far more complex, and virtually balkanised. There are a thousand varieties of women's voices, all angry and impatient for change. The issues are the same: is woman's destiny shaped and contained by her anatomy? Are women specially responsible for children? Should mothers work (the fact that they nearly all have to, is overlooked)? Who should control their reproductive decisions? Is the immense problem of violence to women also shaped by biology, or by culture and tradition? They are still unresolved. What do women want? Does equality require being the same as, or separate destinies from, men? Are women's rights a moral choice? Should a fair society allow, in the name of multiculturalism or religious freedom, values and practices that consign women to a secondary and limited role, to fewer or no choices and voices than men?

I certainly wondered about that when, on 10 December, the *Age* ran a story about a new Islamic school at Hoppers' Crossing, in outer Melbourne. There, though boys and girls are taught in the same classes, the traditionally clad girls sit at the back, the boys at the front. The headmaster was quoted as saying that, though women and men were of course equal, and women might aspire to any achievement, women doctors, for example, should work with and treat only women—and indeed, Victorian women doctors chose to establish a Women's Hospital last century. They must also wear traditional dress, which could be limiting for 'it might be difficult,' he said, 'to wear the hijab under the bonnet of a car'. Shades of the Taliban, I thought, sending female pupils home from Afghanistan's colleges and universities and women workers back to their homes—where some undoubtedly starved—in the name of God and their proper role.

What is the sense, in an industrialised society which has provided free, inclusive and secular education as an ideal, of encouraging exclusive, segregated, religious—not just Muslim—schools that teach women to defer and withdraw? Where—and how—does a fair, pluralist

society draw the line between women's rights, and religion? (Why do all major religions practise women's domination?)

The self-consciously autonomous women who call themselves 'power feminists'—the Paglias, Wolfs and Roiphes—who deride as 'victim feminists' those who demand privileges for women, or consideration for women's biological functions at work, or protection from male violence through laws and progress through affirmative action—have never had to sit, like the Muslim girls, in the back row of the computer class nor have they been taught to defer to men.

Is it really, as Senator Newman said as she dismantled the women's funding programs in her Office of the Status of Women, time women moved out of the sand-pit? Have male-run institutions so changed that it is safe?

FEMINISTS' DEMANDS—ALL KINDS—are all founded on a collective sense, built on generations of grievance, that women should mistrust men's institutions. For all the gains feminism has brought women, a vast pool of resentment remains, and will, as long as women are seen to be 'different' from 'workers' because women are—or can be—mothers and because they still, actually, perform the major responsibilities of children's care (Low-status work—we would not consign so many children to poverty if their well-being were as precious as the politicians preach). We can hardly blame talented women for wanting the rewards enjoyed by men in business, the professions and academia who perceive that motherhood is an obstacle to full personhood.

This sense, that the grievances of women still require redress, is one of the most profound obstacles to collaboration between women and men, and to an inclusive, diverse and dynamic society. Institutions spend so much energy in ignoring women's experience when making policy, men and women on manoeuvring for the upper hand, that there is precious little for the voluntary, daily interchanges, the give and take, on which trust and goodwill and social capital grows. A myriad of different melodies instead of—as Robert Putnam sort-of put it—a choral society does not build a harmonious community.

Feminism, like any philosophy that strikes root and grows, develops and changes

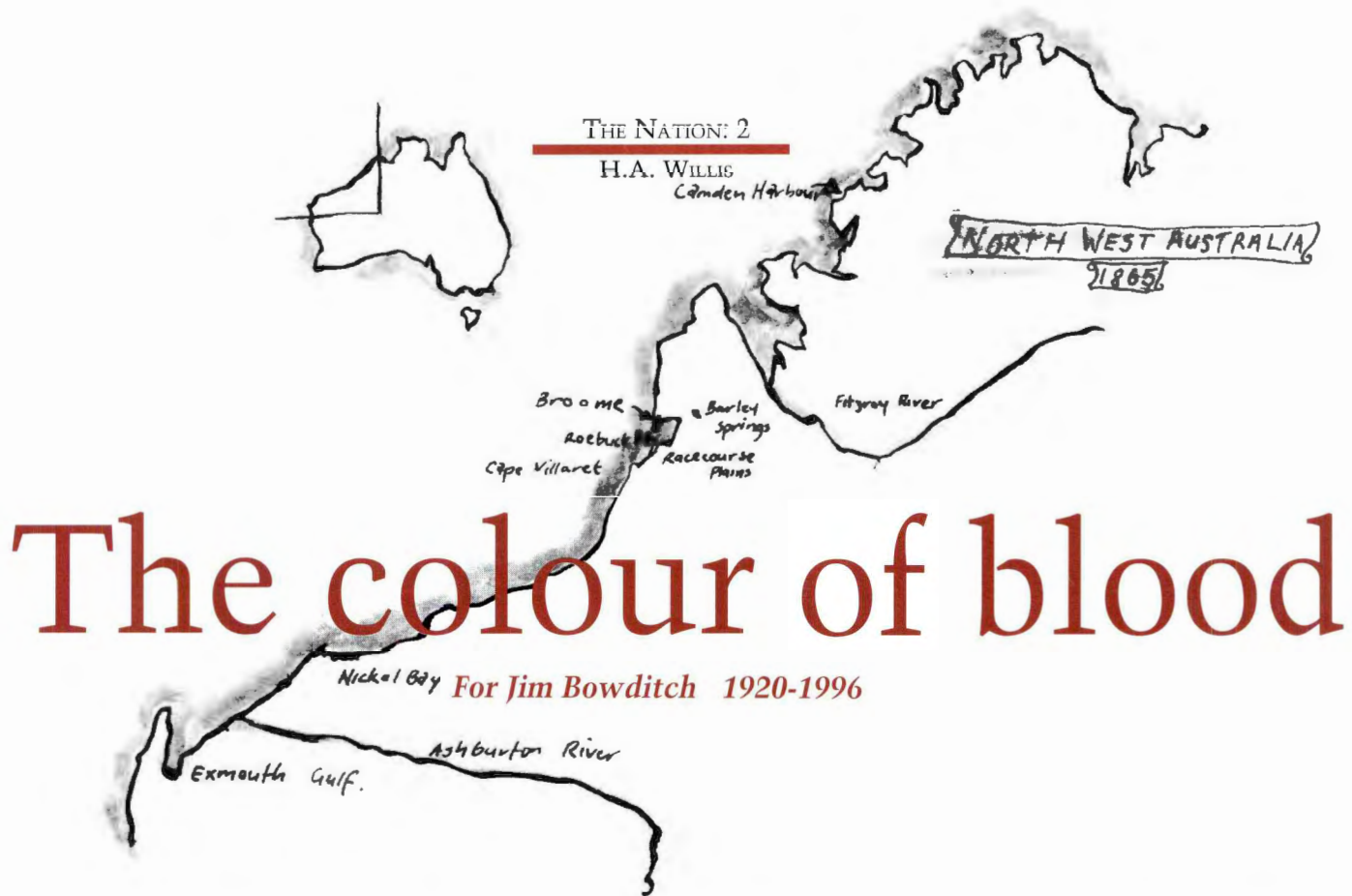
in the struggle for survival: one variety fails and another will take its place. It's a jungle out there, and as I write this in my study I am looking at one. Through the window is my garden, a very tiny oasis, full of birds attracted to a little stone bath of murky water and stale bread. A few feet away, six lanes of traffic roar and pour filth into a canopy of *pungas*—huge, prehistoric-looking tree ferns—tough and primitive plants that somehow survive the insults of modern living best. This garden has a guardian: a stone carving of a podgy, elephant-headed Hindu god: Ganesha.

I bought him for ten dollars 13 years ago from a Balinese carver, knowing nothing about the god, but loving the delicate carving. I realised only recently how well I had chosen when an Indian visitor told me his story. Ganesha's mother, the goddess Parvati, was wife to the Lord Shiva. Parvati made herself a baby out of the mud, when her husband had left her alone for a long time. One day she set him outside her door while she bathed, and instructed him to let no-one enter. But Shiva returned, unheralded, and when he found a strange boy outside his wife's door who wouldn't let him in he became infuriated, and struck off the child's head. Parvati heard the shrieks, rushed to the scene and, weeping, told Shiva that he had murdered his own son. Grief-stricken, Shiva sought about for some way to make his son live again—and found a passing elephant, chopped off its head and stuck it onto his son's shoulders.

Ganesha is revered as the representation of the whole of creation, yet loved for the principal quality attributed to him, that of helping to overcome all obstacles. He is powerful as an elephant—he can tear down and trample the jungle or structures that stand in his way—or, if he chooses, he can be as subtle as a mouse, slipping secretly through the slightest of gaps. Ganesha—the wounded god, the not-whole person, the link between creator and creature—has a solution for every problem.

What better guardian for a feminist, animal-loving advocate of children's rights and runner-at-closed-doors? My friend, a practising Hindu, advised me to pray to him daily. Perhaps I'll have more luck with him than St Jude. ■

Moira Rayner is a lawyer and freelance journalist. Her e-mail address is 100252.3247@compuserve.com



The colour of blood

Nickel Bay For Jim Bowditch 1920-1996

*No adequate assessment of the Aboriginal predicament can be made
so long as the historical dimension is lacking ...*

—C.D. Rowley, 1972.

ON A LATE WINTER'S DAY OF PASSING SHOWERS I stood on the East Perth hill and contemplated the view to the north. With much of the surrounding area being redeveloped, an extensive tract around what was once Claise Brook, a freshwater stream named by Captain James Stirling during his first (1827) visit to Swan River, had been stripped back to the bare contours for the first time in a century and a half. Half closed eyes, a little imagination and the sound of wind in the old pines could yield a semblance of the rural ambience experienced by those who stood on the hill a 100 or more years ago.

Most of them would have been attending funerals; for, until the 1890s, the high land overlooking Claise Brook was Perth's burial ground. Marked out by John Septimus Roe in late December 1829, East Perth cemetery, a broad meadow of lush grass garlanded by bright yellow soursop and blue-mauve freesias, contains many of the Colony's founders, including Surveyor-General Roe.

I went there to examine the inscription on the grave of the first Government Resident Magistrate for North-west Australia: Robert John Sholl, who died in June 1886, a month shy of his 67th birthday.

A righteous man whose faith was never shaken by experiences that might have shifted Job, it could only have been R.J. Sholl who chose for his gravestone a line from Psalm 128: *Blessed are they that fear the Lord and walk in His ways.*

Sholl's grave also contains the remains of his wife, Mary Ann, as well as one of their seven sons and a five-year-old

granddaughter. One side of the square, obelisk-topped gravestone is dedicated to the Sholls' eldest son, Trevarton. Trevy, as his father called him, was lost at sea in March 1867, together with 41 others aboard the 116-ton schooner *Emma*. The epitaph gives Trevarton's age as 22, but in fact this Australian-born boy who read Byron was still only 21 when he died.

The view from the Search Room of Western Australia's Public Records Office is another I have had time to consider. From the long, narrow mezzanine floor up there under the roof of Perth's Alexander Library Building you look across the roofs of the art gallery and the railway station straight into the north face of a straggling wall of city buildings. Kings Park and the Swan River are nowhere in sight. Nevertheless, in winter you can watch the squall lines drawing curtains of rain around those tinted-glass towers; in summer, looking back over East Perth, the heat shimmers over the coastal plain all the way out to the dark blue line of the Darling escarpment.

Sometimes a dozen or so big, shiny crows gather in the afternoon shade outside the window to preen themselves and strut the parapet, their brazen white eyes sizing up the people inside.

UNLIKE THE CROWS OUTSIDE, many of the people behind the glass are rather reticent about their interests and activities. Most of what they discover at their separate, private tables is unlikely to find its way into the history books.

Since the Mabo decision the various parties to land claims have become very, very interested in establishing the whereabouts and affiliations of people who, until quite recently, were not even recognised as citizens of this 'lucky' country. Considerable sums of money are routinely expended to conduct archival searches to fix whose great-grandparents were where when. These investigations are not always (indeed, not often) carried out by historians, who, not having developed a culture of secret research, have seen their discipline's territory steadily colonised over the past couple of decades. In Australia today research into frontier and contact history is as likely to be done by someone with a background in either anthropology or law as by someone with a degree in history.

The problem with much of the research now being done is that not only is it often piecemeal, but even the best of it is unlikely to be published. Scraps of information gleaned from

I READ TREVARTON SHOLL'S JOURNAL at my particular table in the Search Room. I came to him after reading his father's 1865 journal, of which I am preparing an annotated edition for publication.

These days researchers are increasingly referred to transcriptions or microfilms rather than original documents, the preservation of which requires historians to forego, unless absolutely necessary, their pleasure in handling them.

Because my work would produce a new transcription I was permitted to examine the frail foolscap sheets upon which Trevarton Sholl wrote the story of the last two years of his life. Sometimes the original reveals something that even a good copy obscures: a different shade of ink, for example, often indicates where Sholl (or perhaps his father or a brother) returned to correct or annotate his work.



Sholl



McRae



Brown

Photographs of Robert John Sholl and Alexander McRae are reproduced by kind permission of the Battye Library. Photograph of Maitland Brown is reproduced by kind permission of the Royal West Australian Historical Society.

the journals and letters of settlers, from the records of pastoral companies and Church missions, or from police Occurrence Books and other government records, can sometimes acquire immense commercial value.

Sometimes that value depends upon those scraps remaining secret, 'lost'.

In the case of Western Australia, there is, too, perhaps a little more immediacy about those questions of whose grandparents were where, when. Apart from great-grandpa's possible involvement in the occasional murder, there is the awkward matter of the way Aboriginal women were so indiscreet as to give their children the father's name. The skeletons in some family closets are still alive. And talking!

Of course, the great thing about handling old, handwritten documents is the sense of the writer's proximity: the paper you hold is the very paper he or she held. In deciphering an individual's script you start to pick up on when they were excited or tired, you learn to discern their hidden worries and hopes and a subtle intimacy develops. You come to 'know' that writer in an indefinable but very definite way. I have never seen a portrait of Trevarton Sholl—as far as I know none survive—but if I could find the 'lost' photographs taken at Camden Harbour at the end of May 1865 I believe I would recognise him immediately. He had shaved his head a few weeks before and at the beginning of August he recorded his weight as 9 stone 11 lbs (62 kg): a lean, fit youth, described by his father as 'tall'.

In early 1865 young Trevarton had embarked on an adventure that must have made him the envy of every other young man in the Colony. With a £130 per annum portfolio of official positions—clerk, Postmaster and Customs official—he accompanied his father to establish the West Australian Government's presence at the recently formed Camden Harbour Settlement, on the Kimberley coast 250 km north of the present town of Derby.

As Government Resident, Robert John Sholl (£400 a year: his labourers got £24 and rations) held a position comparable to William Lonsdale's when, a generation earlier, that officer had been sent by Governor Bourke to establish government at Port Phillip. But Camden Harbour was as spectacular a failure as Port Phillip had been a success, an especially bitter pill for those sons of Victoria's Western District who joined the Camden Harbour Association dreaming of emulating the exploits of their fathers' generation.

In no way responsible for the disaster, Robert Sholl used his administrative skills and determination to salvage something of the venture when, in November 1865, he relocated the government post to Nickol Bay, 1000 km back down the coast towards Perth. That fall-back settlement flourished and served as the North-west's administrative centre for a century: Roebourne, named in honor of the venerable Surveyor-General.

On its long voyage south the 180-ton brig *Kestrel*, overcrowded with bedraggled Camden Harbour refugees, was forced to put in for water at Roebuck Bay, near what would, in the 1880s, become the pearling port of Broome and, in the 1980s, one of Australia's prime tourist destinations. During the five day stop-over Trevarton Sholl remained ashore, staying with Alexander McRae, a 23-year-old Victorian pastoralist who had cut his losses at Camden Harbour and withdrawn to Roebuck Bay the previous August.

HIGHLY REGARDED BY THE SHOLLS, father and son, McRae had accompanied each on their separate explorations of the country behind Camden Harbour. He and Trevarton jointly 'discovered' and named Walcott Inlet, as well as several other major geographical features of the West Kimberley.

Alexander McRae, like Trevarton Sholl, was a Colonial boy, born and raised in the Western District of Victoria.

Although it is always true that individual texts only attain their full historical significance in context, I think we can still allow that, occasionally, a document emerges that not only vividly depicts a particular moment, it also accurately registers the tenor and direction of our history's deeper tides.

I believe the extracts from Trevarton Sholl's journal reproduced below are such a document. Had he lived he would have developed caution with regard to how much could be said publicly. But he hadn't quite learned that discretion when he died, and his family held on to everything that was his. One hundred and thirty years on it offers a unique insider's view of the Australian frontier.

This is not an account of a major massacre. It is, rather, a matter-of-fact record of the pursuit and murder of three men, of the pursuit and harassment of two women. I believe that it was through countless unrecorded, forgotten 'minor' incidents such as these that native title really was 'extinguished'.

Monday, 13 November 1865

Tacking towards Cape Villaret against a light wind during the night. Wind still ahead (11 am) Cape Villaret distant about 10 miles. Cast anchor about 3 miles off Cape Villaret at 2 pm in 7 fathoms water. I had the dingy lowered at once and with two hands started for the shore a very heavy sea and breakers on the shore at the time. Arrived on shore all safe only shipping one or two seas. The ships boat with father, Cowle, the Doctor, Skipper and crew arrived about half an hour after us and were wet through in beaching the boat, I was the only one ashore dry, tho' I did land in the dingy contrary to the advice of all, who made sure we would be upset.

On the beach I met Mr Logue and McRae, and from them gleaned the following information:— They had been exploring, their party numbering five: Logue, McRae, Vincent, Toovey and a Native. They were gone a distance of about 80 miles and to within 20 miles of the Fitzroy. The farther they went the better the country seemed—at their farthest there was first rate grazing country. They were obliged to return in consequence of finding no water. When camped at a place called 'Barlee's Spring', the native who was on watch about 2 o'clock in the morning, saw a number of natives crawling towards them distant about 30 yards, they were immediately fired upon. Upon going to the spot after the natives had retreated, newly cut clubs etc. were found.

The bore that was once the Aboriginal well was appropriated by the whites and named Barlee's Spring, in honour of the Colonial Secretary, Frederick Palgrave Barlee. It is located 2 km south of the Great Northern Highway, down a dirt track about 5 km east of the Broome turn-off. Sir Fred would no doubt turn in his well-marked grave to know that the name was corrupted to Barley's Spring.

13 November 1865 [Continued]

As soon as it was light the natives were tracked up, but before the party reached them they had separated and gone in different directions, three however were found and killed. One of them had nine balls in him before he died. One of the balls penetrated his back and came out through his stomach, and he made the four white men retreat from him, whilst chasing them with his inside hanging out, as they did not wish their horses to be speared. Finally Toovey dismounted and the native rushed towards him to within 20 yards and threw his spear, which Toovey guarded with his gun. The native then ran to pick up another spear which he laid down whilst throwing the first but when he was stooping to pick it up, he fell down dead. Another was running away and a charge of shot was fired at his hind quarter, he seeing the direction the gun was pointed ran sideways and held his shield behind him thinking to stop the shot and he received part of the charge on the above mentioned spot and part on the shield. He then turned to throw his spear but whilst in the act Mr McRae fired, cut the spear in two and the ball entering under his ear finished him.

This was supposed to be the same party of Natives who killed Messrs Panter, Harding and Goldwyer on this day last year. And had no watch been kept the chances are Messrs Logue, McRae and party would have shared the same fate...

The fate of Panter, Harding and Goldwyer, and something of their significance, may best be imparted by quoting from the inscription on their collective grave in the East Perth cemetery, where they were buried in May 1865 with the biggest funeral until then seen in the Colony. (To page 24.)



Government Camp, Camden Harbour, 31 May, 1865.

The photograph above and on this month's cover was located and identified in November 1996 by H.A. Willis during his researches into Camden Harbour. It is reproduced by kind permission of the Battye Library. It is published here in *Eureka Street* for the first time as a picture of Camden Harbour.

Robert John Sholl to Frederick P Barlee, Colonial Secretary, 17 July 1865.

I mentioned in my official letter of 2^d June that Mr Hamilton, a passenger per "Forlorn Hope" had taken some photographs of the camp, but that I feared to send them by that conveyance. I now forward two ... In the view of the camp the first tent on the left is that of a settler named Clarke who came in the "Jeanie Oswald"; the wooden building next to it is the Carpenter's Shop, next to that some little cooking sheds of the Pensioners, then the Pensioners' tent married men, then the Pensioners' tent single men, in front of which is a wooden building put up by a settler named Wilson who left in the "Jeanie Oswald". The place is now occupied by Sergt. Aherne. To the right & rear of the wooden house, is a part of a circular tent formerly occupied by Mr Chamberlain and now used by the Storekeeper's labourer and my servant. The next tent was originally used for housing Commissariat Stores; at present it is a spare tent. Behind this is the tool house made of quartering laid lengthwise with a temporary roof covered with tarpaulin. The tent behind the soldiers is my own. Next to it is the wooden storehouse, then Mr Cowle's, and, lastly, Gee's tent. The spire rising over the trees is in reality the flagstaff in front of my tent, with the flag drooping, the day having been calm. The landing place is where the mark in pencil is placed, to the right of the big rock, and round towards the base of the Spar lying up & down the bank. From thence the path winds up the bank a little to the right of the Spar. At high water all the rocks are covered as far as the Spar. The sentry box is to the right of the soldiers and the small magazine to their left.

(CSO ACC36 Volume 552)

IN MEMORY OF
FREDERICK KENNEDY PANTER, Aged 28,
JAMES RICHARD HARDING, Aged 25,
WILLIAM HENRY GOLDWYER, Aged 34,

Who together departed this life on N.W. Coast of Australia. In the vicinity of ROEBUCK BAY, NOVEMBER 13th 1864, they were murdered, apparently whilst asleep in the night, by ABORIGINAL NATIVES with whom, as there is every reason to suppose, THEY BELIEVED THAT THEY WERE ON FRIENDLY TERMS.

The Colonial Government, I.S. HAMPTON being the GOVERNOR, took upon itself the task of recovering their remains, interring them in this place, and erecting this monument, MAITLAND BROWN was the leader of the little band of brave men who, risking their own lives, found and brought back for Christian Burial the Bodies of their deceased friends.

It is doubtful the three were killed in their sleep. Goldwyer, who seems to have been on guard, fired at least four shots and probably inflicted casualties. There is also evidence that, far from being 'on friendly terms', the whites and their horses had been helping themselves to scarce water supplies and that when the local people attempted to reprimand the visitors a shot was fired.

But of course what really happened was never going to be the point at a time of public outrage. Exploring the Kimberley, Trevarton Sholl and McRae named a stretch of good pastoral land in honour of Panter and a mountain range for Harding. Ladies wrote poems to the newspapers and Maitland Brown, 'leader of the little band of brave men', published a popular account of his exploits. Brown's party had their own clash with '70 athletic savages', the casualties of which he put at six killed outright and another dozen mortally wounded. In a separate incident two prisoners were shot 'escaping'. Brown reported that one of the dying men confessed that he and his companion (who had unfortunately died before he, too, could ease his conscience) had taken part in the murders of Panter, Harding and Goldwyer.

It would seem that the episode described to Trevarton Sholl by Alexander McRae on 13 November 1865 was at least the third occasion when the killers of the three whites had been 'dealt with'. One member of Brown's 'little band', the policeman Robert Toovey, was still dispensing retribution a year after the killings of the three whites. Fate dealt with him by giving him a berth on the *Emma's* final voyage.

Joseph Logue, Justice of the Peace at Roebuck Bay, had also been involved in Maitland Brown's original retaliatory raid, providing him with the necessary logistic support.

A FEW ITEMS FROM ALEXANDER MCRAE'S subsequent history may help to put his participation in the Barlee Spring killings in perspective.

In the winter of 1866, when he moved south to take up land in the Hamersley Ranges, McRae and young Sholl once more went exploring together, down the coast from Nickol Bay to the Ashburton River and Exmouth Gulf. Trevarton celebrated his 21st birthday on that 1600 km round trip. On his return he noted in his diary:

Saw any amount of niggers, obliged to pepper one lot, others friendly.

'Peppering' meant firing a shotgun into a group of people. The laconic, passing reference—so typical of the record of

frontier violence—gives no hint of casualties.

In February 1868, almost a year after Trevarton's death, Robert John Sholl placed Alexander McRae in charge of the party of settlers sent to avenge the spearings of a white policeman, an Aboriginal tracker and two white pearlers, murdered at a place very near where the town of Karratha would be built a century later. The 'retribution' wrought by McRae and his associates has become known as the Flying Foam Massacre: officially, only half a dozen or so were killed, but other sources estimated the death toll at between 40 and 60. Writing to his sister back in Victoria, McRae cryptically told her that his posse had given the blacks 'fitz'—a word I cannot find in any dictionary, but in the context of McRae's letter it acquires menace.

McRae went on to become a member of the Legislative Council (as did two of Trevarton's brothers) and it is likely his influence in the Colonial Government would have escalated had he not died, aged 45, in February 1888.

Tuesday, 14 November 1865

Early this morning I went and had a look at the wells they have first rate water in them and sufficient to water the ship. There are four wells in all...

Mr McRae gave me a nice collection of shells principally cowries. Also native weapons and implements taken from the gentlemen who paid them the nocturnal visit whilst in the bush, they consist of spears, dowaks [fighting sticks], kileys [boomerangs], shield (the one the nigger tried to stop the charge of shot with), stone hatchet, string, chisels (made from iron hoop, and a large spike nail) and different other things.

Some of the men went out shooting today and returned with a few rats and a small kangaroo, the largest kangaroo here is not larger than an ordinary brush [-tailed kangaroo] about Perth....

Slept on shore again to-night.

What may ultimately disturb most about this material is the very ordinariness of it. The young diarist was obviously excited by the events he records, yet the unquestioning manner in which he and his fellows had casually assumed proprietorship of the land and a right to dispose of its resources pervades their every thought and deed.

Wednesday, 15 November 1865

... At 2 pm Mr Logue lent me a nag, revolver and carbine, and in company with young Vincent I went to have a look at the Racecourse Plains, and their sheep Station which is distant from the Depot about 12 miles. After passing over about 4 miles of very sandy country we reached the Racecourse Plains upon the edge of which is Panter's Spring (a native well) At this spring we saw two natives, we gave chase, they proved to be two native women carrying water from the well. One, an old hag, escaped in the thicket before we could catch her, dropping, and breaking her scoop with water, in her flight—the other, a young woman about 18 years of age, we overtook, and caught upon the edge of the thicket, she seemed very frightened and was jabbering the whole time, of course not a word of which we could understand. She made us a present of her necklace made with kangaroo's teeth. This was the only article she had about her. We allowed her to depart in peace, after admiring her beauty—which was far from beautiful.

... We passed several native wells on the way to the station—all well supplied with water. After staying a short time at the station we

returned to Camp, where we arrived at dusk. On the way home we encountered a small shower. We went to several native camping places, but the niggers all disappeared before we arrived. They scoop out a hole in the sand and there sleep. The men were out again shooting today and shot about a dozen kangaroo.

Had a rubber of whist and slept on shore tonight ...

DID THE TWO YOUNG WHITE MEN RAPE the Aboriginal woman? It was certainly common enough for such an encounter to go that way. But in this instance, from what I know of Trevarton Sholl, I am inclined to give him and his companion the benefit of the doubt. Even so, the long, uncertain moment when the pair of armed horsemen were 'admiring her beauty' must have been extremely unpleasant for the naked girl. *We allowed her to depart in peace, after...* : It gets nastier the more you think about it. Apart from the prospect of rape, she probably knew of Vincent's involvement in the recent murders. And, yes, there was a 'Vincent' who embarked on the *Emma* in March 1867.

It will be argued that the events reported by young Sholl were not the normal method of dispossessing the Aborigines. I can only reply that an extensive and growing body of evidence supports the contention that the murdering of Aborigines was quite common last century. People who deny this just don't know what they're talking about. The historian Henry Reynolds has estimated that more than 20 000 Aborigines were killed during the course of white settlement. 'Most', he writes, 'were murdered—nothing more nor less'. An accurate figure can never be stated with certainty (too much happened in secret, as last century's informed observers testified), but that does not release us from the task of discovering each recorded murder and doing the grim sums.

Just how common and tolerated killings of Aborigines were in Western Australia last century may be gauged by the fact that at least two Governors were personally involved. On 28 October 1834 James Stirling (later Sir James) led a party of settlers and soldiers to attack an Aboriginal encampment about 80 km south of Perth; this was the infamous 'Battle of Pinjarra', in which one white soldier and at least 15 to 20 (but probably more) Aborigines died. The other killing Governor was Charles FitzGerald who, soon after he assumed office in 1848, went exploring north of present day Geraldton with Augustus Gregory. On the morning of 11 December, in an encounter with the locals, FitzGerald perceived the need for a 'severe example' and shot a man dead. A few minutes later, in the ensuing skirmish, His Excellency was speared in the leg.

It is important to note that in both these incidents the Aborigines, who did not have firearms or horses, managed to inflict some casualties. The persistence with which the Aborigines defended their land is still not appreciated. That,

too, needs to be acknowledged. And understood.

Many colonial historians denied the Aboriginal resistance, although there were plenty of primary sources to contradict that falsification. As late as 1967 Russel Ward, in a revised edition of his popular history, *Australia*, claimed that the Aborigines were 'among the most primitive and peaceable peoples known in history' and that 'their reaction [to the whites] was so sporadic and ineffectual that men seldom had to go armed on the Australian frontier.' In fact, frontier violence left us the legacy of rural Australia being so heavily armed.

Denying the Aboriginal resistance is a necessary premise to the denial of land rights. If no war occurred then no treaties are required; and treaties mean negotiations, terms. Compensation.

It is also argued that late-20th century Australians, white or otherwise, are not responsible for the crimes of mid-19th century colonists; the past, like Timor, is another country for which we have no moral responsibilities. In what way, it is asked, can anyone in Australia today ever bear any responsibility for murders that occurred near Broome in 1865? (Or on Coniston Station in 1928?)

Conceding that we are not, individually, legally or even morally culpable for the murders accompanying the white occupation of Australia does not, however, absolve us (the beneficiaries of that occupation) from a collective responsibility towards those of our fellow citizens who are the losers by that occupation.

Collective responsibility is, of course, a conceptual can of worms. It was often the very notion colonialists used to support wiping out an entire tribe rather than limiting the 'lesson' to only those individuals who had attacked them or their property.

On the other hand, it clearly just does not wash to suggest that we have no national responsibility towards Aborigines, citizens of this country who were denied the vote until 1967.

When Federal and State Governments, committed to 'extinguishing' native title in favour of pastoral leasehold, fail to discharge our collective debt to the 'possessors of the soil from which the wealth of the country has been principally derived' (Sir George Gipps, 1839), then we must all consider how we can mitigate that shame.

The imperative to do so, it seems to me, only increases as the Reconciliation movement of the 1980s and early '90s stalls, and as it becomes all too apparent that white Australia is determined *not* to outgrow its deeply and passionately held racism.

We may not be able to change the past but we can, it is hoped, change our attitude towards it. There must be an honest acknowledgement of what happened when Europeans occupied the Australian continent. Without that, in what sense could we possibly continue to consider ourselves a 'community'? ■

H.A. Willis is a freelance writer.



The grave of Robert John Sholl. Photograph courtesy H.A. Willis.

An Extremely Crucial

Questions

1. What do these four men have in common: Joseph Stalin, Thomas Keneally, John Faye, and Damien Parer?
2. Name the Chief Executive who in 1996 resigned soon after his salary was increased to \$2.9 million a year?
3. What has England recently returned to Scotland?
4. Two musicians vie for the title of '5th Beatle'—who are they?
5. Which West Australian writer is shown as a supporter of the young David Helfgott in the film *Shine*?
6. How did Britain mark the death of George Washington in 1799?
7. Who organised the first commercial passenger airline service in the US?
8. What is the westernmost point of the Commonwealth of Australia?
9. Who was the former federal front bencher for the ALP who described the one-time Premier of NSW, Barry Unsworth, as 'a man who likes pulling wings off butterflies'?
10. Name the actor pictured below and the film.
11. Lyndon Johnson, George Bush and Bill Clinton are credited as the



only American Presidents to have visited our shores. One other came to Australia before his Presidency. Who was he and why did he come here?

12. What other event of world significance almost occurred immediately prior to Bill Clinton's visit last year?
13. When did the Irish Free State become the Irish Republic?
14. Who visited Australia in 1871 'chiefly in order to see my son among his sheep'?
15. What is the full name of the Brisbane Cricket Ground known as 'The Gabba'?
16. Why was John King the only explorer to survive the Burke and Wills expedition?
17. To whom did Israel offer the post of President in 1952?
18. Who said 'it is hard to say whether the doctors of Law or of Divinity have made the greater advances in the lucrative business of mystery'?
19. What is physicist Reginald Aubrey Fessenden credited with?
20. What is the longest single span bridge in the world?
21. What is Madonna's full name?



asional, farce, frilly, bacchanal,

1. They are all ex-seminarians.
2. Peter Bartels.
3. The stone of Scone—on the understanding that it be returned for coronations.
4. Pete Best and Stuart Sutcliffe. The former filled in for Ringo when he was sick and the latter died in Hamburg before the band hit the big time.
5. Katharine Susannah Prichard.
6. The British Channel fleet fired a 20-gun salute in his honour.
7. Cecil B. De Mille.
8. The McDonald Islands located about 4,100 km south-west of Fremantle).
9. Bill Hayden.
10. Dustin Hoffman made up to look 121 years old in *Little Big Man* (1970).
11. Herbert Hoover visited Kalgoorlie prior to World War I where he worked as a mining engineer.
12. A crippled Russian spacecraft threatened to crash in Western New South Wales before it passed over the continent and splashed down in the Pacific.
13. 1949.
14. Anthony Trollope.
15. The Woolloongabba Oval.
16. He accepted help offered by local Aborigines.
17. Albert Einstein—he declined.
18. Samuel Goldwyn.
19. He was the first person to have his voice broadcast by radio.
20. The Humber Bridge in England, which is 1,410 m long.
21. Madonna Louise Ciccone.
22. Singer Paul Kelly's (re. his song *Behind the Bowler's Arm* a B-side to his single *Deeper Water*).
23. Katatjuta.
24. Fifteen.
25. The Merchant of Venice; Timon of Athens; Two Gentlemen of Verona; The Merry Wives of Windsor.
26. 5: Labor in NSW, the Country Liberal Party in the Northern Territory, the Liberals in the ACT and SA, and a minority Liberal Government in Tasmania.
27. 'Salute to ABBA'.
28. Cool Jazz.
29. The Symbionese Liberation Army.
30. A swimming pool is named after the drowned Prime Minister.
31. Marcello Mastroianni.

Answers



22. If next Boxing Day Mark Waugh hits a straight-six 10 rows back into the MCG's Southern Stand, whose pie will the ball land in?
23. Ayers Rock is now known as Uluru, but what are the Olgas called?
24. How many Aboriginal languages are still spoken in the Kimberley: 5, 15, or 35?
25. Name four Shakespearean plays that have a place name in the title.
26. How many non-coalition governments are currently in office across Australia?
27. What was Norman Gunston's first top 40 hit?
28. What style of music was introduced by the Miles Davis nonet?
29. What was the name of the organisation that kidnapped Patty Hearst in 1974?
30. How is former Prime Minister Harold Holt remembered in the Melbourne suburb of Malvern?
31. Name the recently deceased actor pictured here looking slightly perturbed by Sophia Loren's tricks.



Summer Trivia Quiz

weight, stuid, blue, lazy, incidental, occ-

rsions, casual, shenanigans, light



EXCURSIONS
JIM DAVIDSON

Streetwalking in Istanbul

AT FIRST YOU THINK THEY JUST WANT to practise their English. 'Where are you from', say the young men, who often come in pairs. 'England ... Deutsch ... Australia?' You own up, and are then asked, 'Sydney or Melbourne?' Nearly always they claim that a relative lives there. But after a few minutes, it becomes plain that there is an invisible carpet shop attached. They are doing all they can to get you into it. Sometimes you succumb.

Still other carpet salesmen urge you into their shop, convinced that they can make you buy. Out come the carpets, an assistant unrolling one after another with a flourish. They pile up; the apple tea is produced. You say you do not want to buy, but the shop-owner carries on as if he does not believe you. He will bring out photographs or produce a book, artfully concealing the vulgarity of commerce beneath a veil of shared connoisseurship. You protest that you cannot afford a carpet, but your claim to be a poor man draws a fine contempt. You are asked to forget price, and choose which three you like the best. You explain that you are only at the beginning of a long trip, that you are about to renovate your house but haven't decided on details ... all of which is met with skepticism before the man tries a different kind of carpet, opening up another front elsewhere on the floor, or else dramatically drops the price. Or both.

Bargaining is as much a way of two men getting each other's measure as it is about getting better value. Ingenuity in response is usually smiled at, often appreciated. It's the Turkish equivalent of the businessman's game of golf, only much more enjoyable. Even when there is no sale, the shopkeeper will often insist that you and he are friends, and want to shake hands as you part.



The mosques. So many of them, even so many designed by the one 16th-century figure, Sinan. From a distance, many look like a cross between a huge grey cowpat and a bejewelled casket. Inside—following the Byzantine example—there are huge spaces, with an odd sense of emptiness, as though the desert origins of Islam result in putting the emphasis on enclosure, as in a vast tent. For there is a strange lack of focus in a mosque, nothing processional as in a Christian church; the major reference point is of course external, being Mecca. In some poorer ones the most striking feature, apart from the walls, is a medley of Turkish carpets donated by the faithful. There is then a stern austerity about their interiors, in Istanbul often offset by points of intensity provided by brilliant ceramics or luminescent coloured glass. But since there are no images of any living creature, even this high art is constrained, the decorativeness reduced in the end to being an elaboration of the mosque's sober purpose. The low lamps on which you

could almost bump your head are in fact an injunction: get down on your knees and pray.

Outside stand the minarets, four on the bigger mosques, looking like a set of intercontinental ballistic missiles. A huge energy is frozen in their buttresses, but even here, despite the power and their sense of readiness, there is a touch of delicacy in the lace-like balconies, the same modification of austerity. Above them again are now invariably placed the loudspeakers which have replaced the traditional muezzin. Five times a day—the first at dawn, at an unwelcome quarter to six—the call to prayer sounds out, to be echoed by variants from all the other mosques in a festival of godly caterwauling.

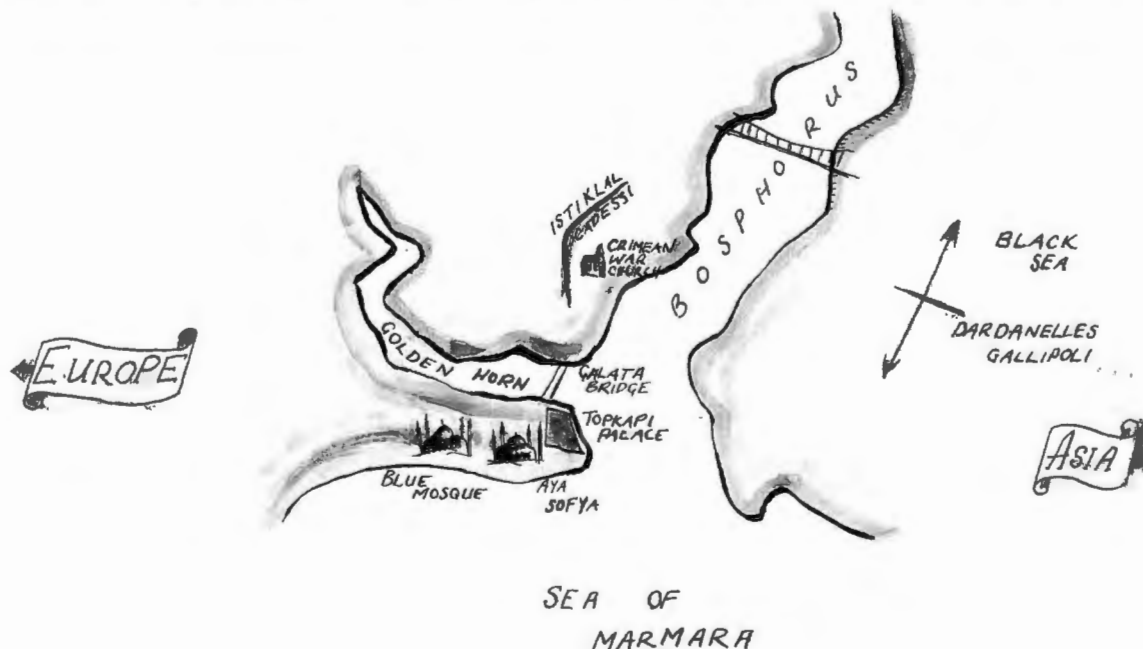


Up the steps to the Blue Mosque. A knot of men stand loosely around near the entrance, waiting for people like us to happen along. A suited middle-aged man, speaking a good British English, comes forward and offers to be our guide for 20,000 Turkish lira. It sounds good value, but dazzled by all those noughts, we haven't worked out that it's about thirty cents. He does a reasonable job, and unlike other guides does not have a patter; there are though one or two blank patches, things unexplicated. The visit complete, I pull out a note from my wallet. 'Actually', he says, 'I don't really do this for money ... I sell carpets. Would you come to see my shop?' We look at each other in amazement. Conceding full marks for ingenuity, we go along.

Inside the carpet shop, tucked away in a square beside the mosque that is otherwise not greatly frequented, an assistant begins briskly to unroll a few before us when the owner produces his card. The name of the business is familiar; so, for that matter, is his face. It transpires that we had been in his brother's shop a few days before. On hearing that we had not bought anything there, the man gives the game away. Sibling capitulation. If his brother couldn't make a killing, he obviously thinks, then he doesn't stand a chance. He is probably right. His whole approach has been more refined, even to refusing to take any money as we part, graciously shaking hands.



In the prime position in the whole city, on a point overlooking the confluence of the Golden Horn and the Bosphorus, with the Sea of Marmara only a stone's throw behind, stands Topkapi Palace. Most of its buildings are not particularly large, and certainly not high; many seem like pavilions in a park, the distinctly up-market chief camp of a nomadic people come to town. Here again there is an infinity of intricacy, with inlay work on rifles so detailed and so measured



(sometimes echoing the keys of a piano) that it almost seems to have been clamped on by autocracy. It is a celebration of the majesty of arms, the basis of power.

As the Ottomans westernised themselves—one sultan employing Donizetti's brother to write marches for his military band—more and more artefacts were produced in what was thought to be the western style. Some of the porcelain on show is an absolute horror: when Victorianism meets

a self-conscious orientalism the result is not happy. Occasionally, though, a detailed, embroidered design combines well with strong unusual colours to produce a pleasing result. Also on display are a number of thrones. One is so broad that it is more of a couch or divan (Turkish word). A low, wide band runs around the circumference, so that for all its jewelled magnificence it could almost pass for a glorified billiard table.

In English we associate the very word 'Byzantine' with complexity and perhaps intrigue, so the Ottomans got off to a flying start. Once they had conquered Constantinople, the new rulers displayed a paranoia that became endemic, and with good reason: until 1607, the first son to reach the Treasury on the death of his father became the new potentate, and then cheerily set about slaughtering all his brothers. Surveillance and precaution became the corollaries to such fortuitous Ottoman absolutism.

The palace stocked up on special plates, imported from China, which would change colour if poisoned food was placed upon them. The Sultan even spied on his own council, from an exalted window which made it impossible for them to tell whether he was there or not. But he too was fearful of being watched, or overheard: in the harem, a fountain provided white noise for when he was in company. Functioning as the sultan's living quarters, the harem was where he received foreign ambassadors. But so exalted a personage was he that even when receiving Turks, exchanges were always mediated by two 'interpreters'



Our guide is a stout, middle-aged gentleman with a rollicking gait and a masterful style, who nevertheless tells us that though he knows seven languages, he cannot read the old Ottoman inscriptions. The flowing Arabic

script is a mystery to him. No-one can read it now, he says.

We sometimes forget that Turkey *was* the first post-modern republic. Amongst many reforms—including discarding Constantinople as a name for the city and renaming it Istanbul, while shifting the capital in 1923 to Ankara—Ataturk also decreed that civil servants were to master the new Latin alphabet within three months, or else lose their jobs. He also banned the fez, the distinctive trim red hat of the Ottoman Empire, just as a sultan a century before had banned the turban. In Ataturk's time, a few people were even hanged for wearing the proscribed headgear, since it was emblematic of the old order. I ask our guide, who would look so well in one, whether the law was still upheld. It's all right, he says, you can wear one. The deflection of the question is part of the answer: if I wore it more than once, he says, there would be trouble.



Banning the old script was perhaps the cruellest thing Ataturk did: flowing Turkish signatures are a lament for the great lost art of calligraphy.



Still in the tourist quarter, the hub of the old city, a pair of youths appear. 'Where are you from?' The old routine; I give an exasperated smile. 'England... Deutsch?'

'No... no'

'Where then?'

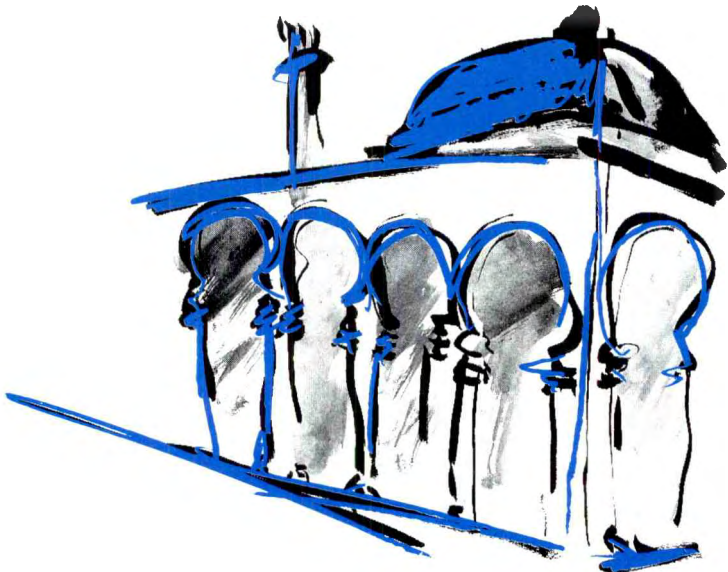
A pause. 'Antarctica'.

??????????

'Yes', I said. 'I'm made of ice ... And before carpet salesmen I do not melt.'

They think it's a great joke, and cheerily say goodbye.

The Turks in fact are amazingly good-humoured. With the concierge at a restaurant toilet, on my first day there, I tussled over the amount she expected to be paid. It seemed to me she was not giving enough change, and so I would help myself to a few more coins. She would say no; the pantomime repeated itself three or four times. Eventually she laughed and gave me the original note back. She was right: the amount was not worth fighting over. Unbeknown to me, Turkish coins have been rationalised in the way the notes have not. The small money has simply dropped the thousands of lira that still bedevil transactions in the currency, merely stating the quantity. But the big money ... In Turkey you can be a millionaire with one note worth less than twenty dollars.



There are also hints of a phlegmatism, a dogged quality in people, not so much a resignation as an acceptance that one soldiers on in a circumscribed space, in constrained conditions. This seems too deep a characteristic to have arisen from the simple fact that Istanbul's population in the last thirty years has increased six or eightfold to reach ten or twelve million. Perhaps then it comes from the discipline of Islam, or even more likely, from centuries of autocracy, for no one could be more arbitrary than the sultan of Turkey. Once, discomfited by a thunderstorm, a sultan wondered who to punish: looking at the scroll of verse he was reading, he issued instructions for the poet to be strangled.

So the policeman who publicly slaps the face of a young man while talking to him (before letting him go) is acting in the despotic fashion that is still expected of authority here. When at the hotel I asked to see a phone book to check a number, the man on the desk said, 'They've taken them away'. Since this sounded extraordinary, I inquired further. It seems that all the numbers have been changed, so this was seen as a sensible precaution; they simply haven't got around to issuing the new ones yet. You do wonder, though: when telephones first came in, the paranoid Sultan Abdulhamid immediately saw their capacity for intrigue, promptly forbidding their use by anyone except a few privileged subscribers.

So given poverty, and given a sense of insignificance before the one true God and the state, people want to stand out. They will tell you they are 'different', 'special', or if they do a kindness to you as a total stranger, beg to be remembered. Individuality is insistent and bursts through as a kind of protest, just as in early Turkish classical music the singer produces a clotted intensity of singular expressiveness within the most restrictive formal constraints.



'Carpets!!!!' I exclaim with a mock scowl. 'The only carpet I'm interested in is a magic one!' Often they laugh and go away. But this young man persists. When I signify Australia, he mentions Wollongong, and soon the Catholic University in Sydney, and Tasmania. There's more to this than meets the eye. We go to a park bench. Ali says he is about to go on military service; I express surprise, for with that streak of grey in his hair he could be thirty-five. But no, like many Turks he is far younger than he looks, a mere twenty—which is old enough to have got himself married to an Australian. Out comes a wallet and a photograph of a square-jawed girl with hesitant eyes: she's not quite sure of the consequences of what she might do. The girl turns out to be the link between those far-off places, a university student born in Wollongong, holidaying in Tasmania. She will return to Turkey in little over a year ... Ali too comes with invisible carpet shop attached, but it's my last afternoon and I'm as dismissive as the Grand Turk himself. Since we've had a real conversation, it doesn't bother him.



A visit to the Ataturk Museum, an old house the founder of modern Turkey briefly lived in, stranded now amidst commercial buildings. The captions to the exhibits (mostly photographs) are nearly all in Turkish alone; however one, to a map of the zones of occupation after the First World War, makes one thing crystal clear. We have forgotten that Istanbul was then garrisoned by a British-dominated Allied army, which imposed a settlement that gave the Kurds and the Armenians autonomy, France and Italy spheres of influence, and the Greeks control of Izmir. (All this was in addition to the loss of Iraq, Syria, and Palestine.) But the Turks have not: Ataturk's curtailing of western whoopie among the ruins of the Ottoman Empire is styled by them the War of Independence.

This explains the source of Ataturk's great and abiding authority, and how the secular, modern state is seen as his legacy. In one sense it was a second liberation, for the Ottomans were transnational, traditionally served by people who had been taken away from Christian families as children, and who knew no other allegiance than to the sultan. As late as the early twentieth century, the court language remained distinct from everyday Turkish. So Ataturk's Turkish Republic was also a new ethnic state, a new project for a defeated people.

In Turkey the Army is committed to the vision of their former commander, and, as a legacy of the Cold War and the traditional enmity towards Russia, remains strongly pro-western. Hence the caution of the Islamists, now the largest single party and the providers of the prime minister in the present coalition government: the army must not be provoked into seizing control of the state, as they have done before.

In fact, there are few signs of the Islamic revival perceptible to the tourist: indeed there are no more veiled women in the central parts of Istanbul than there are in Melbourne. But one notices

the reactivation of an old Koranic school nearby, and learns that there have been riots in recent years directed against the Greeks, for buying up houses around the Patriarchate and creating an enclave—in a city that was once entirely theirs, and in which they are now little more than an aged handful. (Since 1965, the Islamic component of the population has moved upwards from 91 to 99.99 per cent.) But the excesses of religious fundamentalism are boundless. Western charismatics have currently convinced themselves of the need to converge first on Istanbul and then on Jerusalem, to apologise to the Islamic world for the Crusades ...

Given the military rigour of Ataturk and his programme, perhaps some modification of the existing order, now seventy years old, is necessary. Even so, it seems unlikely that Turkey will become another Iran or Algeria. Not because the airwaves are drenched with western pop; not because the films on show are invariably amerikitsch. Not even because museum captions (at least in English) are scrupulously respectful of other religious traditions, as befits a secular state. Rather, it is partly because Ataturk effectively estranged the Turks from their past. Even the son of a muezzin conceded that the young do not want to learn the old Arabic script: it's English and German for them now. To counter the pull of Mecca and the promotion of Islam by Saudi money, there is the economic magnet of the west and the hope of full membership of the European community.



It was one of the great streets of the world. Not broad and ample like the Champs Elysées, the Mall or Nevsky Prospekt perhaps, but the Grande Rue de Pera of Constantinople was rightly named all the same. It ran—indeed still runs—down the ridge which formed the spine of the old European quarter, to the Galata bridge which leads to the old Turkish city. And so in the 19th century it was said (for it was only in 1973 that a bridge was thrown across the Bosphorus) that a stroll across the Galata signified a crossing from Asia to Europe.

Not any more. The days when a small majority of Istanbul's population was non-Islamic—for such was once the case when you put together Greeks, Armenians and westerners—have long gone. The very name Pera (Greek for 'beyond', which is where it stood in relation to the old city) has vanished from the map; similarly, the Grande Rue has now to be discerned in Istiklal Cadessi.

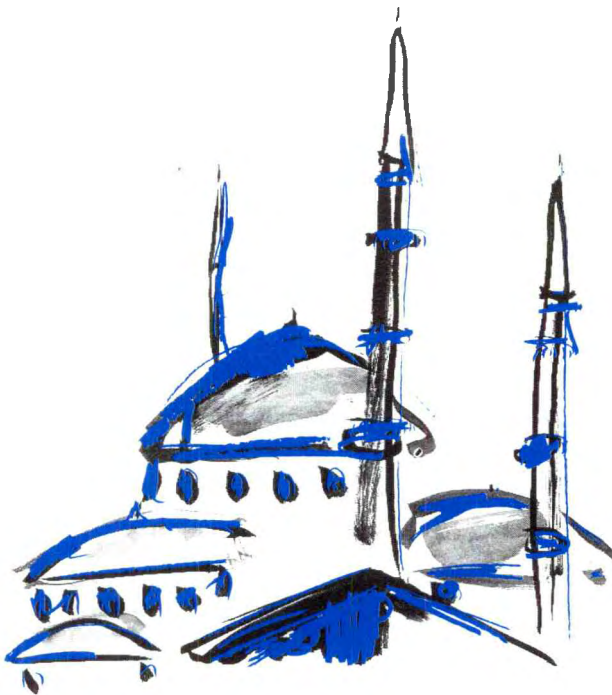
For all that, the spirit of the turn of the century still lurks here. A sweet-sounding, insistent bell draws your attention to the tramline, with its double carriage tram strongly reminiscent of Melbourne's cable cars. On each side the shops are in the contemporary international style, some of them smart, although one of the few carpet shops carries Turkish rugs with images of Tom and Jerry and Mickey Mouse. But the moment you raise your eyes above ground level, it is the battered façades of a hundred years ago that catch the eye, their architectural classicism bearing witness to past colonialism.

The grandeur of Pera was always partly relative: the street is not particularly wide, but compared with the more traditional streets that branch off to right and left, filled with tenements, sweatshops and workshops, it is still impressive. Cars may clog the side streets, but today's Istiklal Cadessi is a pedestrian highway.

Instead of carpet salesmen, there are a few touts, for various dives are located down nearby alleys. But generally you are left alone as you amble among the crowd, which reflects Istanbul's position as the metropolis of the region. The raising of the Iron Curtain has restored a connection with the old hinterland: the camel trains traditionally went as far as Sarajevo, while as late as 1912 Turkey extended to the Adriatic. So you see Slavs, as well as one or two coffee-coloured people with classic Greek features, the product perhaps of stray Janissary genes. Elsewhere there are gypsies, a few blacks, intent tribesmen with creased faces from one knows not where, and even, so I'm told, descendants of old Genoese families, the first westerners to install themselves in the city since the Romans.

In explaining Istanbul's role in recent centuries (while it was still the capital) the analogy that has sometimes been drawn is with 20th century China. If that seems far-fetched, it should be noted that

even today its people talk of going *to* Europe. Westerners behaved in much the same way in both places. European powers would sidle up to the Sublime Porte—as the Turkish government was



called, after a particular gateway—and then, once the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire began in earnest in the 19th century, seek to extract business concessions. It was as though the risqué diplomacy of the Beijing of 1970 was replaced by the free-for-all atmosphere of Shanghai in the 1930s.

The street and its environs, then, are marked by a procession of embassies. The British is like an incommensurable ducal mansion, large and frosty. The Dutch resembles a colonial government house. Surprisingly large and prominent is the Swedish, reflecting that country's 18th century importance. The French, Turkey's first European ally, built a plague hospital at the top (now the consulate), and also some law courts to impose their idea of justice, the façade as demure as a doyley. Half-way down the slope, on Galatasaray, their suzerainty continued, in that when the sultan decided to remodel an ancient prestigious school, it was as a French lycée. A modern curriculum was taught in both French and Turkish. Up went enormously tall cast-iron gates, with a pair of columns clasped together on each side: higher! better! and pretty quick about it, they seem to exhort, if Turkey were not to collapse (as it almost did) before the impact of westernisation.

Immediately off the street are a number of surprises. One is a vast arcade which has seen better days, and now functions as a tavern; the constant coming and going and the lightness of mood enlivens the tatteredness and makes it acceptable. Close to hand, and part of the same once-fashionable development, stands another arcade, as slender as a pencil. All light, linearity and elegance, its boutiques stand capped by turn-of-the-century figurines beneath a dazzling ceiling that itches for art deco.

Also adjacent to the street is the Pera Palace Hotel, rather like what the Windsor might have become had it not been extensively renovated 15 years ago. The residential corridors are gloomy and in need of fresh paint: the creaking floorboards of the faded rooms suggest Agatha Christie, who often stayed here. But instead of the great and the wealthy having been brought across Europe by the Orient Express, the car horns beep from a freeway just below.

The ground floor public rooms remain truly splendid in the late Victorian style, suitably ottomanised, while the plaques on the doors of rooms upstairs are a reminder of just how grand this hotel once was. Guests recorded on just one floor include King Victor Emmanuel of Italy, Trotsky, and Ernest Hemingway. Ataturk also stayed here when he was in town, and the room he always used is now a small museum. On asking to see it I was told it was closed: Sunday. So that's what Ataturk got for his pains. Having de-Islamicised the Turkish state, and made it secular, a shrine to his memory is closed on the Christian sabbath.



Although it is not Sunday, I go in search of the Crimean War Memorial Church. Poking around side streets, I am just about to give up when suddenly, high on a ridge beyond a small mosque nearby, there looms a turret 80 feet high, the church alongside rising most of that distance. I make my way to the gate, which is locked; a Turkish boy playing in the street helpfully presses a buzzer. Silence. A Tamil eventually appears, and shows me around. Inside the church the loftiness of the ceiling is augmented by walls that are almost bare. Five years ago the Anglicans were thinking of giving the building to the Turkish government, but the present incumbent arranged a sit-in.

In he breezed now to conduct evening prayers, wearing a shirt that not only Leavisites would call vulgar. At his suggestion, I follow him behind the screen, where installed already is a semi-circle of kneeling acolytes: one Turk, six Tamils. Accommodated within the grounds, the latter daily sing for their supper. Near-Indian accents thicken the liturgy, which is of the high and dry school, almost a mantra. Meanwhile the vicar's cocker-spaniel runs about sniffing promising carpets and rubbing its back against the altar steps; totally indifferent to the doggy gymnastics, his master's voice continues to intone without the slightest hint of emotion, a performance rarefied to the point of negation. Thus the British Empire goes the way of Byzantium. ■

Jim Davidson is writing, with Peter Spearritt, a history of tourism in Australia.



The bomb

THE DAY THAT Gamal Abdel Nasser died, the announcement came over the radio, *Kol Israel, the Voice of Israel*, at seven in the morning. In Israel everyone listens to the radio all the time.

I was as fixed on the news as everybody else. You opened your eyes in the morning to the news and then listened hourly. It was the time of the 'war of attrition', a constant wearing out of the morale. Egypt's Nasser had declared this war and Israel was besieged. That morning, people—my neighbours—went to their balconies, for even the smallest apartment in Kyriat Sprinzak had a balcony, and stood and clapped and cheered at his death.

I was disgusted. I could comprehend the spontaneous delight of my neighbours but to go to the balcony and clap—to what? To the heavens? I found it primitive.

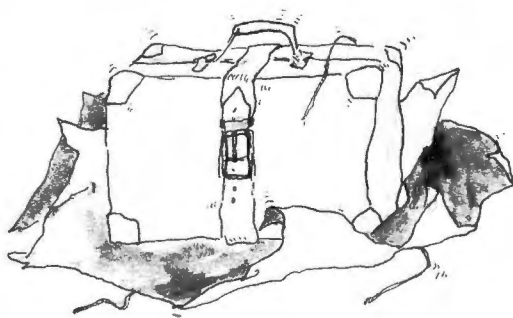
One neighbour, a policeman from Romania, tried to explain the joy he felt. This was the death of the enemy—the greatest enemy to Israel's security.

I understood of course, but he had one brown eye and one blue eye: he did not and could not erase the feeling of primitiveness that I felt. His wife was superstitious. She warned me against stepping on cracks in the ground lest the baby I was carrying turned into a snake. Somehow I expected a more reserved, sedate and intellectual response from my neighbours.

We lived in a tiny flat with marble floors. The flat was made even tinier because one room had been locked by our landlord. This room, straight ahead of the main door, we were not to use. It contained his son's belongings. His son had died in the Six Day War the year before. We could get the flat cheaper if we agreed to this one locked room. The dead son was a taboo subject between us and the landlord and even between ourselves. We simply went about the flat and ignored the room.

Our balcony looked out over the Carmel onto fields and further on to the sea. A few days after Nasser's death a terrorist came to Haifa. Beginning at the port and making his way up to the top of Mount Carmel, he planted bombs timed to go off at two-hourly intervals, working up the mountain.

The city was in chaos. At the hospital



my working day was very long, as I recall, because we cleared the operating theatres and waited for casualties to come in. We had done this not long before when a group of crazed Japanese Red Army members came to shoot up the airport at Tel Aviv. On this day no-one had any idea what would happen next, so major hospitals were put on alert, even as far away as Haifa where I was.

At dusk I stood at the main entrance of Rambam hospital and looked up to the top of Mount Carmel and saw a thin ribbon of black smoke coming from where I guessed the university was. I learnt later that a bomb had gone off under a seat at the cafeteria, killing Henri, a Tunisian student I once met at the youth hostel. The radio announcers continuously warned us about dangerous packages and bags left unattended. But this was routine in Israel: your bags were always searched on the buses, the cinema, going into shops—everywhere. (I laugh to myself, a little insulted, when my bag is searched now at the Coles checkout).

I made my way to the bus stop. People were grim-faced. I was nine months pregnant and sweating in the insufferable heat of the late afternoon. It was a five minute climb from the bus stop to our tiny flat, half way up Mount Carmel. I passed a bomb-disposal unit that had rushed to a building nearby. A whole section had been blown out. The neighbours stood around talking about the incredible luck of a tiny baby that was thrown from its cot. The metal structure had tipped over and protected the child from the rubble that fell down on top.

I made it up the three flights of stairs, puffing and hot. We were to look under the stairwells, which I did, and look into the electricity boxes which everyone had just next to the front door. I opened the door to

our box and saw a parcel, a big parcel, wrapped in an Arabic newspaper and tied with string. My first reaction was to think that I had tripped a wire and that within a second I and my baby would be dead.

Nothing happened. I waited a few seconds and caught my breath. I crept away, walked upstairs and knocked on my neighbours' doors. Nobody was home in either flat. I came down a flight, knocked on the policeman's door and told the wife to get out of the building. We went down together, quite calmly, knocking on doors as we went. Few of our neighbours were home yet. We reached the bottom and ran to the men at the bomb site down the street.

They were all 'old guard', units set up somewhat like the British home guard system in World War 2. I explained what I had seen. They ran up to the house. One elderly man came down to tell me that it might not be dangerous, however he would carry the parcel down to the field across the street. He ran up and came back down with the box in his hands. Then he walked slowly to the middle of the field. After ten minutes of fiddling with wires and tapes the parcel was detonated. It made only a small explosion, rather disappointing. The guard called me over. We had detonated a pair of shoes.

MOSHE BISMUTH, A MOROCCAN friend who is at least two metres tall, had visited us during the day. Moshe was one of the strangest men I ever met—an anarchist, who always wore black and had the anarchist's symbol of three tiny black balls tattooed under his arm. He frightened me.

He had come that day from Kibbutz Zeelim in the south, where we had lived. hitch-hiking the 300 kilometres first through the Negev and then through Nablus and Hebron, north to Haifa.

He saw a pair of shoes he liked in Hebron and bought them, he told me later. Got to us on the Carmel but nobody home. Left the shoes and went for a walk. He knew nothing of bombings. Big Moshe Bismuth played with our black kitten Blanchette and listened while I forgave him. ■

Renée Bittoun is a freelance writer.

Getting there

HERE ARE TWO WAYS OF DOING IT. First, Vincent Buckley, writing within and about Ireland:

Irish antiquities, then, while free of the museum atmosphere, suffer from the paddock condition. In the fields they may be unobtrusive, even insouciant, but those fields are likely to 'belong' to someone who has little care for them, and that makes them vulnerable. If they are not capital assets themselves, they very likely lie next to resources which are; these are mined, and they are undermined. The pastoral condition of the country has preserved many of them from that fate; at the same time, the climate which creates that condition is apt to preserve them by burial; a high proportion of the artefacts in the museums have been uncovered from boglands. Metal, stone and wood become lost, or flake, or crumble in the delicate full damp of the country; if they go into the deeper dampness of the bogs, they will be preserved from erosion as well as commercial exploitation, but at the risk of staying uncovered forever.

Great Explorations: An Australian Anthology, Jan Bassett (ed), Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1996. ISBN 0 19 553741 6
RRP \$39.95

The Oxford Book of Australian Travel Writing, Ros Pesman, David Walker, Richard White (eds), Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1996.
ISBN 0 19 553640 1 RRP \$ 39.95

Next, Barry Oakley's fictionalising of Robert O'Hara Burke:

The precious water glittered over to him through the coolabahs' foliage, and spiked his eye and belly with its promise of fish they couldn't catch, and of birds they could rarely bring down. The wurley's opening made a crude eternal triangle of it all, the sight, the hope, the weariness; and roughly at its apex part of a camel's haunch was suspended—poor Rajah was drying in the sun, and with him their last hopes of progress. A strange end for a vaudeville camel, thought O'Hara: to be pushed on to the stage to the oohs and aahs of a colonial audience; to be sold to an expedition into the interior, trained, petted, then ridden

till his ribs stuck out like a whaleboat's frame, and finally eaten.

But just so with us as well, O'Hara thought. We leave to a thousand hurrahs, cheered every foot of the way out of Melbourne—speeches, toasts, hats and shouts hanging in the air—a holiday tour through the colony, hands wrung, backs patted—then over the Murray and out of the theatre, civilization's behind us with its gasbag and bugles, and you soon discover what a man's made of.

'Going away' A.D. Hope wrote in a classic Australian poem, 'she is also coming home.' Buckley's and Oakley's passages are alike in that each of them bears the traces of exodus, and each is concerned with something's coming home. As such, each might represent the book from which it is taken — Buckley's from *The Oxford Book of Travel Writing*, Oakley's from *Great Explorations: An Australian Anthology*.

Broadly speaking, the first of these books has to do with moving out, and the second with moving in, but that is broad indeed. At this stage of our collective fortunes, it is



unlikely that there would be much of a market for writings which did no more than trace trajectories, and certainly neither the introductions to, nor the notes on this couple of collections work in such straightforward terms. With good reason, they assume that the books' offerings will be of interest largely because of our unshaken appetite both for labyrinth and for golden thread, these offering themselves to us daily, whether or not we identify them as such.

Buckley spent most of his adult life sorting out what it was for himself to be an outsider, or an insider, or both, and did this in part as a way of designating human, and humane, being itself; his territorial investigations had much more than geography in their sights. *Memory Ireland*, from which the quoted passage comes, is a protean and to some a vexatious book because the contours of the familiar and the foreign seem to keep changing places. Buckley hated muddle, but hated over-simplification almost as much, and I think that he worked on the assumption that over-simplification is the customary human way, like bad posture or the incompleteness of spoken sentences. 'Are we inward with meaning, or marginal to meaning?'—the phrasing would have been too abstract for his liking, but the issue exercised him from first to last, however corporeally he cast it.

So when, as an Irish-Australian, he talked about being in Ireland, it was natural for him to see the Irish themselves as somewhat external to their own past, a past about which they could be both loquacious and incurious. This worried man's worried song reported that a people he loved was willingly agnostic about what had gone to constitute them; it did not augur well for their self-possession, or for their adept framing of a future. Sometimes, a foreigner amongst those who magnetised him, he analysed personal, social or political styles: and sometimes, as here, he turned a brooding eye on the relationship between humanity and the green corpus of Irish landscape.

What we get, in the event, is an appraisal which, for all its hallmark melancholy, musters energies to deal with distress. The contrasting of 'museum atmosphere' with 'paddock condition,' the pitching of preservation from erosion against staying unrecovered forever—these are negotiations of bad news, but also facilitations of intelligence. Good prose will show, sooner or later, that there is an intellectual journey to be gone, and will press the claims of that journey whatever the markers of external

wayfaring may be. No hydrography of the Bosphorus will send us sailing to Byzantium: we get, really get, only the places to which we have gone with some onerousness.

Which may, however, be combined with brio. Perhaps the most telling word in Oakley's imagining is 'theatre.' Dickens, inspecting this passage from immortality's dress circle, might well feel himself its distant progenitor. Oakley writes as at the full tide of rushing experience and tumbled objects: 'the sight, the hope, the weariness,' 'sold ..., trained, petted, then ridden ...'—this is the flourish of event, the swerve of the unexpected. 'Stay clear while veering,' says a notice on the rear of a truck. It is good advice, particularly for truck-drivers.

Oakley, granted, is making his own

*'Going away' A.D. Hope wrote
in a classic Australian poem,
'she is also coming home.'*

fiction, which means I suppose that he can say whatever he likes—as, nowadays, we are told with stupefying incessancy by everybody except the more old-fashioned kind of mathematician. But unless I miss my guess, 'you soon discover what a man's made of' stands for something more than the rote gesture of a Victorian male; Oakley is seriously interested in how exploration is to be configured, even when it is being made mock of by an explorer's imminent death.

WHAT KEEPS ON TURNING UP in narratives of exploration, from the modest to the grandiose, is a sense that here the writer is in the *theatrum mundi*—not merely on the hump of the Himalayas or in darkest Wilson's Promontory, but acting a part in the full flood of some imaginable gaze, divine, human, or martian. A motif that keeps coming through in the (say) hundredth exploratory narrative one reads is, 'Here I am: perhaps I can do no other: *and how is the show going!*'

That appended question may in fact, if we are honest about it, be there in minuscule but identifiable letters at the foot of any writing of any ambition. 'A strange end for a vaudeville camel, thought O'Hara....But

just so with us as well, O'Hara thought': given the richly farcical nature of most human performances on most days, why should we be surprised by this? Noel Coward used to ask in song, 'Why must the show go on?' The fact that the manner of asking was blade-thin did not take the edge away, and a blade can do a lot of damage. Oakley's O'Hara, shortly to die, turns that blade over in his consciousness.

Fortunately for our good cheer, and no doubt for publishers, the Australian travellers' heartbeat inwards and outwards is not always in such grave modes. This brace of books will offer you, soon enough, illuminating, or touching, or provocative elements and episodes. I had not known, until reading a fragment of James Cook's *Voyage of the Endeavour* of fresh water's ability to come 'trinkling down,' though it turns out that Chaucer, among others, did: nor how provocatively William Dampier's wary flirtation with the coastline of Australia influenced the writing of *Gulliver's Travels*: nor, if it is so, that in Munich in 1936, at crosswalks, 'even after the correct colour had been switched on there was always an appreciable pause. They were waiting for someone to take the first step and to lead them on.'

Of themselves, these things mean little enough, and any of them can be construed in a number of directions. The same, though, might be said of many a detail in travel writings which, from the West alone, are at least a couple of thousand years old: Odysseus' nakedness, and the manna's evanescence, are still being worked over. The editors of these two volumes have, sensibly, kept their interventions largely to their introductions, each of which is an intelligent and urbane piece of work. Their headnotes are serviceable, and there are plenty of pointers towards further reading.

A generous stone's-throw from where I live there is a plaque in honour of Paul Edmund De Strzelecki, among other things the namer of Mount Kosciusko: metres away from that, rocks are labelled as being from terrestrial phases whose remoteness leaves the imagination fizzling out. It is good to be able to say of each of these books, and especially of Jan Bassett's *Great Explorations*, that they mount the human figure convincingly on a ground which precedes, and will presumably succeed, the whole human shebang. ■

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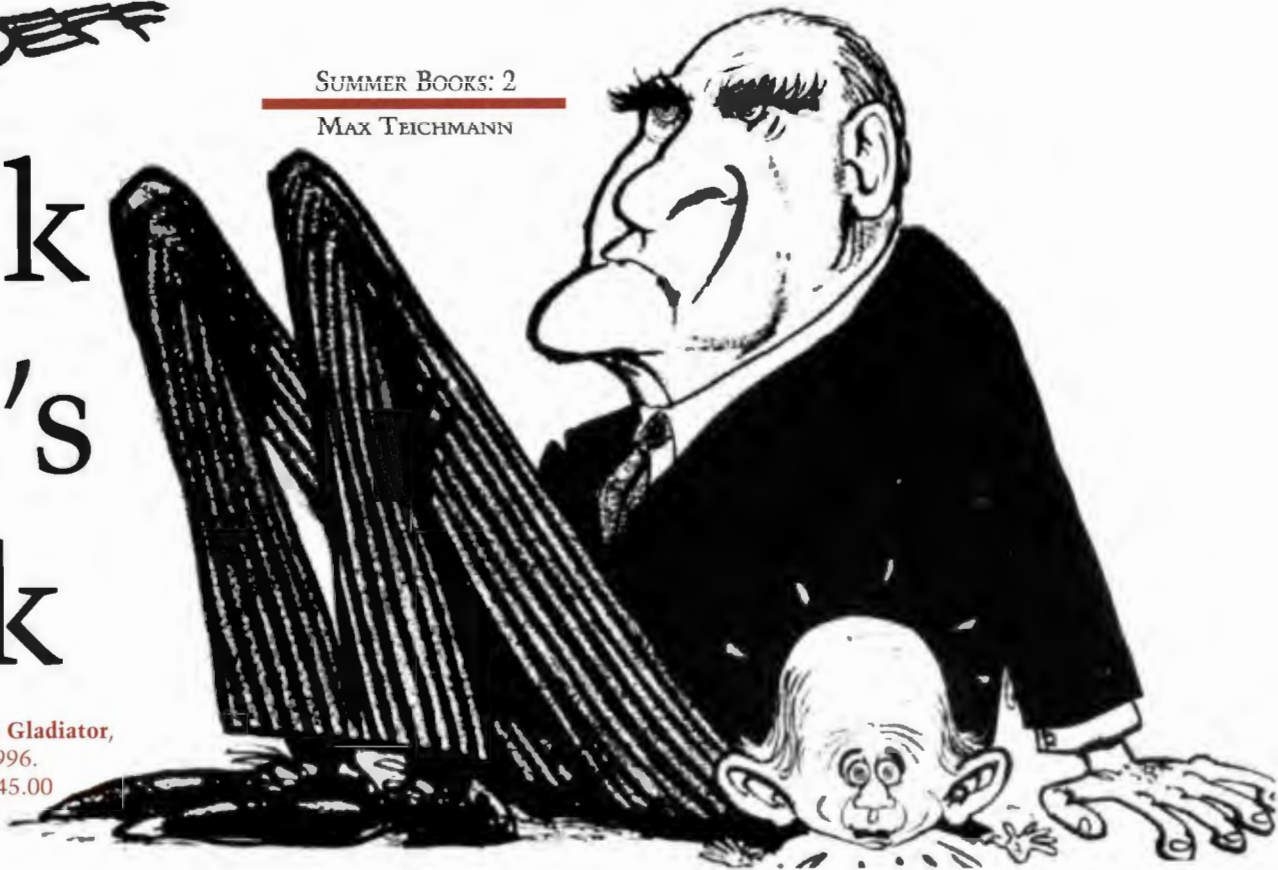
JEFF

SUMMER BOOKS: 2

MAX TEICHMANN

Black Jack's back

Black Jack McEwen—Political Gladiator,
Peter Golding, MUP, 1996.
ISBN 0 522 84718 8 RRP \$45.00



JOHAN MCEWEN PRESENTS as the most important political leader Australia's country people have ever had, and one, who, with Menzies, presided over the most sustained period of economic advance in our history. An advance, unlike some others, where the fruits were spread widely, and our nation regarded as a leading force in the region. And yet, as Doug Anthony writes in the foreword, Golding's biography is the first substantial study we have had of this man. McEwen and his policies are now, 20 years on, barely remembered. How to explain?

One reason is that McEwen is identified with protection, a dirty word only to be used in the pejorative sense; and an economic and social theory which was never refuted, only undercut, parodied and then removed from polite, fashionable discourse. McEwen is treated as Mr Protection himself—whereas the proposition that Australia's economy should utilise protective devices was the received wisdom until the early '60s. Arguments were mainly about how much or how little—not the strategy itself.

Another reason for not examining McEwen's career and the Australia of that time, was, as I've said, that we enjoyed growth, stability and a measure of basic agreement that we haven't had since. Just as we've been witnessing a steady and, in the end, dramatic slide down the ladder of international importance—even relevance. Contemporary historians and commenta-

tors, who tend to come from one end of the political spectrum, are not anxious to recall the good old days and who organised them. So we have a lot about Menzies—a fair bit of this puerile and incurious—and nothing about, perhaps, the real driving force, McEwen.

The most important episodes remembered by us are the anti-communist crusade and the Split at one end, and Vietnam at the other. The first episode divided many Australians for some time, the second almost totally lost the conservatives their reputation, virtually destroyed the DLP, and speeded the defection to Labor of a large part of the middle class. But we *can* be, and indeed have been, distracted from what else was happening during those two decades—'49 to '69, and this is where McEwen comes in.

John McEwen was born in Chiltern in Northern Victoria in 1900 (also Isaac Isaac's birth place). John's father, grandfather and great grandfather had all been Presbyterian clerics, and this is supposed to explain a dour, abstemious and straight-backed personality. Quite possibly—but there may have been other factors. He was orphaned at seven. He said he didn't remember his mother—he was one when she died—but he did remember his father, and 'sometimes missed him'. He went to work at 13, to avoid being a burden on his relatives. (There had been four other children). He moved through the labour force until he

acquired a small Soldier Settler's farm. Too small, under-capitalised and on poor land, most such farms failed. McEwen's didn't. But he never forgot the struggles of the small farmer, the ruthless greed of the banks, and farmers' needs for stable markets, affordable credit, and, quite often, government support.

He became a young MP during the Depression, and observed the effects of such conditions upon country and city people alike. All people needed jobs, a secure future, and, where appropriate, support from the State. Unemployment was a scandal, and a terrible waste of human beings. Those were his conclusions.

The Country party, long dominated by rich farmers and graziers, was a Free Trade party. They wanted industrial tariffs cut, and saw the City, in particular the Unions, the Labor party, the banks and the commodity traders as their opponents. City conservatives were only the lesser of two evils, and then not always. So political coalitions were usually uneasy, mistrustful affairs, likely to blow up at any time.

McEwen was able to change all or much of this. He converted his Party to protectionism, then went on to gain widespread institutionalisation of Protection itself, via his Liberal partners. Australian industry—employers and workers—needed little convincing.

But the miners were a different matter—and as mining came to replace food and

non-minerals in export clout in the '70s and '80s, the free trade lobby gained in strength, until it won. But that came later. Meantime, McEwen, calculating that the Country party must lose electoral ground as farmer numbers shrank, was intent on forging a close ideological and political alliance with the Liberals, whereby the CP could sustain a measure of power and influence disproportionate to its numbers. McEwen succeeded, partly because Menzies was quite agreeable, partly because a new powerhouse of Trade, Agriculture, Customs and a major input into industrial and mining policies was erected. Controlled by McEwen, and sidelining Treasury, protectionist strategies and philosophies could be deployed throughout this complex, and Treasury just had to lump it.

Treasury didn't like this, went looking for journalists and economists who could discredit McEwen and Protection, and a political spokesman who could perform a similar service. So, we had Maxwell Newton, with a sustained and often scurrilous campaign to delegitimise McEwen; Alan Wood who is still beating the anti-tariff, level playing-field drum at the *Australian*, with arguments little different and no better than they were 20 years ago, and Free Traders from the Tariff Board. Plus MacMahon, an intensely ambitious and widely unpopular politician who obtained the Treasury portfolio, which he hoped to use to become Liberal Leader and Prime Minister. A compulsive leaker, seriously disloyal, denying the obvious when called in to explain his latest intrigues, he comes over as a quite unappetising character. *But* with powerful corporate backers, and an old school chum of Newton's, John Stone.

McEwen's views on the necessity for a measure of protection of Australian industry were fairly straight forward. Agriculture and mining could never supply new jobs; on the contrary, their capital-intensive rather than labour-intensive character would reduce jobs. Only manufacturing industries could provide the work which would enable us to grow. And this largely urban base was the precondition of any substantial migration flow (And, incidentally, the migrants would settle where the jobs were, the cities, principally Sydney and Melbourne).

He did not believe there was, or ever would be a level playing field—the big countries would always secure or try to secure their own national advantage—as defined by their important pressure groups—and,

from his experience as a great Trade negotiator—and he was—other countries didn't practise what they preached.

GATT boiled down to a wish list of the economically powerful, quite often at the expense of the weak and not so powerful. Australia was *not* powerful. Free trade was advocated by those whom it advantaged—thus our wool growers and margarine manufacturers, but not our sugar growers or dairy farmers. Other Free Traders were multinationals and great banks, who liked to trade with one another across borders which they hoped would go away, ending all that tedious talk about National Interest.

MCEWEN WAS FOR the National Interest, not some porous concept like the World community, the Global village, or the Global market. His job, as he saw it, was to see that we didn't get into debt, and that we provided work for all (anything over three per cent unemployed was quite unacceptable, and any government which allowed it would go out, or deserved to go out, he said). Workers should be protected by arbitration and a living wage, manufacturers protected against cheap imports, farmers by orderly marketing and measures to prevent middlemen ripping them off, and banks skinning them (along with small business and house buyers).

He fought the British-run conference shipping lines monopoly—whereby our transport costs were greatly inflated. Out of that came our ANL. He disliked the open-ended welcome to foreign investors offered by Treasury—money shouldn't come in to take over Australian firms or land, but rather to start up new enterprises, provide new jobs. His battle over this with Treasury, the media, and foreign-oriented interests was a long one. He retired, worn out, in 1971, with the battle going the wrong way. After him, the Deluge.

One way of helping Australian firms to beat off takeovers, or start new concerns, was via something which became the Australian Industries Development Commission which would go into partnership with private firms until these were safe, or safely running; then sell out. Jim Cairns picked it up for a time, but nothing came of it; no blame on McEwen. McEwen said 'I was never prepared to condone general policies which would strip away from existing industries, which were reasonably efficient in their own environment, the degree of protection they needed to sustain employment. You have to see the whole picture,

not just the efficiency side, before deciding if any industry is worth protecting', and if there *is* a choice to be made between jobs and efficiency, jobs come first. How long since a leading Labor man said that?

McEwen's view was that it was often more wasteful, economically as well as socially, to close down a firm and maintain the workers on the dole, than to bear higher unit costs and keep the thing going. Of course there *are* limits to inefficiency and excessive costs, borne by consumers. McEwen could perhaps be accused, for all his shrewdness, of underestimating the extent to which other people rot the system and bludge on the job and their society. *He* never did, so perhaps lacked in imagination. And it was the rotting of the protection system by Unions and Business which provided so much ammunition to Free Traders. Some of his farmers could be as greedy and as opportunistic as the best of them.

But abolishing protection has just changed the focus of the rotters. Not so many of us can now rot in the old fashioned way. But those who do have run wild via tax schemes and government handouts. Predictably, we are now being asked to accept a GST so as to ease the *intolerable* tax burdens on the new super rich and our foreign-owned corporate giants. Kick them when they are down, is the new corporate logo.

McEwen anticipated, earlier than most, the inevitable loss of our best market, the UK, so sought a replacement. It was Japan—then in the doghouse, and the source of much bitterness here. McEwen undertook to try a rapprochement and make a Trade Treaty on his own. He would take the brick bats and the blame if it failed. He succeeded, having to overcome great mistrust from Japan, and many Australians. Leading Japanese couldn't believe that we meant it or would stick to our word. But as this enormously beneficial relationship prospered, the Japanese came to accord McEwen a very special status and regard. For one thing, other countries followed our lead, and Japan was on her way. I don't remember McEwen receiving much praise in this country then, or subsequently, for that achievement.

HE LIVED THE LIFE of a lonely workaholic—politics and his farm—rarely having time with his wife, who declined in health, retired more and more to her room, and expired in 1967. John had severe dermatitis for the last 20 years, which flared up under stress. He suffered more and more stress. The relentless Press sniping on behalf of

the Free Traders and foreigners, the endless intrigues of MacMahon, slowly wore him down. Then his party would become restive and the big woolgrowers set ambush after ambush. Menzies' retirement in 1966 lost him his great ally, and I don't think he thought much more of the subsequent Liberal leaders than we did. He did pay back MacMahon by vetoing his becoming PM. 'If Big Ears becomes PM, the Country Party will walk'. Murdoch helped him here and Gorton got his chance. And blew it.

Gorton and Black Jack agreed on many things, such as buying back the farm and

old fashioned Corn-Stalk nationalism. But the weary McEwen couldn't tell the impetuous, basically inexperienced Gorton anything. Nobody could, and Gorton swiftly alienated the states, the DLP and the oil companies; whereas the voters loved him.

I think McEwen has been totally vindicated by the economic rationalist performances, not least by what is facing his farmers now, for example, being run out of their markets by heavily subsidised American produce and quota-ed out of others by Big Brother, who orders us to stop support schemes for *our* manufactured exports, and to cut *our* tariffs ASAP. Do as

I say, not as I do. Otherwise you'll get taken to the WTO, that creature of the big five traders and the 200 transnationals. McEwen would say, 'I told you so'.

To end on a lighter note: Menzies conferred the title 'Black Jack' on his colleague—a character in Scottish history, with, perhaps, the darkness of McEwen's countenance and not infrequently, the mood. Golding's book is very interesting, one that needed writing, and I think that even Black Jack would give it a Pass. ■

Max Teichmann is a Melbourne writer and reviewer.

SUMMER BOOKS: 3

JOHN GREENAWAY

Out in the middle

Carlton and United Breweries Best Australian Sports Writing & Photography 1996, William Heinemann, 1996. ISBN 085561 724 1 RRP \$19.95. **On Top Down Under: Australia's cricket captains**, Ray Robinson and Gideon Haigh, Wakefield Press, 1996. ISBN 1 86254 387 9 RRP \$27.95 **The Oxford Companion to Australian Cricket**, Richard Cashman (ed) OUP, 1996. ISBN 019 553575 8 RRP \$59.95

I ENVY SPORTS WRITERS. I envy them for the manner in which sport allows them to write. A good sporting contest has more melodrama than a hostage crisis in the middle of a wedding on *Neighbours*; enough in fact for a writer with an explorer's determination not just to expand beyond facts and figures but to turn sport into something of a parallel world. The reader tolerates the many conceits that sports writers employ in this pursuit because for them it is an escape. How many times have you seen someone open up a paper at a bus stop or train station, briefly cast their eye from under a furrowed brow at the first page, then turn the paper around with relish and immerse themselves in the sports section?

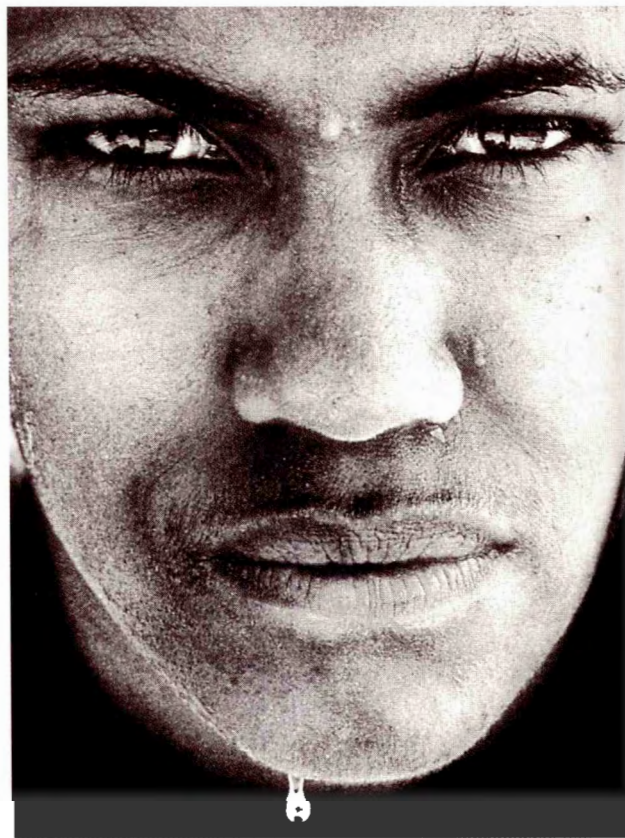
But even though sports writers may have more clay on their potter's wheel than poor old economics correspondents or political roundsmen, we are blessed in this country with an abundance of talented people who know how to use the opportunity. Many of them found a spot in Carlton and United's *Best Australian Sports Writing and Photography* (a venture which marks CUB's expanding sponsorship of sports to help fill the void left by the enforced absence of tobacco-dollars). As you skip from Peter Fitzsimons to

Martin Flanagan across to Les Carlyon and up to Spiro Zavos, you quickly develop the sense that good sports writing comes from an understanding that sport extends be-

yond the picket fence around the oval or the rails bounding the home straight. And it is the circumstance of a spirited performance—the history, the personalities, and the obstacles—which more often than the skill exhibited on the day, decides whether it will be remembered or not.

Les Carlyon loves his racing. He savours everything about it and I'm sure if he could he'd nurture it with the same care my next-door neighbour employs with his agapanthus. His winning entry *Farewell to a Warrior* displays the anatomy of his affection for racing in the shape of one horse, Schillaci—the grey that just kept winning sprints and middle-distance races when it wasn't supposed to. He describes the lead-up to the Futurity Stakes at Caulfield in the autumn of 1995, the last win, when his trackwork suggested that the only way he was going to finish was with the assistance of a horse-sized wheel-chair. But on the day, the old bugger bested 1994 cup winner Jeune and horse-of-the-year Mahogany.

I can remember feeling no animosity towards the old grey when it got up, even though it had done my money, because that particular Futurity was a race with character. (In my less gracious moments, I can be heard to suggest





that a particular horse should be transferred to the Slaven/Nelson stable. They achieved fame with their steed Rooting King using an unusual training method involving three-penny bungers and couple of cricket stumps.) Indeed I had backed Jeune out of loyalty more than judgment, since it won the Melbourne Cup for me at 20/1. It did, however, put some form on the board when it resumed earlier in the autumn with a race record win in the Orr Stakes. But Schillachi's run was full of so much guts, and from most points of view so improbable, that it just had to be admired. The tone of Carlyon's tribute says a lot about a game old war-horse, yet it says as much about racing and why people love it so.

Alongside this mock eulogy is an all too real one given by Spiro Zavos, *The Sydney Morning Herald's* eloquent Rugby Union and leader writer. It marked the passing of Wanda Jamrozik, a sports writer with *The Australian*, who early in 1996 was found dead in her Bondi flat. Zavos sent her off

with a subtle comparison to her Union idol David Campese—another 'risk-taker'—and Virgil's phrase *lacrimae rerum* (the tears of things).

There is a bit of humour too: Clinton Walker describing what it's like to grow up in Melbourne's outer suburbs as a football addict and a piece by Jeff Thomson in conjunction with Paul Toohey: 'Pansies are Grown, Bowlers are Born'. Thommo offers us this insight into the world of advertising from the perspective of the hired person-ality:

I've done lots of ads... Aeroplane Jelly, I did that. Hang on...it wasn't Aeroplane Jelly. It was some other shit. We did that ad at VFL Park. It was a warm day and the jelly was melting... It annoyed me. Espe-

cially eating it. I don't mind jelly, mind you, but by the bucketload it gets a bit much. I was spitting it out everywhere. Then I started getting bored. Maybe it was Pioneer Jelly.

Thommo obviously doesn't belong to the Michael Jordan school of product endorsement.

One of the disappointments of the book is, surprisingly, the two pieces by cricket writer Gideon Haigh. To be fair this is because his shorter pieces cannot compare to his books. His seemingly inexhaustible mine of facts needs length to be woven together by his soft, prosaic style. His reflective diary of the 1994/95 Ashes tour, *One Summer, Every Summer*, has this gem of a passage on Alexander Downer at the Adelaide test match, shortly after he was dumped as opposition leader:

Alexander Downer appears in the box, like one of those Elizabethan ghosts that

walk around with their heads under their arms, and receives a sympathetic reception. His stock have a long association with the Oval... a hundred years ago the ex-premier Sir John Downer had sat next to Albert Trott, soothing his nerves as he waited to bat on his test debut. Trott went into the annals with 8-43 and two unbeaten innings, but I'd waited fruitlessly for Alexander to make a pitch for the cricket vote.

No, he had been too busy making his bed.

HIS LATEST WORK is an updated version of Ray Robinson's *On Top Down Under*. A detailed profile of every Australian captain since Test cricket began, it combines two writers who are masters of the aside. I had not read any of Ray Robinson before opening this book, something which I now regret. His departures are poignant and there is a Lawson-like quality in his adroit use of simple English. The stand-out is his conclusion to the chapter on Harry Trott, Albert's brother, who captained Australia prior to the turn of the century:

The man who was everybody's friend died gauntly at fifty-one on 9 November 1917. As the cortege moved towards Brighton cemetery it became greater at every part of the journey.

The early chapters of Robinson's have such a stamp of authority that I found myself racing through them in anticipation of what he wrote about Bradman and his reputation for being aloof and distant. He gives a couple of reasons for this: the practical joking of team-mates in his early days as the boy-wonder that bordered on the malicious; and his single-mindedness in scoring as many runs as possible, other players' interests notwithstanding. Robinson promptly qualifies this last suggestion by stating the obvious—Bradman's success was in the team's best interests.

Robinson does have his favourites and there is no doubting that Lindsay Hassett was at the top of his list. He was charmed by Hassett's endearing larrikinism and simple joy in playing the game, and disappointed that he earned the disapprobation of some of the game's administrators. Robinson delights in relating anecdotes about Hassett, one of which regards the time the touring party encountered in the Suez an Arab Sheikh who had 198 wives. Ruminating on this extraordinary example of polygamy, Hassett observed that if he had two more he'd be entitled to a new ball. Another has him

dining in London one night when a waiter removed Hassett's jacket to have it cleaned after spilling some Peach Melba down its front. Noticing a spot on his slacks, he called the waiter back, pantsed himself, and sat there for the rest of the meal in shirt, tie and jocks. And this was in the Park Lane Hotel. For Robinson, to whom the quality of the cricket and the personalities who played it were far more important than the record of winning and losing, Hassett was a prize.

For those thirsting for more detail, Oxford University Press has released its *Companion to Australian Cricket*, a follow-up to its *Companion to Australian Sport*. A more comprehensive volume on cricket's history, its players and its themes is hard to imagine. In flicking through I was reminded of the pluck of David Boon when after having his chin cut open by a rising delivery at Sabina Park, Jamaica, he stayed at the crease to have the wound stitched before he went on to make a century. I discovered that Bodyline's mastermind, Douglas Jardine, was not the one-dimensional character depicted in the Kennedy-Miller production, but in fact a complex man deeply interested in eastern philosophy and mysticism. And an insight into Cheryl Kernot's political behaviour is proffered by an entry which credits her as one of the first women to umpire men's grade cricket in Australia. After she acknowledged an appeal in a fourth-grade match at Sydney Uni's oval in 1975 the batsman petulantly refused to accept her decision. She stood firm, however, and he soon trotted off.

GIVEN THAT IT HAS ALWAYS been overshadowed by the men's game, to have gathered so many facts and stories about women who played first class cricket represents some intrepid research. Revealing for this reviewer was the entry on Alma Vogt, a right-arm quick who played just the one test for Australia against the touring English in 1948/49. She first played in Melbourne for a club, founded before the Second World War by rails bookmaker Harry Youlden, which predates the one that presently has the pleasure of my ham-fisted services. Now we'll have to find a photo of her and put her up in the honour roll. I'm sure she'd like the club these days: half the players go by the nickname 'Nuts', the beer is cold and cheap and the Club President is an excellent barbequer of dim sims.

One of the best, and saddest, stories to emerge from these three annals is Eddie Gilbert's; an Aboriginal fast bowler from

Cherbourg Mission who played for Queensland in the 1930s. His claim to fame was dismissing the Don for one of only six ducks he fell for in first class cricket. His bowling was so quick that day that Bradman described it as the luckiest duck he ever made (one delivery was reputed to have knocked the bat right out of his hands). What was extraordinary was how successful Gilbert was, playing over six seasons with the state, at a time when indigenous sporting success was far from encouraged. According to the piece in the CUB volume by Colin Tatz, The Aboriginal Protector would not pay his expenses and controlled his movements with a chaperone (he was even forced during Brisbane matches to live in a tent pitched in an administrator's backyard). His success came at the expense of another talented sportsman, Rugby League player Frank Fisher. An English club wanted to sign him but authorities refused, stating that one sportsman from Cherbourg was enough. Fisher was Cathy Freeman's grandfather.

The entry on Bodyline in the *Oxford Companion to Australian Cricket* suggests that there was a strong argument about at the time that Australia should fight fire with fire and select Eddie Gilbert to bowl the

same line as Larwood, however he lost form and confidence after he was controversially no-balled for throwing in a match against Victoria. Perhaps it was just as well as it would have been an ignominious debut.

Having come close to Australian selection, Eddie Gilbert ended his days in sad circumstances. He died in 1978 at an asylum where he had spent the previous 30 years.

I first encountered Eddie Gilbert five years ago on the walls of the Queensland Art Gallery. Ron Hurley's painting *Bradman bowled Gilbert* took hold of me for a couple of hours. The Don is depicted as a shining knight playing a luminescent cover drive, losing his stumps to Gilbert, who is martyred on the cross yet still able to get a ball away.

At least they met as equals out in the middle. ■

Jon Greenaway is *Eureka Street's* assistant editor

Below; some young spectators on the now concreted SCG Hill in 1958.

Left: Paraplegic wheelchair rock-climber Nick Morozoff in Sydney, photographed by Tim Clayton.

Previous page: Kathy Freeman, photographed by Montalbetti/Campbell



Revisiting Vatican II

HALF A LIFETIME HAS ELAPSED SINCE the beginning of the Second Vatican Council in October 1962. In fact, it is 37 years since Pope John XXIII (1958-1963) announced his intention of calling a General Council to a bemused and unimpressed group of mainly curial cardinals at a consistory on 25 January 1959 in the chapter house of Saint Paul's Outside the Walls.

The Council concluded in December 1965, but we have had to wait until now for a major history of the event. The first of the projected five volumes of the *History of Vatican II* has only recently become available in Australia. The work is being carried out by an international group of scholars under the general editorship of the leading Italian historian of the 20th century Catholic church, Giuseppe Alberigo of the *Instituto per le Scienze Religiose* in Bologna. The English version is being edited by Joseph A. Komonchak of the Catholic University of America.

It will cover each of the four sessions, with the first volume focusing on the preparation and events in the years leading up to the Council.

The international range of conciliar scholarship is well represented in the first volume: Alberigo has written an excellent essay examining the period just before the announcement of the Council; he then discusses Pope John's intentions in calling Vatican II and looks at the response of both Catholic and non-Catholic institutions and individuals to the idea. He also outlines opposition to the conciliar concept from within the Roman Curia.

Etienne Fouilloux of Lyons sets out the history of what was called in 'vaticanese', the 'anti-preparatory' phase. Komonchak looks at the struggle for control of the formation of the agenda between those who wanted a pastorally oriented council and those who wanted to focus on doctrine and specifically on the condemnation of error. Klaus Wittstadt of Wurtzburg examines events in the months immediately before the opening (10 October 1962) and practical arrangements for it. In a fascinating contextual essay, J. Oscar Beozzo of Sao

**History of Vatican II.
Announcing and Preparing Vatican Council II:
Towards a New Era in Catholicism, Giuseppe
Alberigo, and Joseph A. Komonchak (eds).
Maryknole: Orbis/Leuven: Peeters, 1995.
ISBN 1 57075 049 1 (v. 1) RRP \$160.00**



Paulo surveys the religious and ideological world of the early 1960s.

Why did John XXIII call the Council? Alberigo says that he became convinced during the first months of his papacy of the need for a Council and the decision resulted directly from 'the personal conviction of the pope'. He also seems to have been influenced by the synodal practice of the Eastern church.

There had been discussion about continuing Vatican I under Pius XI (1922-1939) and Monsignor Celso Costantini actually drew up a plan for a council somewhat like Vatican II. Pius XII had suggested a Council which he placed in the hands of Cardinal Alfredo Ottaviani in the early 1950s, but due to the Pope's drawn-out illness nothing came of it. Pope Roncalli seemingly only heard of these earlier plans after he had called Vatican II.

John was convinced that the church faced a new situation that was not

threatening but full of possibility. He wanted an open, pastoral council, not one that would condemn the 'errors of the day'.

Alberigo says 'Pope John wanted a Council that would mark a transition between two eras, that is, that would bring the church out of the post-Tridentine period ... into a new phase of witness and proclamation and would also recover substantial and abiding elements of the tradition considered able to nourish and ensure fidelity to the gospel during so difficult a transition'.

The Pope's vision was extraordinarily broad and he had an almost prophetic sense of the significance of the historical epoch through which the church was passing in the 1960s.

In some ways the media and ordinary Catholics responded more positively to John's vision than did the bishops. Alberigo comments on 'the initial myopia' of most of the hierarchy who seemed to lack any broad perspectives on the relationship of Catholicism to contemporary culture.

This is well summed up in the comment of Cardinal Norman Gilroy of Sydney, reported by Edmund Campion, that the Council would be over in within weeks with the bishops simply ratifying Roman decisions. Re-enforcing this lack of vision, Fouilloux reports that in response to a Roman request for *vota* or suggestions for conciliar topics 'Thomas McCabe, Bishop of Wollongong in Australia, took six months to reply in six lines that he had almost nothing to suggest'.

ONE OF THE MOST SIGNIFICANT SOURCES of opposition to the idea of the Council came from within the Curia itself, especially from a group around Ottaviani's Holy Office (successor to the Roman Inquisition and predecessor to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith). The prevailing feeling was that if they could not sabotage the Council, the curialists should try to get control of the process.

The sense of bitterness and resentment surrounding the Pacelli Curia is well expressed by the caustic and cynical priest, Don Giuseppe de Luca, writing in August

1959 to the then Archbishop Montini of Milan: 'After an initial scare the circle of elderly vultures is returning. But it returns with a thirst for new torments, new vendettas. Around the *carum caput* [i.e. the 'dear head'—the Pope] this macabre circle presses close. It has regained its composure, that's for sure'.

One of the most interesting sections in the book is Fouilloux's summary of the *vota* or responses that came back from the bishops, Catholic universities and experts. What is striking about the *vota* is that so much was actually achieved in the Council against a prevailing background of such ecclesiastical narrowness and insularity. Despite their antagonism the influence of most of the curial offices on the preparations seems to have been rather limited.

The *vota* contained widespread calls for condemnations of theologians (especially those from the *nouvelle théologie* like Congar, de Lubac, Rahner and Teilhard de Chardin). There was a deep sense of alienation from the world and culture. There was no feeling even in Latin America for questions of social justice (the Paraguayan bishops allowed the local dictator, Stroessner, to pay for them to attend the Council). Largely forgotten today is the all-pervading mariology of the preconciliar period. There was little attention to the wider world and the surrounding cultural context.

Anglo-Saxon responses were characterised by strong ultramontanism and the assertion of a Catholic identity over and against the surrounding Protestant world.

The most open responses came from two distinct sources: the north-western European world (especially from the Belgian, Dutch and German Bishop's conferences) and from the Eastern Catholic churches. The Easterners were highly critical of constant Latin encroachments on their privileges and they feared new definitions that would separate them even more from the Orthodox.

Another group that responded well to Pope John's call for *aggiornamento* were the Indonesian bishops, no doubt influenced by the Dutch. They actually placed the problem of world population first on their *vota*. Fouilloux comments that 'the antepreparatory consultation brought out less the unity of the Catholic world than its diversity' (p 132).

The other key issue that emerged was Christian unity. The importance of Augustin Bea, the German Jesuit, and the Swiss priest Otto Karrer in the ecumenical aspects of preparation for Vatican II were

pivotal. The Orthodox, Anglicans and Protestants cautiously welcomed Catholic initiatives, especially through the world Council of Churches. However, non-Catholics seemed to be asking themselves cautiously: 'Can Rome change?'

Above all it was the theologians who first perceived the possibilities opened up by the Council. Perhaps the most important of these was Yves Congar. Reflecting later in his *Journal* Congar said: 'I saw in the Council an opportunity not only for the case of unity but also of ecclesiology...and for making substantial progress in matters ecumenical. I committed myself to the task of stoking public opinion so that it would expect and demand much'. The then young Swiss theologian, Hans Küng, took a similar view and his books and lectures across the world probably forced a broader agenda on unwilling bishops.

YET, DESPITE THIS, A THEOLOGIAN of the distinction of Karl Rahner was still suspect in Rome as late as June 1962. He was told by the Jesuit superiors that 'all his writings were under Roman censorship' (p 456) and he played little or no part in preparations

for the Council. Cost was an important issue for the Vatican. It was assumed the Council would last one year with an estimated cost of between US\$25 and \$33 million. The expenses of over 1000 bishops were paid for by Rome. There is one story of a missionary bishop from Cameroon who was 'almost out of money for his journey by the time he reached Paris; he had to continue to Rome by second class train, and this while fasting, until finally some French soldiers gave him some of their provisions' (p 498).

I have not referred here to the rich detail in Komonchak's essay on the actual preparation of the documents that were to be so quickly rejected by the first session of the Council.

In fact the whole book is a treasure trove of detail. Despite the drawbacks of a rather stilted translation and the high price (A\$160), *History of Vatican II* will certainly remain the authoritative source on the Council for many years to come. ■

Paul Collins is a priest, broadcaster and writer. His *Papal Power* will be published by HarperCollins this year.

SUMMER BOOKS: 5

ANNELISE BALSAMO

Telling on the Fourth Estate

The Truth Teller, Margaret Simons, Minerva (Reed Books Australia), 1996. ISBN 1863305343s RRP \$15.95

MARGARET SIMONS' SECOND NOVEL, *The Truth Teller*, is aptly titled. Against the current tide of esoteric novel titles, Simons' thematic intention is immediately explicit. But this is not a simple exercise in finding a person who tells the truth. Simons' truth teller is a movable feast: she does not legitimise one teller, as 'right' or 'real', in the novel. Instead, *The Truth Teller* explores the complicated activity of telling itself. Much of this novel is about the mysterious dynamic between the person who tells and the person who listens, and how truth is (re)constructed in the rolling, never-ending cycles of telling and hearing. Simons unpacks this shifting truth as the key to identity, to intention, and to the heart of human experience.

This novel is not a lyrical, breathtaking, or even pretty read. Simons, a former journalist, is interested, instead, in investigating her subject, and spends no time on obvious literary devices. But the straightforward narrative style is a double-edged sword—while it does cut to the heart of Simons' investigation, it can also appear simplistic, even slightly pat. I think, however, the novel is rescued by a dramatic and genuine undercurrent: viciousness and anger surface in some unexpected places.

Simons sets about her task through a very calculated structure. She has four principal tellers. Three work as journalists in a newsroom on a daily paper and one works in the sex industry. (Only used-car salesmen and lawyers, surely, sit lower on the

truth-telling scale.) Yet it is because these four tellers speak with such forked tongues that Simons is able to dig around in the ashes of telling and truths, and hint at the possibility of renewal.

Each teller represents a way of telling. Simon Spence is the quintessential newspaper man, telling his stories in short paragraphs, beginning with who, when, why, what, where. He tells what he thinks the public should hear. Pru Faraday is, perhaps problematically, the 'female' voice who writes, and tells, human interest stories. Hers are emotional tales, the stories that 'make a difference'. Max Killinger, a Machiavellian character, is interested in showing rather than telling. (The novel calls this madness.) Ophelia, the sex worker, is coded as a whore on two levels: she is professionally a whore (her name is a joke given to her by a pimp), but, as a kind of textual joke, she also tells all the stories readers are supposed to desire. So she tells the 'inside' stories about brothels (and some fairly unsavoury sexual activities), juicy little anecdotes about each of the three journalists, and embarrassing stories about childhood.

She explores vulnerability. Paradoxically, this story whoring—that is, being told the stories that 'get you in the mood' to be a sympathetic reader—actually does redeem most of the other tellers in the novel.

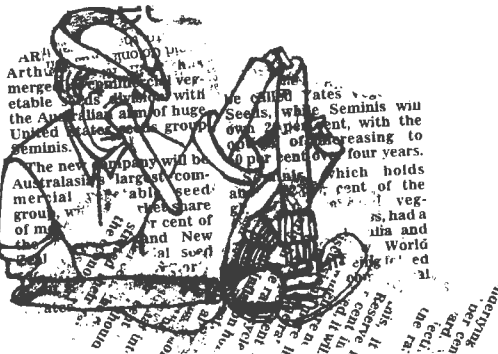
But telling, Simons warns us in *The Truth Teller*, is not just about the self. That Simon Spence can reveal himself as soulless, that Pru Faraday chooses the biggest human interest tale of all, motherhood, or that Max Killinger chooses to show madness rather than tell reason, is one thing, but tales also reach outwards, to destroy or redeem other subjects (and often those who listen). So while Ophelia occupies the uncomfortable position of the hooker with a tongue of gold, the journalists have razor tongues, particularly Simon Spence. Indeed it is his (re)telling Ophelia's stories about brothels in his newspaper that darkens the skies with destroyed subjects, including Ophelia herself.

The difference between self-serving telling, and therapy through telling is, in the novel, very much a difference of gender. Men tell when telling will serve them well. Women tell to protect, assist, love, heal. Men and women might tell the same stories, but they are never told the same way.

It is here that the undercurrents of anger and viciousness I mentioned earlier, become detectable. Simons seems actively to resent the way telling is gender specific. And she

is, I think, even more deeply angered by the way the male way of telling is preferred. To tell it 'like a woman', in this novel at least, exposes you to exploitation, and forces the women who do tell into sometimes untenable positions of compromise.

The true price of compromise becomes clear through the interaction of Ophelia and Pru as storytellers. Ophelia's 'female'



stories are about the brutality of men, and economic and sexual exploitation. Pru's stories are about how the sexes might, and can, relate on equitable ground. But she demands men tell her the stories that she want, and needs, to hear. Ophelia, however, demands only that her (male) partner tells her an interesting (sexual) fantasy. Of these two women, it is Ophelia who is most able to trade in the world of men, and understand the limited scope of their telling, while Pru loses her way, loses the guy and loses her place from which to tell. At the end of the novel, she is telling stories to her

children. This, the novel tells us, is no place at all.

The Truth Teller, while initially suggesting the promise of renewal, ultimately offers the reader little hope about tellers and their truths. When each of the four characters finally find their way into the right story, the price they pay seems too high. The end of the novel throws in a series of plot twists, turns and shocks through which each character is meted out some kind of rough justice.

The reader, too, discovers rough justice. Necessarily a listener, the reader never tells. We know, from the novel, that this is a very dangerous position. So we allow ourselves to be cajoled, flattered and seduced by Ophelia, and exquisitely frustrated by the other characters, but we are given no room for a tale of self preservation. The end then, a ferocious parody of romantic love, is both resisted and desired, and of course, inevitable.

'It is evening. Even with daylight saving, it is beginning to get dark. The end of this story is approaching. There is not very much more to tell. Can you see where I am yet? Where all this is leading?'

'Well ... yes!' the reader shouts. Too late and too smug, I realised the final comeuppance in the novel was to be mine. Reader's desires make truly irksome endings. ■

Annelise Balsamo is a freelance writer and reviewer.

POETRY

ALAN WEARNE

Prime rating

Weeping For Lost Babylon, Eric Beach, Angus and Robertson, 1996.

ISBN 0207 186251 RRP \$17.95

The Angry Penguin, Selected Poems of Max Harris, National Library of Australia, 1996 ISBN 0 642 10663 0 RRP \$16.95

The forest set out like the night, John Anderson, Black Pepper, 1995.

ISBN 1 876044 055 RRP \$15.95

HOW DO POETS ACHIEVE the lesser or greater distinctions of being over or underrated?

Well apart from the obvious determinants—being in the appropriate place at the appropriate time (and the prejudice of those doing the rating)—here is a grab-bag of criteria: whether a poet's collections are reviewed, and, if so, whether they are decent reviews, frequency of publication, sales, anthology appearances, appearances at festivals, readings, residencies, appearances on academic courses, being the subject of

essays and critical/biographical studies, prizes, grants, an overseas reputation, plain old fashioned publicity and the acclaim of peers. Whew! Why, it might be asked, does anyone bother? Because with most poets of talent 'being rated' comes well down the list of reasons for writing.

Messrs Beach, Harris and Anderson are decidedly underrated and here for each are the major reasons: Beach because he is perceived as hanging out with 'the wrong crowd'; Harris because he was such an all-purpose figure (editor, columnist,

businessman, *enfant terrible*) and poetry was seen as just another bow-string; and Anderson because most Oz-Lit groupies will ask 'John Who?'

BEACH IS A STRONG CANDIDATE for Australia's most underrated. *Weeping For Lost Babylon* will alter this condition. If his non-appearance in the Tranter-Mead anthology was a scandal this is ironically outweighed by his inclusion in the New Zealand equivalent (no matter that he hadn't lived there for two decades). Perhaps the underrated have avoided Beach because his books take years to appear. (Sorry, I'd refer them to Houseman) Or because he is perceived as a 'performance poet'—(nonsense: the talented require no labels and besides, Beach publishes extensively and constantly). In an aside let me put the issue of 'performance' poetry to rest. It was a term coined in a moment of exuberance by writers of verve, and later appropriated by mountebanks and the ignorant. I recall the boss of some writing course urging me to 'Whack in some performance poetry, Al!')

Some people might even be prejudiced against Beach because he is that most old fashioned of poets: a lyricist who writes words to be set to music. I would point them in the direction of Mr Shakespeare and Herr Goethe.

The title poem is one to be enthused over: a group of poems on the death of his son, it is the emotional centre of the collection. As befits an improviser, a performer, a Rigoletto, Beach can be a flip wordjuggler, at times deliberately daggy. Well, in this sequence the joker is wild ... wild with grief. I rank it amongst our best elegies, poems like 'Five Bells', 'The Tomb of Lieut. John Learmonth, AIF' and (although it is an anticipatory elegy) Buckley's 'Stroke'.

Max Harris the columnist might have appeared as the land's weekly curmudgeon, pontificating on whatever took his fancy, but he was hardly a promoter of his verse, let alone himself as poet. Thankfully, he has, and we have, been rewarded with this posthumous selection. It is a great find: for one thing Harris was the best poet South Australia has produced (though *produced* is the operative word; that remarkable talent Ken Bolton is disqualified by being produced far far away).

Everyone has their two bobs' worth over the Malley hoax and since Harris, and what he stood for at the time, is dead centre of that affair, here's mine. Point one: all of us have been duped by bad—no, let's call that

dodgy—verse: more often than not it is our own. Harris's only fault was to go public with his enthusiasms at an early age. He may never have gone out on such a limb again, but luckily he still continued telling the world what he liked and why. For example he was a great supporter of New Zealand verse (especially Baxter's, which he published) and that more-than-merely remarkable Afrikaner novelist, Étienne Leroux.

Point two: if Malley was a bad poet he was a very good bad poet; and I'd rather one of them than a bad good poet. There are heaps of 'good' poets in Australia (let alone the English-speaking world) all of them terribly boring and bad!

The pieces that the young Harris wrote as a prodigy from Mount Gambier are certainly interesting artifacts of their time: they would have made great workshop and/or poetry reading fodder (if such institutions had been abroad in the early '40s). They certainly are on a par with early Baxter,



another prodigy if ever there was one. (A further Malley aside: if his 'Sonnets for the Novacord' don't read like early Baxter, nothing does!)

After his apocalyptic excesses (which doubtless would have faded with or without the infamous hoax) Harris still wrote. The major beauty of his mature verse was that it was never faddish: he was his own fashion. If he made poems with an admittedly moderate-conservative technique, they seem sure to survive: 'Incident at the Alice', 'On Throwing a Copy of The New Statesman into The Coorong', 'Martin Buber in the Pub', 'the Death of Bert Sassenowsky', and 'The Tantanoola Tiger', these are poems that even after countless readings make me say: 'well *that's* interesting ... what's afoot here?' I first encountered 'The Tantanoola Tiger' at 14. Even then I couldn't quite see how the author of this (as graspable as Douglas Stewart's 'Silkworms') could be the evil genie of obscurantism that the

hoaxers and their cohort pursued so relentlessly. (And what is 'The Tantanoola Tiger' but a tale of a people hoaxed, told by one who knew what it was truly like?)

Critics and academics can run up countless flags: the poet as seer, as sage, as bard, blabbermouth, storyteller, scene-setter and whinger ... post this-ist, post that-ist. In the end, though, there can be but one banner: after answering *Yes to Can he/she put one word after another in a talented way?* you fly 'the poet as poet.' That is the only way to judge Harris. What other Australians born five years either side of 1921, his birth year, wrote poems that have survived and (even better) are as readable? Webb and Hewett certainly, McAuley and Harwood often, Dobson at times, ditto Buckley and, yes, Malley.

John Anderson is underrated for the finest reason: few know who he is. His previous volume arriving 18 years ago, he has since been assembling these 118 pages. To my knowledge no-one today has kept up such a constant, patient ploughing, and the least his audience can do is to apply themselves with commensurate effort. One of the best things about Anderson is that his readers are required to *work* (though note I didn't say struggle).

What does he give in return? An interconnected weaving of rhapsodies, evocations and prose poems celebrating aspects of the Australian landscape, its flora and fauna, not just of now, nor even before white arrival, but from before humanity. This is a small-sized book of which the term 'big picture' is the inadequate cliché it always has been. Has Anderson Laurie Duggan's 'The Ash Range' for a neighbour? Certainly for those who don't know Anderson's work it could be explained thus: vis-à-vis 'The Ash Range' they are neighbours in the way that two hermits living 60 kilometres apart in the bush, with no-one in between, are neighbours.

Has Anderson (have *you*) read the remarkable Canadian writer Christopher Dewdney? He too may be a neighbour, although Dewdney has been known to go back to his domain's geological foundations. But fishing about for comparisons is, on both sides, somewhat of an insult. Anderson is as original and ambitious as any writing today. I'd be certain he knew of his originality and, surprise surprise, be as sure he wouldn't know, or care, how ambitious he was. ■

Alan Wearne is a poet and author of the verse novel *The Night Markets*.

Moving sideways

THERE IS A LOOK IN THE EYE—serene and strong—of people who have faced death, accepted the prospect, and survived. It is the look in the dark eyes of Doris Brett, poet and psychotherapist, who, with poetry, worked her way through the experience.

Brett an award-winning poet, has had two experiences of ovarian cancer in the last two years. She is now in remission and says, 'it feels good'.

'I would not go back and undo it,' she says 'because I have gained a lot from it.'

Her latest book of poetry *In the Constellation of the Crab* was launched at the headquarters of the Anti-Cancer Council of Victoria by Chris Wallace-Crabbe, a poet whose philosophy 'We are put on this earth to be joyous' is endorsed in Brett's poems of hope and optimism.

Thus he can say of her:

'Here with heightened intensity and greatly augmented range are the strong themes which have already distinguished Doris Brett's poetry: flight, light, magic, metamorphosis. Of especial power are her haunting lyrics about cancer and the all-too-real operating theatre, but her reinventions of old fairy tales are also marvellous.'

Brett knew much about cancer before it first struck her in 1994. It had been her profession as a psychotherapist to help other people to cope with it. For eight years she was a consultant to the oncology (cancer) department of the Alfred Hospital in Melbourne. A substantial portion of her private practice specialising in psychotherapy and hypnotherapy was focused on cancer patients.

She was also an established writer, having won the Fellowship of Australian Writers' Anne Elder Poetry Award in 1984 and the Mary Gilmore Award the following year for a first collection of poetry.

Early in 1994, she felt run-down and had written little poetry for months. After a standard medical checkup, her GP referred her to an oncologist. Brett was prepared for bad news, particularly when the ultrasound test led to surgery by the oncologist soon after. She knew then, from her own clinical experience, that she must have ovarian

cancer. Days before the surgery confirmed her fears, she began writing again.

'Although I knew I was facing great danger, I felt calm, not panicky, she said. "I was fully engaged. The poetry came flooding back instinctively.'

The first part of her book is her personal diary of the fight to survive cancer—the 'Crab' of the title. After surgery in February 1994, she went into remission for two years.



Then almost exactly two years later it struck again. She went on writing.

'The cancer poems were my journal—I wrote my way through the experience. Their essence has been the transformation of a life-threatening experience, with all its pain and terror, into something illuminating and transcendent.'

She takes us on her journey. In *Packing for Hospital* she notes:

Here is the suitcase, open-mouthed
at where it is going. Take care
what you put there. It will
follow you everywhere
like a dog

bringing all that you give it.

In *On the Way to the Operating Theatre* she captures the impotent feeling recognised by anyone who has made that upward-eyed journey from ward to theatre:

How strange it is
to see the ceiling go by like a river...
only we
upside down fliers
on hospital linen
are privileged to see it.

In *Chemotherapy* she embraces an autumn of her own in which she loses her dark curly hair, her eyebrows, even her eyelashes:

Having often admired trees
I now find I am to become
like one. Here in the season
of falling, I am the autumn
one, un-feathering, un-feathering,
Bald as an egg, a kind of nun
of the new beginnings ...

Brett finishes the first part of her book with a poem called *In Kansas*. The symbolism of Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz* is irresistible—yet she does not see arrival in Kansas as the end of her agony of doubt, but a launch into hope.

As she puts it:

'I had a dream of being in Kansas when I was waiting for the result of a blood test. I had never been to Kansas but my dream suggested it to me as a sort of heartland, a symbol of home as Dorothy saw it.

'The dream of being in Kansas was very very peaceful. I waked with a peaceful sense. I felt I had been in the home of the heart. I did not know what lay ahead of me ... just a peaceful feeling of going on and dealing with whatever I had to deal with.'

This is the road that leads
to Kansas. To get there
you must fall in love
with gusting wind,
the roofs tumbling under your head ...
This is the poem that writes you
to Kansas and knows

that in Kansas
you're always coming home.

Now she is home in Caulfield, Melbourne—remembering her body's autumn and winter and smiling at the prospect of its spring, as her hair, eyebrows and eyelashes break through to start life anew. Soon she will be able to put aside the handsome velvet hats her daughter Amantha has made for her public appearances. She is now preparing to resume her psychotherapy practice—with no regrets, in fact, almost a gratitude for the experience. She has difficulty trying to explain how her cancer experience might influence her psychotherapy. 'All of one's experiences add to richness as a therapist,' she says. 'I don't think I will be more empathic. I just know more in a different way.'

Poems in her new book have already won four prizes: the Queensland Premier's Poetry Award (1994), the Northern Territory Government's Literary Award (1995) and two Fellowship of Australian Writers John Shaw Neilson Awards (1990 and 1994).

The cancer poems were not so much a personal therapy as a way of understanding and transforming the experience. 'Although I'm sure my psychological training has influenced me in all kinds of ways, I feel as if I come to my poetry as a

person, not as a psychologist.'

HER FASCINATION WITH fairy tales seems to be more linked with her profession, with the stories highlighting emotional realities. She explains: 'There are underlying messages in fairy tales—that is why they have lasted. I have always been interested in these stories as metaphor.

'In Hansel and Gretel we have the story of a woodcutter who has married again. But he is a weak man and he agrees with the plan of the stepmother that they cannot afford to keep the children. So they decide to lose them in the forest. But on the first trip Hansel drop pebbles on the track and eventually they find their way back. But on the second trip, he drops bread crumbs and the birds eat them. They arrive at the witch's house made of sugar and candy. The witch decides to eat them but Gretel tricks the witch into the oven—and they survive.'

In psychological terms, the story is about children's fear of abandonment. It is also in the tradition of the wicked stepmother as the villain. 'But in my poem I shift the focus to the role of the weak father who agrees to abandon his children

for fear of losing his wife':

Even now it still haunts me,
how if you asked him
he would say
he was only obeying orders...

Doris Brett is 46. She lives with her husband Martin, a computer analyst, and 18-year-old Amantha. She was born in Melbourne in 1950 of Jewish parents. The family had come to Australia in the late 1940s from Poland. Brett went to Lee Street State School in Carlton where her teacher in 4th grade in the late 1950s was Gerald Murnane, then virtually unknown, but destined to be an Australian writer of remarkable individuality.

'He inspired us all,' says Doris. 'He had just read Jack Kerouac and was teaching us according to the principles of the beat generation. He was liberating. That year was a standout.'

BRETT'S NEXT STEP in education—at Elwood State School—was 'a downer'. 'I had to do sewing with the girls.' After that she went to Elwood Central and finally Elwood High. Even at school she was known as 'the psychiatrist'—someone to whom others could brought their problems. At the University of Melbourne, she engrossed herself in psychology. Her earlier experiments in poetry were put aside for the next seven years to concentrate on her profession. She dates the birth of Amantha as the beginning of the renewal of her growth as a writer.

'From being pretty lyrical and superficial in my teenage years, I think I began to write with greater strength and depth,' she says.

Brett says her experience with cancer has helped her clarify who are her friends. 'It clears the decks in all kinds of ways—it's good to face reality rather than the illusions we have about people, even those we thought might be close to us.

'I think this is almost a universal experience for people who have had to face a crisis like this. You can discover that people you thought were close to you are not friends at all.

'Sometimes they are too frightened or even angry to be there for you at any level. The anger can come from seeing you as a needer of help rather than in your more usual role as a giver. On the other hand, those you haven't seen much of can turn out to be wonderful.'

Brett is a woman of the spirit, without a formal spiritual outlook: 'I think the world

is very mysterious place. There are a lot of mysteries I am open to.' She is an optimist and an idealist. As she writes in *The Waiting Room*, a poem in which she muses about the strangers around her outside the doctor's surgery:

And I think that if we all
reached out, wingtip
to wingtip, from where we sit,
including the receptionist
typing in the corner,
we could stretch out our arms
and slowly lift, rise up ..., lighter than
flowers
over the rusty roofs
and hover
strange great blooms
and look, see—
the houses are breathing
in and breathing out,
bright as candles
wishing towards each other

Paul Ormonde is a freelance writer and reviewer. Doris Brett's *In the Constellation of the Crab* is published by Hale and Iremonger, RRP \$12.95, ISBN 0 86806 603 6.

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FLASH IN THE PAN



Through Irish eyes

Michael Collins, dir. Neil Jordan (Village). Like most accounts of Irish history, on paper or celluloid (and by now there must be a few in cyberspace too), this film has become a point of controversy between romantic nationalists and sceptical revisionists (all right, that really comes down to a fight between apologists for today's IRA and their critics). For the record, the football-ground scene and some others are not accurate accounts of what happened. But we knew that even before the revisionists pointed it out, because Neil Jordan told us that he had overstated the case to emphasise the intimidatory nature of British security tactics in Ireland at the time (and since).

Fair enough. Anyone who wants unfiltered history, if that is not an oxymoron, shouldn't go looking for it in a biopic anyway. But it is a pity that the revisionists have not directed their ire to the silliest part of a generally well-made and well-cast film, the relationship concocted between Collins (Liam Neeson), his friend Harry Boland (Aidan Quinn) and Kitty Kiernan (Julia Roberts, unfortunately). An trite, predictable love triangle from the director of *The Crying Game* and *Interview with the Vampire*?

Why Neil Jordan, a man who has never before had trouble mixing sex, politics and violence had a failure of nerve when he turned away from fiction may become the new Great Unanswered Question of Irish history. Because Michael Collins, whom many believe to have died a virgin, ought to have been a natural subject for Jordan. Some critics have found in the film an implied homoerotic attraction between Collins and Boland, but this, though arguable, misses the really interesting point, which is that

young Michael was a decent, clean-living (if hard-drinking) Catholic lad who also happened to be the greatest guerrilla leader of the 20th century.

Killing came a lot easier than sex, apparently. Ah, now there's a fine subject for a film.

—Ray Cassin

Not so sly

Daylight, dir. Rob Cohen (Hoyts, Village, Greater Union). As far as action films go *Daylight* has it all. Tension, drama, plenty of explosive action and even a love interest for its never-say-die star Sylvester Stallone. If you're not after much more than a good old-fashioned action flick then you could do a lot worse than this but, be warned, turn off your brain before you go.

A diamond heist has gone wrong and a cargo of toxic waste in the Manhattan-New Jersey tunnel leads to a massive explosion and the tunnel collapsing. Sly plays a former head of Emergency medical services sacked for getting some of his staff killed in a bungled rescue. In true hero fashion he takes the chance to redeem himself and volunteers for the impossible mission of rescuing the survivors trapped in the tunnel. He finds them OK, but getting out is different matter. They must battle fire, fumes, floods and, of course, each other as Sly frantically searches for an escape route.

Daylight is woefully predictable—as soon as a character says 'see you tonight honey' you know very well she'll never see him again—and does little more than press the usual buttons. On the up side, as action flicks go it's not unwatchable. The pace is fast, the action furious and there are plenty of spectacular bangs. But the most spectacular achievement of the film belongs to Sly. Anyone who can get through this whole two-hour ordeal suffering nothing more than a slight headache gets my nod as a real tough guy.

—Nick Grace

Contempt of court

Ridicule, dir. Patrice Leconte (independent). Human beings are never far from the chookhouse, if the pecking-order politics of *Ridicule* are to be believed. Rémi

Waterhouse's script, based on actual events, tracks the jungles of social rivalry at the court of Louis XVI just before the whole noisome shebang was swept away by something worse.

The story is of Grégoire Ponceludon de Malavoy (Charles Berling), a country noble and amateur engineer who wants to improve the lives of the peasants on his impoverished estates by draining the mosquito-infested marshes. He needs government money for this and sets off for Versailles, hoping ingenuously to catch the ear of the king. He finds things there far murkier than swamp water. Ponceludon finds he must now use his brain to fight the merciless battles of *esprit* and to negotiate the labyrinths of influence. Madame de Blayac (Fanny Ardant) is his means, but she is a seasoned warrior, an intriguer with whom a liaison can be *très dangereuse*. Ardant is memorable as the supreme pragmatist, corruptly attractive, making hypocrisy her finest art.

Leconte's treatment of the period is free from Merchant Ivory ponderousness, and without the gluttonous fussiness of Greenaway's postmodern twaddles. The look is comfortably 18th century to a 20th century eye: it never distracts us from the real business of the film. Where costume and coiffure are emphasised, it is to make a moral point—high perruques are rendered in steel wool, sinister sculptures of detailed meaninglessness. Leconte demonstrates a world where proper feelings, sympathy for

EUREKA STREET FILM COMPETITION

Something has gone wrong here. Toke Townley and Richard Wordsworth in the 1955 film *The Quatermass Experiment*. The best caption for this pic will win the \$30 film prize.

The winner of the November competition was Joe Johnson of Braddon, ACT who thought that Robert de Niro might have been thinking:

I never really liked reading anyway.



others, faithful love, genuineness, give way before battles of wit—*bel esprit*—where style masquerades as substance. A witty retort in an effete world can be a matter of life or death, for to amuse the powerful is survival. Of course, that could never happen now...

—Juliette Hughes

Catfight

The Ghost and The Darkness dir. Stephen Hopkins (Hoyts, Village, Greater Union). As a kid I was besotted with the Willard Price adventure books—I read and re-read them until the stories were tattooed on my mind. I remember how the tale in *African Adventure* about two man-eating lions going berserk at the turn of the century made me look at our tabby, Sir Francis Chichester, in a different light. I've never liked cats since.

I went into the film telling myself to barrack for the lions—after all it happened in 1896 when Africa was being carved up by the colonial powers. But my natural prejudices and some good, simple story-telling sucked me in like butter into popcorn and I was soon baying for their blood. Hopkins does not worry about dressing things up for an era in which lions are threatened with extinction: he lets the story stand on its own. But then again if he had fiddled with it the right way it could have been much better than the pure adventure flick it is, particularly if he had explored the way the rampage derailed, literally, British plans for expansion. Instead the film leans towards a bit of uncomplicated mysticism, which in this case is not quite as satisfying as good, hearty, political fare.

Val Kilmer as Colonel Patterson, the engineer sent to build the railway-bridge at Tsavo, is very watchable, but he's let down by Michael Douglas as the hunter, Remington, who carries on as though he's

just stepped off the set of *Wall Street*. But the real stars are the bit players, the scenery, and of course the lions. I suppose as a mark of respect to the great beasts there might have been a less triumphalist ending, but we're talking films here, not history.

—Jon Greenaway

Lizard breath

DragonHeart dir. Rob Cohen (Village and Hoyts). The real star of this film is the amazing mechanical dragon Draco, voiced by Sean Connery, the ageless Scots crumpet. The theme of the story is a surprisingly revolutionary one about casting off the yoke of evil tyrants, and thereby retrieving ideals and self-respect. The film shows the peasantry being quite floridly oppressed by a father and son who put the nasty in dynasty.

Dennis Quaid, as the 'proper' knight, one who understands noblesse oblige and all that, is put in charge of the education of the wicked king's wicked son (played with suitable horribleness by David Thewlis, of fond memory as That Really Nasty Bugger in *Naked*). Thewlis does not stint when asked to play a baddie. You can almost see him saying to himself, 'I must not disappoint my public. Evil they want and evil they shall get.' I wonder what part they'll give him next—Nero, Hitler, Margaret Thatcher; the list is endless.

There are some strange but fascinating elements in the film: Freudians and Jungians and their ilk will argue for yonks over the scene where Draco takes our disillusioned Dennis to Avalon to imbue him once more with the spirit of King Arthur. In a circle of egregiously phallic pillars—the biggest one being Arthur's which lights up and speaks to him (they advertise things like that in the back of *Cleo*)—he gets back his knighthood. Not so much Iron John as Stone Willy.

But all in all the dragon was tops—in fact the film would be worth seeing for Draco alone if it were not already a very decent sword and sorcery story.

—Juliette Hughes

Dream on

The Starmaker dir. Giuseppe Tornatore (independent). As in his previous film *Cinema*

Paradiso, Tornatore explores the ways film allows human nature to express itself, both on and off camera. But while *Paradiso* was a celebration of cinema, *The Starmaker* is a recognition that cinema can be destructive and a false witness.

Joe Morelli is a conman travelling through Sicily from town to town offering screen tests, for the modest price of 1,500 lire, to those wanting to make it big in the movies. In 1953, in land still visibly ravaged by war, that meant everyone. His tent, beat-up camera, and expired film-stock play host to some extraordinary story-telling and confessions, yet as a self-centred man intent only on doing naive country-folk out of their dough, he is impervious to their charms. That is until he meets Beata, a beautiful young convent-girl whose devotion breaks him down.

One thing you're certain of after seeing *The Starmaker* is that Tornatore loves the '50s and is intrigued by the life people led in rural Italy. Sicily is laid out gloriously and the characters who step up for their



chance at a better life (read, for some, salvation) seem to reflect the contours of the land around them. One suspects that Tornatore feels it was at this time that the simple life was passed over for everything modern.

The only disappointment in this film is that it is directed towards the redemption of Joe Morelli, but it doesn't quite get there—it stops short at his realisation that he has wronged Beata and the good people he has fleeced. Nevertheless the lament is nice viewing.

—Jon Greenaway

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The fish the networks reject

THE RATINGS SEASON is highly overrated. It leads to a popular perception that good programs should be axed

simply because they are watched by fewer people. I often enjoy the programs that the channels dust off and sling on the box during the summer, when all sensible people are inside sheltering from the ultraviolet blast. There are some great repeats—the ABC has been showing *Middlemarch* again, and you can find gems like SBS' repeat of the documentary *Studs Terkel's Chicago*, or welcome revisits to *French And Saunders*.

There are exceptions of course, but strangely, these all seem to be based on a notion of giving the public what it is perceived to want, like the frightful *Carols by Candlelight*. Truly everything you don't want in a Christmas service, but a steadying reflection of the fact that an awful lot of people must be able to endure Ray Martin talking about peace and goodwill after what his program did to the Paxtons.

And on the sweltering Sunday arvo of January 5, four network channels were showing sport, two of them tennis. The ABC programmers had been to the local video store and were showing *The Importance Of Being Earnest*.

Now I have no problem with a bit of afternoon sport on the box when the weather is inclement, but the choice between tennis, cricket, car racing and tennis is Hobson's for someone like me. No doubt if there were ratings for that afternoon they'd show that many people watched, but my guess is that it was the answer to the video store owners' prayer.

When I was last in the UK there were the brain-and bum-numbing marathons of the snooker championships. And the (mostly male) Brits watched with a vengeance. Marriages foundered, children ran away from their hushed and darkened homes where fathers calcified on sofas under the Medusa glare of the shining box. There was a muted outcry from some people, who then said to themselves 'Sod it, [this was Britain you know folks] I'll switch off the damn thing and get a life.' And that probably accounts for the rash of lone yachtsmen intrepidly sailing the Howling 50s and providing our defence forces with much-needed practice at search, rescue and PR.

Some sports are good to watch on television. Skateboarding is skilful and exciting, and eminently deserves to be in the Olympics. Sumo wrestling, slalom skiing, figure-skating, surfing—all fine to watch yet one only sees snippets of them compared with the avalanche of the kind of sports where tycoons can buy a competition. Cricket this year has been stultifying, though in all honesty I must admit that I have been reviled by my teenage son and his friends for saying this. The programmers know this—there are no ads for age-defying creams or whatever else women are supposed to want.

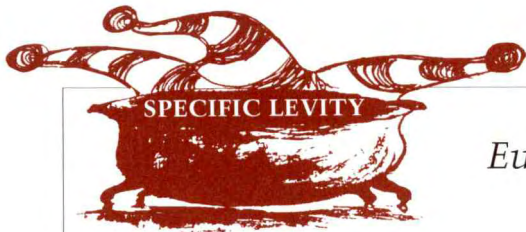
Not that the programmers always do know what people want, despite spending large sums on market research.

Channel Seven made a gigantic blunder last year when trying to woo a wider audience for its old reliable afternoon show *Wheel Of Fortune*. In a move that recalled its master stroke of selling *Neighbours* to Channel Ten, Seven's management sacked host John Burgess and brought in Tony Barber. The ratings plummeted, and Nine's *The Price Is Right* was the beneficiary. My mother said 'Serve them right'. She just switched off—she liked the old *Wheel*, and can't abide the crassness of the new version. And she has her standards, so *The Price Is Right* is not an option. She felt hijacked, as indeed Burgess must have. It was a blatant attempt to force a change of taste, and it's heartening to see that it didn't work.

But matters of taste and education are central to broadcasting of all types. The owners of private broadcast stations are ever keen to know our taste in order to target their advertising more effectively. It's then that you have to rely on the public broadcasters for any kind of public spirit or broader vision in the choice or commissioning of programs. SBS should have a medal for doing this kind of thing. Their summer viewing has been diverse, intelligent, attractive and well-placed. The very best documentaries can be found there; *The Cutting Edge* is precisely that. Their *World News* reminds us that there is more to life on this planet than persecuting dole recipients. And they have been showing the fascinating series *Mansion: Great Houses Of Europe*. Hosted by Alastair Something and Marcus Something Else, the Tweedledum and Tweedledee of taste, it is a delight. They are both greatly knowledgeable about the art and architecture of Europe, and their rather uncritical enthusiasm allows you to form your own opinions of the societies that generated such piles of pride.

Their enthusiasm is as genuine as Sister Wendy's, and as informative. They don't confine us to previous centuries, either. One of the most interesting houses was Mies van der Rohe's Villa Tugendhat in the Czech Republic. The owners were Jewish and could live in it for only eight years before having to flee the Nazis. The sense of history conveyed by such a house in such a context, its clean solidity so familiar to our 20th century senses, reminds us that this extraordinary century we live in will soon be a dead and receding thing, as with all other centuries before it. Like a 17th century chateau, or a 19th century Schloss, a 20th century villa will soon be as much a thing of the conscious past as a Norman castle. Programs like *Mansion* remind us of our mortality, as we hasten together to perhaps perfect felicity or perhaps something else. ■

Juliette Hughes is a freelance writer and reviewer.



Eureka Street Cryptic Crossword no. 50, January-February 1997

Devised by Joan Nowotny IBVM

ACROSS

1. & 23. Regularly formulated, often broken, but showing promise! (3,5,10)
6. An adder, perhaps, basking in the heat. (6)
9. Such a type could be called a shirker. (4)
10. Diagnose one of the clots, or miss both possibly. (10)
11. Alternative title for *The Piano* perhaps? Theatrical Education head without a clue! (3,7)
12. Sounds as if bygone days belong to you. (4)
13. Solidly built porter at the inn. (5)
14. Though short, Eric could be a singer in church. (9)
16. Study girl intended, it seems, to add spice to her course. (9)
19. Hail employment in the building. (5)
21. From my poisoned foot I caught an infection of the ear. (4)
23. See 1-across for the answer again.
25. Law-makers should train ample constituents to take their place, if required. (10)
26. Convey balance. (4)
27. Beat about the bush and foiled the attack. (6)
28. Peculiar red-headed visitor? (8)

DOWN

2. It describes decayed teeth people identify originally. (7)
3. Being faithful to 1 & 23, you keep it through time's circle. (4-5)
4. I can't play the clown as they did in ancient times. (5)
5. Take extensive exercise? (7,4,4)
6. To modify the recipe, work out mils per litre—it couldn't be plainer! (7)
7. Tall Tom, the cricketer, can be surly. (5)
8. Sounds as if the saga you're writing is about a gourmet. (7)
15. People like the Waughs, for instance, practise fair play. (9)
17. What an atrocity—but fury is not acceptable! (7)
18. Fantastic dream I'm having about her! (7)
20. Wise about Hill's reserve capacity. (7)
22. Boy in charge has severe stomach pain. (5)
24. King, having passed on, was recognised subsequently. (5)



Solution to Crossword no. 49, December 1996



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Camden Harbour in North West Australia was a colonial settlement that failed.

Retreating south in 1865, a young man named Trevarton Sholl kept a frank journal in which he recorded his encounters with Aborigines.

Some he felt 'obliged to pepper'.

H.A. Willis explores these early, formative events in Australian history in The Colour of Blood, p20.

