





EUREKA STREET

Vol. 10 No. 2 March 2000

\$7.50



 *Ken Inglis tunes in to the ABC's
Thousand Years in a Day* 

 *Frank O'Shea on The Book of Kells* 



 *Gerard Windsor rehearses Irish fibs and fancies* 

 *Kate Manton demystifies digital TV* 

 *Jon Greenaway reports on Wahid's way* 



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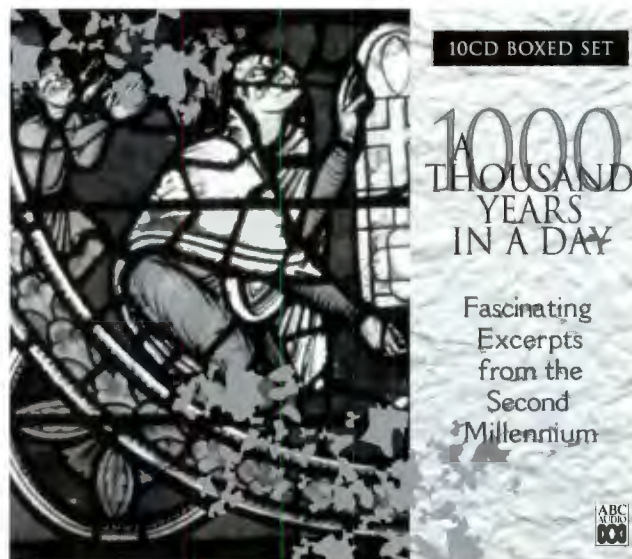
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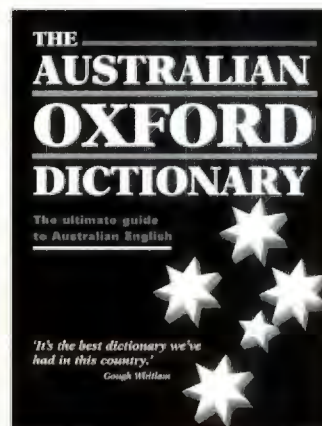
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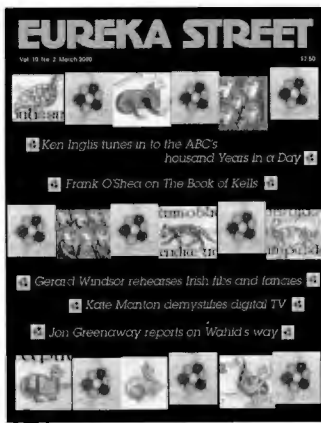
summer quiz answers

1. Miles Davis' *A Kind Of Blue* (1959).
2. The thumb piano used in African music.
3. Katisha, in *The Mikado*, by Gilbert & Sullivan.
4. Anni-Frid Lyngstad; Agnetha Faltskog; Bjorn Ulvaeus; Benny Andersson.
5. Johannes Brahms.
6. Paul Hasluck.
7. In 1624, it was burned down and when rebuilt was called Christiania. In 1925 it regained its old name.
8. a) The Order of St Isabel the Catholic; b) The Order of the Brilliant Star; c) The Légion d'Honneur Grand Croix; (d) Companion of the Order of Australia (AC).
9. Lord Byron was referring to Greece.
10. Trousers and a long-sleeved shirt, with or without jacket, or a safari suit. Not a dinner suit. You will find 'Territory rig' specified in your invitation to a government function in the Northern Territory.
11. The Darwin Club Hotel, similar in some ways to Melbourne's Windsor.
12. The unofficial leader of all the foreign diplomats stationed in a capital city. He or she is always the longest-serving ambassador.
13. The humpback whale: its low-frequency calls are, at 190db, louder than Concorde taking off.
14. *A Handful of Dust*.
15. Augustine Aloysius.
16. Metonymy.
17. The Long March began in Kiangsi, and finished in Shensi.
18. Ataturk.
19. a) Marnie Nixon; b) Marilyn Horne; c) James Earl Jones.
20. a) Figure skating; b) Freestyle skiing (moguls).
21. Robert Lowell, in 'Memories of West Street and Lepke'.
22. a) *Sons and Lovers* by D.H. Lawrence; b) *A Kind Of Loving* by Stan Barstow; c) *Spycatcher* by Peter Wright; d) *Catch 22* by Joseph Heller; e) *Hard Times* by Charles Dickens; f) *Call it Sleep* by Henry Roth; g) *The Big Sleep* by Raymond Chandler.
23. a) The tough, often dead, outermost layer of skin cells; b) The 6-metre coiled tubing that stores sperm behind the testis.
24. a) collective name for the petals of a flower; b) the halo of very hot gas that surrounds the Sun and is visible during solar eclipses. Or a large Cuban cigar, of course, for the extremely politically incorrect.
25. Nobel Physics prizewinners Arno Penzias and Robert Wilson.
26. We, at 46 chromosomes, would be way more intelligent than a pea at 14, marginally dumber than a potato at 48, but shamed utterly by the crayfish, clocking in at 200. Fortunately or unfortunately, it doesn't seem to work that way, or perhaps the spuds and crays aren't letting on.
27. Cardinal numbers have to do with quantity (1, 2, 3 etc.) whereas ordinal numbers (first, second, third etc.) are about order. Funny, that. Nothing to do with cardinals and ordination *at all* ...
28. Early printing (15th century).
29. In 1469: Vasco da Gama and Machiavelli were born; Lippi died; Lorenzo took power.
30. In descending order of perceived status: Brahmans, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras.
31. Mesopotamia.
32. St Benedict of Nursia (c.480–c.547), the founder of Western monasticism.
33. Konstantin Stanislavsky and Lee Strasberg.
34. He was the master gem-cutter chosen to cut the biggest diamond ever found: the Cullinan.
35. Captain Charles 'Chuck' Yeager of the USAF, in October 1947.
36. Just 12 years before, in 1987.
37. Bringing the terms 'junk bonds' and 'insider trading' into general usage.
38. Behaviour unbecoming an evangelist. Bakker drove his poor wife Tammy Faye into terminal mascara addiction.
39. Die.
40. Chicago's O'Hare, at about 2200 aircraft a day.



Thank you to all the brain-boxes who sent in entries for the January–February 2000 Summer Quiz.

Congratulations to winner Carolyn Mitchell of Narre Warren North, VIC, who will receive a copy of *The Australian Oxford Dictionary*, worth \$79.95.



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COMMENT: 1

MORAG FRASER

Coming up

ZEST ALWAYS CATCHES you unawares. It is one of the sparks of incarnation.

The illuminator of the page from the great Book of Kells (below) had zest—whatever word he might himself have used for the quality infused into this sombre moment from the gospel of Mark: 'Now it was the third hour'—the dark time.



Yet here in the midst of death are two golden-haired figures to be grasped before we can move on, even to sorrow. One floats, like a winged alert. The other stares from the top of the column of illumination, separated from his feet, which are at the bottom of the other column. To put him together, your mind's eye must travel through coiling snakes and the

interlocking maze of Celtic calligraphy—humanity in nature, nature patterned but unsubdued.

Every page of this first millennium manuscript has a sparkling abundance, as Frank O’Shea notes in his comment this month. The Book will be on display in the National Gallery in Canberra in Autumn and for Easter. There is one modern pilgrimage that you might think about.

Ken Inglis, writing this month, describes another pilgrimage, this one through the past thousand years, with the ABC’s Radio National as travel guide. We promised you an analysis of institutions in this

year’s *Eureka Street*. Here is our second. With zest.

The Jesuit Lenten Seminars, begun last year in Melbourne and Sydney, are fast becoming an institution. Please join us again this year, at 7.30pm, in Adelaide (St Ignatius’ Church Norwood, 28 March), Melbourne (Xavier College, 15 & 29 March) or Sydney (St Ignatius’ College Riverview, 16 & 30 March) to hear the Hon. Jim Carlton, Professor Hilary Charlesworth, Fr Frank Brennan SJ, John Menadue AO and Fr Geoffrey King SJ examine Morality and Australian Public Life and Public Policy Abroad. ■

—Morag Fraser

COMMENT: 2

FRANK O’SHEA

Celtic highlight

THE ANCIENT IRISH didn’t need much of an excuse to fight, but a row over a book was as good a pretext as any. Take Columcille (521–597) for example. He was of the royal O’Neill clan, a great-great-grandson of Niall of the Nine Hostages whose slave raiders brought the young Patrick to Ireland. He could have been a king, but chose to become a monk instead. (Part of the inauguration ceremony of the O’Neill kings involved an indecorous transaction with a mare; whether this was what decided the young nobleman to choose the priestly rather than the kingly oils is not recorded.)

Columcille studied under the abbot Finian, and was so taken by his master’s beautiful psalter that he secretly copied it. The dispute which followed required the intervention of the high king, whose adjudication—‘To every cow its calf, to every book its copy’—is the first recorded copyright judgment.

The O’Neills were not happy with this outcome and, spurred on by the young prince-monk, found a pretext to coax their opponents into a battle. Nothing in Ireland is ever far from some site of literary significance, and the exchange took place at Drumcliff, County Sligo, a place which today is sanctified by the grave of W.B. Yeats.

It is said that 3000 lost their lives in the fight and whether as punishment imposed by a synod or from remorse, Columcille took 12 of his disciples and went into exile, settling in the barren island of Iona, off the west coast of Scotland. There he established a monastery which came to be one of the great centres of learning and scholarship of its day.

While all this was going on, the Goths and the Vandals were stomping across Europe, hacking at the

atrophied extremities of the Roman colossus, leaving vast areas into which the once-feared legions ventured at their peril.

The world turned empty where they trod,
They took the kindly cross of God
And cut it up for wood. (*Chesterton*)

The barbarian cavalries slashed and slaughtered, carrying off such booty as their culture would appreciate or trade, and burning the great libraries whose treasures were worthless in their unlettered world.

But while the twin lamps of faith and learning guttered fitfully in Continental sconces, the quiet monks of Iona and Lindisfarne, of Clonmacnoise, Clonfert and Clonard (Clon comes from the Irish *cluain*, meaning a meadow) and a dozen other monastic settlements laboured in their scriptoria to copy the sacred books of Christendom. It is to this cultural efflorescence and most likely to Columcille’s foundation at Iona, that the Book of Kells owes its origin.

It is ironic that the religion which had been adopted by Rome should survive through centuries of darkness in Scotland and Ireland, two countries where the Romans had never cut a road or sunk a bath. Ironic too that in a time when Christian orthodoxy was particularly stifling, these northern monks were indiscriminate in what they copied. In time they progressed from the Gospels and the Book of Revelations to the works of Augustine and Jerome and Athanasius, then to the tales and histories of pagan Greece and Rome and finally to Irish grammars or anything else on which they could lay their busy hands.

They were a diverse lot, these copyists, their lives and concerns hinted in the margin notes of their main work. Some amused themselves in verse:

I and Pangur Bán my cat,
'Tis a like task we are at;
Hunting mice is his delight,
Hunting words I sit all night.
'Gainst the wall he sets his eye,
Full and fierce and sharp and sly;
'Gainst the wall of knowledge I
All my little wisdom try. (*Robin Flower trans.*)

Others were cantankerous: 'My curse, and God's curse in addition to it, be on the women who have disarranged all my ink, and my colours, and my books.' Then there were the enigmatic entries: 'Thank God I was not in last night' or 'Brian is a naughty boy.' There may have been a few naughty boys if we judge by another marginal note:

All are keen
To know who'll sleep with blond Aideen.
All Aideen herself will own
Is that she will not sleep alone.
(*Frank O'Connor trans.*)

BY UNIVERSAL ACCLAIM, the Book of Kells is a work of extraordinary beauty. Irish it may be by right of provenance, embellishment and title but it is a treasure of world importance, an attestation that humans can rise above the bonds of sinew and bone to produce a wavering bridge to the divine. The much-travelled 12th-century Welsh bishop Geraldus Cambrensis said as much when he enthused that it was 'the work of an angel, not of a man'.

Modern scholarship says that it is the labour of more than one person, certainly two and in the opinion of some, as many as nine. There are two distinctive styles, one clearly Celtic and one with traces of Arabic or Mediterranean influence. The book is a Latin text of the four gospels, originally in one volume, but bound into four books since 1953. Only the gospel of Mark will make the journey from its home in the vaulted library of Trinity College Dublin to a specially prepared room at the Australian National Gallery in Canberra, where it will be exhibited between 25 February and 7 May.

A page will be turned periodically during the book's Canberra sojourn, each change made under expert supervision and strict security. Visitors may find it open at one of the pages taken up with a single decorated initial letter, interwoven with Celtic swirls, twining tendrils and drawings of enigmatic or grotesque beings. Or perhaps it may be at an elaborate depiction of some scene in the life of Christ, its splendour highlighted by the exuberant representation of the human form.

Only two of the 680 pages in the complete book are without some kind of ornamentation, whether of intricate Celtic artwork or fantasised representations of birds, reptiles and beasts, like the arrow-tailed wolf below.

Wherever it is open, it requires slow, careful and focused scrutiny; it has been said that even though the book was worked hundreds of years before optical aids were known, a proper study requires a 10-factor magnification. Those who have done such an examination have marvelled at the exactness and complexity of the decorations and the way the elements tie together without a single false or irregular line.

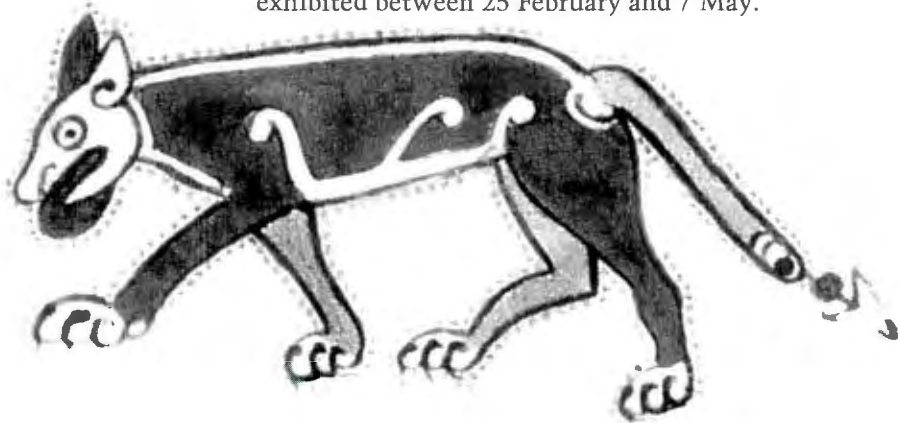
IN THE LAST YEARS of the eighth century, the coastal monasteries of Britain and Ireland were harassed by pillaging Norsemen. These fierce warriors came in their long-boats in search of booty or slaves and even though some of the larger monasteries were like small city-states, they had little chance against such marauders. They came as far south as the Kerry coast where a monk on Skellig Michael is credited with the quatrain:

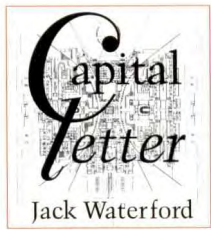
There's a wicked wind tonight,
Wild upheaval of the sea;
No fear now that the Viking hordes
Will terrify me. (*Brendan Kennelly trans.*)

Iona was attacked in 795 and again in 801 and 806. It was after one of these raids that the monks moved their treasures back to Ireland, to the relatively safer haven of a Columban monastery at Kells, some 80km inland from Dublin. Whether the book was completed there or was already in its final state is not known. Its subsequent history is just as hair-raising and eventful and the greatest wonder is that it has survived at all.

Its brief sojourn out of Ireland, only the second in 1200 years, is a result of a five-way co-operation between the libraries of Trinity College Dublin and the ANU in Canberra, the Australian National Gallery and the governments of Ireland and Australia. This is an occasion of joy not only for those with an interest in the sacred or in art or antiquity, but for every citizen of this distant scattering. ■

Frank O'Shea teaches mathematics at Marist College, Canberra.





The bush, the boss, the media and the GST

ONE SHOULDN'T JUDGE the success of the Howard rural strategy merely by the very negative headlines it attracted in the mainstream media. This is not merely because a discount is needed, given that some parts of the media are sick of him, and others are determinably seeking to punish him for failure to indulge their owners.

Of course the safaris excite a lot of cynicism. In the bush, politicians of all stripes are mistrusted even more than they are among journalists. But Howard has not been there merely to appear on city television, and his campaign is an 18-month-long one, where his stolid but nagging style may have more impact than any amount of public relations glitz.

He's back with old-style government—about services and service levels, about education, health care, about infrastructure. One might cavil about how little Howard understands infrastructure, and his mystical sense of rural communities as the essence of Australianness has yet to discover a place for Aborigines. And, of course, the sharp social and economic decline of many of the communities owes much to the economic rationalism and globalisation of the economy he has spent so much of his life championing.

It is acute consciousness of this, indeed, which has made his forays so interesting, and his retreat so profound. Long before Pauline Hanson was feeding off a rural and regional backlash, or Jeff Kennett's arrogance was creating a fresh one, John Howard had not lacked advisers warning him of the problems he was creating for himself. Only now that the polls have moved so sharply, and government has become conscious of how many of its most marginal seats lie in non-metropolitan areas, is government willing to eat humble pie.

And quickly too, even at the risk of choking. The real debacle of the National Textiles intervention did not lie in Howard's mismanagement of the fact that his brother was chairman of the failed company towards which the government was showing such favouritism. It was that the issue of helping workers in such a situation had been on the agenda for over a year, but ministers such as Peter Reith had not developed a single principle as a guide for assistance. In a series of collapses, beginning with a mine at Cobar, it appeared that corporate entities had been restructured late in the day to leave employees penniless but owners with something to salvage. Not only did government do nothing, but Reith's connivance in just such a contrivance on the waterfront two years ago almost gave an impression that such sharp practice was regarded as acceptable.

In recent months, the pressure to find one-off solutions for acute local crises has increased, but when Howard felt forced

to act over the latest one, it was still ad hoc-ery, politics before policy, done entirely on the run, and without a coherent principle to cope with every other knock on the door. Not for the first time were observers wondering whether the government knew anything much about process.

More ominously, some key constituents of government began calculating whether Howard should be displaced. It is hard, however, to see any of the potential successors playing the new pump-priming politics more successfully. The front runners are certainly not well positioned to do so. John Howard's calculations acknowledge that much of the rest of the year will be a horror story with the introduction of a goods and services tax. Even before News Limited turned on the government, there were any number of anomalies—most, of course, created by the Democrats' success in getting some exemptions—waiting to be discovered and exploited by the Opposition and, now, the media. As things stand, it is the small business community which is more alienated from the Liberal Party than the electorate at large. And from Howard's point of view it will only get worse in the medium term. He's not being helped, either, by rising interest rates, since most voters will calculate any change in the fortunes, come 1 July, by how they stood the day before, not two years ago.

KIM BEAZLEY, AND LABOR, have a lot riding on the idea that popular resentment of the GST will remain strong. They have the Canadian, and, arguably, the New Zealand experience on their side. But Howard is looking to some breaks. From the Olympics, and later, from federation commemorations. From tax cuts. Perhaps from some shift of the heat towards (Labor) state governments as they get probably higher-than-expected GST revenues—if some of the burden for the public hospital system goes with it. And from lots of repeat performances out in the bush where John Howard does not do anything very much, but still seems a decent enough sort of guy who listens, keeps coming back even after he gets a bit of a razzing, hasn't (like everyone else) much of an idea what to do about turning back the clock, but seems willing to have a go.

Howard hasn't got anything much to shout about, but expectations of politicians are not very high and his forays might go down a little better than some vague generalisations about concern for education and the general iniquity of some types of tax. Were I Kim Beazley, I'd be polishing up and repackaging Paul Keating's *Working Nation*, and doing so before John Howard discovers and markets it as his own. ■

Jack Waterford is editor of the *Canberra Times*.

No cigale

From Peter Porter

My poem *Late Lines* in the January–February 2000 issue of your journal included a monstrous mistake which must have baffled anyone who read the poem. For some unaccountable reason I used the French word ‘cigales’ (cicadas) in the first line of the last stanza when what I meant was either ‘écrevisses’ (crayfish) or ‘homards’ (lobsters). *Écrevisses* would not scan, so it might have been better if I had used an English word. The poem was written in Corsica which is why I wanted to identify the creatures in the restaurant tank in French. Cicadas couldn’t inhabit a water tank and anyway have no connection with the Samuel Beckett reference of the scream of the crayfish as it is dropped into boiling water. So my revised line should read ‘The old man dreams of crayfish in their tank’. My shamefaced apologies.

Peter Porter
London, UK

Objection I

From Leo Dunne OAM, President Australian Parents Council

I write concerning Sister Brigid Arthur’s book review, *Alliances, Holy and Otherwise*, appearing in the January–February issue. The article concerns Anne O’Brien’s book, *Blazing a Trail: Catholic Education in Victoria 1963–1980*.

As the President of the Australian Parents Council (APC) for the last eight years, I feel obliged to refute statements made by Sister Arthur concerning the Australian Parents Council.

My further qualifications to point out the error of her statements are as follows. I have been a member of the Executive of the APC since 1973; the Executive Officer of the Federation of Parents and Friends Associations of Catholic Schools in Queensland, 1982–1999; a member of the National Catholic Education Commission, 1984–1992, Deputy Chairman of the Queensland

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Catholic Education Commission from 1990 and continuing; and a member of numerous committees national and state, involving Catholic school interests, and the interests of non-government school parents.

The particular statements in the review by Sister Arthur to which my organisation members and I take great exception are as follows:

I always knew that the Australian Parents Council was opposed to the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria and the Catholic Education Office, but before reading O’Brien I did not know there was a connection between that body and B.A. Santamaria and the National Civic Council.

She further says:

The book reveals that, in the war against block funding and a ‘needs-based’ distribution of money, the alliance consisted of Santamaria, Margaret Slattery of the Australian Parents Council, the independent schools and most of the bishops!

The statement apparently made in the book that ‘there was a connection’ between the APC and Santamaria and/or the National Civic Council is purely fanciful.

I can also say from my long working association with Margaret Slattery over the years from 1969

when she took up the position of Honorary Secretary of the APC to her retirement in 1990, that there is absolutely no truth in the conspiracy theory proposed in Sister Arthur’s statements.

The APC was never opposed to the Catholic Education Office and/or the Catholic Education Commission Victoria as documents in existence will attest. It was absolutely supportive of improvements in education, teacher training and the host of other issues being addressed.

The policies of the APC have always supported funding for school students on the basis of need. We have never been opposed to block funding. Our policies have been published repeatedly and often in the *APC Review*, our official magazine since 1975.

Not only is the reporting of the APC policies incorrect, it shows a fundamental lack of understanding about the efforts by APC and many other groups, including the bishops and politicians of all political colour, to try to obtain a degree of justice in government funding for non-government schoolchildren.

I would advise anyone using *Blazing a Trail* as a base document on the history of Catholic Education in Victoria, as is suggested in Sister Brigid Arthur’s review, to remember that the printed word is not gospel and to widen their research base to include the many other available documents.

Leo Dunne
North Sydney, NSW

Objection II

From Margaret Slattery AM MBE
Sister Brigid Arthur, in her review of Anne O’Brien’s *Blazing a Trail: Catholic Education in Victoria 1963–1980* (*Eureka Street*, January–February 2000), says that the book is ‘a valuable piece of history’ and that ‘future writers could well go back to this book as a base document’. Her apparent endorsement of the material in the book should be accepted with caution.

The book contains some historical facts of interest. It also

contains a number of untrue statements about myself and the Australian Parents Council of which I was honorary National Secretary and its principal spokesperson from 1969–1990, during which time I had responsibility with current Presidents for all its official statements and activities.

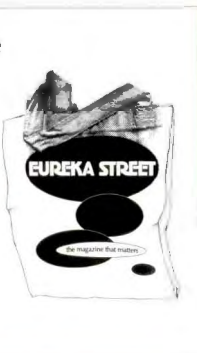
These untrue statements appear to be mired in O'Brien's total misconceptions about the nature and basis of the funding policies of the APC. Nor did she take any steps to inform herself by interviewing me, although the book shows she interviewed many other people who do not receive the prominence that I have unfortunately been given.

O'Brien alleges that the APC and myself were in 'collaboration' with the Liberal Party, with the bishops, with B.A. Santamaria and with the National Civic Council in what she appears to see as an effort to defeat appropriate funding policies for Catholic schools. Such allegations of collaboration and connection are absolutely false, as is her alleged quotation of Dr McKinnon that 'Slattery seemed less concerned about the future of Catholic education than that no credit be given to the Labor Party'. (O'Brien, p117)

O'Brien says: 'By 1972 the APC had informed and convinced almost the whole of the Catholic lobby and their arguments were virtually the only ones being used by Catholic spokespersons' (p87). O'Brien seems unwilling to concede that such unanimity had been achieved because these arguments, based on the right of every child to education of the parents' choice, were seen by Catholic spokespersons to be the best way of achieving funding justice for non-government school students.

The APC is portrayed in the book as a powerful player in the State Aid Scene. It is referred to 46 times over 30 pages in the 200-page book, which makes the author's failure to interview me, or any of the office-bearers of the APC or its past Presidents from 1969 when I first became National Secretary, appear to be a serious omission. The book's bibliography reveals no attempt to research the APC Review, the national journal, published four times per year

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for the last 25 years and which clearly sets out APC policies in full.

Had the author interviewed me and/or done some thorough research on the APC she would have learnt:

1. The 'connection' alleged in the book and taken as fact by Sister Brigid between Mr Santamaria and myself does not exist and has never existed.
2. I have never belonged to any political party nor in fact attended any political meetings.
3. All the Australian bishops were naturally on the APC mailing list. Any influence I may have had on them was because my communications always contained the latest facts and figures on the 'State Aid' issue.

4. In one particularly serious error, the author attributes a series of *Bulletin* articles criticising some of Father Frank Martin's decisions as a member of the Commonwealth Schools Commission, to an ex-President of the APC. The person named has never been a President or Vice President of the APC.

5. My motivation for my many years of honorary work for the Australian Parents Council was based not on 'ideology' as O'Brien's book says, but on an ideal—the ideal that all children were entitled to share equitably in taxpayers' funds allocated to schooling.

Mr Kim Beazley Snr (a member of the ALP, and father of the present Federal Leader of the Opposition) was Federal Education Minister for the life of the Whitlam governments, 1972–75. In 1980 in the book *Melbourne Studies in Education* (Melbourne University Press) at page 46, Mr Beazley had this to say about the debate on the Schools Commission Act in the Federal Parliament in December 1973:

The reference to the prior right of parents to choose was the work of the Australian Parents Council, and possibly especially Mrs Margaret Slattery of Sydney, who negotiated with Government and Opposition over a number of years. The intentions of the Council were to gain reassurance about the right of non-government schools to exist, which has not been disputed in Australia, and to receive public funds which has been disputed.

Mr Beazley's statement is a telling contradiction of O'Brien's ill-founded assertions about the APC's and my motivation and work in the interests of non-government school-children and parents. Mr Beazley's statement clearly shows his understanding that the work of lobby groups like the APC was to present their principles and policies to all political parties without fear or favour.

This is the true motivation and work of the APC.

Margaret Slattery
Wollstonecraft, NSW

Julie Houniet Psychologist

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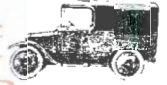
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Cleaned out

PEOPL WHO REACH a certain income level often want a cleaner. It's a trend that reflects modern lifestyles—busy professionals, working long hours. They say they want quality time with the children, or more recreational opportunities. And why should the woman who works as hard as her male partner be the one to clean? The solution to this modern dilemma? Hire a cleaner.

Briefly this summer, when other work dried up but the children still needed their tucker, I took a job with a domestic cleaning agency. This agency was staffed by friendly people obviously enjoying their thrilling ride on the cresting wave of home-help services.

I earned about \$11 per hour. I worked against the clock in hot, stuffy closed-in homes, using a frightening array of cleansers, each one giving off its own chemical tang. Travelling time, petrol and parking-meter fees ate into the hourly rate. We cleaners paid upfront for insurance cover, made contact with clients using our home phones, did all the subsequent on-the-ground negotiations, collected the agency fees, forwarded fees as personal cheques or money orders, were asked to promote the service with leaflet drops to nearby houses, and be 'more than just a cleaner' to clients. I know of other jobs where the hourly rate is lower. Family daycare workers get \$3.50 per hour per child, dishwashers can be paid as little as \$8 or \$9 per hour. By comparison my \$11 looks good.

One stifling afternoon, as I scrubbed at built-up soap scum in an upstairs bathroom, a new client returned to her home unexpectedly, and minus her front-door key. I ran downstairs, opened the door, my face red as a beetroot with sweat visible and staining my shirt, heavy duty gloves on, panting to catch my breath. She recoiled. I felt embarrassed for her. She had imagined

something else—less sweaty, more maid-like—in a cleaning lady. But reality bit. Cleaning in other people's houses is laborious, isolated dirty work that, done thoroughly, makes you sweat.

I drew the short straw in the sort of houses I cleaned. Modern inner-city dwellings, built on small blocks to a vertical plan, are hard on the body. And upstairs doesn't really suit our climate. Professionals seem to need two or three bathrooms whether they are couples or families. Sometimes they are not really homes so much as museums to desirable lifestyles. The upwardly mobile occupy their major asset, while normal people live in a house.

And they are consummate consumers. I used to wonder who bought all those products advertorialised in the Sunday supplements. I met them as a cleaner. Shampoos, conditioners, fragrant oils, cosmetics, hair thickeners, thinners, skin revitalisers and nourishments—never before in recent history have we enjoyed such well-fed hair and skin—marched across the bathrooms, smothering surfaces and shower recess floors. All must be moved for cleaning. Objets d'art, videos, CD players, microwaves, books, vases, candleholders, shoes, sports gear, coffee-makers, wine collections, remote controls, magazines, toys, computers, coffee plungers, more toys ... Stuff near chokes some homes, making cleaning a very tedious business.

This vexed question of the middle class prospering and growing strong on the back of the servant class has taxed far greater minds. One of the 20th century's clearest thinkers, George Orwell, wrote about his stint as a dishwasher in an expensive Paris hotel, describing the *plongeurs* (dishwashers) as the slaves of the modern world.

His work is servile and without art; he is paid just enough to keep him alive; his only holiday is the sack. They have simply been trapped by a routine that makes thought impossible. If *plongeurs* thought at all, they would long ago have formed a union and gone on strike for better treatment. But

they do not think because they have no leisure for it; their lives have made slaves of them ...

Domestic cleaners in 2000 are caught in just such a trap. Possibly some love the work and are happy with the wages but not for long, and not for life.

I am terribly out of step but I'll risk the ridicule and ask, couldn't housework be cheap, purposeful exercise? Isn't teaching children to clean up after themselves an important lesson in life? Wouldn't taking responsibility for the care and maintenance of your own stuff make you think about how much stuff you really need?

Philosophers have written sagely about the descent into decadence of life lived at several removes from reality. Columns of print have been devoted to the great divide in wages, to the gap between rich and poor. Wouldn't it be wonderful if just for a day, as a bold social experiment, wages were paid according to the usefulness to society of the work performed? What shocks, what joys!

More sensibly, to those thinking about hiring domestic help, if you can afford servants then you can afford to pay them a decent wage. If home help, in the form of cleaners, nannies or cooks, is *absolutely essential* to your quality of life, then place a proper value upon it. Ask the agency not what their fee is but what they pay their workers. Add some dollars on if it's too low.

—Linda Gordon

Gone west

ARCHBISHOP OF PERTH, Dr Peter Carnley, was elected Primate of the Anglican Church of Australia on February 4. He replaces Dr Keith Rayner, who retired in November.

The office carries no jurisdictional power, but the Primate presides at general and episcopal synods and speaks on behalf of the Australian Anglican Church in national and international milieux.

In contrast to his predecessor who was cautious with public comment, Dr Carnley wades into topical debate with well-fortified argument. He is willing to canvass his own personal views as well as articulate the mind of the church.

At his first media conference following the election, the new Primate grasped thorny issues of public debate.

On reconciliation: 'I hear from the Aboriginal community that it's very important that the "sorry" word has to be on somebody's lips. I think we have to encourage the Prime Minister to keep travelling with this one.'

On drug reform and shooting galleries: 'It's very important that lives have to be saved. We already provide free syringes to people and that doesn't somehow condone drug taking ... I would approach the question of safe injecting rooms as an extension of that.'

On homosexuality and the clergy: 'I haven't ordained knowingly a practising homosexual person ... The category of friendship is a better category to use to try and understand gay relationships, a better category to use than the category of marriage for example.' A resolution passed by more than 700 bishops at the Lambeth Conference at Canterbury, UK in 1998 opposed gay marriages, but Dr Carnley revealed that he had abstained on this. 'The Anglican Church of Australia doesn't have a mature mind on the issues as a whole just yet; on the other hand we are absolutely unanimous that promiscuity, whether in relation to heterosexuals or homosexuals, is out.'

Dr Carnley's Cambridge doctorate 'concerning the church and its memory of Jesus' evidently weighed in his favour, following misgivings over his book *The Structure of Resurrection Belief* which casts doubt on the physical resurrection of Christ.

Originally from Bathurst, Dr Carnley trained at Morpeth Theological Seminary. Graduating with a BA from Melbourne's Trinity College, he won the Lucas Tooth Scholarship and went on to Cambridge. He was Warden of St John's College, University of Queensland, from 1972 until 1981 when he was consecrated Archbishop of Perth.

Perth is a somewhat remote fiefdom in the Anglican Church—only once before has the Primacy gone to West Australia (during World War II). Unless Dr Carnley considers a move to the eastern seaboard, the West will be well-represented from now on in Anglican public debate. Last November he described proposed changes to native title legislation in the West Australian Parliament as 'a bit draconian', and three years ago put his hand to an open letter, published in London, calling on the British prime minister to raise human rights issues with Mr Howard.

The question is whether the Anglican Church in Australia can cope with this style of leadership. Dr Carnley is optimistic. 'I think Anglicans are not Christians who leave their minds at home when they come to church. I think it would be short-changing Anglicans to think they cannot grapple with difficult issues. I think we are a church which encompasses a huge range of belief, a huge range of attitudes on a whole range of moral issues. Somehow, perhaps by a miracle, we're able to hold ourselves together; and certainly we've demonstrated that we can have a civilised and rational conversation with quite difficult topics, and perhaps in the end agree to differ, but we've got to have the conversation.'

Dr Carnley, who is 62, is expected to fill the role of Primate until 2008, when he is bound by current canonical law to retire.

— Maggie Helass

Talking horse

AS THE HOBART CUP loomed, the summer weather turned grey and wet. The mood at the Man O'Ross Hotel was edgy. The publican had sacked apprentice jockey James Nevin for riding his horse Tiger Talk diffidently at Devonport. The horse was then 'given an easy run' when second at Elwick. How would he fare on Cup Day against the Tasmanian weight-for-age champion Royal Rambo? Before these quandaries were sorted out, I'd worked my way back into the local scene by backing first starter Jadore. The filly obligingly saluted at tote odds of 56/1. How easy punting sometimes seems.

That day—the Saturday before the Cup—the Tasmanian Racing Club also staged the Peter Bakos Memorial Handicap. The race is named in honour of one of the smallest and not most prodigiously talented of jockeys, but a man who earned affection and respect as a raconteur and peerless maker of whips. Each year he came for the Hobart Cup, as so many mainland jockeys have done. Scobie Breasley never won a Melbourne Cup, but in 1947 he took the Hobart Cup on Wingfire. This year Damien Oliver was across to ride the favourite Midnight Sun (a mare in foal to Snippets) for Bart Cummings.

Racing began in Tasmania in 1814 at New Town, just north of Hobart, with a four-mile match race between Cheviot and Diana—over three heats. The TRC established its headquarters at Elwick in 1875, the year the first Hobart Cup was run. Snug in a bend of the Derwent River, the course used to sport a drive-in cinema in its centre and once, on an especially windy day, hosted Pope John Paul II. In genteel times, punters arrived by boat. Now they pile into the carpark opposite the Showgrounds before beginning their assault. Good horses have won the Cup. In 1883 The Assyrian scored under 67kg, after winning the Melbourne Cup the previous year. The next horse to manage the double (in reverse order) was Piping Lane. Victorious at



Elwick with Roy Higgins up, he was a surprise winner at the friendless odds of 40/1 at Flemington in 1972.

This was the day when the famous Tasmanian artist Geoffrey Dyer took a day off from teaching to go on the punt, only to be accosted at twilight by a TV camera crew conducting a vox pop. Asked what he thought of the gallant win by the local horse, the artist replied that Piping Lane lacked charisma. Next day his benign headmaster told him that if he had to wag school, at least stay off television.

The night before the 2000 Cup, Moonee Valley staged the Australia Stakes meeting. The main race marked the return of brilliant colt Redoubt's Choice, conqueror of Testa Rossa in the Caulfield Guineas in the spring. But 'enigmatic' would do for him as well, for the filly Miss Pennymoney ran past Redoubt's Choice at the top of the straight to win easily. It seems that the colt's connections have still not worked out how best to ride him. Darren Beadman, back from a two-year lay-off answering God's call to be a pastor (Bart Cummings advised him to get a second opinion), is tipped to replace Jim Cassidy on the horse.

Apeing, or parodying Fashions on the Field at Flemington, Cup Day at Elwick featured a very tall woman with a hat made of pink, orange and yellow gerberas. She complimented all those, like her, who had painted their handbags and toes, and the many who were 'accessoried to the max'. When the business started, with surrounding grey hills under cloud, women jockeys won three of the first six races. Beverley Buckingham and her successors have always been best treated in Tasmania.

Young Niven, although off Tiger Talk, won his first ever race—on 40/1 outsider Nexus. He thanked his pop who'd brought him up after both parents were killed in a car accident. In the Thomas Lyons, the aforesaid Tiger Talk ran a gallant second to his stablemate and full brother O'Donnell. Royal Rambo, unhappy in the sloppy ground, ran third.

In the Cup, Oliver had Midnight Sun handy, but was boxed in by Devonport Cup winner Torbellino (whose other claim to fame was once running third to Tie the Knot in Sydney). But it was a day for lightweights. Lord Baracus charged from well back to win and punters celebrated a 'local' victory. Jockey Wayne Davis had moved from Victoria seven years before. Lord Baracus may never be mentioned in the same breath as the best Tasmanian gallopers, Malua and Sydeston, or even Strop

who won four Launceston Cups and the Hobart Cup at 14, but the luck, acceleration and handicap were right on the day. As for the publican of the Man O'Ross, second money for Tiger Talk was worth two city wins out of carnival time, not that he shouted the bar.

—Peter Pierce

Church in Ireland

THE LAST TIME I was in Ireland, 13 years ago, there were numerous reports of moving statues. We've found out since that they had reason for their agitation. The public reputation of the Catholic Church has been clouded by a succession of scandals and church attendance rates are steadily declining, especially among urban populations and young people. On top of that, traditional Irish identity derived from a combination of land, nationality and religion is dead, we are told, and the vacuum is being filled in all kinds of creative and/or blind-to-history ways.

One of the features of the new pluralist Ireland is the rise of the Church of Ireland, at the very least in its own estimation. It has tiny numbers but its vision of itself is large: its Primate, Archbishop Robin Eames, sees his church as offering a middle way, a *via media* between the 'extremes' of Catholicism and Presbyterianism. Another prominent cleric, the Dean of St Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin, Robert McCarthy, describes the Church of Ireland as filling a longing for continuity and connection with the past since it represents an unbroken tradition, both in buildings and culture, whereas modern Ireland is the product of a post-Famine wiping clean of the slate.

In the Republic, the Church of Ireland represents a tiny three per cent of the population, and in the North it is the minority Protestant church with Presbyterians in the majority. It never had a large membership but it still does count among its congregations some of the most influential people in Ireland, particularly in the spheres of business, finance and the professions, not to mention the bigger farmers, the ones

who are surviving Ireland's engagement with the European market.

Until the mid 19th century the Church of Ireland was an arm of colonial government, to which all Irish people were obliged to pay taxes. It had a 'terrible, terrible history' says historian Liam Swords, except for the period of the Great Famine when Church of Ireland clergy, and their wives, took a lead in providing relief for destitute and starving people in their parishes.

With disestablishment in 1869, the Church of Ireland began a century of decline, at least in the Republic, as land redistribution, civil strife and, ultimately, Irish independence compromised its economic base, undid its civic importance and led to large numbers of its adherents leaving the country. Then there was the requirement that Catholic marriage partners promise to bring up their children as Catholics, so that the inevitable inter-religious marriages continued to deplete the Church of Ireland population.

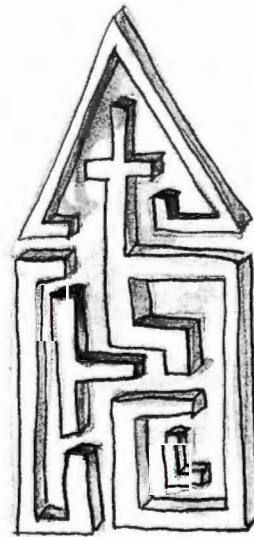
The numbers are still going down and indeed the level of religious practice among members of the Protestant churches in Ireland is lower than among Catholics, but there has been a subtle change in the Church of Ireland's presence in Irish life. In the Republic it has come to represent liberal views on a range of contemporary issues—as well as Unionism and the British establishment. Unlike its counterpart in

England, it took up ordaining women without any great ructions in the pews.

The Church of Ireland has become attractive to some Catholics disenchanted with the Catholic Church, and to certain of the upwardly mobile who perceive the former established church as more socially prestigious and certainly offering a better sort of schooling for their children. In public at least some of its spokespeople have become less polite: Dean McCarthy, who stands in succession to Dean [Jonathan] Swift at St Patrick's, has taken to chiding the Catholic Church, in particular its leadership. When his public offer of St

Patrick's for 'Catholic Masses for tourists' was declined by Catholic Archbishop Desmond Connell, McCarthy responded with disappointment that 'an opportunity for moving things on a bit' had been missed.

McCarthy has called Archbishop Connell a 'product of a bad system' and



criticised the Catholic hierarchy for failing to lead from the front. He knows that every word he says will be covered by the national media: 'There has been a lowering of esteem sadly and very understandably for the clergy of the Catholic Church in Ireland because of recent scandals, and in a sense the Church of Ireland is now and for however long it lasts the favourite son of the press in Ireland.'

Church of Ireland clergymen to whom I spoke invariably referred to the sorry standing of their Catholic confrères, but they are compromised too, not by the temptations of too much power but by the atavistic lure of sectarianism and a long-held habit of vacillation. In the Republic they are embarrassed, and helpless, in the face of the stand-off organised around the parish church of Drumcree near Portadown in Northern Ireland. There the vicar has lent his support to Orangemen whose protests have led to violent clashes with both the British Army and the police, and to a number of deaths, including those of the three Quinn children who died when their house on a Protestant estate was firebombed.

Archbishop Eames has been accused of making public statements which are closely argued presentations of current Unionist thinking, and certainly some of his own clergy in the Republic have been strongly critical of his failure to make a clear and decisive condemnation of the Orange Order.

The whole point of leadership, says Dean McCarthy, is that it should be able to take a wider view. The Archbishop fears losing the rank and file: 'There is a very narrow elastic line between leadership and leadership that has lost its relevance because you have lost touch with what the rank and file are thinking.' It took the deaths of the Quinn children before he was able, publicly, to oppose the Orange protests at Drumcree. One of his clergymen in Portadown has written about the very tribal nature of Unionism and how it has to be helped to move on. In the coming weeks Archbishop Eames' leadership will be tested as the next chapter in the story of the Belfast Peace Agreement unfolds. —Margaret Coffey

This month's contributors: **Linda Gordon** is a freelance journalist; **Maggie Helass** is a Brisbane-based journalist who has worked on assignment for the Anglican Church in the UK, South Africa and Australia; **Peter Pierce** is *Eureka Street's* turf correspondent; **Margaret Coffey's** program in ABC Radio National's Encounter series on the Church of Ireland will go to air on 12 March at 7.10am (repeated 15 March at 7.10pm).



Igniting the conversation

TO CELEBRATE PASSING THE MILLENNIUM, what better than a Symposium and a Festival? The Symposium was organised and published by the independent Catholic magazine *Commonweal* (19 November 1999). The topic was the Crisis of Liberal Catholicism—a topic which usually educes gloom and rhetorical overkill. Here, it prompted an admirable conversation, characterised by mutual respect, intelligence and passion.

Chicago Cardinal Francis George developed an earlier comment that 'Liberal Catholicism is an exhausted project'. He argues that Liberal Catholicism had helped the church to free itself from conservative social and political alliances and to learn from what was good in modernity. But when that task was accomplished at the Vatican Council, it allowed its agenda to be set by the individualism and fashions of contemporary society. George argues that this is a dead end. He argues his case well, and will be worth hearing when he visits Australia in May.

Former *Commonweal* editor Peter Steinfels who, like the Melbourne philosopher Max Charlesworth, has long defended the cause of integrity within the church, argues persuasively that the contribution of Liberal Catholicism has been never more needed—in the face of intolerance within the church and of hostility to Catholic moral principles in wider society. He recognises, however, the trends criticised by George, rooting them in an over-simplified appeal to Gospel principles which is used to deconstruct the Catholic tradition.

I read the contributions to the Symposium with the mixture of affirmation and reservation habitual to one who is conservative by upbringing, liberal by education, and radical by calling. But to my ear something seemed lacking in this rich conversation. I put my finger on it at the festival. This was the Marist Youth Festival, at which a few hundred idealistic young people reflect on their faith.

The Festival confirmed Steinfels' advocacy for breadth of conversation. Among young adults, the conversation must recognise hesitations and emerging certainties, the value and limitations of contemporary song and culture, and the passion for goodness outside as well as inside church boundaries. Otherwise, it simply confirms dislocation. Journalist Martin Flanagan and singer Shane Howard were as central a part of this conversation as was Bishop Brian Heenan. The Liberal Catholic insight is that to censor or control this conversation is ultimately an act of infidelity for it denies the central truth that God speaks in each person's heart. The Festival, however, also confirmed Cardinal George's insight that the conversation must sit comfortably within the church and direct attention to the Jesus Christ who is met there.

Breadth and boundaries in conversation are essential, but they do not give life. At the Festival, life came as young people, immersed in a variety of welfare commitments, found that others shared their spirit. The preoccupation of the Symposium with church structures, accommodation to modern culture, the need for good scholarship, was important. But I found lacking any consistent focus on the radical call to follow Jesus Christ. Conversation comes alive when people walk the boundaries of the kingdom of God. ■

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With their move into job-search programs, are church agencies living out a commitment to justice, or simply doing the government's job? And what is the theological rationale, asks Neil Ormerod.

Drawing the line

THE RECENT SUCCESS of four major church-based welfare agencies in gaining government funding for job-search programs has created a flurry of debate and discussion.

From the initial publicity—31 December 1999 in the *Sydney Morning Herald*—the topic was in the press, either as letters, opinion articles, or news commentary, for around ten days. There were contributions from a social philosopher, a federal minister, an anti-discrimination advocate and even a Catholic bishop.

The ensuing debate has raised a number of issues, but perhaps the most profound, from a theological perspective, is that of the relationship between the mission of the church and its involvement in publicly funded social welfare programs. As Bishop William Brennan asked, 'To what extent is such an activity consonant with the church's main role of proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ?'

Such questions are not new to theology and the answers that have emerged have their roots in the long and controverted topic of the relationship between grace and nature, a point emphasised by John Milbank in his dense work, *Theology and the Social Sciences* (Blackwells, Cambridge, 1990). These days, the problem is more likely to be articulated as 'secular versus sacred', each with its own proper 'sphere' of activity. The question then is, where does one draw the line? Milbank's own preference for the sacred to 'abolish' the secular and for the re-establishment of Christendom—or 'sacralising the secular', as Bishop Brennan puts it—is hardly likely to inspire confidence in those upholding the value of a pluralist society.

Theologians have offered a variety of solutions to the question posed by Bishop Brennan. In *Foundational Theology*

(Crossroad, New York, 1985), American Catholic theologian Francis Fiorenza outlines a number of suggestions that have been offered by both modern and classical theological sources. Traditional Catholic fundamental theology, drawing on the grace–nature distinction, defined the mission of the church in terms of a supernatural goal, identified as salvation or the beatific vision. This stance minimised or denied any proper mission in society, the economy, politics or culture.

Fiorenza also identifies an approach which he calls the 'substitutive mission', associated with the German Protestant theologian Wolfhart Pannenberg, and Catholic theologians Richard McBrien and Juan Luis Segundo.

Pannenberg stated that 'specifically social activities of the Church (its welfare organisations, childcare centers, nursing and hospital establishments, schools, etc.) are subsidiary and temporary. The Church engages in these activities as a substitute for the political structure of society' (Fiorenza, p202). This approach leaves unanswered the question of how this should be done. Is it a function of the church as church, acting in an institutional capacity, or of individual Christians, acting within the socio-political structures of the day?

To pose this question is to consider the model Fiorenza identifies as that of 'unofficial mission', which he associates with one of the major Catholic theologians of the 20th century, Karl Rahner. For Rahner, 'the church as official church ... is not the immediate or the proper subject for realizing the concrete humanization of the world'. To promote such a course of action 'would be to reintroduce clericalism and integralism' (p204)—integralism being that notion that the church should control all aspects of

society. Rahner identified a serious danger of 'clericalism and integralism' when the church adopts 'official' stances in the socio-political sphere.

Next, Fiorenza identifies the 'partial mission' model, associated with American Catholic theologian Michael Fahey, which locates the social dimension as one of many in the church's overall mission. But as Fiorenza notes, 'because this approach divides up the Church's many tasks, it does not sufficiently explore how they are interconnected' (p206).

Finally, he offers his own approach, proposing the following rule: 'the more the social or political ministry of the Church is related to Christianity's interpretative and practical function as a religion to exhibit and to proclaim Jesus as the power and wisdom of the universe, the more constitutive, essential, and distinctive this ministry is' (p223). He then uses this rule to examine various cases, to justify the involvement of the church in areas such as schools and hospitals.

EACH OF THESE conceptions of the relationship between church mission and social agency would respond very differently to the current debate.

The traditional approach would have most difficulty justifying the contribution of church agencies to job-search programs. They would not be seen as part of the supernatural goal of the church. The 'substitutive mission' approach could justify it, but only as a temporary activity until such time as the government took up again its social responsibilities. One can see something of this approach in Bishop Brennan's assertion that 'finding work for the unemployed can be a charitable work, but only, I suggest, if no-one else is doing it'.

The problem for the 'substitutive mission' approach would be that government is actually withdrawing from the responsibility through outsourcing. The 'official/unofficial' stance might note that church agencies such as Centacare are largely run by the laity, though with encouragement and support from the church hierarchy. As such these agencies are not 'officially' the church. Many commentators in the debate might be sympathetic to the 'partial mission' approach which accepts that such work is a part but not the whole of the mission of the church, but as Fiorenza notes, this leaves too many unanswered questions. His own approach would recognise the validity of such work, while acknowledging that it is not a 'core' activity.

My own favoured approach would be to understand the church's mission as follows: the transformation of the present situation to a new situation which more closely approximates the Kingdom of God on earth, through the promotion of a self-sacrificing love which overcomes the evils of the present through redemptive suffering. While this mission is primarily aimed at the religious and moral transformation of persons, it extends itself into the cultural and social dimensions to the extent that these too are affected by the problem of evil.

No-one would doubt that unemployment is a great social evil. Human dignity is linked to our ability to participate in the culture and contribute to the social order. Christians confronted with large-scale unemployment will seek to transform that situation to one which is more equitable and just. But who are the proper agents of such a transformation? Is it the 'church' as commonly identified with the hierarchy of bishops and priests or is it the laity of the church?

Here the teaching of the church is clear. Paul VI's Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, identified the arena of the lay mission as 'the vast and complicated world of politics, society and economics, as well as the world of culture, of the sciences and the arts, of international life, of the mass media'. In Western liberal democracies such as Australia the provision of social welfare services is part of the 'vast and complicated world' that Pope Paul identified.

Such action can occur on an individual basis. There is also nothing which

would indicate that such action cannot be more organised and institutionalised, and that those so involved cannot receive the recognition and support of the church in undertaking this aspect of its broader mission. Organisations such as Centacare, Mission Australia and Wesley Mission clearly fall into this category.

BUT THERE ARE STILL concerns that need to be raised.

In Australia, the provision of employment services has been the primary responsibility of the government, but this should not preclude provision by other services, as occurs in health and education. Is the government withdrawing from its responsibility, or is it simply ensuring that it is carried out by other means (outsourcing)? If the government is withdrawing from a real



responsibility, are church agencies complicit in the evil so involved, even in the very act of tendering? These are complex issues, balancing policy, efficiency, responsibility, and *realpolitik*. Any moral investigation is likely to be inconclusive and open to dispute.

Will the church's acceptance of government funding result in its silencing on government policy? Governments have already attempted to silence funded bodies by withdrawing funding following criticism of government policy. Would funding to Centacare for job searching silence the bishops on government unemployment policy? Would it silence Centacare? Would Centacare be willing to lose funding over a major policy conflict? Would an irate government distinguish between a criticism coming from these two different sources? Again these are complex issues but their resolution lies in the moral resolve of

those who lead such agencies and the leaders of their churches. If they are people of moral courage they will not be silenced by such pressure.

Finally, government funding increases the pressure for agencies to develop bureaucratic structures parallel to those of the public service. Governments like big projects, large structures and bureaucracies which can keep track of every penny spent. Already we have seen agencies develop new corporate structures in order to comply with tendering requirements. If church agencies simply duplicate the big bureaucracies of government, if they neglect the issues, concerns and resources of local communities, then they run the danger of violating basic principles of subsidiarity, much as present government bureaucracies do.

What is not clear in all this is the role of the bishops. Bishop Brennan complains that Centacare did not consult the bishops about the 'wisdom or propriety' of tendering for these major government projects. Is the source of this complaint a genuine theological concern or is it one of political power within the church? Certainly the expertise of the bishops does not lie in the vast and complicated world of economics, politics, and social policy, which is the proper domain of the laity, and within which Centacare largely operates. Nor is it likely that any unanimity would be found among the bishops on such matters. But a lack of unanimity should not prevent action being taken, though a process of review may be called for.

The theological difficulty lies in identifying where agencies such as Centacare fit within the mission of the church, and a variety of positions are possible on that issue. The political issue lies in the fact that local bishops are generally the official chief executives of Centacare and so see these agencies as part of their proper domain.

If nothing else, perhaps the debate over job agencies will help clarify these matters for future reference. Given the current government predilection for privatisation, this is not likely to be the last time we see church agencies tendering for and winning large government contracts. ■

Neil Ormerod lectures at the Catholic Institute of Sydney.

Is there a cure for Melbourne's Catholicism?

MANY CATHOLICS in Melbourne are feeling troubled.

Increasing numbers feel that what was arguably once Australia's most thoughtful Catholic diocese is in danger of being dumbed down or shut up by church structures that seem increasingly authoritarian. Dissenting priests and religious are marginalised.

Reports have surfaced of Melbourne Archbishop George Pell's opposing the invitation to two respected academics, Professors Max Charlesworth and David Tacey, to speak at a seminarians' conference. It would appear that the orthodoxy of these two lay experts is now in doubt—though this is not stated in any open forum where it could be freely discussed, much less debated.

Dr Pell, like a number of his fellow priests and bishops, has had encounters with gay and lesbian Catholics and their supporters over the issue of full participation in the Eucharist by people from the 'Rainbow Sash' group (who openly demonstrate in church for a change in the church's stance on homosexuality). More recently, the Melbourne diocese has become associated with a group which holds out the promise of a 'cure' for gayness and lesbianism. Called 'Courage', this American organisation is controversial, and viewed by many as extremist. (One Australian ecumenical church group, which provides pastoral care to celibate homosexuals, has cut its links with Courage because of Courage's draconian approach.)

Courage requires that its gay and lesbian members acknowledge their sexualities as moral failure and psychological illness. It is widely recognised in clinical and sociological circles that such an approach can foster an unhealthy mixture of guilt and shame, even a state of self-loathing, further marginalising people within the church and the wider community. It can lead to a range of

pathologies, including depression and suicide, and involves a merciless regime of 'treatment' that diminishes personhood rather than nurturing its Christic potential.

Courage's views on homosexuality are contradicted by mainstream psychological and psychiatric opinion, which suggests that gayness and lesbianism are normal expressions of human sexuality, that homosexuality is genetically and culturally shaped in the same way as heterosexuality. And heterosexuality is itself a very broad category, covering diverse identities and expressive practices.

If there is a theology of human sexuality behind the exclusions of openly gay and lesbian Catholics, it appears to be worryingly ignorant of social scientific advances in our understandings of gender and human identity. We now know that gender and identity are continually being shaped by, and are continually shaping, culture and personal experience—all of which is spectacular evidence of the ongoing Creation.

A seriously articulated gay theology (as signalled by writers like Andrew Sullivan and the late John Boswell) would not be at all out of place in these important discussions. But there is no evidence that such a theology is informing the decisions being made in the Melbourne diocese.

HOMOSEXUALITY, then, needs no cure. Perhaps what does need curing is a church which is unable to see the divine giftedness in human sexuality's many expressions of intimacy, caring, relating, loving, nurturing, comforting, healing, consoling, reassuring, affirming, delighting. These things are all part of what the great social psychologist Erich Fromm called 'the art of loving'. It is an art to which the Melbourne Catholic hierarchy seems less than attuned.

Many lay people think that the hierarchy has become too preoccupied with the harm caused by a few sexually abusive priests. And the hierarchy exhibits a seemingly obsessive anxiety about homosexuality. It is as if there are no greater sins or social problems.

The spirituality informing this sexual preoccupation has its counterparts in a Vatican style and stance that is increasingly bureaucratic and out of touch with local experiences and realities. At times it also seems tinged with a worrying mariolatry—worrying especially in the context of the sexual phobias that colour some of the pronouncements about sex.

This spirituality has contributed little to the articulation of a contemporary Australian theology and spirituality that can come to terms with Australian Aboriginality, with our remarkable multicultural achievements, our proximity to Asia and its great religious civilisations, and the problems and possibilities inherent in globalisation. For many lay Catholics it seems increasingly alien and oppressive. The focus on sex at the expense of wider concerns about ethical living in this part of the world is especially destructive.

So, many of Melbourne's Catholics face a dilemma. On the one hand they want to live out the sublime gospel of unconditional love that is at the heart of a compassionate Catholicism. On the other hand they are confronted—and increasingly affronted—by an ascendant authoritarianism. It might have been possible in the past to ride roughshod over the laity. But today the laity is aware that, in its rich pluralism, it reflects the myriad intimations of God's real presence in the world. ■

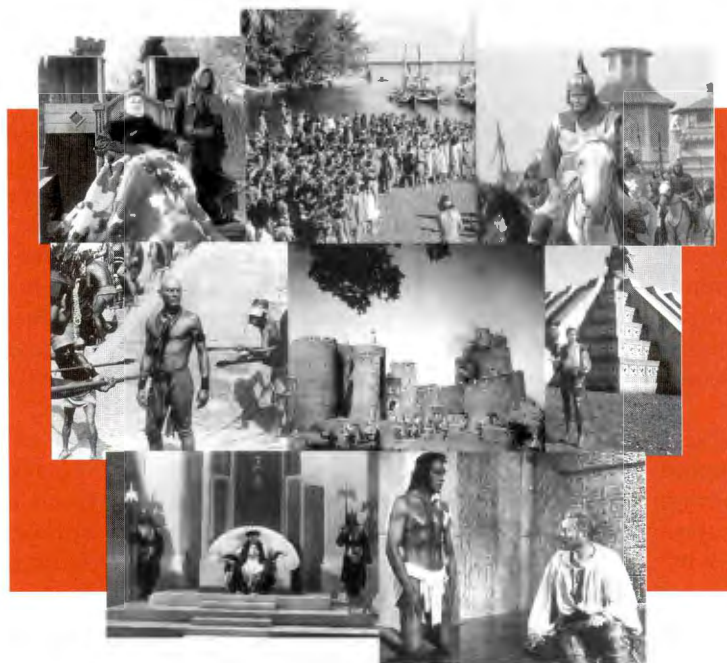
Allan Patience is a Professor in the Faculty of Arts at Victoria University of Technology.

Ear to eternity

For an institution under siege—with financial cuts, commercial pressures and new management looming—the ABC can still turn in extraordinary programming. Historian **Ken Inglis** surveys one radio day in a thousand.

ACROSS AUSTRALIA, you're listening to Radio National.' Listeners to that network can always expect to be taken across the world, and on New Year's Eve they also went on a journey across the centuries, all ten of the second millennium, in a daring and glorious feat of broadcasting: *A Thousand Years in a Day*. The ABC's finest hour, or 15 hours? A grand parade of dedicated talent from the most precious of our cultural institutions.

In the 15 years since Radio National was born, it has more than once seemed in danger of not seeing in the new century. Its lineage goes back to 1945, when the Commissioners who ran the ABC learned from the new craft of audience research how few people ever listened to its stations, and followed the BBC into split-level programming, though as always with fewer resources than the great imperial model. Light, Home and Third, the BBC was allowed, and the Third was pitched at the highest of brows. State and National were the ABC's equivalent, more or less, of Light and Home; and unlike the BBC's stations they had to compete with commercial enterprises neither obliged nor disposed to do more than entertain. The National stations were the ABC's 'serious' ones, the Interstate stations were 'light'. They were renamed First and Second Networks in



1963, and in 1972, following BBC idiom, they became Radio 1 and Radio 2. (The always more fortunate BBC also had Radio 3 and Radio 4. The ABC did have its Radio 3, but that was, as programmers privately said, a dog's breakfast for country people, mixed out of bits from Radios 1 and 2.) Radio 2 became more inventive and commodious after 1970, as a group of young stirrers in Sydney calling themselves the Radio Action Group pressed a mildly responsive management to deliver more nourishment to the steadily increasing number of people with tertiary education.

Radio 2 became Radio National in 1985. This time the change was more than nominal. It was part of a plan to co-ordinate the network's offerings with

those of ABC-FM, which had been launched in 1975 but took a while to get enough transmitters for its stereophonic sound to reach most of the country. The ABC's Corporate Plan for 1985–88 announced that Radio National would offer 'information about the world, cultural enjoyment, intellectual stimulation and entertainment'. Listeners fearful of hearing less music on the newly styled network were assured that it would offer plenty of programs *about* music, though ABC-FM would broadcast more *of* music. Nevertheless, at a pace sedate enough to deter old music lovers from mutiny, Radio National would give more and more time to the spoken word.

Radio Two had been suffering since 1976 from cuts imposed by the Fraser government. The Hawke government, to the dismay of people who had come to expect that Labor in office would be more generous to the national broadcaster, went on reducing its budget. To such a devotee and connoisseur of ABC radio as Barry Hill, it appeared ominous that just as Radio National was launched, Richard Connolly's wonderfully spacious Sunday Night Radio Two (later Radio Helicon) was to have its air time halved. 'The latest austerity,' testified Robyn Williams, whose *Science Show* had been one of Radio 2's triumphs, 'is yet another

blow after all the ABC has suffered for ten years'.

David Hill's appointment as managing director in 1986 provoked anxiety at Radio National, for he was known to believe that the least popular offerings were the likeliest candidates for the axe. In 1987 Barry Hill aired in *The Age* 'the

('Paranoia is true perception', a poster on the wall of 2JJ, antecedent of Triple J, used to declare.) Despite assurances during the campaign, the Howard government immediately reduced the ABC's budget by more than \$50 million, or 11.5 per cent—the most drastic cut ever—and then set up a review of its needs, to be

threat, which some now believed serious, that Radio National and ABC-FM would be merged to save money.

On 7 May 1997 the editors of all major newspapers received, and some published, a letter pleading for the retention of Radio National. 'If it is made to merge with any other network its integrity will be lost.'

*A Thousand Years in a Day was done on no budget, in 40 people's spare time:
a thousand years on a shoestring.*

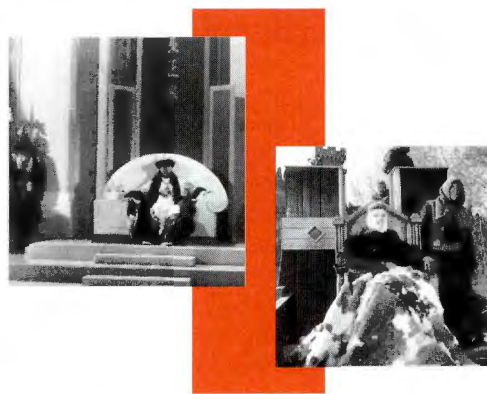
possible assassination of Radio National', and the *Age Monthly Review* ran a symposium entitled 'Has Radio National a Future?' Protests inside and outside the ABC may well have helped to save the network. Hill did not abolish it, but he did the next worst thing, removing parliamentary broadcasts from the Metropolitan network (the new name for Radio One), and dumping it on Radio National, where it was bound to wreck the program strategy which had been building since 1985. When that decision set off outrage among and beyond Friends of the ABC, the government found that it was possible after all, as for decades it had not been, to put the politicians on a network of their own.

The Keating government imposed still more cuts. 'Bearing the brunt ...', reported Richard Ackland in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 'are Radio National and the arts.' 'It really is a horrible scenario', an ABC footslogger wrote to me, 'especially for Radio National, and seems to break the back of many good ABC programs, not to mention what it is doing to the program makers.'

In some critical minds the effects of cuts became an argument for still more. One self-appointed representative of taxpayers declared in 1994 that the proportion of repeats now heard on Radio National showed that 'we' were not getting value for money; and anyway, how could the ABC justify a network reaching at best only 2.2 per cent of the population? Peter Manning, general manager of Radio National, replied that reach was a better index than ratings, and that a million Australians listened to the network.

MANY ABC PEOPLE were jittery in 1996 about the return of a Coalition government, and they were right to be.

conducted by a business man, in a hurry, and with terms of reference which at that moment could sound menacing. 'The Government seeks a more focused role for the ABC which strengthens its effectiveness in key areas by refining the scope of current ABC services and activities.' More focused? Refining? What might those words mean? In the event, Bob Mansfield turned in a vote of confidence in the ABC, after receiving a volume of enthusiastic submissions which astonished him. He did his best to justify the cuts already made by advising the ABC to drop Radio Australia, sell off a lot of property, and do much more 'outsourcing' (a buzzword of the decade). Radio National, he told his client the Minister for Communication and the Arts, 'was the most strongly supported of all ABC networks': as he summarised many of the respondents, they found RN programs 'diverse, intellectually



stimulating and challenging'. As a former executive of McDonald's and John Fairfax, he had been amazed at what Radio National's producer-presenters were achieving on tiny budgets.

The Mansfield report, released early in 1997, was read with some relief in ABC offices, but it did not yield a cent more revenue and it did not remove the

The letter, drafted by two of its signatories, Robert Manne and Barry Hill, expressed eloquently the nation's need for the network:

Radio National is our only radio outlet for the *sustained* exploration of ideas, and the open-minded discussion essential to a modern democracy. The network's brief is to the best that can be thought and said in science and the law, business and literature, foreign affairs, the environment, and many other spheres of cultural importance. What it offers is the essential *interpretative* backdrop to what we get from news and current affairs.

The 15 signatories included, as somebody remarked, not just the usual suspects (such as Chris Wallace-Crabbe and me?), but Les Murray, two archbishops, Sir Zelman Cowan, Dame Elisabeth Murdoch, and—most remarkably of all—the born-again Malcolm Fraser, who had begun the tradition of budget cuts which were impoverishing the national broadcaster. On 13 June Hill and Manne told the rest of us: 'we have reason to believe the letter was well noticed within Government circles and the ABC Management', though they believed that a merger of networks might still be on the managers' agenda. In the *Weekend Australian* of 16 and 17 August Hugh Mackay wrote a column headed 'National icon of the airwaves deserves better'. He began with a high tribute:

Let me just mention a few names: Phillip Adams, Geraldine Doogue, Terry Lane, Peter Thompson, Robyn Williams ... Heard of any of these? How about Norman Swan? (You might recall his exposé of flaws in some of the research of Dr William McBride.) [These are]

some of the most significant contributors, over the long haul, to our understanding of ourselves and our social, cultural, political and physical environment ...

Adams on *Late Night Live*, Doogue on *Life Matters*, Williams on *The Science Show*, Thompson for breakfast, Lane on *The National Interest* and Swan on both *Life Matters* and *The Health Report* are the kind of operators who make you realise that, just occasionally, the broadcast media can be sensationally good, that radio doesn't have to confine itself either to endless chat about the fleeting concerns of the moment ... or spontaneous knockabout breakfast or drive-time comedy ... or more-or-less continuous music—whether pop or classical.

Radio, in other words, can be a deeply serious medium, and Radio National is a prime example of the genre.

Why this sudden paean of praise?

Simply because the rumours won't go away: wherever you turn, you hear that as the austerity measures bite deeper, Radio National is unlikely to survive in its present form. Perhaps it will be merged with Classic FM; perhaps it will be folded into the ABC's continuous news/parliament network. Might it even be allowed to fade quietly away, on the assumption that its "tiny audience" will squeak only faintly in protest?

Mackay's piece drew an immediate response from Brian Johns, managing director since 1995. He hadn't until then made any public commitment to preserve

people at Radio National. If so, Johns himself may have helped them greet the year 2000 with such zest.

THE BBC'S NETWORK of local and regional stations was given a million pounds for a Millennium History Project 'capturing the lives of British people over the past century' and generating more than 600 programs. *A Thousand Years in a Day* was done on no budget, in 40 people's spare time: a thousand years on a shoestring. A group of them thought



up the idea early in 1999, and Stephen Crittenden, executive producer, Religion, took on the job of co-ordinating a project quite different from what they knew ABC TV and the Nine Network were planning. 'Fireworks and all that are surface stuff,' Crittenden told a reporter, 'but underneath is something that lasts. We wanted to do something momentous that captured the scale of it all.' He wanted, more specifically, to convey the depth and breadth of history to a generation who for one reason and other were losing their sense of the past.

Here are some of my jottings on how they did it. And as Marco Polo said when he returned from his journey to the edge

are going to be taken around the world. Martin Portus talks with a professor in York about Spain. The even more lucid John Julius Norwich tells us enthusiastically about the astonishing Normans, and the schism between Rome and Constantinople, and can't stop himself surging into the next century. A great narrator, sounding like Henry Blofield at an exciting test match.

Towards 10, Williams says we can follow the program on website abc.net.au. I try, am told I need something called Audio Real, or is it Real Audio, and give up.

At 10am, news. These hourly five-minute breaks will be useful for toilet visits and fridge grabs.

Donna McLachlan introduces the 12th century. Music of the time between voices. Maria Zijlstra interviews a professor at Cambridge about the crusades. Athol Anderson, professor at ANU, talks with McLachlan about Polynesian voyaging. Sounds of wind and water, and a choir in Papeete introduced by Lucky Oceans: can't resist the thought that his name sounds more like his subject. Extract from *A Guide to the Perplexed* by a man in Cordoba whose name I don't catch: philosopher, physician, rabbi. Rebecca Gorman on Eleanor of Aquitaine with Professor Ann Trindade in Melbourne, a slice of Katharine Hepburn's *The Lion in Winter*, then to Paris, where Gorman interviews a professor at the Sorbonne, expert on Eleanor. Troubadour music. McLachlan goes out with music by Hildegard of Bingen, 'ecstatic as her visions'.

Geraldine Doogue leads us into the 13th century, and brings on Genghis

After the 2 o'clock news, Kirsten Garrett comes in with the startling proposal that the most important date in Australian history may well be 1433, when the Chinese empire abolished its navy and removed the possibility that our land could have become China's America.

Radio National. Now he did, in good administrator's style, declaring Mackay's concern welcome but unnecessary. 'Radio National stays.'

And stay it did, to see out one century and see in another with a display of the qualities described by those letter-writers and that columnist. My impression is that Johns' commitment to the network, combined with changes he has initiated in senior management, has heartened

of the known world, I haven't told you half of it.

At 9.05am, Robyn Williams introduces the whole day and does a precise interview with the lucid Robert Lacey on the year 1000 in Britain. Rhys Jones describes the clubbing to death of the last elephant seal in Tasmania and the flourishing of the moa in New Zealand, and he imagines life in Papua New Guinea and South East Asia. We really

Khan, who turns out to be unexpectedly tolerant: who says RN is unsympathetic to the far right? Some of his words, read by a woman: Brechtian alienation? Magna Carta exhumed, explained, read out. Item on Raziyya, Islamic woman ruler—sultana—of Delhi; a history-making woman I'd never heard of. St Francis of Assisi, by a former head of the Franciscan order in Australia who thinks well of Zeffirelli's *Brother Sun and Sister*

Moon and gives us the saint's message for our time, which might have him branded by the Institute of Public Affairs a typical Radio National lefty: champion of the frail, opponent of consumerism, concerned for all creation, not just humanity.

On the 12 o'clock news John Howard expresses 'hope and optimism' for the new century, in that voice which if you didn't understand English you'd think was delivering a message of gloom.

As every schoolgirl knows, says Copeland, in fourteen hundred and ninety two Columbus sailed the ocean blue; and as this old schoolboy didn't know, he had millenarian expectations for the year 1500. As we now know, though schoolchildren weren't told, he took syphilis to the new world. A roll call of famous syphilitics, named between tolls of a bell.

Norman Swan, into the 14th century, gives us a horrendous *Health Report*, on the black death, starting with a reading from Boccaccio's introduction to *The Decameron*, to convey the plague-stricken Florentine setting for the tales. Kathy Gollan takes us to Java, to hear a poetic work rich in history, and Lucky Oceans to Mali for a wild song about a terrible battle. Then we're back in Europe and the towns of the Hanseatic League, Swan interviewing a scholar with a knockabout pop history manner and Maria Zijlstra getting us into the League's museum. Where earlier centuries have wound up for the news, this one just pauses: no tyranny of time today. Before and after the break, a reading of Chaucer's *Pardoner's Tale*, then Stephen Crittenden in easy conversation across the world with his old teacher Stephen Knight about individual and society in Chaucer's England.

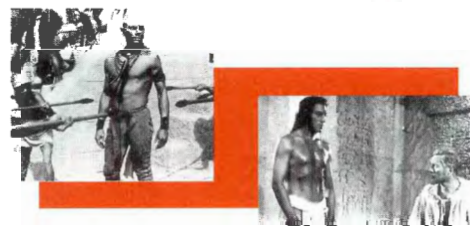
More poetry begins Julie Copeland's 15th century, by Renaissance man Lorenzo de' Medici, and then prose by another, Leon Battista Alberti. Copeland deftly characterises Jacob Burckhardt's account of their civilisation and questions Peter Hall about why Florence was its richest site. John Julius Norwich returns splendidly for a war correspondent's report on the fall of Constantinople, which is lamented in Croatian song.

AFTER THE 2 O'CLOCK NEWS, Kirsten Garrett comes in with the startling proposal that the most important date in

Australian history may well be 1433, when the Chinese empire abolished its navy and removed the possibility that our land could have become China's America. Lyn Gallacher does a mind-stretching item on Gutenberg, and Doris Lessing airs doubts about the benefit of his invention. Over to Spain for Ferdinand and Isabella: voices Spanish and other discussing with thoughtful disagreement the reconquest of Granada, the fate of Moslems and Jews, the inquisition. Thence to the couple's most

famous agent. As every schoolgirl knows, says Copeland, in fourteen hundred and ninety two Columbus sailed the ocean blue; and as this old schoolboy didn't know, he had millenarian expectations for the year 1500. As we now know, though schoolchildren weren't told, he took syphilis to the new world. A roll call of famous syphilitics, named between tolls of a bell. After a re-run from a *Radio Eye* feature on Vasco da Gama the century ends, as it began, in Florence, city both of Savonarola, (burning Boccaccio's book on his own journey to the flames) and Michelangelo, sculptor and sonneteer.

Jill Kitson and the 16th century arrive at 3.05 with another sonnet, Shakespeare's 'When in disgrace', read by John Bell,



before we are off again to the new world—new to *Europeans*, Kitson reminds us. New to me is the Amerindian woman Malinche or Marina, Cortes' guide, interpreter and lover. Her biographer Anna Lanyon gives us a finely crafted essay composed for today, and so does Inga Clendinnen, fresh from Boyer Lectures, on the encounter of Spanish and Aztec cosmologies. (One achievement on show today is Radio National's commitment to women as

both makers and subjects.) To Europe again for Patrick Collinson on Luther. Another nice choice: doyen of Reformation studies, once a professor in Sydney, with an English flair for informal talk that draws on deep learning. Kay McLennan describes and illustrates an efflorescence of music. A passage from Machiavelli's *The Prince* is presented as arguably the first modern book. Dr Jim Leavesley from Margaret River tells gory stories of surgery.

At 4.05 Stephen Crittenden introduces 'the darkly glamorous 17th century' with music by Frescobaldi and talk with Peter Greenaway. Damien Carrick briefs us for debate, taped earlier in the year, between Michael Kirby and Geoffrey Robertson (our two most articulate members of the arguing profession?) on whether Charles I had a fair trial. Kirby (surprisingly?) says Yes, Robertson No. Crittenden tantalises us with prose from the period, spoken by Mark Dignam, anticipating digital radio with the concept of a 'sound house', then identifies the author: Francis Bacon. Witch hunts: appalling stories, spooky music. Zen and the Japanese warrior class. Purcell. Stan Correy on coffee and the culture of capitalism, especially in Amsterdam, a segment lacking only Simon Schama, who is billed in *24 Hours'* program guide as coming in here. Too busy on his huge millennial project for BBC television?

Alan Saunders starts the 18th century with Pope's *Essay on Man*, which he reads with intimacy and animation. He speaks, as the trained philosopher he is, of reason as a candle in the 17th century but a torch in this one, illuminating only what it is pointed at; and he elucidates Hume and Kant. Jonathan Mills portrays Bach as composer and musician to the community of Leipzig and plugs a series of the great man's cantatas which he will direct in churches during the next Melbourne Festival. Professor Ted Cohen from Chicago argues in an American

Jewish comedian's voice that jokes as we know them first appeared in the 1790s. Three people who know a lot about Josiah Wedgwood discuss whether he and his pottery belong to the history of the industrial revolution. Scholars in America tell us about their own revolution, with tinkling martial music. Terry Lane asks which was the more important event of 1770, James Cook's discovery of New South Wales or the birth of Beethoven? A party game—and why not, on this day of days? Jack Carmody and Andrew Ford join in. Tom Morton takes us to the French revolution, which gets less time than the trial of Charles I. I wonder why. And what has become of Stephen Crittenden on Mozart, flagged in *24 Hours*? Is the over-work showing?

The 19th century, after the 7pm news, belongs to Rachael Kohn. Pamela Rabe reads from Tolstoy on the battle of Borodino, Beethoven's *Eroica* surging and fading behind her melodious actor's voice. Andrew Lloyd James takes time off his job in senior management to come in and do a reading from a book about a giraffe, the gift of Egypt's Mohammed Ali, which walked to Paris in 1826, and we go back to that ruler's land not only for expert history and *Aida* but to hear Egyptians today on his legacy. Kohn, alert to religion, has Napoleon in Egypt converting to Islam. John Cargher, learned and cogent as ever, comes in with a blast of big sound and interprets the France of this century as obsessed with bigness, from grand opera to the Eiffel tower. Margaret Coffey introduces Mary Robinson, president of Ireland, lecturing

another re-run from *Radio Eye*: an account created from documents and oral traditions, with sounds of battle, of a bloody 'collision' between settlers and Aborigines on the Murray. The voice of Charles Sturt prompts me to remember a long-ago triumph of ABC radio, *The Sturt Report*, 15 minutes each evening for ten weeks of 1951 from a re-enactment of Sturt's historic journey down the Murray, thought up by the ABC's ace program planner of those days, Clem



Semmler, and becoming the one really popular event in an otherwise lackadaisical jubilee of federation. A great day for the ABC when Tom Playford declared a public holiday for the re-enactors' arrival in Adelaide. I wonder if Semmler, retired in Bowral, is a proud listener today. The other Australian item is about the origin of Australian Rules football. Sounds to me a bit rambling, and an odd choice in such a lean ration of Australiana, but maybe I'm getting groggy: the century has been going for nearly two hours and I for nearly 12. I wait in vain for two items listed in *24 Hours*, Kohn herself on Tocqueville in America and Ramona Koval on Charles Darwin, for either of which I'd have happily forgone the footy.

The 20th century is due to begin at 9.05pm, but the news upstages the

and seductive Adams. I drop out after a while, and miss altogether the book of Revelations set to music: 'the West's grim prophesy of apocalypse', as the note in *24 Hours* calls it.

LISTENING TO THE RADIO is a fairly solitary activity these days, and I've spent the day most unconconvivially, cocooned in earphones, waving at visiting family as they come off the road, not catching up with them until almost the turn of the year at a friend's place. We watch fireworks, sing around the piano, and look on and off at ABC television's salute to the occasion, *2000 Today*, which to my blinking eyes looks like a theme-park tour of the world for viewers with 30-second concentration span, a series of global commercials, as if for American Express or Coca-Cola or the manufacturers of those fireworks exploding with monotonous beauty over city after city. (Watching highlights on New Year's Day, after a night's sleep, I find more substantial items, most memorably those eerie dancers at Uluru). I wonder how many other people heard the whole day's riches. Fewer, I imagine, than listened now and then in car or kitchen. ('It would be nice', thought the writer of a letter published in *The Australian* on 3 January, 'to think that all members of the ABC Board found time to listen ...').

Radio National replayed (though with cuts) a century each day well into January, and the whole creation is to be put out on a CD. How come the video of *2000 Today* was on sale so quickly, and the radio CD had to wait till March? Never mind. Every secondary school

'Fireworks and all that are surface stuff,' Crittenden told a reporter, 'but underneath is something that lasts. We wanted to do something momentous that captured the scale of it all.'

in Australia on the potato famine. Another Irish voice, the historian Liam Swords', quotes people's own words about that disaster, including some from an inquest on poor starved Nancy Kelly in 1847 which he says bring rare tears to his eyes.

Robert Menzies reads some Byron. Next the coming of cigarettes, and from tobacco to opium and its wars, visited in Chinese accents by the ABC's Dai Le and Professor John Wong at the University of Sydney. Two pieces on Australia. First,

program. Yeltsin has resigned! Apart from that event, we are to have from this century not history, no more scenes and sounds, but reflections on history, Phillip Adams presenting as it were *Late Century Live*, preceded not by his trademark Bach but Noel Coward's 'Twentieth Century Blues'. A harmonious quartet of civilised voices across the world, Canadian, English, American and Australian, their themes including wars, genocide and other aspects of death, conducted from his chair by the supple

should have the CD, and every university multiple copies. As traditional arts and social science courses get skinnier, as history disappears from schools, Radio National becomes an ever more precious preserver, transmitter and maker of our culture. In Stephen Crittenden's words, *A Thousand Years in a Day* is something that lasts—in memory, on disk and as inspiration. ■

Ken Inglis is the author of *Sacred Places*, *The Age Book of the Year 1999*.

All in the family

The controversial new Federal Magistrates Service just might work. Why? Because its head, Diana Bryant, is a family law specialist with an open mind.

THE SKIRMISHES between Daryl Williams, Commonwealth Attorney-General, and Chief Justice Alistair Nicholson of the Family Court have been most undignified and protracted. Once, judges got on with judging and the Attorney defended them from the misunderstandings of the public.

The Family Court has long been vilified by a minority of people—mostly men—who believe that it is biased towards women and destructive of families (the majority settle their conflicts without litigation or repeat appearances in the jurisdiction). The Attorney has appeared to listen to these complaints, in part by recently funding a ‘lone fathers’ association (while coincidentally his Cabinet colleague, Senator Newman, had defunded the Council for the Single Mother and Her Child).

When asked to defend other federal courts from trenchant criticism, Williams pointed out (in 1997) that the role of an Attorney-General, whatever it might have been under an earlier set of political conventions, is now an essentially party-political appointment, and declined or failed to defend the courts.

Williams—a quietly spoken, mannerly, easy-blushing QC from Perth—has also quite clearly suggested that the head of the Family Court is a self-important, inefficient, left-wing ratbag. The Chief Justice, in his turn, may be seen to suggest that the Attorney is a rigid reactionary who doesn’t ‘get’ the purpose of the Family Law Act, or the anti-social effects of starving the court of money and judicial personnel.

Williams is notorious within the legal profession for dithering and stalling on statutory and judicial appointments, either because his office is inefficient (letters go unanswered for months or, in my own case, forever, though we are old friends) or out of choice. It is said that Williams has been ‘rolled’ in Cabinet more often than not over appointments to federal courts, funding, and legislation (for example, the disgraceful bill, which he did not support, that was drafted to nullify the effects of the High Court’s decision in *Teoh*). But in other cases shilly-shallying is the more likely cause. Williams’ failure to make a clear decision about the future of present vice-presidential appointees to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal when it is restructured is a case in point.

Chief Justice Nicholson is a committed advocate for the recognition of the rights of the child as they are expressed in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Williams, on the other hand, is a traditional Common Lawyer, uneasy that human rights instruments have any effect within Australia as a result of judicial interpretation rather than parliament-made laws.

The Chief Justice has also repeatedly pointed out that the Family Court has been crippled by inadequate resources and actual funding cuts as well as too few judges. The Attorney argues that courts should be ‘courts’, with all that entails, and that the Family Court is an unstable oil-and-water mix of black-letter law and social work. He argues that the Court should sever its relationship with conciliation and counselling services and get on with judging.

So when the Attorney formally announced last year that he would establish a federal magistracy to deal with the less complex judicial decisions, releasing judges for higher things, the stage was set for a proper row. The Chief Justice wanted those magistrates to work within his Court and under his control (he could certainly use the money that comes with them): the Attorney was determined that this new tier of judicial officers would not be another specialist court, but a court of general jurisdiction.

The Attorney-General, as a traditionalist, has never accepted the need for a specialist court for Family Law, nor the need for any specialist court. He believes that the common law tradition and the power of the parliament to change laws in a democratic way are a far better way of developing the law. This new appointment and the establishment of this new court is consistent with those views.

It could have been outright war, had Williams’ appointment of the Chief Magistrate designate not been so brilliantly appropriate. Diana Bryant QC is a Family Law specialist who practised in Western Australia when Williams (and I) did, and subsequently at the Bar in her native Victoria. She is well-known and respected, even liked, by the Family Court bench and the Chief Justice in particular, who congratulated her on the appointment. And she has a unique understanding of how the magistracy might well work to the benefit of the Family Court. She told me that she had seen a model of co-operation that actually works, and wanted to try it here.

THAT MODEL IS THE Family Court of Western Australia. WA has always done justice its own way—not always well—but had done particularly well when, in the 1950s, it established a special magistrates’ court in Perth—known to journalists under its clumsy title of ‘The Married Persons and Children (Summary Relief) Court’, but to those of us who appeared before it regularly, as the ‘Married Girls’ Court’.

There, women could seek separation orders (men could but never did), or orders for their own maintenance, following their husbands’ adultery, cruelty or desertion; they could seek custody of and access to children; single mums could get skimpy orders to maintain their ‘illegitimate’ children and pay for baby necessities, such as a pram, or a bassinet—but not both. When the Commonwealth’s Family Law

Act was passed in 1975, the WA government decided to combine the resources of this court with the Commonwealth's to form a State Family Court of Western Australia. The federal government appointed judges to exercise the Commonwealth's divorce and related jurisdiction (and, later, judicial registrars), and the State could appoint magistrates to do state things and interim matters.

The blessing of this extraordinarily commonsense arrangement was that the legal profession could continue to deal with an already informal court, and constitutional problems about state and federal division of legislative powers could be easily overcome.

As well, the one court could deal with virtually all matters affecting children, including wardship and adoption applications formerly made by the Supreme Court, and even (in extraordinary cases) exercise care and protection powers under Child Welfare legislation. In other words, whatever was necessary to deal with families' needs under stress or breakdown could be dealt with in one place. Most importantly, the new court was always closely associated with a court counselling service auspiced and staffed by the State Department of Community Welfare. The counselling service worked because it was housed with the court, adequately funded, and always used—and respected—by the judges and magistrates. It even had a childcare centre—this, in 1975!

Admittedly, this arrangement only worked because WA is virtually a city-state and sparsely populated, and the legal climate was favourable. But the Family Court of Western Australia has thrived, its magistrates have developed the expertise and jurisprudence with a combined State and Commonwealth jurisdiction, and the status of Family Law practitioners and Family Law has also grown.

We can expect Diana Bryant to seek a similar success to that of the WA model, if not in its detail, then by thinking laterally, making a user-friendly court (simple process, no pleadings, night courts), and building good relationships with the Chief Justice and other federal and State courts. Williams has done well. It just might work. ■

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Fuel up

IT WAS QUITE A STRAIGHTFORWARD STORY, REALLY—a company produced a tainted product by adding too much of one of the ingredients. In consequence, nearly half the light aircraft in Australia were grounded, and the media made a meal of the circumstances.

One thing is for sure, the tale of this summer's aviation fuel contamination crisis would have been told more clearly if journalists had a little more background in science. Archimedes is not talking rocket science here. Basic high school chemistry would have sufficed. Not only would a little background have bolstered the confidence of the reporters handling the story, it would also have given them a better idea of which questions to ask. The episode could have been a useful learning experience for all.

The basic plot was simple. At a crucial stage in its production process for aviation fuel, Mobil Australia used an acid catalyst. In order to prevent the acid from corroding the pipes of the production plant, the company routinely added small amounts of a neutralising alkaline compound called ethylene diamine (EDA). This compound was not considered dangerous. In fact, there were no international standards for its level in aviation fuel.

But, at concentrations too small to be detected by the internationally approved tests for fuel quality, the EDA seems to have reacted with carbon dioxide in the fuel tanks of light aircraft to form a sticky white solid, and also with the copper and brass components of aircraft engines to form a black solid. These two substances could clog fuel lines and carburettors, potentially causing engines to stall. We are talking about levels of EDA that no normal test would have picked up. This was not made clear by the media.

EDA is a relatively simple organic compound, and has a relatively simple name, as organic compounds go. Yet it was some weeks before the media even settled on how to write it—ethylene diamine, like carbon dioxide. Perhaps it didn't help that CASA originally had 'Ethylene Di-Amine' in its releases, but the variations on that spelling which cropped up for the next fortnight did not inspire confidence. The confusion was such that one report ascribed to EDA the properties of ethylene diamine tetra-acetic acid (EDTA), a commonly used, but distinctly different, compound.

Once the crisis was in full swing, we had mass confusion. While the pilots were screaming for the means to clean their aircraft, Mobil and CASA were busy developing and approving a test for EDA. All of which was studiously reported, almost as if the test would solve the problem of contamination. But it was never really made clear how the test would help—and it seemed to come as a surprise that approval of the test did not end the crisis. While it was necessary to determine which planes needed to be cleaned, it did not actually clean them.

There is much, much more to tell, but by now, you should have the picture. With a little more technical background, our journalists could have provided a much clearer, more interesting and more instructive story. Instead, we were presented with an entertaining soap opera of distraught pilots, harried authorities and politicians, self-serving lawyers and self-righteous corporate executives. ■

Tim Thwaites is a freelance science writer.

It's a power struggle. It's a technological compromise.
All the big players want their piece of the high-definition action.
Welcome to digital television.

Putting us in the picture

AUSTRALIA GETS digital television in 2001.

Less than a year away from its introduction, this latest addition to the nation's media is still the subject of industry lobbying, federal legislation and viewer confusion, with these three factors more than tangentially related. Digital television, a relatively simple development in communications technology, has been thrown, not so much to the lions (though there are plenty of these), but into a three-ring circus complete with government acrobats,

television set or a converter set-top box for their analogue television. The old analogue signal will continue to be sent for some years, so current televisions will not become immediately obsolete.

The ins and outs of the technology (see box, page 25) are in many ways incidental. How many of us really understand how our analogue televisions work? As with most technology, the matter of real interest is the utility of the new toy. And digital television has many advantages—most importantly, clearer pictures and efficient use of the radio-

The US and the UK have already begun digital television broadcasting, using different approaches. The US legislation favours HDTV (but has not mandated it), whereas the UK has gone for multi-channelling SDTV.

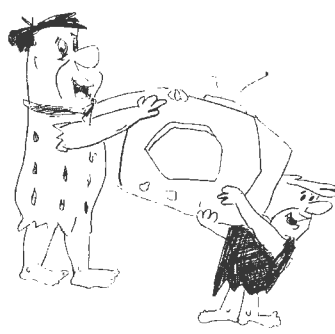
In Australia, the federal government has hedged its bets with a joint HDTV/SDTV model. In a two-step decision in 1998 and then late 1999, the government determined how Australia should move into the age of digital television broadcasting. What it said was this: all companies that currently hold a



industry ringmasters and technological high-jinks.

The focus of all this activity is a change in the way television is broadcast.

Currently, it's broadcast using analogue transmission, but next year it will be broadcast digitally. As a result, viewers will need new equipment to receive the broadcast—either a high-definition digital television set, a standard-definition digital



frequency spectrum. Broadcasters currently use at least one 7-megahertz band of radiofrequency spectrum to transmit one channel, but when they transmit digitally they will be able to use the same space either to 'multi-channel' a number (maybe four or five) of standard definition channels (SDTV), or to transmit one high-definition channel (HDTV) plus one SDTV channel.

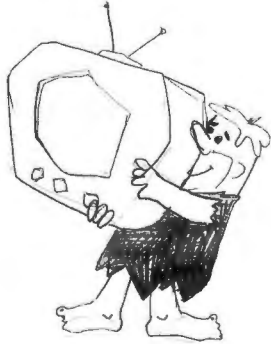


commercial free-to-air television licence (that is, the owners of channels 7, 9 and 10 in their various metropolitan and regional manifestations) receive, free of charge, access to another 7-megahertz of spectrum for digital broadcast in addition to their current service. The ABC and SBS receive the same loan (though some of their licence conditions may differ from those discussed below, which refer to

commercial broadcasters). In return for this spectrum, metropolitan broadcasters are obliged to begin digital broadcasting in January 2001; regional broadcasters sometime between 2001 and 2004.

Under the rules, broadcasters must provide both an HDTV service and an SDTV service, and must also continue to provide the analogue service (until at least 2008). They must broadcast at least 20 hours of HDTV programming per week (SBS is exempt from this requirement). When enough people have purchased digital televisions or converter boxes, the analogue signal will be switched off and that spectrum will be returned to government—the date is currently expected to be 2008. In the meantime, there will be no other commercial free-to-air television stations allowed in Australia until 2006.

HALF OF THIS NEW framework made it into legislation in the middle of 1998. The second-stage policy was announced late December last year, and is expected to be introduced to parliament early this year, perhaps this month. But the circus is far from over. It is still possible that the rules will change during the parliamentary process, with or without an expected Senate inquiry. In addition, the government is yet to decide on some matters, such as whether the ABC will be allowed to multi-channel. Given how close the broadcast start-up date is, and how much preparation broadcasters have



already done, this is, to say the least, an unstable situation and will most likely mean that the beginning of digital television will be characterised by incremental and unspectacular progress.

Amid these substantial changes and uncertainty there is another development, called 'datacasting'. Datacasting will be a non-broadcast service provided to the viewer on a digital television—

HDTV: high definition television, providing a near cinema-quality picture with CD-quality sound.

SDTV: standard definition television, providing a picture similar to the PAL analog service that is Australia's current standard.

Analog television: broadcasting in a continuously variable wave form transmitting video and sound in a full representation of the original.

Digital television: broadcasting which encodes the original information into discrete bits of information which are then decoded to display the picture and sound.

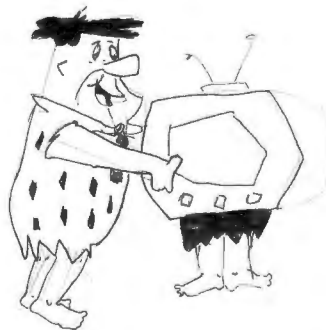
Terrestrial broadcasting: land-based broadcasting transmitting from towers to aerials. This is the way current free-to-air television is broadcast and the way that digital television will be broadcast.

Datacasting: new interactive services provided on a television—such as video-on-demand, home banking, news headlines and web pages.

Spectrum: a continuous range of electromagnetic radiation extending from the longest radio waves through infra-red, light, ultra-violet and X-rays to gamma-rays. In broadcasting, it is also often used as an abbreviation for 'radiofrequency spectrum'.

Radiofrequency spectrum: that part of the total spectrum which is used for transmitting radio waves. The radiofrequency spectrum is a natural resource which is used but not consumed. It is used by being occupied and the efficiency of its use depends on co-ordination among users in order to minimise interference with each other. (Spectrum definitions from the Australian Communications Authority)

text, images, sound and video are transmitted to a viewer who can interact with the datacast by requesting particular services, for example the day's news headlines. As it is currently envisioned, it will be a lot like the internet, but with quicker responses and more structured options. Examples of datacasting services are interactive home shopping, websites and online banking. The government has



very strictly controlled the definition of datacasting so that datacasting does not resemble broadcasting. For example, according to the federal Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts website, datacasters may not show a full video news service, but may provide some video news programming if it is 'a ten minute headline bulletin' or 'a moving video program of

any length on an individual news, financial, market and business information or weather item, as long as the program is only available to a viewer selecting from a menu on the screen, is not hosted by a presenter and is not linked to another item.' A rose by any other name ...

Aspiring datacasters will be given the opportunity to buy spectrum for their



services later this year, at an auction to be conducted by the government spectrum management agency, the Australian Communications Authority (ACA). Existing free-to-air broadcasters will not be allowed to purchase spectrum for datacasting, but will be able to use any 'leftover' spectrum within their own allocations for datacasting services, for a charge determined by the ACA. Aside

from that restriction, anyone, whether Australian or otherwise, a current media owner or otherwise, will be allowed to datacast. Newspaper publisher Fairfax and Rupert Murdoch's News Ltd are expected to lead the charge.

THIS DIGITAL TELEVISION framework raises a number of questions for broadcasters and viewers, but it also raises questions about how the government made its decisions. For starters, the policy is highly prescriptive—there must be 20 hours of HDTV programming a week, there must be 'triplecast' HDTV/SDTV/analogue, and the spectrum will be used for the designated purpose of commercial free-to-air broadcasting. More curiously, the policy insists that there will be a new



The digital television policy might just represent the worst spectrum management decision available

category of service—datacasting—which is defined in extensive terms. But these terms all boil down to one core fact: datacasting is not broadcasting. It is now technologically possible for media services to be less defined—for example, you can already watch video on the internet. The previous strict demarcations between one service and another originated in technological constraints. As these fall away, it is difficult to see any need for such limitations—which makes the government's policy curiously and curiously. It's as though government were prescribing that certain shops could sell a full range of clothing, while the rest were obliged to carry only white cotton shirts with starched collars.

Some reasons for the specific regulation may be found in the relative success of the competing industry lobbying. The government had a number of options for regulating digital television. Pay TV operators such as Rupert Murdoch's News Ltd argued that the government should allow new commercial television channels, given that digital television could free up spectrum, but not allow existing broadcasters to provide competing pay TV services. Other media companies, like newspaper publisher Fairfax, ran a similar line, arguing for free spectrum to be used for new media services. The existing

commercial broadcasters lobbied to be given spectrum to start up digital services, and for an extension of the existing ban on further commercial television channels.

It appears that government went with the arguments put by the free-to-air commercial broadcasters, cementing the broadcasters' dominant media position in the process. The commercial broadcasters have always been criticised for having it easy and constituting one of the least competitive industries in Australia. A broadcasting licence has been called 'a licence to print money'—with good reason. There was a brief period of tough financial times in the 1980s flowing from overvalued licences, but generally, owning one of the three commercial broadcasting licences

in a licence area is what the market would call a sound investment.

But at the same time, with only three commercial stations and two national broadcasters, the free-to-air choice for consumers is very limited. The commercial broadcasters go for middle ground—Australia's population is not nearly large enough, nor the competition strong enough, for any other strategy to be worthwhile.

And just in case you thought that networks 7, 9 and 10 were totally devoted to developing what is now called content, it is worth remembering that the basic business transaction in commercial free-to-air television is the broadcaster selling the viewer to the advertiser. Because of this, and because of the public's predisposition to watch television in any case, the broadcasters don't provide programming for maximum viewer satisfaction. Instead they provide the minimum standard of programming that will deter the maximum number of viewers from switching from one channel to the next. Even a solely economic analysis from the Bureau of Transport and Communications Economics, in its 1996 report *Australian Commercial Television 1986–1995*, states that:

Broadcasters base their schedules on audience size ratings without taking

into account the intensity of viewer satisfaction. This loss of viewer welfare caused by deficiencies in the market process constitutes what is known as a market failure. (p8)

Given that situation, the government's decision to maintain (even bolster) the broadcasting status quo may represent a sadly missed opportunity for broadcasting reform.

ASIDE FROM LOSING that opportunity, the digital television decision also highlights the inconsistencies in Australia's spectrum management. The ACA issues licences for most spectrum uses, which it increasingly does by auctioning 'spectrum licences' to the highest bidder. There are restrictions on use related, for example, to the frequency's capacity and the avoidance of interference with other users, but the licences are otherwise flexible.

For broadcasting spectrum, however, the Australian Broadcasting Authority (ABA) administers broadcasting licences which combine spectrum use with all other broadcasting licence conditions. The digital television licences continue this policy of bundling spectrum in with broadcasting licences. But the ABA model is at odds with the modern world of communications. It is no longer necessary to have spectrum to provide a broadcast service—this is quite possible using other technologies such as cable. Most recently, the Productivity Commission, in its 1999 draft report, *Broadcasting*, argued that the current broadcasting model promotes inefficient use and discourages the development of other delivery and channel management technology. By maintaining this model, the digital television policy pursues an antiquated equation of delivery (i.e. spectrum) with service (i.e. the station).

But even beyond this problem of being outdated, the digital television policy might just represent the worst spectrum management decision available.

Think about it. The government has loaned the broadcasters 7 megahertz of free spectrum. In order to grasp exactly what this means, think of the radio-frequency spectrum as publicly owned real estate—valuable and finite real estate. The broadcasters have argued that the loan is only for a few years, after

which they will return the extra spectrum to government, that they need some start-up assistance because digital conversion is costly, and that the viewers are going to benefit from a better service.

But the problem is not that the broadcasters will have 14 or more megahertz for a few years (though that is certainly valuable). The problem, rather, is that at the end of the conversion process, they will still have 7 megahertz in a digital world where you can do a lot more with 7 megahertz than you ever could under the old analogue system.

Commercial free-to-air broadcasters pay for their spectrum access through broadcast licence fees on their gross revenue, paid to government yearly. In 1998–99 these totalled \$194.5 million from 47 commercial television licensees. Whenever issues arise about their spectrum use, the broadcasters point out that they pay this yearly fee. However, there are two problems with this system. First, though it is generally viewed as a charge for the spectrum, the licence fee is actually related to a single broadcast service, as evidenced by the fact that it is calculated on the revenue of that channel. This system made some sort of sense in the days when one chunk of spectrum and one channel were much of a muchness, but in a digitised world this is no longer the case.

A further problem is that there is no way of knowing if broadcasters pay rents commensurate with the gains they receive from using the spectrum. The Productivity Commission estimates that the broadcasters 'are currently paying close to the *minimum* value of the spectrum they hold (even though licence fees were not calculated on the basis of the value of the spectrum)'. However, the Bureau of Transport and Communications Economics stated in 1996 that 'in capital cities at least the industry has returned to a situation where economic rents substantially exceed the Government's revenue from licence fees'. This statement was based on an assessment of the broadcasters' profits, which the Productivity Commission found to be around the same (abnormally high) levels in 1999.

It does not necessarily follow that broadcasters should be made to pay more for spectrum, or that government should sell off spectrum to the highest bidder.

There should, however, be a clearly articulated and consistent approach to spectrum management that takes into account factors ranging from technological change through to the public benefits of spectrum uses.

WHATEVER THE ANSWER to these questions about spectrum management, the opportunity for rational analysis of the issues may well have been lost in the process of industry lobbying.

When digital television was first mooted, it would have been clear to commercial broadcasters that they could provide the same level of service using a fraction of the spectrum. This is because SDTV (even a little better than our current pictures) uses at most one fourth of the spectrum a current analogue channel does. The broadcasters' problem then would have been that they would be paying the same licence fees for a substantially reduced bit of real estate, while allowing room for other property developers (competing broadcasters, datacasters, and so on) to move in. But by arguing that the Australian public needed spectrum-hungry HDTV, broadcasters could retain the same amount of spectrum for the same rents. While there may be benefits to viewers from HDTV, it does not necessarily follow that those benefits drove the broadcasters' lobbying.

So the free-to-air broadcasters are by and large happy with the policy. Some (primarily the Ten Network and Kerry

Whichever way you look at it, the free-to-air broadcasters won out with a big chunk of spectrum and a continuation of the existing ban on ... further commercial broadcasting licences. In other words, no further competition.

Packer's Network Nine) are unhappy with the late-1999 addition of SDTV to the broadcast requirements, arguing that it will push the limits of their allocated spectrum so that they will not be able to transmit full HDTV for some sorts of programs. However, Kerry Stokes' Seven Network likes the HDTV/SDTV simulcast idea, arguing that it will encourage take-up of the new technology. Whichever way you look at it, though, the free-to-air broadcasters won out with a big chunk of spectrum and a continuation of the existing ban on allocation of further commercial

broadcasting licences. In other words, no further competition. Whether that win is because the government happened to agree with the broadcasters, or whether broadcasters' power over voters is, as it has always been, a matter best left unchallenged by your average nervous government, is anyone's guess.

The new digital television legislation will be in parliament early this year. While it may pass with barely a protest, the government may also find that parliament is better educated than it was in July 1998 when the first round of rules passed through. It is, in any case, rare for broadcasting legislation not to raise an argument. The government may face questions which challenge their entire approach to media regulation—for example about spectrum management and definitions of different media services. Or questions which seek information at a more detailed level—for example, about how much digital television sets will really cost (estimates have varied wildly, from \$2000 to \$10,000) and whether regional areas will lose out through different reception patterns.

The picture may not come into focus until after the introduction of digital television. By then, it will be too late to establish a new digital television regime. But our experience with its introduction should give some clues about the next steps in media regulation. If, for example, few people buy HDTV sets, the broadcasters' hold on the radiofrequency



spectrum might start raising a few more questions, not to mention eyebrows. And if the government proves unable to regulate datacasting under its ridiculously specific rules, that failure will display in magnificent technicolour the illogicality of artificially separating media services in a world where they are naturally merging. The Australian tradition of media regulation by fiasco and debacle (remember pay TV?) may be alive and well. ■

Kate Manton is *Eureka Street's* assistant editor.

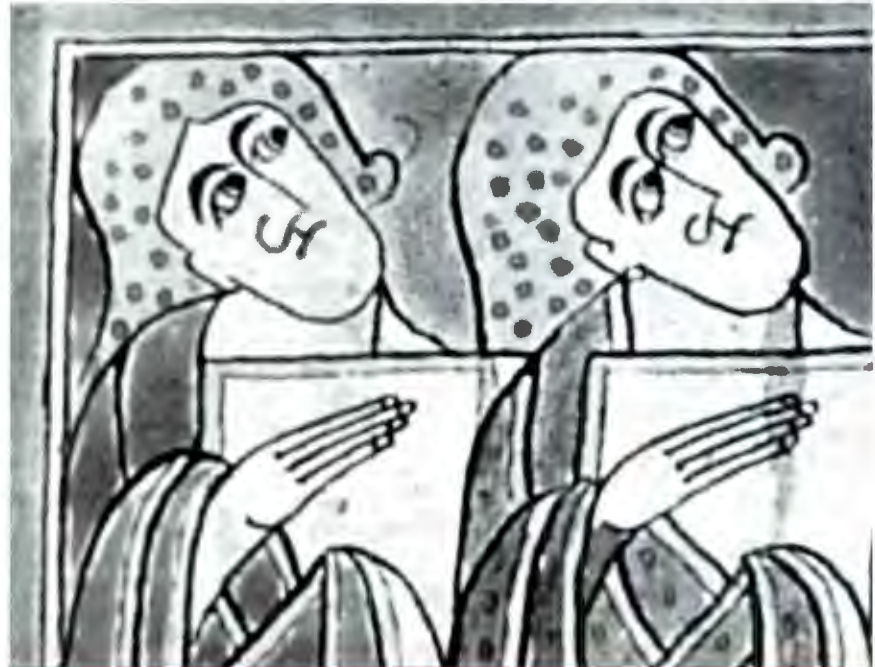
St Patrick's mother ran a shebeen in Enniskillen. Believe it or not. But it's hardly more far-fetched than some of the other Irish claims to saintly fame.

PETER AND PAUL made it to Rome. Longinus, the centurion, to Mantua. The holy house of Nazareth flew to Loreto. James, the cousin or maybe the brother of the Lord, reached Compostella in Atlantic Spain. The family from Bethany, Mary, Martha and Lazarus, found their way to Marseilles. Joseph of Arimathea crossed the English Channel with the holy cup used at the Last Supper and got to Glastonbury in Somerset.

So the stories go. The first friends, the intimates, of the Lord, turned out to be the great explorers of their age and penetrated every corner of Western Europe. If we allow that Joseph of Arimathea reached England late in his life, and suppose that it was on the heels of the Claudian invasion, it is clear that all these centrifugal apostles reached their destinations courtesy of Roman roads and Roman safe conduct passes. The Empire marked the limits of their travel. I presume credulity can be stretched only so far; if the Romans had penetrated to point X, then it was possible that anyone else could have got there too. Whereas if the legions hadn't made it to point Y and planted the eagles, then you don't stretch your storyteller's luck by claiming some native of Judaea or Galilee could have popped up there.

If Those Feet in ancient time hadn't themselves walked on England's mountains green or France's fair fields or in Spain's olive groves, the one-remove connections were still pretty good. They were certainly much better than those of the girl who traced her line through untold dancing partners to the Prince of Wales. James, Paul, Longinus, Lazarus and the rest had in person tripped the fantastic with the Prince of Peace himself.

So the countries they settled in were blessed. As the ages turned over, however, the provinces of Christendom that had never been Romanised felt hard done by. They had as much instinctual need to have touched the hem of Christ's garment as, say, the Italians or the Spaniards. The Scots, among whom the legions had never come until 50 years after the death of the Lord, produced some lateral thinking to overcome their disadvantage. A native Scot, they discovered, had been, if not quite an intimate of the Lord, at least creatively close to him. Pontius Pilate, they said, was born at Fortingall near Pitlochry in Perthshire.

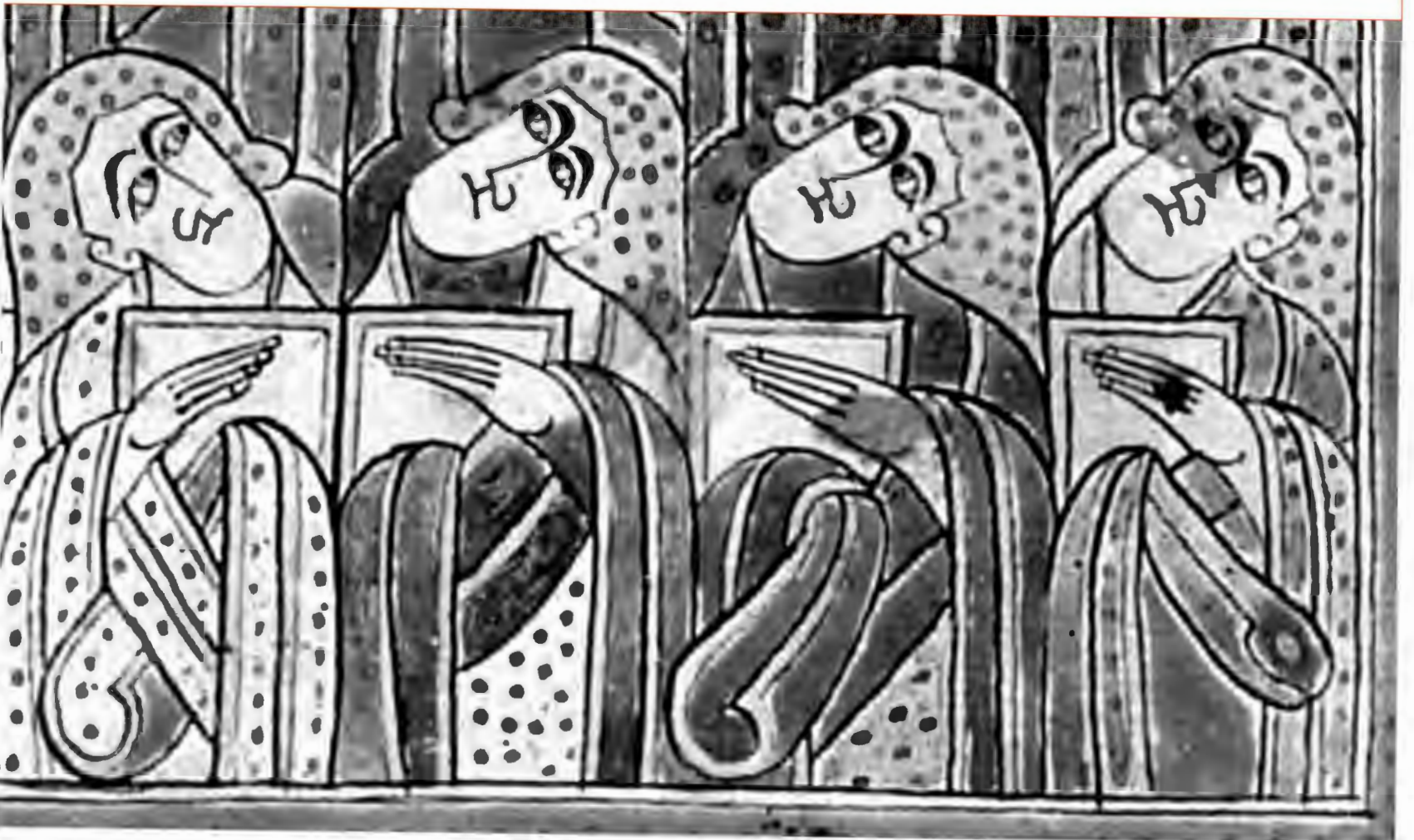


Apostolic





Ireland — a theological fiction



Maybe all the Irish ... believe they come from a line of kings. Their religious affiliations however are much more humble and circumspect. It's a jostle of little fellows, disreputable most of them, at the lower end of the table of the Lord waiting to be invited higher up.

This was doubly bold thinking. First, to inject one of your own into the gospel story, rather than just accept someone who wanders haphazardly out of it. Second, to choose as your family connection, one of the villains of the piece. This suggests a proud, contrary nation, but also one that believes in the possibility of redemption. It's unthinkable (or is it?) that the Scots should select as their character in the drama a man who could never be excused, reprieved, pardoned, even glorified. Perhaps they did get some wind of the information that leaked out of distant Abyssinia, so far from his native land, that Pilate had been converted, then martyred and so canonised there. Fortingall is now little more than an old-world hotel that caters for the hunting and fishing tourist. Yes, that rings true. It means Fortingall is defined by its promise of the catch—as authentic and traditional a note of apostolic Christianity as you could want. The local boy must have made good. He's caused some of the markings of grace to appear in his wilderness.

What however about the farthest, most westerly reaches of Europe? Where the galleys never beached, where the legionnaire's sandal never trod? That's not quite so certain now—there's a glimmer of evidence that a handful of Romans made transient landfall in Ireland, but that's as far as it goes. They certainly weren't shipping in itinerants from their Middle Eastern provinces. It's been rough for the Irish, a people who have given a whole-hearted welcome to Christianity (all right, maybe selective, maybe intolerant) that they don't get a patron straight out of the pages of the Gospel. Whereas a people like the perfidious French score a whole family of them.

In their imaginative zeal however the Irish have discovered some epically marginal connections of their own. These should be better known, and I offer the few I've unearthed in the hope of eliciting more so that we can get a full picture of Apostolic Ireland.

It's not an easy task of assemblage; the Irish claims are neither grandiose nor repetitive. I was introduced to Irish apostolic history by a 1976 article of Patrick O'Farrell, 'Millennialism, Messianism and Utopianism in Irish History'. The author refers to 'the curious early belief that the Irish were responsible for the killing of John the Baptist'. Now that certainly looks a long shot if ever there was. But Patrick O'Farrell was interested not in the actual proposition of belief but in its psychological effects. For the Irish believed that the Baptist's death would be avenged by some national calamity—a plague or some form of nation-wide devastation. It was to lay waste Ireland



for three days and three nights just prior to the end of the world. The Irish called this rough beast 'the Broom out of Fana'. The Broom was to sweep down from the north, from the Fana area of Donegal. Much of the rest of Europe expected the end of the world at the turn

of the Millennium, but Irish hysteria was suitably contrary and waited for a confluence of astrological signs (e.g. the feast of the Decollation of the Baptist falling on a Friday) before settling on 1096 as the year the Broom would sweep down. A dire, officially organised program of fast and penance was followed, and the Broom stayed in its Donegal cupboard.

Why ever should the Irish have thought they were to blame for John's death? There is no genealogical evidence that the Hasmonaean and Herodian dynasties were of Irish origin. It would seem unlikely that any proto-Wild Geese were employed in the Judaeen royal household as jailers, guards, banquet attendants, dancing masters. Maybe the responsibility was incurred in some cosmological apportionment of guilt when the world was being brought out of chaos, and light was being separated from darkness. But why did the Irish score John the Baptist? Maybe it was a triumph of comparative innocence? Instead of sharing in the universal responsibility for the death of Christ, the Irish got off on the far lesser charge of the slaying of the Baptist. But why?

THERE ARE AT LEAST partial answers to most of these questions. It appears that an Irish Druid, Mog Ruith, aka Mogh Roith, was practising his skills in Jerusalem about 33AD. He was in fact a friend and colleague of Simon Magus and assisted him in his contest with the Apostles, as recorded (or in this case not recorded) in the Acts of the Apostles. A year or two prior to this however he was moonlighting as an executioner, and was called up at short notice to inflict the fatal blow on John. His people paid, for more than a thousand years.

Yet, by way of compensation, they did in fact escape the common portion of culpability for the death of Christ. In 1789 Charlotte Brooke published her *Reliques of Irish Poetry*. She was concerned to emphasise the sophistication of the early Irish bards, and she noted that the Irish of the Heroic Age travelled and had considerable cosmopolitan knowledge. By way of evidence she adduced a claim of the historian, Sylvester O'Halloran, that 'the celebrated champion Conall Cearnach, Master of the Ulster Knights, was actually in Jerusalem at the time of the crucifixion of our Saviour, and related the story to the King of Ulster on his return'. She notes that O'Halloran's authority is backed up by that of Archbishop Usher, the man now famous for having computed the date of the start of the world as 23 October 4004BC.

Still, this is a very modest claim indeed. Not only is there no bid for a relationship with Christ, but all that is stated is that Conall was in Jerusalem at the time—not even that he witnessed any of the events of the Passion. Maybe he just got the story at a dinner party or from some innkeeper. Maybe he got it from some disciple, making him one of the first to have the good news proclaimed to him. But there is not a hint from Brooke or O'Halloran or Usher of that. Far

less that Conall took on all the implications of the message and came back to Ulster a believer.

Charlotte Brooke makes no mention of another claim that must surely be linked to this, and is recorded in James F. Kenney's *The Sources for the Early History of Ireland, Vol. I, Ecclesiastical* (1929). This is that the Irish king (pagan of course), Conchobar mac Nessa (presumably the man to whom Conall reported), 'had died in a fit of righteous indignation on receiving knowledge of the crucifixion'. Performed by the ultimate representative of his people, this act of positively Pauline identification with the Body of Christ merited for the Irish a lesser culpability for the act of decide. What that then actually meant in terms of Irish salvation history I'm afraid I just don't know.

The nearest point that I can find of actual contact between Christ and Ireland is noted in *Seventy Years of Irish Life*, a memoir of 1896 by W.R. Le Fanu. (It has to be acknowledged that W.R. was the brother of the horror fantasist, Sheridan Le Fanu.) Le Fanu mentions an insect that I take to be an earwig or scorpion (but I don't actually know if Patrick left either of these creatures in Ireland). At any rate Le Fanu says that it is 'a long, ugly-looking beetle, black and shining, with a forceps in his tail'. Le Fanu claims it has no English name at all, but the Irish for it is *darraghdeoul* which might be translated as 'red devil'. The great lexicographer, Fr Patrick Dineen, says it is a species of long black chafer. In its etymological breakdown *deoul* or *daol* means black or gloomy, and *dearg* is sometimes used as an intensifier and does not mean 'red' at all. Crudely, I suppose, we could call it 'the very devil'. Dineen says that the creature is known as 'the devil's coach horse'. That fits with what Le Fanu says was the poor beast's claim to fame. In an altogether faltering, head-scratching way, he records that 'the tradition as to [the *darraghdeoul*] was that he had, in some form or way, guided or accompanied Judas Iscariot to the garden of Gethsemane'. For those who wished to dissociate themselves radically from the devil's coach horse, Le Fanu gives the appropriate ritual. The animal has to be killed on one thumb nail with the use of the other thumb nail while a Pater or an Ave is recited. If this is done punctiliously the killer will win forgiveness for the Seven Deadly Sins. Le Fanu was of course a Protestant writer.

THAT'S JUST ABOUT IT. It was an Irish insect that got closest to Christ, and for a malign purpose; an Irish priest, albeit disguised as a magician, brought the axe down on the Baptist; and an Ulsterman just happened to be passing through Jerusalem about 33AD, but didn't see a thing. What a threadbare Christian authenticity card!

In at least one instance however the Irish contributed to another nation's Christian template. England, although already richly endowed with the Holy Grail, deserved a less honourable connection.

Daniel O'Connell, in one fiery speech, told his audience that Benjamin Disraeli was a lineal descendant of the impenitent thief. This was in keeping; the Irish were not in the business of trailing clouds of glory for themselves, and weren't to be expected to do it for others either.



A cast of mind had set in. Maybe all the Irish, especially the diasporic Irish, believe they come from a line of kings. Their religious affiliations however are much more humble and circumspect. It's a jostle of little fellows, disreputable most of them, at the lower end of the table of the Lord waiting to be invited higher up. More recent belief might have it that all the early leaders and saints and abbots of the Irish church were of aristocratic stock, but that was a break from the modest purity of an earlier tradition. In 1847 John Edward Walsh anonymously published *Sketches of Ireland Sixty Years Ago*. The work was republished in 1979 and significantly retitled *Rakes and Ruffians: The Underworld of Georgian Dublin*. Walsh cited a belief current in the mid-18th century that Saint Patrick's mother ran a shebeen in Enniskillen. Who would have guessed it? A little more light is shed on this matter by T. Crofton Croker in *The Popular Songs of Ireland* (1839). The family shebeen is recorded in a song probably composed and first sung in 1814, 'Oh, Saint Patrick Was a Gentleman'. Note again, the extreme modesty of this claim. For good measure, the song records that his mother was a Brady and his father an O'Gallagher.

The characters in the initial Irish Christian drama were the man, woman, priest and beetle next door, not denizens of marble halls at all. They belonged to the known community, and the life of that community went on at every point within time—and outside time too. Le Fanu explained how it all worked. He goes from a discussion of faction fights, brawls, barneys, donnybrooks to relate how fights often broke out between funeral parties arriving more or less simultaneously at a graveyard. This was only to be expected, Le Fanu wrote, because 'the last person buried in a churchyard has, in addition to his other troubles, to carry water to allay the thirst (in Purgatory) of all those previously buried there ... Peasants have been known to put shoes or boots into coffins to save the feet of their relatives in their long and weary water-carrying walks.'

Life's grim enough for the dead, but what an ask of the barely-shod survivors! The Irish have had to work hard to establish their place in the Kingdom. Maybe too hard. You can't blame them for turning into a post-Christian nation. ■

Gerard Windsor's most recent book is *I Asked Cathleen to Dance*, published by University of Queensland Press in 1999.

*If Those Feet
in ancient time
hadn't
themselves
walked
on England's
mountains
green or
France's fair
fields or in
Spain's olive
groves, the
one-remove
connections
were still
pretty good.
They were
certainly much
better than
those of the
girl who traced
her line
through untold
dancing
partners to
the Prince of
Wales.*

*Illuminations of
The Second Coming
of Christ from
Manuscript 51.
Monastic Library of
St Gall, Switzerland.
St Gall was a
disciple of
St Columbanus, who
in turn came from
the Iona monastery
of St Columba
(or Columcille).*

The recent confrontation with General Wiranto was one of the first of many challenges that face Indonesian President Abdurrahman Wahid. And the going is not going to get any easier.

Which way Wahid?

IN HIS 1996 study of peoples and cultures converted to Islam, *Beyond Belief*, V.S. Naipaul attempts to recall the first time he talked with Abdurrahman Wahid. Not yet 40 years of age in 1979, Wahid was already prominent in national affairs through his involvement in the Islamic village boarding-school program that his grandfather and father had developed. Despite this, Naipaul had no clear picture of the man or the meeting.

'It might have been because of the very dim light in Mr Wahid's sitting room,' he guesses. 'It was a great strain to try to see him through the gloom, and I must have given up, been content with his voice, and remained without a picture.'

Now President, Abdurrahman Wahid is again in the gloom, one which envelops the entire Republic of Indonesia. Wahid presents as an enigmatic figure, ruling amid sectarian strife, rebellious provinces, continued economic hardship and an army which houses some men not wholly committed to his plans for reform.

The physical appearance of the man shuffling awkwardly before the cameras—he is still coming to terms with the effects of the stroke two years ago that left him almost blind—is certainly more weather-beaten than that of his imposing former military chief and Cabinet member, General Wiranto. Yet Wahid is regarded by Indonesia watchers (and indeed by the United States, if Richard Holbrooke's spirited defence of his Presidency from threats of a coup is anything to go by) as the best hope Indonesia has in its uncertain era of regime change. Paradoxically, his health has improved since he became President.

What is most remarkable is that he seems oblivious to the drama of which he is an integral part. As he blithely tosses off comments that resound across the world his serenity—or, some might say, his aloofness—remains constant.

Deakin University academic Greg Barton is his biographer, and referring to him by his nickname, says that the Indonesian public is warming to Gus Dur's particular combination of sharp intellect and affable wit. It puts him apart from his predecessors.

'He has a much more attractive open personality,' said Barton after returning from a visit prior to Wahid's recent European trip. 'He likes literature and classical music and he is a humanitarian—he is exceedingly generous with people.'

Fr Frank Brennan was recently in Jakarta speaking at a conference on the relationship between Australia and Indonesia and was surprised to be invited with other delegates to an audience with Wahid at the Royal Palace, particularly as the embassy in Jakarta had such a difficult time organising a meeting with Alexander Downer when he came to Indonesia. He described the 45-minute meeting as extremely cordial. Wahid told a number of florid jokes and spoke of his high regard for Xanana Gusmao.

A Muslim intellectual, Wahid is dedicated to a secularism, which puts him at odds with a hard core of Muslim groups who would like to see an Islamic state. Secularism is an ideal handed down to him by his father and grandfather, both of whom have streets named after them in central Jakarta. His grandfather was a

prominent religious leader before the Japanese invasion and his father is one of the heroes of independence. When he took the helm of his father's organisation, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) in 1984, he retracted its political involvement and concentrated on its declared task of fostering tolerant religious values.

Perhaps it is the commitment he has to these values and his Islamic beliefs which sustain Wahid's unusual stability. Even while Suharto was still well ensconced, Wahid published articles critical of him in *Tempo* and other magazines. And because he has over 30 million followers in NU, he got away with it.

SINCE BECOMING President, Wahid has been travelling overseas, gathering international support for his administration. To some, this has been time wasted. He should, they argue, have been concentrating on matters closer to home.

'He has been visiting world leaders to restore their confidence in Indonesia and while this is important I do not think it is as necessary as his presence here,' says Soedjati Djiwandono, a Jakarta-based columnist and political analyst.

'He is respected as a man of integrity but despite his qualities he himself is not the main determining factor for the world to believe Indonesia is on the right path.'

One of the primary tasks that presented itself to Wahid when he was appointed President by the parliament last October (ahead of the more popular Megawati Sukarnoputri) was to design a new federalism that would accommodate the regional elites' desire for greater

autonomy. His Cabinet included a new post for autonomy initiatives, given to former bureaucrat Ryaas Rasyid. Editor of *Inside Indonesia*, Gerry Van Klinken, argues that the initial promise that came with this new position is fading quickly.

'Rasyid is very close to resigning because he has no room to do his job.' Van Klinken suggests that Rasyid had more power when he was director-general of the Department of Home Affairs.

between TNI and the Free Aceh Movement also persist. According to Aceh expert Mark Durie, the momentum for separation from the Republic in this fiercely independent province has reached a point of no return.

'It is not just a quest for greater control over resources [Aceh is an oil-rich region]; the identity issue is the fundamental driving force, and a lack of justice for the crimes the TNI have committed,' says

The loss of East Timor was a slap in the face in the international arena, but to lose Aceh would strike at the historical notions that sustain Indonesia as a whole. Aceh was never fully controlled by the Dutch, who only brought some measure of control to the area in the early 1900s with an accommodation of rebel demands. It was also one of the first provinces to rise up after the Second World War.



The constituency of the future. Above: young commuters in a Jakarta bus; overleaf: students demonstrating in Jakarta. Photographs by Luis Ascui.

'The State Minister for Human Rights [Hasballah M. Saad, an Acehnese], in another newly created position, is also frustrated. He hasn't even got a computer or an office yet.'

During Wahid's brief time as President, conditions in the two main trouble spots in the Republic have deteriorated rather than improved: in the Moluccas, there is continuing Christian/Muslim violence, and in Sumatra clashes

Durie, who has written extensively on the region and its local languages.

'There have been abuses in Aceh over the last ten years like those seen in East Timor—bodies turning up on street corners and the like—and no-one has been able to bring someone to book for it.

'Gus Dur's moderation is unfortunately too little too late because the army has not paused in using its old tactics.'

The problems in the Moluccas are more difficult for Wahid, according to Gerry Van Klinken, because it is not a 'clean' revolt like Aceh and there is the agitation of certain elements behind it as well. Soedjati Djwandono also points to the willingness of Islamic and Christian leaders, including one-time presidential hopeful and current Speaker of the parliament, Amien Rais, to make political capital out of the violence which

has seen over 1800 people killed. Rais was present at the so-called 'million man' rally in Jakarta in January where calls for a holy war were made (Djiwandono estimates that the crowd figure was closer to 16,000).

DESPITE THE deterioration on the home front, Gus Dur has not slowed in his efforts to reform the military and bring world leaders on side. A combination of his beguiling personality and the international community's overwhelming desire to believe in someone who is a moderate and a democrat has made the second of these tasks relatively easy. The job of bringing his army out of the habits bred by the Suharto years is far more difficult—as the conflict with Wiranto has shown. Greg Barton argues that Wahid sees reform of TNI as the key to unlocking Indonesia's problems.

'What he would like to see is the military become more like it is in Malaysia or Singapore, that is, to become more professional, and accordingly, they would be given decent rates of pay.'

Under Suharto, the TNI, dominated by the army, enjoyed a dual function of both defence and 'social' activity. This allowed the officer-class to become wealthy through business ventures. Gerry Van Klinken says that Wahid must look

to changing the structure of the army and altering the way it conceives its military purpose.

'The trouble is, the army sees the people as the enemy. It doesn't face a foreign threat but rather is organised down to the village level in order to keep order and control.'

Greg Barton sees potential for success in the President's approach—appealing to the better nature of the army. 'He is telling the rank and file that he trusts and believes in the army and that only a small number are spoiling its good name. He believes that the majority in the army are only concerned with doing a good job and having enough money to pay bills. At the same time as he is pushing Wiranto he is offering him immunity and this leaves him with an offer he cannot refuse.'

Wahid has to know the limits of how far he can go. Most commentators see him as trying to engineer a compromise similar to that brought about in Spain after Franco or in Chile after Pinochet: one where not everyone is satisfied but

in which important elites do feel they have a stake. While blaming elements in the military for the Moluccas and pushing for Wiranto's resignation, Wahid was also telling world leaders not to call for an international tribunal to deal with the violence in East Timor.

If he can marginalise Wiranto (rumour has it that the letter asking for Wiranto's resignation was sitting on Wahid's desk weeks before he told reporters at the World Economic Forum in Switzerland that he would ask Wiranto to step down) then the various factions in the military, including those still in his Cabinet, will look to him for their lead. Reformers and the international community will want a more rapid redress of the human rights situation, but Soedjati Djiwandono argues he must move slowly.

'Before he became President he said that to turn the army around would take six years and he has to stick to this plan.'

Less than two years ago, General Wiranto was being hailed for his calm approach to the riots and protests that ousted Suharto. If President Wahid's political skills fail him, he too will be pushed aside by events. And nearly all Indonesia watchers agree that if Wahid fails, then the unthinkable conclusion to recent events in Indonesia will become the unavoidable. ■

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



Some enchanted leavening

DAVID TACEY has been much in demand as a writer and speaker on contemporary Australian spirituality. In *ReEnchantment*, he offers a broad and popular view of the subject.

The structure of his argument is simple. He claims that spirituality—the awareness of and desire to be linked to the mystery beneath what we can immediately see and handle—is necessary if we are to flourish, and that thirst for it is now profound in Australia.

Tacey addresses two contending positions in making his case. The first is the ideology of secularism, which he sees as regnant in Australian society and particularly among the educated elites. It expresses the convictions that reality can be studied adequately by science, that religious and spiritual beliefs are irrational, and that economic and managerial questions form an adequate language to speak about national purpose and planning. It regards spirituality as irrational and self-regarding, and views it with suspicion.

The second contender comprises the churches, who believe theoretically in spirituality and should be a home for those hungering for the things of the spirit. However, their language, complacency and oppressive structures alienate those who are drawn by mystery. Although Tacey writes appreciatively of the resources offered by Christianity, he argues that the churches neither value nor encourage access to these resources.

Against these forces that discourage spirituality, Tacey enlists Australian writers, painters and singers, and stresses particularly the resources offered by the land and the wisdom of its original inhabitants. They offer a spiritual vision. It is, however, dismissed and devalued by those who judge it from a secularist perspective. Tacey's Australia, then, is split: at one level pragmatic, thoroughly secular and unreligious, concerned with the surface



ReEnchantment: The New Australian Spirituality, David Tacey, HarperCollins, 2000. ISBN 0 7322 6524 X, RRP \$22.95

and the price of things; at another, it is searching and inarticulately thirsting for depth.

The young, however, are increasingly impatient for a spiritual vision. For anyone committed to a church, the most bracing part of Tacey's book is his account of the popular attitudes to the churches, particularly those of young people. While his experience has been primarily of young adults who are relatively highly educated, his account confirms my own experience. He argues that those who display the most hunger for a spiritual vision were brought up within the churches. They later left the churches because they found there no nourishment for their spirit. Tacey describes accurately the cultural context within which the churches work, the points at which young adults are open to the spirit, and the bleak perception they usually have of church teaching and structures. Priests and ministers developing pastoral strategy would do well to read or hear Tacey.

An informed Christian, however, will find depressing Tacey's account of the popular view of Christian attitudes to spirituality and the body. It suggests how an illiberal, fraudulent and polemical account of Christian faith and life can be accepted as accurate. It is ironical that most of the over-simplifications and absurdities have their origin in arguments between churches. Once used to damn ecclesiastical enemies, they have now become the accepted conventional view of the whole Christian enterprise.

The spirituality which Tacey commends is interestingly complex. Part of its

attractiveness comes from being set as illumination against the darkness of an obdurate secularism and a resolutely unspiritual church. The human reality, of course, is much more dappled. But Tacey distances himself from many popular forms of spirituality by insisting that the individual search for fulfilment is not enough. Connections are important. Genuine spirituality, particularly among people, shows itself in a passion for social justice and in compassion. It also properly belongs within a tradition and a community. Tacey also criticises spiritualities which do not include negativity, minimising the reality of sin and evil, of forgiveness, the justice of God, and the need to make hard choices if we are to respond to the call of the spirit. His view of spirituality certainly does not have the soft centre often regarded as typical of New Age.

IDIFFER FROM TACEY in the way he situates spirituality. He bases it in the belief that the ultimate mystery of reality cannot be known, and that there are therefore many complementary paths in which this reality is symbolised. Religions therefore provide different ways of symbolising reality; they should avoid exclusive claims, maintain their traditions, but adapt them to changing cultures. Judging churches from this perspective, Tacey is impatient with their insistence on alienating formulas and practices, seeing it as indicating a lack of seriousness about spirituality. In many cases he is correct.

But this concern for verbal accuracy may also indicate that many Christians will disagree with Tacey about the way in which spirituality should be grounded. Some of us believe that we have been given privileged ways of understanding and living the mystery, and that beliefs such as that the Son of God became human in Jesus Christ, that Jesus Christ rose from the dead, and that Jesus Christ is the uniquely

privileged path to God involve truth claims. Those who make such claims about Christianity will not ask simply how they can spell out the symbolic content of their faith in terms acceptable to modernity, but also how to do so in ways that respect the contingent truths that it involves. This is an unpopular position. Even though it may be held without denying the value of other paths and without being authoritarian or intolerant, it will still be dismissed for it offends the same secular assumptions which in Tacey's view exclude serious consideration of spirituality.

I found the most appealing aspect of Tacey's work to be his engagement with Aboriginal religion. It reflects his passion and the time he has spent in Aboriginal communities. In his view, Aboriginal spirituality provides us with a model of

what spirituality should be. It offers an awareness of a reality deeper than the surface and a passion for connection and rootedness. It represents what is missing in the conventions of Australian culture, and what is therefore hungered for.

Aboriginal spirituality, then, offers a challenge and a treasure to other Australians. Tacey is critical of some of the ways in which it is met. Some wish to collect Aboriginal culture, adding it to their lives the way they pin hunting trophies to their walls. Some mix aspects of Aboriginal beliefs eclectically into their lives. Others systematically deny the reality and importance of spirituality in Australian life, but wish to preserve the culture of Aborigines even while believing it is primitive and founded in fallacy. Tacey opposes to these approaches a rich under-

standing of reconciliation that goes beyond tolerance or empathy. He argues that we must first take spirituality seriously. When we are open to the mystery that underlies the everyday, and value connection over acquisition, we will be open to Aboriginal Australia and will allow its spirituality to become part of our lives. Only an encounter at this depth will enable us to resolve practical problems like the sharing of land.

ReEnchantment is a stimulating and easily read book. Even those of us who are suspicious of an overarching category of spirituality will find much that is illuminating and that provokes a more attentive reading of Australian culture. ■

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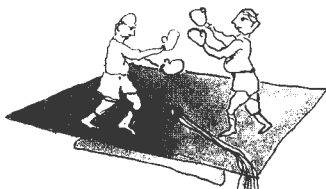
BOOKS: 2

MICHAEL SMITH

The academy of hard knocks

AS WE KNOW FROM newspaper reports at the time, the powers-that-be at Melbourne University Press, notwithstanding their initial enthusiasm, ultimately reneged on their decision to publish *Why Universities Matter*. It is difficult to know why, precisely. One hypothesis is that their aim was to suppress the book's ideas. But if this was their aim, then the failure in their execution has been truly spectacular. The book's editor, Tony Coady, was subsequently deluged with offers from publishers, and the free publicity has in turn guaranteed that the book will sell in far greater numbers than it otherwise would. I, for one, could hardly wait to see what all the fuss had been about.

Those looking for sedition will, however, be disappointed. The essays contained in *Why Universities Matter* are by and large sober, well documented and tightly argued pieces about the current state of Australia's universities. The controversy MUP started is thus almost entirely external to the book itself, or would have been if Morag Fraser hadn't been asked to contribute a final



Why Universities Matter, Tony Coady (ed),
Allen & Unwin, 2000.
ISBN 1 86508 038 1, RRP \$24.95

chapter describing the circumstances that surrounded MUP's actions. Aware that the facts could do nearly all of the talking for themselves, Fraser shows remarkable restraint. For the most part she simply provides a detailed account of MUP's embarrassing involvement in the whole messy saga. The sting lies in the tail when she asks what MUP had to lose by publishing the book. Certainly, as she implies, it had much more to lose by reneging on the initial decision to publish, as it must now deal with the perception that those who run the organisation, a *university press* of all things, feel free to use their position to control the flow of information in ways that serve their own interests.

The novelty of the remaining essays in *Why Universities Matter* lies in the authors' refusal simply to describe the radical changes that have taken place in Australian universities since the Dawkins reforms of the mid 1980s: the massive expansion in the number of institutions claiming university status, the increase in the number of students, the progressive withdrawal of Commonwealth funds, the creation of markets in which universities compete with each other for both students and research funding, the scramble for sources of external money, the controls on the kind of research that gets done, and so on. Nor do they rest content to evaluate these changes in terms of the goals that their makers thought they would serve. Instead they insist that we ask ourselves whether these changes have been good or bad in more absolute terms. Should universities function in the way that they have been forced to function in the post-Dawkins era? Is this what universities are supposed to be like? Unsurprisingly, these questions are answered resoundingly in the negative.

The approaches are diverse. Tony Coady, Raimond Gaita, Bruce Langtry, and Seumas Miller all confront the more abstract questions of value prompted by these questions. What are the terms in which universities should be evaluated? The pursuit of truth and intellectual autonomy are high on their list. Stuart Macintyre and Simon Marginson, Janet McCalman, and John Molony all come at the issue from a more historical perspective. The stark changes occasioned by the Dawkins reforms are made manifest, as is the abandonment by recent governments of the idea, held dear up until that time, that the proper role of the universities is to serve as the custodians of national science and culture. Judith Brett, Peter Karmel, Tony Klein, Jane Marceau, and Marginson all address specific problems that arise given the ways in which universities, and individuals within them, are now made to compete with each other for students and research funds. The perversions of the current market-oriented system are made vivid.

THE IRONY, OF COURSE, is that the whole MUP saga provides a vivid illustration of the sorts of changes many of the authors complain about in their contributions. Once everyone involved in higher education comes to conceive of themselves as players in the kind of marketplace in which Australian universities have been forced to operate, it should hardly be surprising if those who control MUP had seen fit to use their position to control the flow of information in ways that serve their own interests. After all, isn't that just the kind of thing you might expect from a player jockeying for position in a highly competitive marketplace?

But though there is much to agree with in these essays, there is also, I think, at least a little that needs to be added. The authors seem to me to portray ordinary academics too much as victims, swept along by changes which they in no way brought upon themselves. They write as if, from the mid '80s on, successive governments were completely ideologically driven, consumed by the desire to make Australian industries, the 'education industry' included, competitive by international standards. While ideological commitment has no doubt played a significant role, it does not explain why the current reforms have left so little room for academics to exercise their own qualitative judgments about anything of real significance. Why have academics lost their clout in so many spheres over which

they used to exercise autonomous control? The explanation cannot be the desire to have a more competitive 'American-style' system of higher education, as our US counterparts still exercise a good deal of control in a number of significant areas. Indeed, many of us look longingly at the conditions enjoyed by our US counterparts and ask ourselves how we managed to get ourselves into such a mess.

My own hunch is that in order to explain this we have to remember that our current crop of political leaders mostly attended university, if they attended university, between the late 1950s and the mid 1970s. This was a period during which there was a huge increase in the amount of government funding made available for higher education. It was thus also a period in which there was a massive expansion in the number of people who taught at universities, and hence, towards the end, a time when many universities found themselves with academic staff who really didn't deserve to hold their jobs. While some were positively delinquent, others weren't delinquent, but they weren't really very good at what they did either. Many of them taught our current crop of political leaders.

At this point we begin to see the downside of the desire of Australian academics to maintain friendly relations with their colleagues, pretty much above all else, a desire they pursued relentlessly through their unions. One striking difference between Australian academics and their US counterparts is that Australians have never had the stomach to make judgments of quality that would see their colleagues out of a job. Thus there was never any serious tenure review in Australian universities. As someone appointed from the US to a position in an Australian university once told me years ago, 'As soon as I heard what "tenure-track" meant in Australia, I was out here like a shot!' And nor was there any real mechanism for preventing those whose performance as academics was competent, but only marginally so, from being promoted all the way to the top of the scale. In some universities the consequences are still with us. We all know of departments that will never amount to anything until certain people who were appointed in the '60s and '70s, and who have done nothing much of any distinction ever since, retire.

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The extent to which academics may need to accept their own partial responsibility, or perhaps that of their more senior colleagues, for the current state of higher education in Australia should start to become plain. Suppose you were a member of government and these were your memories of the consequences of collegiality among academics. Suppose these were your memories of the extent to which Australian academics recognised the responsibility they had to ensure the quality of their profession, given the incredible freedoms they enjoyed. Would you be keen to entrust any spheres of autonomous control to them? I do not think so.

The sad part, of course, is that many of today's academics were in those same classrooms. We learned the same lessons, and resolved to do things differently when and if we eventually had the privilege to hold an academic post. Yet just when we have risen in the academic ranks to the point where we could make a difference to the way things gets done, we have had the power to make any real difference taken away from us. We can only hope that it isn't too late to persuade our former classmates to give us back the autonomy we need to do our jobs properly. ■

Michael Smith is Professor of Philosophy in the Research School of Social Sciences, ANU.

Artful gatherings

(and so forth), Robert Dessaix, Macmillan, Sydney, 1998. ISBN 07329 0943 0, RRP \$29.95

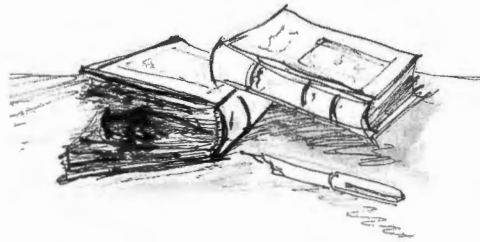
Wormholes: Essays and Occasional Writings, John Fowles, ed. Jan Relf, Vintage, London, 1999. ISBN 0 099 272 725, RRP \$19.95

Adultery and Other Diversions, Tim Parks, Vintage, London, 1999. ISBN 0 099 274 841

THERE IS SOMETHING about a volume of essays that challenges the reader to consider the point of books and reading. Not so with novels or poems or argumentative 'one-idea' works of non-fiction. Their agenda is clear: to distract and entertain, to move and persuade. But we meander through the minds and preoccupations of essayists, nervous and wary that they have some ulterior motive to spring upon us. We want to know—in a way that we don't demand of work in other genres—what claim the writer has to be an essayist.

The three collections I have been reading (in a far more systematic manner than any of their authors intended, I am sure) offer a wide variety of pleasures. Tim Parks and John Fowles, separated by a generation, are both highly regarded British novelists. This is the regulation Essayist's Authorisation: successful work in other genres. Fowles' novels, *The Collector* and *The Magus* among them, are what 'entitle' him to write essays. Australian Robert Dessaix's licence as an essayist is granted on the basis of his idiosyncratic success as a broadcaster and commentator. He is an essayist by vocation and temperament. Novelists (by definition or at least etymology) 'make new', but Dessaix confesses at the outset that 'Making things new is not my forte.' Whereas Fowles refers to his novels as 'elaborate lies', Dessaix introduces a gathering of stories at the start of his volume of short prose pieces with the words (Jeanette Winterson's), 'I'm telling you stories. Trust me.' But we never trust the essayist—or the writer of reviews, as Dessaix points out in a salutary piece on the latter craft. In fact, he continues, reviewers are trusted most when their style is least authoritarian. So, relax.

Essayists trade on their identity; we are attracted to them as we are attracted to particular people for the sake of their conversation, or the stimulus of their lives. Parks is the Englishman Abroad. He has lived in Italy since 1981, has an Italian wife



and in-laws, and his children are in most ways Italian too, no doubt.

Dessaix is an Australian exotic, a public intellectual and public homosexual, of diverse ethnicity, and an adoptee. He first came to prominence as a writer airing these and other matters, in his autobiography, *A Mother's Disgrace*. (Interesting to note that autobiographies have in the past been more often a writer's final work rather than their first.) But he is not merely 'politically' interesting; Dessaix as essayist is comfortable with himself, with his discreet, insinuating authorial persona. He doesn't need to raise his voice.

JOHAN FOWLES, unlike Dessaix, is a maker, a 'magus' himself. He is not, at least to my ear, entirely comfortable writing non-fictional prose. He is not religious, and perhaps senses the balance such language has to achieve between being preachy and confessional. 'It is rather difficult,' he says, 'to put one's private self into a novel; it is rather difficult to keep it out of a poem.' (This is from the essay that was a preface to his *Poems*.) His poems are the contrast to his novels, and his essays uneasily occupy a no-man's-land. No doubt every experienced writer is asked to produce the occasional piece of literary or personal commentary, and not all of these ought to be assessed as 'essays as literature'. My first reaction to *Wormholes* was to think that its moments of interest, independent of Fowles' novels and him as novelist, are far too few. But I think that reaction is a fault of the

book's internal organisation. The collection ought not have begun with the rambling and repetitive autobiographical pieces. Some are too slight to have justified their inclusion under any circumstances, other than archival. That said, there are quite a number of items that have substantial and intrinsic interest.

Fowles' long piece on the renaissance antiquary, gossip and scribbler, John Aubrey, and his *Monumenta Britannica* is fascinating. Fowles himself is an antiquarian, indeed, a collector: although he is suspicious of the collecting impulse in its varying manifestations. The desire to label and possess, he thinks, is a poor imitation of love, and usually works to the detriment of its object, whether it be nature or, in *The Collector*, a person. Natural history is his abiding interest, fuelling both a passionate conservationism, and his work as the curator of the Lyme Regis fossil museum.

In the essay 'Weeds, Bugs, Americans' (first published in *Sports Illustrated!*), he writes with sparkling originality on the need to practise conservation, not so much in parks and reserves where nature is to some extent archived and marginalised, but in the gardens and suburbs where people live. His insights into the different relationships between human settlement and nature in Britain and America are particularly relevant to Australia. In England, the things that grow in untended gardens and along roadsides are various native pasture and meadow species; in Australia they are the same species—and are weeds here. Our Australian urban areas did not develop slowly out of agricultural settlements, but were built as towns, with local nature ruined prior to settlement. The invasive nature of European plants, together with Australians' unreflective and unindigenised gardening habits, has led to what A.W. Crosby has called, in a book of the same name, 'ecological imperialism'.

The longest item in *Wormholes, 'Islands'*, was originally the text for a book of photos of the same name. It begins at the Scillies, off Land's End, then winds back through Cornwall and Lyme Regis to explore the eroticism of the beach, the history of sea-bathing, insularity, Robinson Crusoe, the authorship of *The Odyssey*, the Bermudas and Shakespeare's *Tempest*, and pebble mazes.

On the basis of the autobiographical pieces, it is tempting to judge Fowles rather harshly, or with some condescension. He is a wannabe exotic, a 'liberal' try-hard. He lives in English Dorset, but loves France and Greece. He is a white straight male but is, he says, trying hard to be a feminist, and had no doubt co-operated with his editor who tried to alter his 'gender-specific language ... to more politically correct usage'. (This is, incidentally, the only time I've heard the expression 'politically correct' used without irony.) I'm dubious about the wisdom of updating or politically 'correcting' old essays, particularly in a collection like this where much of the point is to show the writer's history and development. Certainly it is odd to find a reference to the death of Princess Di in a powerful essay woven around events of 1982 (the Falklands War), dated to that year.

But there is also a vulnerability and charm in Fowles' honesty. He is in many ways a 19th-century figure himself—a rationalist, a book collector, an amateur in science. He has to remind himself, in an essay reflecting on the writing of *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, that he is not writing a Victorian novel. He does not seem to be a literary 'professional', does not puff himself or attitudinise. He dislikes literary gossip, jealousy and prizes. He is a countryman, and writes only what he wants to write and thus what he believes in. He is not a part of any literary movement, and reads the work of literary academics with bemusement but also a humble open-mindedness.

In two of the three pieces gathered under the banner of 'Culture and Society', he affirms his own sense of English as opposed to British identity. He would probably be even happier if Dorset had its own language and statehood—England too can be a no-man's-land.

BY LEAVING ENGLAND, Tim Parks has ensured that he simply doesn't have to deal with some of these issues. He has taken with him to Milan as much of English sensibility as he needs. National as well as familial identity is a recurring theme in

Adultery and Other Diversions, which is to my mind the most readable of these three collections. It is self-contained; there is no commentary on his other works, or retrospective on his career, no book reviews. It is a literary work in itself, a book of essays in the not-so-grand tradition. A sticker on the wrapper tells us that the publishers expect that we will already have heard the essays read on BBC Radio 3.

Adultery is a diversion in a society in which we have to create our catastrophes. I am reminded of C.S. Lewis saying that you learn about evil by resisting rather than succumbing to temptation, and Parks seems a far wiser character than the colleague whose increasingly grubby and dishonourable affairs he describes in the title essay. There is no moral insight to be gained from transgressing moral laws, even if there is often a character-building mess to be negotiated afterwards. Parks speculates that people will take ridiculous risks just to make things happen. Apart from anything else, infidelity in relationships makes life idiotically complicated—emotionally and practically, aside from morally. Parks himself, the married man, avoids smugness in his take on all this, and suspects that it is only timidity that keeps him from disaster. Perhaps the timid virtues are those that we can all most profitably exercise.

Parks' relationship with his late father, an evangelical Anglican priest, is not unnaturally a point of reference in the book. In various essays, he thinks through what children owe parents. Parks has, in some timid way, not become the faithful New Testament kind of Timothy his parents may have prayed for; in the essay called 'Fidelity' he feels twinges of guilt about this. But he is not altogether unsurprised when his own kids are discovered to have been stealing money to buy

AUSTRALIAN BOOK REVIEW

FEB/MAR

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chocolates. All things that happen between parents and children are equally novel and archetypal. His own students (of Literature, at the University of Milan) are of course living stories of more import than those they are meant to be studying, and the bounds of a teacher's responsibility are not always clear. Even the boundaries of human personality are a bit fluid; he sees his mother's eyes in his son's and his own father twice returned as a ghost.

Each of his essays is named with a single and usually abstract noun—Adultery, Magic, Rancour, Ghosts, etc.—and has a single narrative focus. We get the hang of his procedure pretty swiftly. But it doesn't detract from the interest of the collection, which resides not in his tone of voice, or even in the autobiographical component, but in what he has to say. Parks makes the reader think: if we all read more essays we might have a deeper sense of the reality of other people.

Identity is a national as well as familial matter, and as an English writer working and living in Italy, Parks has immediate and experiential access to rich material. A group of his teaching colleagues and students travel by bus to Strasbourg to

present a petition to the European Parliament; Parks observes that he feels partly English, and partly Italian, but 'what I never feel is European'. Identity is about belonging to people, a culture, a landscape, as Fowles would agree, and not to administrative and economic units. The European Parliament building, he observes, has no chapel; but there is a 'Meditation Room', which looks to Parks like a room trying not to be a chapel. When he, his two small children and a friend go for a three-day walk in the Alps near the Austrian border he finds—as most walkers do—that physical achievement depends on imaginative engagement, and bumps up against the metaphysical. At the roof of the Mountains is a statue of the Madonna, which for Parks as an unbeliever is nonetheless a locus for gratitude.

ROBERT DESSAIX'S background as described above gives him, you might imagine, a different angle on matters of family and religion. But he is tolerant and open-minded about both. Before *A Mother's Disgrace* brought him attention as a writer, Dessaix was an academic, a translator and reviewer as well as a broadcaster. He brings a unique and distinctive combination of experiences to all his literary tasks. In his stories, of which there is a small gathering at the start of (*and so forth*), he seems to be trying a bit too hard, and not finding a voice, but in his essays and reviews he is relaxed. His evident pleasure in his own mental processes (to adopt Tim Parks' thought), in recalling the right image, making a persuasive distinction, is striking. He mentions just the right specific instance, at just the right moment. He lays down the law—about how to travel, for instance—but without a whiff of censoriousness. He is full of instructive examples and sees no point in the all-too-frequent practice of setting out to overstate one's case. Serving his writerly apprenticeship as a translator seems to have given Dessaix not simply an enviable skill, but a precision and patience with language.

But is it really possible that Robert Dessaix was an Argonaut? I picture the inhabitants of two different worlds meeting—but it is not the pitched battle or the cultural clash one might imagine. The polished, European-style *homme de lettres*, who has been most places and read most things, was once a little Australian boy in short trousers in a backyard, listening to the ABC children's program. It shows that reality is more accommodating than the

easily imagined world of ideological polarities that we are constantly asked to believe we inhabit.

On an Aboriginal out-station Dessaix sees the locals wearing Santa Claus hats, and watching 'images of narcissistic Americans with facelifts talking about their bizarre sex-lives ... flickering on the television screen, as real as zombies from outer space'. We are tempted to outrage but, like Dessaix, settle for melancholy. This feeling tinges the collection: that Illyria (for which Argonaut Dessaix rowed) has, as modern Albania, come to an economic stand-still; that the study of Russian has declined in Australian universities, and Russia itself 'revealed to be just a vulgar backward version of America'; that our attitudes to languages and literature and knowledge have become cheap and utilitarian. In many places in the book, Dessaix finds himself having to preface some remark or idea by ruefully acknowledging that it's old-fashioned, or out of tune with the times, or asking pardon because it is something we're not supposed to say.

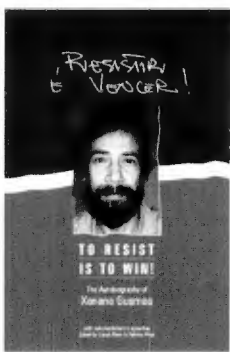
In a civilised society, he seems to suggest, openness of discourse may (counter-intuitively) imply and foster cultural coherence. If we have a language and conversational space in which we can fully discuss, say, gender and race, perhaps there will be less violence and confusion about those matters in people's homes and on the streets.

Which is why, despite the complexity of reviewing them, I like books of essays. These are not three 'rival monologues', but a series of (mostly) serious conversations that I have been having over a few months with a trio of intelligent, alert, generous strangers. 'Bliss, shot through with wisdom', which Robert Dessaix says, is the object of travel, can just as easily be found staying at home, 'in my own walled garden in Fitzroy'. We develop the talent for bliss by 'taking whatever happens to you—a passing cat, the Mona Lisa, knocking over the teapot—and letting it tell you a story. It means letting time crumple, being in a dozen places at once and doing what you love doing most.' Which also sounds like the talent for enjoying essays.

If reading is one of the occupations we love most, such wormholes and other diversions as these may be more humane and civilising than more highly wrought and self-important discourses. ■

Paul Tankard is a doctoral candidate in English at Monash University.

To Resist is to Win: The Autobiography of Xanana Gusmão with selected letters & speeches



To Resist is to Win is to be launched at 4pm, Tuesday 7 March at Writers Week in Adelaide. Sarah Niner, the editor of this important collection of Xanana's words, will be there, and all *Eureka Street's* Adelaide readers are invited to attend. A key feature of the work, which covers the development of Xanana's thought from 1975 to the present, is the autobiography he secretly wrote in Cipinang prison in 1994.

Hitchcock and Uncle Cyril

DURING 1999, the centenary year of Alfred Hitchcock's birth, the master's *oeuvre* was examined yet again, and movie aficionados, expert in deconstruction techniques, competed with each other in searching his films for clues, links and hints that would lead them deeper into the hermetic world of Hitchcock studies.

A recent television series devoted to the man and his work included brief excerpts from his early home movies. Suddenly there flashed on the screen the image of my husband's Uncle Cyril Ritchard doing the Charleston in the Hitchcock garden. Everyone seemed to be having a wonderful time with a lot of clowning and laughter, and I was reminded of a family album photo of Cyril taken about the same period.



Cyril is utterly dashing in a well-cut suit with generous lapels, high-waisted trousers under a double-breasted waistcoat, striking a nonchalant pose, hand in pocket, fedora tipped to just the right angle over the studied, world-weary gaze—a handsome young actor who could be relied upon to fill any bill, from romantic lead to sardonic villain. In this same sartorial splendour Cyril appeared in the 1929 Hitchcock thriller, *Blackmail*, the first British talkie.

Hitchcock made two versions of *Blackmail*, silent and sound. With the sound version, of which the first eight minutes are silent, he encountered a problem. The talented silent actress, Anny Ondra, who played Alice, the daughter of a London newsagent, was hampered by her Czechoslovakian accent. Hitchcock decided her voice must be dubbed. The result is some irritatingly stilted dialogue, soon forgiven when the eye begins to delight in early intimations of the classic Hitchcock play with light and shadow, the visual puns and of course the fleeting appearance of the man himself, as a portly 30-year-old passenger being tormented by a small boy on a London underground.

The pert, attractive Alice contrives a quarrel with her boyfriend Frank, a Scotland Yard detective (John Longden), so she can keep an appointment with a handsome young Artist who has given her the glad eye. The Artist, played by Uncle Cyril, uses his sophisticated charm to entice Alice to 'come up and see my Studio'—the sort of invitation that girls of enquiring mind have always found hard to resist.

Lured by the attraction of doing what she knows to be unwise, Alice climbs the stairs with the Artist—a marvellous shot with the pair arm-in-arm, slowly processing up three long flights as if to a sacrificial altar. The bed to which the innocent girl is dragged by the charming stranger is decently concealed by drawn curtains which billow and toss in time to her cries of 'No, No ...' Her frantic hand appears through the curtains, reaches towards the bedside table and grasps a bread knife left next to a conveniently placed loaf of bread. The curtains bulge and the shadow of the struggling pair is seen on the wall, then silence and stillness. Cyril's very dead hand (still neatly shirt-cuffed and suited) extends out of the curtain as the shocked girl emerges and realises the awful mess she has landed herself in when she could have been enjoying a good movie with her honest cop.

When Scotland Yard and unsuspecting boyfriend Frank inspect the scene of the

crime next morning there is a fleeting glimpse of the dead Cyril on the bed, with only his collar twisted and his tie somewhat loose. But Hitchcock's camera has such power of suggestion we know we have witnessed a violent and bloody killing. And that, after just 40 minutes, was the end of Cyril, at least in that film.

It continues on for another thrilling 45 minutes with the blackmailer (who saw Alice on the fateful night) being chased over rooftops by the faithful Frank, and



finally crashing to his death through the glass dome of the Reading Room of the British Museum.

In *Blackmail*, directed primarily as a silent film, Hitchcock uses hands, as well as eyes, to portray emotion and emphasise points in the story, increasing the tension with shots of hands moving, pointing, twisting or eerily static. We feel Alice's panic as her hand gropes for the knife and share her horror when Cyril's hand flops, lifeless, through the bed curtains. When Hitchcock's lens lingers on her chemise-clad figure, we watch with fascination as, paralysed with shock, she slowly faces the magnitude of what she has done. As she hurries from the death scene, the painting of a life-size Rigoletto points an accusing finger directly at her.

Thereafter, hands haunt Alice. The girl's lost gloves reveal to both the blackmailer and the honest cop her part in the Artist's death. At Scotland Yard time is measured by frequent close-ups of hands stubbing out

cigarettes in what were, for the period, well-filled ashtrays. In one delectable conceit, Hitchcock has Alice and Frank talk of going to the movies to see a thriller based on Scotland Yard, called *Fingerprints*. When Frank protests that producers of such films always get the police details wrong, Alice replies tartly that this time 'they've got it right because they hired a real criminal as director'.

Cyril's part in *Blackmail* could be called small but pivotal—he seduces the girl and in doing so is killed by her. Rape and bloody death in what was hailed as 'the ground-

breaking Knife Scene' followed by mayhem and blackmail!

LOOKING AT CYRIL'S photo I wonder—what *did* Grandma Ritchard think? When he begged to be allowed to leave Sydney University where he had been unwillingly studying first-year medicine, his mother made him promise in writing that if he went on to the wicked stage he would remain true to his Catholic upbringing and protect himself by receiving daily communion. An heroic promise for a 19-year-old to make even in those days of strong faith. I assume that when complying he added the words 'when possible', at least as a mental reservation—he had been educated by Jesuits. His diaries, which cover his adult years, show that he remained an almost daily communicant to the end of his full and successful acting life. He died in 1977, three weeks after collapsing in the wings of a theatre in Chicago where he was appearing as the Narrator in *Side by Side by Sondheim*. He was 80 years old and had worked continuously as an actor on stage, film and television since that day in 1916 when he signed the remarkable promise for his mother.

Margaret Ritchard doted on her first-born and the story of Cyril's conception and birth has afforded wonder and mirth for three generations of our family.

Margaret and Herbert Trimmell Ritchard had been married for almost a year and Margaret had not conceived. In those days it was generally accepted that the purpose of marrying was to have a family and, in Irish-Catholic circles, the larger the better. Margaret began to worry that, if a pregnancy did not occur soon, not only would the spectre of childlessness begin to stalk her life, but her dear Herbert, having been converted from Protestantism before their marriage, might be suspected of not doing his duty. She began a novena to the Virgin

Mary and during those nine days of prayer often visited a Good Samaritan convent where the nuns were praying for her 'special intention'. One of these good women gave her a small vial of sand upon which Our Lady's milk had spilt during the Flight into Egypt.

Being a woman of firm character and having a proper self-regard, Margaret did not for one minute think that the failure to conceive was due to any lack in her. It was obviously Herbert who needed his fertility boosted. So every morning for a week she surreptitiously sprinkled some sacred sand on Herbert's porridge. Soon Margaret was able to inform him that the longed-for child was on the way.

When the time for her accouchement, arrived she and Herbert were managing the Railway Hotel at Hornsby, a far northern suburb of Sydney, a haunt of timber-cutters and railway workers whose admirable thirsts considerably boosted the family fortunes.

While Herbert was supervising the bar on a busy and hot December afternoon, the midwife was upstairs keeping an eye on Margaret's protracted labour. Just before midnight a lad was sent for the doctor. The midwife, eager to claim the extra fee of half a guinea (close to \$100 today) that would be hers if the child arrived before the doctor, rolled her sleeves up and, as the clip-clop of the doctor's sulky was heard coming down the dusty road, gave the reluctant baby a good strong tug and Cyril was born, all 12 pounds of him.

BEFORE CYRIL'S BIRTH Margaret had heeded the current advice that an expectant mother must eat for two and this she did with a will. Afterwards she never regained her shape but she carried herself well, had a commanding air, and was always described in family lore as a fine figure of a woman. I have her very large gold watch in a heavily engraved case that she wore pinned to what could only have been an ample bosom. My husband has fond memories of his grandmother and speaks of visits to her as a small boy when he found her to be as generous as she was comfortable, willing to share jokes with a small boy and reward him with half a crown. She must also have had emotional and mental resilience to survive with equanimity two miscarriages brought about by unusual events.

The first one occurred when Herbert, who in his photos always appears somewhat sober-sided, felt an urge to play a trick

on his wife. Perhaps it was 'a dark and stormy night' when he hid in the cupboard used for the hotel linen. He covered himself in a sheet and waited till Margaret came up to bed. As she passed he sprang out at her with ghostly groans. To his great distress his wife miscarried. No doubt he made heartfelt amends for his ill-considered stunt and soon another baby was on the way.

A family picnic on the ocean front at Manly was planned. The whole family, with a young girl to help, took the train to St Leonards where they were met by a hired charabanc. Baskets, rugs and provisions for the long, thirsty journey were loaded and they set off down the highway to the Spit, where they joined other travellers queuing for the punt to take them across the water to the Manly side. Then on up the hill and down the length of Sydney Road until the Pacific was sighted through the Norfolk pines.

A perfect picnic day with sand and surf and games with Father while Mother sat on a bench under the pines and watched.

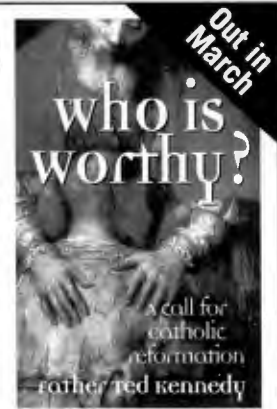
A young woman came and sat at the further end of the bench. She seemed hot and flustered and out of breath as if she had been running. Suddenly a man with frantic eyes was standing before the bench. His shaking hands held a revolver, pointed straight at the now whimpering woman. The shot was deafening.

As Herbert raced forward to pull Margaret away, she glimpsed the body of the woman slip to the ground. Then came the long journey home in the hot afternoon, Margaret sitting upright, outwardly composed for the sake of the children. Within days she miscarried again.

So perhaps seeing her dear boy Cyril transforming before her eyes into a sex-crazed rapist was not such a shock for this stout-hearted matron. After all he was so handsome in that very fine suit and such a splendid actor, and the story—well it was all fantasy really, mere shadows manipulated by that strange Mr Hitchcock. ■

Margaret Goldrick is a freelance writer. *Photo of Cyril Ritchard* courtesy Margaret Goldrick.

A provocative book that challenges the new conservatism in the Australian Catholic Church epitomised by Melbourne's Archbishop George Pell. Father Kennedy's plea is for a radical reformation which would return the Church to the original message of the gospels.



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FLASH IN THE PAN



Cult following

Holy Smoke, dir. Jane Campion. This is a story about leaving a cult. Ruth Barron (Kate Winslett, above) has found peace and love in the chaos of India. Her family, pet groomers in the orderly suburb of Sans Souci in Sydney, are appalled. Ruth's mother (Julie Hamilton) is despatched to retrieve her. But, as we learn, it is one thing to bring back a person. Bringing back the mind requires P.J. Waters (Harvey Keitel, right), a cult-exiter whose authority over every aspect of human living is seen in a wonderful moment of baggage management in the arrival area of the airport. For such authority, P.J. charges big bucks.

The first part of *Holy Smoke* is hilarious. It is full of wonderful small observations. But once Ruth and P.J. settle down for three days in isolation in the 'half-way hut' on an outback station, the film takes on more serious and risky material. What slowly emerges is that there's no need to go to India to join a cult. The Barron family, for example, is a cult. It imprisons Ruth within

its own narrow world, pursuing her with ferocity dressed as love. P.J. is trapped within a cult of manhood. For a period, Ruth herself becomes a cult-exiter, although P.J.'s redemption does seem too easily won.

Curiously, this film also plays on the idea of a cult movie. It is full of clichés, all of which are carefully deployed. The inner dynamic of the Barron family captures something of the dark side of *The Castle*. The costume and behaviour of Ruth's gay brother, along with sundry strange vehicles, are reminiscent of *Priscilla*. There's a little of *Mad Max*. A little of many things. *Holy Smoke* does not so much mine the same vein of comedy as suggest the limitations of the celebration of the bizarre which has become the bread and butter of many films.

Everyone in *Holy Smoke* is dressed up. They live in a culture of appearances. Ruth's brother asks his partner what he really believes in and the man says 'safe sex'. Ruth's mother and her friend struggle for some way to ritualise their confusion and their scratch around for the words of the Lord's Prayer. 'This isn't the one with the valley of death?' mum asks. She needs to know.

—Michael McGirr sj

A ripping yarn

The Talented Mr Ripley, dir. Anthony Minghella. A traditional Hollywood thriller relies on exotic locations and big-name stars to make up for its plotted-by-numbers story and inevitable 'sunset ending', where hero and girl contemplate their future together, safe in the knowledge that the villain of the piece has met his just deserts.

Luckily for us, the immense success of *The English Patient* (a quarter of a billion dollars so far, and rising) has freed British director Anthony Minghella to create *The Talented Mr Ripley* in the form of a Hollywood thriller but without the predictable content.

Tom Ripley (Matt Damon) is an outsider who yearns to become an insider. Wearing a borrowed Princeton jacket he is assumed to be someone he isn't and unexpectedly finds himself sent to retrieve a wealthy shipbuilder's errant son, Dickie Greenleaf (Jude Law), from Italy, where he is dissipating his inheritance with a beautiful girlfriend, Marge Sherwood (Gwyneth Paltrow).

Ripley discovers a life of moneyed ease and decides he likes it; and he also decides he likes Dickie—a lot; enough to want to share his bath. Eventually the young plutocrat tires of toying with Ripley. A trip in a small boat ends in violence and Ripley finds himself all at sea, without a moral compass to guide him.

After the bloodletting, Minghella skilfully shifts our sympathies. As Ripley takes on the 'life' of his victim and improvises his escape we find ourselves hoping for him to succeed, despite the magnitude of his sin. But Minghella is a moralist at heart and he springs a trap on Ripley and the audience. The final twist is so bleak it manages to be both poignant and horrifying; a 'sunset ending' of a different, more challenging, kind.

—Brett Evans

Blithe spirits

Dogma, dir. Kevin Smith. If you're tasteful, pedantic about theology and don't like cartoonish violence and bad language, then don't even bother going to see *Dogma*. It's a silly bit of fluff which in its best moments will make you laugh, but might offend just about anybody. Except God.

Fans of Smith (*Chasing Amy* et al.) will note that the characters Jay (Jason Mewes)

and Silent Bob reappear. In *Dogma*, these two lost, corrupt innocents are given the task of assisting the last descendant of Mary (check that bishop's blood pressure, nurse) in a vital quest: if this Last Scion (Linda Fiorentino—a woman, too! Better take his pulse, nurse) doesn't stop two banished and earth-bound angels from exploiting a Canon Law loophole to return to Heaven, then all existence will, well, not exist any more. Many twists are added; the Scion works in an abortion clinic (I think the bishop's having a bit of a nasty turn, doctor); the cardinal is a money-grubbing, golf-playing populist (uh-oh, bring the paddles and clear ...) and God is played by Alanis Morissette because they couldn't get Emma Thompson. (Sorry, doctor. I think we lost him.)

—Juliette Hughes

Lost Arc

Joan of Arc, dir. Luc Besson. Someone once told me that on New Year's Day in Paris everything is closed except the beauty parlours. After the biggest night of the year you can be assured of a professional shampoo if nothing else. Now you'd assume that most days in the short, turbulent life of Joan of Arc were more taxing than your average modern New Year's Eve—no dispersible aspirin for starters, and certainly no beauty salons for the muddy peasantry. At least that was my assumption until I saw Luc Besson's new film of *Joan of Arc*. But Besson has convinced me that in 15th-century France not only were peasant girls super models, but their hairdressers pioneered blonde tips. In fairness, it has been a grey area of history: some believe Joan was a messenger of God, others an hallucinating madwoman. But a Vidal Sassoon chick? Give me strength ...

Still, it would be petty to judge an entire film on the hairstyling of its lead actor. After all, Milla Jovovich has complete mastery of the lip quiver and is a grand exponent of the petulant rant.

But fortunately *Joan of Arc* is not all hair fetish and bone structure. John Malkovich is in form, showing us he can do much more than his usual psychopathic genius turn. His Charles VII, both vulnerable and malicious, is a compelling combination

early in the film. Faye Dunaway, as Charles' mother-in-law, Yolande of Aragon, combines a shrewd tongue with extraordinary head-dresses.

Dealing with a very big international cast and its merry mix-up of accents and styles couldn't have been easy. Besson's problems range from some subtle failures of nuance (the French actors who have to speak in English are rather more humorous than suits some action) to the very jarring use of Dustin Hoffman as the embodiment of Joan's conscience. Hard to credit that Jovovich's Joan has a conscience that could possibly resemble the strange, ironic depth of Hoffman.

If you still haven't decided whether to see *Joan of Arc*, perhaps Jovovich's own words will help: 'I think if I met her I'd probably just give her a big hug. She's a little girl who went through a lot.' Not as much as her audience.

—Siobhan Jackson

Quiet dread

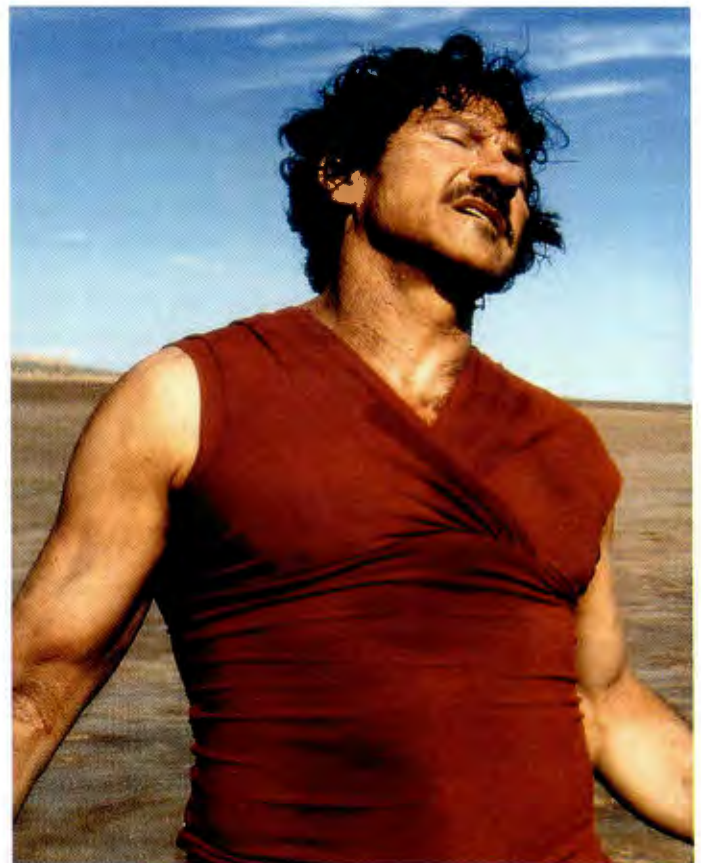
Felicia's Journey, dir. Atom Egoyan. I have to confess, this film has me stumped. In fact I haven't been forced to think so much about a film in ages. Director Atom Egoyan has made some of the most stimulating and intriguing films I've seen in the past decade, typically characterised by complex and tightly woven narrative and temporal structures, which often resolve into clarity only in their closing moments (*Exotica*, from 1994, is a perfect example, and one of my favourites). Egoyan found mainstream success in 1997 with *The Sweet Hereafter*, which was nominated for two Oscars; *Felicia's Journey* is his follow-up.

The story itself is very simple. Felicia (Elaine Cassidy), an almost pathologically naive and innocent teenager, travels from Ireland to England to find the lover who (although she refuses to believe this) seduced and abandoned her. As he left he had told her he would

be working at 'the lawnmower factory in Birmingham'. Of course, there is no lawnmower factory there for her to find, just a kindly middle-aged catering manager who sees her looking lost and helpless on the roadside ... As you might expect, kindly Mr Hilditch (Bob Hoskins) is not altogether what he seems. If the fact that he videotapes all of his and Felicia's meetings isn't enough of a clue, then his (large) collection of tapes of similar meetings with other girls should be enough to make anyone nervous for Felicia's short-term future.

Here's the rub, everything you expect to happen from here does happen. No inversions or subversions, no sudden reorientation of character or plot, just a methodical and oddly gentle exposition of the relationship between a middle-aged serial killer and his young victim-to-be. Perhaps this is the twist—it is a film about relationship, in a genre that usually emphasises anything but. Even so, the roots of that relationship remain as obscure at the film's end as they are at the beginning. Either that, or you blame it all on his mother's cooking. And if you want to understand that comment, you'll have to go and see the film—just be prepared to come out confused, frustrated, and thinking.

—Allan James Thomas



December 1999 Film Competition Winner
 Congratulations to Pat Pilgrim
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On monks, and monkeying with Dickens

MY FATHER USED TO WORK in the Correspondence School in Melbourne. He (we were careful to stress) was hired direct: usually, in those days, you were sent there because of physical decrepitude—or perhaps because one too many classes of Year Nines had left you with the impression that you were King of the Cannibal Islands working incognito for the FBI.

Dad had (of course) no teaching qualifications—this was the Sixties. He, of the rarely balanced cheque book, taught Commerce to a thriving clientele of prisoners and isolates, and found working in the city very satisfying. One of the pluses was that, as a devoted daily communicant, he would nip over to St Francis' Church in Lonsdale Street at lunchtime for a quick Mass among the rosary-rattlers. This caused no comment at work, where his best pal and sparring partner was a card-carrying Communist, and where one of the main tasks was to make sure that the wastepaper basket was near something wet, since one of the other chaps used to write stern letters to the Government and then burn them so they couldn't be traced. (Another fugitive from Year Nines.)

So it was warming to see *Once Were Monks*, a five-part documentary about St Francis' religious community, the Blessed Sacrament Fathers (SBS, Sundays 8pm, beginning 9 April). It's strange to see people you know, or are at least acquainted with, actually on the telly being interviewed about life, the universe and the care of budgies.

Once Were Monks is slowly paced, but I don't find that a problem when the subjects are so fascinating; at the end of each episode you wanted to know more. Would Brother Gerard's budgie survive the move? 'What move?' you say. Ah, well, that's what it's all about: moving on, dealing with change, mortality, history, the problem of pain and the mystery of self-giving.

You see a mixed bunch of men, mostly in late-middle to real old age (Brother Bernard died during the filming on his 102nd birthday) coming to terms with being Catholics with a vocation in the last days of a century that has contained many wars, Vatican II and Pope John Paul II. Some are quite bolshie—Fr Gonzalo Munoz, a brilliantly compassionate priest, leaves the community for an unspecified time. He says, when interviewed, that he finds it difficult to continue saying Mass in a climate of exclusion of women from the priesthood. He speaks of changing morality, how it shouldn't impinge on matters of faith, and how people who can't change become 'clones' rather than truly alive.

St Francis' has had quite a history of sheltering dissenters: 'We can dissent without being disloyal,' says Fr Donald Cave, the academic historian, whose research into the writings of the order's founder, Peter Julian Eymard, reveals extensive suppression of later writings that advocated a move into the world away from monastic seclusion. Arthur Calwell took refuge there in the divisive times of the Labor Party split; Ned Kelly's parents worshipped there.

The direction, by Luigi Acquisito and Andrew Sully, is leisurely; broad in scope as well as minute in observation—quite a feat. The characters unfolded in idiosyncratic glory, their quirks and foibles, their strengths and their sometimes weird senses of humour.

THIS PACING, this willingness to let a story just happen, is something that the adaptors of the BBC's most recent assault on Dickens (screened in February on the ABC), were obviously not allowed in their brief.

Much was made in pre-program publicity of John Ferguson's inability to complete the task of making *David Copperfield* worth watching in two 90-minute episodes. At this point I remember that this is only two-thirds of the time given to *Pride and Prejudice*, which is about a third the size of *David Copperfield*. I don't blame Ferguson for not being able to fillet the novel into the comic-book tableaux it consisted of in the current offering. Someone was obviously willing to do it, just as you will always find someone willing to chop down a great old tree, or put a freeway through an exquisite meadow. The price paid was to lose the essential Dickensian life and eccentricity: Betsy Trotwood and Mr Dick were about the best, but what on earth happened to Steerforth, the Micawbers, Mr Peggotty, Tommy Traddles? Toned down, stitched up or left out.

There is a market for long unfolding stories, sagas, what have you: they're called soap operas. The ABC's dull, fake-quirky *Something in the Air* was done over so satisfyingly by Phillip Adams that I've really nothing more to add except that if the Drama department has enough money to waste putting good actors on a treadmill like that, why don't they do something brave and make a *real* adaptation of a Dickens novel? Something running almost as long as, say, *Dog's Head Bay* ... ■

Juliette Hughes is a freelance reviewer.



Eureka Street Cryptic Crossword no. 81, March 2000

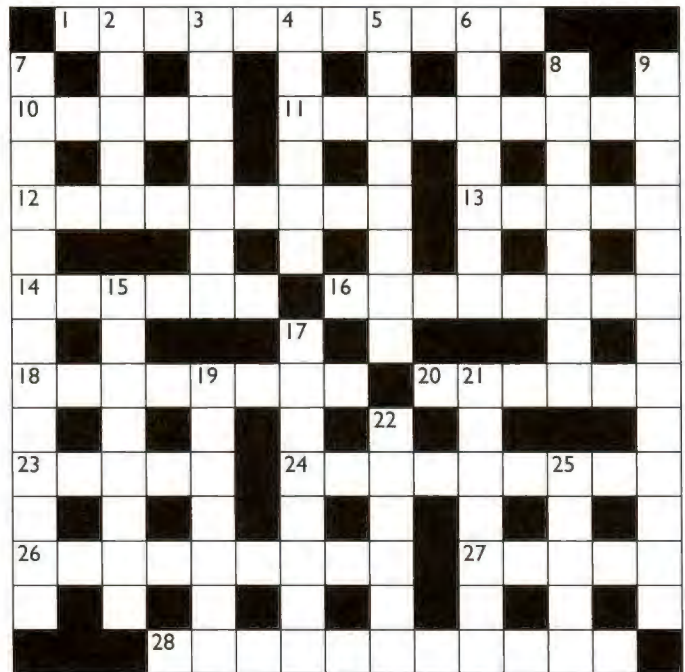
Devised by Joan Nowotny IBVM

ACROSS

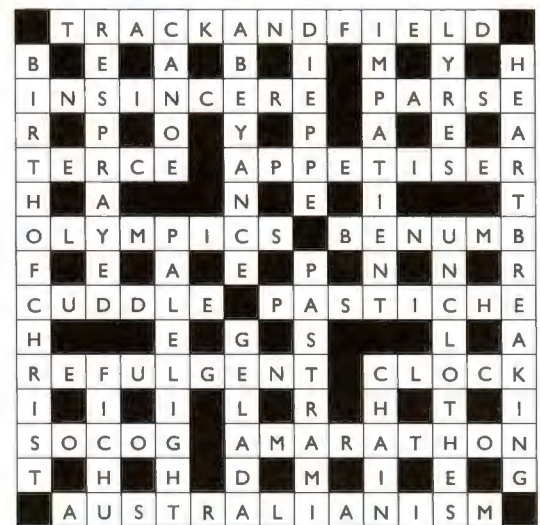
1. Youths fuss over the French perfumes. (11)
10. Supply verbal sally with starting point. (5)
11. Is about to take a turn for the better and speak off the cuff. (9)
12. When last seen, I unfortunately was missing a vital part. (9)
13. Perhaps a flip of the wrist will shake up the dish. (5)
14. Somewhat confused, goon is likely to cut an angular figure? (6)
16. Read the riot act on the captain? Yes, treat No.1 constructively—the same as everyone else! (4, 4)
18. Provokes School's leader in a way that is quite uncalled for. (8)
20. 'No action in the past' a sister interposed! (6)
23. French animal fur is quite plain. (5)
24. Subordinate given entry to part of spaghetti junction, perhaps. (9)
26. Through homesickness feeling lost? A gain could be in the offing. (9)
27. Enough for a politician the French endorse. (5)
28. In exotic dance scene candles start glowing. (11)

DOWN

2. American lawyer, on out-of-order public transport, smears the system. (5)
3. Don John of Austria in famous naval battle pantomime depicts. (7)
4. What to do with a rope, perhaps, when you pass over! (4, 2)
5. Sounds as if unknown clearly indicated that he was dismissed. (8)
6. Member of travelling circus, possibly, provides PR on route to be taken. (7)
7. Northern Italian citizen unable to see need for this protection from the sun. (8,5)
8. Strawberries and cream in cakes, maybe, creates need for them at the dentist. (8)
9. Individual endowed with emotional control. (4-9)
15. Could be bridge complementary to 24-across. (8)
17. The donkey and you, it seems, getting on in years together, brought alleviation of distress. (8)
19. Some Catalan tanagers perch in the shrub. (7)
21. Rodents go back and forth to point where they find a tasty sauce. (7)
22. Paradigms of perfection or silly notions about the Left? (6)
25. A sort of lavender jelly? (5)



Solution to Crossword no. 80, January–February 2000



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