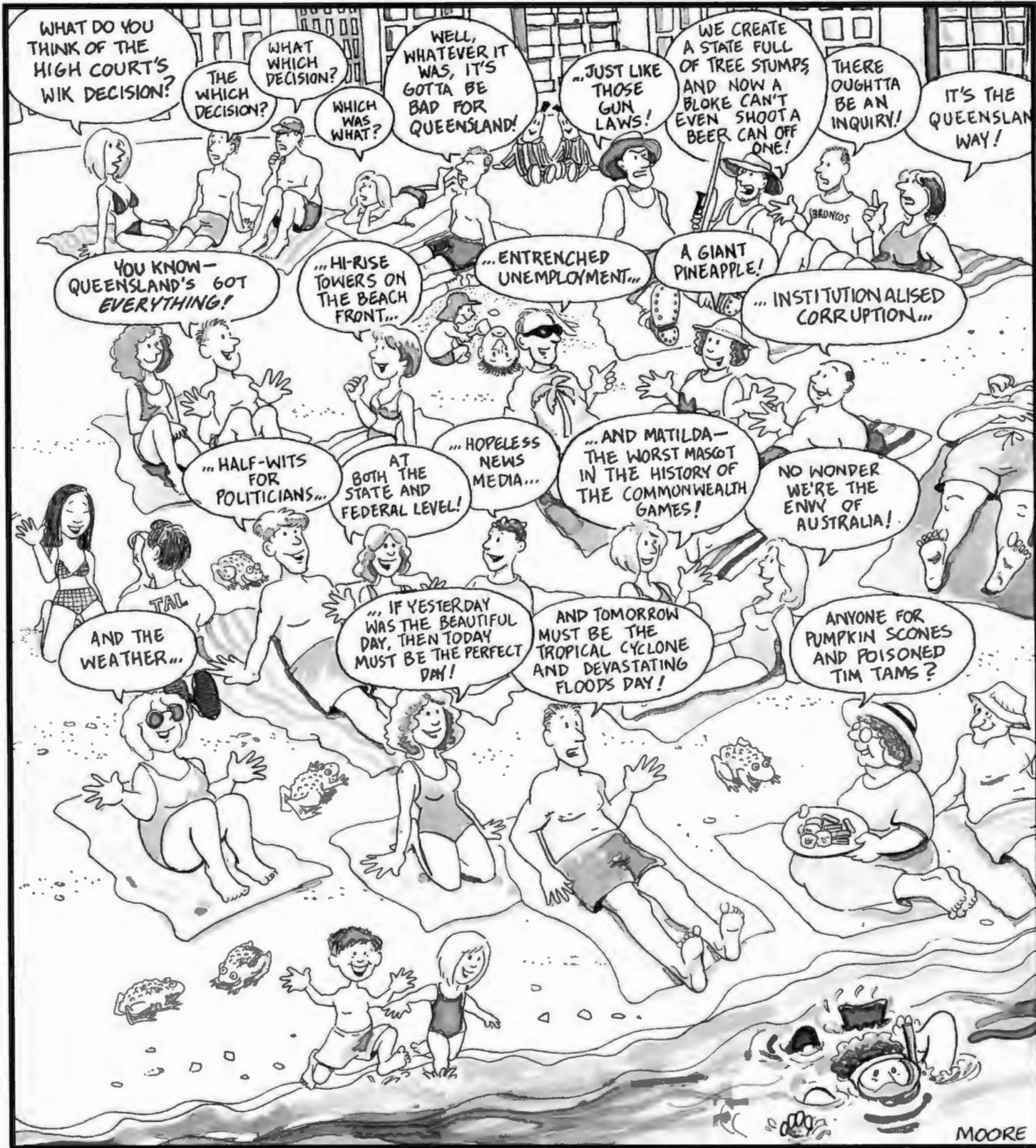


# EUREKA STREET

Vol. 7 No. 3 April 1997

\$5.95



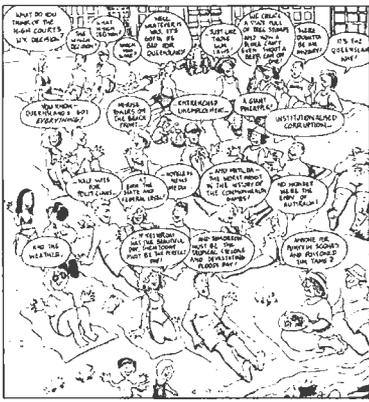
QUEENSLAND

Margaret Simons on **The state of**



*'The overwhelming majority of students in Catholic schools ... were not subjected to sexual abuse. Indeed, without the work of brothers and nuns, often in heroic circumstances, Australia would have been unable to teach its baby boomers how to read and write. The renowned Goulburn school strike made this point in the early sixties. If a life of personal privation forced some individuals into distorted behaviour, then the whole country is subtly complicit.'*

Michael McGirr documents a case history that illustrates the double edged tradedy of pædophilia.  
See 'A day within your courts', p24



*The public hysteria of  
extinguishment has now  
given way to the private  
discourse of negotiation  
and co-existence.  
Meanwhile Borbidge and  
Co. have dispatched their  
silks, with all due respect,  
to ask the High Court to  
overturn 50 years of  
decisions on excise. Some  
pollies have no shame.*

—Frank Brennan

See 'Pastoral comical,  
pastoral tragical', p4.

#### Cover cartoon by Dean Moore.

Cartoons pp 10, 18, 20-23 by  
Dean Moore.  
Cartoon p11 by Peter Fraser.  
Cartoon p49 by Pat Campbell.  
Graphics pp2, 10, 14, 16-17, 25,  
27, 28-29, 39 by Siobhan Jackson.  
Photographs pp31, 32 and 35 by  
Bill Thomas..

*Eureka Street* magazine  
Jesuit Publications  
PO Box 553  
Richmond VIC 3121  
Tel (03) 9427 7311  
Fax (03) 9428 4450

## CONTENTS

4

COMMENT

7

CAPITAL LETTER

8

LETTERS

10

THE MONTH'S TRAFFIC

16

CHANGING CAPITAL THINKING

Labor are now one year on in opposition,  
Lincoln Wright analyses some shifts in  
their economic policy.

18

NEW FOR OLD

Jon Greenaway looks at changes in  
the ALP and in the unions.

19

ARCHIMEDES

20

NORTHERN EXPOSURE

Has the Queensland of the Fitzgerald  
Inquiry era changed at all?  
Margaret Simons investigates.

24

A DAY WITHIN YOUR COURTS

Michael McGirr tells of abuse, shame and  
guilt.

27

SUMMA THEOLOGIAE

28

I'VE GOT NEWS FOR YOU

Paul Chadwick sifts through the latest  
on media ownership and diversity.

30

CHANCING YOUR ARM

An Irish Diary *part II* by Graham Little.

36

BOOKS

Ray Cassin reviews the Santamaria revision;  
Max Charlesworth gives an unabashed  
review of *Shame and the Modern Self* (p39);  
John Hewitt salutes the grand old lion of  
economics, J.K. Galbraith (p40).

42

RELOADING THE CANON

Peter Craven on the Great Book  
into Great Film phenomenon.

43

POETRY

*Back* and *Spadework* (p45) by Peter Steele.

46

THEATRE

Geoffrey Milne asks why Shakespeare  
gets top billing.

48

FLASH IN THE PAN

Reviews of the films *Jerry Maguire*, *The  
English Patient*, *Lost Highway*, *Breaking  
the Waves*, *Mars Attacks* and *Star Wars*.

50

WATCHING BRIEF

51

SPECIFIC LEVITY

Publisher  
Michael Kelly sj

Editor  
Morag Fraser

Consulting editor  
Michael McGirr sj

Assistant editor  
Jon Greenaway

Production assistants:  
Paul Fyfe sj, Scott Howard, Juliette Hughes,  
Chris Jenkins sj, Siobhan Jackson,

Contributing editors  
Adelaide: Greg O'Kelly sj  
Brisbane: Ian Howells sj  
Perth: Dean Moore  
Sydney: Edmund Campion, Gerard Windsor  
European correspondent: Damien Simonis

Editorial board  
Peter L'Estrange sj (chair),  
Margaret Coady, Margaret Coffey,  
Valda M. Ward RSM, Trevor Hales,  
Marie Joyce, Kevin McDonald,  
Jane Kelly IBVM,  
Peter Steele sj, Bill Uren sj

Business manager: Sylvana Scannapiego  
Advertising representative: Ken Head

Patrons  
*Eureka Street* gratefully acknowledges the  
support of Colin and Angela Carter; the  
trustees of the estate of Miss M. Condon;  
Denis Cullity AO; W.P. & M.W. Gurry;  
Geoff Hill and Janine Perrett;  
the Roche family.

*Eureka Street* magazine, ISSN 1036-1758,  
Australia Post Print Post approved  
pp349181/00314  
is published ten times a year  
by Eureka Street Magazine Pty Ltd,  
300 Victoria Street, Richmond, Victoria 3121  
Tel: 03 9427 7311 Fax: 03 9428 4450  
e-mail: eureka@werple.net.au

Responsibility for editorial content is accepted by  
Michael Kelly, 300 Victoria Street, Richmond.

Printed by Doran Printing,  
46 Industrial Drive, Braeside VIC 3195.  
© Jesuit Publications 1997.

Unsolicited manuscripts, including poetry and  
fiction, will be returned only if accompanied by a  
stamped, self-addressed envelope. Requests for  
permission to reprint material from the magazine  
should be addressed in writing to:  
The editor, *Eureka Street* magazine,  
PO Box 553, Richmond VIC 3121.

# Pastoral comical, pastoral tragical

**T**IM FISCHER SPENT CHRISTMAS with a temporary hold on the prime ministerial reins, calling for the extinguishment of native title on pastoral leases in the wake of the High Court's *Wik* judgment.

John Howard, back in the saddle, set about searching for a solution by Easter. Extinguishment was not an option. The issue was money, not principle. The National Party and its constituency were sure to be offended. The Liberals had to step back and let their country cousins vent their spleen. Discrediting the High Court which delivered a 4-3 victory to the Aborigines was a central part of government strategy.

During the summer vacation, the Court was fair game, being mauled by conservative premiers led by Rob Borbidge, whose knowledge of the Constitution led him to believe that he could do a Bjelke-Petersen in replacing Mal Colston, overlooking the 1977 amendment to the Constitution designed to defeat any such repeated abuse of parliamentary representation.

While Chief Justice Brennan privately corrected Fischer for his earlier erroneous attacks made during the WA election campaign, alleging the Court had been tardy in reaching a decision in *Wik*, Attorney-General Daryl Williams said it was no part of his role to defend the judiciary, even from unwarranted public attack from his own government.

According to Williams, 'The judiciary should speak for itself.' He thought 'the judiciary should develop mechanisms themselves in contributing to community debate'. The judiciary maintained its silence. As Brennan said in his private correspondence to Fischer (released with remarkable haste by Fischer under an FOI request on the eve of the National Party Conference on *Wik*): 'Neither the co-operation that is required among the branches of Government nor the dignity of this Court would be advanced by my making a public statement to repel the attacks which you have made. Indeed, Courts are not capable of responding—nor would they wish to respond—to media attacks.'

Howard endorsed his deputy's attack on the Court by his silence and fudging of the issues, saying, 'The Chief Justice didn't dispute the right of people to criticise court decisions.' As for his deputy, 'No, I don't think Tim ever overdoes it. I think he is a fantastic deputy and a fantastic bloke.'

Tim just happened to get his facts wrong. He just happened to fudge the distinction between erroneous criticism of the court for tardiness and acceptable criticism of a particular decision. And it all just happened in time for the National Party meeting to carry a resolution unanimously supporting Fischer's criticism of the High Court, and just as the government's legal advice was flowing in, revealing that

extinguishment of native title was not an option.

In *Wik*, the High Court's new majority explored new ground uncharted in *Mabo* and held that a pastoral lease does not grant the lessee a right of exclusive possession. Therefore it is not a lease in the traditional sense. It is in no way akin to a freehold title. A pastoral lease is a bundle of statutory rights granted to a person authorised to conduct pastoral enterprises often over a vast area of land. It is common for many other persons to be granted access and use rights to such land. For example, the crown could issue timber licences, quarry licences and permits for stock access by others.

In the middle of last century, Earl Grey, from the Colonial Office, was insisting that the new governor, FitzRoy, guarantee continued Aboriginal access to pastoral lease lands. Such access has always been a feature of pastoral leases in the western jurisdictions of Australia. But this century, there was no legislated access and no stipulated access in lease documents retained in the eastern jurisdictions. No matter, according to the High Court majority. Aboriginal rights of access and use would continue on all pastoral leases unless such rights were specifically excluded or unless the pastoralist could demonstrate a right of exclusive possession.

The economic and political significance of a pastoral lease not being a lease with a right of exclusive possession lies not just in the continued co-existence of native title. The theory of native title is that the radical title to land vests in the Crown once it asserts sovereignty. But the crown does not obtain the beneficial use and ownership of the land until native title has ended, either by the departure of the native title holders, or by the crown's appropriation of the land to itself, or by the grant of a right of exclusive possession to another. If a pastoral lease were truly a lease, the beneficial interest in the land would revert to the crown on the termination of the lease. Not being truly a lease, a terminated pastoral lease will result not in a reversion to the crown but in the full flowering of native title.

**N**ATIVE TITLE PROTECTED BY the Racial Discrimination Act and buttressed by the Native Title Act is akin to a freehold title. If the Nationals and the National Farmers Federation were to get their way, an extinguishment of native title by the Commonwealth on just terms would start with the presumption that the taxpayers were up for the freehold value of all land covered by pastoral leases—42 per cent of

the Australian land mass. The taxpayers of Sydney and Melbourne would not stand for it. Those wanting to maintain native title could expect support from Treasurer Costello.

Pastoralists in Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory have always had to provide Aboriginal access to their lands. Pastoralists in Cape York have agreed to do so, so we are talking only about pastoralists in the southern part of Queensland and the west of New South Wales. They will have to learn to share the country like pastoralists everywhere else.

Once extinguishment is ruled out, there are still problems, but they are solvable, honouring the principles of non-extinguishment, non-discrimination and certainty for investors whether they be miners, pastoralists or bankers.

A principled solution to *Wik* is within our grasp.

The High Court has done its job reaching a decision by a narrow majority. Now, it is Parliament's turn where the Senate will determine the final shape of the legislation by a narrow majority.

Access and traditional use of pastoral land should be permitted only to those Aborigines who can satisfy a strict threshold test in applying for native title. The rights to hunt, camp, fish, conduct ceremonies and care for sacred sites should be exercisable without the need for elaborate tribunal hearings with lawyers on all sides.

These rights should be automatic, with an emphasis on local agreements. Pastoralists and local Aborigines are far better at talking about gates, guns and fires than are Sydney QCs and Canberra politicians. If Aborigines claim greater rights, such as the right to run their own commercial

operations or to build their own outstations, they should not do so without the consent of the pastoralist unless and until the tribunal determines the existence of those rights.

Pastoralists need to be guaranteed the right to develop their pastoral leases as they always have for pastoral purposes. Aborigines are agreeable to this guarantee being set in legislative stone.

But pastoralists wanting to expand their rights to include a right of exclusive possession so as to run tourist operations will need to negotiate with native title holders.

Even before the breakdown of negotiations at Century Zinc, miners were insisting that they could not cope with a right to negotiate being exercised both at the exploration and at the development phases. A once-only right to negotiate should not be clouded by ministerial powers to intervene. Aborigines deserve the time to consider any development application whether or not their traditional country is subject to a pastoral lease.

A principled solution to *Wik* is within our grasp. The High Court has done its job reaching a decision by a narrow majority. Now, it is Parliament's turn where the Senate will determine the final shape of the legislation by a narrow majority.

The public hysteria of extinguishment has now given way to the private discourse of negotiation and co-existence. Meanwhile Borbidge and Co. have dispatched their silks, with all due respect, to ask the High Court to overturn 50 years of decisions on excise. Some polities have no shame.

It only took John Howard four years and the mantle of the prime ministership to give his considered assessment of *Mabo*: 'The substance of that decision, now with the passage of time, seems

completely unexceptionable to me. It appears to have been based on a great deal of logic and fairness and proper principle.' And everyone is agreed Tim is still a fantastic bloke. Doing in the High Court to get up the idea of extinguishment was worth a try. Really? The only thing stopping it was the hip-pocket nerve.

Next Christmas, we must start looking for some capital-C conservative judges, but preferably of a particular kind—ones who have little interest in conserving national institutions, and no time at all for the romantic notions of Earl Grey and his ilk. In short, they should be fantastic blokes—just like Tim. ■

**Frank Brennan** SJ is Adjunct Fellow in Law at the Australian National University and Director of Uniya.

---

COMMENT: 2

MAX CHARLESWORTH

## T Well, hello Dolly!

THE RECENT CLONING OF DOLLY, the Scots sheep, has been greeted with mixed and contradictory reactions. On the one hand it is seen as a new marvel of scientific and technological gee-wizardry; on the other it is seen, in a spirit of luddite pessimism, as fraught with all kinds of 'brave new world' dangers.

In actual fact the cloning of Dolly, while an outstandingly clever piece of scientific work, is not a dramatic scientific 'breakthrough', since the theoretical possibility of cloning has been known for some time.

Cloning in the plant and animal fields has been in use for many years and most people have clones roaming at large in their gardens. Human cloning, using the Dolly technique—transferring a human cell nucleus in an egg so that a genetically identical individual is produced—is still some way off but we know, in principle, how to do it.

The fears that Dolly's cloning will lead inexorably to a eugenics program where human beings are designed to order and mass produced at will ('Clone me up 100 Rob Borbidges, Scotty, and we'll give the High Court hell'), are science fiction nonsense. Many people have the idea that human cloning is a radical threat to individuality and human uniqueness, but this is absurd. Human clones may have identical genetic structure but that does not mean they lack any individuality.

In one sense I am the product of my genes, but as a genetic organism I develop as a human being by my interaction and exchange with many environments—my family, my society, my culture. And, of course, what I freely do with my genetic endowment and how I use it is crucial to the making of my individuality.

Unless one adopts some wild form of biological determinism, the contributions of nature and nurture are roughly equal in me becoming me. From this point

of view human uniqueness and individuality are not put in doubt by cloning.

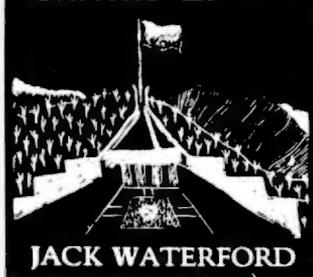
Of course, human cloning does raise many thorny issues (including genetic 'enhancement' and sex selection) that need to be kept under the kind of surveillance and control that is in place at present for major organ transplants, in-vitro fertilisation and so on. Rigorous and sensitive control, not prohibition, should be the watchword.

Some theologians have raised questions about the scientific and technological control of human reproduction as though this necessarily represented an hubristic attempt to 'play God', or involved the technologisation of human conception and birth and so offended against the 'dignity of the person' (to use that blessedly vague and often selectively employed principle). No doubt, that kind of scientific hubris can occur, but it does not necessarily follow that the use of technology of any kind, including cloning, in assisting conception and reproduction is *in itself* wrong or against the 'dignity of the person'.

Rather, it is a matter of deciding how genetic engineering, including cloning, may be used, as Aristotle used to say, in what circumstances and situations and whether or not it enhances the capacity of human beings to be masters of their fate and captains of their own souls.

We have, as noted, done reasonably well so far with the control (though with some blips) of major organ transplants and IVF, and there is no reason to suggest that we can't do much the same with the issues presented by Dolly and her human successors. ■

**Max Charlesworth** is the author of a number of works on bioethics including *Life, Death Genes and Ethics* and *Bioethics in a Liberal Society*.



JACK WATERFORD

# I Canberra double take

**I**N NEW-STYLE PUBLIC administration adapted for globalisation and niggardliness with public resources, the new contract government employee will be

more autonomous and focused on achieving clear outcomes set by government, which will step back and focus on broad issues of policy and expected outcomes.

And in the new-style government where everything is political, ministers want to increase their power to control everything, including bodies traditionally at arms' length from politicians. Seem like a contradiction?

On the one hand government, in the name of transparency and creating proper market conditions, is corporatising government service agencies and seeking to put their executives on contracts requiring them to behave independently to secure the desired result.

According to the rhetoric, the purpose is to make managers manage within clear expectations, and to hold them accountable for results. It should be possible, the proponents claim, to separate out the responsibility for policy, the political functions for which ministers should be responsible and the actual delivery, where managers will have wide discretion but be answerable for the results they achieve.

On the other hand, government is beginning to pull in the reins of a host of functions once performed by statutory agencies, often established deliberately so that they would be independent of the politicians. Some have trading or market functions; others have regulatory functions, such as the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission or the Civil Aviation Safety Authority; some have advisory functions, such as the Law Reform Commission or the National Health and Medical Research Council; some executive functions in a confined area, such as the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission; and some, of course, have a mixture of functions.

The important thing about them is that they have been promoted as being at a distance from politicians, focused on the long as well as the short term and usually subject to political direction only by explicit and accountable mechanisms.

For Government this has had the benefit that it can then embrace or disavow the output according to flavour, can distance itself from unpalatable but necessary action, and, sometimes, escape accountability for outcomes. Since ATSIC, for example, the propensity of Aboriginal community delegations to go to Canberra to lobby for their grants, or for ministers to be blamed for appalling failures of service delivery has been much reduced; ministers will blandly explain that decisions about the allocation of resources, and responsibility for outcomes, is a matter for the Commission itself.

Such bodies are also grand places for political patronage. Their boards, and many of their senior officers, even in quasi-judicial bodies, have been traditionally stacked with friends, relations and factional allies of those who sit on the Treasury benches. It has often been blatant; it is rarely unconscious. It has been a tolerated perk of power; for some power-brokers, the opportunity which patronage gives to reward friends and punish enemies is the *raison d'être* of their political existence,

and the source of the power which major factions, such as the NSW Labor Right, have wielded. A saving grace has been that the practice functioned as a pressure valve, reducing the inevitable temptations to have direct patronage in the public service proper. Now that government is deliberately relaxing some of the checks and balances designed to protect the integrity of the formal administration, one might think there is a need for more open processes with appointments to statutory bodies.

The Howard Government, however, has had exactly the same zeal to throw out the last Government's placemen and women and install its own as Labor did when it came into office. It does not even turn on the delicacies of the individual minister: after a few ministers showed no appetite for the political appointment, the job was taken over by Cabinet, and no process in Cabinet is so crudely partisan as the choosing of members of statutory authorities. The motto, as ever, is 'What's he/she done for us lately?' The difference is the number of senior minds engaged.

**C**ABINET, EVEN THE PRIME MINISTER personally, has intervened in a host of agencies either to overrule suggested appointments, to insist upon its own friends and relations, or to push unwanted people out. A number of ministerial recommendations, (for example, Michael Wooldridge's proposal of Professor John Funder as head of the NHMRC, and John Anderson's proposed re-appointment of John Kerin to a meat-marketing body) have been overruled without the least show of embarrassment.

John Howard's plans go, however, past merely getting people sympathetic to his agenda into controlling positions in agencies. After several decades in which governments have been giving statutory authorities more autonomy, he wants the rope pulled back in. He has asked ministers to review all their statutory authorities to see how much their existence 'limits government's own sphere of control and constrains the options available to them', with a view to increasing ministerial power of direction and without close legislative constraint.

He wants, in short, to shift the power back towards ministers. Fair enough, if he and his ministers are prepared to accept more responsibility for what is achieved. It would be nice to see a Minister for Aboriginal Affairs again held to account for the appalling facilities in an Aboriginal community, or a Minister for Transport for a failure in air safety.

Alas, however, this is where the apparent contradiction between public service devolution, outsourcing and the reining in of statutory authorities resolves itself. Government is still determined to resist being able to be called to account for any failure of service; it merely wants the right to fiddle with the rules as it likes, leaving others to do the actual work and to carry the can.

After a decade of change under Labor in which a high item on the agenda was the removal of the notion of 'public' from the concept of 'public service', the second stage is now in place: the removal of the concept of service as well. One might well ask what is to be left. ■

**Jack Waterford** is editor of the *Canberra Times*.

## Dark memories

From Christopher Richards

Congratulations to H.A. Willis (January 1997) on behalf of fellow users of Perth's Battye Library who, as I did in 1986, have read R.J. Sholl's marvellous journal—and his son's writings—and wondered where the photographs of Camden Harbour taken in June 1865 had vanished.

'We have no 1860s photographs of the Kimberley coast,' the pictorial librarian later told me in a letter. H.A. Willis has proved them wrong, and the efforts of the photographers Arthur Hamilton and Charles Hake—stowing their apparatus with difficulty on the tiny 'Forlorn Hope'—were not in vain. How wonderful if Hamilton's shots of Mount Lookover and of Sholl and his son could also be found.

To see just one little aspect of Sholl's caption brought to lithographic life in your front cover picture of the Government camp at Camden Harbour—'the flag drooping ... the day having been calm'—makes all his entries covering that brave but mad endeavour in Australian history live again.

But the older Sholl, fine writer that he was, closed an eye to less savoury events that offended the sensibilities of genteel society, such as the slaughter during the punitive 'Flying Foam' expedition by Alex McRae, detailed in your article. Perpetrators like Trevarton Sholl and others were, to the benefit of future consciences, more blunt about the vicious treatment of the WA Aborigines.

Modern writers build on a tradition of research in this area. Among a range of references, the history faculty of Murdoch University did much groundwork on the Panter-Harding-Goldwyer killings and subsequent retribution. Academic Bruce Scates delivered a lecture, 'The Border War', at Murdoch University in March 1988 that later formed the basis for his article, 'A Monument To Murder', in *Celebrations in Western Australian History* (ed. Lenore Layman and Tom Stannage). He and others were instrumental in informing the relevant parts of my book, *There Were Three Ships, the story of the Camden Harbour expedition* (Univ. of Western Australia Press, 1991), a joint winner of the Fellowship of Australian Writers local history award.

It was interesting to see the picture of the Sholl grave in your magazine,

*Eureka Street* welcomes letters from its readers. Short letters are more likely to be published, and all letters may be edited. Letters must be signed, and should include a contact phone number and the writer's name and address. If submitting by e-mail, a contact phone number is essential. Address: [eureka@werple.net.au](mailto:eureka@werple.net.au)



but what of the Fremantle memorial to Panter, Harding and Goldwyer, erected by C.J. Brockman (bearing another name famed in WA history)? Murdoch students and academics petitioned Fremantle Council in 1988 that it should bear a secondary plaque commemorating Aboriginal people who died during white settlement. Not a bad idea for any such memorials.

Christopher Richards  
Ivanhoe, VIC

## Questing

From Tom Drake-Brockman

In his article 'The Jesus in Question' (*Eureka Street*, December 1996) Robert Crotty concludes that recent analyses of the historical Jesus—his character and objectives—are diverse and inconclusive. This would seem to be an overly bland assessment given an apparently emerging consensus on some very basic issues.

In his recent book, *Honest to Jesus*, the founder of the famous Jesus Seminar, Robert Funk, has drawn some quite dramatic conclusions. While affirming that a definitive image of Jesus is and probably always will be elusive, there is a growing body of evidence about what he was not, and nearly all of this contradicts some of the most basic theological tenets of mainstream Christianity.

The hallmark of this theology—that Jesus was the messiah whose central purpose was to sacrifice his life to atone for our sins and guarantee

eternal life for those who acknowledge him as their Lord and Redeemer—is rejected as being at odds with nearly everything the historically verifiable Jesus believed in. Furthermore it would seem that Jesus did not think the 'end time' was imminent and was more concerned with the problems and issues of this world than the one to come.

These findings are sufficiently authenticated to constitute a profound challenge to established Christianity and by persisting with their traditional creeds and liturgies in defiance of that challenge, the churches are opening up a dangerous credibility gap. It is likely that this gap will only widen as the 'Third Questers' move on from attempts to categorise Jesus with sociological labels—activist, exorcist, Pharisee, Essene etc.—and focus on his ethical teachings and his vision of human spirituality. Because then the real contempt that Jesus had for hierarchical institutions and ritual observance will be more fully understood and that may precipitate an upheaval not seen since the Reformation.

Tom Drake-Brockman  
Berrilee, NSW

Robert Crotty replies:

Tom Drake-Brockman's letter goes to the very heart of the issue inherent in the third Quest for the Historical Jesus. I'm sorry if I sounded bland to him in my recent article. I was explaining the situation and not passing any real comment, apart from the fact that if anybody wanted to get involved in the ensuing debate then they should become informed.

I would presume from his letter that Tom has become informed and has made a valid contribution. Going one step beyond blandness, I recently published *The Jesus Question: the Historical Debate* (HarperCollins: Melbourne) in which I tried to provide what I consider to be the essential data

### LETTING GO AND MOVING ON

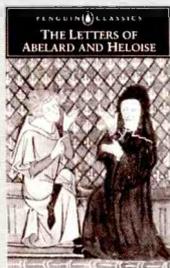
Individual or group  
counselling for people  
experiencing painful  
life changes

**Winsome Thomas**

B.A. (Psych), Grad. Dip. App. Psych

Phone (03) 9827 8785

Fax (03) 9690 7904



This month, courtesy of Penguin Books, the writer of each letter will receive a Penguin Classic

for informed debate. In the latter part of that book I also tried to show where I would take issue with arguments such as Tom proposes. If (and it is a big if) one or other of the Third Questers really have uncovered a historically valid Jesus (not of course the same as the *real* Jesus), does this mean that Church teaching and preaching must conform to it? Crossan and Borg would say 'yes', even though their respective historical Jesuses are not quite the same. Someone like Robert Eisenman (and perhaps Thiering) would require the established churches to dismantle their edifices at once since they are based on a drastic misunderstanding of sources.

If Tom's historical Jesus (who does not believe he is the messiah or redeemer and does not intend to usher in the end-time and condemns hierarchy and ritual) had to be preached in the church of today, then any Christian church would need to be fundamentally revised. The Reformation would seem like a gentle spring clean.

But, my point in *The Jesus Question* is that history is not the basis of any religion and Christians, more than most, need to give up the seductive safety of historical proof. It is what the first Christians made of Jesus that is important and what Christians today can make of Jesus. We have, in the canonical gospels, some idea of what the first Christians made of Jesus. Mark's gospel is a most cleverly contrived presentation of what Christian discipleship offers a human. It is not history. It is a variant of the Christian tradition. Christians today need to understand that tradition and apply it today but not in any literal fashion.

By all means let the historians have their head, and that includes myself since I am deeply involved in the study

of the history of early Christianity. But their conclusions do not directly determine what Christians, as Christians, should think and do today. History is a culturally fashioned reconstruction of the past. It is not the arbiter of how people should think and act. It is not the determinant of religion.

This is not to say that Christian churches of today do not need a reformation. I think (and here I will stop being bland) they need to be stood on their heads and revitalised from top to bottom, but not on the basis of a historical reconstruction or a Robert Funk's discovery of the *ipsissima verba* of Jesus.

Robert Crotty  
Underdale, SA

## J'accuse

From Mark Johnson

A 72-year-old member of our Catholic community has been treated with savageness and arrogance. This same member of our community has given decades of his life to the proclamation of the Gospel to cultures unfamiliar with peculiarly Euro-centric modes of expressing the Good News. This member of our community is the Sri Lankan theologian Fr Tissa Balasuriya. The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith's (CDF) scandalous treatment of Fr Balasuriya has little to do with doctrinal integrity. Rather, it has much more to do with the grievous abuse of authority.

The aforementioned treatment of Fr Balasuriya is but one of several scandalous dimensions of his excommunication. Another source of scandal for thinking Catholics has been the lack of due process involved in Fr Balasuriya's exclusion from our community.

Excommunication is the most severe sentence within the Church's punitive arsenal. So severe that the Vatican has even balked at using it against assorted dictators throughout Central and South America. However, it seems that Fr Balasuriya, and those of similar thought, are not as welcome within our community as are those colourful rogues of Latin America, no matter how much blood is on their hands. Fr Balasuriya was excommunicated without trial, without reasonable opportunity to defend himself, and without recourse against such a decree.

Another source of scandal is the apparent elevation to the level of

credal belief of the dubious ruling that the Church has no authority whatsoever to confer priestly ordination on women. Here we arrive at the crux of the matter. The CDF required of Fr Balasuriya that he sign a profession of faith. Fr Balasuriya was willing to do so, to sign the Credo of Paul VI. This was not enough. The CDF presented Fr Balasuriya with a profession of faith with an additional clause which stipulated the Church's lack of authority to ordain women. It is this supposed profession of faith that Fr Balasuriya did not assent to.

It is strange, to say the least, that while the Vatican claims that it has no authoritative basis from within Tradition to permit the ordination of women, it seems to have found the authority to elevate this lack of authority to the level of credal belief.

It seems that this current pontificate's desperate and fearful attempts to impose a totalitarian regime upon the People of God are little more than the death rattles of immature and irrelevant notions of Church.

Mark Johnson  
Ashfield, NSW

I WANT TO INVEST WITH CONFIDENCE

AUSTRALIAN

**ethical**  
**TRUSTS**

Agribusiness or reforestation.  
Mining or recycling.  
Exploitation or sustainability.  
Greenhouse gases or solar energy.  
Armaments or community enterprise.

**Investors can choose**

Through the AE Trusts you can invest your savings and superannuation in over 70 different enterprises, each expertly selected for its unique combination of earnings, environmental sustainability and social responsibility, and earn a competitive financial return. For full details make a free call to

**1800 021 227**

Investments in the Australian Ethical Trusts can only be made through the current prospectus registered with the Australian Securities Commission and available from:

**Australian Ethical Investment Ltd**  
Unit 66, Canberra Business Centre  
Bradfield St, Downer ACT 2602.



# THE MONTH'S TRAFFIC



FOREIGN CORRESPONDENCE

## On the road

**M**Y RENTAL CAR BROKE down at Gilgal on the road to Jericho. In the first hour with the bonnet up, about 600 cars went past. A police car tooted its horn. No one stopped. I told my companions that in the parable a lot of people passed by on the other side but eventually a Good Samaritan stopped.

Then a tractor driver from a nearby kibbutz stopped. He was a Jew. He lent us a telecard to make a phone call to the car rental company to come and rescue us. Unfortunately the phone card was empty and the call did not connect.

Then a taxi-driver with an empty Mercedes cab stopped. And he was a Jew—who thought the only good Arab was a dead one. He wanted to charge us 150 Shekels to take us back to Jerusalem. But he did call the rental company for us on his mobile.

While he was doing that, a young man came on his tractor from the Kibbutz opposite. He knew how to fiddle with a burned-out fuse box and after a while got the motor turning over. And he was a Jew.

Which one most closely fitted the effective altruism of the Good Samaritan?

Altruism is in short supply in Israel-Palestine at the moment.

Palestinians in Gaza still shelter the extremist Hamas group, who are likely to break out with bombings at any time because of the long delays in implementing the peace accord between Israel and the PLO. The Palestinian Authority, stretched beyond their resources in policing the areas under their control and riddled with corruption, maintain their faith in Chairman Arafat with difficulty. The ultra-right orthodox Jews increase their pressure on the Israeli Government to build new settlements on Arab land.

On a visit to World Vision projects for Palestinians in Israel and the West Bank in the first week of March, I was impressed by the restraint of the Palestinians. Yes, they had a protest march about the proposed Har Homa settlement

opposite Bethlehem. Yes, the day I visited Manger Square all Palestinian shops in Bethlehem were closed in a general strike.

But most Palestinians I met, including those on World Vision staff, are moderates. They want peace. They want to live alongside their Jewish brothers and sisters. They do not want to harass or be harassed.

Because of the poverty and trauma in the Palestinian community, virtually all World Vision's work is in that community. So there was not the chance to meet many Israelis. But from newspapers and television it is clear that most are moderate and deplore the agitation of the ultra-orthodox.

On March 4 I visited the Har Homa site of the proposed Israeli settlements. The first stage will house about 10,000 people. Ultimately 50,000 will live there.

The stated purpose is to create more living space for Israelis. The more serious purpose is to build an alternative Bethlehem—for it is only 1000 metres away from Manger Square on the next hill. This would include luxury hotels for pilgrims, thus seriously undercutting the Palestinian economy which will depend heavily on Christian tourism.

The cost of this exercise has already been the building of a security road through Arab land, knocking down olive trees hundreds of years old and confiscating vacant farming land. The Israeli Government keeps pretending these sites are 'terra nullius' but we have heard this

trick before. One of World Vision's senior staff, George Habbas, has lost half his ancestral family land, so I can appreciate the multiplication of such loss.

Christians are of course a diminishing breed in Israel-Palestine because of emigration, down to maybe 50,000 out of four million people. But Christian leadership is very important within the Palestinian community, and they have come out strongly against the proposed settlement. In this, I believe they are being genuinely altruistic: they want the best outcome and the best peace for the whole nation—Jews, Christians and Muslims.

—Alan Nichols

LOCAL CORRESPONDENCE

## On the buses

**T**OWARDS THE START of a month of not flying, I took the McCafferty's coach from Townsville to Cairns. It left on time, at 10.50am on a Sunday morning, bearing away from a swathe of ads intended to attract backpacker's (sic) to renovated pubs, and headed out of the gentrified precinct of Palmer Street, across the Ross River, on to the Bruce Highway, to the far north.

It was a journey that I had never undertaken at ground level. Nearly ten years before we had caught a light plane from Townsville to the Dunk Island resort. That trip dramatically emphasised the line of latitude that separates the dry savannah of Townsville, in its aggravating rain shadow, from the wet tropic region that cuts in as soon as Ingham.

From the air, red-brown gives place abruptly to green. The high island of Hinchinbrook swells beneath. The Barrier Reef edges nearer the coast, pale green and blue, dotted with sand cays.

From the bus the change is soon perceptible, its establishment slower. The land to the west rises as the last long renewal of the Great Dividing Range. Termite mounds are taller, pointier. Sugar-cane stands encroach



## Vale Maria

ON THE DAY SHE ANNOUNCED that she would not seek a second term as President of Ireland, Mary Robinson told a radio interviewer that one of the things she would remember from her years in office was the smell of fresh paint in the community halls and parish centres throughout the country.

A seemingly banal notion, it told a great deal about her view of the role of president: service to ordinary people rather than cloistered figurehead for the institutions of state. In seven years, she had travelled the



country to attend openings and launchings, to show support for travellers or the handicapped, to plant trees and encourage local enterprises and to do many things which no other president had done.

As a constitutional lawyer, she was not afraid to stretch her interpretation of presidential duty to the limit and occasionally test the waters beyond what custom and protocol might have dictated. In the very best way, she politicised her role. (It is tempting to compare the way Sir William Deane appears, in recent times, to be confounding those Australians who would constrain what he does and says.)

Many observers will place greater importance on the symbolic rather than the actual smell of fresh paint from Ireland. Before her election, Mary Robinson was an academic lawyer on the fringe of the Labour Party, an advocate of human rights and a

on the road's edge. Miniature railways, impossibly narrow, track beside the cane. Harvest was many months away, but the stands were green, thick, growing in sympathy with the wetness of mountains clad grey with cloud and creeks (Little Gin, Black Gin in succession) which were the width and force of temperate rivers.

In this scantily populated stretch of coast everything is compulsively named. Charles Harpur's poem 'The Creek of the Four Graves' took its title from the killing of white explorers by Aborigines in the Blue Mountains. Thus historical misadventure was turned into victory. Inscribed by what had happened there, the place passed under the authority of the European settlers (and poets) soon to come upon it. But in far north Queensland, naming seemed inveterate, mechanical. No dry season trickle was left undistinguished. Names were generic, patronymic, often altogether incongruous. When the bus finally stopped at Cardwell, it parked in Brasenose Street. The Marine Hotel, one block down, stands on the corner of Victoria and Balliol Streets. Oxford colonises still.

Before the coach halted it had been raucously overtaken by a van. Across the aisle two tourists from Holland—young women alternating between a game of Yahtzee and sleep—were rocked to attention by a blaring horn, then faced with one of the sorriest of Australian sights. I had no Dutch to name this anachronism—'the brown eye'—three sets of pallid bum-checks and not-too-clean clefts exposed in company. An individual offering of this view would betoken perversion, but this—perhaps a yearning for days of uncomplicated mateship. I did not enlighten the women about stern theories of rampant, repressed homosexuality that flourished in the 1970s. They were, after all, in Australia to see another kind of natural world.

Les Murray once remarked that, in its bus terminuses and travellers, Australia makes its nearest (or maybe premonitory) approach to the Third World. Tourists and backpackers apart, our vehicle bore a contingent of solitaries, not some noisy sub-continental community on wheels, at risk of horrific casualties. The typical middle-aged male of the far north, grey ponytail tied behind, was aboard. Behind him sat a shaven-haired, ice-blue-eyed itinerant with a plastic baby roped around his neck. In what wilderness, I tried to remember, had the Dutch girls alighted? What terrible void, or banality, was in store for them? The 'video entertainment' had—

with a grisly aptness for Australian highway travel—been about the abduction of a child.

Cardwell—grey sea, flat waves, Hinchinbrook Island smudged out by overcast—would have been soon forgotten but for the signs in the windows of failing businesses. They reminded the passer-by of the town's dilemma. *Port Hinchinbrook Resort/Yes/[and then the affirmations] Save Our Town/Marina/Boat Ramp/Jobs For Our Kids*. Small business self-interest, disguised as battlers' plaints, has fuelled conservation/development battles fought from one eastern end of the continent to the other. Keith Williams's project is presently turning mud-flats muddier, endangering the dugong, giving the finger to the recent economic history of 'The Island Coast' which has seen so many resorts sold at a loss (to the Japanese, locals whinge, hopelessly). Implacably Williams presses on, as though pyrrhic victories were the best kind. This, of course, is the hometown lovingly remembered in Alan Frost's 'A North Queensland Dreaming' in *East Coast Country*.

Beyond Cardwell things get wetter. Tully appears against a background of thickly wooded hills. It vies with Innisfail, fondly named in memory of an Emerald Isle, for the title of wettest place in Australia, but it was Babinda whose shopkeeper had the gumption to affix a rain-gauge measured in metres to the wall. Nearer to Cairns, Walsh's Pyramid emerged in a cloud wreath. On a ridge of the divide a waterfall fell heavily down. Nature only reluctantly gave place to the boom town that straggles along the shores of Trinity Bay.

In a self-consciously wilder era, the area near the Cairns bus terminus was known as the Barbary Coast. Cleaned up, the waterfront is now a dock for cruise ships. The 'Marco Polo' was at anchor and the passengers were being piped onto the 'Reef Endeavour' to the tune of 'Edelweiss'. On the proletarian side of Trinity wharf, a line of touts advertised backpacker accommodation.

With verve and unsentimental efficiency Cairns organises the wants of visitors rich and poor, Japanese and fellow Australians ('harried urbanites' as the editorial in the *Cairns Post* condescendingly called them). A city for transients, its new buildings designed precisely for those passing through, clammy Cairns is more a point of departure than a place. The 'real' tropics, 'where reef meets rainforest' beckon from the coast still further north and from the circling hills.

—Peter Pierce

## Boys' army

champion of the international fight against racism and intolerance—hardly the personal profile or the public issues to excite a conservative electorate. Her long association with feminism and progressive views on private morality alienated many, and her election in 1990 was partly a result of errors by complacent opponents, partly a fluke of Proportional Representation. Once elected, however, she set about changing her job from signer of official documents to leader of change. Historians will argue whether she was the woman *for* the times or the woman who *made* the times. Certainly, the Ireland she hands over is more pluralist, more mature, more at ease with itself, and these are all the qualities that she helped to nurture.

As President, Mary Robinson reached out to all Irish people around the world and to all who felt an affinity with Ireland. A country which, for hundreds of years, has exported so many of its people must, of necessity, have a wider meaning for nationhood. I am not entirely comfortable with talk of an Irish diaspora, implying as it does, persecution and maudlin exile, and inviting comparison with older and more epic scatterings.

The truth is that most Irish people who live abroad today do so out of choice, and the modern emigrant is leaving one of the most prosperous countries in Europe. What Mary Robinson has done is to acknowledge that the emotions Irish people feel about the country of their birth or ancestry is fundamental to their identity. She has told them that although they live in another place, they will always be welcome home; the symbolic light of greeting which she lit at her official residence seven years ago has never gone out.

Then there has been Mrs Robinson's role in international affairs: her official visit to Britain where she included Warrington, the location of an IRA atrocity, in her itinerary, her frequent visits to Northern Ireland where she was not universally welcome, her relationship with French Presidents Chirac and Mitterrand, her reception in America and here in Australia, and her efforts on behalf of Rwanda and Somalia.

Whatever the success of these official head-of-state duties, Mary Robinson will be remembered as the person who helped to redefine Irishness and replace the shillelagh and the leprechaun and other props of Victorian nostalgia with the emblems of a modern, confident people.

—Frank O'Shea

IT IS DIFFICULT FOR THOSE OF US who have never experienced war, to connect with the significance of Australia's most important national day, Anzac Day. It is difficult for us to comprehend the heroism and humour, the sacrifice, horror and pathos, of the 'war to end all wars': World War I, 1914-1918.

My grandfather, Claude William Collins, and his older brother Jack, volunteered for the first Australian Imperial Force. Jack, at the age of 19, survived Gallipoli. His few letters sent to his parents' home in Fairfield, Melbourne simply commented, 'It's not too good over here ... so whatever you do, Mum and Dad, don't let Snowy join up ...'

Alas, Snowy (my grandfather Claude), wanted to be in on the Great Adventure. He pestered his parents for a couple of years until eventually he got his chance, in early 1918, to join his brother in the Great War. He was posted to the Western Front. Snowy must have been very determined to be with his brother for, once over there, he negotiated a transfer from the infantry to Jack's unit, the 6th Field Artillery Brigade. The two brothers had no idea that the Western Front would become the worst theatre of war. In France and Belgium, allied casualties alone were 4,000 on a 'good' day, and this terrible campaign lasted 51 months.

Mindful of this family connection, I decided to visit the world's largest Commonwealth War Cemetery in Belgium. Tynecot cemetery occupies the Broodseinde-Passchendaele ridge and overlooks, five kilometres to the valley below, a medieval city called Ypres. It was on this Ypres front of approximately 12 km, between 1915 and 1918, that some of the bloodiest fighting of the war took place.

In the immaculately tended Tynecot Commonwealth War Cemetery lie the remains of 12,000 soldiers, mostly Australian, mostly under the age of 21, two-thirds of them 'unknown'.

I walked through this cemetery, admiring the strange beauty of the pure white gravestones erected in perfect rows, red roses contrasting at the base. As an alien from a peacetime generation, wandering further among these graves, I kept asking the obvious question—how did this happen?

I was partly answered when I retraced my steps to the front gates of the cemetery. Here on either side, two German 'block-

houses' still stand defiantly, although overgrown with ivy and with their entrances sealed long ago. Built of double reinforced concrete and once concealing the deadly Maxim machine guns, these impregnable fortresses commanded the ridges surrounding Ypres. Ypres was defended by the Allies. The blockhouses could not be destroyed by artillery fire. They could only be taken by infantry assault.

From this windswept vantage point, in the old firing-line of the German machine guns, I could survey the route of the Allied attack on Tynecot on 9th October, 1917.

The Allied High Command decided to make a third and final push to break the enemy lines surrounding Ypres. Two previous offensives had failed, with enormous loss of life. The Australian 3rd Division was ordered to attack the Broodseinde Ridge for the last time.

Throughout the cold night of October 9, 1917, the Diggers quietly made their way from Ypres to the jumping-off line. At 5.30am, while troops were waiting in their forward trench to go over the top at 6.00am, a German artillery barrage wiped out a third of the strike force. Then torrential rain rendered the terrain—which was below sea level—a quagmire. Yet the attack went ahead at 6.00 am as planned.

The pretty, green sloping valley and the grey spire backdrop of Ypres today give no sense of how it must have been in 1917. In the battle ahead the men endured a five km advance, mostly knee-deep in mud, up the hill, without any cover and under merciless machine gun, artillery and rifle fire.

Australian soldiers captured the Broodseinde Ridge, but at a tragic price.

A tall white memorial cross now stands atop one of the German blockhouses in symbolic appreciation of the heroism of these men. Inscribed in large letters is the declaration, 'Their names shall live for evermore'.

I turned away from the grim blockhouses and the distant, idyllic view of Ypres, and went back to the graves for a closer look at the epitaphs. In 1919, after the War, the Australian Government offered the parents of soldiers killed overseas the opportunity to compose an epitaph to be placed on their sons' graves. Only 66 letters, including spaces, were permitted for grieving parents to express their farewell. The Government expected parents to pay. It is now estimated that 10,000 graves are without epitaphs because many parents, at the time, could not afford the considerable cost. Ironically, the payment was never collected.

# OPEN DOORS

COUNSELLING AND EDUCATIONAL SERVICES INC.

*Families face enormous challenges today eg rapid technological advances, increasingly pervasive media, vanishing family networks and relaxed sexual and social mores.*

**Open Doors**, established in 1984 and staffed by members of the Anglican, Baptist, Catholic, Presbyterian, Reform and Uniting Churches has a Mission to:

- enhance the health and well being of individuals
- support parents and school communities in the care and nurturing of children
- promote the role of family and marriage in society.

*A multi-disciplinary team of psychotherapists, psychologists, counsellors, educationalists and other health professionals combine to provide the following services:*

- An education resource and consultancy service for primary and secondary students, parents, teachers and youth workers, specialising in **value-based sexuality and relationships education** through sessional work with students, staff inservices, parent workshops, parent/child family nights.
- Development of **value-based relationship programs** (videos, teachers' resources, workbooks) which are used in **4,000** primary and secondary schools in Australia and overseas.
- Specialist counselling and therapy for teenagers, couples and families on relationship issues - communication, conflict, marriage, crisis pregnancy, STDs, contraception, abortion etc.
- Research publications about teenage and family issues and evaluations of current trends and initiatives in personal development education.

While safe sex campaigns, harm minimisation strategies and teen drinking programs are genuine attempts to turn the tide of self destruction, these Band-Aid treatments do not affect real healing. Open Doors works to **address the underlying issues** by supporting and empowering parents, instilling a sense of worth in our youth and promoting protective community values.

Open Doors needs to raise an extra **\$500,000** over the next 2 years to maintain existing services and to meet increasing demands.

Please consider making a special and significant contribution.



Family Name Title Christian Name

Address

P/Code

Please accept my  Cheque  Bankcard  Mastercard  Visa Donation for \$

Card Number

Signature Expiry Date

Make cheques payable to **Open Doors** PO Box 610 Ringwood Vic 3134 (Donations are **tax deductible**).  
For information about our counselling and educational work write or telephone (03) 9870 7044

**Patrons:** Most Reverend G Pell Archbishop of Melbourne  
Right Reverend James Grant Bishop Coadjutor in the Anglican Archdiocese of Melbourne

I knelt in silence. One grave especially offered a connection with the spirit of Anzac Day. This soldier, against the wishes of his parents, had joined up, changing his name and putting his age up. He was killed, at 19, on the Western Front. His parents wrote and paid for his very simple epitaph, 'Rest here in peace. Your parents' hearts are broken. Mum and Dad.' —Adrian Collins

FOREIGN RELATIONS

## Bougainville

JUST WHEN THERE APPEARED to be scope for another phase of peace negotiations in Bougainville, Sir Julius Chan announced the unthinkable: mercenaries had been recruited to intensify the war against the rebels. They were bringing with them better equipment, logistical support, surveillance facilities and anti-terrorist training techniques.

There was a certain amount of shilly-shallying about whether the mercenaries had anything but a training role, so as to quell the outrage that 'the dogs of war' had entered the Pacific. Of course it became quite clear that they were meant to stiffen up the sinews of the PNG military to capture the mine site and enclose it within a sanitised perimeter.

Share prices for Bougainville Copper Ltd rose from rock bottom; there were fantasies about Port Moresby buying out the mine and endowing Bougainvilleans with a sizeable holding in it. There were rampant suspicions that senior ministers were less than disinterested, and even that, following African precedent, the mercenaries were ultimately to be paid off with shares. But that was only speculation.

The more immediate question was how the government could have found 30-40 million dollars for immediate down-payment when the PNG soldiers are inadequately trained, supported and provisioned. The soldiers had been expected to win hearts and minds but had to forage in village gardens—causing deep antagonism. And the body bags continued to come home from Bougainville's seemingly unwinnable war.

What was Sir Julius up to? The timing strongly suggested he needed a victory before the mid-year national elections. He had come to power in late August 1994 promising a resolution of the war. He has not delivered. Even though the reasons for

this are largely outside his control, decisive action seemed the most politic course. This year's national elections could be chaotic. With the abolition of provincial government elections, there are no second prizes. In 1992 the average number of candidates per electorate was 15.2. There were 48 in one Highlands electorate. Theoretically you could win with three percent of the votes. Nine seats were won with less than ten percent of the votes; 54 with less than 20. On past performances half the MPs could lose their seats although with access to much greater resources under Chan, there should be more facile manipulation. As the Prime Minister in PNG is elected on the floor of Parliament in the first session after the elections, Chan needs a boost, whatever other interests are involved.



Now, as I write, a further crisis has occurred: the Commander of the PNG Defence Force, Brigadier-General Singirok, in spite of having been a party to negotiations with the Sandline mercenaries, took them into custody, intending to see them packed out of PNG and called for a Commission of Inquiry into the total deal. This is being called a *coup*. A better word at this stage would be *mutiny*, and a very mild one at that.

In going to the Governor-General to explain his position, Singirok was paying homage to the Constitution in spite of the irregularity of his action. There was no intention of occupying the citadels of state. Singirok's intention seemed to be to remain in Murray Barracks until further discussions. He had not spoken to dissident politicians, it seemed. Meanwhile Chan sacked him as Commander.

There is much puffing in the Australian Parliament about the unconstitutionality of Singirok's action. However, it should be

remembered that it is Singirok who is saying that a military solution is not possible and that political negotiations, obviously involving devolution of powers to a Bougainville government, are essential. His attitude was well-known in 1994 when he was battalion commander there. In spite of that he loyally obeyed Prime Minister Wingti's crass order to assault Panguna and was himself wounded. It seems apparent that Singirok is trying to save soldier and civilian lives. For that at least he deserves credit. The military's so-called 'High Speed' operations have been a fiasco.

It is difficult to predict what will happen from here. The first reports said that the Police Commander had joined hands with Singirok. This turned out to be false; the police were supporting the government.

Unfortunately there is a long history of resentment and even riots between the army and police. It is to be hoped the police steer clear of army barracks. Similarly, it will be of little help to law and order if the troops do not remain unified behind Singirok, even if he is obliged in due course to resign.

Looking on the brighter side, one can hardly lament the sacking of Sandline. It will now have learned the lesson that PNG is not Africa and that, while there is horrific random brutality in PNG, it is not organised by the State: or it wasn't until Sandline arrived.

Sir Julius must surely now have to forget about his quick Bougainville fix and proceed with a political solution. He should now conciliate his critics by at least affecting to call a Commission of Inquiry which will no doubt last into the election period. A new government can then tackle (or not as the case may be) its findings.

The sad aspect of these happenings is the impotence displayed by Australia in its relations with its former colony.

The time has come to provide military assistance on Bougainville provided Port Moresby also agrees to a political solution and to organise, under the aegis of the South Pacific Forum, a multinational peace-keeping force.

Sir Julius could hardly object; he advocated exactly that after PNG's Vanuatu anti-secessionist campaign in 1980.

—James Griffin

## No decimal points in bread

ARE UNEMPLOYMENT RATES a poor guide to social distress? Is youth unemployment associated with trends toward later marriage, thus resulting in a reduction in child poverty? Is it time to reconsider the favoured fiscal treatment the elderly receive (should pensions be cut?) in an effort to encourage a pattern in life in which there is a period of saving followed by a period of use of those savings, or 'dis-saving,' as the jargon has it? Is it politically correct to be 'nasty' to the unemployed so that those who are working might not feel so bad?

These and other controversial issues were raised during a seminar entitled 'Beyond 2000: The New Social Policy Agenda' presented by Dr Peter Scherer, of the Social Policy Division of the OECD, at the Social Policy Research Centre in Sydney on 18 February.

On 15 February, a Planning Day for Uniya, the Jesuit social justice centre, was held at Canisius College in Pymble. Its aim was to identify causes of social distress and develop strategies and policies which would alleviate these problems.

It was impossible to resist the temptation to examine areas of policy conflict and policy convergence between the two organisations.

The big picture, as painted by Dr Scherer involved a fascinating account of recent processes of policy development at OECD Policy Directorate level. He discussed the 'old' social policy agenda, whose underlying idea was the need for social protection in unusual circumstances for the stable, single-income household.

Under the old agenda, money transfers to the elderly and the unemployed have increased, family allowance payments have declined and health costs have exploded. This pattern has led to the Crisis, or *La Crise*, as Dr Scherer proclaimed—in France, everyone speaks of *La Crise*. However, Dr Scherer disputed the popular assumption that unemployment is the cause of *La Crise*, supporting his case with figures which show that the employment population ratio is higher than it was 25 years ago (although youth unemployment has increased significantly).

What then is the cause of social distress? According to Dr Scherer, the most

significant change during this period has been a growth in two-income households and a fall in single-income households.

He concludes that this change in distribution is the main factor in causing social distress. Twin-income households have a different economic pattern from single-earner households, so there is growing divergence of economic interests between those who are likely to fund money transfers and those who receive them. This leads to resentment, a two-tier social and economic stratification and a breakdown in social cohesion. Within this changing demographic pattern, single-parent families are the most vulnerable in the labour market.

The change in income distribution and the concern about it are new. However, to some extent, this concern has been superseded, in Europe, by a debate about 'social exclusion'—broadly, the notion that a number of factors act together to marginalise some groups.

These factors include combinations of education, employment, race, housing, family structure and benefit rules. Allied with this is the focus on geographical disparities and the concentration of disadvantage in certain areas. In this context, maintaining a person just above the poverty line by means of money transfers is seen as a problem rather than a solution.

It was at this point that Dr Scherer's account of OECD policy intersected with social and economic policy initiatives being developed at Uniya.

There was unanimous agreement on the need to inject social, ethical and moral issues into political/public debate.

Specific translations of this notion included the need to recognise the association of problems—such as poverty, homelessness, suicide, health issues and early death—with unemployment. There is also a need to develop more comprehensive and creative strategies concerning unemployment. There has to be a move away from a simplistic notion of providing a roof over the heads of those who have been homeless (closely allied with the need for accommodation is the need for support).

Communication strategies need to be developed, including the compilation of biographies, which put a human face on 'the homeless', 'the long-term unemployed' and other groups who are regarded as homogeneous and excluded.

Uniya's broad strategy included documentation of experiences, educating the community about the lives of the socially disadvantaged by providing a human

balance to statistical analyses (while not forgetting the value of data).

Statistical analyses return us to the OECD process, which identifies symptoms of social distress by unravelling statistics. Statistics lead to the following suggested solutions:

- reduction in financing of pension systems (which in a sense are 'crowding out' arrangements that would enable parents to combine child-raising and careers);
- the development of income-support arrangements that encourage beneficiaries to take risks and be flexible. One example of this flexibility could be unpaid trial employment;
- creating alternatives for unemployed people other than their actively looking for work, given the expectation of an excess supply of labour;
- the repayment of income support benefit when income rises above a certain level;
- support for those who care for elderly and infirm relatives;
- policy interventions that come earlier in life, and that are preventive, not remedial.

Not all of these would apply to the Australian situation but policies of early intervention would mesh with Uniya's approach.

—Marie Leech

*This month's contributors:* Alan Nichols is an Anglican priest working with World Vision; Peter Pierce is professor of Australian literature at James Cook University; Frank O'Shea teaches at Marist College, Canberra; Adrian Collins teaches English and history at Carey Grammar School, Melbourne; James Griffin is professor emeritus at the University of Papua New Guinea; Marie Leech is senior policy officer at Uniya, the Jesuit social justice centre.

### Res Publica

Aims to deepen community understanding of ethical and public policy issues, by applying a philosophical perspective.

Three issues per year. Subscription rates: \$21 (individual), \$10 (concession), \$50 (institution), payable to:

The Centre for Philosophy and Public Issues, Philosophy Department  
The University of Melbourne  
Parkville Vic 3052  
Tel: (03) 9344 4026  
Fax: (03) 9348 2130  
e-mail:  
w.barrett@philosophy.unimelb.edu.au

# Changing capital thinking

IT WAS THE EARLY MARCH 1997 cover of *Business Review Weekly* that really signalled the end of the Keating era, not the early March 1996 federal election. 'Keating is dead', boomed the heading, 'Labor's new guard rejects his faith in free markets.'

Labor's new policy oligarchy, the trio of Kim Beazley, Simon Crean and Gareth Evans, have put together a revamped interventionist approach to trade and industry, one that explicitly links employment growth to government-assisted industrial development. Electoral disaster has given birth to a New Economics.

Anyone observing Labor's New Economics might feel uncannily drawn back, in spirit at least, to the soft and optimistic idealism of the 1970s, when Gough Whitlam seemed ready to galvanise the nation with a range of progressive government initiatives.

Back then, Australians were unaccustomed to politicians harping about the need for market reform. Although Whitlam cut tariffs by 25 per cent, the Lucky Country was less self-conscious about the merits of the Australian economy, and whether it was competitive enough to face the vaunted challenges of globalisation.

It is not so much Labor's new policies that evoke the more genuine spirit of old fashioned social democracy, but also the way in which they are expressed. Labor's industry spokesman, Simon Crean, speaking in federal parliament in early March against the abolition of the ship bounty, sounded like a passionate Labor man of old when he decried the likely effects on employment. It appeared that he had shaken off some of the technocratic pride and chumminess with the OECD-IMF crowd that made the Labor leadership look a little sleazy and opportunistic in the 1980s.

It is now a little over 20 years since the Australian Labor Party, caught in the midst of the uncontrollable political and economic crisis of 1975, converted to economic rationalism. In later years, Paul Keating, as perceptive members of the Australian business community understood, was terribly sensitive to the humiliating

memory of the Whitlam Government's perceived fiscal incompetence. For those sins of state, Keating compensated, psychologically and politically. He became the perfect specimen of policy defensiveness, dogmatically upholding the virtues of market reform to ensure electoral success and the support of corporate Australia. And the party followed, still dumbfounded at the disasters of the mid-1970s and intoxicated with electoral success after 1983.

Social democratic thought was retained, however, in the Accord between the former Labor Government and the ACTU. And Keating had a progressive social and cultural policy. But government was persistently downgraded as an active agent of industrial competitiveness. Instead it was a passive umpire, setting the framework for market prosperity through micro-economic reform and tariff cutting. As a result, market-based policies became the benchmark for judging economic management skills on both sides of politics.

It is obvious to us now that the post-war boom had ended in the mid-1970s and a new world of global competition had begun. Hawke and Keating's Labor Party, like other western governments, certainly emphasised that things had changed. Labor's New Economics implicitly claims to have learnt some lessons from the Hawke-Keating Era.

Critics of Labor's New Economics say it is a blue-collar vote-grabbing exercise with possibly dire fiscal results. Gough Whitlam, in a lecture last month to the free-market think-tank, the Centre for Independent Studies, attacked Labor's revised position on tariffs. Stalling the tariff-reduction timetable, Whitlam said, would just increase job losses. Supporters as well are uneasy about the rapidity of the new policy formulation, and the crass certainty of some of Beazley's spokesmen, whose confidence might indicate they have not learnt anything from last year's defeat.

Nevertheless, it seems the rhetoric of the market has come to seem a little hollow to both the electorate and elements in the

business community who are puzzled by rapid economic change.

The worldview conjured up by Paul Kelly's *The End of Certainty*, the quintessential record of the 1980s, supports the formula that only trade liberalisation will allow us to deal with international economic forces. Kelly had argued that the turn-of-the-century 'Australian Settlement' has held back the Australian economy in its first century. Protection and wage arbitration, what Kelly called the New Protection, were illusions we could no longer afford if we wanted to grow faster and keep up with the rest of the world. He applauded the fact that both political parties had embarked on the 'necessary' institutional reform to dispel those illusions.

The problem with Kelly's view is that there is more than one way for a nation to deal with the international economy than just dropping its trading trousers. All round the globe, variations of national capitalism, sometimes called neo-mercantilism, are operating efficiently without falling prostrate before free-trade dogmas. What Labor's new thinking holds out is a chance to develop our own version.

There is a problem with outcomes as well in the Kelly-Keating worldview. Where are the results of Keating's great market experiment if we still have an 8.8 per cent unemployment rate? Why has foreign ownership of Australian assets increased to about 60 per cent of gross domestic product since the mid-'80s? Where are the new industries that other nations seem to be developing? Why is foreign debt over \$200 billion?

**E**VEN IN CONSERVATIVE BUSINESS CIRCLES there is disquiet about the direction in which the 1980's reforms have led us. Leading nationalistic capitalists like Frank Conroy, chairman of St George Bank and Howard Smith Ltd, are complaining about the lack of a national strategy and the banality of market mantras. Other voices are also coming to the fore in the international arena.

The British Labor Party under Tony Blair promises well-managed capitalism without the Thatcherite odium. The pillar of market capitalism himself, financier George Soros, has just written an anti-free-market article in the *Atlantic Monthly*, which questions the stability of free-market policies



without government co-ordination. Even in New Zealand, Finance Minister Winston Peters is encroaching on traditional free-market verities by getting the NZ coalition government to agree to massive increases in government expenditure and very high target growth rates. And, most of all, the intervention behind the East Asian economic miracles is creeping into the minds of business people who trade in Asia, who see the deals Asian governments do for their competitors, and who come back to Australia a little puzzled at our faith in free markets.

The Howard Government is certainly aware of something going on in the mind of the business community, though the Prime Minister believes business only wants clearer direction, not more intervention.

Last year, the Government appointed TNT's chief executive, David Mortimer, to head an inquiry into the \$10.6 billion worth of Commonwealth Government business assistance schemes. As the sophisticated discussion paper of his secretariat indicates, Mortimer is no economic rationalist. Along with Industry Minister John Moore, he sees a big role for business assistance schemes.

Labor's New Economics, therefore, does have a potential conservative rival. Except that where the Howard Government talks of helping business, it is not linked to any social agenda for the unemployed, let alone the pursuit of full employment. Employment is not even in Mortimer's terms of reference.

With Labor's New Economics, jobs, if not full employment, are the ostensible priority of business programs. But wasn't 'jobs' the catchcry of Labor under Keating as well? Instead of unleashing market forces, Labor wants to correct market failure. It is just that there is no clear idea yet of what such a policy would look like, only hints of certain lines being softened on car tariffs and enterprise bargaining. Which industries, after all, should be developed and under what rationale?

In his contribution to Labor Essays: 1997, Evans makes it clear that growth is still the way in which Labor hopes to reduce unemployment. Fair enough, except big deal: Keating thought so too. Instead of tackling the broader themes of national development, Evans concentrates on the effects of the Howard Government's tight budgetary policy. Sure, the cuts will stall growth a little, and have worsened the unemployment rate. But where is the new thinking here?

Australia needs new industries, not financial manipulation. This is another de-

bate over fiscal policy, not a serious re-appraisal of the role of government. Labor's assistant deputy Treasurer, who talks a lot about Labor's need to focus on 'social inclusivity', offers little in the way of guidance, except to suggest Labor's role should be to protect Australian workers from globalisation. But instead of offering them more in the way of sophisticated social security, why not offer them a hope in the new industries of the future?

Tariff reduction and trade liberalisation were regarded by Keating as the great prod for industrial Australia.

Multilateralism is still Labor's fundamental trade policy. This has not changed. But it has been diluted with a revised position on tariffs for the car industry, with all the implications this might have for other policy areas. Beazley has indicated that Labor will consider keeping tariffs on car imports after 2010. Labor will also seek a commitment to comparability from our trading partners on tariff reduction rates.

Labor's trade spokesman, Steven Smith, argued in a recent discussion paper that value-added industries were needed because of the forecast decline in value of our farm commodity exports over the next two years. But is this really new? Smith has talked about aggressively using the World Trade Organisation to pursue our trading aims. But isn't this just more of the same 1980s rhetoric, only more activist sounding? Wasn't our unquestioning rush to join these bodies the problem in the first place?

**S**IMILARLY, BOTH SMITH and Simon Crean have outlined new bureaucratic arrangements for trade policy, a traditional stance of those who regard treasury and its brand of market economics as a blight. Smith has talked of the possibility of combining the departments of trade and industry. Crean has even suggested a policy-planning body along the lines of Japan's Ministry for International Trade and Industry. If they are serious, it could signify a shift towards a capability to create a more managed system of trade and industry. This could form the basis of an alternative approach to dealing with the international economy.



With industry policy having a big impact on the Budget, the co-operation of shadow Treasurer Gareth Evans would be required in a Beazley Government. Under Keating the Treasury view on macroeconomics was omnipresent. There was the usual emphasis on the virtues of budgetary balance, low inflation and a generally tight monetary policy. Budget surpluses were good and necessary; deficits were bad and destructive. When deficit-spending did take off, it was under the crisis conditions of the early 1990's recession, not because of a change of macroeconomic heart.

Now, even on fiscal policy, Evans is saying the well-nigh unbelievable—that short-term budget cutting is not to be preferred to a medium-term approach to balancing the budget, especially if pressure on the budget is coming from employment-generating industry assistance schemes. Gareth Evans has also rejected the underlying theory of the Howard Government's fiscal policy that says cutting the Budget deficit will reduce the current-account deficit—the twin-deficits theory.

Under such policy it is not clear just how Labor would buck the financial markets if the dollar began falling so rapidly that interest rates would have to be lifted or if the inflow of foreign capital slowed. Is Labor advocating the re-implementation of exchange controls? Not likely. Political sceptics about the New Economics offer a familiar line. In office, a Beazley Labor Government could easily backtrack, particularly if its senior officeholders are former Keating ministers. Policy mindsets develop over time; they do not change overnight.

When asked by Independent MP Graham Campbell what had convinced Labor to switch policies, a member of Labor's shadow cabinet made it clear that electoral defeat was the reason.

Labor's New Economics is directed to elements in the business community, as well as to its lost heartland. Electorally, it might work if Labor reads both constituencies right and the Government reads business wrongly. One Labor insider has even expressed the hope that John Moore would fail to push through new industrial policy schemes in cabinet. That would leave Labor with a clearly distinguishable policy position. And a crack at the next election if unemployment remains high. ■

**Lincoln Wright** is a staff reporter on finance and economics with the *Canberra Times*.

# New for old

IT IS AN ACCEPTED WISDOM that a comprehensive defeat can be character-building if the reasons for failure are appreciated and understood. Maxims such as this invoke lateral thinking as a means of challenging adversity.

One year into the Howard Government the labour movement is giving off signs that it is trying to put this into practice. But lateral thinking is a precursor to lateral movement and that can have people moving in different directions, creating tension and contradictions loaded with irony. Thus you have the ACTU-demonised Peter Reith launching a NSW Labor Council book on union reform. And you also have the Federal Opposition repudiating a decade of their own economic policy while changing the official abbreviation of their name from the Australian Labor Party to New Labor Party.

Such moves are a volatile mixture of pragmatism and opportunism. After a decade secure in their convictions—secure enough to keep the left at bay—industrial and parliamentary Labor are trying some new approaches. So there is a suspicion that survival instincts have taken over in both the industrial and parliamentary camps of Labor.

*Reforming Australia's Unions* is essentially an amalgam of articles published in the Labor Council-sponsored magazine *Southland* with some updated commentary by the likes of Michael Costa, the Labor Council's assistant secretary.

The finger-wagging at the ACTU in his introduction to a chapter on how unions should operate in modern work environments sets the tone: he cites poor implementation of enterprise bargaining, inappropriate union amalgamations, and a neglect of the immediate concerns of unionists in favour of an emphasis on an integrated national-wage strategy.

One might suspect the goal of this book is to fit Kelty with a shoe soled with the problems of the union movement (save for the occasional insight—like that offered by a couple of marketing students who asked why it is that in an era of decreasing market-share unions were increasing their dues).

According to the Labor Council, it's not the demise of the manufacturing sector, nor the casualisation of work, or a general

rise in the prosperity of those whose skills are in demand that should be blamed for the drop in membership: instead it's the misguided deeds of the ACTU.

This is not to say that they are wrong in pointing to deficiencies in ACTU policy during the Labor years, but a treatise on how unions can best serve workers in an era of contracts would be more useful than an apportioning of responsibility for current ills. It's all very reminiscent of that kid who used to whine 'I told you so' and then disappear before you could whack him one.

But in between the lines of this book is a story of political manoeuvring. Recently the NSW Labor Council came close to turmoil with several left unions considering disaffiliation (ironically the ACTU



helped to convince some of them to stay, thus avoiding a public brawl]. The control of the right unions, and correspondingly that of Assistant Secretary, Michael Costa and Secretary Peter Sams, is in need of shoring up.

Perhaps the Labor Council believes a good working relationship with Peter Reith will benefit their affiliates. Reith's presence at the launch was no great surprise given that he has said publicly and privately that he prefers dealing with Peter Sams and Co. to dealing with their ACTU counterparts.

Or maybe someone is having dreams of pre-eminence. If the elections for executive positions in the ACTU, due in September, result in a swing to the left, we might witness some brawling between Sydney and Melbourne, through which the Labor Council could claim to represent more accurately the views of the modern unionist.

Obviously a public fall-out in the union movement would be in no one's (except perhaps the government's) interest, but it might prove hard to keep such rumblings under the surface.

On the other hand parliamentary Labor is finding that it already has dead bodies to bury. Late in February it was revealed that the ACT branch of the ALP has proposed that the official *abbreviation* of its name be changed from Australian Labor Party to New Labor Party. This means that it retains its old name but has a new sub-title. It might appear that National Secretary Gary Gray is having a bet each way in case the party stumbles upon its own Tony Blair. But in fact the move is also intended to block an incipient left-wing party using the name 'New Labour' as part of an appeal to disenchanted ALP voters.

The New Labour Party had its inaugural meeting last November in Newcastle. At the moment it is a collection of students and dissatisfied unionists promoting policies such as the reversal of privatisation, free university education, and the formation of an Unemployed Workers' Union. It is, however, moving to establish branches in every state. At the time of writing its membership stood at around 200, not nearly enough to register as a political party with the electoral commission. It hardly appears a threat to the ALP, and indeed with no union affiliations, looks unlikely to develop any muscle, yet Gary Gray still wanted to protect the name by getting in first.

ACCORDING TO THE SECRETARY OF the New Labour Party, Bob Leach, an admirer of New Zealand New Labour, the name change is manna from heaven. With a legal team working gratis, the new party had planned to take up action against the ALP with the electoral commission prior to the March 26 cut-off. They were to argue that the ALP acted in bad faith by targeting the New Labour Party in particular rather than acting on its professed motivation of defending the name. (Kim Beazley, in an article on tariffs in *The Australian* on March 11, wrote that the new abbreviation was to prevent 'the misappropriation of the name by our political opponents'.) Bob Leach also



suggests that the name change is in contempt of the ALP's constitution since it was a party decision made by the administration. Even though he is not wildly optimistic about his chances, Leach is sure the action will bring the New Labour Party some much-needed publicity.

While the name change may have the whiff of back-room politics about it, it may also have come about for exactly the reasons Gary Gray has suggested. The federal ALP, with its reformed front bench finding its feet, is striking out on a path closer to the one they were on pre-Paul Keating. New Labor may have a brighter ring to it if the polls show that the furtive gestures on car tariffs and greater government intervention in industry are popular with business and workers. (See also Lincoln Wright in this issue, p16.)

The curious thing is that New Labor is exhuming some of the policies of Old Labor with a front bench comprised of Keating's Middle-Aged Labor. His erstwhile cabinet must have forgotten all that macro-economic guff he used to toss off like grandma's home-spun truths. And the greatest irony is that Gough Whitlam has now entered the debate, criticising this tentative archæology with the sharp phrase 'New Protectionism'. Whatever name it goes by, Labor must offer something that voters want to be a part of—much the same task that the union movement has before it.

For an Opposition to be throwing around such fundamental ideas in public might be seen as a declaration that they are unfit to govern, recalling the history of the Coalition under Hewson and Howard. But this is the only way to win back the ungrudging support of the public.

One of the most significant factors in pre-election polling in recent times has been the high percentage of respondents who declare themselves unsure, even at the eleventh hour.

This may mean that the time is near for a significant shift in voting towards a broad coalition of interest groups and parties of the left. This is what the New Labour Party is hoping to see emerge just as it has over the Tasman under the proportional voting system.

It may also mean that the Australian people are looking for something substantially different. To provide it, Labor and the unions will have to suspend the wisdom that has become convention. At present, the former is closer to achieving this than the latter. ■

**Jon Greenaway** is *Eureka Street's* assistant editor.

## A yarn of woven genes

**T**HE PUBLIC VIEW OF SCIENTISTS—as opposed to science—doesn't seem to have moved on much from World War II, when researchers were respected as an important part of the war effort, but known and regarded as 'boffins'. They were eccentric dorks, removed from the real world, dressed in dustcoats—essentially colourless, grey people interested in technology, but not art or humanity or beauty.

Nowadays in Australia only a dork or a nerd would give up the potential of a well-paid job for the poor pay and lack of security of life as a research scientist. A forum in Canberra last month was told that one of Australia's most promising young scientists had to move house 14 times in 12 years and change his research direction four times to stay in employment. So why do they stick with it? It might surprise outsiders to learn that one reason is exactly the same as why artists, writers and performers are willing to starve in garrets—*aesthetic pleasure*.

Science, like music, is all about pattern. Scientists seek patterns in a seemingly random and chaotic world. When a pattern is found, it can be used to predict, to generate scientific law or theory. From Newton to Darwin to Watson and Crick, pattern is the Holy Grail of science. And, just as in music or painting, when the pattern or the chord or the colour fits, the pleasure is intense. As a young zoologist, Archimedes remembers the thrill walking through the bush and being able to predict which animal calls you could expect to hear from which patch of vegetation. Like listening to a familiar string quartet, that feeling of pattern still enlivens bush rambles.

And, as in art, some of the most intense intellectual delight comes from stumbling on an unexpected pattern, the blending of disparate ideas, or as Edward de Bono puts it, thinking laterally. As a student Steve Morton, now a senior scientist in CSIRO, started work on what was believed to be a rare marsupial mouse, the fat-tailed dunnart. The animal was so rare that he had great difficulty in trapping them. But he began to get a feel for where they lived—he found their nests under rocks on the Basalt plains west of Melbourne. Thinking laterally, he developed a sophisticated method of capturing them. He simply rolled over their rocks and grabbed them by hand. The technique was so successful he found that, far from rare, these mice were one of the most common small mammals in Australia. They just didn't enter traps. All it took was a new way of looking at things—*lateral thinking*.

Carbon fibre embedded into plastic or resin is a very light, very strong composite material used in the construction of modern aircraft. Traditionally the carbon fibres are layered or stacked like dressed timber: within each layer the fibres are parallel, but in alternate layers the fibres are perpendicular. This leads to a lamination which is exceptionally strong in one dimension, but can tend to peel apart in others. What do you do to improve the strength in these other dimensions?

Well, researchers in the Department of Aerospace Engineering at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology have turned to the ancient art of weaving. They are working with weavers on the latest computerised looms. Because weaving is all about intertwining fibres in three dimensions. Their studies now centre around finding the most effective weaves to produce the greatest strength and flexibility in aircraft components.

An explosion of data to do with sequences of genes and proteins has been generated by the automation of molecular biology. Overwhelmed, biomedical researchers are starting to invite computer scientists to come and apply the latest information handling techniques to helping sift through the results. This unlikely collaboration has not only spawned a new field called bio-informatics, but also has generated an entirely new approach to designing future drugs. Using data processing techniques that have much more to do with engineering than biology, computer scientists have been able to do much more than organise results and match useful genes and proteins. As the data accumulates, they have now begun to predict what protein sequences are likely to be biologically active, so that novel compounds incorporating these sequences can be made and tested. At the very least, their work will assist medical researchers by narrowing the search for useful proteins, but it also promises startling original discoveries. ■

**Tim Thwaites** is a freelance science writer.



# Northern exposure

**E**VERY NATION HAS ITS JOKE. Britain has Ireland, America has the Deep South. Australia has had Queensland—the deep north, for many years land of bananas, inarticulate peanut public figures, and pumpkin scone politics.

Jokes can be very serious things. We laugh when we most fear for ourselves. Sometimes we laugh when otherwise we would cry. In the case of Queensland, perhaps we laugh because our national joke is simply Australia, writ large.

Many states in Australia have had their gerrymanders. Several have had their populist old-man politicians—Bolte, Playford, and Court senior. Cronyism and corruption have at times been national sins and national ways of doing things.

In the late 1980s, the joke seemed to be over. The Fitzgerald Inquiry revealed institutionalised corruption at every level of Queensland public life. As Mr Tony Fitzgerald QC commented in his final report, 'This Commission of Inquiry ... began by pulling a few threads at the frayed edges of society. To general alarm, sections of the fabric began to unravel.'

Following the inquiry, Queenslanders had a hunger for a better public life unprecedented in the history of the state, or for that matter, the country. Great changes were in the air, and as part of them the Bjelke-Petersen Government fell.

But what is it about Queensland? Eight years after the release of the Fitzgerald Report, public life is again in pitifully

poor shape. One prominent Brisbane QC commented to me recently: 'It would make you weep, the quality of some of our elected representatives, and I'm not talking about any one party.'

Good government seems to elude Queensland. As the state faces up to the challenges of the next decade and century, the reasons for this are relevant to other states, because in many ways, Queensland continues to be a barometer of the national climate.

Three issues will dominate Queensland for the rest of this decade, each of them a corner of a national issue. First, there is the *Wik* decision on native title, which has the potential to affect almost 70 per cent of the state, and which goes to the core of issues of reconciliation and the role of law. Second, there is the Government's relationship with the Criminal Justice Commission, the standing anti-corruption body that was spawned by Fitzgerald and which is the most visible reminder that the state once had aspirations for a better way of doing things. And third, there is the planning issue—the fact that Queensland is moving very quickly from being a highly regionalised state, to one where development is concentrated, and unbalanced.

The Goss Labour Government lost power for many reasons. The immediate cause for its lack of electoral success was an unpopular freeway between Brisbane and the Gold Coast. The

freeway symbolised one of the main problems and challenges facing Queensland—the spectacular growth of population in the south-eastern corner of the state.

A few years ago, interstate migration to Queensland was at 1000 a week—the equivalent of a city the size of Albury-Wodonga every year. Migration has dropped off from those levels, but Queensland's population is still growing at 2.5 per cent per year, compared to 1 per cent for the nation as a whole.

Most of the growth is in the south-eastern corner, and as well, the decline of rural industries and family farms means that there is also substantial intra-state migration. Fewer than 200,000 Queenslanders now live west of the Great Dividing Range. This is particularly significant for the National Party, which has always seen its power base as being in rural areas, but according to Jon Stanford, a member of the University of Queensland's economics policy unit, neither Labor nor the National Party has come to grips with the implications of the population shift. Neither Labor nor coalition governments have dealt with the huge infrastructure and planning problems in a considered way. Labor's approach began and ended with the freeway, and the National Party, seems even less able to turn its attention to the fundamental and urgent city planning issues.

Stanford says: 'The Government's rhetoric is still that Queensland depends on rural industries—farming and mining—but in fact only about 5 to 6 per cent of the state's GDP is coming from farming.

'Everyone thought the breaking of the drought would lead to this great rural upturn, but now it is becoming clear that the decline is longer term. There are many farming enterprises in Queensland that haven't made a profit for five to six years, and eventually those families move to the eastern seaboard as well.'

Mining, the other big earner of times past, is still important, but not as an employer. Technology means that this once labour-intensive industry, responsible for dozens of company towns west of the dividing range, now employs fewer than 20,000 people directly. As well, the trend is for mines to fly their staff in on two-week shifts, rather than settling them and their families in the mining towns. Again, the population drift is to the south-eastern corner.

**T**HE NEW ECONOMIC GIANT in Queensland is the services sector, now responsible for 70 per cent of economic activity, with the big export earners being tourism and education. All this is in many ways a larger version of trends that affect the whole of Australia, but if part of the function of government is to manage change and transition, then Queensland is a sorry model.

'The Borbidge Government simply don't seem to understand the changes in the economy', Stanford says.

Distress about the Borbidge Government's capacity for long-term, considered decision-making comes from all quarters. In fact it is hard to find anyone who has an unqualified good word to say for the Government, including those in its natural electorate.

Michael Pinnock, head of the Queensland Mining Industry Chamber of Commerce, says that business grew close to the Goss Government, having better access to ministers than ever before. The incoming Borbidge Government at first seemed

to want to punish business for this 'betrayal'. The money end of town was frozen out. Only now are relations thawing.

And the quality of the Government's advisors?

Pinnock hesitates. 'You're touching a raw nerve there. I really have to be careful. Fundamentally our view is that after the change-over there was a real hiatus. Overall we don't feel Borbidge had as good a team of advisors as Goss.'

The star in the new Government's team of advisors, business representatives agree, is the new head of treasury, Dr Doug McTaggart, formerly a low-profile academic from Bond University and a surprise appointment. Nevertheless, he has won the respect of industry.

The problems seem to centre on the Premier's Department. The staff, crucial in opposition, is perceived to be simply not up to the job of government, and few of the ministers are seen as having the intellect to compensate.

**I**T WASN'T ONLY BUSINESS that was denied access by the incoming government. Aila Keto, one of Australia's most respected conservationists, now involved in campaigns to save forests, says that she would have been completely frozen out when the Borbidge Government came to power, were it not for the timber industry itself.

'Since the days of Joh, the industry has realised that governments come and go, but the conservation movement is a constant, and they have to have continuing dialogue.' It is the timber industry, she says, that has made sure that she is still consulted and involved in negotiations.

Imogen Zethoffen, head of the Queensland Conservation Council, has the opposite experience. She has never been refused a meeting with the minister when she has asked for one. Her group is frequently consulted, but virtually none of its program is picked up. 'Sometimes we are consulted to death, but for absolutely no outcome', she says.

*Good government seems to elude Queensland. As the state faces up to the challenges of the next decade and century, the reasons for this are relevant to other states, because in many ways, Queensland continues to be a barometer on the national climate.*



Queensland's other two big issues—*Wik* and the CJC—also reflect badly on the ability of governments of both colours to plan, or think beyond short-term political advantage. Both Labor and the National Party took a punt that the *Wik* decision would wipe out native title claims to pastoral leases, and in the last few years granted many leases without consultation with potential native title holders.

Since the *Wik* decision came down, Premier Rob Borbidge's public statements have see-sawed from the inflammatory, to a comparatively conciliatory stand. Most recently, his extraordinary attack on the High Court demonstrated ignorance of a Constitution which, in other debates, he has claimed to value greatly.

But surprisingly, Michael Pinnock says that Borbidge's red-neck public stance differs from that taken in private briefings with the mining industry. While publicly making statements suggesting that legislation was needed to wipe out native title, Borbidge and officials from the Attorney-General's department



*Inquiry into inquiry, public vituperation and a media that concentrates on the daily fireworks rather than intelligent analysis:*

*perhaps it is understandable that the public hunger and expectation for a clean public life has faded.*

were using industry briefings at the beginning of February to spell out different options, including negotiation with native title claimants, and legislative change incorporating compensation for extinguished native rights.

Why the difference? 'I think it is old-fashioned politics', Pinnock says. 'Borbidge is playing to what he perceives to be his electorate. He is appearing to appeal to the extreme red-neck view, which is really "let's just get rid of all this nonsense called native title and get on with things."'

Asked whether this was unhelpful, Pinnock agreed that it was. What the mining industry wants, he says, is not so much changes to legislation as a speedier and more effective process for deciding claims.

'We want those who are entitled to native title to get it, or to get realistic compensation. Most of all we want decisions.'

Ultimately, he agrees that the industry will have to negotiate with potential titleholders. The Government's inflammatory comments will make that process more difficult.

ONE OF THE UNIQUE FACTORS in Queensland's Government is of course the Independent MP, Liz Cunningham, on whom the Borbidge Government relies for its existence. Nothing happens without Cunningham's being consulted, and so far as her actions can be predicted, they are predicated on her perceptions of her Gladstone electorate's interests. Statewide issues are therefore frequently decided on intensely parochial perceptions. Cunningham has stymied industrial relations reforms, because she believes her electorate wouldn't want them, but has done nothing to moderate the Government's stance on *Wik*, or on the CJC.

Relations between the Labor Government and the CJC were never good. Early in its life, the CJC launched an

investigation into the alleged abuse of ministerial expense accounts. It landed politicians from both sides of the divide in trouble, and infuriated Wayne Goss. To make matters worse, there were some early CJC mistakes and misjudgments. The press officer at the time, who now works for National Party Minister for Police, Russ Cooper, was rightly or wrongly accused of being anti the Goss Government, and of injudicious leaks.

There were legal and research problems with early CJC reports, including into the prostitution industry and into poker machines. Some of the CJC's early appointments owed more to perceptions of who the goodies and baddies were in those heady post-Fitzgerald days, than to cool decisions about what sort of people were best suited to the long, unglamorous slog of a permanent anti-corruption fight.

Nevertheless, under its first head, Sir Max Bingham, the CJC had overwhelming public support. Peter Beattie, then the head of the parliamentary committee charged with overseeing the CJC's work, also supported Bingham through thick and thin. Beattie's role made him an enemy of Goss. In the early 1990s, Beattie told this reporter that he considered his advocacy of the CJC had destroyed his political career. How the wheel turns. Beattie is now leader

of the Opposition, and Goss has become politically invisible.

Perhaps it is an example of how short memories can be in Queensland (beautiful one day, perfect the next) that people now tend to refer back to the Bingham days at the CJC as a golden age. Relations between Goss and Bingham were bad, but between Borbidge and the current CJC head, Frank Clair, they are atrocious.

Things started badly, with the CJC investigating the memorandum of understanding between the Government and the Police Union to see whether or not it amounted to electoral bribery and corruption. In a move that most consider to be tit for tat, the National Party government appointed its own inquiry into the CJC.

Frank Clair, a lawyer best known for his dogged prosecution work, and not for the political sense so vital to this sensitive job, objected vociferously. Clair's approach cost him dear in public support. It allowed Borbidge to accuse him of setting the CJC up as an alternative parliament—beyond accountability. While Clair undoubtedly had good reason to suspect the Government's motives, he was on weak ground. When Fitzgerald recommended the setting up of the CJC, he deliberately made it ultimately accountable to Parliament, rather than completely autonomous. He rejected the NSW ICAC model, saying 'an independent body is needed, an autonomous one is not. The idea of an autonomous body can at first be comforting, because it is beyond the control of those in power who may be corrupt. However ... it is also beyond the reach of practical proper control.'

In any case, the inquiry into the CJC went ahead, resulting late last year in the dramatic resignation of Mr Ken Carruthers, the head of the inquiry into the Memorandum of Understanding. He claimed there had been political interference, making it impossible for his inquiry to proceed sensibly. Meanwhile Frank

Clair got front-page headlines by telling a parliamentary estimates committee that proposed budget cuts to the CJC would jeopardise inquiries into emerging evidence about corrupt senior police.

Borbidge leapt. What was all this about senior police corruption? If it existed, why hadn't the CJC done something about it before? He challenged Clair to put up the evidence, or shut up.

And so yet another inquiry was launched—into the CJC's own allegations of police corruption. The Carter inquiry is presently in progress and at the time of writing had heard evidence of junior police involvement with the drug trade with unverified claims that an unidentified senior policeman known as 'God' was also involved.

Thanks to the politics surrounding all these multiple inquiries, the Carter inquiry has been cast as a test of the CJC's credibility. Given the incredible difficulty of proving corruption, the CJC is not in an enviable position. Borbidge has stated publicly that he has no confidence in Clair, and has described the CJC as 'keystone cops'.

One cannot assess the health of public life in Queensland without talking about the media, which, in the debate over the CJC, has played a consistently unintelligent role. That other child of the Fitzgerald Commission, the Electoral and Administrative Review Commission, several years ago analysed the alliances of convenience that had grown up between journalists and the powerful, and the superficial and specious reporting that resulted. Not much has changed.

**D**URING THE FITZGERALD ERA, the ABC's *7.30 Report*, largely under the leadership of anchor Quentin Dempster, played a vital role in providing intelligent and independent analysis of events. This reporter remembers how, at the height of the inquiry hearings, actors were hired to replay crucial parts of the evidence so that the public could see for itself what was happening. Dempster argued passionately with ABC management for the extra few hundred dollars this exercise cost each evening. The actors sat in the public gallery, watching the people they were to play that night. It was an example of commitment to quality local reporting.

Before, during and immediately after the Fitzgerald Inquiry, the *7.30 Report* helped to keep the rest of the media on track. Now that the program has become national, its important local role has been lost. In Melbourne and Sydney, it may hardly be missed, but in Brisbane, a one-newspaper town, its absence has changed public life in important ways.

The one newspaper, *The Courier-Mail*, seems ever ready to swap sense for sensation. Recently, according to statements from the paper's management, reporters spent a year investigating the Manning Clark Order of Lenin affair. One can think of many other things, closer to home, which might better merit a year of investigative effort.

Inquiry into inquiry, public vituperation and a media that concentrates on the daily fireworks rather than intelligent analysis: perhaps it is understandable that the public hunger and expectation for a clean public life has faded.

One observer close to the action said he had concluded that the National Party had decided that it was not going to go

this time without a fight. The men who might once have been regarded as the conscience of the party—Bill Gunn, who as acting Premier during the Joh for PM drive set up the Fitzgerald Inquiry—and Mike Ahern, have gone.

Nor has the Labor Party anything to boast about. Although Beattie's credibility on corruption-related matters is high, ALP power broker, Terry Mackenroth, is still on the frontbench. When Goss was in power, it was Mackenroth who, having been found to have abused his expense account, made a series of allegations against the new 'honest cop' police commissioner, Noel Newnham. Mackenroth's allegations proved to be groundless, but the ensuing investigation into Newnham showed up other discrepancies in his travel expenses, and he was forced to go. Later, Goss revealed to Parliament the history of the feud between Mackenroth and Newnham. The police commissioner had briefed Goss privately on allegations concerning a donation to Mackenroth's 1989 election campaign. Goss later had these comments wiped from the Hansard record, on legal advice that the matter was before the courts.

The police union, criticised by Fitzgerald as one of the factors perpetuating a corrosive police culture, is more than ever a source of concern. The eventual findings of the CJC inquiry into the Memorandum of Understanding found no basis for charges against government ministers or findings of corruption, but nevertheless the existence of the memo, which promised the police union wide powers and rights to consultation, means that as in the days of Bjelke Petersen, relations between executive government and the police are unhealthily close.

If public life in Queensland is clean, then it is almost certainly more a matter of good luck than good management—

*Since the Wik decision came down, Premier Rob Borbidge's public statements have see-sawed from the inflammatory, to a comparatively conciliatory stand. Most recently, his extraordinary attack on the High Court demonstrated ignorance of a Constitution which, in other debates, he has claimed to value greatly.*



or perhaps it is just a symptom of the fact that the last two Governments have been relatively short-lived, and cronyism hasn't had a chance to ossify into something even more dangerous.

In the meantime, as Queensland wrestles with a subset of the nation's most profound challenges, it looks as though it might continue to be one of the nation's most serious jokes. ■

**Margaret Simons** is a freelance writer.

# A day within your courts

I HAVE A FRIEND WHO IS an astute traveller. Whenever he finds himself in a new city, he takes himself on Monday morning to the local court-house. He believes you can learn more from what passes in front of the magistrate than you can from any tourist brochure.

The courts are unfamiliar to me. When I found myself in Ballarat in the middle of January, I was surprised that a city with such fine public buildings has such a lacklustre court-house. The backs of the toilet doors are covered with graffiti: 'here I shit, a free man', 'abandon hope all who enter here.' Somebody had amended 'such is life' to read 'suck is life'.

I was there as a character witness for another friend, Tom Matthews. About two years previously, Tom and Joanne Adams had approached me after Mass and asked if I would celebrate their wedding with them. They were slightly older than the typical couple. In his mid-thirties, Tom had successfully changed careers from being a primary school principal to working in data management. He had been married twice before but, by one of those strange turns of the Catholic bureaucracy, we were able to negotiate all the formalities. He had first married soon after leaving a religious order and we talked at length about his fraught relationship with the two sons of that marriage, both now teenagers. I was relieved to see them both at the wedding. Before long, Jo was expecting their first child.

I hadn't heard from them for a while when last September I had a call from Tom. He told me that the police had come to his office and asked if they could speak to him privately. He suggested a meeting room but they said they'd be happier if he came back with them to the station. He complied.

At the station, they charged him with nine counts of indecent assault on minors. The charges related to a time about 25 years before when he was still a member of a

religious order and was teaching in a school near Ballarat. Tom had no clear recollection of the incidents that were described in the statements of his victims. He had, however, lived for years with a sense that there was something in his past which was unresolved and continued to undermine his capacity for intimate relationships. He knew he had done something terrible. Although he had no legal counsel with him, he pleaded guilty to the charges on the spot. He said he even experienced a mild relief. He said that he had spent 25 years tied to a railway track, waiting for the train to come. Now the train was approaching.

Even so, there was still a long wait. A date was set for the case and then deferred on three separate occasions. Tom was spat on and heckled on his way to court for the preliminary hearings. Jo was hoping that the matter could be settled before the baby was born, although she had to contend with the prospect that Tom could be behind bars for the birth. In fact, they had a boy about a month before the case finally came to trial. It was a stressful Christmas. During a briefing with Tom's barrister, Jo asked if she should bring the baby to the court.

'God no,' said the barrister, 'the last thing we want is for people to say what they said about Lindy Chamberlain—that she only had the baby to get sympathy.'

It had been a long wait also for Tom's two victims. The statements they made to the police told of lives that had been damaged by abuse. The night before the trial, one of them appeared on a tabloid current affairs program. His face was masked, but his voice betrayed more tiredness than anger. He didn't sound vengeful, there was no sign of bloodlust in what he had to say. But he was clear that Tom's actions had laid a burden on him under which he had struggled. Unlike Tom's, his recollections of the crimes were crystal clear. The victims had been aged nine and ten when they came

under Tom's care. They were now in their mid-thirties, about my age.

Later, I tried to imagine their side of the story. Robyn Miller is a family therapist and social worker and works as a consultant to the pastoral response office in the archdiocese of Melbourne. She has indelible memories of standing in front of a forum that was conducted in the parish of Oakleigh last July after its former parish priest, the late Kevin O'Donnell, was convicted of sexual offences against children. O'Donnell's history of abuse stretched over 40 years. He had been in Oakleigh for 16 of those years. Nobody has dared count the number of his victims. According to Miller, the anger in the parish was white hot. After the meeting, two women in their sixties approached Miller and disclosed for the first time that they had also been abused as children. Their reason for staying quiet for so long was a common one: they thought they would not be believed. In sentencing O'Donnell in August 1995, Judge Kellam emphasised again and again the long silence which his victims had maintained because they too thought they would not be believed. In February, the Archbishop of Melbourne, George Pell, attended another meeting in the parish and offered an apology. This time the church's credibility was on the line. The process of recovery in Oakleigh, as elsewhere, will be long and arduous.

'YOU HAVE TO REALISE two things about paedophiles,' says Miller. 'The first is that they are engaged in highly addictive behaviour.'

She quotes Ray Wyre, the founder of England's Lucy Faithful Foundation, who came to Melbourne last year to conduct training in this area. He maintains that with offenders you have to talk about control. You can't talk about cure.

'The second thing,' continues Miller, 'is

that, like most addicts, sexual offenders are highly skilful. They are adept at grooming their victims and cultivating opportunities to offend. Often this means infiltrating a family and gaining trust. They also rationalise in order to overcome internal and external inhibitors of their activities. Then, finally, they are brilliant at minimising the impact of what they have done. They evade responsibility. Part of what we try to do in working with offenders is to get them to develop victim empathy.'

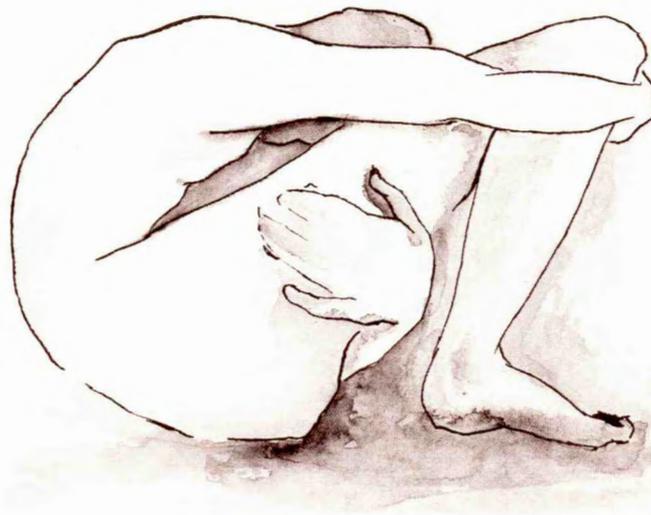
Robyn Miller's own research has built on the comparison often made between the impact of child sexual abuse and post-traumatic stress disorder. This disorder was used in the 1980's to describe the specific symptoms of large numbers of veterans after the Vietnam War. Miller says, 'the syndrome is characterised by nightmares, intrusive recollections of the event, acting as if or feeling that the event is recurring in response to a situational cue, memory lapses, anxiety, problems with relationships and a feeling of detachment from others.'

Miller has also itemised some of the recurrent difficulties that victims present. They include regressive behaviours, sleep disturbances, eating disorders, persistent and inappropriate sexual play, depression, low self-esteem, fear of or reduced interactions with members of the sex of the perpetrator, substance abuse, self-destructiveness and risk of suicide. That's before they reach adulthood. The overwhelming legacy left to the abused is self-hatred. They often take responsibility for what has happened, especially if the adult is trusted by the community at large. They live in shame.

Tom's victims spent their day in court sitting patiently in the back row. An encampment of media set up outside the building. Everybody waited as the dark side of Ballarat passed slowly before the magistrate. A transport company had an unregistered vehicle. A young business woman needed an intervention order against her former partner who happened to be her paymaster at work; the magistrate ruled that he was not to come within 50m of her and wondered how this could be enforced

when they worked in the same office. Another woman had breached an intervention order because she wanted to rescue her child who had been left to sleep in the car at her husband's place. A young man was rifling a purse in a shop in Daylesford. He was caught before he managed to get anything. Otherwise he'd be going to jail: he has a long list of priors.

Tom's was the 42nd case to be called. What unfolded over the next two and a half hours was beyond the normal range of sadness. The police prosecutor read the details of Tom's crimes in a grim litany as members of his family struggled to contain their emotions. Tom sat with his head bowed; a member of one of the victims' action groups moved to the seat behind him



and leaned forward, literally breathing down his neck. A police officer asked the man to sit back.

**T**OM'S BARRISTER THEN BEGAN to fill out the picture. It emerged that Tom, having grown up in a staunchly conservative Catholic family, entered the juniorate of the order when he was fifteen. The juniorate was a school designed for streaming vocations from early adolescence. He left the juniorate and returned to a normal school run by the order where he felt branded indelibly as a failure by the brothers for leaving the juniorate and a freak by his peers for going there in the first place. He was himself sexually assaulted by brothers.

The magistrate interrupted at this point to ask the barrister if surely, having been abused himself, Tom would have been in a better position to judge the

effect of his actions on the boys.

Beneath this question lies a world of conjecture. Robyn Miller says that the anecdotal evidence indicates that most abusers have themselves been abused, but this is far from saying that everyone who has been abused becomes an abuser. Indeed, some, as the magistrate implied, become effective carers.

The question also begs the further question of how deeply entrenched abuse has become in the clerical culture. It is impossible to know and easy to exaggerate. Nevertheless, the letters of John Bede Polding, Australia's first bishop, have recently been published. They show that in the middle of the nineteenth century, he had to send a fellow Benedictine back to England with a reference to the effect that he was not to be allowed near boys. The expression used to describe his failing was 'goosiness', a word I am unable to find in dictionaries of slang, although the verb to 'goose' means to poke somebody between the buttocks. Some years ago, I was teaching at a school in Sydney where one of my lay colleagues told me about his days as a brother. In his mid-twenties, this man had been made headmaster of a school, superior of a community and expected to do a university degree at the same time. This workload itself bordered on abuse of a kind. It came to his attention that an older

member of the community was molesting one of the young students. He broke one of the unwritten rules of the order, that you sort out your own problems, and asked advice from the higher-ups. 'Don't tell us he's up to his old tricks again,' he was told about the pædophile.

After Tom's case, my evidence in support of Tom was widely reported in the media. One result was a letter from a member of the order which Tom had joined. It was long and deeply pained and ended in the writer saying it was 'really an open letter':

Every male teacher worth his salt is tempted in the company of youths and boys. Some are alluringly attractive. 'KK's' used to be an expression when I was a young brother—'kissable kids'. It is an obligation to resist these temptations. Thank God, I did. But it's every male

teacher's problem. All the safeguards in the world will not shield him from meeting the problem.

Miller believes that the writer is caught up in a 'distorted offender thinking' which attempts to normalise paedophilia.

The overwhelming majority of students in Catholic schools, however, were not subjected to sexual abuse. Indeed, without the work of brothers and nuns, often in heroic circumstances, Australia would have been unable to teach its baby boomers how to read and write. The renowned Goulburn school strike made this point in the early sixties. If a life of personal privation forced some individuals into distorted behaviour, then the whole country is subtly complicit.

Sexual abuse was never part of my experience at school in the seventies. I do vividly recall one occasion in 1973, when I was 12, finding myself out of bounds in the wardrobe room behind the stage. I was sticky-beaking. The priest in charge of the area discovered me and flew into a rage. He threw me from one side of the room to the other then dragged me outside by the hair. He had been drinking. I became terrified of him. Eight years later, when I was a novice in this man's order, I was sent to work in the community to which he was now attached. I was still terrified of him, always looking over my shoulder to see when he was around.

**I**T WAS A FURTHER SIX YEARS before I was back in that man's city, this time for an ordination. He came and sat beside me at the lunch afterwards. After some awkward small talk, he said to me 'I bashed you up, didn't I.' I said 'Yes you did' and had to leave the table to regain my composure. That brief exchange relieved me of an enormous burden. It was enough to know that he had remembered, was troubled, and owned up in an openly apologetic manner. Admittedly this was a minor incident. But I admire his courage. It has helped me a great deal. Sometimes I wonder if victims of abuse are really looking for a meeting of this kind in which the original aggressor is nakedly undefended.

I feel for my friend Tom. In spite of a traumatic adolescence, he did make a second attempt at a religious vocation and at the age of 21 he found himself teaching as a member of a particular religious community whose prevailing ethos was one of psychological torture and emotional deprivation. In our briefing, Tom's barrister wondered aloud what every other 21-year-old was up to in the mid '70s. Tom was living in a

community whose older members took a perverted pride in steadfastly refusing to remember his name. Every hour of the day was accounted for; the only adult companionship was the half hour in which the community sat down together to eat in silence. Several of the people who sat in silence around that table have since been convicted of child sex abuse. Gerald Ridsdale, who worked in the parish in this period, is still in jail. As these details were being enumerated, the member of the victims' rights group sitting behind Tom stood and yelled the names of the members of the community who had been convicted. He added Tom's name to the list and stormed through the door.

Tom's case does stand out in significant respects. He took responsibility to the extent that he realised his behaviour was destructive and in 1974, close to a breakdown, sought professional help. His psychologist, Ronald Conway, had kept his file and was able to testify on Tom's behalf. Conway said that 'the only available objects of affection for him (Tom) were the boys in his charge ... (it was) not surprising this overflowed to indecency'. Conway also said that the system of training which Tom had experienced which crushed fundamental human needs was inhumane and destructive. He was amazed that so many 'loyal and decent' people had come out of it. Conway's advice was instrumental in Tom's leaving the order. Some years later, Conway also told the order that they needed to change their training practices. The order took the view, according to Conway, that they would look after it themselves. Conway has interviewed every candidate for the priesthood in the Melbourne diocese since the late 60s. He has profound misgivings about mandatory celibacy for clergy. 'Many have the gift of ministry,' he says, 'but not all can live the celibate life.'

Tom's younger sister came to the stand and spoke of the silent, brooding and unhappy man who came home from the order. A friend spoke of how different he had since become. Another said that Tom had been close to suicide with remorse. I said that Tom had lived an inhuman life and acted in an inhuman way. An older victims' supporter, also sitting behind Tom, shook his head angrily as I spoke. Tom's mother was also called to the stand but the magistrate said there was no point in putting her through the ordeal.

**T**HE BARRISTER PLEADED for a suspended sentence, arguing that the community

would understand that his circumstances warranted special consideration. 'The community' was a euphemism for the media.

There were two trials taking place in the same room. The magistrate sentenced Tom to three months on each charge, the last two terms to be served concurrently, making a total of two years. He agreed to the suspension only because the crimes took place so long ago and Mr Tom Matthews was demonstrably a different human being from Br Tom Matthews. Once convicted, Tom was able to leave, under police guard, to return to his month-old son and year-old marriage. As we stood to leave, the older victims' supporter turned and said that three of his sons had been abused and asked me if I cared about that. He was more sad than angry but I felt immediately defensive. I wish I had said something to him, something to acknowledge the pain that kept him sitting in court all day following the tragedy of a complete stranger. God knows what he was seeking. Perhaps he wanted to know somebody was sorry.

Tom was harassed as he left the court. When some of Joanne's friends read about the case in the paper the following morning, they sent flowers. Others were outraged. They said that Tom had only married her so he could be like Lindy Chamberlain and have a baby at the trial. They asked what other skeletons were in the closet. What else was going to be dragged up? They implied that if anything happened to Jo's elderly parents in the next twelve months, they would hold Jo and Tom personally responsible. Tom's employer told him there was no problem as far as he was concerned but within a month he closed the division in which Tom worked. A sentenced criminal, Tom is now looking for work. The baptism of their child has been postponed until their friends can get together calmly. Yet another generation has to wait.

There are no easy lessons from this grim sequence of events. Helen Prejean's account of offering companionship to murderers on death row while reaching out to their victims, *Dead Man Walking*, ends with these words: 'Forgiveness is never going to be easy. Each day it must be prayed for and struggled for and won.' Prejean is a model. She dodges none of the tough stuff. She believes that it's pointless talking about forgiveness unless everybody has a chance to tell their story and to be heard.

Both Robyn Miller and Helen Last, the co-ordinator of the pastoral response office in the Melbourne archdiocese underline the fact that there is no way forward for either

## T John Honner culls the theological crop

survivors or offenders unless the perpetrator of a crime is able to take responsibility for what they have done. On the other hand, they talk about a type of church culture in which clergy lack accountability.

Celibacy does not create paedophiles. Indeed, most paedophiles live in heterosexual relationships. But the church has put priests, brothers and nuns on a pedestal and that gives them undue power in the lives of victims. It is this power which helps first in grooming potential victims and then in reducing them to silence about what has gone on. It is a tragic irony that in a period in which the church has put the theological fingerprint of its members under close scrutiny, it has paid little attention to the ability of its celibate ministers to live with dignity and integrity. Helen Last says that her work with clergy constantly reveals a gap between the way they think they can live their vow of celibacy and the public perception of how they live that vow.

ONE SYMPATHETIC RESEARCHER, Richard Sipe has written that 'celibate—that is clerical—culture involves authoritarian alliances, economic bonds, societal privileges and homosocial parameters, all of which have nothing to do with the reality of celibate practice.' Robyn Miller puts this more bluntly. Where offenders themselves have been exposed to abusive and inhumane practices within their religious lives, the church has some tough questions to face.

It did occur to me in Ballarat that after a plane crash, people sift through the wreckage for the black box, that most protected part of the aircraft, which never forgets. They apportion responsibility to the pilot, the navigator, the maintenance crew and the design of the plane. In Tom's case, it could be too late to settle any question of blame. His victims may well ponder the old adage that justice delayed is justice denied. But if any healing is to take place, it can only do so on the basis of truth. The truth is that Tom was flying a plane that was never airworthy. The people who built it have much to lament. The church is still recovering from the timid theology which separated body and soul and tried to bind the body. But the church, including both offenders and survivors, is the body of Christ. In our fear, we have deeply bruised it. ■

**Michael McGirr** sj is the consulting editor of *Eureka Street*.

Note: Some names in this article have been changed to protect the privacy of individuals and families concerned.—cd.

• THOMAS MOORE'S *CARP OF THE SOUL*, published in 1992, is a book that I liked very well. Many others liked it too—it spent 46 weeks on the *New York Times* best-seller list, including time at number 1. Moore's gentle blend of Jungian psychology, Christian spirituality, and the better aspects of New Age wisdom—which is, after all, Old Age wisdom—exemplifies much of contemporary literature in spirituality. But is such spirituality a consumer product which satisfies the need it generates, or is it expressive of a thirst for God?

• In the January edition of *Modern Theology*, an international journal published by Blackwells from Oxford, Gregory Jones has an article entitled 'A Thirst for God or Consumer Spirituality?' Jones argues, first, that Moore substitutes a very pragmatic polytheistic 'sacredness' for the Christian God; secondly, that Moore has his focus on the self-sufficiency of soulfulness rather than on the action of the Spirit; and, finally, that Moore privatizes Christian practices and thus removes communal and justice issues from his agenda. As a consequence, contemporary spiritual practice can make it more rather than less difficult to discover communion with the Spirit. This is a very interesting and, I think, valid critique. Jones, who lectures at Loyola College in Baltimore, is one of the editors of *Modern Theology* and the entire issue is devoted to a discussion of traditional and modern spiritualities. It is important reading.

• When the first man and woman get caught out in the Garden of Eden, the Lord God tells the woman that 'your desire shall be for your husband and he shall rule over you'. What do these lines from Genesis 3:16 mean? Walter Vogels, who teaches at Saint Paul University in Ottawa, has a very technical article in *Biblica* 77/2 (1996) which will answer your question. Mind you, all articles in *Biblica* are very technical, for this is the journal of the Pontifical Biblical Institute, the home of polyglot scholarship. Vogel notes how conservatives have used this verse to defend the superiority of the husband, and how some feminists in turn have argued the reverse. His conclusion, however, is surely good news for all those husbands and wives frantically deadlocked on this exegesis:

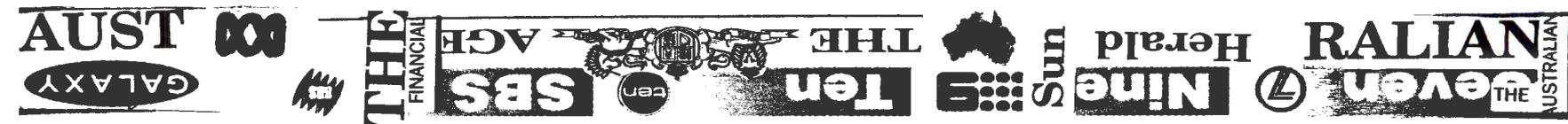
The text does not speak of the superiority of one over the other, not even, in a sense, about equality, if that means that they have equal 'power'. Love is not concerned with power. The text speaks about a very unique and harmonious relationship in which two distinct and individual persons are no longer 'alone', but really one.

• The dream of the month belongs to Reinhard Frieling, a member of the World Council of Churches and Roman Catholic Church Joint Working Group, who has an article in the January 1997 number of the *Ecumenical Review*, itself a WCC publication. Frieling's very accessible essay is entitled 'Communion with, not under the Pope'. In it he describes his desire to move from the provincialism of the German regional churches, to which he belongs, to a universal ministry of unity in the Church. This elegant, wise, and hopeful essay is in no way a plea for classic Protestant polemics against the papacy, but a dream for a truly catholic church.

• The mad article of the month is Stephen Happel's 'Communion with Fast Food' in *The Way* of January 1997. Happel claims that few people in contemporary western society prepare food together and then dine together. Rather, there is a greater and greater tendency towards fast food and pre-prepared food. He wryly observes that the old style of giving out communion and taking communion to the sick had elements of the fast-food syndrome about it. More seriously, he asks if our eucharistic liturgy might need to be changed if it is to catch the ethos of modern culture? Unfortunately he offers no answers.

• For interesting information, consider John England's study of 'Early Asian Christian Writings, 5th-12th Centuries' in the April 1997 number of *Asia Journal of Theology*. For example, England describes in some detail the Sian-fu stele, a three-metre high monument from the Nestorian monastery at Chou-chih in China in 781 A.D., a text of 2,000 Chinese characters and 70 words of Syriac which summarizes the faith and history of that community at that time. And just when was it that Christianity came to Germany? England does not mention that Matteo Ricci, the great Jesuit missionary, discovered remnants of this Nestorian Christian community when he arrived in China some eight centuries later. ■

**John Honner** sj is scholar-in-residence at Newman College and editor-in-chief of *Pacifica: journal of the Melbourne College of Divinity*.



THE MEDIA  
PAUL CHADWICK

## I've got news for you

**K**ERRY PACKER MIGHT NOT need to persuade the Government and independent senators to dismantle the cross-media rules that appear to stand between him and control of the Fairfax newspapers. The existing rules may be too weak to stop him, or other media owners who want to control papers and broadcasting outlets in the same market.

The rules appear to have at least two flaws, one of which has already been used by Australian Provincial Newspapers to maintain ownership of a radio station and a newspaper in overlapping markets in Queensland. The Australian Broadcasting Authority has accepted the arrangement on the basis of legal advice, a decision with potentially far-reaching implications for the effectiveness of the cross-media rules in larger markets. APN, controlled by the O'Reilly family interests, is also close to obtaining sufficient support in the Senate for an amendment which could weaken the rules ahead of the Federal Government's long-anticipated revision. The rules do need revision, but only after a more spacious debate than we have seen so far. At the end of this piece, I will sketch a proposal for one limb of a public-interest test which may be inserted into competition law if the Government pursues its plans to adjust media ownership rules. To explain the potential loopholes in the cross-media rules it is necessary briefly to explain their origins.

In 1986, the Hawke Government traded off greater concentration of ownership within each of the print, radio and TV segments for greater diversity among them. Restrictions were placed on the extent to which owners could have cross-media holdings, for instance, interests in a newspaper which circulated in the same market served by their TV or radio station.

The decision produced a massive ownership upheaval and concentration got much more intense within both print and electronic media. But the trade-off was less successful. The cross-media rules were never applied to magazines. The attempt to extend them to pay TV failed. Owners big in one medium quickly moved to the permitted limit in another (usually 15 per cent) and pressured the politicians for change. It is these rules in the Broadcasting Services Act which are thought to be stopping Mr Packer, who controls the Nine Network and most major magazines and a chunk of pay TV, from taking over the Fairfax papers, chiefly

the *Sydney Morning Herald*, the *Age* and the *Australian Financial Review*, of which he controls around 14 per cent. Rupert Murdoch controls the bulk of the country's newspapers and waits at 14.9 per cent of the Seven Network.

The rules are also supposed to prevent owners of provincial newspapers from having undue influence in smaller markets by also controlling the local radio or TV station. The largest owner of regional daily papers is Australian Provincial Newspapers. The O'Reilly family also controls the Australian Radio Network, seven metropolitan and five regional stations which reach a potential audience of 54 per cent of the Australian population.

### Flaw 1: 'fake circulation'

A newspaper is only subject to the cross-media rules if it fits the definition in section 6 of the Broadcasting Services Act: 'a newspaper that is in the English language and is published on at least four days in each week, but does not include a publication if less than 50 per cent of its circulation is by way of sale.'

Among APN's regional dailies is the *Queensland Times* of Ipswich, circulation about 15,000. In 1994, O'Reilly interests expanded their radio holdings to include 4KQ, a Brisbane commercial station. The markets served by 4KQ and the *Queensland Times* overlap, so APN was potentially in breach of the cross-media rules.

The agency which is supposed to enforce the cross-media rules is the Australian Broadcasting Authority. After APN acquired 4KQ, the ABA granted it 15 months to remedy its cross-media breach. Just before the deadline in March 1996, APN told the ABA about its plan to circulate a free rural edition outside the 4KQ licence area. The ABA replied that this would not do and threatened to issue a notice directing APN to fix its cross-media breach. But about four months later APN began distributing free copies which took to 51 per cent the proportion of *Queensland Times*' circulation that was outside the radio station's licence area. The circulation data comprised both paid and free papers.

The ABA was satisfied. With less than 50 per cent of the total circulation now within the licence area, the ABA removed the *Queensland Times* from the register of newspapers associated with licence areas. This put the paper beyond the reach of the cross-media rules. But was the 'fake circulation', gener-

ated by distributing extra papers for free, properly part of the circulation of the newspaper? The ABA's legal advice said yes.

'Circulation' is not expressly defined in the act so it is interpreted according to the act's definition of 'newspaper'. That definition excludes newspapers if less than half their circulation is by way of sale. The ABA was advised that the act thus anticipated, and did not prohibit, situations in which a significant proportion of the circulation of a newspaper is unpaid distribution. APN's response to its cross-media problem and the ABA's acceptance of it have considerable implications for metropolitan markets, and specifically for Fairfax.

It appears to be open to, say, Mr Packer to acquire *The Age* and to print and distribute extra copies and distribute them outside the licence area of his Melbourne TV station, GTV9. So long as the proportion of circulation 'by way of sale' remained at less than 50 per cent of total circulation *The Age* would not be caught by the present cross-media rules. The same technique might be applied to the *Sydney Morning Herald* and TCN9.

Why give away thousands of papers, you ask. The average weekday paid circulation of *The Age* was audited last September at 207,000. A proportion (figure not available) already circulates outside metropolitan Melbourne, GTV's licence area.

A large element of a newspaper's production expenses are in what are called 'first-copy costs', the items that have to be paid whether the paper sells one thousand copies or one million. The marginal cost of printing and distributing free copies might not be prohibitive. It might even make sense, given the potential rewards of cross-media holdings in Melbourne or Sydney or both.

To those with designs on Fairfax but a cross-media problem, the chief value of the 'fake circulation' device might be that it allows a pre-emptive strike before the government's current review of the rules is complete and before any problems are encountered with independent senators over the form of replacement rules.

**I**N 1986 ALL THE KEY MEDIA deals were done on the strength of a press release outlining a Cabinet decision in November. The law on which the deals were predicated was not passed by Parliament until the following June, by a margin of one vote, Senator Brian



Harradine's. It is possible that once again the market will run so far ahead of the regulators and legislators that the omelette will be deemed too hard to unscramble, as the financial commentators say.

*Flaw 2: 'on-line circulation'*

We know from the APN case that the law does not define 'circulation' and that the ABA has accepted advice that a significant proportion of circulation can be unpaid distribution. This is the essence of the second flaw in the present rules.

Major publishers today make available on-line versions of the newspapers they publish. For the time being, access is usually free to those with a computer, a modem, a phone line and some ability to navigate the Internet. Each time someone uses the on-line version of major daily newspaper is called a 'hit'. Some papers' sites are receiving hundreds of thousands of hits a day, far more than the number of newspapers sold in the traditional paper form. Are the on-line hits 'circulation' for the purposes of the cross-media rules?

If they are, it seems that less than 50 per cent of the circulation of *The Age* and *Sydney Morning Herald*, is 'by way of sale' and so those papers are not covered by the current cross-media rules. Alternatively, if a paper's circulation now comprises both sales of the paper version and hits at the on-line version, how could the ABA possibly calculate whether more than 50 per cent of circulation is in the service area of a particular radio or TV station? The readers making the hits are in cyberspace, not a defined geographic area.

On this interpretation of 'circulation', Mr Packer or Kerry Stokes of the Seven Network or the O'Reillys of ARN, or some other existing media owner could acquire the major Fairfax papers today. Their only concern would be competition law, not cross-media rules. And if the News Corporation papers were also excluded from the cross-media rules by such an interpretation, Mr Murdoch would seem able to move to control of the Seven Network (subject to foreign ownership restrictions and competition law). On-line papers can be updated at regular intervals, not published once daily like paper ones. A more careful definition of 'published' may be required.

The puzzles presented by on-line versions of papers illustrate that the notion of 'convergence' must be considered in any revision of the rules. Newspapers delivered by phone lines and read on screens do make obsolete the original cross-media rules. But their core rationale remains just as valid: the law must dilute then prevent concentrations of media power.

*Mr O'Reilly goes to Canberra*

APN, led by chief executive, Mr Cameron O'Reilly, does not like having to print and distribute free several thousand extra copies of the *Queensland Times* and has for some months been lobbying politicians to change the cross-media rules to fix its problem. Coalition, Labor and Democrat senators, and independent Senators Harradine and Colston, are understood to have agreed to support an amendment proposed by APN which would have the effect of diluting the cross-media rules.

The amendment would have been passed late last year but for the refusal of the Greens to support the procedural motion to waive notice, treat the change as non-controversial and pass it without debate.

A lobbyist for at least one other media owner tried to assist APN's efforts. APN has recently renewed the lobbying. Meanwhile, the amendment is currently tacked to an unrelated broadcasting bill well down the Senate notice paper. The Communications Minister, Senator Alston, has told a Liberal party-room meeting that the amendment was simply technical.

The amendment would mean that, when a newspaper and commercial radio station cover the same market, the cross-media rules would prohibit common ownership of both only if at least 50 per cent of the paper's circulation was within the licence area and the circulation of the paper within the licence area was at least 2 per cent of the licence area population.

**T**HE PROPOSED LINK BETWEEN a paper's circulation and licence area population is new. If passed, the immediate effect would be to permit more cross-media ownership in at least three regional markets, Warwick and Tweed Heads, where APN owns the regional dailies, and Maitland, where John B. Fairfax owns the *Mercury*.

But again the implications go far wider. Two per cent of licence area population seems minor until you calculate that half the average weekday circulation of *The Age* last September was equivalent to only 3.5 per cent of the population of the Melbourne licence area of 3.05 million.

Circulations are in long-term decline; populations rise.

How does common ownership of radio and papers in the same market improve the chances of diversity? Why worsen concentration without countervailing public benefit? 'Why privilege radio in this way?' the TV owners will ask. 'We want equal treatment.' The 2 per cent of population figure will be swiftly pressured

for change, so that the expansion plans of owners do not fall foul of the new rule.

A larger question suggests itself. How is it that all major parties could have agreed to support, without debate, an amendment to dilute one cross-media rule at a time when the underlying policy and details of all those rules are under review and comprehensive amendments are said to be imminent? If the change is merely technical, what's the hurry?

The cross-media rules *do* require a rethink. The foreign ownership rules also need scrutiny. The dilemmas are genuine and complex. Policy makers are puzzled. We need a more open debate. Its views are in flux, but the Government's preference appears to be to drop the cross-media rules and rely on competition law to regulate media mergers.

Media report unnamed sources suggesting that media-specific 'public interest' tests may be added to the Trade Practices Act and applied by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission or some other regulatory agency.

But experience elsewhere shows that it is difficult for the regulator to do much more than accept the promises of an acquirer that editorial independence will be granted to the outlets being swallowed. Such assurances are in practice unenforceable if, after control is cemented, they turn out to be as hollow as some have proved.

Editorial independence is a subtle matter of relationships between those who hold the power conferred by property rights and their management and journalistic delegates who mostly wield it day to day. It is not amenable to legislators' formulas, regulators' oversight or judges' enforcement. Nor, on pure freedom of the press principle, should it be.

The Government would do better to devise purpose-built criteria which direct the regulator's attention to the core issue: if a given media merger goes ahead, will it diminish the variety of independent sources of information, entertainment or opinion presently available?

If so, the transaction should not be permitted unless those initiating it demonstrate substantial public benefit. An example of such benefit might be that, unless taken over, a paper would close.

Such thinking would take us away from the blather about technology and the market fixing everything and away from the obsession with a multiplicity of outlets.

We would focus instead on diversity of content, where the public interest lies. ■

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

# CHANCING YOUR ARM

## An Irish Diary, Part II

**I** HAD TO COME HERE TO REALISE it's not like it is on the news. They're not going on about the troubles all the time. On television you'd think fighting and trashing things is all they think about. But they're like normal people, living normal lives.'

*Monday July*

The Daughter's reaction moved me, far more than I'd have expected. I've lived for so long in a country where the only Ireland is the South, where the only choice is between Yeats and Wilde and Beckett and the Reverend Ian Paisley. Even the scenery's Republican! We drove past a big mural in a street in East Belfast. Two men are in fatigues and balaclavas and carrying machine guns. One has his gun pointed away, the other's is pointing right at you. The writing says *Prepared for Peace. Ready for War.* 'They show that on every news report about Northern Ireland!' the Daughter exclaims. 'I thought every house in Belfast must have one!'

It is already our last day but we decide against driving the great north Antrim coast. That would retrace some of our trip to Derry. The Daughter would have to come back on her own some time to see the Giant's Causeway and Bushmills Distillery and visit the shop in Portstewart that makes the best pork sausages in Ireland. (Somebody else says they're even better from a butcher in Moira, but we don't get there either.) We stayed in Co. Down instead, driving down the Ards Peninsula through Millisle and Donaghadee, seaside towns that look like they haven't changed since my mother's father took her there on holidays in the 1920s. Some houses fly Union Jacks and some of the curbs are painted the loyalist red white and blue, but they look faded and not as menacing now. At Portaferry, though, it's salutary to see the Orange Lodge raised up on a kind of island in the middle of the town, more prominent than any church or public building. (In Northern Ireland, if nowhere else, Dame Edna's wrong: the Catholics don't get all the best spots!)

At Downpatrick—Dun or Fort Patrick—the Church of Ireland claims to have St Patrick's remains. His grave is there. Nearby, at Saul, is the place where he did his famous deal with a local chieftain, promising to drive all the snakes out of Ireland if the poor Celt, whom he'd personally converted, would let Christianity set up its stall in his country. I wondered irreverently how good a deal the Irishman had made. What if he'd said 'How about you keep your Christianity, get rid of the *nettles* and we'll handle the snakes?'. St Patrick never got rid of them all anyway.

I remember my mother saying when she first came to Melbourne the Micks have stolen St Patrick's day! It wasn't something I paid much attention to at the time but it's piquant to discover him here, an honorary Down man and resting within earshot of Anglican prayers. Down in Dublin we go to St Patrick's, also Church of Ireland. This is where Jonathan Swift was Dean; he's buried there, alongside his beloved Stella. But it's gone half-native: obviously very High Church at the front, it's festooned with regimental colours down the sides (very Church of Ireland) and then, at the back, there's a nice lot of cheerful talk, a little light trade and some reproductions of ancient

Celtic statuary. There's even a relic in the form of an oak door with a slit in it. Reputedly some lord stuck his arm through this slit as a brave gesture to some other lord he was feuding with. He risked having it cut off. But it wasn't, and the two lords made up and the phrase 'chancing your arm' was born.

Downpatrick is a good place for seeing the physical layout of power and the ascendancy. There are Cromwells buried here, though I'm not sure how closely related they were to Oliver. But the main thing is the church, high on a hill, then a little way down the hill there's the regimental barracks (as was), and next to that the prison, then, a little lower, a row of elegant houses of three and four storeys, and then, down at the bottom of the hill, the narrow streets and small houses of the town, where the shops have Irish names on them like Donahue and Ryan.

We turned north again. Half-way up the west of Strangford Lough, on Mahee Island, are the remains of Nendrum Monastery. You reach the island over hump-backed bridges that link several beautiful islands seemingly deserted but well cared for. They may be private estates. At the abbey, we found the most magical place of our visit thus far. The waters of the lough were as still as glass. We heard crows and cattle and farm machinery working in fields below that we couldn't see. There was a faint drone of road traffic far away in the distance. Patches of the sky were Wedgwood blue and everywhere there were huge white clouds. Only the three of us were there, marking out the abbey buildings, standing where monks had stood a thousand years before, squinting to get their view of the water and the surrounding peaks exactly right and building the stone up in our minds to the height they would have been. A sign on a deep pit said Purpose Unknown.

Back in the Royal the Teacher read and the Daughter watched Wimbledon on Sky. I lay on the bed with my Walkman listening to the dedication service for my infant sister and brother. I wished I hadn't. Some Protestant liturgies are just too hard—even with the best will in Christendom, not to say the best voice and the best preaching training in Christendom, it's asking too much of a man to carry the whole hour. Three or four long extempore prayers, two bible readings, a children's

*Home thoughts from abroad: St Patrick's Day march with ritual trimmings, Melbourne, 1997. Photographs, below and pp32-35, by Bill Thomas.*



sermon and the real sermon, not to mention announcing the hymns, the readings, the collection and listing the arrangements for the Sunday School's summer break. No choir, very little audience-participation (the Lord's Prayer and the hymns), and this just one of the three services he will take around the district before he has his lunch!

The dedication itself was well-meaning but confused, and we were competing with a local who'd been in the church for years, was known to everybody and her family had donated an electronic music system. The children's sermon was the worst. 'Hands up the children who know the meaning of the words flotsam and jetsam.' I couldn't see, of course, but I don't think any hands went up. 'Well, as you know, this is summer time and soon we will all be going away on our holidays. To the seaside. Well it's at the seaside where you will find flotsam and jetsam.' I wished he'd give an example, or at least remind us which was which, but he didn't. How he reached his moral, I am not sure. (Sermons, it occurs to me, are the original post-modernist genre: nothing needs to connect to anything else, they are all iteration and re-iteration till the time runs out and there's no conclusion—only the text loudly proclaimed one last time.) Anyway, the children were



*Casting out snakes  
from the shopping Mall.  
Melbourne March 1997.*

told that if they felt undervalued, that no one loved them and their lives were totally meaningless, and them not eleven yet, then they were flotsam and jetsam—all washed up, I suppose he meant—and needed Jesus to see something in them no one else could. A piece of driftwood that would look good on the mantelpiece, for instance.

July 1st is the 'wee twelfth', the first of the Orange marches, and a rehearsal for the big one on the 12th. It goes down the Newtonards Road and at least doesn't cross into any Catholic area, confining itself to an area of Council houses where the Protestant poor live if they are lucky enough. Many are boarded up in expectation of promised renovation. Shop fronts have steel shutters on them and the concrete roads are cracked and broken in places. Union Jacks flutter from some upstairs windows.

There are over thirty bands and they take an hour to pass. ('It's in one of these James Galway started', Cyril tells us. 'And Van Morrison lived only round the corner. Sure I was born only a street away myself.') The huge banners sway and dip above the heads of the marchers, crass cartoons like the worst Bible illustrations but preaching politics. 'No Surrender' and 'Dublin Out'. The marchers wear their Orange sashes, occasionally some wear royal blue, but the dominant colour is grey and black. Old men in bowler hats and morning suits, young men in dark grey suits that are too big for them, a few girls in uniforms and hats. A lot of black. I think—unkindly, because social class is involved here as well as religion and politics—of a parade of unemployed funeral attendants and chauffeurs, of underfed ladies' maids and, in the middle of the bands themselves, the beefy butchers' boys who belt their big Lambeg drums so hard the skin splits and all eyes are on them as a runner arrives with a replacement.

It's traditional to have a fish supper on the wee twelfth. This time Barbara wanted to go up-market to Harry Lamsden's, a newly-opened branch of an old north of England chain. It served the usual range of cod and plaice in batter, and chips, of course, as well as cocktail onions and what they call 'mushy peas'. But the building is pretentious, a large, square, further-down-market Sizzler. We're soon uncomfortable, realising we're being conned. 'They'd not have one of these in Australia', said Cyril, who'd wanted to go to a proper fish and chip shop all along. But they have. I asked the manager and he phoned the branch in Liverpool. The Teacher took a bet. 'It'll be in Burwood', she said. The manager came back: 31 Lakeside Drive, East Burwood.

Over a late Guinness in the bar I overheard two Yorkshiremen talking. They were business consultants who'd worked in Florida and Hong Kong and I think I heard Moscow. 'The business is here now though', they said. 'The Americans, the Germans, the European money pouring in'. 'And it's so convenient', the other man said, 'working close to home. Never thought I'd see the day this lot got their act together'.

*Tuesday July 2nd*

**W**E ARE EXCITED ABOUT DUBLIN. All of a sudden, after a good breakfast and we're in the car and we've got petrol and we've found the main road to Dublin, a collective pulse-taking breaks out. We pronounce our three and a bit days in the North good. Busy, interesting, the countryside unforgettable. It's hard to believe, after all the politics. But Dublin will be something else again, though the two capitals are only as far apart as Melbourne and Wodonga.

There's Irish on the car radio, sounding to the ignorant like an endless clearing of throats. Twiddling the dial we get a weather forecast and the car erupts when the man says 'There'll be storms and there's some chance of *tunder*'. The Daughter says she'll never say it any other way again. We agree that in Ireland, North and South, the biggest pleasure is the language. The eloquence is staggering, wrapping itself around you on the radio and in the streets and the hotels. You realise you'll feel the cold when you go home and the newsreaders don't know they don't know where the stress is in a sentence. The Irish should count their word-making in their GNP.

We skirt the Mountains of Mourne, though it's hard to take our eyes off them even for the traffic. These days the border's about as well-marked as the Victoria-New South Wales line on the Murray. The clearest evidence we're in another country is that the signs are in Irish as well as English, European Union flags everywhere, and we're back with kilometres—though, because 'You can't hurry the Guinness', as they say, the speed limits are still in mph. Another sign, perhaps, was the way the road narrowed and slowed us down like it used to on the Hume north of Albury. The transports were bad, of course, but in Ireland, on the main Belfast-Dublin road, the problem is farm machinery which likes to travel at dignified agricultural speeds. Still, it was not long before we were crawling through the rush-hour down O'Connell Street, past the Post Office, eyes peeled for signs that would take us across the Liffey to St Stephen's Green. (Magical names!) We stop at a red light and a boy soaps up the windscreen and holds his hand out for a pound. All I have is English money. 'But that's only worth fifty pence here', he protests, 'gi'me two.' But English is all I have and I don't immediately feel like paying out two pounds and the lights are changing. The windscreen stays soapy.

We are in the same hotel as some of the literary heavies at the conference. (It's on 'Australian Identities' and has attracted several hundred people, mostly from Australia.) Our friends the Poet and the Arts person are next door; they've been in France. We drink Ricard with them and another friend, the Scholar-Priest, and they spread biscuits with cheese bought that morning in Paris. We have dinner in the Shelbourne—not easy to say if you're used to 'Melbin'—where British soldiers took refuge in 1916 and a draft of the Irish constitution was drawn up in 1922.

Wednesday July 3rd

THE CONFERENCE IS AT UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, part of Ireland's great National University. (Trinity, till surprisingly recently, was partial to Protestants, though it's where they filmed *Educating Rita*.) The campus is like a larger, richer La Trobe. The heavies and the rest of us share taxis the first morning though we soon discover the number ten bus. There's a woman on the radio who sounds like Penelope in *To The Manor Born*. I say to the driver 'well there's no Irish woman then!'. 'Ah but she is', he says. 'She's from the Irish ruling class, South Dublin. That's how they talked under the British and there's people imitating them now'.

David Malouf, a huge presence in Dublin because his new novel is set in Ireland and because he won the Dublin-IMPAC prize, opens with an attack on facile post-colonialism, saying we are *all* settler societies. He praises openness and diversity, deplores even 'horticultural absolutists' (native plants and all that), chooses as the 'real stars' and the model for other areas of Australian culture, the chefs who've made Australian cuisine both authentic and open.

The first panel I attended was on the history of surf life-saving, how we nearly didn't get the 1956 Olympic games and racism in sport. The last speaker said we wouldn't understand what he was saying till we understood the cultural theorists Carole Pateman and S. Zizek, and began to summarise them. Happily, when he got to his video, which he said would *prove* there was racism in sport, he turned his back to switch it on and I slipped out.

Dublin is fearfully expensive. It's because of Europe, the EU bureaucrats administering all those grants and needing hotel rooms to live in for months at a time.

At eleven the pubs are still full in Temple Bar. We go to Gallagher's and eat Boxy, a sour potato pancake. We drink Murphy's. The Teacher does best with Mollie Mor, a rough and tasty fish stew. It occurs to me that even in the tourist pubs and restaurants here you find yourself having a good time. When it comes to the crunch, the Irish can't quite manage to be professional enough or insincere enough to spoil anybody's fun.

Thursday July 4th

THERE ARE WHITE-UNIFORMED SAILORS from the aircraft carrier John F. Kennedy in all the pubs. Somebody says 'better here doing nothing than firing rockets somewhere else'. I am still wondering why the remark annoys me so much.

Everybody goes to Bewleys in Grafton Street. My first visit was when I was seven, my father driving us down in a borrowed car, and I half-expected they'd still serve the scones and buns and cakes on three-tiered silver stands and they counted up how many you'd had at the end. Today the Poet and I had another lesson in how the Irish attend to the language, instead of, or on the way to, or in addition to the thought. Were we happy with our table? Happy as Larry, said the Poet. 'And', said the maitresse d', 'and was he a *very* happy man, this Larry?'

But it can be sour as well as sweet. 'Our wives will pay' we say, hurrying to the next conference session. 'Ah now' said the same woman, 'you're such *grate* organisers. Of other people, I mean, not yourselves'. It was a clear rebuke.

Friday July 5th

I WALKED TO THE POST OFFICE AFTER BREAKFAST. I've been impressed before by the cavernous hall and the bright green paint in places where even Australians are used to red. I'd hadn't understood before how completely it was destroyed in the Rising. Across the road is The Gresham Hotel where my parents had their honeymoon in 1938. On the way back I hurt my foot. It's the sort of thing tourists do, especially the ones who carry weight. They go pounding the flagstones to see the sights using muscles and tendons long gone superannuated at home. I see the Poet wears a pair of those voluminous, thick-tongued white American runners.

Still being literary, the Teacher and I take a taxi to the Dublin Writers' Museum. The driver is young and his head is shaven—he could be an English soccer hooligan. In fact, he's soft-spoken and seems genuinely pleased we like Dublin so much. 'There's a lot more people around today', I say, 'are the holidays starting?'. 'It's the Eagles concert', he says, 'a lot of older people up from the country'.

The story of Irish writing is breathtaking, even when you half-know it already. It's a story of two centuries of big disappointments and small renaissances linked to Ireland's political fortunes, like the great, crushing response to the United Irishmen's rebellion in 1798. But I can't help focusing on the form of the thing, the literal writing on the wall that tells us the story. In many other museums

and libraries you have to work around, or screen out, the academic and bureaucratic language while you wince at the bad grammar and the spelling mistakes. But not here, where the display-writers' words do the story proud. And it's the same at Trinity College as we advance through crowded rooms to The Book of Kells. The language of getting there is a good part of the pleasure.

Living writers don't appear in the display. But around the building I see a portrait of Edna O'Brien and a bust of Seamus Heaney that emphasises the horizontal in his eyes and mouth, hiding



*An enthusiast,  
Melbourne,  
St Patrick's Day, 1997.*

the warm, bear of a man who hugged us all at the Melbourne Writer's Festival in 1994. After the Nobel, he's a kind of royalty.

Strap-hanging on the number ten on the way back to St Stephen's Green I see the driver has a book open on his steering wheel. It's *Far From The Maddening Crowd*. ■

**Graham Little** is a Melbourne academic and writer. His autobiographical *Letter to my daughter* was published by Text in 1995

# Santa's second wind

**Santamaria A Memoir,**  
B.A. Santamaria, OUP, Melbourne, 1997.  
ISBN 0 19 554052 2 RRP \$29.95

**F**EW PEOPLE ARE GRANTED the luxury of seeing their autobiography published twice. If you don't manage to get yourself down right the first time, too bad.

Yet Bartholomew Augustine Santamaria has lived long enough—he is 81—not only to have had second thoughts about his presentation of self to the world but to have shepherded them into print.

*Santamaria A Memoir* is not so much a revision of the first version of those thoughts, which appeared in 1981 as *Against the Tide*, as a re-publication of them with an addendum. But that addendum is substantial enough to justify the change in title and a change in the context in which the whole work must be read.

*Against the Tide* was, to put it crudely, a loser's book. *Santamaria A Memoir*, however, is the work of a man who believes that the tide has begun to ebb, vindicating

his judgments on church, society and politics, and that an intellectual milieu that has hitherto largely reviled him now owes him a re-evaluation. The last five chapters in the book have a confidently polemical tone that is only intermittently felt in the rather more resentfully composed material that the two books have in common. The motto of these last chapters, if it is not incongruous to place their author in the company of a rabid secularist, could be Zola's: 'Give me combat!'

Like Santamaria's columns in *The Weekend Australian*, this concluding section seems buoyed up by its author's sense of seeing the world differently from his adversaries. And, as in those columns, his preoccupation with the race of the tide sometimes prevents him from charting confusing eddies that swirl in contrary directions.

When *Against the Tide* appeared, the Cold War, the forge of Santamaria's political engagement, ecclesiastical and civil, still seemed to be waged as furiously as ever. In 1981 Ronald Reagan had not yet celebrated his first anniversary in the White House, Margaret Thatcher had yet to acquire the glow of post-imperial *machismo* by reconquering the Falkland Islands, Mikhail Gorbachev was unknown in the West except to Kremlin watchers, and Karol Wojtyla had scarcely begun his papal project of refashioning the wider church in the image of a Polish Catholicism tempered by its long stand-off with totalitarianism.

As is now clear, however, at the beginning of the '80s the Cold War was approaching a cataclysmic resolution, and when the cataclysm came it was markedly one-sided: the collapse of the Soviet empire was so rapid that even the sternest of cold warriors

were caught off-guard. Santamaria can hardly have regretted the defeat of the old foe, but he was not among those who crowed loudest over the events of 1989-91.

In part, perhaps, this was because he had already tasted the anticipatory satisfaction provided by Australia's quota of the defections and retractions that, in the two decades after the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia, gradually atomised whatever support the Soviet Union still retained among communists in the West. But, at a deeper level, it was because Santamaria had found other wars to wage by the time Australia's erstwhile comrades were writing books with titles like *What's Left?*

The splintering and eventual dissolution of the former Communist Party of Australia receives only incidental attention in the *Memoir*; as does the self-serving prevarication of the ALP left during Labor's years in power, when the party's commitment to its traditional constituency withered in the face of the free-market zealotry of Paul Keating and his Treasury advisers in voodoo science. Yet those two stories have converged, and the wider political realignment they represent is part of what gives the *Memoir* a different focus from *Against the Tide*. Many people who once thought of themselves as part of a broad left, negatively characterised by its opposition to the agenda of the coalition parties, are now in a position that Santamaria has long occupied: they are on the intellectual fringe of mainstream politics, which, *pace* Labor's recent doubts about tariff cuts and enterprise bargaining, are still constrained by the assumptions of economic rationalism.

Some of these intellectual casualties of the '80s have even begun reading Santamaria's weekly commentaries, and, like his fellow columnist Phillip Adams, have been puzzled to find themselves in agreement with some of what they read. Adams announced to the world that Santamaria's views had lately acquired a pinkish hue, an interpretation that reveals how ill-informed Adams is, at least about Santamaria, and probably about the left, too. Better-read commentators with longer memories conceded that Santamaria had always been an unlikely champion of unfettered capitalism, and declared their regret for the enmity spawned by the Cold War and the Labor split of 1955, which had prevented them from making this acknowledgment earlier.

There even developed a florid new genre in Australian journalism, the old-enemies-come-face-to-face interview, in which

Santamaria and former communists or ALP politicians pronounced each other to be decent human beings and mutually lamented the parlous state of Australian society in this era of greed-fuelled globalisation. In the *Good Weekend*, the *Australian Financial Review Magazine* and on *Lateline* they paraded: Clyde Cameron, ruefully admitting his part in the flouting of the ALP's constitution and rules that barred the Grouper delegates from the Hobart conference in '55; Bernie Taft, ambivalent about the CPA's legacy; and Jim McClelland, a former Grouper who remained in the ALP to become, like Cameron, a minister in the Whitlam Government.

The strongest endorsement, however, came in the autobiography of the former Governor-General, Bill Hayden. In a speech to the National Press Club, Hayden reiterated the thoughts expressed in his autobiography on Evatt, Santamaria and the split, and not surprisingly, given their drift, those thoughts get a mention in the *Memoir* also. 'I freely confess that I was a bit of a sectarian bigot,' Hayden said of his own experience of Labor in the '50s. 'I enjoyed the elemental conflict with what we used to call the "Groupers". But when I look back on it, it was a totally unproductive period which did great damage to the Labor Party.'

'What Evatt did in 1954 was to consign Labor to 20 years of opposition ... I am, inexcusably in the ranks of the Labor Party, generous to Bob Santamaria. Santamaria we used to treat as a reactionary and worse ... But if you read Santamaria's columns these days, he is much more radical than the Labor Party. Much, much more and always has been. He is a distributist. It's a sort of Catholic theory about what society should be like ... I am certain it's not practical, but it is not a plot to subordinate society to the Catholic Church.'

In the autobiography itself, *Hayden*, the condemnation of Evatt is even more vigorous: 'The device which set off these fissionable forces within the party was a public statement of October 1954 by Dr H.V. Evatt, then Opposition Leader. He made it without consultation in a desperate and inexcusably selfish effort to save his sagging leadership. Not for the first or last time in his career Evatt put his personal ambitions ahead of any other interests, such as those of the Labor Party. He might have

saved his leadership in 1954, but he bequeathed Labor a legacy of more than two decades of internal division and self-evisceration, keeping it trapped in opposition ... the remarkable thing is that, having left a legacy of political ruin and desolation, where he was supposed to have created a government, he became canonised as another martyred hero of Labor ...'

As retractions go, that's pretty comprehensive. Hayden's book and speech reversed the practice, still the norm in ALP circles, of laying primary blame for the split with Santamaria rather than with Evatt; even more important, they repudiated the belief, still cherished by many on the left, that the ultimate aim of the Movement was to use the ALP's Industrial Groups to ensure Catholic dominance of the party's agenda. Hayden's views are quoted at some length here because, although they take up only one page of the *Memoir*, they are an especially clear example of a repositioning among some of Santamaria's former enemies that happens to be rhetorically useful to him, as a kind of retrospective validation.

That kind of validation, with its implicit appeal to a wider audience to reconsider its

*Santamaria's views part company with the left in what might be called Catholic gender politics: a clutch of attitudes resistant to the most far-reaching social change of the past century in Western countries, the gradual abolition of the sexual division of labor.*

assessment of him, is important to Santamaria because, as noted above, he has himself been doing some repositioning, and the last five chapters of the *Memoir* can be read as a sort of manifesto issued at the conclusion of the process. In his case, however, the repositioning is strategic rather than philosophical.

Hayden, unlike Philip Adams, correctly understood that Santamaria's views on society and its proper ordering are now in essence the same as they have always been. And those views—which Hayden recognises as distributist, although Santamaria feels uncomfortable with that term's Chesterbellocian associations—are indeed more radical than anything that is likely to

**1997  
Catholic Education  
Conference  
Melbourne  
University:  
June 16th-18th**

*The 1997 Catholic Education Conference  
addresses a vital and topical issue*

*'Catholic Education:  
Re-Imagining our Catholic  
Culture—A New Exodus?'*

**Keynote Speakers:**

**Mary Boys snjm**

Union Theological Seminary,  
New York.

**Patricia Murray ibvm:**

Loreto Education Centre,  
Dublin, Ireland.

**Bishop Geoffrey  
Robinson:**

Episcopal Vicar for Education,  
Sydney

**Morris West**

Well known Australian author.

**Seminars/Focus Groups:**

Kate Fogarty, Morag Fraser,  
Bill Jennings, Marie Joyce,  
Peter Malone msc, Catherine  
Massam, Barry Moran,  
Michael Morwood msc,  
Moria O'Sullivan rsc, Joseph  
Takchi, Sang Tran, Anna and  
Tom Nguyen.

**Registration costs remain the  
same as in recent years:  
If paid by the end of April \$175;  
After end of April \$195**

*For Registration Brochures contact:*

Michael Kupsch  
Monash Uni, PO Box 527  
Frankston Vic 3199  
Ph (03) 9904 4240  
Fax (03) 9781 3066

**The Catholic Education Conference  
Addressing Central Issues in  
Catholic Education**

be tossed around in Labor Party policy committees these days.

They are culled from the decentralist theories that are a familiar theme in the papal social encyclicals—theories lampooned in racist and sectarian diatribes at the time of the split as Santamaria's 'three-acres-and-a-cow' vision of an Australia populated by Catholic peasants. The papal provenance of these views is sufficient in itself to make some people hostile to them, but it cannot seriously be maintained, by anyone who has taken the trouble to read the source documents, that their content is inherently inimical to social-democratic thinking. Indeed, their communitarian flavor probably has even greater affinity with modes of thought now common on the left than could have been the case in 1955, when the nation state and the class war seemed to provide a sufficient interpretive framework for democratic politics.

But Santamaria's views part company with the left in what might be called Catholic gender politics: a clutch of attitudes resistant to the most far-reaching social change of the past century in Western countries, the gradual abolition of the sexual division of labor. 'Attitudes' because, with the significant exception of the church's exclusion of women from its ordained ministry, they are not enshrined in official Catholic teaching; they are, however, regularly reinforced by papal and curial exhortations on 'the family', for which phrase one can usually read 'the role of women'.

Here the story returns to Santamaria's strategic repositioning. One of the episodes that those interested in his career will search for in vain in the text of the *Memoir* is the split that took place in the National Civic Council at the beginning of the '80s, when, having decided that there was little hope of regaining a place of influence in the Labor movement—and being prescient enough, even in those pre-Kelty days, to discern the long-term decline of organised labour—Santamaria decided to concentrate on building a 'pro-family' lobby instead. The Australian Family Association, now led by his daughter, Mary-Helen Woods, was formed for that purpose, and the NCC itself began to put more emphasis on broadening its catchment through its campus fronts, the undergraduate Democratic Clubs.

The changes were not welcome to many of the NCC's union activists, who felt abandoned, and eventually formed their own organisation, the Industrial Action Fund. Though on a much smaller scale than the episcopally engineered split in the Move-

ment that resulted in the birth of the NCC in 1957, it was every bit as acrimonious, with the pro-Santamaria faction at one stage entering the NCC's Melbourne headquarters in the dead of night to seize the files and change the locks on their rivals. But these little details are not recorded in the *Memoir*.

The progress of the Australian Family Association is enthusiastically reported, however, and so is the pontificate of Pope John Paul II, which Santamaria regards as the most hopeful sign that, despite indications to the contrary in the aftermath of the Second Vatican Council, the Catholic Church will remain a bulwark against modernity, and in the specifically theological sense of the term, against modernism. The Pope's campaign to wind back pluralism in the church, as those who have from time to time been targets of Santamaria's journal of religious controversy, *AD2000*, will know, is couched in the kind of crusading terminology accorded the fight against communism in the '40s and '50s. With no attempt to avoid bathos, the *Memoir* records the elevation of George Pell as Archbishop of Melbourne as a high point in this new crusade.

**A**ND THERE'S THE RUB. Bill Hayden is probably right in judging that there never was a real prospect of the Movement seizing control of the ALP, even if there had been some such secret agenda. The broad-based nature of the party would have precluded Movement supporters from ever being more than one faction among several. And Hayden is certainly right in judging that the exit of Catholics from the party after the split was a disaster, not just in electoral terms but because it meant the loss of contact with traditions of thought that might have helped to renew Australian social democracy. Move from the deals and compromises of the Labor Party to the zero-sum game of Catholic Church politics, however, and there are only two factions, the ins and the outs.

Given who now wields institutional power in the church, Santamaria is very much an in. In the short-term, that is a problem for those of us who are outs. But in the Catholic Church you learn to take the long view. The tide will run out again some day, and in the meantime there is plenty of work to do. Like unstitching Catholic gender politics from the rest of Catholic social thought, for example. ■

**Ray Cassin** is the former editor of *Australian Catholics*. He now writes for the *Age*.

# Shame is the spur

I AM LOOKING VOYEURISTICALLY through a keyhole and my attention is wholly engaged and fixated by what I can see. Suddenly I sense the presence of someone behind me and I discover that he has been observing me all the while. I am overcome by shame: I blush profoundly, I am totally disquieted and confused and a series of emotions—uneasiness, fear, disgust, guilt—wash over me. I am suffused by shame.

Sartre's famous example is used to make a momentous philosophical point about the human being and the structure of the conscious self. The human subject can be turned into an object for another subject and I can never control how 'the other' sees me. So long as there are other conscious subjects about in the world my autonomy as a self is in jeopardy. We try to escape this intolerable situation by making the other into a thing that we can dominate or control (often in the nicest possible way) and by trying to evade the fact that this is a contradictory enterprise. Sartre calls this 'sadism'. Or, more radically, I turn myself into an object for the other and invite the other to treat me as a thing. Sartre calls this 'masochism'.

All human relationships—especially the sexual encounter—oscillate between sadism and masochism and the elaborate games that people play with (and against) each other can all be seen as sublimated forms of Sartrean masochism or sadism. Whatever one may think of Sartre's analysis of the experience of shame and the large implications he draws from that analysis, there is no doubt that shame is one of those primordial experiences which disclose basic structures of the human subject. It is much more than a set of feelings or emotions, although of course it is embodied in deep emotional states. This is shown by the persistence of shame in religious contexts and its connections with sin and guilt and repentance and the human/divine encounter in some religions. We can, after all, play sado-masochistic games with God just as effectively as with other people. The curious Adam



**Shame and the Modern Self,**  
David Parker, Rosamund Dalziell,  
Iain Wright eds., Australian  
Scholarly Publishing, Melbourne, 1996.  
ISBN 1 875606 35 1 RRP \$29.95

and Eve myth in *Genesis* makes the point that shame is, at least *prima facie*, a consequence of some kind of alienation or fall from grace but most scholars reject the idea that this should be seen as an historical event (or that it has any sexual import). Rather, shame should be seen as an existential condition of being human.

Again, modern anthropology and social psychology have charted the part that shame and its derivatives play in most cultures in reinforcing the 'social bond' and in determining the socio-cultural roles that people play. In many cultures, for example, women are born into a quasi-permanent condition of shame because of elaborate purity rituals and oppressive marital and family arrangements. The recent (rather facile) studies by Samuel Huntington and Francis Fukuyama have shown us at least that shame and guilt are very important in trying to forecast the shape of the great civilisational and economic blocs. Further, the protean character of shame is shown by the fact that old forms disappear—illegitimacy is no longer shameful in the way it was twenty or so years ago, and some of our writers (Bernard

Smith and Robert Dessaix for example) in fact celebrate their illegitimacy. Salman Rushdie's florid catalogue of shame and the shameless in his novel, *Shame*, reminds us that new modes of shame are being born all the time. We are now expected to feel shame at historical injustices inflicted by our ancestors on Australian Aboriginal peoples, or at the Nazi Holocaust, or at the fact that we survived the Holocaust ('survivor's shame'), or by the despoliation of the environment by our ancestors.

The collection *Shame and the Modern Self* is based upon a conference at the Australian National University and most of the contributors are from the ANU and the Canberra branch of the Australian Catholic University together with a couple of US scholars.

The resultant book illustrates the formidable difficulties of making a coherent collection out of this kind of academic symposium, especially on such a fluid topic. The literature scholars, Rosamund Dalziell (on bastardy and shame) and David Windsor (on Rushdie's novel *Shame*), are the most accessible, but the star performer is John Braithwaite who has developed a theory of 'reintegrative shaming' which has important practical implications for the way we punish criminals.

BRAITHWAITE RELIES FOR HIS historical background on the US historian Norbert Elias, but Elias' perspective is curiously limited in that the religious underpinnings of shame (Christian and non-Christian) are hardly mentioned. Again, the work of the French scholar Donzelot, *The Policing of the Family*, shows how parental and familial shaming of children have been such a potent source of social control.

The collection also has some interesting essays on the psycho-sociology of shame by David Moore and T.J. Scheff. Scheff focuses on the sense of collective shame of the German people after the World War I (the Germans referred to the Treaty of Versailles as 'The Treaty of Shame') and he

shows how Hitler exploited this in his tactic of 'humiliated fury'. Shame was also a powerful force in Hitler's personality and Scheff provides gruesome details of Hitler's squalid sexual practices which required the humiliation of his lovers.

One of the editors, David Parker, claims that a reason why shame is on the 'current research agenda' is that Western societies 'are at a moment of large-scale and relatively profound transvaluation in which the shameful is being contested and re-defined'.

However, I am not sure about this. Certainly, we have many exotic examples of shamelessness in our political, public, business and religious life which parallel the horrors of the shameful in Rushdie's novel. But do we need a redefinition of shame? In my view, what we really need is a local Rushdie to write an Australian version of *Shame*. ■

Max Charlesworth is a former professor of philosophy at Deakin University.

BOOKS: 3

JOHN HEWITT

## Reasonable numbers

**The Good Society: The Humane Agenda,**  
John Kenneth Galbraith, Houghton Mifflin, New York,  
1996. ISBN 0 395 71328 5 RRP \$39.95

**J**.K. GALBRAITH IS THE LAST of the New Deal lions. At 88, he is one of the very few living members of an F.D. Roosevelt administration—where he served with distinction, taking charge of wartime price control. However far his views might now be from the contemporary economic mainstream, Galbraith is revered by his colleagues and recognised as the most eloquent voice still defending the Keynesian revolution.

On one occasion I had the pleasure to witness him, as a tall and sprightly 84-year-old engaged in scholarly debate. The setting was a forum at the Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, and Galbraith was joined by fellow Harvard professors, Robert Reich (formerly Clinton's labour secretary) and Michael Porter (of the Business School), to discuss the upcoming 1992 presidential election. A lifelong Democrat—who had also been appointed by President Kennedy as Ambassador to India from 1961 to 1963—Galbraith was naturally for Clinton. But this did not stop him from attacking the Arkansas Governor's economic platform (remember Clinton's '92 campaign mantra, 'It's the economy stupid!').

As Galbraith recalled Roosevelt's New Deal, which was so spectacularly successful in getting post-Depression America up off the mat and back to work, those of us in his presence that night couldn't fail to be enchanted by his unique



historical perspective and patently 'unconventional wisdom'.

Galbraith has never been a dispassionate practitioner of the 'dismal science'. In fact, he has nothing but disdain for the abstract theoretical economic models which so dominate the neo-liberal economic environment. At the centre of economic life is the social interaction of people, and this very fact introduces a level of complexity which none of the mathematically pure models can possibly predict. Nowhere has he made this point more tellingly than in his little gem of a book, *The Culture of Contentment* (1992), and in his amusing and psychologically astute Harvard novel, *A Tenured Professor* (1990). The writing in both these books simply sparkles.

As an economist, public servant, and writer, Galbraith has always been a passionate humanist, never afraid to take sides in the public arena. This point was acknowledged by some of his most distinguished colleagues in a volume of essays, *Unconventional Wisdom* (1989), presented to him for his 80th birthday:

(Galbraith's) passion for a more just and civilized human existence and his lifelong commitment to act politically toward those ends challenged a profession espousing an improbable and vacuous neutrality on questions of public morality. No one ever doubted which side Galbraith was on.

In this sense he is rightly called, 'the conscience of the economics profession.' And it is this conscience which Galbraith brings to bear on the subject of *The Good Society* (1996).

The first thing that needs to be said about this book is that it is written in a conversational style: clear, literate, and devoid of jargon. It is almost impossible to believe it was written by an economist, but then again, Galbraith always writes with an ear for his readers (and they are many). He believes that for all our present introspection and debate about what's wrong with society, and in all the proposals put forward to remedy the problems (for example, tax reform), we are failing to address the fundamental question: What is a good society?

For Galbraith, the vision of a good society is shaped by the view that it is a good society for all. His primary concern is that under the present economic imperatives, a gulf is opening up between the fortunate few who dominate the political and economic spheres, thus maximising their interests, and the

increasing number of 'needful' citizens who are essentially powerless to effect changes in public policy. Any society deserving of the adjective 'good' must seek an economic policy which contributes to the welfare of every citizen. Such policy will not come about through the mechanics of the market but through the exercise of political will.

That is why we need to outline our vision of the good society.

**G**ALBRAITH IS PERHAPS best described as a visionary pragmatist who shies away from utopian goals and any notion of the 'perfect society'. Rather than employing any specific political program, his view is that governments need to recognise 'real world constraints' and distinguish clearly 'between the utopian and the achievable, between the agreeably irrelevant and the ultimately possible.' Decisions need to be made on the basis of the sound social and economic merits in each particular case. Now more than ever, ours needs to be an age of practical judgment.

One of the reasons why ideologies such as economic rationalism and privatisation have asserted themselves in recent times, is because governments have failed to address the foundations of a good society. Galbraith is not necessarily opposed to privatisation in every instance (in some cases it may be good for society as a whole), but he is extremely critical of economic policy which is driven by dogma not reason.

This constitutes a failure of political nerve, and is illustrated by the abandonment of full employment in favour of a low inflationary environment through the application of monetary policy. This is abdication of political and social responsibility, condemning large numbers of citizens to a very bleak future indeed. Clearly much of this projected anxiety has the potential to tear apart the fragile social fabric of civil society, as the less fortunate citizens squabble over the economic crumbs of our so-called affluent society.

For Galbraith, the 'essence of a good society ... is that every member, regardless of gender, race or ethnic origin, should have access to a rewarding life.' There will be differences of aspiration and qualification, but the good society reaffirms in the strongest sense a very real equality of opportunity. Central to this concern is the decisive role of education. Economic policy needs to be based on 'a substantial and reliable increase in production and employment from year to year.' Those who cannot participate in the workforce must have their

needs met. The measure of a civilised society is the extent of its welfare provisions, and there should be nothing derogatory about being on welfare. A good society does not turn in on itself (with protectionist policies, clamps on immigration, cuts in foreign aid, etcetera) but possesses a strong international dimension. It is in every country's interest to work for mutual trade benefit, a healthy environment, and world peace. This can only be possible when the more affluent nations provide support for the less fortunate members of the world community.

In an extremely timely chapter, Galbraith addresses the issue of migration. He points out that developed nations benefit tremendously through effective and non-discriminatory migration policies:

The national community is enriched by those of foreign culture and sophistication and by the exchange of ideas and talents that a liberal immigration policy allows. And there is specific economic advantage to the rich lands from the movement of workers from the poor countries for the real work that in the affluent world all but the avowedly eccentric seek to escape.

This book is a storehouse of political and economic wisdom gleaned from a life active at the centre of this decidedly American century. But Galbraith is nothing if not a realist, and concludes with a reminder that appropriate vision does not necessarily translate into political action. The imbalance of power and influence in modern polity means that governments often find it politically expedient to pander to the social and economic élites (for example, through tax cuts).

If indeed an inclusive democratic and good society is to succeed, there needs to be an effective 'coalition of the concerned and compassionate' to argue for the good society as 'a bright and wholly practical prospect.' Vision is important, but the future remains uncertain, waiting to be shaped by our action.

It is a chastening thought then to read Galbraith's closing admonition, that 'the good society fails when democracy fails.' ■

**John Hewitt** is a tutor in Political Science at the University of Melbourne.

## Where in the world do you want to work?

Overseas or in Australia, Palms matches communities in need of particular expertise, with people willing to share their skills.

We are looking for:

- Accountants
- Agricultural Workers
- Builders
- Carpenters
- Doctors
- Electricians
- Farm managers
- Fitters
- Joiners
- Mechanics
- Nurses
- Printers
- Primary, Secondary Vocational Teachers
- Youth Workers

If you are prepared for a unique experience, working for a two to three year period immersed in another culture, come along to our Information Sessions

### MELBOURNE

Sunday 6th April, 1997  
at 2pm

Catholic Missions  
400 Albert St. E. Melbourne.  
(Opp. Diocesan Centre)

### ALBURY/WODONGA

Sunday 13th April, 1997  
at 2pm

Sacred Heart Parish Hall  
283 Beechworth Rd.  
Wodonga. (Behind Church)

or contact:

PALMS

PO BOX 54, Croydon Park, NSW 2133

Ph: (02) 9642 0558 Fax: (02) 9742 5607

email: Paulian.Association@mary.acu.edu.au

## Jean Vanier

Founder of

**L'Arche Communities**

and co-founder of Faith and Light Groups round the world, Jean is visiting Sydney in April 1997. He is the author of many books and widely recognised as a prophetic public speaker.

L'Arche Australia is organising three opportunities for Jean to meet with people — a day workshop for those involved in ministry

— a public lecture

— and a weekend of talks, workshops, sharing groups and quiet time, where participants can come for all or part of the time.

For further details contact:

The Office of L'Arche Sydney, Gay Cleary,

PO 312 Burwood 2134

ph/fax: (02) 9747 5858

# Reloading the canon

*Marlon Brando wasted no praise on Hollywood, claiming to prefer the stage. But his 1951 screen performance as Stanley Kowwalski in *A Streetcar Named Desire* was one of the triumphs of translation from literature to screen. Peter Craven takes a good look at more recent examples of the crossover art.*

IT WILL NO DOUBT COME to be seen as an amazing episode in cultural history that in the later 1990s the film industry fell in love with literary classics at about the same time the English departments had been backing away from them—the works—for so long that it seemed easiest to pretend they weren't there.

Of course there have always been films—good, bad and indifferent—based on books and plays of more or less enduring value (who could forget Joan Fontaine and Orson Welles in *Jane Eyre* or Brando in *Julius Caesar*, not to mention David Lean's Dickens or Visconti's version of *The Leopard*!) The difference now is partly that there is something like a niche market which appears to be an extension of the BBC classics/masterpiece theatre audience from television to cinema. In recent years this has not only produced the Branagh Shakespeare films, and the Austen plague, but has exercised an influence on figures like Martin Scorsese and is now, finally and unmistakably, affecting the Hollywood mainstream.

In the Oscar warm-up period we saw Baz Luhrmann's version of *Romeo and Juliet*, directed and promoted as if it were a musical, become big box office, and an epic expansion of Michael Ondaatje's highbrow Booker Prize-winning novel, *The English Patient*, with its grand Shakespearean star, Ralph Fiennes, who also had the good grace, or sense, to record the book. And beyond this, new films of *The Crucible* and *Portrait of a Lady*.

*The Crucible* has the biggest kind of Hollywood stars—Daniel Day-Lewis and Winona Ryder—both on the face of it suited to their roles. *Portrait of a Lady* is the most



ambitious project so far of Jane Campion who, as well as being loved in this part of the world, is fast becoming one of the most highly-regarded film directors anywhere.

Miller's Salem witchcraft play, with its allegory of McCarthyism, has remained relevant down the four and a half decades since its first production. Its antique speech and dress have probably aided its assimilation as a classic. Henry James' *Portrait of a Lady* is in a different category.

F.R. Leavis thought it and *The Bostonians* were the finest novels in the language, and if that sounds a bit steep in a

world that includes *Ulysses* and *Bleak House* it is hard to argue, if the high realist post-Flaubertian novel of the late 19th century is your norm, as it was Leavis's, that the book of life gets much better than this.

*Portrait* would probably have touched fewer people comparatively than *The Crucible* (a great favourite on the high school syllabus) but it is a novel which has retained its pertinence into a feminist age and is untainted by the residual corniness that often appears to afflict the classics of a previous period. With its overwhelming focus on the travails of its protagonist, Isabel Archer, *Portrait of a Lady* is a woman's book which does not pull its punches. It represents 19th-century realism at its most dynamic and it has the formal glitter of the contrast between European corruption and American naivety.

Until very recently *Portrait of a Lady* would have been considered too complex, if not too sophisticated, a subject for Hollywood treatment and also perhaps, in an unsatisfying because unsentimental way, too deeply sad. Though we should not underestimate a former Hollywood that could bring us Ophul's *Letters of an Unknown Woman* or *Streetcar named Desire*. In its own way *The Crucible* is also very sad indeed and it is not hard to imagine the kind of ideal '50s film that might have been made of it if the very conditions that brought it into being had not afflicted Hollywood at the time.

In any case Nicholas Hynter's film of *The Crucible* and Jane Campion's *Portrait of a Lady* are both highly literate, deeply ambitious, attempts to turn film into a parallel universe to the stage and the world

of the novel as it unfolds in the head.

*The Crucible* was Arthur Miller's bid for a play which transcended the context of its composition, but it was also his most political drama. It is colourful in a way that Miller did not normally allow himself to be. Its visual world of bonnets and peaked Puritan hats is paralleled not only by a quaint cobbling together of early American 'biblical' speech ('It were not in your reckoning, Mister') but by a kind of poetic largesse as well whereby Miller allows himself various grandeurs of metaphor and diction as he indicates how God's icy breath can fall upon the world.

It is a gift of a subject for the cinema, a costume drama full of blazing rhetoric and courtroom climaxes—with a chorus of hysterical girls, hellbent on proving their one-time enthrallment to witchcraft—and some of the juiciest parts the postwar stage has provided.

Nick Hytner's film is full of promise and seems perfectly cast. Day-Lewis's 'Irish' persona, his classical training and his effortless assumption of American roles promises an ideal Proctor. Winona Ryder who had played his wife in *The Age of Innocence* sounds right as Abigail, the great juvenile 'female' lead of the modern American theatre: she has the intelligence and the ability to convey youth and passion. On top of this the great Paul Scofield is cast as the judge, Danforth.

**T**HE UPSHOT, HOWEVER, is a film which is constantly interesting but which is less than the sum of its parts. The interest, as well as the trouble, begins with Arthur Miller's adaptation of his nearly forty-five-year-old play. He has effectively opened it up both topographically and historically. In practice this goes a lot further than the usual variation of scene necessary for a film version and it brings with it a concomitant loss because the great farrago of a 17th century witch trial loses some of its drama along the way.

The most obvious addition is at the outset when Tabitha, the black girl, takes Abigail and the other girls into the bush for a bit of dancing and a steaming pot on the fire to chant wishes and curses by. This is all done very evocatively by Hytner in smoky shadows and gyrations but it is also excessively explicit. If 17th century Salem girls had execrated and conjured, however playfully, by moonlight they would have been inclined to think they *were* witches, whereas the whole point with these girls is that they are putting on an act, aided by

group hysteria and the coherent unreason of the regimen they have grown up under.

That world of combined earthiness and straightlacedness is represented in great lingering detail by Hytner: sometimes the effect is bracing and strange (the Anglo-American voices give the whiff of history) but too often the archaeology overwhelms the aesthetics and we feel that we're being subjected to the cinematic equivalent of a Jonathan Miller stage production (based around Rembrandt or whatever) which has been crudely televised.

This is partly a matter of nodding direction: the spectacle is impressive enough in itself but it diffuses the drama.

Day-Lewis's performance as Proctor is oddly moody and unfocused, as if he were so scared of reducing the character to a stereotype of strong and silent heroism that he risks allowing him to lose shape altogether. He is best at bringing out the

sensuality of Proctor's rapport with Abigail and his arrogance skimming the surface of insecurity. At the finish, when Proctor retracts his confession, it's the vulnerability of the man, rather than his integrity, that Day-Lewis allows to predominate. Paradoxically this allows Hytner (who has a tendency towards maudlin directorial execution scene, replete with the recital of the Lord's Prayer before the drop, which owes its not inconsiderable poignancy as much to the fine old dames who die with Proctor. It doesn't leave a dry eye in the house but it displaces the complexity of the play's ending to a kind of group pathos.

Winona Ryder is likely to be accused of giving her most advanced impersonation yet of a drama student on heat in the presence of High Art but this would be imperceptible, however feasible: she is in fact a very subtle Abigail because she captures the element of raw histrionics and

## Back

*Back to chili and the salted ice,  
to a land black and white at noon  
as the plane stoops to National: back to sheaves  
of bred-in-the-bone courtesy and  
of Mace and gleaming shotguns barely racked:  
back to the flag canvassed by Cole—  
a work of nature, all there was to be:  
back as we taxi, for better or for worse.*

*At home, friends shoulder a way through sleep,  
the orb twists in summer darkness,  
felled saplings hoard the Christmas oils  
of crinkled eucalyptus. Back  
as far away as the world allows and no  
time at all or forever, a child  
leafs the Saturday Evening Post, transfixed  
by somewhere else's mortal glamour.*

**Peter Steele**

insecure game-playing that sorts with the ruthlessness and lust. The edge of affectation in the performance, although risky, is just right.

Joan Allen as Goody Proctor turns in a flawless performance, beautiful in its plainness, that succeeds in capturing the character's goodness as well as the touch of self-reproaching coldness that is necessary to the script. She plays the part classically and works to give definition, by contrast, to the moody indefiniteness of Day-Lewis's Proctor. And the supporting cast do extraordinarily well in the face of Hytner's fidgety direction and Miller's slackened script. The presence in this film which does most to highlight the weakness of both of these is that of Paul Scofield in the role of the judge Danforth.

**S**COFIELD GIVES THE KIND OF performance which could win a supporting Oscar but there is nothing supporting or subordinate about the performance. He plays Danforth with enormous authority, every shade and subtlety and nuance registered by that sepulchral voice and those black eyes. It has been described as a hammy performance but it is not that. Scofield gives the kind of performance, subtle in its shaping but perfect in diction and gesture, which is associated with the stage or rather with a kind of cinematic transposition of the stage's potential. The effect is to seduce Hytner away from his attempts to be cinematic and the direction becomes the servant of the performance. This would be fine if the privilege were extended generally. It is the

style of a lot of '50s and '60s films which adapt plays, from Elia Kazan's *Streetcar Named Desire* to Mike Nicholls' film of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, but in this case the great actor sidetracks the film.

One of the odd mutilations Arthur Miller has made of his own play has been to deflate and dissipate the formalised drama of the courtroom scenes that give *The Crucible* so much of its concentration (its affinity, apart from anything else, with the movies of the period like *Inherit the Wind* or *Anatomy of a Murder*) but which also make it such a dialectical play. Scofield is wonderfully forensic but there is no sense of the camera as an implied spectator at a ritual of some weight and grandeur before witnesses.

That makes the complex purgatorial nature of Miller's vision—with its sense of the expelling of demons, counterpointed at each step by the insanity of accusation—a much less politically weighted thing in this curate's egg of a costume drama.

By some act of mercy or some access of grace, a costume drama is the last thing *Portrait of a Lady* is. Jane Campion's film is an attempt to rescue this very great Henry James novel about the travails of a young woman, Isabel Archer, from the glamorising and trivialising clutches of the likes of Merchant-Ivory. And in those terms it works—both as a piece of feminist recuperation and as a recapitulation of the value of this material in contemporary, not nostalgic terms.

Campion's *Portrait of a Lady* begins disconcertingly with what is almost an alienation device: in grainy black and white

young women with unmistakably Antipodean accents talk about love and pain. The contrast with a sumptuous world of servants and carriages and tushery could not be more marked and Campion makes it clear that the only kind of 'heritage' she is interested in is one of the heart rather than haberdashery.

**T**HE FILM IS VERY BEAUTIFUL to look at and not in the least seductive. It perpetuates *The Piano's* trick of faces appearing out of shadow, close-up as often as not, in the merciless light of early morning or subject to the draining light of winter where colour is thinned or the residual light when evening is coming on and colour is a signifier rather than a substance or vibrancy.

What Campion provides is something like an anthology of weighted moments from the intricate detail of the novel. This is infinitely preferable to reducing the book to the bustle of its circumambient gossip and the anachronistic glamour of its wardrobe, in something like the BBC manner where the dramatic aspect of a classic novel has to arise from the general welter of TV naturalism (as if every 19th century novelist could be translated into the visual equivalent of Trollope) but it does come at a cost. Campion, perhaps by necessity, underplays the comic complexities of the world that produces Isabel and her hopefulness in order to concentrate on the painful expectancy behind the hope or the affecting face of a hope which has been slapped down once too often.

One way of indicating what this film of

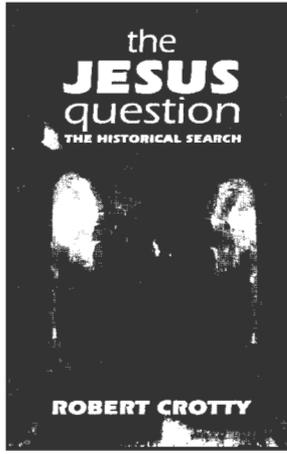
## Who was Jesus *really*?

Throughout history, much discussion has focused on the historical identity of Jesus. That he existed is generally agreed, but methods of interpretation and understanding differ markedly.

In *The Jesus Question* Robert Crotty provides:

- ◆ a survey of modern biblical interpretation
- ◆ an analysis of the way churches interpret the Bible
- ◆ a geographical and historical background to the world of Jesus
- ◆ a survey of scholars who have recently constructed a historical Jesus.

out now from HarperCollins *Religious*



ISBN 1863716815 RRP \$24.95

# Spadework

'...the subterranean spadework of anger.'—Canetti

*Digger they call him, meaning by it death,  
but how could he care less?  
Ribbed like a mole, with back and belly a sheath  
for the moving, glinting thing inside,  
he is at it all the hours God ever made—  
jab and thrash and wield by turns.*

*If you could meet him, there in his black arcades,  
all, he knows, would become clear.  
For none of this is impulse, nothing random:  
every revetment calls a sapper,  
as the blanched rock or the burned gulf its rider.  
Over all, Orion glitters.*

## Peter Steele

*Portrait of a Lady* can't afford to elaborate is Campion's use of Shelley Winters as Mrs Touchett. The few moments when she appears are beautifully sharp, yet the film can't sustain many of them because it has to be pointed rather than circumlocutory which means that, however heroically, Campion is playing James' matter against the grain of his digressive manner.

What Campion does capture, powerfully, is the sense of the isolated individual—*isolated morally or affectively*—silhouetted against the wall of society which is represented by the differing ambitions and desires of more or less good or bad individuals.

The film of *Portrait of a Lady* is very interestingly cast—swerving just past type and then coming to rest. This works extremely well—and a bit surprisingly—in the case of Barbara Hershey as Madame Merle, who gives a performance that drips with sophisticated moral ambiguity, perfectly pitched in its 'Europeanness' and polish.

The limits of Campion's reach in *Portrait of a Lady* are shown by the treatment of

Gilbert Osmond. He is certainly one of the coldest fish in 19th-century fiction and John Malkovich plays him in a smoky glass version of his familiar reptilian manner in a way which is riveting, as Malkovich always is, but a touch too somnolent and lacking the brighter kind of charm.

If you had the world history of talkies to draw on you might choose James Mason to play Osmond though it's worth remembering that Campion's colleague and compatriot Sam Neill is the classiest act since Mason at representing sinister charm and his Australian/New Zealand origin and very 'neutral' English might have been just right for a heavily Europeanised American like Osmond. As it is Malkovich plays Osmond brilliantly but all in one register, so that it is even more difficult than it should be to understand how Isabel Archer could fall for such a cobra of a man.

If Osmond's chic-punk is a little too late 20th century, too New York in a context where New York, not Europe, has been the cultural capital of the world for a long time now, Nicole Kidman's Isabel Archer, with its Yankee accents but Sydney rhythms, is

a brave performance which scales more of the mountain than could have been imagined. Kidman has been criticised by some American critics for not being able to convey emotion to the camera when she has her mouth shut but in fact she conveys, very powerfully, Isabel's inability to know what it is she thinks and feels.

Part of Kidman's (and Campion's) achievement is to ensure that Kidman looks right as Isabel Archer—pretty exactly right according to this reader's reckoning—and that is some kind of achievement. It cuts against the grain of Kidman's perky image. It is an extremely game performance, full of intensity and risk and with no false notes, even if it does not fathom all the depths.

WHAT LIES BEHIND CAMPION'S *Portrait of a Lady* beyond this is intimately related to what lay behind *The Piano*: a desire to articulate in cinematic terms a sort of feminist archaeology of the brutalities women have kissed the rod for in the name of love and to do so without surrendering to any feminist cant. Aesthetically Jane Campion's reach exceeds her grasp in this film, but one has to be impressed by the toughness of the politics that underlie her aim.

Of these two films of classics, each of them in their way venturesome and full of interest, *Portrait of a Lady* seems to me the more successful (even though success is the last word one would reach for in relation to a film that not only has limitations but gains its sorrowful strength from the way it battles with its limitations and frets at the audience's imput, never surrendering to an easy aestheticism). *The Crucible*, by contrast, is uneasy with its own intrinsic theatricality so that it finds difficulty in naturalising its strongest idioms in an effectively filmic way.

But both these films have the courage to succeed to and fail in unpredictable ways. Both are—oddly enough—flawed by the presence of great actors and each is dominated by performances of complex diffidence.

What the canon debunkers (who are also the syllabus setters) will make of these painstaking and highly literate homages to classics one can only guess at. They testify, clearly enough, to a tremendous contemporary appetite, beyond any of the trappings of nostalgia, for the depth and eloquence of a collective literary inheritance. ■

Peter Craven is the reviews editor of the *Republican*.

# The Bard's Dream Run

IT IS WIDELY ACCEPTED that the most popular playwright in Australia (certainly as measured by the number of productions of his plays staged each year) is William Shakespeare. With more than twenty professional productions nationwide in each of the past few years, Shakespeare leaves his nearest rivals (who happen to be David Williamson and Louis Nowra) wallowing in his wake.

And Shakespeare's dominance is not restricted to Australia. His work is enjoying a huge revival of interest throughout the English-speaking world as well as in Europe and Asia. Then there is the much-remarked vogue for Shakespeare on film. The Bard is clearly having a dream run at the moment.

I would argue further that the most popular (or most-produced) play of Shakespeare's over the past three decades has been *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Memorable productions have included Peter Brook's legendary 1970 revision for the Royal Shakespeare Company (which toured Australia in 1973), Jim Sharman's brooding version for Lighthouse in Adelaide in 1982 and 1983, and Roger Hodgman's knockabout MTC version in 1984, reprised for Moomba in the Myer Music Bowl the following year.

Since 1987, the *'Dream'* has enjoyed even higher popular profile in the phenomenally successful open-air picnic productions by Glenn Elston. In February this year, clones of that highly physicalised, erotic but playful (if somewhat over-doubled) show provided more than incidental entertainment for the thousands who were attracted to the Botanic Gardens of Melbourne, Sydney and Perth every week of the long hot summer.

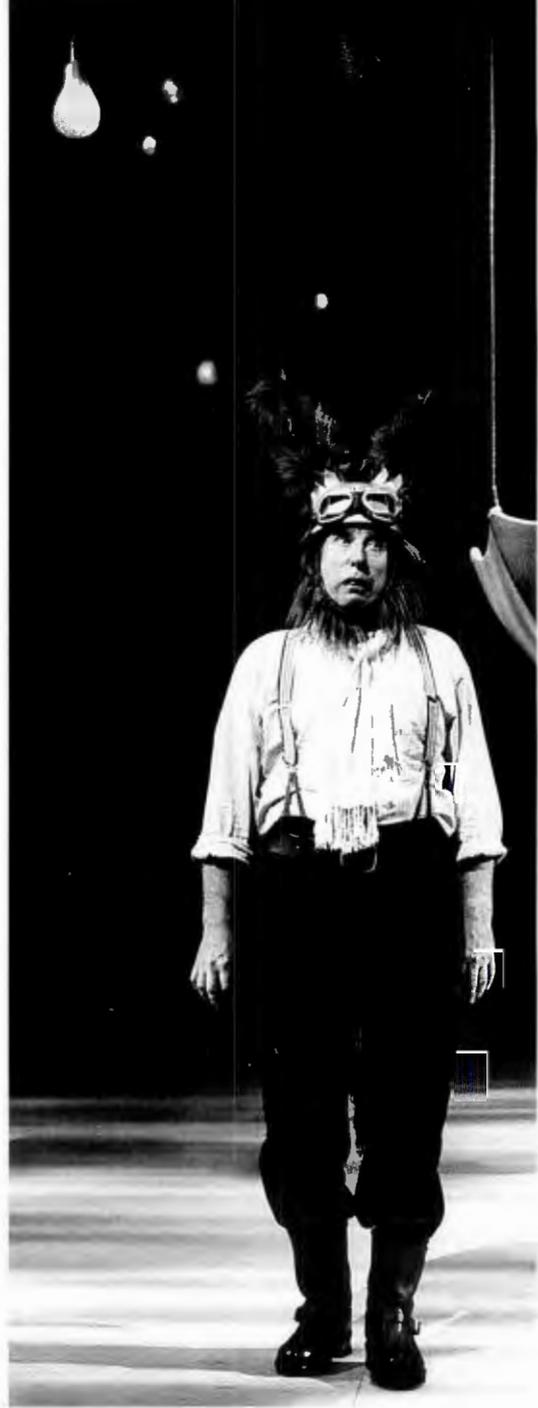
Then enter, on Tuesday 25 February—a particularly hot and clammy midsummer night in Perth—the UK Royal Shakespeare Company to begin a long tour of Australia and New Zealand with Adrian Noble's much-acclaimed *Dream* production. The present remount (with a substantially new cast) opened last August, again at Stratford, and its Australasian tour comes via Hong

Kong and Tokyo. It takes the company to Adelaide, Melbourne, Wellington, Auckland, Sydney and the Gold Coast in quick succession.

I should say at the outset that I found it exciting to see this at the festival of Perth and in the sumptuously refurbished His Majesty's Theatre, Adelaide—one of the best restored of Australia's 19th century theatres. It was also good to hear—without the attendant distractions of screeching bats, birds and traffic noises.

This is a good production, on many levels; if it were a production by the Sydney Theatre Company or the Melbourne Theatre Company (or, indeed, the Bell Shakespeare Company), we might have been quite pleased with it. Noble's production (designed by Anthony Ward) begins with an obvious homage to Brook's innovative 'new look' 1970 production, with Hippolyta swinging gently on a trapeze inside a simple box set with a central rear door. But, where Brook's box was pure white—and it remained so throughout—the Noble/Ward version is bright red and it gives way (for all the scenes in the forest) to a more obviously suitable open, ultramarine-blue space, but one with a solid rear wall and four doors. When we return to Athens for the wedding and the mechanicals' play, the red box returns from the floor and the flies.

Where Brook's acrobatic fairies occupied (quite plausibly) an ethereal domain, more or less throughout the proceedings on their trapezes, Noble's promise to do the same: they appear clinging to upturned umbrellas suspended from above ... only to be rather summarily grounded. Thus, Titania's fairy bower is the interior of a lavishly-cushioned, upside-down, giant beach umbrella, faintly reminiscent of the amphibian craft in which James Bond and his Russian lover are last seen in *The Spy who Loved Me*. There are other design tricks: hydraulics, which raise doors up from the floor, and follow-spots worked backstage from the proscenium bridge. They help conjure up the sense of dream and magic to



which Noble's production aspires but they also keep the production well and truly locked away behind the proscenium arch.

Finally, the characters are almost all attired in garish technicolour, more suggestive of the bad-acid-trip end of the dream spectrum. So Titania's fairies (doubling most of the mechanicals, as in Sharman's Lighthouse production) are decked out in frizzy wigs and vests of bold yellows, greens, indigos, oranges over their labourers' outerwear. Puck gets about barefoot and barechested in a lurid yellow Indian-style pantaloons with braces, while the lovers are in vaguely matched secondary colours—turquoise, magenta, purple and lime-green. As with the Brook production, there is a faintly oriental air to them; the court attendants, for example, look a bit like Air India (or are they Thai Airways?) flight attendants. In short, the



Christopher Harris as Bottom  
and Amanda Harris as Titania in  
the Royal Shakespeare Company's  
production of  
A Midsummer Night's Dream

*Titania's fairy bower is the interior of a lavishly-cushioned, upside-down, giant beach umbrella, faintly reminiscent of the amphibian craft in which James Bond and his Russian lover are last seen in The Spy who Loved Me.*

energy about it, especially in the way the scenes follow each other with a relentless piling-up of mischance upon mischance, although much of this effect is generated by Shakespeare's ingenious farce plotting. But the Elston picnic productions leave this for dead, with their acrobatic Pucks and their use of characters arising from lakes and swinging from trees.

Noble's production is actually a bit soft, erotically. There's a suggestive bit of licking of Bottom's ass's tail from Titania when she first falls in love with him, but this ends up looking more like simple British smut than the wild sexual celebration Brook gave us at about the same moment in his production when Bottom was hoisted onto the shoulders of a couple of brawny fairies and a huge fist was thrust up from between his airborne legs to suggest the exaggeratedly large member attributed to the ass in folklore. No such dark eroticism (or the kind in Sharman's Lighthouse production, where the fight between Geoffrey Rush's Oberon and Gillian Jones's Titania for the Indian changeling boy was charged with sexual and political depth) is explored here.

No, in this production, it's all surface—admittedly, a very bright and lively surface—and it's certainly very funny and very assured and very mainstream. There's nothing here to disturb your dreams in the way past productions have. As for its claims to innovation, there's hardly an inflection, line interpretation, doubling scheme or thematic vision that we haven't seen almost regularly in MNDs since Brook's exciting revision.

**W**HAT, THEN, ARE THE GAINS of seeing this in an indoor venue? The verse (in all its huge variety) is well handled, and it's interesting to hear the way English actors of high calibre still locate the different social standings of their characters regionally: Bottom and his fellow amateurs are all provincial—Peter Quince, for example, is a 'Taff'—and Theseus and his court lot are audibly from BBC London, while the lovers

are allowed some of their own regional tones. I enjoyed Rebecca Egan as Helena, Christopher Benjamin as Bottom and Ian Hughes as Puck a good deal ... but no more than I did Pamela Rabe, John Wood or Bruce Spence in the same roles in various Australian productions.

**A**LSO INTERESTING—in terms of innovation or the lack of it—is the resolutely 19th century picture-frame image of the play in this production. When we saw Brook's production in its white box set (which deliberately subverted the prevailing forests-and-fairies images of previous Shakespeare Memorial Theatre house styles), the impression was that that was about as far as the box set could go: it was as if Brook was challenging us (and his company) to take the next step and abandon orthodox stage sets and props altogether, in the way that Rex Cramphorn's equally legendary *Tempest* did when it toured Australia in 1972/73—at about the same time that Brook's famous *Dream* was touring this country!

So why has the RSC given us yet another production of the '*Dream*' (in a curiously reversed exercise of what may be seen as bringing coals to Newcastle)? The answer is partly that the Australian producers (including Edgley International and the Adelaide Festival Centre Trust) chose it as the most readily available and tourable example of the art of the company's newish Artistic Director, partly because of its Brook-homage qualities and partly as an antidote to the plebeian-picnic reputation the play has earned in the Antipodes lately.

Brook's 1970 production for the RSC was (rightly enough) described as 'epoch-making' in its day and its impact has been felt throughout the Shakespearean-speaking world in the years since. I cannot see this most recent version achieving the same status. ■

**Geoffrey Milne** is head of theatre and drama at La Trobe University.

effect seems designed to connote multicultural 1990s Britain and the chromatic kinds of 'fantasy popularised on television.

Other than that—and some nice textual emphasis from time to time on the recurring word 'dream'—there doesn't seem to me to be much in the way of production concept or interpretative innovation. But that doesn't inhibit the PR merchants; the hype accompanying the tour features quotations from British tabloid reviews telling us how innovative, physical, energetic, erotic and outstanding Noble's production is.

Okay, there is a reasonable degree of physicality in this production, particularly in the increasingly wound-up relationships between the lovers and in Puck's relationship with Oberon, but no more than in Roger Hodgman's 1984 MTC production.

There is certainly also a high degree of

# FLASH IN THE PAN



## Cruising out of control

*Jerry Maguire* (Hoyts, Village, Greater Union) dir. Cameron Crowe. Classic Hollywood fare, such as *Jerry Maguire*, must always have the stodge that appeals to our fundamental taste buds: love lost and won again; somebody wacky and zany; a bit of redemption; the cute kid. If it's worth watching then a movie must do this well and cook up a bit more for the table. Unfortunately *Jerry Maguire* offers nothing but the basics and even these are heated-up leftovers.

One of the problems is that it is difficult to have much sympathy for the central character as played by Tom Cruise. To begin with he's a smarmy prat travelling down the Damascus Road in a convertible, but Cruise turns him into a desperately inarticulate out-of-his-depth oaf. Coming to terms with being sacked from a sports management firm, he draws on the support of his one remaining client and a girl from accounts who resigned with him (she has a three-year-old son and a sister who dabbles in militant feminism). The little boy is cute, almost annoyingly so; Cuba Gooding is fun as the idiosyncratic footballer and Renee Zellweger as the girl is a bit of a heart-warmer. This is about as good as it gets. It is an ill-scripted mess of a movie that misses out on being a better film in its slavish pursuit of simplicity.

*Jerry Maguire* is essentially a values-film, but these values are crudely reinforced by predictable and evenly-timed emotional tugs. As the personification of that which is good and wholesome, Tom Cruise's bumbling attempt at charisma is not the way to go. Yet he might win an academy award for it. —Jon Greenaway

## Desert medicine

*The English Patient*, dir. Anthony Minghella (Village). Michael Ondaatje's novel, *The English Patient*, rifled the colonial experience of at least four continents. It gave desire a physical locale where the mind could play as luxuriously as the body. Mortality, sex, war, Tuscany and the desert—with a formula like that how could an ambitious film director miss? Easily and many have. But Anthony Minghella is not one of them.

Minghella's reimagining of Ondaatje's multilayered story of African adventure, love, war and its human aftermath, is a case study in sheer nous about the potential and power of the cinematic medium. Minghella really does translate. Walter Benjamin once called translation a mode, and Minghella gives every sign of having understood what he was on about. There is no hint of the slavish or mere lavish about this translation from page to screen.

The film, like the book, has a deft double focus—on the pre-war intrigues and desert romance of Count Almásy (Ralph Fiennes) and his clipped English lover (Kristin Scott Thomas), intercut with his final weeks of shrivelled life as 'the English patient' in a Tuscan monastery/villa where he is watched over by a trio of displaced angels (Juliette Binoche, Willem Dafoe and Naveen Andrews). With players of this quality (there isn't a weak performance in the film) Minghella is able to build complex, metaphorical notions of identity, commitment, trust, nationality and patience with polyphonic finesse, but also with the grand sweep that film makes possible. In one glorious and definitive scene, Hana, the nurse (Binoche) is swept up on a bell rope by her Indian lover and, holding a wartime flare like a torch of discovery, comes face to face with the fully fleshed humanity of an early Renaissance fresco. This film is full of such epiphanies. —Morag Fraser

## Lost plot

*Lost Highway*, dir. David Lynch (independent). Here is a confession. I am Lynch-blind. I do not see the vision other critics see when confronted with new David Lynch material. I cannot see the genius. And some-

times I have trouble even seeing the film through. Is his work too confronting for me? Am I shying away from some dark point in my own unconscious? I do not discount such possibilities. But nor do I discount the possibility that Lynch's films are actually dull and reprehensible, and, unfortunately, *Lost Highway* is no exception.

There is really nothing I liked about this film, but there were some things I liked less than others. I can say that for much of this very long film (over two hours) I was frankly bored. There were no characters that held my interest, the plot was repetitious or occasionally offensive, and the pace was ponderous. 'But the style!' I hear people cry, 'There is satisfaction in the style!' Not for me, I'm afraid. *Lost Highway* is so try-hard, using every art-house device open to the film-maker—mysterious messengers, time dislocation, other media (television, video, film) informing the central narrative and so on—that it became curiously banal.

And now to the reprehensible. The character Patricia Arquette played, alone, was appalling enough for me. The character is split through hair colour: when she is brunette she is a wife; when she is blonde she is a force of nature (see *Bewitched*, *I Dream of Jeanie*). The difference between *Lost Highway* and a 1960s sitcom is that Arquette's actions as either blonde or

### EUREKA STREET FILM COMPETITION

Sophia Loren and David Niven in the 1966 film *Lady L*. Sophia must be having some interesting thoughts about David Niven's feeding style. This month's \$30 winner will be the one who comes up with the best caption.

The winner of the Jan/Feb competition was Lenore Crocker, of Armidale, NSW, who came up with this caption for the pic below:

*The next time you put dripping down the sink, get it out yourself!*



brunette are linked to her varying success as a sex object. It is an astonishingly neat misogynistic fantasy, made even more potent by Arquette's character's being subjected to both a dose of dismemberment and extreme coercion.

I keep seeing David Lynch's films in the vague hope that there will be some epiphany for me (or him). But this will be the last time. I'm a-going home to my mother.

—Annelise Balsamo

## Divine afflatus

*Breaking The Waves*, dir. Lars von Trier; (independent). Audiences of this film tend to polarise: at the end you are either led out sobbing luxuriously on the arms of concerned friends, or you sit wondering why you're so cross.

On the credit side, von Trier has elicited powerful performances. Emily Watson as the simpleton heroine is compelling. Her Bess is a vulnerable girl, brought up in a Scottish Calvinist community of unusual rigour and coldness. She marries a Swedish oil rigger, who makes her ecstatic until he has to return to the rig. She becomes hysterically unhappy, and prays to her God to bring him back at any price. So Jan is returned—paralysed from an accident.

He tries to make her form another attachment by telling her to take a lover. She is so insulted by this that he asks her to do it for him, to tell him the details. She does so with a will, and with tragic consequences. Stellan Skarsgaard as Jan, and Karin Cartlidge as Dorothy, Bess' brother's widow, act intensely, warmly, even convincingly, a strange thing given the film's annoying wrongheadedness, and the repellent nature of its narrative. Why does Jan 'improve' each time Bess degrades herself? (When she is finally killed by sadistic sailors he walks again.) Bess' God is a trickster figure, a capricious potentate with whom she makes a Faustian pact. We never see any broader perspective on this; her conversations with 'God' are always validated by subsequent events.

*Breaking The Waves* is presented as a brave and beautiful film that tries to merge religious experience with sexuality. But it's too irritating to be a tragedy (though there is sadness), not funny enough to be comedy, (though you sometimes laugh, uncomfortably) and far too ignorant of real religion to hit any right spiritual notes at all.

—Juliette Hughes

## Mars a day

*Mars Attacks!* dir. Tim Burton (Hoyts, Village). For a while you struggle with this film. It's the Hollywood A-team paying tribute to the B-team with a confused and twisted story shot extremely well and schlock special effects without a single strip of sticky-tape in sight. It should be very bad but in the end it's very good. Only after accommodating the contradictions can this film be enjoyed for what it is: highly-perfumed ritualised cultism.

*Mars Attacks!* is a spin-off from Tim Burton's *Ed Wood*. After paying homage to the man, Burton has now turned to the style of 'art' which he triumphed. Inspired by some alarmist trading cards from the '50s, he has gathered together a brace of stars such as Jack Nicholson, Glenn Close, Martin Short, and a very annoying Chihuahua, to take on the beady-eyed, big-brained, barking Martians. But it's the little green men who steal the show. They are unscrupulous, lying, conniving bastards who sing off-key and can't take a punch. You just can't help but love 'em as they run around with their mini-translators telling all 'don't run, we are your friends!' while roasting people with contraptions that look like Fisher-Price bubble-blowers. In the end Slim Whitman, Tom Jones and an ex-heavy-weight champion save the world.

One of the best things about this film is seeing all the stars get picked off one by one. I'm not being totally facetious when I say death becomes them. My only beef is that some of them didn't turn up later in the film, either by mistake or as walking zombies with faces caked in talcum powder.

—Jon Greenaway

## Storming back

*Star Wars*, dir. George Lucas (Hoyts, Village, Gretaer Union). 'A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away ...' The screen begins to roll out the story-so-far like a magic carpet stretching into starry space; the music has that unmistakable rising fifth (DAH DAH dadada DAH dah); the names appear like invocations—Luke Skywalker, Princess Leia, Han Solo, Darth Vader, Obi Wan Kenobi, Chewbacca, Artoo Detoo. Now *there's* magic, without the need for realism.

I've been thinking recently that the two

best epics ever produced by Hollywood have been the *Star Wars* and *Godfather* trilogies. One is for a young sensibility, the other very adult. Both treat of deeply mythic themes, both are about kingship, though one is informed by Arthur and the other by Machiavelli. Innocence and experience, perhaps. Both have raised the consciousness of a whole generation and influenced imitators and inspirees. But I'd say *Star Wars* has had the deeper effect on a whole generation, adults and all. Lucas began a trend in science fiction/fantasy that has made the genre mean much more than a fun Flash Gordon thing.

The new cut will cause arguments: the pace is not so tight and hectic; things are fleshed out, amplified and explained in the extra four minutes of this version. Lucas also changed a bar-room scene, where Han was threatened by Greedo, the bounty hunter. In the original Han blew away the pesky alien in the midst of its threats with a gun concealed under the table. Lucas now has Greedo draw on Han first, so that he can

I KEPT TELLING HIM HE WASN'T  
ROMANTIC ENOUGH SO HE BOUGHT  
ME A DOZEN PASSES TO SEE  
ROMEO AND JULIET...



outshoot him like a decent gunslinger. I think it fits the character better, though some fans are aggrieved and talk of bowdlerism.

*Star Wars* is the heir of the Western, that lost its soul when it began to search it. But the frontiers of space are boundless: imagination can delve unfettered into questions of meaning, truth, light and dark sides of the self—the last a question that the Western asked in *The Searchers* and played out that genre's hand with the reply. But *Star Wars* and science fantasy will be around with us a long time.

—Juliette Hughes



# A hard reign

**I**T IS ONE OF LIFE'S JOYS to come back to a book, a film, a TV program and find it good, and sometimes even

better when you've grown into its shoes. That has been the case with *Elizabeth R*, the BBC's (literally) crowning achievement in historical drama. It was first shown here in 1971, a time when we were all barely sentient. There had been no viceregal Dismissals, drunk or sober; dammit, it wasn't even Time yet!

By 1978, (the last repeat) Australians had seen quite a bit of political drama, Glenda Jackson was stalking through telehistory in her farthingale for the fourth time, and for many, that was enough. After all, the Great Nanny, Margaret Thatcher, had begun to lower on the horizon, and the Brits were about to get their bottoms thoroughly tanned for the next decade or so, something they are popularly supposed to adore.

I don't know how many times the BBC repeated the program in Britain, but it keeps giving me the awful thought that perhaps somehow the strange delight one felt in Gloriana's triumphs paved the way for Thatcher's own brand of domination.

There is a rich coda to all this in the fact that Glenda the Great forsook her buskins and ruffs to become a *Labour* MP, and was heard publicly pronouncing Thatcher to be a madwoman. That she might just stand a chance of being the first woman Labour prime minister, at a time when the monarchy she portrayed so irresistibly is under republican threat, is probably a pipedream—but such a delicious one.

When it comes to documentary, as opposed to play-history, however, the links between portrayal and reality are far more significant. *Frontier*, the ABC's three-part series on the land wars fought by Aboriginal people for 150 years following colonisation, is essential viewing, and I hope will be repeated at least as many times as *Elizabeth R*. Its format is similar to some successful historical series made by American public broadcasting, notably *The Civil War* and *The West*.

The writer-producers, Bruce Belsham and Victoria Pitts, consulted with scholars Marcia Langton and Henry Reynolds, used diaries, official records, newspaper accounts, engravings, and wove them into a strong narrative with actors such as Pamela Rabe, Hugo Weaving, Geoffrey Rush, Max Cullen, Noah Taylor, Barry Otto, Bill Hunter, Ruth Cracknell among others.

The most appalling thing *Frontier* shows us (and there is much to appal) is that so little has really changed for two centuries. The Christian churches played their Janus roles of advocacy and detraction of an alien culture, attempting some sort of physical preservation while busily dismantling spiritual structures. The greedy assumed the role of victim in order to appropriate and exploit possessions that were common to all. There were activists, well-meaning meddlers, crackpot theorists and politicians, many as twisty as they were inept. The activists

were often, I think, more eloquent than today's, though their words fell on stone. Presbyterian J.D. Lang was concerned more than a century ago about issues of compensation, of transforming the Aborigines 'into a race of paupers forced to beg their bread where they formerly earned it'. Thomas Fowle Buxton wrote against 'the wickedness of our proceedings as a nation' against those 'whose only crime [was] to trespass on the land of their forefathers.'

The story of Colonel Charles Napier's refusal of the governorship of South Australia gives me déjà-vu when I think of the catch-phrase 'commercial confidentiality'. The Act of acquisition was passed by an undebated night-sitting of the British Parliament, to benefit some private entrepreneurs. Napier wrote: 'So one of the last acts of this Parliament was publicly to tell a lie and deprive an inoffensive race of people their property without giving them the slightest remuneration.

So much for truth and justice.' The lie, of course, was that South Australia was 'waste and unoccupied land'.

**S**ECRECY WAS EASY IN THE 19TH century, when travel was slow and horrible crimes could be committed and concealed in the assurance that those who should have protected the innocent would usually collude. As public opinion in the cities grew against the wholesale slaughter conducted by such as Major Nunn, leader of the Waterloo Creek massacre, the bloodlust of redneck vigilantes gave way to more psychopathic murder methods: arsenic, the tool of snivelling suburban poisoners, became the drug of choice for the brave pioneers.

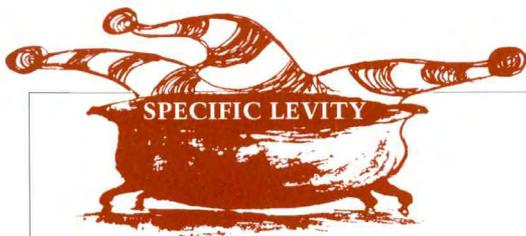
So *Frontier* shows more than history; the story of the travails the British have visited upon Australian Aboriginal people is not over, just as Elizabeth I's calm assumption of her God-given right to use Ireland as a sinecure for her favourites has its bloody legacy now. The pastoral leases that are so much in the news now, one might think would be a badge of shame, given that they were a desperate attempt on the part of the Colonial Office to preserve some part of the original owners' lands from the rapacity of genocidal monsters.

The most important achievement of *Frontier*, I think, has been to show up the myths of Aboriginal passivity and acquiescence. The colonisation of this country was never anything other than a rape, aggravated by robbery, and the failure to realise this and make amends is to condemn all of us who live off the proceeds of the crime.

Politicians who talk glibly of 'black armband' views of history should remember why black armbands are worn in the first place. ■

**Juliette Hughes** is a freelance writer and reviewer.

As with *Elizabeth R*, *Frontier* is available on video, and the latter is also available on CD ROM.



## Eureka Street Cryptic Crossword no. 52, April 1997

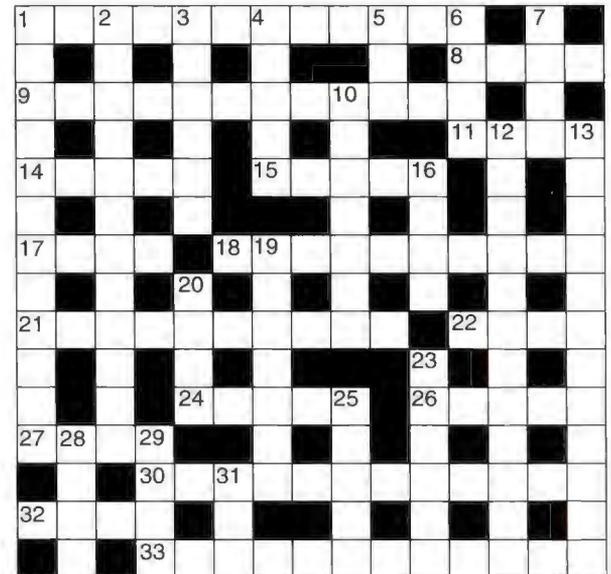
Devised by Joan Nowotny IBVM

### ACROSS

1. Mail me before I die in the empty room—this afternoon, in the Latin way, perhaps! (4,8)
8. Long to cut off North this time. (4)
9. Poor Aunt Ina lived round here before the flood. She was somewhat old-fashioned! (12)
11. Current I'd rather avoid because of its corrosive quality. (4)
14. Edition for the children! (5)
15. Some would say the wife should pay for herself. (5)
17. Wander along the road to where they all lead, we hear. (4)
18. Before the auction, arrange for insurance, for instance. (10)
21. Took a seat before I was even getting up. Such behaviour calls for ridiculing. (10)
22. Carnival conducted according to the rules. (4)
24. Quiet circle all right! So quiet I was all of a tremble! (5)
26. Discovered cast to be well fitted-out. (5)
27. Some drongo never left! (4)
30. News about share of genetic material comes as a breath of new life. (12)
32. Creased alb I took to the northern holiday resort. (4)
33. Annoying common pest is enough to drive one insane! Quite the opposite! (6,6)

### DOWN

1. Sick and ailing, I grasp at straws when accused of pinching! (12)
2. Scholastic Aptitude Test? Is minority group expected to express gratification at this? (12)
3. Simon or Justin anger you? Well, I'm damned! (6)
4. The football code that dominated and gave the orders. (5)
5. You can recognise the dictator in his insidious and treacherous deeds. (3)
6. Some bird mimicked my narrative style. (4)
7. Salvador possibly laid the paints on thickly. (4)
10. I am between two holders of high office, possibly, in this city-state. (7)
12. Sounds as if, when you carry domestic pet, your wrist gives way and you end up looking like a lampooner! (12)
13. Activities such as classifying feathers lower people's status, perhaps. (12)
16. Not as long as 8-across, being made up of minute sections. (4)
19. Bring back the siesta or begin exercising. (7)
20. Cut end off Celtic flag, possibly. (4)
23. I object after a state of fiery excitement. (6)
25. Expresses grief on bended knees. (5)
28. Shape of cricket's past, beginning of Eggleston's future? (4)
29. Gradually, he manifested hysterical personality aspects. (4)
31. Fool up the tree? Could be looking for a stick! (3)



### Solution to Crossword no. 51, March 1997



## Jesuits in Australia

David Strong SJ

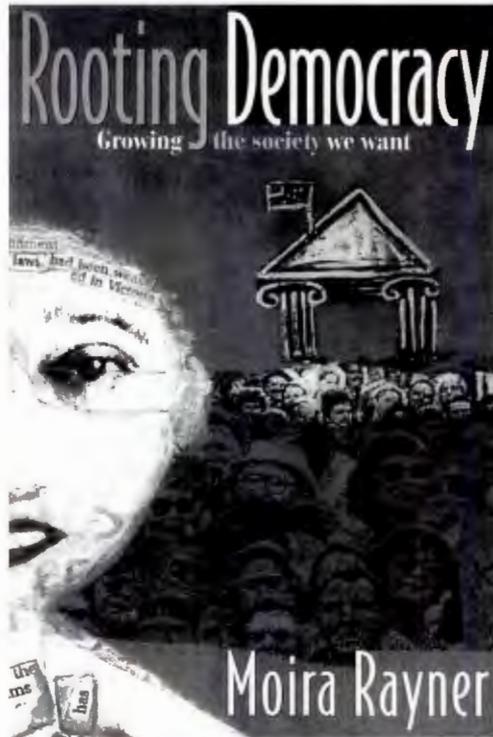
*A comprehensive history of the Australian  
Jesuits 1930–1970, written from the 'inside'.*

210x148 mm,  
480 pages paperback.  
RRP \$34.95

This book and others are  
available from the  
Jesuit Publications Bookshop  
PO Box 553  
Richmond 3121  
ph (03) 9427 7311  
fax (03) 9428 4450

# EUREKA STREET & Allen & Unwin

*Special book Offer*



## Rooting Democracy Growing the society we want

*'I want a society that offers a decent life for all its citizens:  
how do we build it together?'—Moira Rayner*

We take the processes of democracy for granted—until they break down. In this searching analysis Moira Rayner examines the faultlines in Australian democracy. But she goes further, suggesting ways in which we can diagnose the problems, repair the processes and restore trust in public and political institutions.

Thanks to Allen & Unwin, *Eureka Street* has ten copies of this book to give away. Just send an envelope marked 'Eureka Street December Book Offer' to PO Box 553, Richmond, 3121.

**I  
N  
V  
I  
T  
A  
T  
I  
O  
N**

JESUIT  
PUBLICATIONS  
AND  
VITA  
TOURS  
AND TRAVEL

### DISCOVER THE JEWELS OF ITALY ROME — ASSISI — FLORENCE

8 days all-inclusive escorted tour to Italy  
with Qantas, returning at your convenience

**Special offer \$3999\***

\*\* Departures 18 June 1997 3 September 1997  
23 July 1997 October 1997

Stay in leading four star and three star hotels — Enjoy traditional Italian food and hospitality — Travel in luxury air-conditioned coaches  
Special features for Catholic travellers:

- Papal audience/visit St Peter's
- Vatican Museum/Catacombs
  - Santa Croce—The Church of the Holy Cross
  - The Basilica and tomb of St Francis of Assisi
- The Cross of St Francis
- The Tomb of St Clare
  - The Duomo of Florence Santa Maria dei Fiori
  - The Religious Centre
  - Daily Mass with Jesuit Tour Chaplain

\* Twin share hotel accommodation \*\* Go on and explore other parts of Europe and return at will

- Go to London and return to Australia from there for an extra \$150 •  
For further information ring Anne on 1300 300 552

ISSN 1035-1758



9 771036 175017