

# EUREKA STREET

Vol. 9 No. 9 November 1999

\$5.95

Jon Greenaway  
*Return to Timor*

Who's missing out in Australia?

The Ignatius Centre's report on disadvantage

Moira Rayner on  
Geoffrey Robertson's  
Crimes Against Humanity

Paul Collins reviews  
John Cornwell's *Hitler's Pope*

The common reader's  
poet John Sendy on John Shaw Neilson

**Since last Christmas, GOOD SHEPHERD has assisted:**

- **103 homeless people** to find permanent accommodation;
- **70 young people** to find foster care;
- **757 families** to receive financial counselling;
- **219 people** through a No Interest Loan (NILS);
- **12 adolescent mothers** to find a place to live with support;
- **43 single mothers** escaping domestic violence to find a safe home for their families;
- **1466 adolescents** through counselling;
- **662 young women** and their families, through counselling work and Reiki;
- **hundreds of families and individuals** through referrals, by speaking out against injustices and by advocating on their behalf.



**GOOD SHEPHERD...**  
*helps to build a safe,  
 fair and a more just  
 community for everyone*

...and we need your support this Christmas

Please send donations to  
**GOOD SHEPHERD YOUTH AND FAMILY SERVICE**  
**Reply Paid 18, 117 Johnston Street, Collingwood 3066**  
 (no stamp required if reply paid number is used) or  
**Telephone 9419 5477** for further information.  
 Donations of \$2 and upward are tax deductible.  
 (Credit cards accepted)

# Art Monthly

AUSTRALIA

## IN THE NOVEMBER ISSUE

Patrick Hutchings reviews the Jeffrey Smart retrospective  
 Andrew Sayers talks to David Hockney about portraiture

Suzanne Spunner traces the genealogy of  
 the Telstra National Aboriginal and  
 Torres Strait Islander Art Award

Mary Eagle reviews the conference  
 What John Berger Saw

Christopher Heathcote on Australian artists  
 and environmental awareness

## Out now

\$4.95, from good bookshops and newsagents.  
 Or phone 02 6249 3986 for your subscription

## AUSTRALIAN BOOK REVIEW

### NOVEMBER

**José Borghino on  
 cultural malaise and arts funding**

**Chris Wallace-Crabbe on  
 Drusilla Modjeska's *Stravinsky's Lunch***

**Cassandra Pybus on Christopher Koch's  
*Out of Ireland***

**Sophie Masson on Sara Douglass'  
*The Betrayal of Arthur***

**Andrew Riemer on  
*Reasons I Won't Be Coming***

**Ross Fitzgerald on  
*The Centenary Companion***

New Subscribers \$55 for ten issues plus a free book  
 Ph (03) 9429 6700 or Fax (03) 9429 2288

"Everyone said they wanted a full church. What I discovered was that while that was true, they didn't want any new people. Full, yes, but full of the people who used to come, who had moved away or were now dead."

*David Farrer, Bp of Wangaratta,  
 on "Vacating the ecclesiastical club-house"*

"Verging has been a learning experience. I can now recognise a mother-of-the-bride on sight. She usually glitters, even in the early afternoon, and often wears a hat. Frequently she arrives armed with a florist's box of corsages, and she carries with her an unmistakable aura of upper management."

*Beryl Rule, award-winning humorist,  
 on being a verger*

### The Melbourne Anglican

1998 winner of the Gutenberg Award for Excellence  
 in Religious Communication

To subscribe call (03) 9653 4221  
 or visit [www.melb-anglican.com.au](http://www.melb-anglican.com.au)

*The Melbourne Anglican*

*Early on a Sunday morning in late September, Dili's marketplace was deserted. I had last seen it six months before, bustling with people buying and selling vegetables ... if the old archway hadn't still been there—blackened from the flames but standing proudly—I would not have recognised it.*

—See 'Return to Dili'  
by Jon Greenaway, p16

Cover design by Siobhan Jackson. Photographs pp4, 14 by Bill Thomas. Photograph p8 by Greg Scullin. Graphic p12 by Siobhan Jackson. Photographs pp16–19 by Jon Greenaway. Photograph pp21–22, Associated Press AP. Photograph pp24, 26 by Michael Coyne.

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

## CONTENTS

4

### COMMENT

With Michael McGirr, Toby O'Connor and Dewi Anggraeni.

7

### CAPITAL LETTER

8

### CHURCH-BASHING OR TRUTH-TELLING?

Dorothy Lee argues for a positive middle way.

9

### SUMMA THEOLOGIAE

10

### THE MONTH'S TRAFFIC

With Edmund Campion, Morag Fraser, John F. McCarthy and Steve Sinn.

11

### ARCHIMEDES

13

### BUSH LAWYER

16

### RETURN TO DILI

Jon Greenaway looks at the politics and the prospects in East Timor.

21

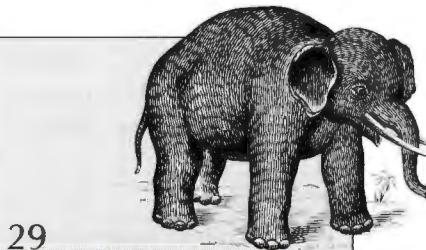
### THE POLITICS OF PEACEMAKING

The Americans aren't going to Dili. Maybe that's not such a bad thing, argues Anthony Ham.

24

### FAIR GO!

Paddy McCorry dissects a new report on social disadvantage in Australia.



29

### READING ALLOWED

A new page of books for kids, and adults who never lost the habit.

Reviews by Kate Crofts and Siobhan Jackson.

30

### TRACKING JOHN SHAW NEILSON

John Sendy goes in search of one of Australia's best-loved, least-understood poets.

35

### POETRY

'Max Is Missing' by Peter Porter.

36

### BOOKS

Moira Rayner gives three cheers for Geoffrey Robertson's *Crimes Against Humanity*; Peter Cochrane expatiates on Stephen Holt's *Short History of Manning Clark* (p38); Paul Collins reviews John Cornwell's *Hitler's Pope: The Secret History of Pius XII* (p40); Bruce Duncan endorses Race Mathews' *Jobs of Our Own: Building a Stake-Holder Society* (p42).

44

### FLASH IN THE PAN

Reviews of the films *Erskineville Kings*, *In a Savage Land*; *Affliction*; *Yellow Submarine*; *Run Lola Run*; *McLibel: Two Worlds Collide*.

46

### WATCHING BRIEF

47

### SPECIFIC LEVITY

# EUREKA STREET

A magazine of public affairs, the arts  
and theology

General manager  
Joseph Hoo

Editor  
Morag Fraser

Assistant editor  
Kate Manton

Graphic designer  
Siobhan Jackson

Publisher  
Michael McGirr SJ

Production manager: Sylvana Scannapiego

Administration manager: Mark Dowell

Editorial and production assistants  
Juliette Hughes, Paul Fyfe SJ,  
Geraldine Battersby, Ben Hider

Contributing editors

Adelaide: Greg O'Kelly SJ, Perth: Dean Moore  
Sydney: Edmund Campion, Gerard Windsor

Queensland: Peter Pierce

United Kingdom correspondent  
Denis Minns OP

South East Asia correspondent  
Jon Greenaway

Jesuit Editorial Board  
Peter L'Estrange SJ, Andrew Bullen SJ,  
Andrew Hamilton SJ

Peter Steele SJ, Bill Uren SJ

Marketing manager: Rosanne Turner  
Advertising representative: Ken Head  
Subscription manager: Wendy Marlowe

Administration and distribution  
Lisa Crow, Mrs Irene Hunter, Kristen Harrison

Patrons

*Eureka Street* gratefully acknowledges the  
support of C. and A. Carter; the  
trustees of the estate of Miss M. Condon;  
W.P. & M.W. Gurry

*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  
email: eureka@jespub.jesuit.org.au  
<http://www.openplanet.com.au/eureka/>

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

Printed by Doran Printing,  
46 Industrial Drive, Braeside VIC 3195.

© Jesuit Publications 1999

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

COMMENT: 1

MICHAEL MCGIRR

# As time goes by



T

HIS YEAR IS DIFFERENT. People want to know what your plans are for New Year's Eve. They've never asked before. It has also been a year for anniversaries, maybe because at the end of every century and half-century there's a rush to get things done.

It's 50 years since the revolution in China. In the years leading up to it, anthropologists had been digging for evidence of human ancestry at Chou K'ou Tien, outside Beijing. It was painstaking labour, led by a Canadian, Davidson Black. Work went on despite the warring armies of Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalists, the Communists and the traditional warlords being at each other's throats nearby.

Eventually, the team found a single tooth. It was evidence of human life in that area half a million years earlier. A few years later, Black's colleague, Pei Wenzhong, found a complete skull of Peking Man. After more labour and at great expense, three more skulls came to light. As Penny van Oosterzee tells the story in a new book, *Dragon Bones*, the whole lot went missing in the confusion that finally brought the Chinese Communists to power. Nobody knows what happened to the skulls.

The story of Peking Man is a parable for the turn of the millennium. Not just because 500,000 years of human history puts the passage of another 1000 into perspective. One thousand in half a million is like a day out of 18 months. Tell that to the restaurant owner who wants to charge a thousand bucks for a feed. But think of the effort that was lavished on finding one skull. Then think of some of the most telling images of the century. Think of the Pol Pot Holocaust Museum in Phnom Penh where dozens and dozens of human skulls are still stuck to a wall to form a map of Cambodia. The history of the 20th century is a charnel house. Yet every skull has had as much claim to care as that of Peking Man.

One of Davidson Black's occasional companions was Teilhard de Chardin, a Jesuit and palaeontologist. He believed

that the whole story of material creation is spiritual. He saw evolution as a process of revelation and vice versa. He found not just human remains but also a human future by scratching at rocks. He had seen war. He could also see a future.

Christians call the time before Christmas Advent. It is a time for celebrating hope. This year, some New Year's revellers will also be celebrating hope. Others will behave like there's no tomorrow. I would like to spend December 31 in the peace park in Hiroshima. There is a museum there, different from the Pol Pot

Museum. It is spacious, quiet and simple. It invites the heart to grow rather than shrivel. At midnight, I would stand beside the famous watch that was recovered from the debris of 6 August 1945. The case of the watch is partly melted. It is frozen forever at 8.15am. It's a reminder that time does not stand still. The final Gospel reading this year in most Christian liturgical traditions starts: 'In the beginning was the word.'

■ Michael McGirr sj is *Eureka Street's* publisher.

COMMENT: 2

TOBY O'CONNOR

## No tax please, we're investors

TREASURER PETER COSTELLO recently announced the Government's long-awaited business tax reform package. This package follows reforms to the income tax system through the 'New Tax System' legislation debated in the Senate earlier this year. While the proposed business tax reforms paint the full picture on national taxation reform, the beauty is in the eye of the beholder.

Big business and the well-heeled are applauding the reforms as a way of increasing our international competitiveness and attracting investment. Less audible are the concerns being voiced over the unfairness of lowering effective tax rates on the capital income of the top end of town and jeopardising revenue necessary to fund income support and services for the less fortunate.

At the core of the reform is a major cut in the corporate tax rate, down from 36 to 30 per cent, and a raft of Capital Gains Tax (CGT) regimes that will substantially reduce tax on profits. The reforms include: a halving of the CGT to 25 per cent for individuals; total exemption from CGT for overseas pension funds and exemptions for Australian super funds investing in venture capital; concessions to small business and large capital investment projects to compensate for the scrapping of the accelerated depreciation scheme.

The Treasurer claims that the business tax reforms will 'produce a world competitive taxation system and what that means is investment and jobs'. But to what degree will the promised benefits of boosted investment and growth, reduced national debt and jobs growth be realised? And at what cost?

Reductions in the CGT will certainly reduce barriers to overseas investment. Incentives directing investment into venture capital and other assistance

to business may establish the climate for new industry development and jobs growth—but these are far from guaranteed. Australia has a poor record of ensuring jobs growth in return for company tax breaks, infrastructure support, subsidised labour and other business concessions. There remains little in the way of an explicit requirement in these new arrangements for a return of jobs out of our generous, taxpayer-funded contributions to the corporate sector.

The introduction of across-the-board CGT cuts as a pre-condition for increased investment remains a 'getting the fundamentals right' strategy. It does not guarantee economic or social dividends for the common good of society. In many instances it may undermine potential economic and employment growth. Little thought has been given to the risks inherent in this system of privileging short-term and unstable speculative investment in property and shares over other forms of investment which offer lower rates of return but longer-term economic and social pay-offs.

Such a risk is accentuated by the increased opportunity for tax avoidance that is fostered in a system where the maximum rate of tax on capital gains is lower than the top marginal income tax rates at 47 and 40 per cent. These top rates will become irrelevant as high-income earners convert income to capital gains. Cuts to the CGT are promoted as benefiting the increasing ranks of 'mum and dad' investors who have an increasing interest in shares and property. However, the bulk of tax benefits will flow to wealthy investors rather than to middle-income groups, who are more likely to be investing for retirement or their children.

But there is one group that continues to cop the worst of the Government's tax reform proposals.

Those on low and fixed incomes are set to be slugged by the regressive tax on consumption and inadequate compensation arrangements which now appear vulnerable to potential welfare cuts foreshadowed by the Government. With the announcement of the business tax package come predictions that the tax cuts, far from achieving the aim of revenue neutrality, may reduce the budget surplus to the tune of billions of dollars. This places future expenditure on health, education, welfare and other community services at risk as the Government seeks to fill another potential revenue 'black hole'.

The key initiatives outlined in the business tax package unnecessarily trade off equity for the attraction of investment.

The package fails three equity goals: to raise revenue in a way that guarantees sustainable economic and employment growth; to raise revenue fairly; and to raise adequate revenue to fund community services and income support. Little room has been left for the consideration of welfare under this new tax system unless, of course, it is of the corporate variety. Increasingly, the needs of the most vulnerable and the common good of the community seem to be out of the picture when it comes to deciding who will be sharing the benefits of taxation reform. ■

**Toby O'Connor** is the National Director of the Australian Catholic Social Welfare Commission.

COMMENT: 3

DEWI ANGGRAENI

## Viewed from Indonesia

**N**O T LONG AFTER THE RETURN of violence following the East Timor poll early in September, a 22-year-old Indonesian student activist, supporter of Partai Rakyat Demokrasi, a left-wing political party, joined a protest march in New Zealand. She carried one of the banners and joined in the calls denouncing the Indonesian military's involvement in atrocities in East Timor.

At the end of the march, some of the protesters lit candles, then another produced an Indonesian flag. The Indonesian student watched, wondering what he was going to do with it. When he brought it to one of the lit candles, she realised with horror what he had in mind. She rushed across and grabbed the flag from the protester. An angry tug of war occurred. 'I don't know where I got the energy from. He was twice my size,' she said later. Luckily for everyone involved, a sober, older protester intervened and the flag was saved. The atmosphere of solidarity, however, was somewhat broken.

That same night, the Indonesian student contacted her friends in Melbourne and Sydney, and found that many who would have joined protest demonstrations had been put off by the flag-burning activities that followed many of these rallies. 'I was new in this part of the world. I hadn't realised that flag-burning was part of the process,' said the student.

The incident is only one example of how easily unnecessary conflicts arise between Australia and Indonesia, and their respective peoples. The young student was angry with the government of the day and its military, but she shared a collective national pride in the flag, a symbol of hard-fought independence. New Zealanders and Australians do not seem to invest such emotion in their flags. So the protesters that evening took for granted that the Indonesian student, who shared their anger at the Indonesian authorities, would also agree to the burning of the flag. Any other attitude might have been interpreted as irrational, emotional rubbish.

The blanket aggression towards Indonesia and things Indonesian, as shown by many Australian activists, stun many Indonesians, students as well as those who have been living

and working for years in this country. Many of these have been very critical of the Indonesian Government's policy on East Timor. But, facing vilification from the media and people around them, they eventually became defensive. Deep down they do not believe that Indonesia can be all that bad. They begin to look for good aspects and indications of good faith to which they can relate.

The bulk of the Indonesian population, however, only hear good things about Indonesia, and see images on television to reinforce their perception of what happens in East Timor. They do not hear about atrocities committed on East Timorese. Some of what these people see and hear is true, and they know it is true because they meet East Timorese who came from there and live to tell the story. They also hear about how the government is trying to help some refugees from the troubled territory to resettle in other areas or to repatriate.

The Australian public do not hear this information, however, because it is never reported here.

On 24 September, Doug Struck of the *Washington Post* Foreign Service, published an article stating that some reports of mass killings and large-scale atrocities committed by anti-independence militias and their Indonesian military backers could not be confirmed or appeared to have been exaggerated.

This was followed closely by articles in the *Guardian* and the *Independent* saying similar things.

In Australia only the *Herald Sun*'s Andrew Bolt published the same story, on 7 October. The rest of the media have so far overlooked it.

In Indonesia, Australia is now seen as a hostile country. And this is conveniently exploited by the authorities, especially the military, to stir up hyper-nationalism among the people. Not only does this somewhat exonerate them, but it also serves as a powerful diversion from the authorities' own inability to maintain security in the territory. ■

**Dewi Anggraeni** is the Australian correspondent for *Tempo* news magazine.

# Power in the process

**J**UST WHAT ONE THINKS was the critical factor in bringing Jeff Kennett down depends on where one is coming from. It could have been mere arrogance. It could have been his neglect of the rural centres, and the failure of his rationalisations of local government. It could be that the Kennett mixture of tough talk, privatisation, red-tape slashing and reduced government services works with the electorate only when there is a sense of economic crisis. But process—or Kennett's complete disregard for it—must be given its credit too.

The Victorian independents have a common cause with independents elected elsewhere over the past decade. NSW led the way, at both state and federal levels, with characters such as John Hatton in the state parliament, and Ted Mack and Peter Andren in the federal parliament. Over the past decade, however, there has been scarcely a chamber in our parliamentary system which has not at some stage been hostage to independents with a mission to make government more transparent, under a more obvious system of checks and balances. The Victorian shopping list—a strengthened Auditor-General, reduced exemptions (especially for 'commercial-in-confidence' transactions and 'Cabinet' documents) under Freedom of Information legislation, and greater scrutiny of the executive by the legislature—might seem fashioned for the Kennett experience, but is little different from what was being asked in NSW a decade ago.

The independents' success helps to disprove the theory that the public is interested in outcomes rather than processes, and will accept reduced goods and services if government is removed from its back. The public appetite for goods and services—health, education, welfare, a safe environment and so on—does not appear to have changed much, even if people are less concerned about who delivers them than in the fact of their availability. Concern about how they are delivered has, if anything, become even more significant in recent years. And it is political unconcern about being seen to be fair and open which has caused more political grief, and has damaged the standing of politicians more, than any other factor.

Are these facts which could have been harnessed in the republican debate? The strongest argument against an elected president has been that election risks implying mandate, and a font of power separate from the legislature or the prime minister.

But most of our notions about separation of powers come from a time when ministerial power was exercised directly by ministers or people under their close control, from a time before vast bureaucracies or a welfare state, preceding even an organised police force. For the early modern political theorists, notions of the King or the executive were more akin to the modern ministerial private office than to the modern bureaucracy.

When these early theories foundered in practice (cronyism, patronage and corruption on big projects such as railway construction, for example), Australia devised the statutory corporation—whose officials were subject to both parliament and the legislature but which had protection and independence from the improper influence of either. In time the theory was

extended so that critical executive functions—such as the appointment, removal and discipline of public servants—were controlled by independent public service boards. Much later, Australia was one of the first Westminster systems to recognise further ways of controlling and holding public service discretion to account, through Ombudsmen, freedom of information legislation and administrative and judicial review.

It has been only in recent times that ministers have again sought direct control over the appointment process. That control underlies much of the suspicion that has created the process-minded independents.

The difficulty is that patronage is still a major reason why parties contest for power. The power of rewarding one's friends and punishing one's enemies is often at the heart of the party funding system and the basis of the networks and factions which parties establish.

Appointment is intrinsically a political process, and one can never have entirely objective ways of establishing merit. If the power of appointment were at some remove from day-to-day politics rather more circumspection might be shown.

**B**UT THERE SEEKS LITTLE HOPE for such circumspection, given that the major parties are reluctant even to address branch-stacking within their own parties. If branch-stacking is about anything, it is about having a say in the spoils of office.

Branch-stacking is corrupt, and it corrupts all those who engage in it. Yet the ALP factional system indulges in branch-stacking on all sides, and not a few ostensibly pure politicians depend for their survival on deals made with various ethnic chieftains and other vote-hawkers of unbelievable moral squalor. Such people do not make deals simply for the satisfaction of seeing one faction triumph over another: they do it in the hope that power will be exercised on their behalf, at their behest. The abuses are hardly less obvious in the Liberal Party.

It is impossible to segregate the dirty deals a politician must do to get selected and elected from the decisions a politician must make as legislator or minister. It is a sound rule of thumb that a person who has won preselection by dirty tricks will be a crook in office. And since the process is usually not only personal (in the sense of getting power for one person) but an aspect of party factionalism, it compromises not only individual politicians but whole governments.

So smelly and out-of-control has branch-stacking become in the ALP that Kim Beazley has recognised that he must be seen to exercise leadership against it. The cynic should not expect much more than press statements, and certainly no valour bringing him into actual contact with the enemy. Beazley is part of the faction system and too many of his colleagues are compromised. But one cannot help thinking that some ticker in this field might not only give him some credit among those interested in the standards of public office, but some credentials for real leadership. ■

Jack Waterford is editor of the *Canberra Times*.

# Church-bashing or truth-telling?

*A reflection on the meaning of church.*

O

NLY THE OTHER DAY, a friend remarked to me that he thought the church had become a kind of whipping boy in academic circles: anybody at all was happy to say, or hear, anything negative about the church. Perhaps that's true of the academic world; certainly it is true of many Christian groups, conservative and otherwise.

The remark started me thinking. I began with a chastening recollection of the amount of 'church-bashing' I have engaged in myself over the years. Was it all one terrible projection of my own unresolved anger? Or was I endeavouring to speak the truth and refusing the safe burrow of loyalty to the institution only because it happened to pay my salary? Actually, I don't much like seeing myself in either camp. I'm not really a church-basher by nature, because I'm all too conscious of what the church, in its various manifestations, has given me. On the other hand, I know that many people have suffered acutely at the hands of the church, for personal or political or sexual or theological reasons. For those people—for women and gay people and other kinds of marginal beings—I want the truth to be told, no matter how much it hurts to speak the words of confession. I want to hear the words because people's suffering must be named and injustice exposed. More than that: only the words of confession will elicit the healing words of absolution.

Sometimes I find myself in arguments with people in which I take diametrically different points of view. Here I am on one occasion bashing the church in an argument with someone I consider naive and insecure who wants to hold on to the idea that there really is a pure church, an absolute locus of all truth. Or on another occasion I'm frantically defending the church against the accusation (forget Adam and Eve, forget the snake) that it is directly responsible for the problem of evil—from the murder of Cain down to any present-day massacre you might like to name.

Theologically, of course, the situation is much more complex. What exactly do we mean by the word 'church'? To which group of people, which history, which institution

are we referring? Sometimes people are talking about their own denomination; sometimes it's a kind of postmodern disdain for institutions of any kind; sometimes it's the decisions of a particular Synod that they don't agree with; sometimes it's a brand of theology, sometimes a particular hierarchy. When the Eastern churches use the term they mean something rather different from us in the West: for them the

creating an alternative, non-institutionalised community of believers, it has to be admitted, has not been great. The almost entire lack of appreciation for the transcendent, the communion of saints, the liturgy and the sacraments is part and parcel of Protestantism's inability to take hold of any real theology of church: easier to retreat to individualism and parochialism, and ignore the rest of the world.



church is already holy by reason of its final end, its constitution as the communion of saints, the presence of the transcendent within its life and ritual.

For Protestants, there is often a natural antipathy to the word 'church', arising from painful historical experience. In the multiplying of denominational divisions since the Reformation, Protestants have generally been the non-conformists who leave (or are thrown out of) the church, and then attempt to construct themselves as something other than formal, institutional church. The success of Protestantism in

For many of my Catholic friends the word 'church' suggests an excluding and remote hierarchy which threatens to dominate them. For them, it means a magisterium that has little room for diversity, for women's voices, for lay participation, for deviance from the narrow and perfect truth of dogma. Others attempt to reconfigure the idea of 'church' by asserting that it means, not the hierarchy and its structures, but the ordinary people across a vastly diverse world who come together to share the sacraments, the struggle, the significance of the Word for their lives.



Where I work we have a student—a woman with a wonderfully deep and honest sense of theology—who often asks the semantic question when people are engaging in a spot of church-bashing or church-barricading. ‘But what,’ she asks earnestly, leaning forward in her chair, eye-ballng them and wagging her finger for emphasis, ‘what exactly do you mean when you say “church” here?’ Usually there’s an uncomfortable silence—if someone else doesn’t actually change the subject—and people don’t know what to say. The question has never really occurred to them. For this particular student, who happens to be gay, it makes all the difference in the world whether ‘church’ means a few blokes in the Synod pushing papers across a desk, or an autocratic episcopal figure throwing his weight around, or a growing army of fundamentalists declaiming against life in general or the communion of saints or the sacraments or the love of good, Christian people. Perhaps more acutely than the rest of us, this woman has experienced the symbol of ‘church’ as both destructive and creative, cruel and kind, excluding and embracing. Many of the definitions of church outlined above she can’t bear, but others she loves and holds, knowing that at a deeper level they hold her.

So where do we stand when it comes to that ambivalent word ‘church’? Well, I suppose in the end I locate myself both with and against the church, depending entirely on how you define it (and, in future, I intend to follow the example of my student). In a real and deep sense, I’m wholeheartedly with the church: the church not as a society of saints but a school for sinners (a dispute which was eventually resolved in a sensible manner by the early church). I stand with the church as one who is, like others (to use Martin Luther’s famous phrase), *justus et peccator*, justified and sinful. At the same time, I oppose those supposed defenders of the church who can’t admit the tension, who want the church to be a narrow, inhospitable place that squeezes the life out of everyone who’s not a hero, who think they can move from *peccator* to *justus* in one ecclesiastical leap. But if ‘church’ means the communion of saints and the sacraments and the rest of us on earth struggling with the plenitude yet unfinality of it all, I’m with that church all the way, sinful and blissful as it is. ■

**Dorothy Lee** is Professor of New Testament at the Uniting Church Theological Hall, Melbourne.

## T

THIS MONTH’S CROP OF JOURNAL ARTICLES were as rich and varied as any month’s: they dealt with interpretation of scripture, the nature of God, church structures, moral problems and, on a more earthy level, with quarrels about the use of church graveyards.

But my reading was distracted. The events of East Timor have hung over any reading these months. In particular, they raised the perennial question we face in any theological reading and reflection, namely, how to discern the value of what we read. With characteristic bluntness, Ernest Hemingway once spoke of the need for a bullshit detector to sift out falsity and triviality. The need for such an instrument in theology is sometimes easy to evade, but what happened in East Timor reminds us that theology is about large questions of life and death. It is therefore intolerable to treat trivial questions seriously or handle serious questions trivially. What might reasonably guarantee seriousness and genuineness in Christian theology?

Many instruments are advertised at the theological market, each promising reliable performance. The doctrinal tradition of the church is said to provide a sure test, whether this tradition is identified with Scripture, with the statements of Councils, with the theology of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, or with occasional Roman statements. Others appeal to a less defined Catholic sense that expresses faithful life within the church. Personal experience, too, clearly influences how we weigh what we read. Many advocate the test of discipleship, the following of Jesus Christ, to help us sift gold from dross. And others offer the values of Jesus Christ as presented in the Gospel stories as an adequate test.

It is desirable and easy enough to combine these various tests in theory. But it is more difficult to do so in practice. The claims of authority in doctrine are often made so unattractively that they discredit themselves. The life of the church is perceived as too problematic to be a standard of judgment. The values of Jesus Christ are blurred by historical questioning.

In times of disenchantment, individual experience easily becomes the decisive test of what God is like, of what Jesus Christ really meant and means, and of what the church should be. But if there is no countervailing force to individual experience, we shall come to sing different words to the same hymns, pray different versions of the same prayers, and fail to find common response to the tragedies of strangers in East Timor.

But tragedies often provide their own countervailing force. Fragmentation is met by a solidarity in which doctrine, the life of the church, the experience of the community, the story of Jesus Christ and the claim to follow him all come together. A recent Mass for East Timor was such an occasion. Over 2000 people were crammed into the Melbourne Cathedral—East Timorese and other Australians. The celebration was led by Bishop Hilton Deakin with the authority that comes from 20 years’ commitment to the East Timorese people and the justice they seek. Here, people of all backgrounds and grades of commitment to church found hospitality in a living church. The East Timor Mass suggested that the personal experience by which we may safely test what we read of God is the experience of a suffering people, and the experience of people in solidarity with them. An experience that is communal and self-forgetful provides a criterion for judgment.

But David Dymond (*Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, July 1999) reminds us that Christian life is lived, too, at more mundane levels. Church graveyards have generated English legislation for a thousand years. Tudor laws forbade handball, bowls, croquet, checkboard, backgammon, cards, logatting and, more desperately, games ‘hereafter to be invented’. Earlier, a group of clergy and laity were threatened with excommunication after disrupting worshippers by playing tennis against the church wall. After the Reformation, the Bishop of Lincoln comprehensively condemned ‘any playes, lords of misrule, sommer lords, morrisse dauncers, pedlers, bowlers, berewards, butchers, feastes, scooles, temporall courts or leets, lay juries, musters, or other profane usage in our church or churchyard.’

Christian experience, even in places of death, has clearly been diverse and finds its place. But among graveyards, Dili tests uniquely what we say about God. ■

**Andrew Hamilton sj** teaches at the United Faculty of Theology, Melbourne.



## Morris West 1916–1999



**M**ORRIS WEST revisited his past last year. He went back to the Strathfield (NSW) campus of the Australian Catholic University, a site he had left 58 years earlier, when it was the training college for Australia's Christian Brothers.

He had entered those gates at 13 and exited them at the age of 24 with £40 in his pocket and a change of clothes in his suitcase. Now he was back again, doing a fundraiser for an institute for religion, literature and the arts—a typically generous way for Morris West to spend an afternoon. Naturally, his talk began by recalling those long ago days. Some of his audience would have been familiar with his account of his time in the brothers, for he had compacted the monastic experience into his first novel, *Moon in My Pocket* (1945), a book whose vanity may be risible but whose pain and humiliations are genuine. Before the appearance in 1996 of Gerard Windsor's account of the Jesuit novitiate, *Heaven Where the Bachelors Sit*, it was a unique insider's look at religious life in Australia, a necessary text for church historians.

Back at Strathfield last year, Morris West walked round the refurbished buildings, challenging old demons and recalling his past. Bitterness had evaporated, but his judgment of those years remained constant. Leaving the brothers in 1940, he had been like a man without a shadow: he had had to

find himself, to get a life. He joined the army and he got married—‘much too soon’, he said. The army made him a censor of the troop’s letters home, thereby giving the future novelist a sentimental education. After the war, he began writing for radio in Melbourne and he shared in the post-war Catholic cultural revival with people like Monsignor Percy Jones and Maslyn Williams.

A second marriage closed that world to him, so the Wests went to Italy, where they sniffed out the story of a priest working with street kids in Naples. From this came *Children of the Sun* (1957), a book which brought him to the attention of US newspaper syndicates, who employed him. Settling in Rome, they made their apartment into a crossroads for film people, diplomats, writers and churchmen. He wrote *The Devil's Advocate*, his first successful novel, in 1959, and followed it with *The Shoes of the Fisherman* in 1962, when it topped the US hardback fiction bestseller list. Their themes would become familiar to his readers: the tensions between idealism and power as institutional personalities defend their turf.

What readers liked about a West novel was its moral sense: he raised questions of ethics and explored them through his characters. They were contemporary too, set in a world readers knew from their newspapers and TV, if not from their own lives. Their prose was unambitious, which made them easy to translate, as he liked to boast, pointing to the 27 languages he has appeared in. There was another bonus: they could be made into films. So, trained as a teacher, Morris West never really abandoned the classroom. He went on teaching through his novels, his didacticism becoming so intense that at times all the characters seemed to speak with the single voice of Morris West. Critics joked that he wrote about popes because it allowed him to pontificate.

On a public platform he was a febrile, passionate speaker who electrified his audiences. At his 1994 Veech Lecture for the Catholic Institute of Sydney, for instance, he got so wound up that his spectacles misted over, he lost (and then found) his voice and occasionally punched his chest, apparently to keep his heartbeats even. The chairman, a priest, sat transfixed, his hand poised, he said later, to give absolution in case of sudden death. Yet when the rigorous ordeal was over, West

answered questions in a mild voice and then went out and ate a three-course dinner.

West's public addresses on the corruptions of power won him enemies in both church and state who punished him in their fashion. He saw the church as a family conversation rather than a papal monologue, claiming, he often said, as a member of the household, the right to speak in the assembly of the household. His favourite character in history was Giordano Bruno, the Dominican philosopher burnt at the stake in papal Rome 400 years ago. He wrote a play about him, *The Heretic*, and chose lines from that play for the Morris West plaque in the Writers' Walk at Circular Quay in Sydney. At the wake of Maslyn Williams, two months before his own death, he told a friend that he was writing hard to get something finished for the Bruno quatercentenary in February 2000.

—Edmund Campion

## One for all

*The fifth Ordination of  
Catholic Women Conference,  
Canberra, October.*

**T**HE NURSE CAUGHT the atmosphere exactly. On Saturday she'd gone AWOL from the conference to catch the celebrations at the opening of the new nurses' memorial—Canberra's belated but welcome acknowledgment of the vital contribution made by so many Australian women during this century's wars.

It was a great lunch, she told the afternoon OCW session, but not quite the contrast she'd expected. Somehow the celebration was all of a piece with the conference. Same rueful joy. Same sense of authentic purpose.

It was a professional woman's tribute. And an apt summary of the weekend's proceedings. Called 'Embracing the World: Women, Spirituality and Church', this was a positive conference, open—literally, to all comers, female and male, from many faiths—and open-ended but rigorous in its theology and analysis of the current role of women in the Christian tradition, particularly in the Catholic Church.

Several factors kept discussion positive. One was the presence of Elfriede Harth, spokeswoman for the European-based International Movement We Are Church



## Hot spots

(IMWAC). Colombian-born Harth, who lives now in France, has a commanding grasp of the current pastoral conditions in the European church (in France, for example, the average age of priests is 70, and 92 per cent of pastoral work is done by women). And she has a soft-voiced reasonableness that might disarm even Padraig P. McGuinness. But the situation she describes calls for action as well as quietly measured rationality. In Brazil, Harth notes, some parishes see their priests about once a year. Her conclusion: 'Either all the sacramental life of the church will die and we will become Protestant, with the lack of people to perform those sacraments, or they have to ordain those who are doing the job.'

Another positive factor, and a boost to the entire conference, was the recent publication of the Australian Bishops' Report on the Participation of Women in the Catholic Church in Australia (reviewed by Maryanne Conroy in October's *Eureka Street*). The Report served as a reference point throughout the weekend. There was much discussion of its translation and international dissemination. Elfriede Harth left for the Rome Forum of European Christians on the Monday with a copy in her bag.

The Report documents exhaustively the overwhelming desire of many Catholics, women and men, to work actively in the church. There is no shortage of labourers. It also documents the desire of a majority of Australian Catholics to continue an examination of the nature of priestly ministry and the question of women's participation in it.

The ironies were not lost on the OCW conference: the issue of women's ordination has now been raised most prominently in the document published by the Australian Catholic Bishops, and published with due regard for papal teaching on the matter.

But there was no time for savouring ironies. East Timor, and the consequent issues of justice and authentic church participation, turned the focus outwards from the beginning. And there it stayed.

The press release issued after the conference called for a full and forthright response from the Australian Bishops to the specifics of their Report. That was one outcome. The other—a kind of osmosis of informed activism—will be harder, but more exciting, to track.

—Morag Fraser

*Conference papers*, by Elfriede Hart, Marie Joyce, Veronica Brady, Kerry-Anne Cousins, Heather Thomson and Morag Fraser will soon be available on OCW's website at [www.netconnect.com.au/~ocw](http://www.netconnect.com.au/~ocw)

**D**ESPITE WHAT APPEARS to be an upsurge in genocidal activity in the past decade, life is becoming tougher for authoritarian regimes and fascists of all political stripes. And it's all because we live in an information age.

Take East Timor, for example. In accordance with time-honoured practice, those who were fomenting violence on the island after the referendum on independence also engineered the withdrawal of the foreign media, and cut the telecommunications links before they set to work in earnest. After all, if you are going to slaughter people and obliterate the infrastructure needed to operate their country, it's best not to have the eyes of the world looking over your shoulder. American senators and the World Bank are not keen on such sights.

Nowadays, however, it is hard to eliminate all sources of information. In an effort to gain whatever knowledge he could about what was going on in East Timor, a bright reporter from *The Australian* contacted Dr Fred Prata, a remote-sensing expert at CSIRO Atmospheric Research. 'Do you have any satellite images of East Timor?' the reporter asked. Although he couldn't provide anything useful at the time, the query started Fred Prata thinking.

It didn't take him long to begin working on data from the Along Track Scanning Radiometer, a sensitive instrument developed by researchers in Australia and the UK, and mounted on the ERS-2 satellite of the European Space Agency which passes over East Timor one night in three. The main purpose of the device is to measure sea surface temperatures for work on climate change. But it detects heat sources in general, and has been used to spot forest fires and pick up hot spots in volcanoes in the hope of predicting imminent eruptions.

Prata developed software which not only showed the fires on land, but also provided an estimate of their heat and area. He then applied his analysis to East Timor on 6 and 9 September, not sure whether anything would show up. But the fires were clearly there. And when he pulled out a map of the island, he found, to his distress, that many of them correlated with the major human settlements.

This evidence of the mayhem on East Timor, together with information on the extent of the fires and when they occurred, has now been posted on the web ([at www.easttimor.com](http://www.easttimor.com) or [at www.dar.csiro.au/info/general/East%20Timor/fires.htm](http://www.dar.csiro.au/info/general/East%20Timor/fires.htm)) where it is publicly available to anyone with an internet connection and a modem, including members of the World Bank and the students demonstrating in Jakarta against the actions of the Indonesian army.

Such freely available information of dark deeds can be a powerful weapon. Just ask Amnesty International. As all authoritarian regimes know, control of information is the first step to assuming overall control. Information from foreign radio and television, for example, helped bring down the Iron Curtain.

Now, via the internet, activists against repressive regimes have the capacity to go much further. There have been recent press reports, for instance, of groups threatening Indonesia with what the British science weekly, *New Scientist*, has dubbed 'hactivism'—a campaign of cyber-guerrilla warfare where hackers burrow into computers and wreak havoc, disrupting communications, draining bank accounts, and altering government and military documents.

Nobel Peace Prize laureate José Ramos-Horta claims that members of a hacker group contacted him, told him they were sympathetic to his cause, and showed him how they could access bank accounts in Indonesia. 'I've been categorically assured that not one life will be lost,' *New Scientist* quotes him as saying.

Archimedes finds such a statement disturbing—akin to the old idea that white-collar crime, such as embezzlement, causes less harm than armed robbery, because it does not involve overt violence.

But even if, like Archimedes, you find the ethics of 'hactivism' highly questionable, it is yet one more example of how the information revolution is beginning to blow up in the faces of those who seek power and control at any cost.

Tim Thwaites is a freelance science writer.

# In perspective

I FLEW INTO Indonesia on Sunday 5 September, the day after the results of the Timor Referendum were announced.

While waiting in transit in Jakarta airport for my flight to West Sumatra, I picked up a newspaper. Reports told of the reactions of Indonesian politicians to the referendum results—dismay, disappointment and bitterness. As I sat in the airport lounge, I felt that something momentous or even terrible was about to occur.

Over the next four days, I attended a conference at Andalas University in Padang, the bustling provincial capital of West Sumatra. During the meals and coffee breaks that punctuated the formal sessions, people gathered around the television to watch Indonesian coverage of the unfolding drama in East Timor. There were numerous talking heads and shots of meetings in Jakarta. However, whatever was taking place in Dili was anything but obvious.

By Tuesday 7 September, news filtered through of large demonstrations in Australia. Protesters had burnt the Indonesian flag. As I was the only Australian at the conference, Dutch and American colleagues began to approach me. An American resident in Jakarta said, 'Last night I saw your Foreign Minister on CNN. He said that Australia couldn't just send troops to East Timor because that would amount to an invasion. OK, the situation is

serious, but couldn't he find a more diplomatic way of making his point? This makes it sound like Australia is contemplating a war.'

That afternoon I caught a *delman*, one of the charming horse and cart affairs that serve Padang. Sitting in the two-wheeled buggy with a wizened old man, I asked about the local situation. 'It is OK here, not like Aceh,' he told me. 'Everything is safe.' The horse plodded along, the *delman* swayed in time and for a moment the troubles in East Timor were a universe away. Then, in the centre of Padang, I picked up a local paper. 'Warships Prepared for Combat in the Face of Australian Threat' said the headline. Dismayed, I retreated to my hotel room to watch CNN.

The next day, during a coffee break at the conference, delegates discussed the burning of the Indonesian flag and the 'aggressive' stance taken by Australia. A lecturer from the local university who had studied in Australia pointed out that Australia was afraid of Indonesia. He had heard of a novel that offered a fictionalised account of an Indonesian invasion. Another local academic said that Australian aid was calculated—Australia always expected something in return. As things were turning altogether too serious, I tried to lighten up the conversation with a joke. 'Well,' I said, 'there is an Australian saying: no such thing as a free lunch.' The tension broke, and they told me of a similar Indonesian maxim: 'Behind the rock, there is a shrimp.' In other words, in human affairs there is usually a hidden agenda.

After the conference, I took a trip with a friend into the Sumatran highlands. For some days we sat by the serene waters of Lake Maninjau. The tranquillity of the lake might have reduced us to reverie, but I had brought a shortwave radio.

I met another lecturer from Padang's university, who had also attended the conference. We sat talking by the lake, and inevitably our conversation turned to East Timor. He told me the Indonesian side: the army had entered East Timor, with the tacit support of the West, to counter the threat of communism. Now, after investing so much time, effort and valuable resources,



Indonesia reluctantly had to let go. Polite and reasonable, he also hinted at deeper feelings of bitterness, humiliation and defeat. I offered another version. Perhaps we could compare the conflict in East Timor with a dispute in a village. Here, when two parties have a quarrel, according to village customs known as *adat*, the case is taken to village elders for mediation. However, if one side refuses to negotiate and resorts to violence, then the conflict escalates and might never be resolved. The problem in East Timor, I suggested, was that the Indonesian military had used violence to resolve the issue. Many Timorese never accepted 'integration' with Indonesia. As a consequence, the conflict had never been solved. In this sense, the East Timor problem could be seen as yet another legacy left by Suharto—from a time when generals used military force to solve problems that should have been resolved through negotiation. He liked this way of looking at the problem, and we parted on friendly terms.

That night my friend and I retreated to a restaurant for dinner. The restaurant's occupants usually watched the soccer, but tonight we were tuned into a speech by President Habibie. He announced that Indonesia was giving in to international pressure and accepting an international

Trinity College  
THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL  
DISTANCE EDUCATION **On-line**

Trinity has been approved to offer courses of the Melbourne College of Divinity via the Internet.

## Theology for Graduates

- Graduate Diploma in Theology: 6 units over 3 years (part-time)
- From Feb, 2000: "Formative Christian Thinking"(two units forming a year-long subject)

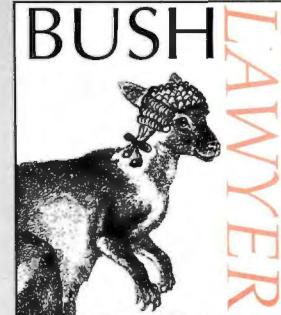
## Theology for Everyone

- Diploma in Ministry covers scripture, history, theology and applied studies.
- From Feb, 2000: "Politics, Scandal, Intrigue and God (1 and 2 Samuel)"  
and "Introduction to Ministry Formation".

## CONTACT

Anne-Marie Skegg (03) 9349 0127 [askegg@trinity.unimelb.edu.au](mailto:askegg@trinity.unimelb.edu.au)  
Trinity College Theological School, Royal Pde, Parkville, Vic, 3052  
[www.trinity.unimelb.edu.au/theolog](http://www.trinity.unimelb.edu.au/theolog)





# Getting justice in proportion

peacekeeping force. On at least two occasions, the camera panned over the ministers standing by the podium. General Wiranto, the head of the armed forces, looked extremely tense, as if he could hardly contain his feelings.

A few days later I flew into Jakarta. By now things had escalated. The Indonesian press reported the crisis, with pictures of East Timorese refugees. But while the international press told a story of organised killing and forced evacuations, the Indonesian press focused more on the role of Australia. The newspapers showed photos of a flotilla of Australian ships heading to East Timor. In Indonesia, the story shifted from one of human rights abuses committed by military-trained militias out of control to one of Australian 'aggression' and the affront to Indonesia's dignity.

From an Indonesian perspective, Australia's interest in East Timor is anything but neutral. ('Behind a rock, there is a shrimp.') Indonesians did not want Australia to take a leadership role in the peacekeeping force. 'If Australia wants to guard its relations with Indonesia,' one friend said, 'why can't it let someone else take the leadership role?' Other friends speculated about why Australia was 'taking over' East Timor—was it the oil or were there uranium deposits, or did the US want to open a base in East Timor?

While catching up with friends, I found myself engaged in continual conversations about East Timor. A senior official in a state ministry talked of the crisis at great length. When we met she gave me a news clipping. The headline read: 'Terror Towards Indonesian Citizens in Australia'. The story told of the great pressures applied to Indonesian students. For example, the story reported that at Sydney's University of Technology one student experienced the humiliation of being refused entry into a lift because he was Indonesian. When another Indonesian student entered a bus, the driver asked if he was from Indonesia. When he said he was, the driver then told him to get off. Australia might call itself a champion of human rights, but Australian behaviour fell well short of ideal, the article suggested.

Refracted through local news reports, the statements of Australian politicians were seen as insensitive and even arrogant. When Indonesia cancelled the security pact with Australia, it was reported that John Howard had suggested that Australia expected this to occur, and that the treaty had no substance in any case. Howard's

**I**N MY LAST COLUMN, I made a preliminary skirmish into the thorny territory of Aboriginal crime rates and the over-representation of Aboriginal people in our jails. My general conclusion was in line with that of the Australian Institute of Criminology: 'the principal causal factor of Indigenous over-representation in prison is the generally low status of the Indigenous community in Australia, both in socio-economic terms and in terms of patterns of discrimination.'

This is, of course, unsatisfactorily general. Some might even regard it as stating nothing but the 'bleeding obvious'. I want to take the discussion in this column beyond mere hand-wringing.

From the redneck law-and-order carry-on, you'd think most crimes west of the Dividing Range are committed by bad (black) individuals victimising innocent (white) communities. Accordingly, the answer is to become more punitive, to adopt zero tolerance policy towards crime.

Crime in rural Australia is, of course, a much more complex phenomenon than this. One of the least-known (or least-discussed) facts behind the debate about Aboriginal crime rates is that the victims of the most serious crimes committed by Aborigines, particularly crimes of violence, are predominantly Aboriginal themselves. (And Aborigines would argue that the police have always taken a zero-tolerance attitude towards them anyway.)

While the redneck lobby's diagnoses and prescriptions can be discounted on the basis that they are (consciously or unconsciously) racist, on the Left there is a tendency to avoid unpleasant facts concerning Aboriginal crime rates, probably because acknowledging that the problem is serious may provide aid and comfort to the enemy. It is much easier, for example, to suggest that judges and magistrates be 're-educated' so as to be more sensitive to Aboriginal history, culture and aspirations than, say, to address the issue of wife-bashing by Aboriginal men.

Men who bash the women closest to them are not, by and large, evil insensitive psychopaths. They are men who break under pressure and explode. To say this is in no way to blame the victims, nor to excuse the crimes these men commit. But we must ask

the questions: What is the source of this pressure? How can we relieve it?

We know from Australian and overseas research that serious problems of violence and petty crime are often associated with serious social problems, in particular unemployment and wide income inequalities. This is not to suggest that poor people are bad or that poverty, of itself, is directly related to criminal conduct. Nonetheless, there is a link between crime and poverty—two thirds of the imprisoned population are unemployed at the time of their arrests and only about 15 per cent of prisoners have completed school.

According to the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC), Aboriginal people are imprisoned at about 14 times the rate of non-Indigenous people. But the unemployed (Indigenous and otherwise) are imprisoned at a rate more than double that rate. The AIC concludes from this that 'the effect of being unemployed is over twice the effect of being Indigenous. As Indigenous people have a much greater chance of being unemployed, the potential for reducing Indigenous imprisonment by addressing unemployment and its causes is considerable.'

The AIC draws similar conclusions concerning education. An Aborigine who fails to complete secondary education is 130 times more likely to go to jail than a non-Indigenous person who finishes high school.

While the AIC thinks that criminal justice could undoubtedly lift its game concerning Aborigines, 'it is the social and economic policies which are far more likely to be effective in reducing disparities in rates of imprisonment'.

Of course, we lawyers can't sit in our courthouses enjoying the purity of our discipline while outside the community leaders, social workers, priests, teachers and politicians go about the business of bringing the world to rights. The real challenge is to find ways of involving Aboriginal people more in the processes of courts, especially children's or youth courts, so that they feel that the processes are for them, and are theirs, not an alien imposition, and that the outcomes satisfy their needs for justice in their communities. ■

Séamus O'Shaughnessy is a country magistrate.

other statements seemed to rub salt into the wound. A few days later, the national daily, *Kompas*, reported that Howard saw Australia's leadership role in the peace-keeping force as strengthening Australia's role as a European people in an Asian region, positioning Australia to take 'special responsibility' for affairs in the region. The *Kompas* report suggested that Howard's statement smacked of white superiority. 'Wouldn't it be better,' an American friend suggested, 'if John Howard kept quiet for a few days?'

The implications of this crisis ran deep. Many Indonesians have long been dismayed by the behaviour of their military, but now they felt that their self respect as a nation was at stake. A newspaper editorial suggested that this was the greatest humiliation the country had faced since its foundation.

As one friend indicated, the affront to Indonesia's dignity could now be exploited for political purposes: to bring about the downfall of Habibie, to unify Indonesia around a common enemy (Australia), and to drive from the front page the scandals currently rocking the capital. Instead of

ruining the military's reputation, the crisis had rallied everyone around the flag. Many of those I spoke to were speculating about how Australian politicians were exploiting the crisis rather than asking how Indonesian politicians had used it. An article in the influential weekly, *Tempo*, argued that John Howard had 'played the East Timor card' as a political strategy, using humanitarian concern to 'win the hearts of the people'. Under this view, the ultimatum issued to Indonesia, and Australia's leading role in the peacekeeping force, were both designed to show that Australia was no longer afraid of Indonesia. *Kompas* carried a cartoon showing a kangaroo meeting a Garuda. The kangaroo had a set of papers in its pouch bearing the words 'self-interest' while the Garuda stood perplexed.

Few Indonesians seemed to comprehend the scale of human and physical devastation in East Timor. This lack of understanding presented a daily personal dilemma for me as an Australian: how would I answer the hostile questions of friends and strangers alike? I attempted it in different ways, with Indonesian friends also offering suggestions. One friend came from Aceh. He has often

faced the hostility of Javanese slighted by the separatist movement in his home province. Finally, to avoid arguments, he had found it better to tell people that he was from another part of Indonesia. He suggested I might tell people I was from Switzerland. A former colleague told me of a meeting of people from the strife-torn islands of Maluku. In the past, he said, Muslim and Christian neighbours had lived there in peace. Then for political expedience certain parties had exploited communal differences, and now violence had replaced neighbourliness. While the little people died, those at the top exploited differences for their own ends. 'So, look,' he said, 'we are old friends. Why should we fall out if those at the top are exploiting this conflict for political purposes?'

—John F. McCarthy

## Coming in

ONE OF THE GREAT GIFTS is the invitation people offer us to enter into their lives: birthday parties, conversations over coffee, passing words. One of my sisters once told



me that when she feels that she has run out of steam she decides to live the day simply receiving.

Yesterday I was receiving. A friend came to talk about her life. She can't talk freely with anyone else. She has done a serious crime and her lawyer advised her to speak with no-one—counsellors, therapists, even her family—because whatever she says can be used against her. As you can imagine, there is a whole story that this woman needs to tell—about what led to her crime. She has had to put the lid on a cauldron inside her. Last week, when she saw that the list of names the police had interviewed included her children, she started to think of suicide.

Her case will be heard, at the earliest, in over two years' time. One of her parole conditions was that she do art therapy. Her free drawings touched into feelings so strong that they threatened to whoosh her away, so she had to back off. She couldn't talk with the therapist.

Night time is the hardest. Night time and sleeping. Nearby is a house called 'A Woman's Place', which provides a space for women such as my friend. She came there because she could no longer live in her home. For weeks she didn't speak with anyone. But they accepted her. She walked and walked. Slowly she began to return a greeting.

She made friends with one of the women there and it was this woman who travelled with her on the train to the court hearing and sat all day in the courtroom and led her out the back door afterwards, shielding her from the cameras. It is this woman she now meets every Friday for coffee. My friend is an avid reader and spends many hours each day in public libraries, keeping at bay the unnamed forces that menace her peace of mind. Listening to her, I praised God for public libraries, for women who are staunch.

Last night I went to a party, two parties really, a 70th birthday and a 60th birthday. I sat with Divina, who was proudly wearing a tartan Highlands cap that her friend, Sister Margaret Spencer, had brought back from Scotland for her. Divina, with her bright red hair, smudged bright lipstick, incredible vitality and amazing memory for details about the life of the First World War air ace, the Red Baron. Divina, who was once David. Divina, who proudly tells me about the time two years ago when she handed Sister Margaret the last two bottles of port that she had touched. Divina, who wasn't sure if Sister Margaret would bring back a rat trap or a cap for her. Divina, who is a volunteer

for Sydney City Mission, who visits people living at home with AIDS and shops for them.

And then there were the speeches. From Rupert, whose daughter Cathie, a hyperactive mountain of a woman, must surely have tested him over the years. Rupert spoke gently and lovingly about community. And from Brian, who was at home among this gathering of humanity and dogs, blowing out 60 candles on the huge cake with the help of a young Aboriginal boy, unwrapping the huge present—a stereo—and celebrating. After 60 years he was celebrating. He thanked God for being the skinny kid who missed out on the footy teams that he had longed to be in, for his year-long depression and breakdown at university. He was at home here because through these experiences he could feel and love and receive love from these people.

In our kitchen we had two new volunteers last Saturday, Gabby and Isaac. Isaac works with his family's publishing company and Gabby is studying commerce at university. It was a pretty quiet day for the kitchen. Usually hundreds come for lunch, but this was the first Saturday we had opened for a month. There had been so many people using the toilets for drugs and just so many people coming that we closed for a while. Gabby and Isaac were willing and helpful. They didn't get to sit with the people, preferring to stay behind the counter. It's a risk to step into the dining room and pull up a chair. I'm hoping they will take it in the months to come.

—Steve Sinn sj

*This month's contributors:* Edmund Campion is an emeritus professor of the Catholic Institute of Sydney; Morag Fraser is editor of *Eureka Street*; Steve Sinn sj is parish priest at Kings Cross/Elizabeth Bay, NSW; John F. McCarthy is a researcher at the Asia Research Centre, Murdoch University, Western Australia.

## New Titles

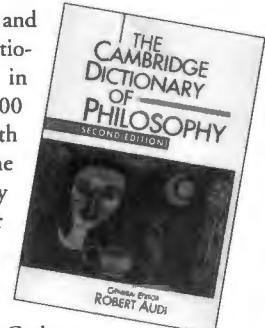
### The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy Second Edition

Edited by ROBERT AUDI

This is the most authoritative and comprehensive one-volume dictionary of philosophy available in English. It contains over 4,000 entries, which range in length from 100 to 4,000 words. The Dictionary has been written by an international team of over 350 experts.

'This is easily the best one volume reference tool on philosophy that I have seen.' Graham Nerlich *The Australasian Journal of Philosophy*

November 1999 984 pages  
0 521 63136 X Hb \$135.00 0 521 63722 8 Pb \$49.95



### The Cambridge Guide to Women's Writing in English

Edited by LORNA SAGE with advisory editors: GERMAINE GREER AND ELAINE SHOWALTER

'This is an admirable collection, put together by an editor who knows so much about women's writing, from different times, and from all over the world. There are all kinds of surprises and delights here. A book for browsing through, a bedside book.' Doris Lessing

'There are few books that one can say, on oath, that this has not been done before but as there has been, thus far, only one Lorna Sage, nothing as learned, as witty and wise as her *Guide to Women's Writing* has appeared before the new millennium.' Gore Vidal

November 1999 700 pages 100 line drawings  
0 521 49525 3 Hb \$75.00 0 521 66813 1 Pb \$39.95

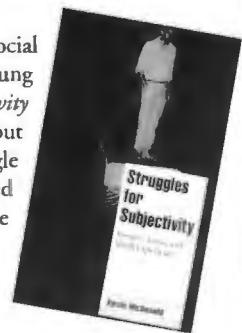
### Struggles for Subjectivity

#### Identity, Action and Youth Experience

KEVIN McDONALD

This book examines the urgent social and cultural questions faced by young people today. *Struggles for Subjectivity* is not only about young people, but explores forms of crisis and struggle increasingly evident in advanced societies at the beginning of the millennium.

November 1999 240 pages  
0 521 66279 6 Hb \$90.00  
0 521 66446 2 Pb \$34.95



 CAMBRIDGE  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

10 Stamford Road, Oakleigh, 3166

# Return to Dili

EARLY ON A Sunday morning in late September, Dili's marketplace was deserted. I had last seen it six months before, bustling with people buying and selling vegetables and other odds and ends.

LOOKING AT THE PILES of twisted metal and a layer of ash that covered the entire area, I found it hard to imagine that here, during the few moments of cool before the heat settles, there should be the organised chaos of traders setting up their stalls. If it hadn't been on the corner of a roundabout that has an undisturbed monument to the Republic of Indonesia at its centre, and if the old archway hadn't still been there—blackened from the flames but standing proudly—I would not have recognised it.

It wasn't entirely deserted though. Two boys, separate from each other, were

picking their way through the rubble in the desultory way children do. One picked up a rock and threw it at a sheet of corrugated iron, making a clatter that was quickly smothered by the silence; the other stopped to pick up a long wood splinter that he hit against some bricks until it broke. I wondered what they were thinking and what they had seen.

Elsewhere, the capital that had been levelled in the two weeks after the overwhelming vote for independence was showing signs of lifting itself up. About half the city's population of 120,000 had returned to rebuild, along with some

people from other parts of the territory who had pitched tents and humpies at places along the foreshore, in the soccer stadium and elsewhere. Many were washed and dressed in their Sunday best, taking a break from carting their possessions and foraged bits of corrugated iron along the streets. Disregarding its destruction, people were filing through the gates of the Bishop's residence for mass. Dom Carlos had yet to return, but two Portuguese Jesuit Fathers, who had been evacuated to the seminary compound in Dare some 10 kilometres from Dili, would celebrate the Eucharist this day.





Marketplace, Dili, October. Now being rebuilt with Interfet assistance.

Dili itself seems secure now—people are walking around freely, posters of Xanana Gusmao are wrapped around trees in front yards and the flags of a free East Timor are raised. But even here, where the Interfet force has its base and the UN and some 20 to 25 International NGOs are making their first tentative attempts at reconstruction, there are periodic reminders of the devastation of early September.

A fire was started in a dump near the airport the day after Interfet had its first real engagement with militia in the now-infamous town of Suai. Drums full of fuel

burned fiercely and thick black clouds spewed out for all to see. A week prior to this, the charred remains of up to 13 people were found in the back of a burnt-out pick-up and media reports suggested that it had been lit to destroy evidence

On the same day, the last remaining pole keeping the mobile phone network alive in Dili was shut down. At the time some of the remaining 1500 or so TNI forces were in control of the communications centre.

In other parts of the island, people are less safe and food and medical aid are in

very short supply. In mid-October, a handful of daring (and in some cases foolhardy) NGO workers were taking convoys of aid to pockets of the Southern and Western regions, where the militia were still very much active. From the planes flying between Darwin and Dili on the Sunday prior to the Suai engagement, you could see a long and dark cloud trailing from a clump of buildings in the vicinity of the town of Viqueque in the south-east.

This, though, could be the militias' last hurrah inside East Timor for some time. There are reports, from Interfet

sources, of militia leaving East Timor for the safety of the neighbouring province as 3000 troops were being put in place to patrol the border. As the early altercations between Australian troops and militia show, it will be here that pro-Indonesian forces will make their stand—if that is what they intend to do. The bizarre shooting exchange launched by an Indonesian police patrol, equipped with a superseded map from Dutch times, on a group of Australian soldiers on patrol, finally

exploded the myth of TNI co-operation with Interfet.

The timing of these border incidents seems to fit into an already established pattern of Indonesian military elements frustrating the undertakings of the civil administration. Not only was Indonesia's new parliament set to consider the results of August's popular consultation some time between 10 October and early November, but there were also rumours of a high-level breakthrough on the issue of voluntary repatriation from West

Timor. The first clash between Interfet and Republic of Indonesia (RI) forces followed on the heels of the announcement by UNHCR representatives in Dili, that Jakarta had finally undertaken to guarantee safe return.

The vote by the MPR (National Assembly of Indonesia) was regarded as a formality, but its ramifications are not so easily predicted. Kofi Annan declared the hand of the UN by making a statement prior to the Indonesian parliamentary decision that after the approval it would be looking to administer East Timor for up to three years.

This might have been a political gambit by the Secretary-General but, nonetheless, it does reflect serious needs. What has been done to East Timor and its people by the Indonesian military would make the most committed pacifist spit fire. Up to two thirds of the population were displaced in September, many of them herded like cattle on to trucks and boats bound for West Timor. Their homes were torched. They were intimidated in Kupang, pushed into opting for resettlement in Indonesia. In Atambua, young men and suspected pro-independence activists were separated out. One source in the Atambua Diocese made the painfully wry observation that when they were taken away, 'it was not to be given a fair trial in a public court—they were being murdered'.

**W**HAT MOCKED and insulted this pain was the sight of TNI troops leaving, prior to the arrival of the first Interfet forces, with television sets and video recorders piled on to their boats. Students of Indonesian politics (in plentiful supply in East Timor now) explain this as springing from an extreme Indonesian chauvinism which saw the Republic as East Timor's provider and the people's rejection of the autonomy proposal as gross ingratitude. Since East Timor saw fit to reject their benevolence, then the soldiers could take everything that Indonesia had given and could burn their barracks behind them. Ali Alatas' description of East Timor as 'the pebble in our shoe' springs to mind.

Spite is one of the many theories put forward to explain why the intelligence sections of the military fostered the militia and directed their fire. Another



Above: Dili soccer stadium, now a tent city.

Below: Jubilation amid devastation—one Dili returnee.



is that this was a lesson for the other would-be-breakaway provinces on how costly it is to leave Indonesia. One could also guess that a proxy civil war would allow a claim for 20 per cent of East Timor, since 20 per cent of voters opted to stay with the Republic. Further speculation has it that a plan was hatched to depopulate East Timor of as many independence supporters as possible, before challenging the validity of the vote so that a new referendum could deliver a 'better' result. Then there is all the land that Suharto and key army generals own—what happens to that? Finally, there is the theory of choice among Indonesia's growing band of cynics: that Suharto is rupturing the Republic along its fault lines to draw attention away from the way he amassed his fortune.

Trying to make sense of current events in Indonesia is like putting together a model airplane blindfolded and without glue. However, what is apparent is that the ferocity of early September and the scope of TNI involvement (with eight warships ready only days after the poll announcement, to take the displaced away) caught many by surprise. In a fax sent the day he was shot dead outside his Dili home on 11 September, the Director of the Jesuit Refugee Service in East Timor, Karl Albrecht SJ, wrote that everyone knew there would be trouble, but 'not this bad'. (Unamet's civpol section has begun investigating the circumstances of his killing.) The 'few rogue officers' postulation is now widely regarded as false.

Even though only a few weeks have passed, East Timor itself has ceased to be the crucial humanitarian issue. Yes, there are the displaced people returning, and remaining pockets of militia being cleared out, and the international community making its plans for reconstruction, but it is the exodus to West Timor and other islands in the archipelago that promises the real horror. The reports of heads on sticks lining the road leading to West Timor were fanciful, as, by inference, were questions asked in the Australian press about the missing 500,000 (they were in the hills or were some of East Timor's 150,000 transmigrants who decided to leave for good). Nevertheless, it will be shown that TNI chief, General Wiranto's 'guess' at a death toll of less than 100 from the fighting



Bishop Belo's house in Dili, after the post-referendum destruction.

after 4 September is a gross underestimation. Maybe the number of deaths caused by the combined effects of the militia rampage will eventually be measured in the tens of thousands.

What is certain, though, is that many lives were ended in the process of leaving the East and arriving in the West, and

well away from the eyes of the world. At the time of writing, in early October, church sources were still reporting militia killings in West Timor's Belu regency, of which Atambua is the capital.

A Salesian Father from the Philippines, who fled East Timor along with most of the people near his community

in the Dili suburb of Comoro, returned the day prior to the first flights of returnees from West Timor's capital Kupang, having left behind him a death threat and terrified refugees.

'There is constant intimidation and propaganda to dissuade people from returning,' he said in Dili.

'It is not just the militia, but the media and government sources as well. Everywhere there are stories of Interfet troops butchering people and East Timor consumed by war.'

'They are scared enough by now I would have thought.'

Well before the arrival of the multi-national force, Indonesia's populist press began decrying UN meddling and in particular the expansionism of Australia—the 'real reason' for the Howard Government's interventionist policy. An issue of a conservative current affairs magazine was published in early September with an article on the new imperialism of the Australian Government. The cover graphic showed what looked like a bowie knife plunged into a splintering map of East Timor, and on its handle was the Australian flag.

The protests against the UN and Australia were much reported also, but rarely revealed for the lacklustre and staged affairs that they were. At one such demonstration outside the UN building in Jakarta, young firebrands arrived on buses to meet an already prepared line of riot police with banners and rehearsed chants. There could not have been more than 250 of them, and as I walked through the middle of the group I was given a leaflet screaming at the international community's indecency by a girl smiling as though she were handing out McDonald's meal vouchers.

Much more genuine was the outrage of students at the extension of the military's security powers. This extension was enacted for East Timor after General Wiranto rode roughshod over President Habibie. It brought thousands of students on to the streets, where genuine bullets were fired at them.

**I**N AUSTRALIA, as everywhere else perhaps, the popular conception of a 'hard man' is someone who is aggressive, strong and intimidating; if he has a scowl like Bruce Willis then all the better. In East Timor there are plenty of 'hard' men

and women. People of endurance. But they show it by taking time out from carrying food or pushing bits of wood on carts to smile and greet you happily. That people are still able to be as friendly and courteous as they are after what has happened, and after the promises made by Unamet before the vote that they would protect the people, is astounding. Other people would have broken.

But in time the impact, not only of the recent violence but of the division of community over 25 years, will show itself. Many East Timorese are like Francis, a pro-independence activist who currently works for one of the media organisations camped in the bunker of Dili's Hotel Turismo. Some of his family are dead, some he thinks are in the camps in Kupang, and others, who were living in the East Timor enclave of Ambeno, he has no idea about. Now he says he works for the journalists, so he can tell the people when they go around the island that it is now safe for them to come out of hiding and receive the aid that follows behind the soldiers. How will he feel about himself and his family when that job is done?

The role of the church in the rebuilding of lives will be as fundamental as the physical repair of East Timor itself. One of the consequences of the attacks on church people has been to shake the people's confidence in the one institution that offered them respite from the Indonesian occupation. The fact that only a quarter of East Timor was Catholic in 1975 yet now nearly 90 per cent are followers is indicative of the physical and spiritual sanctuary the church gave the people. The massacre of priests and refugees in the church in Suai, the destruction of Bishop Belo's residence, and the death of Fr Albrecht, who courageously continued to deliver what little rice he had left to people hiding from the militia onslaught around Dili, meant that, for a time, there was nowhere to hide.

Bishop Carlos Belo will now be the focus of church efforts to help the people. In some ways it was appropriate that he was not witness to most of the mass destruction after he was bundled across the Timor Sea into Darwin by Australian Government agents. Since his appointment in 1983, he had always spoken of reconciliation and was strong in his belief that a solution could be found

through dialogue. His disapproval of the continuing armed struggle waged by Falintil, and his entreaties to Fretilin and CNRT (National Council of Timorese Resistance) leaders to end the guerrilla war, were constant. His recognition of the legitimacy of the militia, signified by a peace accord he co-sponsored with General Wiranto before the vote, was an attempt to bring them into such dialogue. But his burnt-out home is testimony to the failure of this policy.

**B**ELO WILL BE LOOKED to now to take the lead in a situation very different from the one that he left. On the day of his return to East Timor his legendary irascible nature was sharpened to a point. Crowding journalists who annoyed him were verbally slapped away and unwanted visitors were sent packing. He did have time to say, however, that Indonesia should now mind its own business. His reactions were hardly surprising, given what was left of his city.

The political agenda he had to be mindful of in the past was one set by Jakarta. Now it looks as though he will have to be conscious of what the UN and CNRT say and do. But he has the help of the dynamic and forthright Bishop Basilio Nascimento of Baucau—his Diocese is the heartland of East Timor's pro-independence push—who has already involved himself with gusto in the reconstruction effort.

The two bishops preside over an institution that has taken the impact as much as the people themselves. In Dili this was evoked by parishioners demonstrating solidarity with their church by laying 100 rupiah notes at the foot of the damaged statue of the Virgin in one of the bay windows in Belo's burnt home. This two-cent offering is also a call for help.

Whether the help can be delivered depends on the international community, and in particular the Australian Government, holding its nerve. It was obvious from the start that the border with West Timor would eventually become a major source of conflict. One gets the sense, now, that the die has been cast.

**Jon Greenaway** is *Eureka Street's* South East Asia correspondent.



POLITICS

ANTHONY HAM

# The politics of peacemaking

Rarely has there been a more compelling argument for international intervention in support of democracy than the situation in East Timor. Rarely has the United States been so conspicuously absent from the forefront of the debate or from attempts at a resolution.

**T**HE US RELUCTANCE to commit troops to a peacekeeping force in East Timor has puzzled many analysts, particularly given the scale of recent US involvement in Kosovo and Iraq. But when viewed within its historical context, the reluctance is wholly consistent with some fundamental, if unofficial, precepts of American military engagements overseas.

Immediately following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the US Government pronounced the dawning of a new age, a New World Order. In official parlance, this New World Order was hailed as the triumph of the international community

(as represented by the United Nations) over the narrow sectional interests of individual member states and over the frozen alliances of the Cold War. In reality, the New World Order opened the way for the US to dominate international relations. Despite the denials made by US Secretary for Defence William Cohen, during his recent visit to Australia, this New World Order consists of America's acting as the world's policeman and self-appointed arbiter of international just causes. The US now selects, with the discrimination of self-interest, the conflicts in which it fights.

Within this post-Cold War environment, the protection or restoration of democracy has not been the primary principle determining US commitment to areas of conflict. Rather, the decision to deploy US troops has been based on a carefully calculated assessment of US interests. In this context, the American reluctance to engage in the debate over military intervention in East Timor is entirely consistent with past practice. UN ballot or no UN ballot, the issue of East Timor was one in which no US interests were at stake, or at least none which would justify risking American

relationships, lives and economic interests throughout the Asian region. There could, therefore, never realistically have been any question of US involvement in East Timor.

**I**N ADDITION, East Timor clearly lacked two other necessary ingredients for US involvement: a demonised leader and the scope for involvement without committing on-ground troops.

Elsewhere there is no shortage of examples of the US propensity for demonising foreign leaders, presenting them as pariahs and enemies of the international community—Colonel Gaddafi in Libya, President Saddam Hussein in Iraq and President Slobodan Milosevic in Serbia. Each has been outlawed by unilateral US decree, and each of the countries over which they rule suffered sustained military and economic action as a consequence.

This approach is classic Cold War strategy—the calculated designation of some as friends and some as foes. At the height of the Cold War, the US had a ready-made enemy in the Soviet Union. For friends, it sometimes courted politically sympathetic dictators, with little regard for their human rights record. President Mobutu Sese Seko, who bankrupted the former Zaire and ruled with rare cruelty, was one of the United States' most valued clients in Africa, having been installed by a CIA-backed coup which unseated an elected Soviet-aligned government. Chile is another case in point. So is Iraq, where Saddam Hussein was receiving American assistance and support before and after he had used chemical weapons on the Kurdish town of Halabja, and throughout the period when his government was perpetrating egregious human rights abuses on such a scale that its record was described by independent agencies as the worst in the world.

Later, when Saddam Hussein's Iraq became the enemy, the narrow aim of sanctions and air strikes was to remove Saddam from office. The aim was never democracy. As a US State Department official commented to an Iraqi opposition figure in the immediate aftermath of the

Gulf War: 'Who told you we want democracy in Iraq? It would offend our friends the Saudis.' (See Andrew Cockburn & Patrick Cockburn, *Out of the Ashes: The Resurrection of Saddam Hussein*, Harper Collins, New York, 1999, p49.)

US policy-makers continue to make monsters of perceived enemies and select allies who have scant regard for human rights. Examples abound of the continued propagation of enemy images by US policy-makers with the aim of feeding popular perceptions, of the picking of winners without regard for human rights concerns. If US intervention were truly about safeguarding democracy, then the elected government of Sierra Leone deserved international assistance. If US intervention were actually driven by the desire to pro-

mote the right to self-determination, then numerous causes (the Kurds in Turkey, the Tibetans among others) could demand urgent international intervention as of right. And if US intervention were about preventing genocide—as was claimed in Kosovo—then the people of Rwanda could rightly complain of neglect.

Cold War friends of the US were anointed not for their democratic credentials, but for their ideological stance and strategic significance. Little has changed—the new wave of international bad boys fill the vacuum left by the defeat of the Soviet 'evil empire'. Either friend or foe. One or the other, and no in between.

A long way from East Timor? Perhaps not quite as far as you might think.

Indonesia's President Suharto was an American (and Australian) hero, having overthrown the communist-leaning Sukarno. It did not matter that, under Suharto's deeply repressive rule, East Timor was in flames decades before UNAMET arrived, long before there was even talk of a referendum. Suharto may be gone, but Indonesia has not outgrown its usefulness as a friend, and remains an important economic player in the region, the Asian economic crisis

notwithstanding. Any military action against such a friend was, for the US, unthinkable—it had the potential for turning a valuable friend into a dangerous foe. There should be no surprises that President Clinton remained non-committal while East Timor burned.

In addition to this reluctance to alienate friends, US governments have, since Vietnam, been reluctant to commit ground troops without first ensuring a one-sided contest; hence the remote-control cruise missile strategy adopted in Kosovo and Iraq. In East Timor, there was never any talk of mounting air strikes to provide a solution to the violence, for to do so would be to bombard a 'friendly' army, and kill countless civilians in an attempt to neutralise the guerrillas occupying the same territory. The possibility of fighting a guerrilla war against the militias in East Timor would have been a radically different proposition from bombarding a conventional army from afar. Without air strikes, without first carving out a path of least resistance, the dangers faced by any multinational force would inevitably be increased, thereby multiplying the risk of American casualties in the name of a cause for which the US already had little stomach.

Hence the US prevarication. Hence the US reluctance to support Australia's building of the international coalition to enforce the UN referendum. And hence the unwillingness of the US to send troops to East Timor. With no compelling interests at stake in East Timor, the US showed little inclination for playing the policeman. With no pariahs to punish, the image-makers would have had little material with which to work in securing American popular support. And with the prospect of a messy campaign in the swamps and mountainous jungles of East Timor, where the difference between friend and foe is not readily apparent, US foreign policy-makers did what they have always done, Cold War or no Cold War—

they turned away and refused to become involved.

**T**HERE REMAINS ONE outstanding question: is it such a terrible thing that the United States of America has chosen to remain on the sidelines in East Timor? While the answer to that question is undoubtedly a complex one, a few sobering



lessons from recent American practice in the Middle East are instructive.

In 1990–91, the United States drew together an unprecedented international coalition of forces to expel the Iraqi army from Kuwait and restore peace in the Gulf region. That coalition has now all but evaporated, largely because subsequent manifestations of US foreign policy in the region have alienated one-time supporters throughout the Arab World.

The US Government's relentless pursuit of Saddam Hussein through the use of devastating sanctions and air strikes has fed the widespread perception throughout the region that the US is either blind, or callously indifferent, to the suffering of the Iraqi people. With Saddam Hussein still in power, it is the Iraqi people who have suffered, punished both by US policy and by Iraqi Government persecution. As a result, the destruction of Iraq has been accompanied by the concomitant destruction of any goodwill towards the US.

**F**URTHER SHADOWS were cast over the US role in peacekeeping and peacemaking operations by revelations, in early 1998, that the monitoring equipment installed by UN weapons inspectors had been used by the US Government to spy on the Iraqi leadership. In other words, the US used the cover provided by a UN-mandated peace mission to attempt the overthrow of the Iraqi Government. The final straw came when this ill-gotten intelligence was used to select targets for bombing raids during Operation Desert Fox in December 1998—an operation not sanctioned by the UN. The US Government protested its innocence. But few in the Arab World believed them any more.

Any latent illusions about the impartiality of the US were thereby destroyed. For a government which styled itself as a peacemaker in the region, such a monumental loss of credibility was dangerous.

The bitter harvest from this alienation came with the bombings of US embassies in Nairobi and Dar-es-Salaam in August 1998. Militant Islamic groups hostile to American intervention in the Middle East quickly claimed responsibility. The American response was similarly swift—yet another prominent display of fire-power in attacks on the base of Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan, and on what

was claimed to be a chemical weapons production plant in Sudan.

The case of the Sudanese factory perfectly illustrates why America is not trusted as an impartial peacemaker or peace-enforcer. American justifications, based on secret soil samples taken from outside the factory, that the facility was a chemical weapons production plant have since been cast into doubt—this factory was in fact built by the United Nations to manufacture medicines in an Arab country in desperate need of such resources. The World Health Organisation recently issued an urgent appeal for assistance in providing much-needed supplies of Chlorquin—once manufactured in the factory and hence affordable for Sudanese—to prevent an epidemic of malaria in Sudan.

In addition to these doubts, evidence of US hypocrisy began to surface, dealing the fatal blow to US peacemaking credentials. When the Chemical Weapons Treaty was signed, the US Senate agreed to its terms only after Senator Jesse Helms and his allies set strict conditions for US accession. These conditions included a right of veto over international inspections at suspect US sites and barring UN inspectors from taking soil or other types of samples from US chemical facilities out of the country. The US would not let itself be subjected to the same scrutiny which formed its rationale for bombing Sudan.

US attempts to make peace in the Middle East have been compromised, foundering on the duplicity of its pronouncements and on its devastating military interventions. Many in the region have become convinced that the US Government is not to be trusted.

These are important lessons for the operation of United Nations peace-keeping and peacemaking missions throughout the world. If US involvement invariably leads to the alienation of the local population, then missions such as the one in East Timor can probably do without it.

The Americans are not, and never were, going to Dili. On past practice, perhaps that is something for which the East Timorese should be thankful. ■

**Anthony Ham** is a Melbourne-based writer specialising in the culture and politics of the Middle East.

## MELBOURNE UNIVERSITY PRESS

### ROSA! ROSA! A Life of Rosa Praed, Novelist and Spiritualist

by PATRICIA CLARKE



Rosa Praed, a prolific novelist, was 'a most unusual woman'. Born into frontier Queensland in 1851, a time when settlers lived in isolation afraid of Aboriginal attacks, she was to spend her adult life in the literary, artistic and political circles of London. There she socialised with glittering public figures including Oscar Wilde and the Prince of Wales. Rosa's literary subjects were varied, and reflect many aspects of her life—her interest in women's rights, her own unhappy marriage, and her search for spiritual meaning.

Hardback \$39.95



### BESIDE THE SEASIDE Victorian Resorts in the Nineteenth Century

by ANDREA INGLIS

Generously illustrated with delightful colour photographs and postcards, this revealing historical study evokes the social life—its moral earnestness and social exclusiveness—of Victorian seaside resorts, particularly Lorne, Queenscliff and Sorrento.

Hardback \$34.95

[www.mup.com.au](http://www.mup.com.au)

# Fair go!

*A new report on Australian social disadvantage should make us look twice at the cherished belief that this is the land of the 'fair go'. Some pockets of Eastern Australia are now more like the land of the 'no go'.*

**Paddy McCorry** reviews a disturbing document that highlights entrenched disadvantage in Australia.

**Unequal in Life: The Distribution of Social Disadvantage in Victoria and New South Wales.**

A research report by Professor Tony Vinson for the Ignatius Centre for social policy and research.

ISBN 0 7334 0627 0

**U**

NEQUAL IN LIFE: *The Distribution of Social Disadvantage in Victoria and New South Wales* is an important piece of social research that challenges the comfortable image of Australia as a land of opportunity for all.

The report maps the distribution of disadvantage in Victoria and New South Wales, using a methodology that enables its author, Professor Tony Vinson, to provide a picture of 'cumulative disadvantage'. In 83 pages of description and analysis, tables, maps, diagrams, graphs and appendices, Vinson shows that residents of a number of areas in the two states are doing it hard—much harder than the rest of the community.

The report is a challenge to governments and their social policy planners to work strategically with community agencies and the residents of these areas to dismantle entrenched disadvantage.

Undertaken by the Melbourne-based Ignatius Centre (the research and policy arm of Jesuit Social Services), the *Unequal in Life* report demonstrates clearly that there is deep social disadvantage in many localities and neighbourhoods, and in some cases that this situation was identified more than 25 years ago. Because little has been done by the relevant authorities to alleviate the structural causes, the problem is now even more deeply entrenched.



Reports like these are not usually universally welcomed, and there have been various reactions to the report and its central finding. It has been welcomed by some groups and described as valid, thorough research which vindicates often-expressed concerns about directions in government welfare funding and notions of social justice. Other bodies have gone in for a variation on 'shoot the messenger', arguing that the report will only further stigmatise poor neighbourhoods and their residents, and that the localities should be disguised, or the report not released at all. There are also always those who can be depended upon to respond in terms similar to the *New Statesman* commentator (cited in the report) who took umbrage at the findings of one study into the relationship between mortality rates and socio-economic status: 'The poor have only themselves to blame: if they stopped smoking, drank less, ate up their greens,

went jogging and stayed married, the differences would disappear.'

The notion of the 'fair go' is an enduring part of Australian popular culture, but there are other, less positive cultural habits, including the well-worked tactic of blaming the victim. The report takes a strong ethical stance on the issue of blame. 'To "blame" the residents of areas for being disadvantaged is ill-informed and completely beside the point', says Tony Vinson. 'If any finger pointing is warranted, it should be directed at authorities which have engaged in flawed or negligent planning, or state and national decision-makers whose policies have had harmful consequences for disadvantaged communities.'

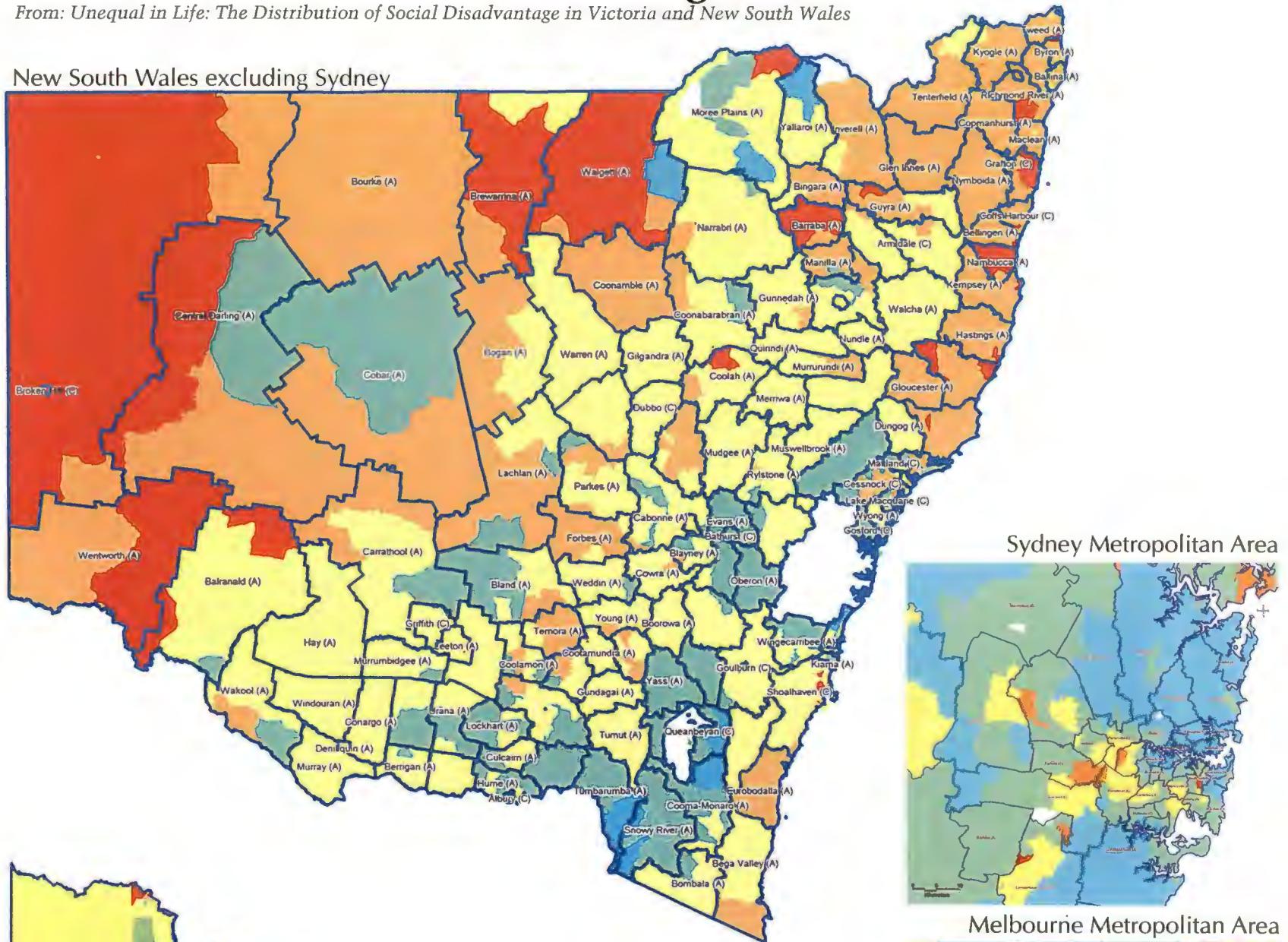
The progress of the research was not always plain sailing. A number of government departments and agencies provided generous support to the project, but not everyone approached was willing to help. Vinson notes that in some cases 'the controllers of data had yet to embrace the idea that it was not a personal possession'.

The report describes area social deprivation research, the choice of indicators and procedures used, and the findings. It concludes with a discussion of the issues identified. There are several appendices, including one which discusses the technical problems encountered during the project. There is also a substantial bibliography.

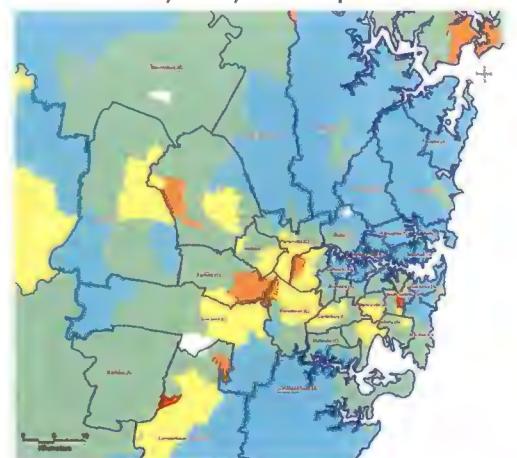
# Distribution of Social Disadvantage

From: *Unequal in Life: The Distribution of Social Disadvantage in Victoria and New South Wales*

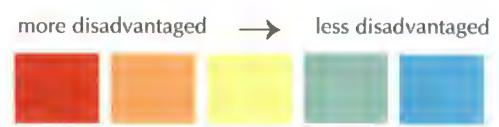
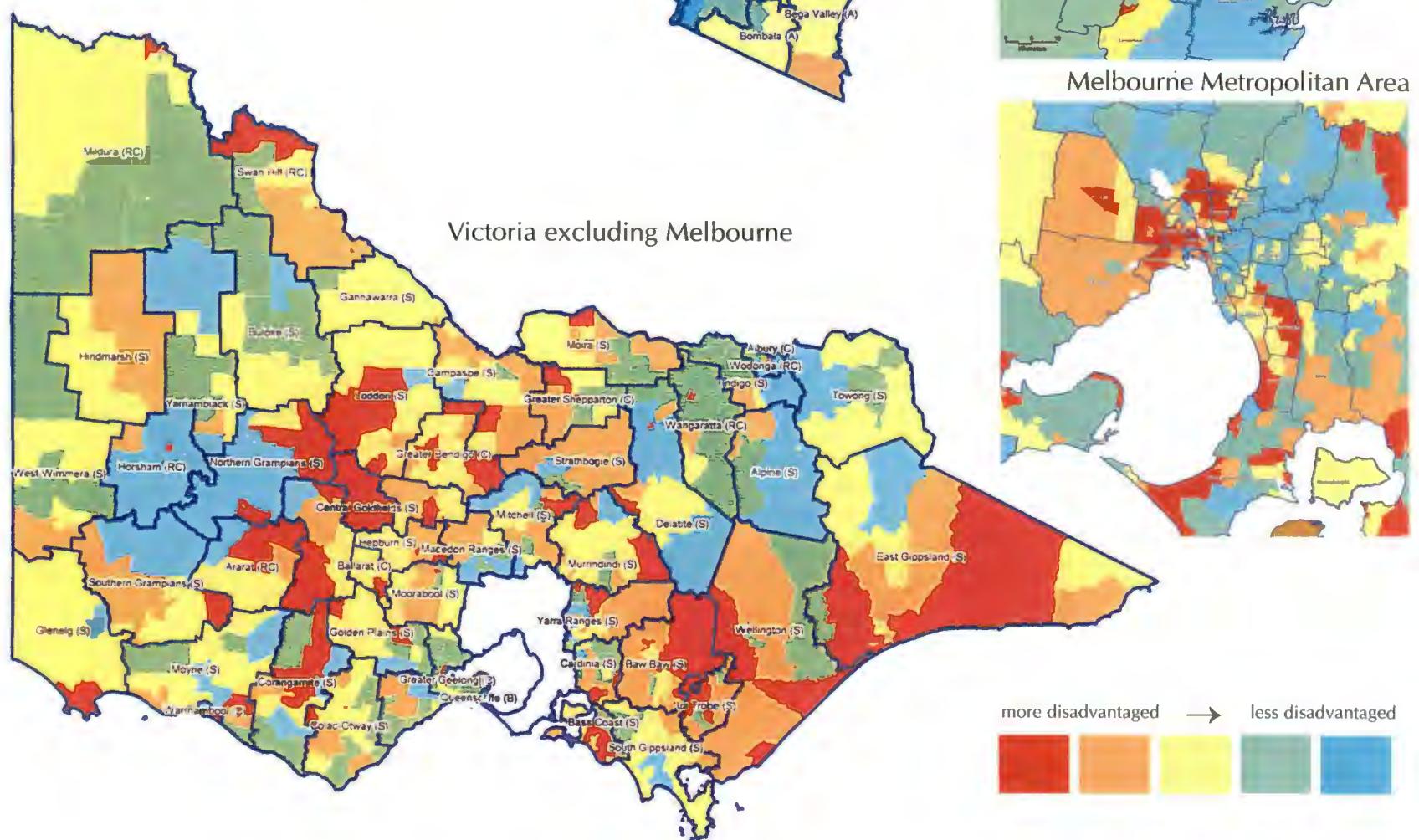
New South Wales excluding Sydney



Sydney Metropolitan Area



Melbourne Metropolitan Area



Area social deprivation research is just one of many tools which can be used in the study of society. It involves comparing geographic areas through the use of social and demographic data, to identify social inequalities and their impact on the various resident social groups. This type of research has been used to identify long-standing and often compounding inequalities among social groups in industrial societies like Australia. Vinson's report is in this particular research tradition. He uses a broad range of direct indicators of disadvantage, overlaying them to develop a picture of 'cumulative disadvantage'.

Vinson draws attention to the potential gains from such an approach: governments in particular can be made aware that some communities will continue to fall further behind unless special attention is paid to their needs. The detailed research can provide governments and their policy-makers with information about the key components of disadvantage, where strategic policies can best be directed, and where funds can best be spent.

**T**HE REPORT ALSO makes an argument for using such research results to help generate prevention strategies. The policing of youth crime is a case in point: here prevention is better than cure (and less costly). By identifying the relationship between broad disadvantage and crime, you are halfway to a prevention strategy—a better option than continuing to sink enormous sums of money into the criminal justice system.

It is clear what happens to communities at risk if action is not taken. Vinson himself co-authored a research report on a similar project in Newcastle over 25 years ago. When he suggested strategies for dealing with the serious disadvantage uncovered in that study, the official response was along the lines of, 'Don't worry, a freeway is going through that area and all the problems will be flushed away.' Vinson calls this 'the lavatorial response to social disadvantage', and a clear (if inadvertent) expression of deep contempt towards people living in adverse circumstances. *Unequal in Life's* findings for those same areas of Newcastle today make for melancholy reading—nothing much has changed. But neither can those in

authority claim ignorance as the excuse for this particular social policy failure.

Area social deprivation research has already produced a wealth of information for consideration by social policy planners and administrators. In the early 1970s, the Whitlam Government introduced a range of initiatives on urban and regional development, including the Australian Assistance Plan and the Social Welfare Commission. At the time there was a strong, almost fervent commitment to regional development and decentralisation as a key national planning strategy—prompting the joke that Albury-Wodonga, a centre earmarked for rapid development, was to be renamed 'Whitlamabad'.

The Whitlam Government's initiatives did, however, set a policy focus that encouraged broader public attention to urban and regional development, and though this policy focus may have been as shortlived as the Labor administration, significant research attention was given to area deprivation studies in Australia.



And of course, similar studies were being carried out overseas. Vinson discusses some of that research which is relevant to his project, as well as other methodologies for measuring area social deprivation, including five commonly used in the United Kingdom.

The indicators used in Vinson's project are:

- unemployment
- low income
- low birthweight
- child abuse
- left school before age 15
- emergency assistance
- psychiatric hospital admission
- court convictions
- child injuries
- mortality
- long-term unemployment
- unskilled workers
- court defendants.

These indicators are discussed at length, with reference to a range of studies relevant to each one.

This section has much to interest the general reader. For example, where Vinson discusses income as an indicator of disadvantage, he cites a recent piece of research in Britain which showed that as the economic circumstances of parents worsened, so did their children's reading abilities. This finding warrants further study, and also raises a question about current educational 'policy'. Governments might more profitably attend to unemployment and the manifold negative consequences of low income on families than focus on public education and the teaching profession when seeking the root cause of illiteracy in Australia.

An important section of Vinson's report is where he discusses the concepts of 'cumulative disadvantage' and 'milieu deprivation' in relation to the development and self-perpetuation of areas of concentrated poverty—the 'underclass phenomenon'. A diagram in the report represents how this process happens.

No diagram, however, can show the reality of the 'psycho-social risk factors' for people trapped in these circumstances. There is a wealth of research showing the damaging consequences of poverty—depression, hopelessness and fatalism.

Vinson acknowledges some difficulties experienced during his research, and some limitations. As noted before, not all 'controllers of data' were willing to provide assistance; some data was not available in postcode format and needed to be converted; and some data sources proved perhaps to be not extensive enough (e.g. low birth weight), or were only completed to an experimental stage within the timeframe of the study (e.g. mortality). And there may be other sources of data that remain inaccessible, for a range of reasons, but which could perhaps provide different results. There were also some differences between the indicators used in each of the two states, and the effects of this are noted in the report.

**T**HE FINDINGS OF the Ignatius Centre's report point to the existence of entrenched disadvantage in both urban and rural areas in both states. Vinson

to p28 ...

# Putting the figures together



Tony Vinson, Emeritus Professor, School of Social Work, University of New South Wales

*The most striking aspect of these results is that a high level of concentrated disadvantage was identified in the inner suburbs of Newcastle, including precisely some of those areas which were intended to be 'flushed away' 25 years ago.*

V

INSON'S OBJECTIVE was to determine a single factor score for each locality which would summarise its susceptibility to the range of problems under consideration. There were several steps in the process, from research and analysis of data through to testing of results against other models for verification.

First, each postcode was ranked according to the number of times it scored, per proportion of its population, on the chosen social indicators.

In Victoria these were: unemployment, low income, low birthweight, child abuse, left school before age 15, emergency assistance, psychiatric hospital admission, unskilled workers, court defendants, and child injuries.

And the results of this exercise? The study shows that a small number of postcode areas made up a large percentage of the locations which ranked highly on the social indicators used.

Only two of these seven post codes are in Melbourne, pointing to severe problems in pockets of rural Victoria.

In New South Wales, only nine indicators were used, as one chosen indicator (the mortality index) had not been completed in time. The indicators were unemployment, long-term unemployment, unskilled workers, left school before age 15, low income, child abuse, low birthweight, court convictions, and emergency assistance.

The most striking aspect of these results is that a high level of concentrated disadvantage was identified in the inner suburbs of Newcastle, including some of those areas which were intended to be 'flushed away' 25 years ago.

The second step was to determine if there was any significant degree of interconnectedness between the various indicators. The object was to identify a disadvantage factor that would 'arrange

postcodes in an array, like beads on a string, ranging from the area which is most generally vulnerable to the problems presented by [the] indicators, to the one which is least vulnerable.'

The statistical technique used (principal component analysis) identified a major factor which showed significant correlations when tested against all of the indicators, except for low birthweight. Each postcode's position on the 'string of beads' was then determined by weighting each of the ten indicators by a value which reflected that indicator's loading on the general disadvantage factor. The final score was the total weighted sum.

This technique proved that in both states there was a considerable overlap between those postcodes with the highest disadvantage factor and those which were previously identified as high-ranking on the indicators.

The report notes, however, that there are some marked variations. Some postcode areas which appeared in the Top 30 rankings did not score particularly highly on the disadvantage factor. Vinson believes this may be because high and low rankings on various indicators have had a 'cancelling-out effect'. There are also postcodes which had few appearances on the Top 30 rankings but rated high on the disadvantage factor—a result, perhaps, of the cumulative effect of a high number of indicator scores just below the Top 30 ratings.

In the third step, the 'disadvantage factor' scores were compared with results obtained by using similar existing measures used commonly by other researchers and widely accepted as valid. This was done to see whether the high factor scores would independently identify areas of concentrated disadvantage. Vinson chose the index of relative

social disadvantage, a methodology which uses Australian Bureau of Statistics census data, focusing on low income, low educational attainment and high unemployment. This comparison found a highly significant correlation between the two sets of results: 0.913 in New South Wales, and 0.828 in Victoria.

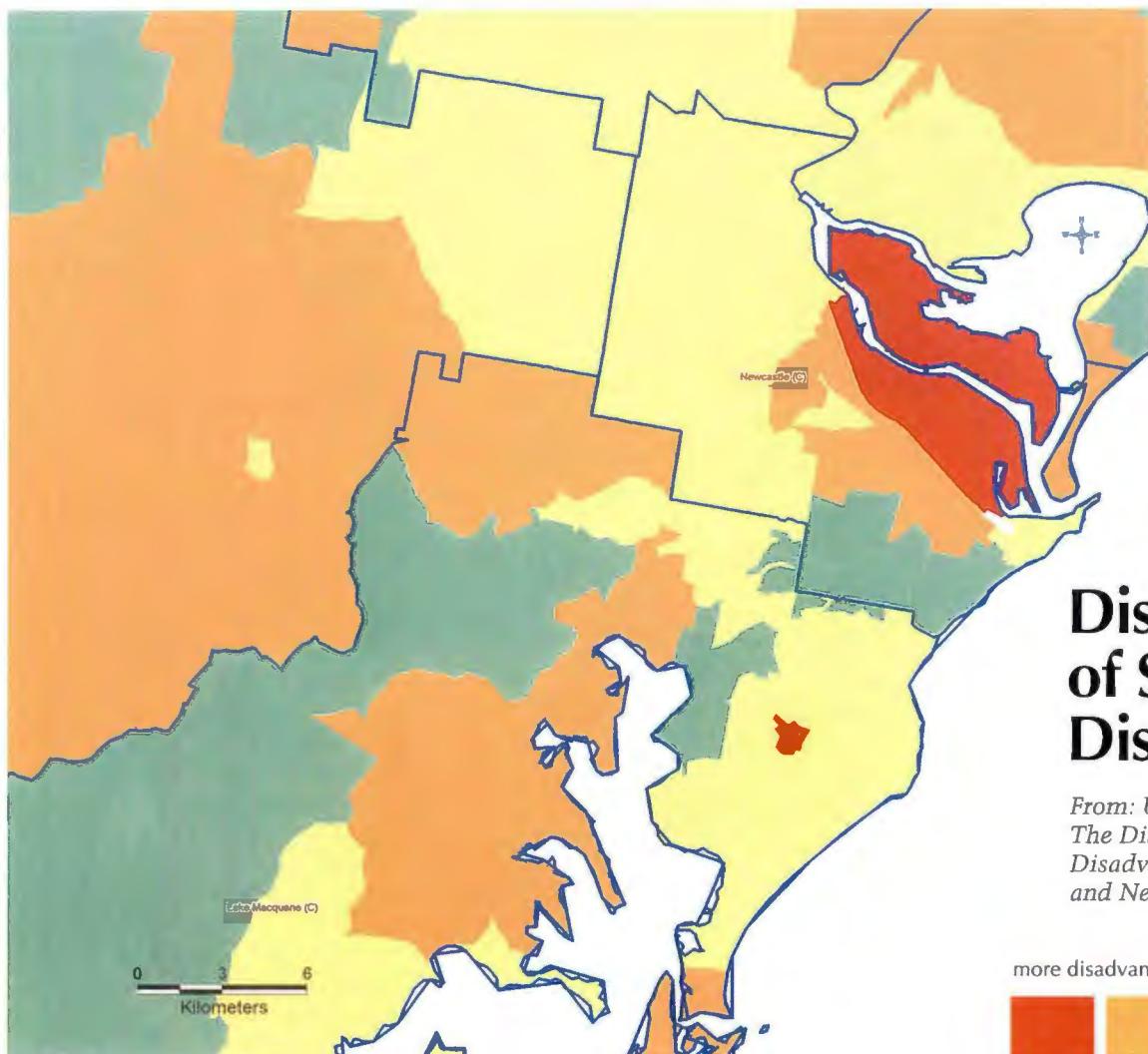
In the fourth step, Vinson tested the data once more in order to check the validity of his measures. Areas scoring highly on the disadvantage index would be expected to have a disproportionate share of the problems captured by each indicator, and in both New South Wales and Victoria, this proved to be the case.

**T**HIS REPORT PROVIDES governments with a starting point for practical action. It also raises interesting issues for researchers and social planners to consider. For example:

- Some areas scored highly as a result of economic factors such as unemployment and low income; others as a result of issues to do with children—abuse, or injuries.
- The experimental data for mortality in New South Wales showed that 28 out of 30 high-rating areas are rural localities, many with significant indigenous populations.
- The intensity of the disadvantage factor is higher in New South Wales than in Victoria.
- A comparison of the maps for Sydney and Melbourne shows Sydney with only two small pockets of extreme disadvantage (in the inner city). In Melbourne the disadvantaged localities are numerous, and spread throughout the inner and outer suburbs.

What, one might ask, is the picture like for the rest of Australia?

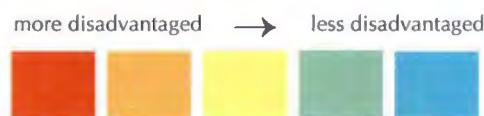
—Paddy McCorry



Newcastle  
and environs

## Distribution of Social Disadvantage

*From: Unequal in Life:  
The Distribution of Social  
Disadvantage in Victoria  
and New South Wales*



feels this is not a cause for despair, however. These areas should not be given up on, he says, but seen as starting points in a campaign. And the campaign should be conducted by all levels of government, with the participation of community agencies and the people themselves, to rid society of such inequality.

The lesson to be learnt from *Unequal in Life* is that failure to act, as occurred when similar disadvantage was identified in Newcastle in 1975, will result in the development of concentrated pockets of poverty. The poverty will become intractable and people's lives, children's lives particularly, will be damaged by hopelessness.

Since completing the report, the Ignatius Centre has held discussions and briefings with government authorities in both states, and with local community groups.

As noted above, reactions to the report have varied. The New South Wales Government has responded strongly and positively, asking Vinson to continue his

research and to extend the methodology used, with the intention of using it as a regular tool for future social planning. Initiatives are already under way to attack the problems in some localities, and the Carr Government is committed to similar efforts in other areas, particularly in those parts of Newcastle identified in the report.

Vinson's extensive academic background and practical track record in innovative social projects make him well-placed to be a resource for social planners and government authorities. A quick scan of his community involvement alone shows input into such diverse areas as social science policy, homelessness, welfare services and policies, child protection, research evaluation, child abuse and public housing.

But it is in his recent work in public housing that Vinson's strategic approach of research, community development philosophy and co-operative, inclusive practice is most clearly and successfully demonstrated. A project between the

University of New South Wales and the Department of Housing in Sydney to transform the problem-ridden housing estates of Waterloo is regarded as a model for other researchers and activists.

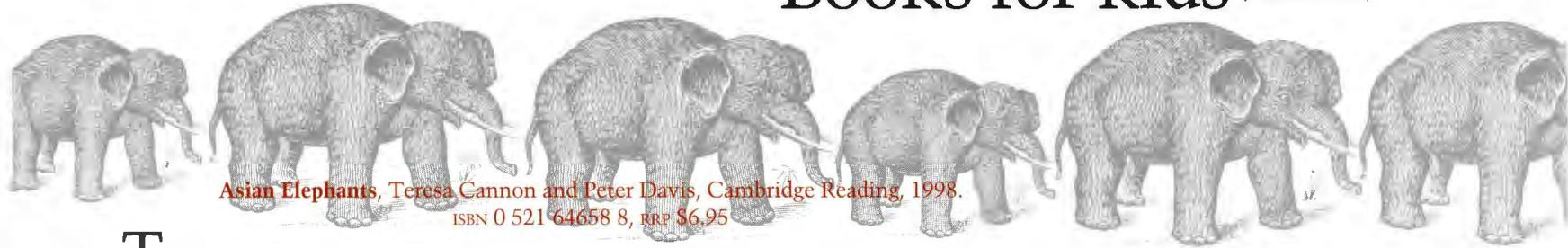
Such a positive response from the New South Wales Government is encouraging, and both Vinson and the Ignatius Centre hope that the report will be studied closely and used to guide policies and programs in other states.

But the Ignatius Centre is not waiting for government to lead the way. As the report notes, 'It cannot be assumed that social initiatives taken at the state or national level can override extreme degrees of local cumulative disadvantage.' So the Centre plans to begin projects in communities in both states, aiming to put actions behind its policy of 'standing in solidarity with the poor in the community'. ■

**Paddy McCorry** is a student in the Department of Creative Media at RMIT in Melbourne.

# Reading allowed

## Books for kids (and adults)



**Asian Elephants**, Teresa Cannon and Peter Davis, Cambridge Reading, 1998.  
ISBN 0 521 64658 8, RRP \$6.95

**T**HIS VISUALLY APPEALING, informative account is a tribute to the elephants and an inspiration to children. Teresa Cannon and Peter Davis show these magnificent creatures in full splendour in their own environment. They have a passion for elephants and manage to convey it.

At an early age a child develops a taste for knowledge; each new thing learnt is a precious and rare gift. Children are taught basics—one plus one is two, C-A-T spells cat—but they need more.

Teresa Cannon and Peter Davis provide more, exploring the life of an Asian elephant in great depth. After living with and observing them for five years, they have a profound understanding of these great animals and have now translated all they know into a language comprehensible to a child. A child can chew on a steak, but it is much easier if you cut it up for her.

I am continually surprised by the things my seven-year-old sister comes out with. How can such a small child pick up and absorb so much information, I wonder to myself. But when children are exposed to the same amount of information as we are, why wouldn't they? It may seem to breeze over their heads, but often it will be recovered at a later age, and then stick with them for life.

While this is a children's book, the information in it is very detailed but also very interesting. It is the same information that would be given to an older reader but is adapted here to capture the interest of the child. Take for example this description of elephant hair: 'Their hair stands straight up and feels like soft plastic. It shines in the sun.'

'The more people know about elephants and how special they are, the more they will work to find a way for people and elephants to live together,' say Cannon and Davis. So the book is natural history plus environmental education of a non-preachy kind.

So unless you believe you can portray the Asian elephants more accurately and with more passion yourself, I strongly recommend you let your child enjoy the beauty that is *Asian Elephants*.

—Kate Crofts is a Melbourne Year 10 student.



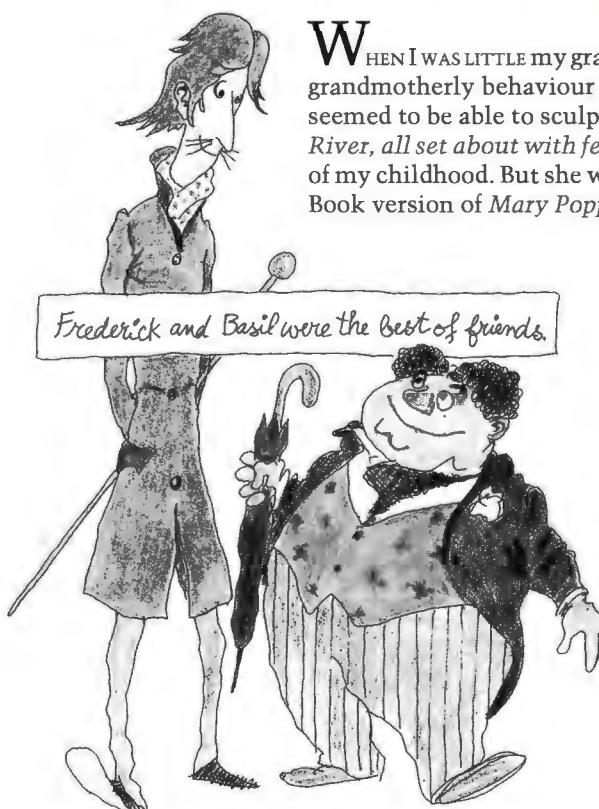
**The Two Acrobats**, Jeanne Ryckmans, illustrated by Simon Leys. Duffy & Snellgrove, 1999.  
ISBN 1 875989 43 9, RRP \$12.90

**W**HEN I WAS LITTLE my grandmother read aloud to my sister and me. While I'm sure this is not unusual grandmotherly behaviour I have always felt enormously privileged to have had a grandmother who seemed to be able to sculpt the very air of our bedtime stories. *The great grey-green, greasy Limpopo River, all set about with fever trees* are words I will forever imagine snaking through the evening light of my childhood. But she wouldn't read just anything. My sister or I would always pull out the Golden Book version of *Mary Poppins*. Never was it opened—I thank her in retrospect. Instead we delighted in the adventures of Rikki-Tikki-Tavi or Mr Tumnus.

*The Two Acrobats* is a book I'm sure my grandmother would have read us. Exploring the characters that inhabit the Paris winter circus and the savoury bugs that bloat their stomachs gives Jeanne Ryckmans (words) and Simon Leys (pictures) much to have fun with. Ringmasters, Strong Men, pyjamaed aerial artistes, presidents of Republics, garlic snails and roasted pigs—all dance about the pages, ducking in and out of the story marked down in Leys' lyrical freehand.

This is a book that children will love to see and hear and adults will love to read aloud. My own daughter wanted to travel to Paris on the strength of it—and I'm happy that her books should encourage travel desires so in tune with my own.

—Siobhan Jackson is Eureka Street's graphic designer.



# 'My riches all went int



## Tracking John Shaw

**W**RITING ABOUT John Shaw Neilson in *The Age* over ten years ago, John Larkin made a sad claim: few people read the poet 'except for fleeting glances in the flurry of the classroom'.

Yet only a small acquaintance with Neilson (1872–1942) brings something fresh or poignant, joyful or haunting. Many avid readers who neglect Henry Lawson, Henry Handel Richardson and Joseph Furphy brighten when Neilson is mentioned, when they recall a poem, remember seeing Darryl Emmerson's musical play *The Pathfinder* back in the 1980s, or express a desire to read more verse.

Down in the land where he was born, Neilson rates highly even when compared with the bevy of talented Australians who pioneered white settlement around Penola, South Australia, as my wife Dawn and I found out last November. We passed through the splendid green pastures, lakes and swamp lands of the West Wimmera. Huge and ancient red gums dominated the paddocks with stateliness and stability as we drove through Goroke, Bringalbert, Apsley and Langkoop to the SA border.

Then the Coonawarra and Penola vineyards and tasting rooms, hundreds upon hundreds of acres, row after row, sign after sign, still expanding, had a well-drilled, manicured uniformity we found slightly daunting. 'Enough to put you off the stuff,' muttered Dawn unconvincingly.

Penola is a lovely little town, well-tended and proud, swimming in roses and colourful gardens, dotted with heritage cottages, surrounded by green paddocks, swamplands and giant red gums, engulfed by historical associations that claim visitors wherever they go. Notices, signs and plaques inform on street corners, buildings and footpaths and there are so many important people to celebrate: John Riddoch (1827–1901), Blessed Mary MacKillop (1842–1963) and many more. In 1872, John Shaw Neilson was born there.

We made our first call to Racecourse Road on the outskirts of town and were directed to a vineyard with a plaque marking the spot where Neilson lived his first three years. This plaque was unveiled several years ago by the vineyard owners, Peter and Margaret Muller. Under a fine avenue of red gums which border

# *o dreams'*

EXCURSION  
JOHN SENDY

## Neilson

the vineyard, it is not far from Racecourse, Sawpit and other swamps which played such a part in the poet's Penola childhood, remained in his memory, and informed the fantasies involved in one of his most famous poems, 'The Land Where I Was Born', published in 1907:

Have you ever been down to my countree  
where the birds made happy Spring?  
The parrots screamed from the honey-trees  
and the jays hopped chattering.  
Strange were the ways of the water-birds  
in the brown swamps, night and morn:  
I knew the roads they had in the reeds  
in the land where I was born.

Later, we met Margaret Muller, the energetic and articulate author of the impressive *Dreamers and Singers: Poets of the South East* (1994) and *Penola, Where it All Began, Mary MacKillop 1842–1909*. One of a band of local historians, Margaret, an English teacher at the Penola High School, conducts a segment of Year 12 English Studies on John Shaw Neilson's

life and poetry and continues her own indefatigable love affair with the poet.

From the Racecourse Road area the Neilson family moved to a rented cottage still standing in McArthur Street and in 1880, young Jock, as Neilson was known in his family circles, began a brief attendance at a new school nearby in what is now Riddoch Street. This building is part of the present Penola Primary School.

The Neilsons had plenty of relatives living in Penola, including Jock's Uncle William Neilson, whose family lived in one of Penola's most famous thoroughfares, the delightful Petticoat Lane. Apparently, it became known as Petticoat Lane because of the large numbers of female children living there in the early days. Petticoat Lane's attractive historical cottages are now owned by the Penola Branch of the National Trust and rented out to tourists.

We walked down it several times. The cottages, decorative little gardens with attractive shrubs, a magnificent cedar and other old conifers, make it a lovely stroll. The original red-gum wooden curbings have been restored. On the top corner stands the first Josephite School established by Mary MacKillop and Father Julian Tenison Woods in the 1860s. Next door is the recently completed Mary MacKillop Interpretative Centre which attracts many visitors and has interesting architectural features.

Neilson wrote more than one poem relating to petticoats, and critics sometimes connect them to Petticoat Lane, which seems fair enough. His 'Petticoat Green', published in 1915, prompted his mentor, A.G. Stephens, to comment: 'This is glorious verse.' Neilson told his friend James Devaney that it was a talk to an artist and a tribute to the colour green:

A petticoat is a tender thing,  
tender as love or dew,  
Perhaps it is piece of an angel's garb  
that has sometime fallen through;  
For there be gates in the distant sky  
that the elder seers have seen,  
And you—you have known them, mournful man!  
so paint me a petticoat green.

James Devaney's *John Shaw Neilson* (1944) also quotes the poet making an apt late-in-life comment: 'Inspirational poetry is often dealing with beautiful abstractions almost impossible to express, and at its best may defy analysis word for word and line by line.'

We dawdled around Greenrise Swamp within sight of town. In good rainfall years it would cover a large area liberally dotted with majestic red gums probably old when Neilson roamed there as a child. What a place for kids it must have been. Plovers, seagulls, cormorants and black ducks performed for us as light rain spotted down and, intermittently, huge trucks, clanging and roaring, hurtled past on the Mount Gambier road.

By 1881 the family had fallen on desperately hard financial times. Little Jock, now nine years old, had four siblings: Margaret, Jessie, Annie and William. After the family was evicted from their rental home, John Neilson (Snr) took up a selection at Minimay across the border in Victoria where the family settled and another son, Frank, was born.



The Minimay selection presented difficulties galore. The land was uncleared and unfenced, a dwelling had to be built, a well sunk and the Neilsons had no capital or income. There, the family spent eight years of unrelieved material hardship. No wonder the poet wrote of it as 'the poor, poor country'. In order for the family to survive, the father was forced to seek contract labouring work in the surrounding districts making the development of the farm extremely difficult. However, he was prominent in urging the establishment of a school at Minimay which opened in May 1885. His oldest son attended for only some 15 months until he turned 14 and went shearing and fencing with his father. The future poet's main education came from reading the books the family owned, mainly the poetry of Scott, Coleridge, Hood and Burns.

**M**INIMAY TODAY, population 12, is a few kilometres off the main road, a secluded spot consisting only of a store, church, hall, two or three houses. Our contact was Geoff Carracher, farmer, Justice of the Peace, Councillor of the West Wimmera Shire, local historian and many other interesting things. Carrachers have lived around Minimay since the 1870s. Ten years after the Neilsons left, the Carrachers acquired their land and retained ownership until recently.

Geoff showed us the old selection a couple of miles from town alongside Neilson Swamp which usually fills with several feet of water each year and dries before summer ends. He took us to where the school had been, the school which he attended from 1946 until it closed in 1950, unaware of the famous

Australian who had preceded him. He showed us the plaque that Minimay citizens dedicated to Neilson, now in the local store.

The usual red gums dot Neilson Swamp as do a few bull oaks and an occasional grey or yellow box on their old selection. We stood there looking, the Little Desert only a short distance north, no house in sight, no vehicle noises. The silence was loud, broken occasionally by the hum of insects or a bird call. A dozen or so galahs took off nearby and a crimson rosella landed in some high grass.

The school grounds are shaded by giant conifers, Pepper trees and 18 of the ubiquitous Sugar gum, all obviously planted in the early days of the school. Jock Neilson and Co. had only to climb the fence to descend to the large Minimay Swamp, surrounded by red gums and populated by the water birds about which he wrote later: Blue cranes (White-faced Heron), pelicans, swans, black ducks, spoonbills, plovers. Late in life he ended 'The Crane is My Neighbour' as follows:

The bird is my neighbour, he leaves not a claim  
for a sigh,  
He moves as the guest of the sunlight—he roams  
in the sky.

The bird is a noble, he turns to the sky for a  
theme,  
And the ripples are thoughts coming out to the  
edge of a dream.

Neilson has written of his childhood fear of God. He told James Devaney how, probably at Minimay, the blue crane cured him of that fear: 'It seemed so confident and happy without any fear. It wasn't frightened about God like me.' In 'The Gentle Water Bird', his poem for Mary Gilmore, he wrote:

Gracious he was and lofty as a king:  
Silent he was, and yet he seemed to sing  
Always of little children and the Spring.

God? Did he know him? It was far he flew ...  
God was not terrible and thunder-blue:  
—It was a gentle water bird I knew.

In June 1889 the Neilsons surrendered their Minimay selection. They travelled by wagon across the Little Desert to Dow Well, a few miles south of the rapidly expanding Nhill.

From their new home, John Neilson and his eldest son took shearing, fencing and wheat-clearing work. Margaret, the eldest daughter, became a domestic until she obtained the position of sewing teacher at the local Tarranginnie East School on 12/6 per week. She kept that job for nearly four years. The younger Neilson children attended this school.

During their years around Nhill, John Neilson and John Shaw Neilson both had poems published in the *Nhill Mail* and several of the latter's poems

appeared in *The Australasian* and the *Bulletin*.

On the Western Highway, about six kilometres on the Adelaide side of Nhill, a sign reads: 'Historical Marker 300m, Pioneer Poet Monument'. The monument is at the site of the Tarranginnie East School. The inevitable plantation of sugar gums borders the school block. We stood there on a windy day with clouds building up for a downpour, gazing across brown paddocks sloping towards the Little Desert. The Neilsons had lived in a rented house just over there. Somehow it seemed a desolate, sad place, with traffic zooming along at high speed. No other car stopped. Lyric poets on the Western Highway lead a somewhat lonely existence.

In 1895 the Neilsons moved to a mallee selection east of Sea Lake on Tyrrell Creek, on what is today the Sea Lake-Swan Hill Road. Their prospects had not improved. They moved further north all the time, further inland, from poor country to poorer country, from debt to more debt.

Drought years, rabbit hordes, severe frosts and lack of capital brought continued hardship. The men were forced to seek labouring work thereby neglecting the nascent farm. Towards the end of 1897 Margaret Neilson (Snr) became ill and died at the Bendigo Hospital, aged 47. Then the eldest daughter, Margaret, spent months in the Bendigo Hospital with typhoid fever.

**K**EVA LLOYD, NEWSAGENT, local historian and lifetime resident of Sea Lake, is the author of the huge 432-page *Then Awake Sea Lake*, published in 1997, an admirable history of the district, containing hundreds of fascinating photos. An efficient enthusiast, Keva directed us to the original Neilson block on Tyrrell Creek, now owned by Ron Harrison.

In a strong wind we wandered over the land cleared of the mallee that clothed it when the Neilsons arrived over 100 years before. The sky dominated huge ploughed paddocks intersected with mallee borders. We saw some of the original boundary fencing with eight strands of fencing wire topped by one of barb. Between the posts four wooden droppers held the wires of each panel. Ron Harrison informed me those droppers, split from bull oak timber, were nearly as good as new even though 100 years old.

Early this century the Neilsons took up blocks close to what is now the Eureka Flora Reserve, north of Sea Lake not far from Chinkapook, over 2000 acres in all. For many years the home was at a spot a couple of kilometres up the slope from the Sea Lake-Robinvale Road amid low hills. Belah, native pine and mallee grew there and saltbush, a useful fodder. Today, most of it is billiard-table clear.

Aylis Scougall, a lifetime resident, directed us to the site of the old Neilson place. She was born in the 1930s, just across the bush road. A local history authority, Aylis also referred us to a long line of fencing work on the nearby Chillingollah Road. 'They

were fanatical fencers,' she said, 'Everything had to be exact.' This was why the Neilsons were so often employed to erect fencing. The poet casually mentions in his autobiography that they did eight miles of fencing near Lake Tyrrell in the summer of 1901.

Imagine the work: there were no chain saws, tractors, post-hole diggers and modern machines, only axes, shovels and crowbars. The posts had to be cut with axes, the holes dug with shovels and crowbars. The posts had to be lined up and rammed in with crowbars, the holes bored with wires, the wires inserted and strained tight. And there were no hot showers, fridges, hard or soft mattresses. Have you ever used a shovel and a crowbar all day, dear reader? My father and grandfather had an intimate knowledge of such work. My acquaintanceship was more fleeting but even thinking about it makes me tired. No wonder John Shaw Neilson regarded grape picking at Mildura (a job many present day folk find appalling) as rather restful and recuperative!

The poet wrote in his spare time or composed in his head while engaged on easier jobs like riding after stock: 'I seldom could write anything in the summer because the heat and the flies seemed to unsettle my mind. The best time for writing in the Mallee is from the beginning of May till the end of September. The mornings are sharp but there are a great many sunny days. The winter sunlight is particularly beautiful.' So begins 'May':

Shyly the silver-hatted mushrooms make  
Soft entrance through,  
And undelivered lovers, half awake,  
Hear noises in the dew.



And he ends 'The Sun is Up':

Blithely a bush boy wanders on a walk—  
Shaking with joy, joyous in heart and limb:  
For his delight the trees have learned to talk  
And all the flowers have little laughs with him  
Watching the far sky, wonderful and dim ...  
The sun is up, and Death is far away:  
The first hour is the sweetest of the day.

The Smoker parrots got his poetic attention several times. Smoker is the bush name for magnificent, mainly yellow, Regent parrots inhabiting northwest Victoria and the Murray areas nearby:

He has the full moon on his breast,  
The moonbeams are about his wing;  
He has the colours of a king.  
I see him floating unto rest  
When all eyes wearily go west,  
And the warm winds are quieting.  
The moonbeams are about his wing:  
He has the full moon on his breast.

### (‘The Smoker Parrot’)



Neilson loved the spring. He recognised October as a wonderful month in Australia. He dubbed spring 'the sweetening of the year' and was sometimes known as the green singer:

All singers have shadows  
    that follow like fears,  
But I know a singer  
    who never saw tears:  
A gay love—a green love—  
    delightsome! divine!  
The Spring is that singer—  
    an old love of mine!

brilliant scarlet bottle-brushes, shady melaleucas and a *Eucalyptus woodwardii* covered with glorious bright yellow blossoms. I wondered how green and shady it was in Margaret Neilson's time there.

Our next stop was at the Sea Lake Railway yard where John Shaw Neilson and his father held a council of war on the night they learned Maggie was seriously ill—they had no money and she had no mother and no proper home. They met under a mountainous wheat stack, for the Station then bustled with teams and was piled high with bags of wheat. Now unmanned and deserted, it looked derelict and windswept but still a couple of old struggling geraniums, struggling to flower, showed signs of life.

About 1910, the shy, retiring Neilson apparently fell in love. Whether his feelings were reciprocated is not known. Florence Case, who delivered mail at Sea Lake, was less than half his age:

Dark eyes are hers; but in their darkness lies  
    all the white holiness of Paradise;  
A tender violet within them shows  
    and the unsullied beauty of the rose;  
                Dark eyes are hers.

And much more verse along similar themes came during this time: as well as 'Her Eyes' there is 'You, and Yellow Air', 'The Girl with Black Hair', 'Love's Coming', 'To a Letter Carrier', the Sadie poems and others. Some sort of friendship obviously existed, but by 1916 she was married with a son. As Florence Spencer she attended Neilson's funeral at Footscray in 1942.

## N Footscray in 1942.

NEILSON WAS BECOMING known as a poet. His verse appeared periodically in the *Bookfellow*, the *Sydney Sun* and other journals. His first collection, *Heart of Spring*, was published in 1919, 80 years ago, by A.G. Stephens' *The Bookfellow*. Further volumes, in the poet's lifetime, followed in 1923, 1927, 1934 and 1938.

Meanwhile his eyesight troubled him and reading and writing became difficult. A large part of the Eureka land had been sold off over the years and he found more work away from the Mallee in Gippsland, Mildura and Melbourne.

Eyesight problems necessitated getting someone to write at his dictation. This wasn't always easy. James Devaney, in his biography of Neilson, tells how the poet once got a workmate on a road job to copy material. 'What, poetry?' the fellow gasped and became bewildered with the problems of spelling and punctuation. After a few lines the fellow exclaimed, 'Jesus!' And then, 'But this ain't poetry anyway, Jock, you must be going off your onion.'

Neilson's father died in 1922. The old man had married again and fathered two more daughters. The poet, about this time, began to receive a literary pension of one pound per week, 'a great help when out of work'. He provided regular money for his stepsisters and their mother. In 1928 a permanent job

Above: Neilson with Lisette Doyle (née Neilson) and her daughter, and the pram he gave her, in 1936. This photo and the portrait of Neilson on p30 (by Julian Smith) are from the new biography, Jock: A Life Story of John Shaw Neilson, by Cliff Hanna, University of Queensland Press, 1999. Other photographs pp30–33 courtesy John Sedy.

---

was found for him as a messenger for the Country Roads Board at the Exhibition Buildings. He was 56. For 13 years he worked there while living at 160 Gordon Street, Footscray, with his sister, Annie McKimm, her husband and children.

Hal Porter, in his autobiographical *The Extra*, tells of his interview with Neilson in the Exhibition Gardens in 1935 while the poet/messenger ate his sandwich lunch:

... here he is, half blind, shy, monosyllabic, awkwardly eating while walking and being hounded by an unshy and inquisitional pest ... my intentions are of the sweetest and sincerest, my love of his poetry intense and almost sincere. 'The Orange Tree', I recall, particularly tantalises me yet, though I know it by heart, has me flummoxed. It's like reading smoke ... I fire unrecallable questions into his diffidence, and can't recall any of the answers. Only two of his remarks stay with me. One's that he can't recite 'The Orange Tree' or any other poem of his, even mentally to himself. This strikes me as extraordinary. I can rattle off any of my adjective-choked verses anywhere, to anyone ... John Shaw Neilson's other unforgetten remark is: 'Like a cup of tea?'

But the young Porter mindlessly refused.

Annie sometimes acted as his amanuensis, a task she shared with her young stepsister, Elizabeth, whom Neilson called 'Lisette'. Several phone conversations reveal 'Lisette' as a most courteous, composed and alert person, born in 1915. She describes her brother, Jock, as 'a man of feeling and understanding who'd had a hard life'. She lived her first years at the Eureka farm near Chinkapook but remembers nothing about it. But she remembers the help and money Jock provided regularly for her family. 'He did practically everything for us.'

Here was a man who had had only three years' schooling. He lived a large part of his life in poverty. His mother and two sisters died young. He spent 40 years at hard, slogging, physical toil. Yet he created a wealth for us all, if only we could pause long enough to absorb it. He shines out of the land where he was born, from the magnificent, harsh, dented expanses of the Wimmera and the Mallee, glinting mystically, with his water birds and colours, young girls and suffering women, smoker parrots and honey bees, compassion and sensitivity. How well he summed it up in 'The Poor, Poor Country':

My riches all went into dreams that never yet came home,  
They touched upon the wild cherries and the slabs of honeycomb,  
They were not of the desolate brood that men can sell or buy,  
Down in that poor country no pauper was I. ■

**John Senty** lives and writes in North Central Victoria.

POEM

PETER PORTER

## Max Is Missing

The stars are there as mathematics is,  
The very there of nothing to be proved.

And so we say that theorems rely  
On axioms, or proof by the absurd.

And stars outshine the tenses, kings on plinths  
Or menses of the strutting nano-nodes.

While all along our mathematicians fear  
They're stalking horses of an abstract god,

And posit the suspicion there's no room  
For rich historic tit-bits in their space—

The big and little of it, shrunk or spun,  
A million needle-points, a mono-ange.

Out of the corner of philosophy's eye  
a mathematician's pinning on a post

*Max is missing: ginger tabby cat  
With white sabots—reward for his return.*

The government of integers will wait  
While our researcher searches for his cat,

The stars be patient, God donate his time;  
A theorem is for Christmas, but a cat

Is for forever. Come home, Maximus,  
The badges on the fridge are slipping down.

The page is Luddite quite as stars are bright,  
A ball-point and a brain out-twinkle them.

Should stars know Max is missing, would they guess  
How little he must miss them where he is?

# Law in the killing fields



**Crimes Against Humanity: The Struggle for Global Justice**, Geoffrey Robertson,  
Allen Lane, The Penguin Press, 1999. ISBN 0 713 99197 6, RRP \$45

**O**N 12 OCTOBER, the human population of the Earth officially reached six billion, with nearly 200 different sovereign governments, reflecting their unique cultures, traditions and laws. Yet there are some rules of conduct, supported by all rational beings and regarded as binding, which make up a universal, international law—what Roman law called '*jus gentium*'. They deal with individual freedoms shared by all people, without discrimination: *safety of the person*, and freedom from the wanton state infliction of death and torture; *fairness*, and rules which protect every individual from arbitrary arrest and unfair trial; and *liberty of belief*, or freedom from unreasonable interference with choice of religion, opinion and associates. Some acts which deny these freedoms are crimes against humanity, everywhere.

Geoffrey Robertson's book could not be better timed. Australia has entered into a new regional activism, based on a perceived duty to protect a people from atrocious suffering. Robertson takes the pragmatic view that 'a rule is one of law not because it has been laid down with clarity in a treaty or a textbook, but because there is at least a slim prospect that some day, someone will be arrested for its breach ... across governmental boundaries'. This is what

transforms the *jus* from what was, for hundreds of years, merely 'divine', natural or moral law: *universality*—there can be no cultural exemption from their application—and *enforceability*—you don't leave it to God to punish.

I was discouraged, as a law student in the 1960s, from studying international law because it was not 'real law'. Yet I began my studies 20 years after the Nuremberg Trials, in which the language of 'crimes against humanity' was used for the first time, which made such crimes punishable, even if they were 'legal' according to the country which authorised, mandated or excused them. I was introduced to human rights discourse by a Perth barrister, Henry Wallwork, a judge of WA's Supreme Court now, who used to carry, and quote from, a dog-eared copy of the United Nation's 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, often when we were stewing in frustration at the maltreatment of our Aboriginal, or mentally ill, often wretchedly poor criminal clients. Of course, the *Declaration* was unenforceable, and still is. Some human rights activists argue too forcefully that human rights treaties are part of our legal system. As Robertson puts it, 'optimism is an eye disease which inflicts many who expound human rights law ...'

I have used the language of human rights for 30 years as an advocate. It gives both a benchmark and a dictionary for expressing outrage at the deficiencies of laws and behaviour of government agents. Robertson reminds us that these ideas have power, that naming a wrong makes it possible to right it, and that human rights are an engine for changing both institutional behaviour, and citizens' expectations of justice.

Until very recently, it was unimaginable that a respectable, rich, aristocratic old man with powerful friends could be brought to book for 'crimes against humanity' committed while he was the Head of State of a sovereign nation. Yet, in 1998, Auguste Pinochet, the former Chilean dictator, who had granted himself and his minions legal immunity for their abduction, torture, and murder of political opponents, was arrested on his last, carefree jaunt to England, to face extradition and charges for such crimes perpetrated on citizens of a third sovereign nation, Spain. He was surprised, and has apparently been thrown into a depression. (My spirits lifted.)

Until 1999 it seemed equally unimaginable that the UN might authorise the bombing of a sovereign state, Serbia, to protect its Albanian Kosovars from atrocious treatment. Matters have

developed so swiftly that East Timor is mentioned in just half a sentence in Robertson's book, which he finished writing in April 1999. Who would have foreseen then that, by September, Australian troops would be serving in East Timor to protect its people from well-organised slaughter by Indonesian army, police and state-sponsored militias? And serving in an East Timor whose Indonesian administration had been recognised by Australia as 'legitimate' after Indonesia invaded in 1975.

Less than a month later, and before the UN was forced to authorise its Human Rights Commission to inquire into atrocities and forced displacement of the population, the International Commission of Jurists authorised its own Commission of Inquiry. The Law Societies of four Australian states and the Australian Section of that UN-affiliated organisation of judges and lawyers have begun to train hundreds of volunteer lawyers to document the evidence of East Timorese refugees now in Australia. The documenting is an essential preparatory step for potential prosecutions—whether in Indonesian, Timorese or other tribunals—and UN action.

In the half century after the Nuremberg trials, virtually no progress had been made in establishing an international 'rule of law' which would make perpetrators of crimes against humanity accountable. The UN did create, and the international community ratified, more human rights treaties, which oblige nations to protect the fundamental rights of their own people, and permit intervention against those who do not. During that time no steps were taken to realise the promises of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, or any other treaties. The UN and its members engaged in hand-wringing, grandstanding and blind-eye turning, while 'sovereign' governments wrought havoc on their populations—in Cambodia, Rwanda, Iraq, the former Yugoslavia. They were still looking away when, for example, Afghanistan turned its women into sub-human slaves. The international community, by failing to act, granted *de facto* immunity to monsters such as Uganda's Idi Amin and Haiti's Duvalier, dictators in flight from the countries they had despoiled and plundered. No wonder Pinochet felt safe. No wonder Indonesia's Wiranto is 'outraged'.

Clearly, those nations that ratified instruments which did have enforcement provisions (UN committees, largely) such as the *International Covenant on Civil and*

*Political Rights* (1966) and the *Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment*, meant them to have as little impact on their actual behaviour as the Geneva Conventions and prohibitions on inhumane acts in war—widely flouted. Their diplomats resisted the establishment of a standing International Criminal Court; governments failed to apprehend accused criminals to face trial in special Courts, such as the Hague Tribunal into crimes against humanity in the Balkans. The proposed International Criminal Court, agreed to in July 1998, when ratified by enough countries (60), will be able entertain these charges, but we can expect a long wait for the necessary ratifications. Few sovereign nations fancy being accountable for what they do to their people.

**B**UT THE MILIEU has changed, and apparently suddenly. What brought the shift about?

Robertson identifies two factors. One is the ease of modern communications. Tyrants who burn books can't shoot down satellites—which documented the destruction of Dili, and the apparent mid-ocean unloading of ships said to be crammed with Timorese civilians. Nor can they close down the internet. Threats and violence in Dili drove Australian TV crews to flight; but troops are in East Timor because those crews, there to observe the independence vote, sent us astonishing proof that armed thugs first threatened, then openly went hunting, slaughtering and kidnapping civilians, burning their homes and towns after the independence vote. We heard the screams and phoned pleas for help from priests and doctors; saw the blood, the smoke columns, the ghostly eyes of terrified fugitives slipping silently in the darkness to the hills as their would-be murderers circled UN and Red Cross compounds.

Australians responded, viscerally: we could not stand by. But we waited until the Indonesian Government agreed, and half a million East Timorese went missing. Consent had to be achieved diplomatically. East Timor was not as strategically important to the superpowers controlling the UN—the US is the only real superpower left—as the Balkans had been. Diplomatic justifications for non-intervention flowered and the UN bureaucracy fiddled as Dili burned. But Indonesia did agree, persuaded by the demands of international law, which has, over the last seven years, begun to challenge the precepts of diplomacy. As

Robertson points out, human rights are often inconsistent with and inconvenient to, diplomacy.

The history of human rights and the movement for global justice shows a struggle against 'sovereignty'—the principle of non-intervention in the internal affairs of nation states. The horror of the Holocaust was not enough for the UN to deconstruct this principle after Nuremberg. The superpower self-interest of the Cold War blocked the enforcement of UN promises to prevent crimes against humanity. UN committees and the Security Council, with its absurdly convoluted bureaucratic structure, have been flawed and inefficient.

As Robertson points out, the greatest progress in protecting fundamental human rights has been made where states have jointly set up regional institutions, independent of any internal government politics, to receive individual complaints. These tribunals' findings are enforceable and they can demand compliance with human rights laws from governments as a condition of membership of the regional community. Why do they demand this? Because a country which does not protect its own citizens' rights is unlikely to respect the 'sovereignty' or rights of its neighbours and their people. The best example, lauded by Robertson, is the European Charter and Court of Justice. Former Australian Human Rights Commissioner, Brian Burdekin, has been advising the UN and member nations on setting up these institutions for the last five years. It was only through reading Robertson that I understood how important his work is, and that human rights institutions in countries such as Latvia and Outer Mongolia are important for Australia too.

So we should welcome Indonesia's recently announced Inquiry, involving its own independent Human Rights Commission, into East Timor, no matter our cynicism about its outcome. The International Commission of Jurists' Inquiry by three eminent jurists (none will be Australian), and the UN Human Rights Commission's independent investigation, are also necessary. Justice must be done, and be seen to be done. That is why the House of Lords set aside its own initial finding that Pinochet had lost his 'sovereign immunity' because of the UK's ratification of the *Convention Against Torture*: it was right, but one of the judges had been associated with Amnesty, which had intervened and made submissions on the case. The legal principle is more important than the inconvenience.

Robertson traces the development of human rights, from church law through the writings of philosophers such as Locke and Hobbes, and domestic manifestations such as the American War of Independence. That war asserted not only the primacy of individual liberty as a restriction on the power of the state, but for the first time required a constitutional enumeration of the rights a citizen could enforce against a government by taking it to a court. The Nuremberg Tribunal, after World War II, defined 'crimes against humanity' for the first time as rights that could not be taken away by law, and could be enforced. We are now in the third age of human rights: the enforcement age. The Pinochet arrest, the Hague Tribunal, and the UN-authorised bombing of Serbia are its first steps. The establishment of the International Criminal Court, when it happens, will be a true watershed.

Reading Robertson's brilliantly readable account reassured me that human rights talk—pooh-poohed by the Australian Government in domestic political discourse—has legitimacy. It is now a legal precept, not just a political ideal, that individual human beings possess basic rights which no political order can remove; and that other countries (through international institutions) can tell nation states how to treat their citizens.

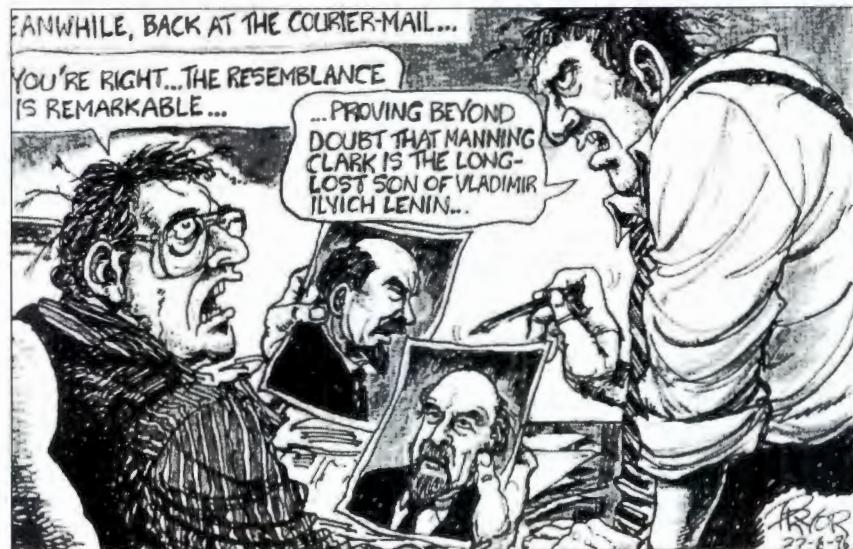
Words are not enough. We must incorporate these principles into the Australian legal system. Indeed, Australia has, as Robertson notes. The High Court decision in *Teoh* incorporated Australia's international obligations, under the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, as a 'legitimate expectation' of our 'natural justice' procedural rules. That the Commonwealth removed it, as a matter of political expedience, is an abomination and should be reversed, particularly now.

In Robertson's own words: 'If the promises of the Universal Declaration are to be realised, we must look to bodies independent of the UN, to regional treaty systems and their courts, to forge an international human rights law sufficiently understood and respected to be enforced in *municipal courts* [my emphasis] throughout the world... (which) calls for a consensus of principles and not an accommodation with political power...'

His own wife and young children, Robertson comments ruefully, have forcefully reminded him that 'the most fundamental human right begins at home'. ■

**Moira Rayner** is a lawyer and freelance journalist.

# The history man



**A Short History of Manning Clark**, Stephen Holt,  
Allen & Unwin, 1999. ISBN 1865 08 0594, RRP \$29.95

**O**NE THEME in Stephen Holt's lucid and quietly partisan *Short History of Manning Clark* concerns Clark's dissenting spirit. 'There could be no cheerful communion with regimented believers of any sort', writes Holt.

There was little chance of Clark's becoming an ideologue for anyone or anything, let alone an 'agent'. For that you had to be an ardent believer and Clark was never sure about what to believe in. He was always searching and being disappointed. There are brief bursts of barracking for a great leader [Lenin, Kennedy, Whitlam], for like Carlyle he could idolise a commanding individual, but that sort of 'communion' was offset by an ultimate pessimism about 'isms' of any kind. Clark would never join the pack. As Holt has recently told us in the *Canberra Times* (2 September 1999), correspondence from Clark's time at Harvard in 1978–79 reveals a fascination with that country broadly similar to his response to the Soviet Union in 1958—a fascination with its creativity and beauty mixed with fretting and hostility towards the 'bullies'.

One of Clark's earliest 'crimes' was to refuse to take sides with the anti-

communists at Melbourne University as the Cold War got under way. This, at the same time that the communist cell on campus declared they would never admit Clark because he was a 'reactionary' and a non-joiner anyway. An ASIO report at the time agreed with the University communists. The informant wrote that Clark would 'never submit himself to the dictates of others, whether they be Party or otherwise'.

Another strand in this *Short History* concerns Clark's trail of critics and the failure of some to match the perceptiveness of the ASIO spy quoted above. Geoff Pryor's cartoon summary of the case for Clark's Order of Lenin has one thuggish *Courier-Mail* journo comparing pictures of the goateed Lenin and goateed Clark. Another looks on, saying, 'Proving beyond doubt that Manning Clark is the long-lost son of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin.' Clark's goatee suggested an affinity not with Lenin but Don Quixote, as did the theatrical dress, the hat in particular. Clark was a performer, a lone crusader, and he had windmills to tilt at. Holt rightly identifies him as an 'unrepentant romantic', wanting more equality, less mindless conformity and less

spiritual bullying. That's about the nearest Clark got to a manifesto.

But serious critics also fell for the idea that Clark was, at least intellectually, a captive of the Left. Robert Manne reviewed Clark's work in the wake of the Order of Lenin kerfuffle in the *Australian Review of Books* (October 1996). He argued that Clark had been seriously wronged by the *Courier-Mail*, reviewed some of his writing and concluded with the view that the six volumes had slipped from 'originality and grandeur' to 'something astonishingly simple and banal'. Manne's explanation for this slip was itself simple and banal: 'This shrinkage was the real cost Clark paid for his unresolved lifelong flirtation with communism.' A crude Marxism-Leninism he had picked up in 'the communist party pamphlets of his youth' was to blame. Manne's defence of Clark slipped into a parody that would have delighted the *Courier-Mail*. There is no evidence for this 'flirtation' beyond Clark's polymorphous engagement with ideas from everywhere. Pamphlets! Which pamphlets? And why did this 'flirtation' only take effect late in Clark's life? Somehow, according to Manne, it had just risen up and taken over the later volumes of the *History*. The loss of 'originality and grandeur' however, is a point that should be reckoned with.

Holt is too kind to entertain it.

**W**HEN VOLUME ONE of his *A History of Australia* appeared in 1962 Clark responded to criticism saying he was 'astounded at how much his reviewers knew about his beliefs in matters of religion and irreligion, he having no fixed views on these matters'. Trying to pin down someone whose own faith was so fragile was a precarious business. Clark's customary ambivalence about all his beliefs was tied to a gloomy sense of all humanity's irrationality and fallibility. What recurs in his work is not so much the class struggle, though that is there, but the eternal human themes of evil, loneliness, despair and failure. His reading list for every one of the six volumes was sizeable and the influences can be detected—Byron and Pushkin for volume one, Dickens, Tennyson, Thackeray, Wordsworth and Keats for volumes two and three, and so on. But hovering over them all was the gloomy perceptiveness of Dostoevsky which struck a chord in Clark like no other. If anything about Russia really captured Clark it was pre-revolutionary literature—Pushkin, Gogol, Tolstoy and Chekhov, and Dostoevsky in particular.

When Clark's senior colleague, Professor John La Nauze, was asked to review volume one, he reputedly said, 'Oh, I haven't got time for fiction.' La Nauze was the same professor who advised Henry Reynolds not to take up Aboriginal history because there was nothing in it, and who insisted, on another occasion, that 'Australia has a history before 1788. It is the history of Great Britain'. Clark's impact on the meaning and significance of Australia was profound. He was lighting up the unseen and La Nauze could not recognise it. He was writing at a time when Australian history was about things—land, sheep and gold—and when events that mattered were thin on the ground—rum rebellion, Eureka, maritime strikes, Federation and Gallipoli, not much else. Running through volume one is the insistence that Australian history was about great ideas; it was a place where the great value systems of European life were being fought out in an entirely new context. Humphrey McQueen wrote that in *A History of Australia*, 'the villages of Sydney and Hobart assumed the significance of Athens or Bethlehem'.

Like Patrick White in literature, Nolan, Drysdale and Boyd in painting, Clark lifted our understanding of ourselves to a new level. Here was a vision so grand, so powerful and so different that reading it was like waking up in another land, or seeing your own country for the first time. Volume one was a wonderful shock. 'Rest assured', Greg Dening has written in more recent times, 'there will never be another word written in Australian history that is not in some way a response to what he has said.'

The shock of the new and original was also evident in Clark's treatment of Asia and the colonising mission of both Protestant and Catholic powers in the Asian region before 1788. Clark jolted us by placing Australia in Asia. His research in the 1950s included work in the libraries and museums of Jakarta, Madras, Benares and Rangoon. As Holt explains, Clark's idea was that early Australian history was 'part of a wider historical interaction between Europeans and Asia and was not just an isolated British exploit'.

When Geoffrey Blainey was under fierce attack from the Left over his views about immigration, a book of essays was published in which one author referred to Blainey's books as being widely 'distributed'. Robert Manne picked up on this in a way that illuminates Clark's importance. He pointed out that the choice of the word 'distributed' was a case of left-wing

self-deception. The correct verb was 'purchased'. That is, we should use the verb 'purchased' to acknowledge Blainey's popularity and readability. But it follows that critics should do the same for Clark—the most popular Australian historian of all. 'The common reader is Clark's true power base', writes Stephen Holt. The past is precious territory and who controls it is a political issue. It is the popular historians, therefore, who worry politicians and ideologues. Controversy matters to politicians only if it engages people beyond the universities. Clark's following had critical mass. As he explained in his final, unfinished work, *A Historian's Apprenticeship* (MUP 1991), Clark gave a great deal of thought to how to tell the story so it would engage the ordinary reader.

**H**OLT'S BOOK follows Clark's intellectual development, his academic career, his writing and the pursuing controversies, in considerable detail. The spiritual dimension of Clark's life is also sustained up to a point. Anyone wanting to read about his life could well start with this delightful *Short History*. My one reservation is that Holt is gently partisan to the point of

I WANT TO INVEST WITH CONFIDENCE

AUSTRALIAN

**ethical TRUSTS**

Agribusiness or  
reafforestation.

Mining or recycling.

Exploitation or  
sustainability.

Greenhouse gases  
or solar energy.

Armaments or  
community  
enterprise.

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  
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, Duntroon ACT 2602.

underplaying, and thus not explaining, the darker side of what drove Clark, for this influenced his *History* in significant ways, particularly the 'loss of originality and grandeur' in the final two volumes. While Holt follows the agitated critics in detail, he fails to deal with some of the most revealing, and he does not touch on the intriguing clues in *A Historian's Apprenticeship*.

John Carroll's essay (*Quadrant* 1982) on the 'puritan obsessions' which became prominent in Clark's *History* is rancorous and ideologically driven, but it is also extremely powerful. It rightly identifies Clark's primary concern—to write about the rise of democracy and the future of individual freedom in a mass society which had ceased to believe in God. Clark was tracing the trajectory, as he understood it, from a god-governed to a godless world. He wanted to know where this would lead. Repetition, extravagant language, and something of an obsession with the erotic, the violent and the drunken seem to take over late in the project, as does a disdain for popular culture, ordinary people and their ordinary doings, in volume six. Carroll does not explain the timing, but he is much closer to the mark than Robert Manne about the nature of the change.

What Manne sees as 'Marxism-Leninism' is merely the presence of class relations in Clark's work. Clark was always perceptive in this respect and there is no reason to brand his perceptiveness 'Marxist-Leninist', or to blame it on 'pamphlets'. The point, however, is that in the final two volumes of the *History*, class structure is the bearer of deeper, existential concerns which had come to the fore.

Why this was so is a good question in need of an answer. The answer may have to do with Clark's own uncertainties as he grew old, and with the disillusionment he felt with Australian politics after Whitlam. 'Are we a nation of bastards?' he had written in 1976. If any 'pamphlets' returned to capture him late in life they may have been chapters from the Bible. In *A Historian's Apprenticeship* he quoted from Genesis, 'The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth', and described Marxist historians as 'the ones who wanted to substitute a superficial certainty for a profound doubt'. Further on he compared himself to Gibbon: 'His subject was the triumph of Christianity and barbarism. Mine was the more modest one of the bizarre and humiliating contradictions in the lives of all of us.'

Clark frequently reasserted these deeper concerns in the form of an argument with Marxists or the Left. One final quotation:

So when the believers on the Left told me they dreamed of how 'beaut' things would be under socialism, I wanted to tell them my dreams were of shameful deeds in the past, and I wanted to be told how the dirty slate could be washed clean.

Stephen Holt's *A Short History* should be read in conjunction with Clark's final, unfinished work, with careful attention to both the language and its textual settings. ■

**Peter Cochrane** is an Associate of Australian Heritage Projects and a freelance writer based in Sydney. He is co-curating the exhibition 'Belonging' and editing the National Library's *Conversing with a Nation*.

BOOKS: 3

PAUL COLLINS

# Papal diplomat

**Hitler's Pope: The Secret History of Pius XII**, John Cornwell,  
London: Penguin, 1999. ISBN 0 670 87620 8, RRP \$39.95

WHEN PIUS XII (1939–1958) died in 1958 many Catholics felt that a saintly, almost 'divine' pope had passed to a richly deserved heavenly reward. Even before his papal election, as Cardinal Secretary of State, Eugenio Pacelli had always seemed so serene and unworldly that it was almost impossible to imagine him losing his temper, let alone throwing a tantrum and having a screaming match with a visiting German politician.

Yet that is apparently what happened on the morning of 8 August 1931. Pacelli's visitor that day was Dr Heinrich Brüning, German Chancellor and rather conservative Catholic Centre Party (*Zentrumspartei*) politician. He led a country in crisis caught up in the Depression, rampant inflation, unemployment and the increasingly threatening growth of the Nazi Party.

Brüning, whose *Memoirs* are the source of this story, says that Pacelli demanded that he seek Nazi support for his minority government so that he could out-vote the Socialists and smaller parties and fulfil the Secretary of State's favourite scheme, a concordat between Germany and the Vatican. Brüning bluntly refused to do this. He considered it unrealistic; he had much more pressing priorities and he was utterly unwilling to compromise with Nazism.

On leaving Pacelli, the Chancellor commented acidly that he hoped that 'the Vatican would fare better at the hands of Hitler than with himself, a devout Catholic'.

As a devout Catholic, Brüning probably understood Pacelli's political and diplomatic attitudes better than most politicians. In a revealing passage about the Cardinal, later excised from his *Memoirs*, Brüning commented:

All successes [Pacelli believed] could only be attained by papal diplomacy. The system of concordats led him and the Vatican to despise democracy and the parliamentary system ... Rigid governments, rigid centralization, and rigid treaties were supposed to introduce an era of stable order, an era of peace and quiet.

This notion is reflected in the comment of Pacelli's predecessor as Cardinal Secretary of State, Pietro Gasparri, that it was always easier to deal with dictatorial governments which were completely predictable, than with democracies which were characterised by shifting parties, policies and opinions. These comments reveal a lot about the attitudes of Vatican diplomats in this period.

Brüning's observation points us in the direction of the real motivation of Pius XII. The strength of Cornwell's unfortunately titled book is that he sketches an ambience in which we understand why Pope Pacelli acted the way he did, not only with regard to the Jews, but also why he was willing to compromise with Hitler. We also see why he deliberately destroyed Germany's Catholic Centre Party, the one possible



The diplomatic Pope: Pius XII receiving at the Vatican, 1939.

focus of opposition to Nazism. Pacelli saw no place for Catholics in democratic politics because they were not under the direct control of the Vatican.

Cornwell also stresses Pacelli's notion of papal authority. Like the other popes this century, he saw the church essentially as a juridical, hierarchical, centralised bureaucracy, a 'perfect society' complete in itself. It was the task of the pope to rule this society from the solitude of an exalted authoritarianism. The popes were profoundly distrustful of democracy and any form of politics independent of papal control. Even local hierarchies, as the German

bishops discovered from 1933 onwards, were to be largely left out of negotiations with their government.

As Pacelli's friend and ally, Monsignor Ludwig Kaas, commented:

In the state there is the leadership principle; at the Vatican the same holds. If parliamentarianism continues to rule in the episcopate, the church will be the one to suffer.

Cornwell's book is weakest when it tries to argue that Pius XII was essentially anti-Semitic. In the pre-War period, Pacelli manifested the kind of traditional Catholic

anti-Judaism that can be found among right-wing Catholics of the period. As Ronald Modras has pointed out in *The Catholic Church and Anti-Semitism: Poland 1933–1939* (1994), Jews were caricatured as anti-Catholic liberals committed to world domination in league with the Masons.

Cornwell quotes a number of instances where, after the war broke out, Pius XII clearly failed to speak out, the most telling of which for me are the massacres of Orthodox, Jews and Gypsies perpetrated by the Pavelic regime in Croatia. Cornwell shows that information gradually accumulated in the Vatican about the carrying out of the 'final solution' all over Europe. But the Pope still failed to speak out. Why?

*Hitler's Pope* argues that it was because of Pacelli's long-standing anti-Jewishness. I suspect the truth was more complex and related to other elements in Pacelli's personality and theology.

I HAVE FOUND Carlo Falconi's *The Silence of Pius XII* (1970) more enlightening on this question of Pacelli and the Holocaust. Falconi suggests that, psychologically and spiritually, the Pope was placed in an appalling moral dilemma which was heightened by his personal spirituality. While he never doubts his sincerity, Falconi suggests that Pacelli's religious attitude derived from a dogmatic and juridical view of religion, rather than from a mystical or prophetic one. Cornwell would agree with this.

Falconi blames the cardinal electors of 1939 who felt that the Church needed a diplomat to deal with the Nazis and the international situation. He makes the interesting argument that since the Nazis scorned diplomacy, a diplomat was the last type of person the Church needed. He suggests that what was needed was someone who was prepared to risk everything in the established Church to make a stand against the evil that Nazism represented. In other words—a papal prophet! Unfortunately such popes are few and far between.

While *Hitler's Pope* is certainly not the final word on Pius XII, its great strength is that it places the Pope in the broader context of the development of the papacy over the last 150 years and it has a real sense of the ecclesiological issues that underlie the politics.

It is also clear and readable—always a plus for those of us who value communication.

**Paul Collins MSC** is a priest, author and broadcaster.

# Making capitalism accountable

*This spending of the best part of one's life earning money in order to enjoy a questionable liberty during the least valuable part of it reminds me of the Englishman who went to India to make a fortune first, in order that he might return to England and live the life of a poet. He should have gone up garret at once.*

—Henry David Thoreau

(1817–62), *Walden, or Life in the Woods*, 1854

**Jobs of Our Own: Building a Stake-Holder Society. Alternatives to the Market and the State, Race Mathews, Pluto Press, Sydney, 1999.**  
ISBN 1 86403 064 X, rrp \$24.95

**I**N JOBS OF OUR OWN, Race Mathews reflects the widespread concern that economic power is increasingly being concentrated in the hands of international corporations. How then can capitalism be made accountable, so that it truly serves the human flourishing of all human beings, and does not become an omnipotent global master?

Mathews has spent much of his life in federal and state politics and in recent years has championed a new look at mutualism and co-operatives as means to tame the excesses of capitalism.

*Jobs of Our Own* seeks to recover neglected currents in labour and British history, particularly in the distributist writers, G.K. Chesterton and Hilaire Belloc, though not uncritically. Distributism wanted ownership of productive property widely distributed among ordinary people and not concentrated in the hands of the rich or the state. Mathews sees distributism 'as a contribution to debate about Third Way politics, stake-holder society and alternatives to the market and the state' (px).

Not a Catholic himself, Mathews traces the links between British distributism and Catholic thinkers, particularly Pope Leo XIII in his 1891 social encyclical, *Rerum Novarum*, and Pius XI in *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931) which stressed the anti-statist principle of subsidiarity—in other words that the exercise of power in organisations should devolve to the lowest level practicable.

Mathews offers chapters on the increasing concern about poverty in the 19th century, on the English Cardinal Henry Manning and Cecil Chesterton, on Belloc, G.K. Chesterton and later distributism. His quest is not an antiquarian one, to resurrect

neglected writers, but to recover the ferment of ideas in the early labour movement, especially the long debate between socialist and distributist writers, notably that between G.B. Shaw and G.K. Chesterton.

Essentially, Mathews is trying to remove the historical lens of the Cold War clash with communism which so coloured perceptions of earlier socialist movements. The Marxist-Leninist version of collectivism is now largely abandoned as an epic tragedy, with practitioners of its bloody ideology also massacring its ideals. But in terms of both ideology and politics, what can now check an unrestrained capitalism?

Mathews has returned to earlier traditions of socialist thought which embraced the ideals of social equity, human rights, freedom and responsibility, especially as articulated through the social conscience of the Anglican and Catholic churches. However, he realises that for distributist ideas to work, they must reconcile 'the moral case for greater democracy in the workplace with the requirements of productivity' (p4).

**M**ATHEWS INVESTIGATES closely how the co-operative idea has worked in two of its most notable experiments, the Antigonish Movement in Nova Scotia, Canada, and in Spain's Mondragon, both heavily influenced by Catholic ideas of spreading ownership as widely as possible. The Antigonish Co-operative Movement failed by the 1990s because of what Mathews calls the 'Rochdale cul-de-sac', meaning that when the owner-workers handed over control of their co-operatives to professional bureaucracies, the 'agency' problem emerged, with the interests of managers and the worker-owners diverging. In recent years, as in

Australia, many mutual aid societies have been demutualised, to the great financial benefit of the managers.

Despite the history of the eventual failures of most co-operatives, can they be made to work? Yes, says Mathews, and instances the extraordinary Mondragon co-operatives in the Basque region of Spain. They worked where others have failed because they devised methods to counter the agency dilemma and maintain the direct involvement of worker-owners. Indeed, Mondragon has continually reinvented itself, moving into high-tech areas of production. It is currently the ninth largest business group in Spain, employing 30,000 workers and with sales of almost \$6 billion.

Mathews has not here attempted to review the influence of Catholic social thought in general on the co-operative movement. This would require an examination of Catholic movements in Europe, and especially Germany after World War II with its co-determination schemes, and the cross-fertilisation between Catholic and Social Democratic social traditions. However, this would be worth exploring, especially in view of the increasing convergence between Catholic and Social Democrat proposals for the reform of capitalism.

Mathews adds a striking quote from Pope John Paul II, speaking in Cuba in 1998: 'For many of the political and economic systems operative today, the greatest challenge is still that of combining freedom and social justice, freedom and solidarity, so that no-one is relegated to a position of inferiority' (p236).

Indeed. It is a message that the Pope has propagated in practically every country he has visited in many hundreds of speeches, and in his encyclicals. The gap between rich and poor, and how to make the global economy truly serve the human needs of everyone, or—as he puts it—how to make capital serve labour, is one of his most persistent themes. This message has been keenly welcomed in Third World countries, but is generally ignored by the Western media.

As John Paul explained in his 1981 encyclical, *On human work*, the aim is truly to socialise property, that is, 'when on the basis of their work each person if

fully entitled to consider themselves a part-owner of the great workbench at which they are working with everyone else. A way towards that goal could be found by associating labour with the ownership of capital, as far as possible ...' (par. 14). He sees the churches, in dialogue with the leaders of the other great world religions, as providing a moral framework for this reform.

**S**INCE THE COLLAPSE of the Soviet Union, hopes that a more humane form of capitalism might urgently redirect resources to abolish absolute forms of poverty everywhere have been dashed. Global restructuring continues apace, but in whose long-term interests?

As the economist Jeffrey Sachs wrote recently in the *New York Times*, since 1996 the stock market wealth of the rich countries grew by more than \$5 trillion, more than 50 times the debt owned by the 42 poorest countries with a total population of 700 million people. Yet in that same period until the June 1999 debt remission of \$70 billion, the West had written off only \$200 million for just two countries (Bolivia and Uganda). Who can doubt that this is a spectacular failure of moral responsibility

by the West, resulting in literally millions of unnecessary deaths and an astonishing toll of human suffering?

It is urgent that those convinced of the need to foster more widespread ownership in the means of production work out realistic ways to do so, and oppose the increasing concentration of wealth in the hands of the few, with the consequent risk of undermining democracy and civil harmony. We have escaped the apocalyptic revenge of communism against the abuses of an earlier capitalism. Unless we can redress present injustices between rich and poor, other spectres may arise, in a new and terrible form.

*Jobs of Our Own* deserves serious thought about ways of reversing the increasing concentration of wealth, and hence political power. Is it too fanciful to hope that by the end of the 21st century, our descendants will regard widespread ownership of property and the consequent exercise of social and political responsibility as the normal prerequisites for civilised living? ■

**Bruce Duncan** CSSR lectures on history and social ethics at Yarra Theological College, Melbourne, and works also for Catholic Social Services.



Photo (above) and quote (left) from *The Oxford Book of Work*, edited by Keith Thomas. Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1999. ISBN 0 19 214217 8, RRP \$59.95

# FLASH IN THE PAN



## Boy zone

*Erskineville Kings*, dir. Alan White. The idea of Australian 'masculinity' as something to be examined or questioned has been garnering a certain amount of attention in the past few years, not only in academic circles, but in the media and popular culture. The ABC's *Secret Men's Business* is one recent example from the small screen. Alan White's debut feature film, *Erskineville Kings*, offers some similar issues up on the big screen.

The story revolves around two brothers, Barky (played by Marty Dennis, who also wrote the script) and Wace (the all-singing, all-dancing Hugh Jackman). It begins with Barky's return home for their father's funeral, following a two-year absence from the family he had left to escape his father's violence and anger. Barky and Wace's interactions are the core of the film—Wace hostile, resentful, and determinedly fixed in his image of their family; Barky on the other hand wanting to open up old wounds.

*Erskineville Kings* explores these issues in a series of increasingly hostile conversations between the two men as they thrash out their conflicting ideas of family, of their parents and of each other. Unfortunately, the script's origin as a stage play betrays itself in what is largely a series of tableaux: the lounge-room conversation, the bar conversation, the pool-room conversation, and so on. Despite White's attempts to position the characters in the resolutely urban Erskineville, the overtly composed and planned framing of each shot makes

each scene look like a theatrical set, even though the film was shot largely on location.

Worst of all, there's something terribly unsatisfying in the film's exploration of the ideas about masculinity and relations between men that it sets itself up to examine. The traditionally inarticulate and emotionally inexpressive Australian male poses some real problems for anyone wanting to explore him as a character; if you present him as expressive enough to explore an issue, then

you've already misrepresented him. White falls into this trap, perhaps unavoidably, and in doing so gives us a set of characters who simply ring false, as staged and posed as the framing of the film itself. These are issues worth exploring; *Erskineville Kings* just doesn't quite get there.

—Allan James Thomas

## Up the jungle

*In A Savage Land*, dir. Bill Bennett. 'A romantic epic in the tradition of *The English Patient*', my foot. Two anthropologists, Evelyn Spence (Maya Stange, pictured above) and her husband Dr Phillip Spence (Martin Donovan), journey to Papua New Guinea's Trobriand Islands to study a matrilineal society. Evelyn soon discovers that the 'primitive' culture she is studying may grant enormous status to women, but her own 'civilised' culture and, more particularly, her husband, do not. Quickly we discover that *In A Savage Land* is to be an exploration of a white woman's coming-of-age set against an exotic and artfully contrasting backdrop.

Mick (Rufus Sewell), the island's resident rough-neck pearl fisher and, surprise surprise, a kind of God figure to the locals, infuriates Phillip (envy) and intrigues Evelyn (temptation). He just seemed a private school boy on survival camp to me. In response to her husband's lack of interest in her research (Phillip regards her as little more than his secretary) Evelyn decides to leave the village and venture into the highlands to study a group of headhunters. In order to locate them Evelyn enlists the

help of Mick, and—you guessed it—their love blossoms on the muddy jungle paths.

It isn't long before all falls apart between Evelyn and the headhunters, and Phillip realises he has lost a great typist and the Trobriand women realise how bankrupt Phillip's studies are and the war breaks out and everyone's white linen is looking a little crumpled and ...

*In A Savage Land* is well-meant but plonking. The sexual and cultural politics of colonialism are explored with all the vim and vision of a museum diorama. The film's centre suffers from being too serious, the periphery suffers from being too light. The small clutch of colonial/missionary types goofing about in baggy shorts are hard to take seriously at the best of times and close to 'Carry On' at the worst.

—Siobhan Jackson

## Chaps and mishaps

*Affliction*, dir. Paul Schrader. In a central, excruciating scene in *Affliction*, Schrader has his less-than-hero, Wade Whitehouse (Nick Nolte), skol a whisky, wrench out an aching molar with a pair of blue-handled pliers, glare at the offending tooth as though it were a fault in nature, then gargle more whisky and spit blood. The scene could be grotesque but it isn't because Nolte's performance is so finely balanced between fury and pathos, and so physically convincing. He twists his square body to register gradations of angst, lurching through the film (set in bleak New Hampshire) in half-laced snow boots, looking all the while as though he is going to trip over himself. Which he does. Dreadfully.

*Affliction* is another of Paul Schrader's explorations of impacted masculinity (following his screenplays for Scorsese's *Raging Bull* and *Taxi Driver*). Curious then, that the screenplay (written by Schrader and based on a novel by Russell Banks) should let the film down. Nolte could hardly have worked harder. His character has enough awkward humanity to keep us sympathetic—well almost—even when he sets fire to his father (played convincingly as an unregenerate drunk and wife/child basher by James Coburn). And in one gentle scene with Margie, his girlfriend (Sissy Spacek, who is excellent but under-used), you get enough of the whole man to gauge what is lost when Wade staggers into compounding violence, losing love and connection. Willem Dafoe, as Wade's damaged, sensitive brother Glen, plays an

oddly angled part—a sidetrack that the film seems unable to follow. He is also the voice-over of the narrative, just one of several clumsy devices—overdone flashback is another—that pins an otherwise good film down.

—Morag Fraser

## Colour me groovy

*Yellow Submarine*, dir. George Dunning (1968). This amiable bit of stuff has been cleaned up, digitally remastered and released around the world on big screen, video and DVD. Strangely, Dunning and the two scriptwriters, Al Brodax and Jack Mendelsohn, seem to have done little else beside this. Dunning died in 1979.

Being a fervent Beatles lover, I saw *Yellow Submarine* in 1968 when the psychedelia look was a new thing. (Except, of course, that it wasn't exactly new—it was a kind of reinterpreted Art Nouveau, with its neat, sensuous curves describing the ineffable: a sort of calligraphy of infinity, perhaps.) *Yellow Submarine* diluted Art Nouveau's jewel palette to frivolous pastels, jaunty oranges and knicker pinks.

The time was ripe for *Submarine*'s return: the kids of the '90s sensory overload have rediscovered psychedelia through the *Austin Powers* movies, which cleverly recreated the look of Carnaby Street, without, however, being able to recreate the sense of taboo-breaking optimism that tingled in our blood in those days.

Something that *Submarine* was always good for was a sense of buoyant expectancy: everything was going to be all right, people had all realised that war, inequality and sexual repression were not just wrong but silly, and Utopia was just around the corner. So there was nostalgia as I watched the Blue Meanies make war on the happy hedonists of Pepperland, and get vanquished by the power of music, love and the word 'yes'. I remember thinking in 1968 that the animation seemed stiff, but realised this was meant to be kind of arty. That aspect of *Submarine* now looks very fresh: kids used to *South Park* won't be hankering after Disney's counterfeit-reality images. The

film is a delight to the eye, just damn good fun to watch. If you still like *Monty Python* reruns you'll probably enjoy this, and you'll see where Terry Gilliam got some of his influences.

*Submarine*'s plot is simple, and there is some unreconstructed hero-worship in the use of the Beatles as heroes, saviours. But if that jars at first, there is some very nice dialogue, playing around with philosophy, touching even on profundities, no less.

—Juliette Hughes



## Scarlet runners

*Run Lola Run*, dir. Tom Tykwer. Lola (Franka Potente) and Manni (Moritz Bleibtreu) are petty criminals in love, in Berlin. Manni's blond hair is growing out; Lola's red hair is like sports-car duco. Lola is fast and furious, Manni is a nong. Manni is the sort of 'bagman' who accidentally leaves plastic bags full of other people's money on

the train for the local derro bagman to pick up. Derrrrr. Manni's redistribution of wealth is admirable, but not appreciated by the bald psycho he is working for. Manni has 20 minutes to live. Run, Lola, run!

*Run Lola Run* presents three versions of these strangely compelling events, with each episode spiralling in an entirely different direction. With a jumpy mix of animation, montage, grainy video, luscious film and hair colours, *Run Lola Run* is a bright but bumpy ride. A con-

tagious soundtrack does a lot to keep *Lola* running in the right direction—two gun-toting punk kids running slow-mo to the strains of 'What a Difference the Day Makes' can be enormously affecting and funny.

The same cannot be said for the possible futures dotted throughout the film. As *Lola* runs through the bleak urban landscapes of Berlin she bumps (literally) into various characters whose futures are shown in a series of flashed images. With each subsequent episode, different possible futures are flashed, combining the lightweight bizarre with verbose social comment. Either way this exercise was a gentle irritant.

*Lola* relies heavily on our attachment to

the two romantic leads. *Lola*'s curling mouth and flushed desperation had my complete attention. Manni, unfortunately, didn't seem worth all the effort. He would have had me jogging at best.

—Siobhan Jackson

## Fries with that

*McLibel: Two Worlds Collide*, dir. Franny Armstrong. The young director of this film got up and answered questions at the end of a screening in Melbourne. She said that her father had been a filmmaker but switched his interest to the internet. So he had a pile of equipment sitting around unused. Armstrong borrowed it and started to follow the fortunes of two nobodies who were beginning to edge into the news. They were Helen Steel, a part-time bar worker, and Dave Morris, a single dad, who had just been sued by the McDonald's corporation for distributing a leaflet claiming that McDonald's food was unhealthy, its practices environmentally vandalistic, its employment practices unjust, its advertising exploitative, and so on. McDonald's wanted an apology. They got the longest trial in the history of the British legal system. They had millions to spend. Helen and Dave were broke. But they stuck it out for years. Franny Armstrong stuck it out as well.

The *McLibel* trial has been an ongoing public relations disaster for McDonald's. It spawned the website [www.mcspotlight.org](http://www.mcspotlight.org), where, among other things, millions of visitors have watched as McDonald's workers engage in the kind of discussions which are not allowed in their workplace. It has lent impetus to campaigns in Australia such as the 'McMatch and Win' trial and efforts to prevent McDonald's opening in certain locations.

This is an amazing film, partly because of the sheer dogged commitment of both of the people it portrays and the filmmaker herself. Needless to say, TV and other networks in Britain have given it a pretty wide berth. Apparently, they have advertising revenue to protect. It may also be difficult to catch in Australia, although it can be found at [www.spanner.org/mclibel/](http://www.spanner.org/mclibel/), if you don't mind watching films through magnifying glasses. *McLibel* is funny, serious, comic and tragic. It offers a close encounter with people who give a damn and that is an uplifting experience. It may also change the way you eat.

—Michael McGirr SJ



JULIETTE HUGHES

The family story goes (Hughes oral tradition is as reliable or unreliable as any other) that he was working (making a boiler, no doubt) on the huge ship when he was suddenly hailed from above. He looked up the ladder and saw a man holding a bucket of red-hot rivets. 'Cathlic er Protestant?' demanded the man, tilting the bucket. My grandfather, a devout Catholic alcoholic, snapped back, 'I'm an Englishman!' The bigot shrugged and went back to work, leaving my grandfather to reflect upon the Irish (my grandmother was a Caffery) but not, I think, to question the value of an organised religion that can make you end up with a skull full of hot metal. We never did find out what side my grandfather's inquisitor was on. I think he must have been an Orangeman because a Catholic would definitely have had a go at an Englishman. There are long, long memories in Ireland, and they don't remember anything much that was good.

*Eureka Street* the BBC TV mini-series (ABC Sundays 8.30pm) came as a pleasant surprise to *Eureka Street* the magazine. It was no surprise, however, to find that the Belfast street eponymous to the series was as shabby as the one here in Richmond. I doubt very much if there are Eureka Streets in Toorak, North Shore, Mayfair, or whatever is the posh part of Belfast: such places prefer Strands, Boulevards, Drives and Avenues. There's a sense of discovery, free inquiry, disdain for mere façade, a bolshiness about a *Eureka Street*. It resonates with images, however apocryphal, of a dripping, naked Archimedes running out of the house, shouting his triumph that he'd discovered a piece of the nature of things.

For Australians there is also the image of ordinary people rejecting tyranny and corruption, rebelling romantically under a blue flag with stars in a shape that the Northern Hemisphere couldn't see. Things were going to be different for the people who fled or were shed by the old world.

And it was different, and continues to be. Here in Richmond, half of the businesses backing on to *Eureka Street* are owned by Vietnamese; Australia is far more polyglot than any old-world country, and there is a tolerance of different cultures and religions that would be unthinkable in many other places. Like Belfast.

*Eureka Street* the program (*ESTP*) is a sharp reminder (if the news weren't enough) that hatred is a powerful fuel. The hero, Jake Jackson, is a repo man, stalking his impecunious prey with a team of thickies. Economic problems seen in microcosm can be tragic: *ESTP* sees them comically, victims enraged or nonchalant rather than crushed. Up yours, they seem to say—who steals my telly steals trash.

Jake has a heart, and like my grandfather, the sense to shut up about being a Catholic when around his rabid Orange mate, whose recurring nightmare is of the Pope coming to his door (like a repo man in fact) and forcing him to drink Communion wine. Later the rabid one fantasises that since AIDS was killing all the gays, and

# Streets ahead

**T**HE *TITANIC* nearly orphaned my father before she ever left the dock. My grandfather was a boilermaker, and in 1910 he went over to Belfast from England to work at Harland & Wolff's shipyard on the unsinkable wonder.

sickle-cell anaemia killing all the blacks, that there was a perfect way to get rid of all Catholics—poison the Communion wafers. A heart grown brutal indeed.

Jake's fat friend Chucky has different fantasies: he wants riches and beautiful women and, being no Adonis, is unlikely to get the latter without the former. The scam which makes him rich and nets a blonde for his bed is not new: advertise a grossly named sex toy, rake in the money, send the dupes nothing, and then bank their cash safely—few people will pursue you for a refund because no-one wants to see an item titled 'Great Big Dildo Company' on one's bank statement. Chucky excites the interest of Findlater, a financial adviser. Findlater will do the creative accounting while Chucky dreams up and sells his Irish Sea bubbles to quangos. Victorians must surely be thinking of Tricon when they watch it ...

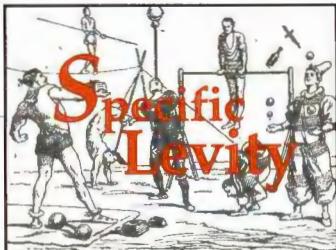
*Eureka Street* the program is in the tradition of so many good films and programs dealing with Ireland, North or South. Roddy Doyle's novels have made great films (*The Commitments*, *The Snapper*, et cetera) and *ESTP* is of that ilk, although based in Belfast rather than Dublin. What *ESTP* shows, as if we didn't know it like our alphabets already, is that Northern Ireland is still Ireland, dominated though it is by British transplants. The urgency, the scatological energy of the speech, the pervading sense of corrosive deprivation, all belong both to North and South, Catholic and Protestant. The deprivation began in old oppressions and grew in the hatred born of oppression's memories. But essential to peace anywhere is a big dose of amnesia, and the Irish are too good at remembering. Stuck in the past, the big haters must evolve or destroy themselves.

**E**VOLUTION IS THE KEYSTONE OF *Walking With Dinosaurs* (ABC Sundays 7.30pm). If you liked the animation in *Jurassic Park* (and whatever the limitations of the plot, the sight of dinosaurs grazing or stampeding was exciting and revelatory) then you and the young fry will be glued to the set for this one.

Kenneth Branagh is the narrator, a tad fruity at times, but instructive regarding pronunciation of names such as diplodocus, emphasis PLOD. The makers have avoided that premier ennui trap of all nature docos, the human-getting-into-4WD or human-talking-to-camera shots (what are voiceovers for if not to avoid talking heads?) and use the Attenborough technique of concentrating on the animals. The result is fantastic. I don't know how scientifically solid are these reconstructions of dinosaurs' lives and habits, but they are fascinating artefacts at any rate. The habits of animals known to us are used as templates for the drama: diplodocus acts very like an elephant; raptors behave very like hyenas or even lions.

The result is a cogent, vivid drama that entices the eye all the time, placing this unimaginably ancient world manageably before us: 'Oxfordshire, 152,000,000 BC' for instance. You'll switch on the answering machine during this program, reflecting on how little a time the bald ape has walked the planet, wondering perhaps whether the great lizards in their hundred-million-year reign knew something we don't. ■

Juliette Hughes is a freelance reviewer.



# Specific Levity

## Eureka Street Cryptic Crossword no. 78, November 1999

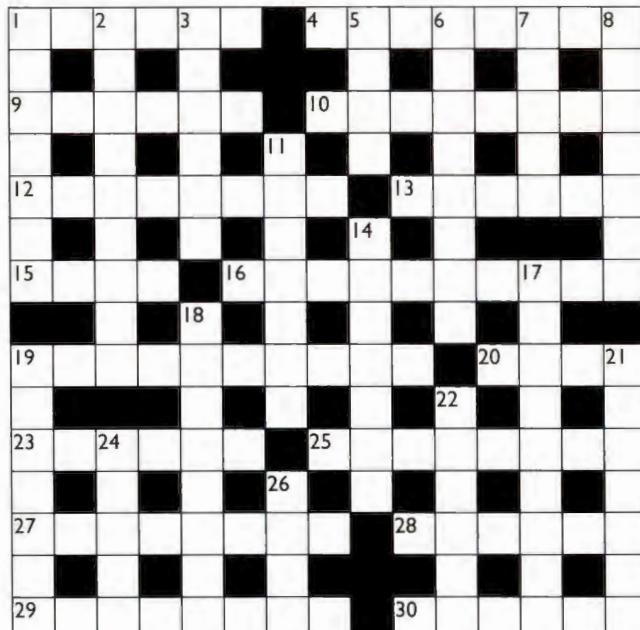
Devised by Joan Nowotny IBVM

### ACROSS

- Slippery-sounding country—used to be 4-across. (6)
- A state of harmony about the beginning of the century. (8)
- Heavenly drink that can bring on trance. (6)
- & 1-down. Representative of 4-across in country such as 13-across. (8,7)
- Keepsake features bar inside; 10-across & 1-down not needed here. (8)
- Is girl able to stay in this country? (6)
- See about driver's licence, for example, at the bathing spot. (4)
- Make mention of the objective with little hesitation—it is a popular choice. (10)
- Greens' cure can bring about new life. (10)
- It can be cast in a post box even before the day of 16-across (4).
- Pay the rent or possibly vacate the premises. This is a warning! (6)
- Invigorate your life by mixing greens, that is, vegetables, in your diet. (8)
- When Tom's house leaders were burgled, their hearts beat wildly. (8)
- Dramatic lawyer brought back first-class wine. (6)
- Handsome fellow batting is no more than a spectator! (6-2)
- When conveyed by 10-across and 1-down, it is said to be royal. (6)

### DOWN

- See 10-across.
- With directions on both sides, top commercial displayed a series of pranks. (9)
- Card game inclined to pack in unpleasant atmosphere? (6)
- Do or die for American aroma! (4)
- Means to make statement on dates. (8)
- Scot's expression of inability to name tropical plant. (5)
- When the sun goes over it, it's time for sailors' toast! A dram may suffice. (7)
- Form of meditation practised within broad parameters by those who show the marks of time. (7)
- Pour the wine without disturbing the first bit of sediment within, meanwhile delivering a discourse! (7)
- He will make no effort, we hear, but still wants to get to the church on time! (9)
- Before taking a stroll, read the introduction on the way to 20-across at the 16-across. (8)
- Enumeration of person's defects, such as being a liar etc.—so to speak! (7)
- Chic model, e.g. Antonia, paraded inside. (7)
- In former French province, art is inclusive of love. (6)
- Sign that six are to leave, apparently. (5)
- 20-across changed from affirmative, possibly, to negative definitely! (4)



### Solution to Crossword no. 77, October 1999



**EUREKA STREET**

This subscription is:

New  Renewal  Gift

Length of subscription:

One year (10 issues for \$54, \$49 concession for pensioners, students and unemployed)  
 Two years (20 issues for \$99, \$89 concession)

overseas rates on application:  
tel +613 9427 7311  
email: subs@jespub.jesuit.org.au

Send to:  
**Eureka Street Subscription**  
**Reply Paid 553**  
**PO Box 553**  
**Richmond VIC 3121.**

(No postage stamp required if posted in Australia.)

### Your Contact Details:

Mrs/Miss/Ms/Mr	First Name	
Surname		
Street No.	Street Name	
City/Town/Suburb	State	Postcode
Daytime Telephone No. ( )		Fax/email

### Gift to: (Please also fill in your own contact details, left)

Mrs/Miss/Ms/Mr	First Name	
Surname		
Street No.	Street Name	
City/Town/Suburb	State	Postcode
Daytime Telephone No. ( )		Fax/email

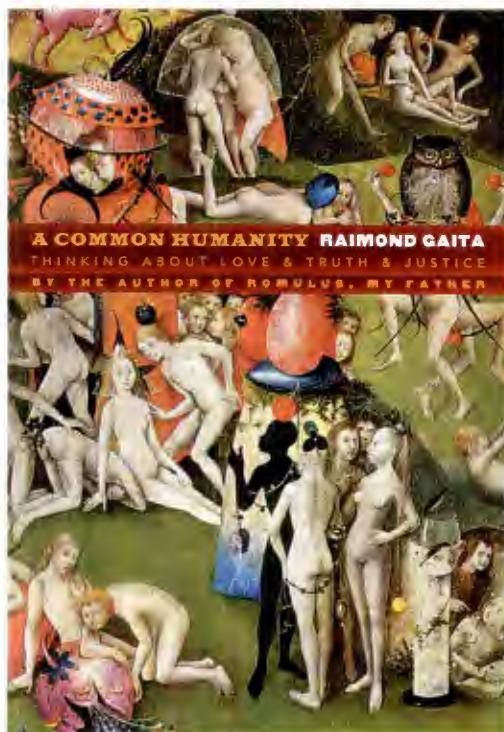
### Payment Details

I enclose a cheque/money order for \$  
made payable to Jesuit Publications.  
 Please debit my credit card for \$

<input type="checkbox"/> Visa	<input type="checkbox"/> Bankcard	<input type="checkbox"/> Mastercard
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cardholder's name		
Signature		
Expiry date / /		

Mailing list: I would like to remove my name from the mailing list when it is used for outside advertising.

# EUREKA STREET



TEXT  
PUBLISHING

## Special Book Offer

### A COMMON HUMANITY: THINKING ABOUT LOVE & TRUTH & JUSTICE

In this marvellous and challenging book, Raimond Gaita (author of *Romulus, My Father*) discusses ideas about love and hatred, good and evil, guilt and forgiveness. Reflecting on concepts of racism, genocide, justice, truth and truthfulness, he raises questions about our search for lucidity and meaning in life. As his focus moves from Mabo and land rights to the Holocaust and the stolen children, Gaita argues that our deepest sense of a common humanity depends on the understanding that every human life is precious.

Moving, wise and inspiring, *A Common Humanity* explores personal, political and philosophical ideas about the kind of society and the sort of public conversation we might have in the 21st century.

Thanks to Text Publishing, *Eureka Street* has 10 copies of *A Common Humanity* to give away.

Just put your name and address on the back of an envelope and send it to:  
*Eureka Street* November Book Offer, PO Box 553, VIC, 3121.

# spirit — dream

Monday 10<sup>th</sup>–Friday 14<sup>th</sup> January 2000  
University of NSW, Kensington, Sydney

Gathering Australians from  
Across The Nation  
To Welcome The New  
Millennium

*Spirit Dream* is about who we are as Australians and what we are becoming, culturally, socially, politically, economically, in our lifestyle, values, justice, ethics and spirituality.

A wealth of our nation's leading presenters, writers and artists from within the Church and wider community will provide keynote addresses, workshops and creative debate on issues relevant to our identity, spirituality and future. The aims of this Gathering are to provide a creative, cutting-edge arena where people can:

- experience and celebrate the spirit of who we are as Australians and what we hope to become
- articulate and express our issues, concerns and longings in open, inclusive dialogue which promotes mutual understanding and acceptance
- embody and promote the values of openness, inclusivity, reconciliation and justice
- imagine and claim our hopes and dreams for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

#### For Programme and Registration Contact:

The Shekinah Creative Centre  
Phone (02) 9484 0252 Fax (02) 9481 9179  
PO Box 54 Thornleigh, NSW 2120

*Spirit Dream* is being hosted by The Shekinah Creative Centre which began in 1991 as a registered non-profit organisation working in the Church and the wider community in the area of Spirituality and the Arts, with particular emphasis on our Australian Spirituality. Shekinah is an ancient Hebrew word referring to the visible presence of God in our world.