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A MAGAZINE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS, THE ARTS AND THEOLOGY
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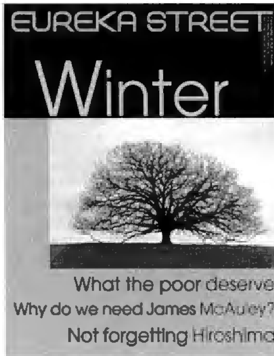

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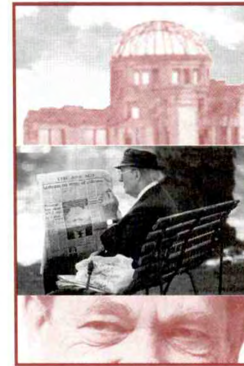

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MORAG FRASER

Marking time

ONE OF THE WISER recommendations of the May anniversary celebrations of both the federation parliament and the Labor Party Caucus came from former Prime Minister Gough Whitlam when he insisted that a fixed four-year term would be salutary for Australian politics.

Certainly a fixed term would pare back some of the too-familiar pre-electoral limbo during which the government's hard policy work ceases and the opposition becomes dumbstruck about the detail of its future proposals.

But which Australian political party is sufficiently unencumbered by self-interest to make the move?

Meanwhile, the issues raised by the Governor-General during the federation celebration—a genuinely representative parliament, reconciliation, protection of the environment and fairness for the disadvantaged—take a back seat. There is plenty of flurry from Canberra, but it has more to do with internal party power squabbles, leaks, misjudgments (will we ever be told the truth of what exactly Australia knew about East Timor in 1999?), and pre-electoral manoeuvrings. The CSIRO might be vocal about the local environmental effects of climate change but Kyoto is hardly the first word on the prime-ministerial lips. And equity—including due regard for the young and the old who are homeless or living with their dignity and hope constrained by inadequate income—what of that?

EUREKA STREET Mondays at Newman College

The federal Labor Party could be back in power by the end of 2001, but

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One of our cover articles this month, Kay Rollison's 'Pension prospects', deals with the history of provision for the poor in this country. Rollison analyses the tension—currently revived—between the pension understood as the inherent right of a citizen and the pension conceived as charity for the barely deserving poor. See page 17.

Eureka Street photographer, Bill Thomas, has captured, in Australian streets, parks, arenas, and at the Chinese Lunar celebrations (at left and page 17), some of the diversity that the Governor-General wishes to see represented, directly and indirectly, in Australian institutions.

At the moment, though, some of the people, some of the time, run ahead of official expectation. During the May Federation Parade in Melbourne an elderly Chinese woman, a stranger, took genial charge of my blond Celtic grandchildren, at the intersection of Bourke and Swanston Streets. Unprompted, she carved out a vantage point for them, guarded it—and them—strenuously, wrapping her coat around their backs when the wind cut down Bourke Street's canyon. It was a chance moment of friendship—across generation and culture. The two children will grow up believing it to be the norm.

And opening in Melbourne during the week of the federation celebrations was an exploratory new Australian opera, *Batavia*, by composer Richard Mills and poet/librettist Peter Goldsworthy. One of the songs, 'Changing of the Watch', appears in Goldsworthy's *New Selected Poems*. A few lines from it seem apposite to the federation aspirations voiced by the Governor-General for this experiment of ours, this new nation in an ancient land:

> Strikes eight the bell, pray all be well,
> Please Lord preserve our frail nutshell ...

—Morag Fraser

COMMENT:2

ANDREW HAMILTON

Taking the high road

LIKE ANZAC DAY, the Governor-General is a symbol. And like that of Anzac Day, vice-regal symbolism changes, fades and revives in unpredictable ways. In the 1960s, it looked as if Anzac Day would die with the last of the soldiers who had fought at Gallipoli. Its place in Australian life is now assured. A few years ago, it seemed that when the Governor-General lost his vicarious crown, his Office would be a parking place for just another suit. Yet now it is invested with an almost religious significance: he is called to mirror the nation to itself, to give expression to its soul.

While as constitutionalist the Prime Minister has rejected this amplified role, as politician he has surely responded to it in appointing Archbishop Peter Hollingworth to the position. At a personal level, I welcome the appointment. If the nation's health is diagnosed by its care for the unprivileged, Sir William Deane has consistently urged preventative medicine. The symbolic value of his words and gestures is carried on by Peter Hollingworth's past association with the Brotherhood of St Laurence, a consistent advocate for a more just society.

The linkage of the role of the Governor-General's office with the nation's soul, however, invites broader reflection on the Archbishop's nomination. Who could better mirror the nation to itself, we might ask, than one committed to the spirit and skilled in articulating what in functional terms cannot be said? Spiritual leaders, Christian or other, it would seem, have much to offer society in this role.

Some have argued against this on the grounds that it blurs the proper separation of state from church, hard won over centuries. But from the point of view of the state, there is little to worry about. Churches now have little power and are marginal political influences. If an Archbishop renounced his responsibilities during his term of office, he would seem as eligible as any other citizen.

From the point of view of the Christian church, however, reservations arise, not from concern to maintain the separation of church and state, but from disquiet about the shape of the reintegration of church and state which is implicitly on offer. To accept that bishops and, by implication, churches should attend to souls while the state has responsibility for bodies is to accept a tendentious reading of history and to undermine the basis of being a church.

The slogan, separation of church and state, implies a story according to which citizens were liberated from the intrusion of the church on their lives and pockets. Separation conferred on the state the freedom to be secular. But the modern history of the West can also be read in darker terms as the struggle of the state for sole rule over individuals' bodily lives. With its victory over the churches, it won the power to legislate as it wishes, to administer laws as it wishes and, without constraint, to pass control

over individuals' bodies to corporations as it wished.

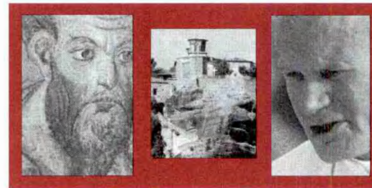
If this sounds unduly bleak, consider the treatment of asylum seekers. In Australia, they are imprisoned without trial, have been handed over to profit-making corporations for their custody, and to foreign security firms for their deportation. Critics are intimidated by the contracts which govern access to centres and by threat of exclusion. The government has also proposed that its officers should be able to restrain the bodies of asylum seekers, including children, by manacles and drugs. It also routinely criticises judges when they give unwanted decisions, and attacks judges when they criticise actions of government.

The question, therefore, is whether churches can accept a symbolic settlement which offers them responsibility for the soul, while leaving responsibility for bodies to the government.

The church is called to be publicly the body of Christ, and is built around the memory of the broken body of Christ. It is to celebrate and take part in the making whole of the body of humanity. When bodies are maltreated and broken, as they are through torture and arbitrary imprisonment, the body of Christ is injured. A church which does not publicly accept and discharge its accountability to God for the broken body denies its own calling.

This charge falls particularly on episcopal churches, in which the bishop is central because he is the head of the local body. He must articulate publicly the injuries done to the body. So as long as a bishop is known as such, he is claimed by this responsibility.

If this argument is correct, my reservations about the appointment of a bishop as Governor-General can be put in a hypothetical case. If the Bishop-become-Governor-General were called to address the Cabinet and departmental heads, should he draw attention publicly in the name of the body of Christ to the maltreatment of the bodies of the asylum seekers? Or should he be silent? If he does the former, will this be tolerable to the state? And if he is silent, how can he be said to discharge his accountability within Christ's body? ■



Pope John Paul's trip to Greece and Syria was of more than political interest. His journey retraced the steps of St Paul. As Bishop of the Roman church, he embodied the ancient tradition that Rome held the bodies of St Peter and St Paul, and so was the centre of unity within the church. Since Paul's day, however, the path which he walked has become rutted and rocky, eroded not least by the church which the pope represents.

When St Paul visited Athens, he could speak only in general terms about Christian faith because he had no common ground with his educated hearers. John Paul's joint statement with Archbishop Christodoulos of Athens was also notable for its palpable diplomacy. It spoke little of faith held in common, and focused on the large social and political issues facing Europe. It also deplored proselytism, the attempt to win converts from the other church.

The cautious tone of the statement reflects the extent to which the destruction of Constantinople in the Crusades, preached by the Western church, still embitters the relationship between churches. That Pope John Paul visited Athens and not Constantinople/Istanbul reflects the replacement of Christianity by Islam as the religion of the Roman East.

Syria, where the Pope went upon leaving Athens, was seminal in the stories of both St Peter and St Paul. Along with Alexandria, Constantinople and Rome, Antioch was one of the major centres by the fourth century. If the Bishop of Rome had visited the other three centres then, he would have been cordially welcomed by bishops who lived out a common faith within very diverse cultural forms. They would have confidently expected that Christianity would soon become the dominant faith through the Empire.

The pope's visit to Syria gave comfort to the comparatively few Christians left there. Most belonged to churches which, like that of Alexandria, were separated from Constantinople and Rome in the conflicts of the fifth and sixth centuries, and became marginal to their own culture after the rise of Islam. And in Syria, too, the pope had to walk carefully in the rubble of long-fractious relations between Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

An energetic man, St Paul travelled in hope of a new beginning. Pope John Paul travelled in frailty, expressing regret for the rupture within the work that St Paul had begun, and expressing hope for a commitment to begin afresh.

St Paul would have appreciated the largeness of the gesture, but not envied John Paul for the responsibility which he assumed. ■

Andrew Hamilton SJ is *Eureka Street*'s publisher.

Capital Letter

Jack Waterford

The political sieve

In the dying days of the Unsworth government in NSW in 1988, a Labor apparatchik was moved to protest to his superiors about the increasing irresponsibility of Unsworth's election promises. There was no way they could possibly be carried out, he said. They would send the state broke. Don't worry, was the response. There's no way we are going to win. The promises are merely to limit the size of the swing against us.

This was not quite the way that Paul Keating ran his two elections as prime minister, even if, on both occasions, his painting of the state of the economy and of the size of the Treasury was consciously optimistic. Keating actually thought he could win. That he did so against the odds, the first time around, increased his optimism on the second.

This time, it is doubtful whether even John Howard thinks he will win. Something may come up—Kim Beazley may stumble or be caught in bed with a choir-boy—but the polls are ominous and little real movement is in sight. Howard would like to win, of course, but he is not running a campaign based on damage limitation for the party, least of all for the benefit of Peter Costello as next leader. Nor is he deeply concerned about Peter Costello's place in history. If Howard wins, he will take the credit; if he loses, it will be partly Costello's fault.

Even now, however, one might think that the very slim chances that Howard has are not helped by open conflict between himself and his deputy, and between his and Costello's supporters. Hence the mystery of the leaked letter from party president Shane Stone.

From Peter Costello's point of view, it hardly matters exactly who leaked the document. It was leaked with intent to damage him. Each of the parties to the letter—Stone and Howard—had an obvious interest in doing so, and each of the others who might have seen and leaked the document—in John Howard's office—also had an interest in doing so.

Obvious? In some senses anyway. Now it is in the open, it puts on the record the argument that John Howard has been unable to reach his full potential because he is being held back by poor deputies. It can hardly be his fault, or his fault alone, if the Liberals cannot win the election, carrying the weight of Peter Costello as he has been. The bad policy which has caused the collapse of the government's fortunes has come from Costello. So too, allegedly, is much of the stubbornness and meanmindedness. That the argument is nonsense is neither here nor there: anyone who would blame Costello ahead of Howard for such things is sadly out of touch, but anyone who too obviously repudiates it only hurts the party itself, and further damages Costello.

What the letter actually said was commonplace. Nor was there anything very unusual about its being written—far more damaging and frank statements arrive each day, particularly from polling and focus-group research. The letter said that the government was out of touch and not listening. That's news? It was going out of its way to alienate key constituencies. It was widely perceived as mean and tricky. Party backbench and constituency anger is particularly focused on John Howard, Costello and National Party leader, John Anderson. Costello was seen as being particularly impervious to criticism and suggestion, and some of his unpopularity reflected on Howard because Howard was the leader. In other words, nothing that had not been said by a score of political correspondents, editorialists, talkback pundits, or, just as importantly, by any number of writers of letters to the editor, folks in the pub, or focus groups for months. While nothing said about Costello was false, it is possible that Stone over-egged the pudding in reporting criticism of him, in the belief that Howard might be more likely to listen if the critique embraced some of his rivals.

Of course, even the commonplace gains some extra authenticity by being contained in an official document. The press has not been short of criticisms of the government by anonymous backbenchers in recent months, but a document recording exasperation and panic helps show how widespread the concern is, and is more difficult to shrug off than attacks from outside.

When things are running against you, you do not get the luck either. If the Budget turns things around, Peter Costello will get much of the credit; if it doesn't, Howard will get much of the blame. The worse things get, the more difficult it will be to pin Kim Beazley down on anything: why should Labor try to win the election when the Liberals are working so hard to lose it? Some of Labor's actual or potential constituencies may have rather more success in forcing out some policy detail: they have no particular reason to rely on vague assurances of goodwill, least of all when everything is set up for a sluggish economy, ropey estimates of revenue and expenditure and, probably, a new 'black hole'. The Budget arithmetic may, however, unravel well before an election date. It would not be Peter Costello's doing; he is too disciplined for that. But if it did, he might consider that it was an appropriate revenge on a man setting him up for the fall. ■

Jack Waterford is editor of the *Canberra Times*.

Tax gap

From Monica Dennison

I salute Rosemary West (*Eureka Street*, April 2001) for highlighting the question of social equity in her discussion of the impact of the GST pact with John Howard on Meg Lees' leadership of the Democrats.

Few have acknowledged that, at heart, the GST is a regressive tax. On a very large majority of items the poor pay the same rate of tax as the rich.

Yes, the rich pay more tax at restaurants for they buy more expensive meals and the poor pay less tax on their hamburger at McDonald's. Again, the rich pay more tax on the car parts for their expensive cars and the poor pay less tax on whatever form of transport they can afford.

And yes, there are exceptions for fresh food and a range of essential chemist items. But I was amazed to discover recently that overseas travel is not subject to the GST. That really must help the poor!

This basic question of social equity has been largely overlooked in the discussion of the GST and the terms 'regressive' and 'progressive' in relation to the tax system have been largely forgotten.

A progressive system of taxation increases the rate of tax paid as the amount of income increases. Under the GST that incremental rate has been decreased. The rich pay far less income tax and they no longer have to pay provisional tax. That lot (in the form of quarterly payments) now falls to businesses great and small.

A regressive tax overburdens the poor. The GST is not a regressive tax *per se*. It is a flat-rate tax in which the rate of tax, 10 per cent, is approximately the same on every item. However the introduction of the GST is regressive because it tilts the balance in favour of the rich.

Let's be under no illusion. The federal government may collect more tax under this system and it may be simpler in operation (tell that to small business!) but it cannot deliver a reversal in the misfortunes of the poor. By its very nature it cannot address basic problems of social inequity. The gap between rich and poor continues to widen.

Eureka Street welcomes letters from its readers. Short letters are more likely to be published, and all letters may be edited. Letters must be signed, and should include a contact phone number and the writer's name and address. If submitting by email, a contact phone number is essential. Address: eureka@jespub.jesuit.org.au

Let's restore the term 'social equity' and the concepts of 'progressive' and 'regressive' taxation to our social and political vocabulary!

Monica Dennison
Rockdale, NSW

Blessed be

From Dr John Carmody

Christopher Dowd's long response (*Eureka Street*, December 2000) to Dan Madigan's throwaway line about the 'disastrous choices' of Pope Pius IX (*Eureka Street*, October 2000) was a rambling farrago of non sequitur and circular reasoning.

Dowd's declaration, for example, that the dogma of the Immaculate Conception is now 'essential to Catholic belief'—whether true or false—simply does not engage with the question of whether a different choice might have been made on that subject. It also leaves unconsidered the twin obsessions of innumerable Catholic potentates (at many levels): the centrality of the Virgin Mary to their theology but the enduring marginalisation of so many other women.

Likewise, Dowd's assertion, on that vexed and dubious matter of papal infallibility, that at the first Vatican Council 'the bishops to a man [sic] believed in it', seems simplistic. He indicates a different historical understanding from my own which makes me wonder what Lord Acton and his party would think of it.

Similarly, Dowd's exculpatory attitude towards the Papal States seems regrettably sanguine about the persistent conflation of sacred and secular in the recent political history of Catholicism, a clericalist world-view which has not served us particularly well (as Bruce Duncan's recent book, *Crusade or Conflict?*, should remind us). He also falls into the trap of the end justifying the means when he approves of Pius' kidnapping of Edgardo Mortara because of that priest's eventual proselytising of the Jews. It is a variant of the attitude persisted in by so many contemporary Australian opponents of reconciliation and the 'Stolen Generation' aspect of our history.

Perhaps, though, the most remarkable of Dowd's aperçus is his declaration that it was the 'rudeness' of the 'modern world' which induced the negative attitudes of Catholicism towards it. This implication of Vatican refinement—a rather effete contrast to the robust history of Catholicism—is too risibly redolent of the Anglican parsonages and romantic novels of Victorian England to carry any weight in determining modern Australian attitudes towards Pius IX and his contentious beatification.

John Carmody
Roseville, NSW

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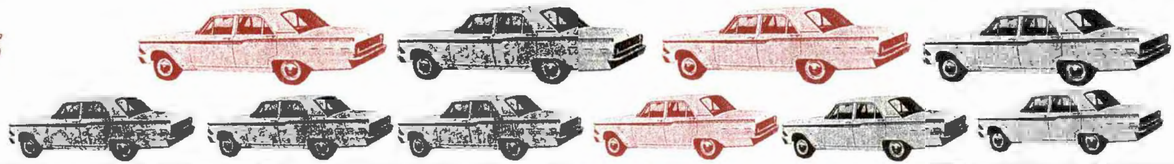


Regional rumbles

THE NATIONS OF South East Asia are in some turmoil at the moment. The steely successor to Joseph Estrada, Gloria Arroyo, declared a state of rebellion that allowed her to shift the supporters of the disgraced former leader from the gates of the presidential palace. Demonstrations reached a level of violence not seen in the Philippines since Marcos. To invoke an Australian cliché, it was the 'battlers' venting their anger at the daughter of privilege who has put their working-class actor/president hero in jail.

What has been seen in Manila may be just a taste of far greater upheaval to come in Jakarta after the Indonesian National Assembly censured President Abdurrahman Wahid for a second time, in April. With his support in parliament dwindling and his determination to shrug off criticism as strong as ever, there seems little hope that Wahid will see out his term. If he is removed, his supporters from East Java may not be as easily dealt with as the protestors in Manila.

Even if both leaders firmly establish their legitimacy, communal tension and separatist problems will continue to dog them. In March ethnic violence emerged in the slums of Kuala Lumpur, with the first clashes between Indians and Malays since the 1969 race riots. The government of Mahathir Mohammad is also busily locking up members of the party of former finance minister Anwar Ibrahim, using the draconian Internal Security Act that permits imprisonment without charge. Meanwhile, support from the Malay majority is ebbing away.

Elsewhere in the region, Burma remains in the grip of the military, with no speeding up of dialogue between the generals and Aung San Suu Kyi, or any reduction in the drug trade or human rights abuses. Thailand is not as serene as it could be either, with the newly elected Premier, Thaksin Shinawatra, facing removal for a false assets declaration.

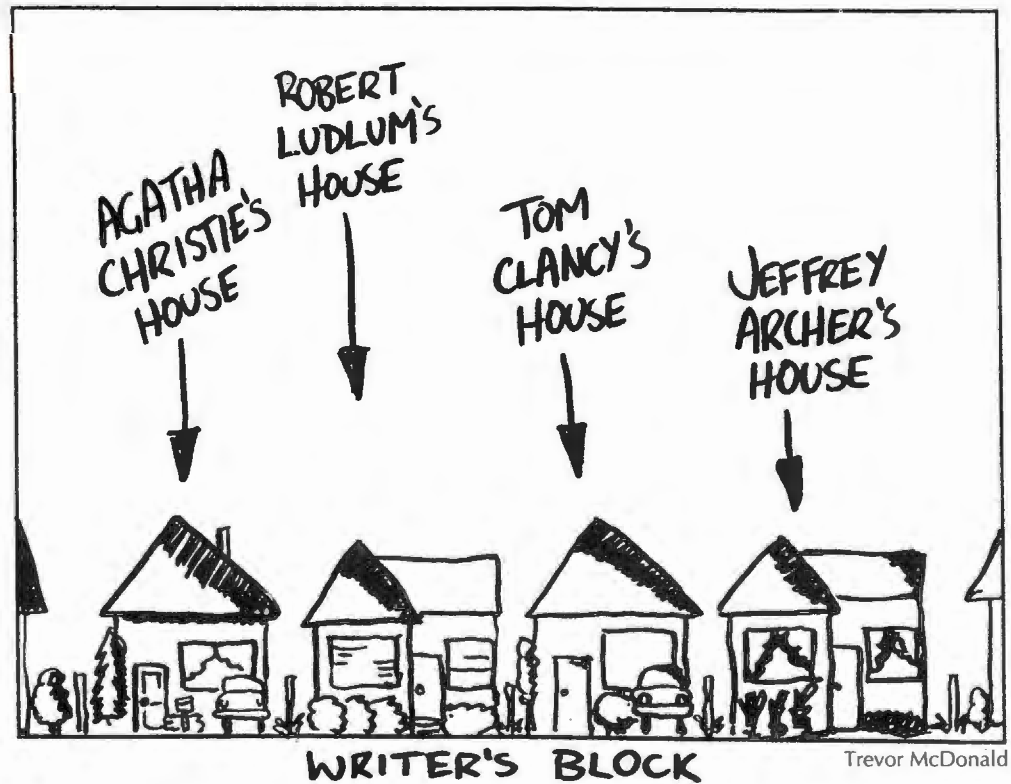
And running underneath it all, like a subterranean faultline, is the threat of another economic upheaval. Eyes are being cast nervously northwards in anticipation of another currency slide if Japan's financial sector folds under the pressure of reforms promised by incoming Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, or if Beijing drops the value of the renminbi against the strong US dollar.

With all that is going on in this part of the world it is surprising then that Cambodia should be experiencing a stability it has never seen in its modern history. Since Prime Minister Hun Sen took full control at the 1998 national elections, political violence has dropped, aid money has started flowing again and high-profile delegations have visited. In April the Cambodian government even won praise from one of its chief critics in the past, Human Rights Watch, for providing refuge to members of an ethnic minority fleeing persecution in Vietnam.

The best indication yet that Cambodia is improving has been the recent release of a survey by the Centre for Advanced Study, based on over 1000 interviews conducted across the country. Seventy-two per cent of respondents believe their country is heading in the right direction, and 78 per cent are 'confident and happy' about Cambodia's future. Nearly half indicated that they had become personally better off in the past two years. For pure optimism these results, one suspects, would put any straw poll of dotcom millionaires from Silicon Valley in the shade.

But while its neighbours are battling problems in the present day, it is the shadow of their nation's horrific past that most troubles Cambodians. Specifically, whether former Khmer Rouge should be brought to justice for the genocide that left at least one million dead, or whether their crimes should be forgotten.

In January both houses of parliament passed a law that would enable the setting up of a UN-backed Khmer Rouge Tribunal. Since then the law has been in limbo; the government says it has been assessing whether or not it is constitutional. Hun Sen



Trevor McDonald

Where all roads lead

LITTLE SIGNPOSTS ALREADY mark the beginning and end of this church year. At its beginning, Fr Jacques Dupuis, after an investigation sloppily prosecuted by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, was exonerated and encouraged to pursue his work and inquiries. In November, the Social Justice Statement on rural and regional Australia will be issued.

These signposts seem to point in different directions. But all roads go through globalisation and its cultural effects. Dupuis, for example, was drawn to write about the uniqueness of Christ, and so about the relationship of Christianity to other faiths. This question is urgent and inescapable, because through immigration and through information we are in daily contact with other religions. As we do not live within a simple Christian world, we must reckon with other faiths.

The reckoning takes place most extensively in spirituality, and not in theology. In spirituality faith is given practical shape. Faith, personal lives and culture intersect. It has always been a battleground. Amulets, blessings, funeral rites, attending the theatre, trendy wigs, springs of water, liturgical dancing and the enneagram are just a few of the adaptations of culture within Christian life that have caused controversy. But mutual exchange is as inevitable in religious practice as in commerce. We need only remember the willow plate. Samuel Bow adapted Chinese patterns for the European market. After his success, Chinese potters adapted his patterns to sell to Europe. Their work in turn influenced later English potters. Was it finally more than a pun to identify such china with China?

In spirituality, there is the same challenge to identity. Is there a point, for example, at which a Catholic nourished by Buddhist meditation, Jungian archetypes, New Age crystals, earth religions, corporate retreats with ritual war games, earth religions and fertility cults, not to mention Wesleyan hymn singing and Pentecostal prayer, ceases to be Catholic?

And so to regional Australia. A treatment of it will explain the effects of globalisation on the country, notably the centralisation of ownership and the reduction of services. Churches are not immune. As clergy and services are increasingly withdrawn from small centres, each denomination offers, at most, very occasional celebrations. If people wish to support their fragile local community, they will be drawn to inter-denominational practice and a more eclectic spirituality. Can they maintain their Anglican, Uniting Church or Catholic identity? One way to protect identity is to define some practices as Christian or Catholic, and to proscribe others. This rarely works, for exclusion tends to exclude the Gospel. A better way may lie in hospitality. Good hospitality presupposes a relaxed place in which we are at home, so that we can readily invite others in and accept invitations to go out. But to welcome others and be welcomed by others on their terms requires a strong sense of our own identity.

So we return to the challenge of globalisation: to sustain and empower small communities within their own tradition, so that they can offer and receive hospitality. ■

Andrew Hamilton SJ is *Eureka Street*'s publisher.

has said that trying Ieng Sary, 'Brother Number 3', in such a tribunal would mean war. Sary was granted a pardon after organising a mass defection of Khmer Rouge forces to the government in 1996, and is one of half a dozen Khmer Rouge leaders from Pol Pot's inner circle still alive. The Prime Minister has also stated that a version of the law passed by parliament would be enacted before an aid-donors' meeting is held in Japan later this month.

While opinion is divided on how best to deal with the past, there is also the desire of many to find out what motivated the Khmer Rouge's butchery. Why did they kill so many?

This debate is mirrored by another: what to do with the piles of skulls and bones left around the country as reminders of Khmer Rouge brutality? Buddhists believe that the spirit of a person is in limbo until their remains are properly cremated. The Prime Minister has promised a referendum on the issue.

Perhaps it will be conducted next year along with long-awaited commune elections. The stranglehold that Hun Sen's CPP party has on local politics has been the cornerstone of his success. If opposition groups mount a serious challenge there is no doubt that more spirits will have to be laid to rest.

Nonetheless, the survey's results paid tribute to the desire of Cambodian voters to determine their future. While less than 50 per cent thought the upcoming elections would be fair, 97 per cent said they intended to vote. —**Jon Greenaway**

Disease unease

IN 15 YEARS as a veterinary surgeon, Malcolm Ramsay has seen a lot more than cats and dogs. In the early '90s, he worked in Cambodia. There he contributed to the early stages of the rebuilding of a rural economy which had been ravaged by war. Among other things, he trained local farmers in animal husbandry.

'I first came across foot-and-mouth disease in Cambodia,' says Ramsay, explaining that most villages know the disease to occur every three to five years, sometimes affecting many animals, sometimes only a few. Foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) is endemic in Cambodia, which means the virus is moving constantly through the livestock populations. 'It is just one of a number of serious livestock health problems that periodically disrupt

village life. FMD causes serious hardship when it kills young stock or when draught animals go lame.'

Vaccine is not widely available in Cambodia and is expensive. It provides only six months' immunity so is only useful when combined with disease monitoring and livestock movement controls. 'Vaccination can be used strategically as part of an eradication program. This was demonstrated successfully by Indonesia whose last reported case was in 1983. In Cambodia, however, the eradication of FMD won't eventuate until the government has an improved capacity to monitor disease and control livestock movements.'

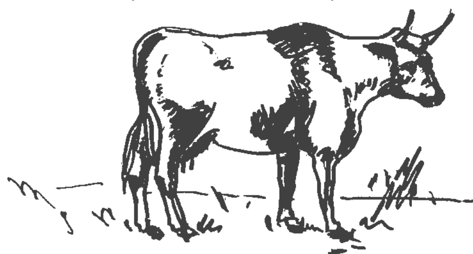
More recently, back in Australia, Ramsay has been working for the Victorian government in a program designed to deal with the spread of Johne's disease among sheep and cattle. However unfamiliar the condition may be in suburbia, it's not hard to get sheep farmers talking about Johne's disease. The symptoms of Ovine Johne's Disease (OJD) are subtle. 'FMD is basically a loud disease, quick to announce itself upon arrival,' says Ramsay. 'OJD in comparison is a quiet and insidious disease, which can take years to reveal itself.' Ramsay explains that some farmers debate whether it is really a disease and worth worrying about. Yet the discovery of OJD in a flock means that those sheep may only be sold for slaughter; they cannot be used for breeding. This dramatically affects the value of the livestock. Ramsay has found himself in the difficult position of breaking unwelcome news to farmers.

In March this year, Ramsay was in Devon in England, also breaking bad news. He arrived when the outbreak of FMD was in its early stages. He was part of a group of 20 Australian veterinary and technical staff.

'There's an agreement between Britain, Canada, New Zealand and Australia to provide assistance in the case of livestock disease emergencies in those countries. That's what was being honoured when AFFA (Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries Australia) and state agricultural departments asked their staff for expressions of interest at the end of February. I believe there was a huge response and I was one of the lucky ones to be sent with the first batch. We were replaced by fresh crews when our month's tour of duty was over. We were divided into four groups and sent to Cumbria, Staffordshire, Devon and Newcastle.'

Ramsay was put to work looking for the disease. Almost immediately, he began inspecting up to 3000 pigs, 800 sheep and 300 cattle in a day. It was a week before he found FMD. First thing on a Tuesday morning, he returned to a farm he had visited three days earlier. The farm was spread over five separate premises.

'The previous surveillance visit had taken all day and I'd come away feeling somewhat chilled. My speech had been slurred by the end of the day due to a mix of



exhaustion and mild hypothermia. At least for this visit I was wearing some extra layers of clothing. I began with an inspection of the dairy herd and chatted with the herdsmen at the first premises. I then inspected numerous pens of ewes with lambs. No evidence of FMD. When we arrived at the second premises the sleet was coming down at 30 degrees from horizontal and ice was building up on the straw laid on the driveway entrance. I inspected a barn with nine-month-old heifers and steers and noticed one steer slightly depressed with a little frothy saliva at the mouth. All other stock in the barn appeared normal. Three of us pushed the steer up against the wall so I could examine it. Parting the lips revealed a number of vesicles in the mouth. When I tried to extend the tongue, the epithelium began to tear. I had no doubt that I was looking at early classic FMD lesions.'

Following instructions, Ramsay contacted the MAFF (the Ministry for Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing) and had the diagnosis confirmed.

'We immediately shot the steer using the farmer's gun and I took samples of epithelium and fluid from the vesicles. We then disinfected the area, covered the head in a bag and dragged the animal into a pen to separate it from the others. Based on my investigations, the MAFF decided to slaughter stock on all five premises belonging to this farmer and his extended family.'

Ramsay says that the following seven days were the hardest week's work of his life.

'I was responsible for managing all five premises as we assessed, valued stock, slaughtered, disposed of the remains and disinfected.'

He supervised the burning of hundreds of carcasses.

'One of the hardest things for farmers and vets alike was the sense of great waste where herds and flocks of apparently healthy animals were destroyed. This became widespread when the 'firebreak cull' of stock on neighbouring properties was introduced in April. Although we all knew the cull was for the greater good of the industry, the sense of waste was deeply shocking as barn after barn was filled with dead animals left to rot until disposal could be organised.'

Ramsay says that all the farmers he encountered, whether they had animals destroyed or not, felt caught up in a national crisis, one he hopes Australia never has to contend with.

'It was the older farmers who coped less well. I heard the same tear-filled story from the 50- and 60-year-old farmers as they described concern for their children who farmed with them and who looked to the farm for a future livelihood. The 20- and 30-year-old children, for their part, seemed more stoical and pragmatic, keen to get the grisly work finished and start reconstructing their lives.'

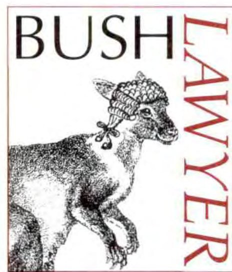
—Michael McGirr

Reading youth

Agnes Niewenhuisen is careful never to patronise people, particularly young ones, who don't like reading. As Manager of the Australian Centre for Youth Literature, she led a raft of partners in a nationwide research project, *Young Australians Reading* to find out what was needed to make young people want to read. The project was partly funded by the Australia Council and undertaken by the Sydney-based Woolcott Research Pty Ltd. The results make one optimistic: of the 801 students (primary and secondary) not one wanted to be seen as belonging to a group of reluctant readers: even if reading was uncool in their circle, it was much more uncool to be categorised as a non-reader.

But if kids would like to be seen to be readers, turning that into books read is the challenge, and the report has numerous suggestions about making reading more attractive to the young. These all would require some level of commitment and investment: book covers designed to attract the young, teen magazines publishing book extracts, libraries making some concession to youth needs (teenagers are unimpressed by the adult section and scornful of the children's section). The whole tone of the

A well-tuned cymbal



SHORTLY AFTER THE RECENT US presidential election, *Time* magazine published an essay extolling the ability of Chief Justice Rehnquist to maintain public confidence in the US Supreme Court. The Supreme Court was able to come out of the confusion and doubtful legitimacy of the Florida disputed returns litigation not only unblemished but, according to *Time*, with its reputation enhanced.

Chief Justice Rehnquist has notoriously hard-Right political views, as do two other judges on the Court (of nine judges, only three could be classified as liberals). Nonetheless, the Court has widespread public support, even among Democratic voters. The reason, according to *Time*? Mystery. Rehnquist has refused to allow the court's proceedings to become a media circus like the O.J. Simpson trial. By keeping the televisions out it has maintained its sphinx-like dignity.

One of the perennial themes in judicial conference is the tension between judicial independence, accountability, and the need to inform the public about our work and maintain confidence in the administration of justice.

From time to time, politicians and the tabloid press attack the judiciary, or members of it. In my experience, the response of judges to such attacks is almost always defensive— a great deal of anguished complaint about the unfairness of our attackers, but not much thought given to formulating more positive approaches.

In 1625, Francis Bacon, who had been a judge, published his essay *On Judicature*. He commented, 'An over-speaking judge is no well-tuned cymbal.' But what is an over-speaking judge?

Last year, Justice Michael Kirby told a story about giving a speech in Zimbabwe on 'Breast Milk Substitutes and the Law'. It prompted a fellow judge to ask, 'Kirby, is there nothing you will not speak about?'

Kirby recently spoke publicly in support of the concept of public education. He ventured, in diplomatic fashion, that public education ought not to be diminished in favour of funding private schools. For this he was attacked both by the Prime Minister and the federal Attorney-General, neither of whom appeared to have read his speech, only a selective and somewhat sensationalised newspaper report of it. They claimed he was playing partisan politics. He responded by correcting them in a media release.

Kirby presents a challenge to the traditional notion of judge as 'man of mystery'. He is the antithesis of the approach lauded by *Time* magazine. He is the most prolific writer of speeches, articles and essays the Australian judiciary has ever produced and he has been criticised as one who has no unexpressed thoughts. As his self-deprecating story about Zimbabwe shows, he is aware of some of the drawbacks of prolixity. Nonetheless, he seems to take the view that it is to the public's advantage to know what he thinks about all manner of things.

Will we increase the quality of justice by being mum out of court? There is no single or simple answer. One magistrate attacked by a talkback radio jock rang up to defend himself. Others have taken defamation proceedings. Kirby puts out the occasional media release. Attorneys-General used to speak for the judiciary; not now. Most judges think, 'Today's news, tomorrow's fish-and-chip wrappers' and get on with their work. The debate continues. ■

Séamus O'Shaughnessy is a NSW magistrate.

report is one of intensity, urgency: despite Niewenhuisen's tolerance of reluctant readers, she is trying hard to win them over.

Should we be worried about the reluctant readers? One thing the research did not explore was the nexus, if any, between being a reader for pleasure and being a success at school work in general; school grades were not revealed among the detailed profiles obtained.

Some kids are just not going to read much beyond their set texts and manuals. Some would rather be doing something else, and that may well be just as valuable as reading for pleasure. Scientists, athletes, artisans: the latest John Marsden might not be as important to them as it is to the publishers, the English teachers, the librarians.

Niewenhuisen is not as worried as some librarians and teachers about this: 'They worry about the young men,' she says, 'they try to pick up the skateboarders.' But she remembers that in the 1960s many would finish school at 14 and get a job. 'Yes, I'm committed to reading and the importance of reading, to promoting the value of reading cultural, emotional, educational. But at the same time I think it's very important to keep a clear perspective and not make assumptions that people who are not regular readers are not valuable to society.' She is very sure, however, that we would see more committed readers if the conditions were right. 'A lot of potential readers aren't well-served by their school experience, their libraries and families.' Schools need, the report points out, to make more time in the secondary curriculum for free reading in the way primary schools do.

This, however, might be difficult to achieve in the bulging timetables generated by the frantic push for subject credibility that occurred in the aftermath of the Blackburn Report. In the rush to cover all the requirements and keep an exhaustive record of having done so, there is hardly time actually to teach, let alone develop any depth in the students' experience of literature. The slashing of staff and resources made it harder than ever to teach reluctant students properly, just as the pressure was put on to keep them all at school till Year 12. The kind of disruption that used to be caused mainly by disaffected Year Nines could now persist into senior classes; compliance had to be enforced by the loading in of compulsory work requirements that meant enormous workloads for teacher and student. Reading for pleasure was always a luxury for senior students: now it's a wonder any have the time, even if they have the

desire. The report does not venture into such territory: it focuses on smaller, more achievable goals than the rebuilding of an entire education system that has been cut to the marrow.

Young Australians Reading points out that students often do not enjoy prescribed texts, and that 'as this often becomes all the book reading that they do in later secondary years, it makes all their reading experiences less enjoyable'. It recommends better selection of texts; this is only common sense—ask any parent who has had to help a disgusted child slog through thin, dreary 'issues-based' novellas.

Publishers are asked to help by marketing their wares more effectively, but as anyone who has read Hilary McPhee's *Other People's Words* will now know, they also need to select better works and edit them properly. Media campaigns with 'famous role models' have worked in Canada; Niewenhuisen spoke glowingly of the surf club that had gone crazy for Harry Potter. The Potter phenomenon has educators and book people in general scrambling to see if the magic can spread. Will the reluctant reader who embraced the Potter series now be primed for other titles, other authors? *Young Australians Reading* has made a decent diagnosis and suggested a course of treatment. The bean-counters and the policy-makers will now have to deal with it.

—Juliette Hughes

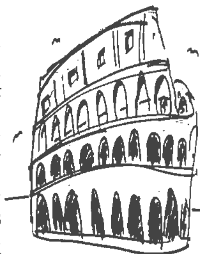
Think Adelaide

WHERE ARE THE public forums that work? Where can ideas be discussed civilly and intelligently?

The public sphere in Australia is bigger than it has ever been. Through talkback radio, market research, television, radio, email, specialist magazines and websites, newspapers, public meetings, and many other means, the opportunities for the expression of feelings and opinions are almost endless. And yet no-one seems to think that public debate is in a healthy condition.

My feeling is that the reason for this is that nearly all public discussion has been drawn into the realm of spectacle, into the colosseum. Spectacle, cathartic emotion, exemplary myths, symbols, branding: these are the things that postmodern media are good at. They present things at speed, and for maximum impact. They are the colosseum where public emotion can be synthesised, amplified, and expressed. They are the place where identity, opinion and mythic narratives clash in a conflict witnessed and judged by the citizens and their leaders.

Every culture has a colosseum; every culture needs one. The spectacular expression of public emotion is part of human history, and will remain so until the (unlikely and undesirable) day we evolve into entirely rational animals. The colosseum is part of civilisation, but so is, or should be, the forum. And it is the forum that is too little visited at present. The spectacle of staged conflict and simulated clarity of emotion has taken over too much space. Too much work is done by charisma and too little by open discussion. The price of this imbalance is high, for we risk paralysis on many of the most pressing issues we face if we approach them in postures of ritualised combat.



From 12 to 15 July this year, a bit of open space for the pursuit of ideas will exist in Adelaide, at the Festival of Ideas. Thinkers from around Australia and the world will converge for three days and four nights of discussion under the broad themes of water, pollution, reconciliation, addiction/intoxication, and cosmology. All the daytime sessions will be free and, if the experience of the first festival in 1999 is anything to go by, the crowds will be large. The event is modelled on the perennially successful Writers' Week at the Adelaide Festival, and has a broader canvas of the life of the mind to work on: from physics to politics, from religion to microbiology, and from current affairs to archaeology.

It is the sort of thing Adelaide does really well. In a way, things like this are the ripest fruits of the 'big country town' feel that Adelaide is so easily and cheaply mocked for. This is a town on a human scale, where people expect to be able to meet and mix with the visitors from overseas and interstate. Indeed, people feel a responsibility as well as a right to exercise their moral and intellectual citizenship. They are not so disabled as people from larger cities by the sense of being one among millions.

If this makes the Festival sound as worthy as a bowl of home-made muesli and as snug as a nice cup of tea, then that would be a distortion, but not a wholly groundless one. There are mindful pleasures on offer, opportunities to listen, think, and talk about issues. The process is deliberative rather than spectacular. While speakers such as Bishop John Spong, Vandana Shiva, Paul Davies, Margaret Wertheim, Naomi Klein, Phillip Adams, Saskia Sassen, Raimond Gaita and Tim Flannery do exist on the intellectual edges of global celebrity, they will be talking to an intelligent public, not performing in some sort of Disney on Ideas. They will appear on their own, and with less well-known thinkers. They will be asked to explain their special subjects, and to address more unpredictable questions.

As politics has long been little more than a gladiatorial battle, none of the speakers is a presently an active politician. The themes relate to current concerns—water, population, drugs, trade, reconciliation—and to intellectual inquiry on the *longue durée*—cosmology, ethics, biology, ecology. However, the important thing is that these explorations will not be put into the straitjacket of immediate 'relevance' that governs the news media. When panels talk about water, they will address earth science, religious symbolism, patterns of human settlement (like water in cities, or in the Murray-Darling basin), and dangers in places like the Mekong delta and the Middle East, where water wars seem almost inevitable. And in all the themes there will be similar opportunities for reflection over time, and across intellectual disciplines that have become too specialised to communicate widely on their own.

Finally, all this intellectual pleasure and exploration takes place in open, uncorporatised space. Of course there are sponsors, but they are mostly government departments of semi-public institutions like the local universities, and their promotional works are blessedly obscure. One of the things that most struck me about the 1999 Festival was the relative lack of banner advertising. We get so used to having every piece of space around us sold to someone for marketing. We need civic spaces outside this bombardment, outside the insistence that we are on this planet only to consume more stuff. This is one.

—Robert Phiddian

This month's contributors: **Jon Greenaway** is *Eureka Street*'s South East Asia correspondent; **Michael McGirr** is the author of *Things You Get for Free* and *The Good Life*; **Juliette Hughes** is a freelance writer; **Robert Phiddian** is senior lecturer in English at the Flinders University of South Australia.

Citing Hiroshima

THE WORLD:1

The bombing of Hiroshima permanently changed human existence from a fact into a question. In Japan, memorials loom large but survivor testimonies go out of print, and a third of the country's power is provided by nuclear reactors. **Robin Gerster** watches the dust and the ironies settle in this changeable nation.

'Delicious, delicious,' said Japanese Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi as he tucked into slices of succulent musk melon, topping off a meal of raw bonito slices, vegetables and rice balls. Television cameras rolled as he downed a glass of milk and snared pieces of sweet potato with his chopsticks. The Prime Minister's dining habits don't usually make the evening news, but on this occasion, the meal was the message: Obuchi ate last week at Tokaimura, near the site of Japan's worst-ever nuclear accident just six days earlier. The sweet potatoes were gathered 300m from ground zero, and the other ingredients came from near the town. The not-so-subtle point: trust us, everything is back to normal.

—Donald Macintyre, *Time*, 18 October 1999

OH JAPAN! Its self-satisfaction is legendary. But over the past decade, as their great post-war success story has unravelled, even the Japanese themselves have come to the realisation that fresh approaches are needed to tackle problems in virtually all areas of national life. Optimists will rejoice in the ascension to the prime ministership of the 'maverick' Junichiro Koizumi, about as close to a populist Bob Hawke as Japan can throw up—though it's his luxuriant hairdo and light-coloured suits, more than his politics, which bring Our Bob to mind.

Koizumi wants to reform the impossibly cliquey Liberal Democratic Party, long ruled by smug dotards who have turned political nest-feathering into a national art-form to rival *ikebana* and *origami*. He also wants to revitalise Japan's dodgy economy, and good luck to him. Yet, for all his radical rhetoric about 'changing Japan', Koizumi is deeply conservative. His comments about the absurdity of Japan having to label its armed forces a 'Self-Defence Force' (because of the pacifist constitution imposed on it by the occupying Americans) hardly warranted the over-reaction they received in the Australian press, but there's no sign that Koizumi is at all interested in healing those festering sores that continue to blight Japanese foreign relations. His disinclination matters more in international arenas than in domestic politics. Nonetheless, the issue is one of fundamental importance. One would think that acknowledging iniquities in its military past was an essential first step in preparing Japan for a new, constructive future.

So what's been done? Old bogeys that should have been buried years ago have been needlessly reinvigorated. A landmark legal decision providing belated compensation to the so-called 'comfort women' sexually enslaved by the Japanese military during its long period of aggression in the Asia-Pacific in the 1930s and 1940s has been overturned; and new high school history books that whitewash Japanese atrocities have been approved. And now Prime Minister Koizumi has declared his willingness to visit Tokyo's controversial Yasukini Shrine, wherein the spirits of those who have died in the emperor's name since the Meiji Restoration are venerated. The 'spirits' include

prosecuted war criminals like Tojo, and members of the vicious *Kempeitai*, the Japanese secret police. No wonder that some people, even those of us with an affection for Japan, rail at the arrogance of its political and cultural elites and condemn its capacity for complacency.

The official reaction to the 'criticality incident' (a euphemism for near-disaster) at the Tokaimura uranium processing plant north-east of Tokyo in late September 1999 could hardly be more illustrative of Japanese heedlessness. At least the then Prime Minister Obuchi could justify his melon-eating exploit (unrelated, it is reliably reported, to the fatal stroke that ended his life just a few months later) on the basis that it maintained national morale. The Japanese landscape *is*, after all, pockmarked by more than 50 nuclear reactors, which produce over a third of Japan's gigantic electricity output—one wouldn't want to frighten the horses. But there was hardly a squeal of protest in response to the Tokaimura accident, either during its immediate aftermath or in the months that followed, as Japan's appalling negligence in monitoring its nuclear industry came to light. The lack of reaction is staggering—even by the standards of Japanese apathy. And this in a country which sets so much store by its nuclear victimhood in early August 1945.

The relatively small and splintered Japanese anti-nuclear movement, vociferous and committed though it is, is engaged in a losing battle against an overwhelmingly pro-nuclear political/bureaucratic establishment and a general population that doesn't appear to give a damn. Except, that is, when it comes to Hiroshima, or rather, what might be called the symbolic 'Hiroshima', for the city has become so connotative of nuclear holocaust that it subsumes the later (bigger) explosion in Nagasaki. As John Whittier Treat observes in his study of Japanese responses to 'the Bomb', *Writing Ground Zero* (1995), Hiroshima is not merely a place, but a 'trope' of 'a new fact within the human condition'. It is not lost on the Japanese that that 'fact'—the capacity of the human race for self-extinction—was validated over their own sacred soil. If, as its famous historian Saburo Ienaga has written, Japan suffers from a 'collective amnesia' about the actions of its military forces in the Asia-Pacific from the time of the invasion of China in 1931 through to 1945, then 'Hiroshima', the mythic, martyred city, is largely responsible. 'The Bomb' clouded Japan's wartime culpability; it provided the excuse for escape to the high moral ground. The common Japanese equation of Hiroshima with Auschwitz as the two great human horrors is instructive. It is a convenient historical coupling, which turns the Japanese from aggressors into innocent, sacrificial victims of racism: the Jews of the Asia-Pacific.

The dropping of 'the Bomb' is now historically distant, and popular fiction and film have so worked over the idea of 'nuclear holocaust' as to make it seem comfortingly fictional. Nowhere is this nuclear amnesia more troublingly evident than in Japan.

Present-day Hiroshima is a pleasant city. Its streets are wide and tree-lined, it has excellent public amenities, picturesque tramcars and a superb setting on a fan of several rivers flowing down to the oyster beds of the Inland Sea. It also continues to cash in on its wartime notoriety by promoting itself as a 'Mecca of World Peace' (a semiotically confusing description—but this is Japan). While it is impossible not to feel sympathy for the city's 'bombed', the so-called *hibakusha*, the ridiculous claims sometimes made on their behalf provide ample ammunition to critics of what Ian Buruma has called the 'Hiroshima cult', many of whom are inveterate Japan-bashers. Significantly, these claims are usually made not by the victims themselves, but by outside observers. Werner Wells' Foreword to Michihiko Hachiya's *Hiroshima Diary* (1955), the journal of a physician who survived the blast and treated its victims, is a case in point. A surgical consultant to the Atomic Bomb Casualty Commission, Wells makes the startling claim that the bombing of Hiroshima was different from the saturation bombing of Japanese and German cities in the final days of the war, because those who were killed in the latter attacks 'had the comfort of knowing they were being killed by more or less familiar and acceptable weapons.'

Yet there is no denying it: Hiroshima *was* different. The very word seems to encapsulate the crucial issue and ongoing crisis of our postmodern age—the triumph of technology over human flesh-and-blood.

As Arthur Koestler and many others have observed, whereas humans have always had to live with the certainty of their individual deaths, since Hiroshima, humanity has to live with the prospect of its annihilation as a biological species.

Yet it is not this apocalyptic scenario that most concerns the visitor to the city's commemorative facilities located in and around 'Peace Park', the epicentre of the Hiroshima cult. What impresses is the impact of 'the Bomb' on the individuals who experienced it, who can't have been prepared for what descended upon them from the blue. It is fatuous to try to measure the relative awfulness of individual horrific events. But when, in his meditation on the moral dimensions and legacy of the bombing, *Hiroshima Notes* (1965), the Nobel Prize-winner Kenzaburo Oe describes Hiroshima as 'the extremity of human misery', it is difficult to argue with him.

One might, however, want to argue with some aspects of Hiroshima's Peace Memorial Museum. Foreign visitors often complain that the Museum's contextualising of the historical circumstances surrounding the use of 'the Bomb' is cursory at best, evasive at worst. The part of the exhibition which reveals its effects on the human life of the city is notable for its exemplary documentary emphasis. The displays are simple but eloquent—a watch stopped at the precise second of the explosion, a photograph of a kimono pattern imprinted on a young woman's back, a little boy's twisted bicycle. A glass showcase of fingernails and shreds of skin kept by the mother of a teenage victim (his name was Noriaki Teshima) is accompanied by the legend: 'Suffering from terrible thirst, he is said to have tried to suck the pus from his raw, nail-less fingers.' That this seems to be an unnecessarily grisly elaboration points to the real problem with Hiroshima's commemorative identity—too much detail looks suspiciously exploitative. This is a general problem with war testimonies, especially in literature. The elaboration of war horrors has a potentially anaesthetic effect on the reader, hardening rather than arousing sensibilities. But at least British World War I writers, for example, or even Jewish Holocaust survivors, had a textual and cultural tradition upon which to draw in constructing their cataclysmic narratives. The inscribers of 'Hiroshima' had no such precedents. Not surprisingly, they continually complain that they lack the words, the literary language, to describe what they saw and endured.

Nevertheless, what Hiroshima survivor–writers—such as Tamiki Hara and Yoko Ota, and also Nagasaki's great, tragic memorialist Takashi Nagai—do communicate are those intangible things no museum can adequately exhibit. Not least, they express the demoralising effects of so much random human slaughter, the impact of such sights as old neighbours fighting over possession of unidentifiable corpses presumed to be family members, the irreparable 'cracks and fissures' (as Nagai called them) created among both individuals and communities by such colossal upheaval. In other words, the spiritual wreckage of it all, evident even as Japan frantically rebuilt in the post-war years. The quantity of Hiroshima writing is immense, and testimony to the determination of the survivors to describe the indescribable. Yet, with the exception of Masuji Ibuse's canonised novel *Black Rain* (and Ibuse wasn't even a *hibakusha*), the writing has had little impact. Amazingly, in his incisive study of atomic representations, *Nuclear Criticism* (1993), Ken Ruthven ignores the Japanese perspective except for a single fleeting reference to *Black Rain*. Did Ruthven consider it irrelevant, when compared with how the spectre of omnicide has haunted the Western imagination? But Hiroshima literature has little status in the metropolitan literary cultures of Japan either, being considered a marginal genre. Much of it is now out of print, and is regarded coolly by a public not wishing to be again confronted with the horrors of war, and perhaps unwilling to face up to the ironic consequences of its present dependence on nuclear energy.

The virtual erasure of atom bomb literature from the critical record is both curious and regrettable, because Hiroshima writing *should* command our attention. Nuclear weapons, as Margaret Thatcher once remarked, 'can't be uninvented'. The Cold War may be over, but the nuclear threat remains as deadly as ever, and has become menacingly dispersed across the globe. Yet complacency, or what Ken Ruthven calls 'nuclear amnesia', prevails. The dropping of 'the Bomb' is now historically distant, and popular fiction and film have so worked over the idea of 'nuclear holocaust' as to make it seem comfortingly fictional.

Nowhere is this nuclear amnesia more troublingly evident than in Japan. Copies of *Black Rain*, *Hiroshima Notes* and Nagai's *The Bells of Nagasaki* might be available in the tourist kiosk in Hiroshima's Peace Park, but it is the T-shirts showing that fashionably iconic image of the silhouetted, skull-like 'Genbaku Domu', or Atom Bomb Dome, that the sightseers want. 'Too provincial', says the Japanese literary establishment of the collective Hiroshima testimony. Of course it is heavily localised, for what can be more immediate than the wholesale destruction of one's home environment? But it also shares the universal paradigm of the journey, albeit of a singularly domestic nature. A journey in a city changed in a flash; a difficult journey into an uncertain future, undertaken in a sea of ashes; a journey into the unknown, as radiation illnesses lurked and progressed; a journey to recover human dignity. Reading the accounts is a harrowing journey too, vicariously, but nonetheless utterly, engaging. Most of all, the significance of Hiroshima writing 'travels' across time and place. It is as compelling now as it ever was. ■

Robin Gerster's latest book is *Legless in Ginza: Orientating Japan* (Melbourne University Press).

PENSION PROSPECTS

Are we doomed to repeat historical injustices to those who are poor or simply old? asks **Kay Rollison**.

IT'S NOT FASHIONABLE these days to consider that we have anything to learn from history. Nonsense—of course history illuminates matters of current importance. For example, we can learn much about the attitudes and values still at work in the current debate about the welfare system by looking at the introduction and operation of old-age pensions in Victoria. From that historical perspective we can see how those who saw pensions as a right inherent in citizenship all but lost out to those who wanted to limit the cost of the nascent pension system, because they saw it as expensive charity for the barely deserving poor. No wonder history is unfashionable.

By the turn of the 19th century, Victoria was experiencing a significant ageing of its population, as immigrants who had flocked there in the wake of the gold discoveries reached 'the sunset of their days'. The 1890s were also a period of economic difficulty, as the colony struggled to overcome not only boom and bust, but also drought and the decline of the mining industry. There were stories in the press about destitute old people being sent to jail because of lack of other provision for them.

Provision for the poor was sporadic, disorganised and inadequate. In the absence of a poor law, the state's contribution to dealing with the destitute was to run a benevolent asylum and an immigrants' home in Melbourne, and to contribute funds to some of the many charities run by churches or local communities. These in turn operated local benevolent asylums, hospitals or cottage homes, and gave out 'relief' in the form of goods, orders on shopkeepers and occasionally money to assist those unable to fend for themselves. In addition to government, and in some cases municipal funding, charitable organisations got their money from private fundraising. Ladies' committees were in the forefront of charity work, and businessmen could, by the donation of a guinea, acquire the right to send charitable cases to the organisation of their patronage. This structure dealt with the destitute of all ages, though the aged made up the largest number of inmates of asylums and homes.

Charities divided the poor into the deserving and the undeserving. Charity was supposed to be for the deserving poor. Thinking was dominated by the fear that giving charity to all destitute people

would encourage impostors, sap independence and reward vice and idleness. Being destitute was not enough; it was also necessary to be destitute through no fault of one's own. In practice, however, something still had to be done for the feckless and drunken. So outdoor relief (food or other goods from a charity) and cottage homes were provided for the deserving poor, and asylums were used to house the undeserving. Asylums were unpopular, having an air of the workhouse; inmates were less than citizens, and lost the right to vote. But hospitals and asylums were also used to house those destitute aged, whether deserving or undeserving, who could not look after themselves.

Decisions about whether applicants for charity were deserving or undeserving were made by those who ran the charities, often advised by the local ladies' committees. Being 'deserving' usually meant being of good moral character, and having been hard-working. The Salvation Army seems to have seen things a little differently; they substituted a work test for a moral character, giving assistance to anyone who agreed to work in their institution—sorting papers and rags, for example.

By the end of the 19th century, there was a well-developed system of mutual obligation in place. In order to receive assistance, the destitute had either to prove they were of good character, had worked hard in the past, or were now willing to work. Those best able to show this could stay in their own homes and in control of their own lives; those less able to show this ended up in an institution.

Against this background, the Victorian parliament established a Royal Commission in 1896 to inquire into 'the desirability of provision being made by or under the control of the State for the maintenance of the aged poor, either by pensions, insurance, or some other mode of relief'. The Commission did not wish to replace the existing charitable system. Its task was to consider extending assistance to a significant number of aged Victorians who were believed to live in poverty, but to be too proud to use the existing charitable system. Its deliberations were less about the existence of such a group, which was assumed, and more about how its needs could best be met.

Many of the witnesses who appeared before the Commission were providers of charity who judged the situation on the basis of the group they were familiar with, and argued that a pension, which they saw as another form of outdoor relief, would discourage the aged poor from seeking employment and be wasted on drink. They preferred the existing options of cottage homes or institutions for the aged poor. Others, however, agreed that a pension would maintain independence and be cheaper than putting people in institutions.

These opinions often reflected witnesses' views of the causes of poverty. Many of the charity-workers attributed poverty to individual improvidence or misfortune; no doubt they saw a lot of this in their work. But other witnesses, and the advanced liberals who made up the majority of the Commission, considered that low wages, lack of employment and—with the mining industry in mind—technological change were major factors. Individuals were still expected to struggle to be self-supporting, but it was not entirely their own fault if they ended up destitute. Such people deserved the support of the state in their old age because of their contribution to its development by a lifetime of work.

This view was reflected in the recommendations of the Commission. It rejected the otherwise attractive option of insurance as taking too long to help the existing poor. It also rejected the proposal of the Salvation Army that 'the religious bodies' should tender for the support of the aged poor—a proposal with a curiously contemporary ring today. It opted instead to extend the role of the state by directly paying an old-age pension of 10 shillings a week. In the Commission's view, 'the ethics of this question made clear the obligation of the State to ensure that the worn-out wealth-creating machines who have contributed to its development ... shall receive the means of subsistence and comfort'. It seemed a victory for those who thought that citizens had a right to support from the state in their old age.

But it was a highly qualified victory, for many of the features of charitable provision were carried over into the new system. 'Poor' meant destitute; applicants could own no

more than £10 worth of property. There was no expectation that the aged would retire from work and get a pension; the pension would only be paid if they could show that they couldn't get work. Applicants with an income of less than 10 shillings a week could get a part pension. The distinction was maintained between the deserving and undeserving poor—though the Commission called them 'less deserving'. Only the deserving could get a pension, the less deserving being institutionalised, with the loss of rights and dignity that entailed. To be a 'deserving' good citizen required not only tangible evidence of 'care and prudence' such as saving bank deposits, but also having brought up a respectable family, which made women eligible. The Commission suggested that while a government department should be responsible for the payment of pensions, the existing ladies' committees might well be used to determine eligibility. The pension age was 65, and applicants had to have lived in the colony for ten years.

The advanced liberal majority of the Commission wanted to afford aid to the destitute or nearly destitute, 'without weakening ... individual initiative or impairing the Anglo-Saxon characteristics of self-respect and manly independence'. They acknowledged the difficulty of providing for old age by individual effort, but still wanted to ensure that the effort was made, or had at least been made before old age made it impossible. So they relied on the notion of mutual obligation inherent in the idea of deserving and undeserving poor, and retained many of the features of a charity. The Commission stopped short of calling the pension a right, seeing it rather as a reward.

In the subsequent political debate the Commission's report was interpreted by advanced liberal and labour parliamentarians as endorsing pensions as a right of citizenship, however circumscribed, and a scheme very like the Commission's recommendations was adopted. But the legislative history of old-age pensions over the next ten years shows how easily the ideal of pensions as even a limited right could degenerate into pensions as charity. Early in the new century drought caused a government financial crisis, and the first spending to be cut was that on pensions—down to a maximum of eight shillings, then seven shillings. The conservative Irvine government, which openly considered the pension a 'charitable grant', even for the deserving, imposed further restrictions characteristic of the charity model, requiring a successful applicant to be 'physically or mentally incapable of maintaining himself' and requiring an applicant's children to prove that they could not support their aged parent. Any property that pensioners owned reverted to the state on their death, another feature common in the charity model. Irvine also capped the amount that could be spent on pensions, treating it in the same way as the amount voted for charities. By these means, the number of deserving aged poor in Victoria receiving a pension was nearly halved. When in 1909 responsibility for old-age pensions was transferred to the Commonwealth, about 16 per cent of Victorians eligible by age received the pension. Under the Commonwealth legislation, that had risen to 30 per cent by 1910.

Old-age pensions were undoubtedly popular with the aged poor; perhaps they thought of them as a right in return for a lifetime of hard work, low pay and taxes. Labor members, who felt they represented the class interests of the poor, certainly made this claim. But most of those who used the rhetoric of rights saw the right as belonging only to those judged to be the deserving poor, the good citizens who had practised thrift and hard work, and were genuinely destitute through no fault of their own. Furthermore, the rights argument was totally rejected by many Victorians, who continued to see pensions as charity for those who had failed in life's great race.

The Howard government's current reform of the welfare system excludes aged pensions. But its view of welfare is fundamentally the same as the thinking on pensions of many Victorians 100 years ago. If welfare is a right at all, it is a highly circumscribed one. There is little or no emphasis on people's right to assistance from the state as citizens. We find the same distinction between the deserving and the undeserving poor, the deserving being those who put up with the 'mutual obligation' of work tests or community service. The undeserving lose their benefits. We see the same faith in the morally regenerative power of work, whether or not it's really available for the unemployed, or even desirable for single parents and people with disabilities. There is the same fear of fraud and invasive scrutiny of claims that makes welfare feel like charity. And there is the same sense that welfare recipients are to blame for their situation, and that they could easily get off welfare if they only tried a bit harder.

Lacking now, as then, is an understanding that unemployment and insecure employment, low wages and rapid technological change create the need for welfare. And given the current unwillingness to think historically, it's too much to hope that anything can be learnt about genuine need, and an appropriate response to it, by looking at the mistakes of the past. An attempt to halve the numbers getting assistance from the state is as likely to be the response now as it was then. ■

Kay Rollison has a PhD in history.

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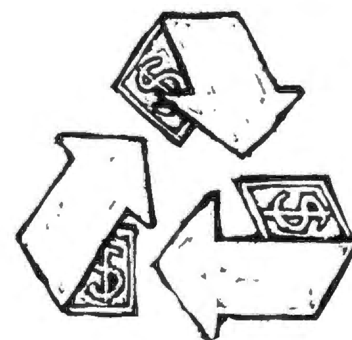

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MOIRA RAYNER

Democracy rules ... OK?

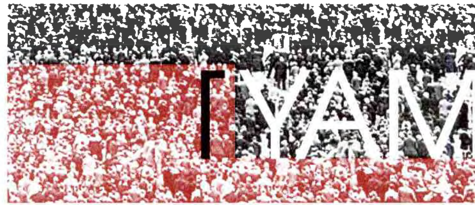
The meaning of the London May Day protests.

THE TERM 'MOB', short for *mobile vulgus*, the excitable crowd, was first coined during England's Glorious Revolution of 1688. The London mob was the first one so designated, and the term subsequently came to be the political code or shorthand for vulgar, irrepressible reality.

The London mob, so feared by rulers, police and newspaper editors, has roared in the city streets for hundreds of years, often on holidays, and often smashing and 'liberating' the property of their foes. In 1517 the rioters of 'Evil May Day' targeted the property of rich foreign craftsmen and merchants, whom they held responsible for their atrocious economic conditions. In 2001, the protestors of the damp and uninspiring May Day felt that Habitat, Barclay's Bank and a small electrical goods shop in the Tottenham Court Road were responsible for child labour, the destruction of rainforests, global warming, GM crops, traffic, pollution, multinational companies, global branding, Third World debt, and sanctions against Iran. Or perhaps they just needed a bathroom and a nice lie down.

This May Day's protests were supposedly highly planned. This would not be unusual in London's history, if it were true. By the late 18th century the London mob had become less spontaneous and more strategic. John Wilkes' campaigns for wider parliamentary representation, civil liberties (for bourgeois Englishmen) and the freedom of the press during the 1760s and 1770s, for example, were supported by demonstrations where windows got smashed and wealthy Londoners' houses were attacked. So it continued through the next couple of centuries, mostly in targeted campaigns—Corn Laws, suffragists, race, Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and anti-Vietnam marches. May Day, though, has become diffuse, an occasion for discontent about the quality of our lives.

This year's May Day demonstration was a damp squib.



We were warned, for weeks, that it would be war. Papers ran grainy, closed-circuit TV pictures of the supposed 'organisers' (the '24 missing anarchists') and police warnings to stay away from what would undoubtedly be a confrontation between 6000 police and an army of international conspirators.

What happened? It rained. It rained a lot. Big stores and offices put up plywood hoardings. The 30 or so self-important 'anarchists' squatting in a warehouse let themselves be searched that morning by police, who were using an obscure and slightly objectionable power based on an apprehension of conspiracy to damage property. They found an aerosol paint can, a carpenter's knife and a small amount of cannabis in the rucksack of a Dane who thought it was legal here. Nobody showed up for the proposed mass feeding of the doomed pigeons of Trafalgar Square. Cyclists blocked Charing Cross momentarily to highlight safety and pollution concerns. There was street theatre at Euston, free vegie burgers at King's Cross, and at lunchtime unionists marched with drums behind the red flag through the Angel chanting, 'The people, united, will never be defeated.'

Meanwhile, back in the city ... after a gathering at Her Majesty's Theatre organised by the Socialist Workers' party, organisers of the crowd of about 2000 told the amiable yellow-jacketed police escort that they might just drift up towards Oxford Street, which they did, with no objection, at about 3pm. Then, everything changed. New police, grim-faced, dark-clothed riot police, silently encircled and cut them off, saying politely but firmly, to those already there, 'you may not leave' and to others, 'you may not come in'. There was milling, singing, and people peeing in the gutter. After an hour or so someone threw a plastic bottle. Half an hour later the man in charge of the Met operation was telling a TV reporter that about 4000 or 5000 people were throwing bottles and missiles at his officers.

By this time an objective observer would have seen that the whole of central London had been brought to a halt because of the atmosphere of tension and expected violence promoted by police, politicians (PM Tony Blair 'condemned the violence' that day, before there was any) and the press. Yet for hours the trapped crowd sang 'Bohemian Rhapsody', 'Yellow Submarine', and 'If you're happy and you know it, clap your hands!'

Yes, there was violence. It came hours later, as frustrated and tired people tried to leave and were driven back by police on horseback, with batons, truncheons and shields, and even then most were retreating in fear of being crushed. Some ratbags did smash windows and thieve, once they had got away.

This was not a London mob. This was a police exercise: promoted, planned and executed with Singaporean efficiency. For the people, May Day 2001 was the Day That Nothing Much Happened. It was not a great day for democracy.

IT WASN'T REALLY a great week for democracy. That week the government announced the appointment of 15 new 'life peers' to the House of Lords. These appointments, by an independent Commission rather than the more usual patronage of the Prime Minister, were supposed to be the 'people's peers' and to mark the high point of Blair's commitment to political reform, after he abolished hereditary peers' right to sit in the House in 1999. Based on the DEMOS thinktank proposal, derived from ancient Athens, whereby citizens were chosen at random to rule the city-state, these new

life peers were not to be drawn from narrow elites but from the ranks of ordinary people: one need only apply.

Of course, even in Athens only some citizens were eligible: no slaves, aliens or women, for example, could take part in the ballot. And so it was in London. More than 3000 people did send in their CVs, the vast majority from London. The 'people's peers' comprise seven knights, four charity workers, a lord's wife and three professors. Most come from London or the south-east; the majority have already got awards from Her Gracious Majesty, 11 are already in *Who's Who*, just four of them are women, and there's not one nurse, pensioner, volunteer worker or plumber, and not one working-class git among them. The new Establishment has engaged in an act of homosocial reproduction.

It is true that it is now a liberal establishment. But if I were a native Londoner, I would take to the streets over the powerful words of Lord Stevenson, head of the selection committee, on class, merit and reward in the Workers' Paradise:

> You haven't got your hairdresser in this list, but if you go back to our criteria, one of them is that the human being will be comfortable operating in the House of Lords. Before we were to nominate someone from that kind of background with an outstanding achievement in his or her chosen way of life, we would have to be very, very confident that they would feel comfortable standing up in debates and talking and cutting it. I don't rule out the possibility that someone of that kind will be appointed, but it would be a great responsibility on our part appointing them. We would have to do it very carefully.

Lord Stevenson might learn something from the proceedings of our Australian Constitutional Convention, in 1998. That unruly mob learned very quickly how politics, and the wishes of ordinary people to rule themselves, are done, and done over, in parliaments.

This fear and disrespect of the common sense of the common man and woman shows that the 'mother of all parliaments' has become an old madam, demanding 'respect' which she no longer deserves. ■

Moira Rayner is Director of the London Children's Rights Commissioner's Office.

Science burning Bush

IN A CURIOUS TWIST, science is rapidly becoming the conscience, the Thomas à Becket, of the US Bush administration. It's an odd reversal of roles. It is more usual for science, with its wealth of ideas, to be pushing against legislative barriers erected by politicians. But in the past few months, we have seen in George W. Bush a politician who refuses to be constrained by science.

Science and politics are, of course, two completely different worlds and clearly, different standards of certainty are used in science and in politics. Nowhere is this illustrated better than in the case of George W. versus the climate-change scientists.

Bush, you will remember, has withdrawn American support for the Kyoto agreement on reducing greenhouse gas emissions to slow the rate of global warming. He argued that scientists themselves were still disputing whether global warming was real. Now that is an interesting contention, given that support among climate scientists for the idea that human activity is causing global warming runs at well over 90 per cent—according to Robert Watson, the co-chair of the world's chief scientific body on global warming, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

Worse, American scientists are busy presenting the other side of the coin to Bush in a government report entitled *Climate Change Impact on the United States*. In it, he will learn that doing nothing about global warming may well have repercussions close to home. These include less snow in the Rockies, which will reduce the water supply to desert cities (including Los Angeles); more hurricanes in Florida; and rising sea levels and hotter temperatures along the heavily populated eastern seaboard.

Then there is the Bush administration's desire to develop its anti-missile shield. While the government is arguing the virtues of such a system, very little of substance has been said about how it will work. Perhaps that is because most scientists don't believe it's possible. So far, only one of three tests of a missile-based system has worked, and that test was widely believed in the science world to be a fluke or a fraud. And an Israeli expert has recently stated that an air-borne laser-based system would be unworkable because the beam would be irretrievably scattered and weakened by aerosols in the atmosphere by the time it reached its target. ('Who will rid me of these turbulent scientists?')

Those pesky researchers—government biologists at that—are even out there in the wilderness denigrating the President's plan to have Congress approve oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska. In direct contradiction to Exxon, a recent report from the US Fish and Wildlife Service says that most seabird populations show no signs of recovery more than a decade after the Exxon Valdez oil spill in southern Alaska. Colleagues from the same agency further north are predicting disaster for caribou herds—already in poor shape—if the drilling is allowed to go ahead. The area earmarked for activity happens to be right in the middle of the caribou calving grounds.

Science, it appears, has become the spectre at the Bush dance. ■

Tim Thwaites is a freelance science writer.

PETER PIERCE

Recalling McAuley

Recent biographies of James McAuley, including Michael Ackland's Damaged Men, *fail to explain why the man has proved so compelling.*

In February of his last year, Jim McAuley took me to lunch in Hobart, to Mure's Fish House in Battery Point. He paid. We'd just finished a 200-minute English staff meeting at the University of Tasmania. Part of it was given to ascertaining the 'correct' plural of rhinoceros. (There are three or four options as it happens. Ionesco was on the syllabus.) Needless to say, Jim had not been in the chair. At lunch—at least as long as the staff meeting—he told me that he had secondary cancers in the liver, and would not survive beyond the end of the year. Medical friends were deeply engaged. There would be treatments in Sydney, but only by way of postponement. He was direct, angry, uncomplaining. When he died, on 15 October 1976, I was astonished to find that one senior colleague (who had been on leave) had not known how ill Jim was. For Jim kept his life in compartments. It was said of him that he had cronies, rather than friends.

I had come back from Oxford to tutor at the University of Tasmania, where Jim had been one of my teachers from 1968 to 1973. At Mure's he was welcoming me back, although not in the expectation that I would, or should, stay long. I didn't. Not many years before—in 1970—he had been diagnosed with bowel cancer. This came as a shock to his daughter who, I recollect, had been about to go to the same cancelled lecture (to have been given by her father) as I was. After Jim had recovered from surgery, a Malaysian mate, tutor and postgraduate student in the English department, Salleh ben Joned, had gone out with me to Calvary Hospital to see Jim. (Salleh, a poet, columnist, academic, would later return to Malaysia, fall foul of the humourless Mahathir regime, and end up in Scandinavia.) For relaxation, Jim was reading Anthony Powell, the 12 volumes of *A Dance to the Music of Time*. It was an indulgence not till then permitted, but a real refreshment for him. It wasn't then—to be vigilant about remembrance—that he famously said, 'better a semi-colon than a full stop'.

In the early spring of 1976, while Jim was still coming to work, I was chatting in his office (never ask, 'How are you?'). On his desk, in his crabbed but beautiful penmanship, was a poem on a single, expensive sheet of paper. When he saw me reading it upside down, he put the poem away in the top drawer. The title was 'Explicit'. It was intended, with a grave theatricality, to be his last poetic testament. Ron Haddrick read 'Explicit' on the three-hour ABC program that went to air some Sunday nights after Jim's death. Friends like Vin Buckley fondly reminisced. Several of McAuley's hymns were performed. Meanwhile, having begun 'Explicit' darkly jesting: 'Fully tested I've been found/Fit to join the underground', he was perhaps discovering what substance there was in his conclusion; how long would be that 'dark and cold' winter, before springtime, when 'the wattle turns to gold'.

As school kids, eager to get to university, numbers of us knew of McAuley; marvelled that a real poet would settle in Tasmania; would teach us. There was more than one, of course. Gwen Harwood had given a talk to our English class at Hobart Matriculation College when this smart-arse recalled the hoax of hers on the *Bulletin*, the acrostic sonnets from Heloise to Abelard and back which so aggrieved the editor, Donald Horne (they spelled out: SO LONG BULLETIN FUCK ALL EDITORS). Only a very few years later, in 1969, McAuley and Harwood read together at an undergraduate literary society meeting in Hobart. (This was an occasion which Jim regularly supported, reading another time with his old mate Alec Hope.) This time he read from *Surprises of the Sun*—Romantic, self-questing poems that should forever have disturbed characterisations of his verse that politics largely dictated.

In Michael Ackland's parallel lives of McAuley and Harold Stewart, *Damaged Men*, he quoted acquaintances of Jim who disturbingly asked whether the Ern Malley poems were all for which he would be remembered. They weren't. Although the effects of this marvellously deft imposture continued to haunt its victims, and two generations of their defenders, I scarcely heard Jim mention the hoax. My impression was that it had long ceased to matter to him. That it has mattered, for so long, at such length, to many others bespeaks a culture thinner than it thinks itself to be. It also indicates how the indictment of Jim's conservative politics was wilfully imported into judgments of his poetry—first he assaults modernism,

then the ALP; backs 'meaning and craftsmanship' in poetry and the DLP.

And what of his politics? His fights with the Sydney Catholic hierarchy were long in the past. His relations with Santamaria, and the extent of their influence on one another, were a matter of persistent rumour. Like most others, I was outside all that. I've no idea whether McAuley had secret discussions or meetings with John Kerr in the months before the Dismissal. But I do remember the answer to a question innocently put to him in the pub nearest the Oxford railway station, back in 1974. Jim was having lunch there with me and one of the sons of Bob Santamaria. I asked him if he knew anything of the recently appointed Governor-General. Indeed he did. Kerr had been the godfather of one of his children. Later he and Kerr had had a falling-out (over the DLP, as Ackland's book explores). Now they seemed to be in touch again. McAuley, who loathed Whitlam, said something like this: 'Kerr is very ambitious and very vain. He will not be a passive Governor-General and Whitlam is stupid if he thinks so. He will seek as far as he can to use the influence of his office.' As it would prove before the end of the following year: true prophecy.

Ackland does a much more measured job of assessing McAuley than his predecessor Cassandra Pybus in *The Devil and James McAuley* (1999). Yet neither of them knew him, and it shows, in various, but telling ways. No-one now knows Keats or the Brontës either, or Byron, sadly, but this does not usually allow them vulgarly to presume acquaintance as do Pybus and Ackland. The former announced that she was glad to have got him in the grave at last; the latter warns McAuley's children that they may not recognise the portrait of their father that he is about to paint. One trusts not. Pybus runs the improbable thesis that McAuley was a repressed homosexual. Moreover, terrified of demonic possession, that he consequently demonised communism. As Peter Conrad wrote of the first charge, in his withering demolition of Pybus' book in *Australian Literary Studies* last year, 'I think I would have known.' About altogether more common matters—especially adultery—both Pybus and Ackland are evasive, notwithstanding that, for each of them, the expatriate, sometime academic Graeme Hetherington was a prime source of gossip.

Hetherington's intrusions into the McAuley narrative, continue to be broadcast in prose and verse. Those who were in Hobart in the 1970s might wonder at the extent and importance of the acquaintance that Hetherington claimed with McAuley. And they might ask if any local poets prompted McAuley to the Swiftian conceit of Poets' Anonymous, whereby the government would pay bad poets not to write and encourage them to discuss their sad propensities with one another. (In qualification, McAuley was well capable of being supportive and disparaging by turns.) Hetherington's evidence was gleefully received and then dissembled by Ackland and Pybus. Was McAuley an adulterer, as each hints? Or should we maybe take his word? In a long afternoon that I spent at his house in New Town, where modern marriage was the main part of the conversation, Jim said that his own was 'without spot or stain'. Naively or not, I think that that ought to be part of the record as well.

The intent to demean McAuley is evident in the lack of precise sources that Ackland and Pybus give for anecdotes intended to damage him. At times Ackland quotes Pybus as a source without her having given primary attribution. Did McAuley, while in New Guinea towards the end of World War II, determine to kill an obliging Japanese soldier to see what it felt like? Did he succeed? I have heard the story from a contemporary who knew McAuley, but from what place, what desire, or perhaps what fantasy did the tale truly emerge? It's one best interred. Put it in the urn with the exorcism yarns that have distracted Ackland (it's miraculous what malaria bouts can be mistaken for).

Why has his turn come round again? What void in the present culture is he being summoned up to fill? What current anxieties is he being conscripted to address? The recent studies of McAuley do not confront the questions that, insidiously, they raise.

A KEY TROUBLE with books so unsatisfactory in their treatment of McAuley as *Damaged Men* and *The Devil* is that they queer the pitch for the next biographer. No-one wants more of the well-meaning hagiography of Peter Coleman's *The Heart of James McAuley* (1980). (And by the way, I was in Peter Conrad's rooms in Christ Church when Jim rang Coleman about the sale of *Quadrant*. As long as the magazine kept going, he didn't care who owned it. This is mentioned by the bit player because so many personal sources seem to have gone unconsulted, or

unused, by Pybus and Ackland.) But where is the positive account of a man so richly gifted, so generous of his time and talents?

Not that I knew a tenth of it, but consider McAuley's engagement with family, church, colleagues, friends and sparring partners, with politics, poetry, criticism, polemic. And never forget, although this seems hard for recent biographers to take seriously, his great gifts as a teacher. Acutely alive to the craft of poetry, he made many of us love to learn of the technical processes of its creation. His minor masterpiece is *A Primer of English Versification* (1966). Many students of his who became teachers of English are forever in his debt. Intensely prejudiced about his favourites (Spenser, Dryden, Trakl), he impelled us to question his damning of Shelley, his equivocations over Blake. Reading with relish Northumberland's words, 'Let order die!' in *Henry IV Part II*, McAuley moved from intense immersion in that extreme feeling to reproof of it, but not before affording a glimpse of what long ago, as an undergraduate at Sydney University, had attracted him to anarchism.

As school kids, eager to get to university, numbers of us knew of McAuley; marvelled that a real poet would settle in Tasmania; would teach us.

McAuley said of Peter Conrad, as he could justly have said of himself, that he could charm the birds from the trees. In him were compounded rage and grace, civility and vengefulness. As someone has correctly informed Ackland, he was a democrat in dealings with his colleagues and always 'available' (before this became a dreary bureaucratic duty) to students to talk about their work. He played politics on many stages: with Catholic bishops, in the formation of the DLP, over the Orr case at the University of Tasmania, in public forums to debate the war in Vietnam. The last he never squibbed. He was also for years involved, for a time as president, in the English Teachers' Association of Australia. A sense of civic duty compelled McAuley, whatever his critics might have thought of it. School, parish and lecture theatre all engaged him fully. All stages came alike to him; but their opportunities were taken with respect. McAuley the consummate actor has escaped the imaginations of Pybus and Ackland as well.

Why has his turn come round again? What void in the present culture is he being summoned up to fill? What current anxieties is he being conscripted to address? The recent studies of McAuley do not confront the questions that, insidiously, they raise. To turn back to the actual career: McAuley's professional progress was curiously stuttering. Years of it were spent at the Australian Institute of Pacific Administration in Sydney, before he accepted a Readership in Poetry at the University of Tasmania. Following the sudden death of Murray Todd, McAuley succeeded to the Chair of English. His poetic reputation was slow to build as well. Max Harris had books of verse published before McAuley or Stewart. The Quiros epic answered to an inner, spiritual need of McAuley's that was very effectively and widely communicated. Those who are happy to build myths of the poet might think of *Surprises of the Sun* as liberating the Romantic from the doctrinaire, neo-Augustan admirer of Pope and Dryden. Wrong: few Australian poets have been more consistently Romantic in their practice (if not their criticism) than McAuley. He witnessed the benign effects of Nature (and in consequence taxed the Governor of Tasmania, who read 'In the Huon Valley' at McAuley's funeral service). Often in his poems he positioned himself at the edge of the frame, looking in at the natural world, poised in grateful wonder, paring down his words to simple, declarative utterances. And at times he distilled what he hoped might be wisdom: 'It isn't true that one never/Profits, never learns.'

Expressing the doubt that Christ could ever 'walk in a poem' in 'our century', McAuley had already written such thrilling poems as 'Jesus' in refutation of himself. Like Keats, he believed in the salving antithesis, 'the joys that lie/Closest to despair'. This was to speak of trials of faith and of private demons; to face them, admit to them, but hardly to yield to infernal possession. Neither the poet nor the public man have been well served in any book about McAuley. Instead, the last two have invented a private self, unverifiable and unrecognisable to any but themselves, a man tormented, hypocritical, contemptible. For all that can be said against Jim McAuley, what a person he was to bring alive one's time spent with him. Others can actually say that from deeper, more complex and intimate acquaintance than mine. ■

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MARK ARMSTRONG

Upping the Aunty

Death Struggle, Quentin Dempster, Allen & Unwin, 2000.
ISBN 1 8650 8037 3, RRP $29.95

Is the ABC 'lazy, presumptuous with taxpayers' money ... flabby, and incoherent' as Paul Ham said in March in the *Sydney Morning Herald*? Is it inefficient and in need of reform, as Richard Alston, the Minister for Communications and the Arts, has been saying for five years?

The motive for allegations is easy enough to find. Opinion surveys consistently show that the ABC is Australia's most respected organisation. It is publicly funded, but independent of the government. This attracts the hostility of Treasury, Finance, and much of the Canberra establishment. More dangerous still, it provides a platform for all viewpoints, including many which are unwelcome to governments and vested interests. No wonder it is attacked as a faction-riven bureaucracy. But where is the factual material for the attacks? It will not be found in the public record of over ten reviews plus inquiries every year, from a host of parliamentary, public service and audit bodies. The ABC rates very well in those reviews.

Unfortunately, some ABC insiders are among the source of the rumours and damaging 'factual' material. Since the ABC employs the nation's largest number of journalists, it should not be surprising that some spend their time exposing the alleged wickedness of their own organisation. In some parts of the ABC, a communication problem with the boss becomes a public scandal demanding a Royal Commission. That is just a fact of life, a part of the free, journalistic culture, and a cross which most ABC people, from junior staff to division heads, carry as the price of free speech.

Quentin Dempster is a crusading ABC journalist famous for his book about whistleblowers and his exposure of corruption in the Bjelke-Petersen government in Queensland. His new book, *Death Struggle*, attempts to expose the wickedness of ABC leadership. The cover promises an exposé of the way 'political malice and boardroom power-plays are killing the ABC'. Well, there *is* some political malice from Canberra. It starts with politicians who have been wounded by news and current affairs programs. But the tabloid approach of this book misses the point.

Death Struggle claims to expose misdeeds by 'political animals at their most dangerous—from Bob Hawke and Paul Keating to John Howard, Richard Alston, Donald McDonald and Brian Johns. Through the eyes of a key player we gain an up-close and personal view ...' and so on. The problem is that there is almost no evidence of the political animals doing anything dangerous. This sensational treatment overlooks the fact that Canberra's way of strangling an organisation is much more effective, and indirect: via bureaucratic channels, and through 101 different impacts on finance and resources.

What about the alleged 'boardroom power-plays'? Whatever problems Donald McDonald may have as current chair of the ABC, or Jonathan Shier as managing director, there is no current suggestion of 'boardroom power-plays'. And *Death Struggle* does not tell us about the power-plays in the period it covers, from 1992 to 2000. There *were* a few power-plays, but nobody was stupid enough to try them at a board meeting. The back cover also promises 'a chilling account' by Dempster as an investigative journalist. The keyword of the 350-page book seems to be 'scandal'. Everything opposed by the Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU) seems to have become a 'scandal'. Yes, the book does rehash some mistakes in management and strategy, but it takes imagination to turn them into scandals.

Somebody needs to explain that this book is misleading. It misrepresents the dedication of thousands of ABC people who delivered an excellent service throughout the 1990s. It is potentially damaging to public broadcasting, because a book by a former staff-elected director looks more authoritative than a tabloid newspaper article. People who care about the ABC may be persuaded to believe this account, and enemies of public broadcasting may claim it proves their case.

I was chair of the board for five of the years the book covers. I feel an obligation, even at the risk of drawing attention to the book, to say in print, and for the record, that this catalogue of alleged scandals, blunders and politics bears no resemblance to what was happening at the ABC, or what the main issues were.

In the 1990s, the ABC invigorated Australian media as never before. Australian drama reached

record levels. The ABC at last threw off the colonial cringe, symbolised by the announcers' imitation Southern English accents, to become a real powerhouse of local culture. Triple J radio went nationwide, to offer real engagement to younger people. News and current affairs programs increased, and at last abandoned the 'me too' agenda to cover our own Asia-Pacific region. Books and CDs poured out; there was expansion in rural and regional radio outlets. The orchestras were rejuvenated. Women moved up the management chain; in the 1990s, the ABC led the whole TV sector in getting women on screen, especially in news and current affairs. The ABC underpinned the expansion of Aboriginal broadcasting, and took on hundreds of Aboriginal trainees—all this in a period of steadily reducing staff numbers.

A stream of broadcasters came from around the world to find out how the ABC was managing such a renaissance, and how they could copy it. Teams of public service managers were sent to the ABC to learn from its financial management and change management success. Other frequent visitors were the BBC chairman and senior executives. They studied our program budgeting and resource allocation in detail, and their findings formed a major input to the eventual BBC 'producer choice' program resourcing system. Then Richard Alston as Minister and other politicians called for the ABC to reform itself by adopting the BBC system. This was the system inspired by the ABC itself!

Anyone who doubts this record can check the lists of awards in the annual reports from 1990 onwards. There are lists of local and international program awards, awards for financial reporting and for music. Consider the improved work environments built at Ultimo in Sydney, Southbank in Melbourne and elsewhere. Count the number of new regional studios built in places that had limited service before. Study the press reports of literally hundreds of thousands coming to ABC open days in the 1990s.

DEATH STRUGGLE IS A big book, replete with detail, which cannot be rebutted in a short space. But one example may illustrate the difference between its alleged scandals and the real ABC: the portrayal of the two Managing Directors of the '90s, David Hill and Brian Johns. Both worked with me. Hill is portrayed as probably the worst of many management ogres and fools in the book: dictatorial, impetuous, devious, hell-bent on commercialisation, and a hater of ABC staff and culture. This is a false image, unfair to Hill. Hill had his faults, like any chief executive. I was not always his favourite person, but did that really matter so long as he followed instructions and delivered the good broadcasting results of the early '90s? Dempster was present, as staff-elected director, for Hill's last two years, so where are the direct accounts of his bad behaviour? Most come from reports by third parties. Hill could not have managed to misbehave for two years everywhere but in Dempster's presence.

If ever there was an MD who met Dempster's (and the Union's) ideal specifications, it was Brian Johns. When we looked for a new MD in 1994, we wanted somebody to lead a creative renewal at the ABC, and to improve relations with staff. Johns lavished time on the CPSU leadership, and even defied government industrial relations policy to support a deal with unions about how redundancies would be handled. How does *Death Struggle* portray him? Johns appears as an incoherent, politically naive operator who was secretive in dealings with staff. For the record, that is not Brian Johns.

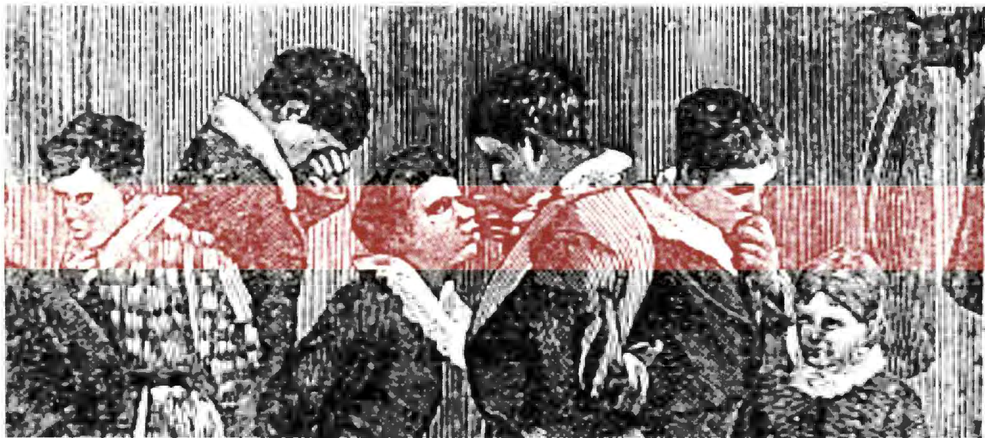
Dozens of others, at levels beneath MD, are exposed as incompetent or worse. In fact, wickedness seems to be a virus that strikes anyone within six months of taking on an ABC management role. That is very misleading. Nobody is perfect, but the ABC

managers with whom I worked were the best I have encountered in the public or private sector. This is not just a personal opinion. It is based on various dealings with the ABC from outside, and the independent opinions of people in other sectors who dealt with the ABC.

A clue to the book's view of management wickedness lies in its long, detailed account of the campaign to stop ABC TV at Gore Hill in Sydney being co-located with radio at Ultimo. Suppose, for the sake of argument, that Brian Johns and the McDonald board were wrong, that it would have been better to renovate Gore Hill and not to co-locate. Was that mistake a scandal, a crime, a conspiracy? At worst, it remains a mistake, a sub-optimal use of resources. The book provides abundant detail to show bad faith, secrecy and gross incompetence. Yet even from its own account, it seems that there was a high level of staff–management consultation, with some breakdown of communication. Is this a reason for damning Johns and refusing to deal with him? The fact is that nobody can manage even a corner shop without making mistakes.

If every person who ever made a mistake were sacked, we would all be unemployed. And the first people to go would be the leaders, the reformers and the creative people, because reform carries inherently more risks than doing nothing. That would be disastrous for the ABC. This leads to another problem with the *Death Struggle* view of the ABC: dozens of the leaders or managers in the book are revealed to be flawed and inadequate. The main exceptions are the heroes such as whistleblower John Millard, Gore Hill anti-co-location campaigner David Salter, and the CPSU throughout. For the rest of the managers who receive coverage, there appears only one solution: dismissal.

Management instability is one of the ABC's top two problems. The other is reduced funding. On a rough count, the team reporting direct to the MD has had a 100 per cent turnover twice in five years: once, gradually, after Brian Johns replaced the David Hill team; and once, more quickly, when Jonathan Shier replaced the Johns team. That sort of turnover is expensive because of the cost of terminating contracts. It is vastly more expensive in loss of corporate memory and leadership confusion.



Hostile forces in Canberra are always claiming, for their own reasons, that ABC management needs to be flushed out. The opposite is the case. The ABC could perform even better if it retained skills and planned for the long term. The lean, mean private sector organisations hold on to their leadership.

Thus far I have consciously avoided rebutting *Death Struggle*'s view of myself as a nice guy but ineffective as chair, but I do need to mention one point: I stopped or restrained numerous dismissals, and wish I had stopped even more. Hostile forces in Canberra are always claiming, for their own reasons, that ABC management needs to be flushed out. The opposite is the case. The ABC could perform even better if it retained skills and planned for the long term. The lean, mean private sector organisations hold on to their leadership. The key executives at the Nine and Ten commercial TV networks have been in the same roles for around a decade. Seven had big changes around the year 2000, but has otherwise been stable.

The ABC has special problems with wholesale management turnover, because there is no obvious pool of experienced public broadcasting leaders. The easiest choice is to recruit from the commercial sector—if people are prepared to work for half the commercial salary. The vacuum left by ABC departures is often filled by people who come from the sales-oriented culture of commercial broadcasting. Their *modus operandi* and training can be a threat to what makes the ABC unique: independent, non-commercial broadcasting.

Death Struggle does two further things which contradict each other: it exults in the removal of wicked ABC managers and it opposes commercialisation. The best way to prevent commercialisation is to have a culture which nurtures leaders. The best way to commercialise the ABC and change its values is to denounce the ABC leadership, and replace it with people from commercial media.

I could not recommend *Death Struggle* to anyone who wanted to know what the ABC is really like, or what it was like during the five years I was chair of its board. It is a strange, factional account that spends 350 pages trying to uncover scandals which do not exist. In my experience, Quentin Dempster is a noble, caring human being; I originally agreed to help him write the book, believing that he wanted to tell an interesting, colourful story showing how ABC people struggled against so many pressures to deliver a relevant, stimulating, authentically Australian service. I moved away as he kept saying that the publishers, Allen & Unwin, only wanted a 'blow by blow' account of what happened in the boardroom. Well, boardrooms aren't simply 'blow by blow' places. People work on planning, finance, strategy, monitoring and accountability. They don't punch each other, or scream. You do the inevitable dirty work somewhere else, and unfortunately you can't disclose it to a staff-elected director who takes pride in being a whistleblower.

People who care for the ABC, which means most Australians, should know that this account is misleading. The ABC is a vastly better organisation than *Death Struggle* suggests. ■

Mark Armstrong is Director of Network Insight, a Sydney-based communications research unit, which is part of RMIT, and a former chair of the board of the ABC.

Operation Fiji

Peter Davis holds the camera while surgeons wield the scalpels.

Fiji: Annette Baldwin is on location. All around her, people are unpacking expensive-looking equipment, putting on costumes and rehearsing routines as they prepare the theatre. Behind the scenes there are a million-and-one tasks demanding attention.

Baldwin is in control. She knows where everything is, from a single battery to the machine costing hundreds of thousands. She helps unravel pipes, run cables and plug in computers. And she knows exactly where every one of her 42 crew members must be and at what time.

Opposite page: Sally Wharton (left) and Annette Baldwin, members of the voluntary Australian cardiac team, prepare the operating theatre at the Colonial War Memorial Hospital, Suva.

Above: The cardiac team at work.

Photographs by Peter Davis

Like all good directors, Baldwin knows the importance of teamwork—except all this activity has nothing to do with staging plays or making movies. But it is very much to do with heartthrobs.

As the head of the Medical Extension Program at the Sydney Adventist Hospital, Baldwin is responsible for co-ordination of the voluntary cardiac team, a group of skilled and dedicated people who fly around the Pacific bringing renewed life to people whose hearts don't throb quite as they should. The team is sponsored by Sydney Adventist Hospital and the Adventist Development Relief Agency (ADRA) with support from the Australian government through the Pacific Islands Project.

Today's location is the Colonial War Memorial Hospital in Suva, Fiji. Other teams, under Baldwin's direction, have produced the same two-week performance in Tonga, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea. This time she journeys ahead of the team to prepare the way for the 1700kg of equipment—hundreds of boxes and crates, all labelled, each one forming part of the jigsaw that will fix a faulty heart.

The team arrives in Suva late on Saturday night. Operations begin on Monday so they spend Sunday unpacking and plugging in. Everyone is gowned up in hospital-theatre green. They shuffle across the hospital floor like a small army of green ants preparing a ritual.

For some in the team it's their first time. Others are veterans of many visits. Baldwin has made ten visits with a cardiac team to Fiji. She knows the ropes. The team members, she tells me, are 'on holidays'. Not on Australian beaches, relaxing with families or blobbing out in a Pacific island resort. Instead they choose to do what they know well and what they do back home. They part-pay their airfare and accommodation. 'Satisfaction', 'experience' and 'the feeling of making a difference' are the common answers in response to the question of why.

Beyond the quiet certainty of the hospital walls, somewhere out there in the suburbs and shanty towns of Suva, 70 people who have made the shortlist for the heart operation are waiting to find out whether they will be selected. Only half of them will make the final list. They are all short of breath. Some have holes in their hearts. Others have a faulty valve—a legacy of rheumatic fever, a disease now eradicated in Australia but still prevalent in the Pacific.

It's Sunday afternoon and in a room adjacent to where the equipment is being assembled, Australian cardiologist Dr Allan Gale sits in conference with Dr Shiva Roy from Sydney's Prince of Wales Hospital, and locally based doctors, Dr Bekama and Dr Nasaroa. They are watching the small screen on a big machine called a cardio-ultrasonographer. The machine costs $250,000 and it has been donated to the hospital by the manufacturer, Agilent Technologies. Tomorrow morning this machine will be officially handed over in a breakfast ceremony attended by Fiji's interim prime minister and a bevy of politicians. But today there is no ceremony, just a series of moving pulsating images—these are the beating hearts of those who lie in waiting.

Allan Gale points to the screen to identify the irregularities in each heart. He's the one who decides who makes the final list. 'We can't fix everybody,' he says. 'We have to choose those who have the best chance of leading a normal life without the sorts of drugs that would be hard to obtain in this country.'

By the end of the day an operation schedule for the next two weeks has been finalised.

I ARRIVE BACK AT THE HOSPITAL at lunchtime on Monday. A large table in a waiting room near the theatre is piled high with fruits, meats and cakes. This is sustenance for the cardiac team. It's brought to the hospital by local women who volunteer their skills. All of them know someone who needs an operation. Not all of the team is here. Some are resting in the hotel. They will make up the night shift. Twenty-four-hour surveillance is essential after an operation.

I gown up and am directed into the theatre to witness the first operation. On the table is a 30-something woman. Dr Gale and his team have opened her up and they're probing her chest cavity. Beyond the humming and sighing of the machines there's a strange silence. Everyone is in his or her place. Everyone knows what to do. It's the smoke and the smell of burning tissue that I find hard to take. It comes from the sutures. They do it to stop bleeding. I'm conscious of the noise my camera makes.

The operation takes three hours. Later that day I visit the recovery ward. The woman I saw with her chest open, her heart exposed and her flesh smouldering, is plugged into many machines. She's surrounded by intensive care volunteers. But she's conscious and able to laugh at a joke from one of the nurses. 'In two weeks she'll be out of here and living a perfectly normal and healthy life,' Annette Baldwin tells me.

Over the following two weeks, the cardiac team operated on 30 patients. Since the program began in 1985, over 1000 volunteers have given the chance of longer life to nearly 300 patients. ■

Peter Davis is a Melbourne-based writer and photographer, and lecturer in writing at Deakin University.

"It is very hard for many to cross that line and accept that same-sex love may, for some men, include erotic expression of their love for one another."

Jeremy Marks, head of a UK organisation set up to "heal" homosexuals which is now changing its policy

"Dr George Pell... is a high profile and outspoken cleric whom some credit as having assumed unto himself the role of spokesman for the Church in Melbourne. Sydney Anglicans will want someone who is at least the measure of Pell in terms of advancing a Christian perspective."

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JAMES GRIFFIN

Ventures in Paradise

The Pacific Islands: An Encyclopedia, Brij V. Lal and Kate Fortune (eds), University of Hawaii, Honolulu, 2000. ISBN 0 8248 2265 X (includes CD-ROM).

It is easy to be facetious or too portentous about the micro-states and dependencies of the Pacific Ocean. Someone recently, on being told of an alleged sex scandal dividing the community of Pitcairn Island, thanked the Lord that the Cold War was over. It was a relief to know there could be no suggestion of any but legal intervention from outside. However, in the not impossible event that all 44 *Bounty* descendants (down from 47 in the 1996 census) will decamp, perhaps to Norfolk Island again, as in 1856, will the territory revert to being a veritable *terra nullius*? Will the UN take it off its decolonisation agenda? Would Britain defend it like the Falklands in 1982?

But, to be truly serious, we should remember that there was a scare among some cognoscenti following the accession to power of the New Jewel Movement in Caribbean Grenada in 1983–84, which the US felt it had to suppress. One evening in Melbourne I was hustled by a conspiratorial friend into a hugger-mugger of concerned Australians who were being addressed by a US State Department chap about the vulnerability of similar micro-states in the Pacific. Theoretically, you could have a coup d'état, say, in Nauru or Niue almost instanter, our visitor thought. That was almost the extent of his knowledge of the region. I was reminded of our esteemed Vandemonian convict, Jorgen Jorgenson (1780–1841), an adventurous Dane (by birth) who from an English ship in 1809 had once taken over Reykjavik one Sunday morning while the inhabitants were at church. He declared Iceland independent of Denmark and remained Protector for nine weeks.

But our State Department American was not totally astray about the portents. The USSR soon began to essay fishing agreements with Kiribati and Vanuatu and the fervent anti-neo-colonialists in Vila began seeking diplomatic relations with Cuba and Libya and talking down Indonesia's claim to West Papua. (I cannot remember what impudent attitude they had towards East Timor: perhaps liberation there too.) Vanuatu joined the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and was so adamant on nuclear issues it held back from the Treaty of Raratonga, set up a provisional independent Kanak government in Vila and in late 1987 expelled the French ambassador and reduced its mission from 30 to two. There was concern in Canberra, some worry in Washington. Strategic denial was the aim of the game.

There were, however, countervailing factors. Vanuatu was discomfited when France reduced aid for the country's Francophones. Libya's billions were not forthcoming. The mere sound of that villainous name reduced investment and all-important Australian tourism. Internal conflicts over Libya eventually led to riots in Vila. That ardent critic of Australia, Prime Minister Fr Walter Lini, was obliged to seek Australian and New Zealand aid to restore order. Then in 1990 there was another alarm, when Soviet representation opened in Port Moresby. The embassy closed in 1992 after a period of ineffectuality and incomprehension. Moscow had to economise and had grown other preoccupations. It was too late to think it might dabble in Bougainville's torment. Continued dependency in the region on Australia is unavoidable.

Today the perceived problems are different. Outside powers pose no obvious territorial or ideological threat, although maritime zones remain unprotected. The French have ceased nuclear testing and even seem to have appeased Kanak unrest in New Caledonia. Our 'strategic perimeter', however, has become an 'arc of instability'. Starting beyond the cusp of the arc, we face the previously unthinkable possibility of the dissolution of the Indonesian state while East Timor will remain territorially vulnerable from without and unstable within. The indigenous population of Irian Jaya (West Papua) will not accept continued Indonesian rule even with concessions to autonomy. Its gigantic Freeport mine, without restraints, continues to sludge both its terrain and its politics. What is surprising is that there has not yet been a more evident carriage of arms to the OPM (*Organisasi Papua Merdeka*) rebels.

Papua New Guinea is lapsing into a broken-backed state; parts of the Highlands are unapproachable; the reforms of the reputable Morauta government are unequal to the accumulated problems, including

even kleptocracy; the recent mutiny of the army stems more from gross neglect than insubordination. While there is progress in negotiating devolution in Bougainville, the province cannot return to its pre-civil war prosperity. And population growth is among the highest in the world there, and in the contiguous Solomons which is riven by secessionism and despoiled by Asian loggers. Its government must soon cease to function altogether without salvage which, if it happens, will be reluctantly and probably even futilely rendered, because the causes will not be readily recognised.

Any salutary post-mortem will have to move beyond the ritual retrospects of exploitative colonialism to the troglodytism of the late three-time Prime Minister, Solomon Mamaloni, and those who relished his pork-barrelling. In Vanuatu we have just had the ludicrous spectacle of an Indian trade and investment adviser becoming a government official by depositing an alleged 82.5kg ruby ('the world's biggest') as an earnest of his philanthropic intent to invest in the biggest infrastructural projects the country has seen. He said he might donate it to the nation. He claims it is worth $317 million; passing through Australia its declared value was $40,000. A more notorious finance haven is Nauru (pop. 11,360 which includes immigrant workers), infamous now not just for its lunar crater of colonial eco-devastation but for its patronage of the money-laundering of huge criminal gains, especially from Russia. In Fiji (pop. 800,000), the largest of Pacific Island states after Papua New Guinea, the latest racial-constitutional crisis may prove irresolvable and may be seriously aggravated by the end of this year as more Indian farmers lose their leaseholds. More emigration is likely, and where better than to Mrs Hanson's land?

WITH STRATEGIC denial at least for the time being a dead issue, all this ironically points to an increasingly burdensome role for Australia, especially in Melanesia and, to a lesser extent, for New Zealand, primarily in Polynesia. Our mighty partner, the USA, expects us to shoulder it although, presumably, it will continue to keep its own eye on Micronesia. Failed and new states in Africa and the former USSR and Yugoslavia have become competitors for the aid and investment funds of other powers. At the launch of *The Pacific Islands: An Encyclopedia*, Foreign Minister Alexander Downer gave an unexpectedly eloquent speech, showing that he at least saw the urgency of a less patronising and more holistic response to Oceania. It is to be hoped he can persuade some of his more capable departmental officers to point their careers in that direction. And in view of the boorish behaviour at Islander forums of at least two of our prime ministers in the past, this encyclopedia should inspire more respect for Pacific customs.

Grotesquely, during the last decade, when we should have expected our tertiary institutions to provide the research, instruction and training to understand our region, they have been deprived of the funds and incentives to do so. The Pacific History department (set up in 1950), and related disciplines in the Research School of Pacific Studies at the Australian National University, led the world in this area and developed postgraduate programs for Pacific Islanders. Gradually these disciplines were watered down to include South East Asian and East

At the launch of The Pacific Islands: An Encyclopedia, *Foreign Minister Alexander Downer gave an unexpectedly eloquent speech, showing that he at least saw the urgency of a less patronising and more holistic response to Oceania. It is to be hoped he can persuade some of his more capable departmental officers to point their careers in that direction. And in view of the boorish behaviour at Islander forums of at least two of our prime ministers in the past, this encyclopedia should inspire more respect for Pacific customs.*

Asian studies. No Pacific History is taught at undergraduate level at the ANU today. Courses at the universities of New South Wales, Adelaide and Newcastle or at La Trobe and Macquarie universities no longer exist. It is not good enough in the current climate for politicians to say it is up to universities to choose what they teach. For salient disciplines like this, appropriate pressure or earmarked funds should be applied. This is why this colour-coded one-volume encyclopedia is overdue, and imperative even. It has been some five years in the making and, to its great credit, AusAID has contributed $107,000 to its preparation and publication. In pursuit of flexibility and inclusiveness, some 200 scholars from Canberra to Cardiff, from Massey (NZ) to Marseilles, have been recruited.

It would be misleading, however, to give the impression that the tome is pre-eminently political. It is a compendium of factual reference relating to the physical environments of the Pacific Islands, their peoples and diasporas, histories, social organisations, economies and cultures, as well as political systems. These issues are grouped under thematic headings rather than as items in alphabetical order, so that commonalities as well as differences can be emphasised—for example in sections on language, indigenous chiefly systems and religion. While it is invidious to select items for praise, a general reader (and this book is not just for Pacific scholars) will find the discussion on climate change, global warming and related phenomena rational and readable, as is the section on World War II.

There are generous profiles of cities, chiefs, explorers, missionaries, observers (even Denis Diderot, who never left Europe), scientists (some often neglected like Lajos Biro), anthropologists (Mead and Wedgwood), explorers, politicians, sportspeople, and writers, both indigenous and visiting. This allows full scope for nit-picking as to who should be in or out. The editors have been indulgent, including Somerset Maugham as well as Melville and Michener, and poet James McAuley on the basis of his minor epic, *Captain Quiros*, and other writings. But Kenneth Slessor because of the long poem 'Five Visions of Captain Cook'? Still, Daniel Defoe and his inauthentic Man Friday are there too.

The final grouping, 'Island Profiles', proceeds for easy reference from 'American Samoa' to 'Vanuatu' and 'Wallis and Futuna' and, imaginatively, includes areas which are neither states nor dependencies, such as Chatham Islands (NZ), Galapagos Islands (Ecuador), Irian Jaya (Indonesia), Ryukyu Islands (Japan) and Torres Strait Island (Australia). The inclusion of the last-named should alert Australian readers to the fact

that their off-shore frontier is populated by Pacific Islanders, and that there have been at least four occasions in the '80s and '90s in which calls for secession have been made in this Eddie Mabo territory.

It would be too much to expect these days that, in general, the unvarnished lucidity of most entries did not owe a great deal to the two editors, Brij Lal and Kate Fortune, especially as the contributors are not expected to be hidebound by past conventions of excluding all but 'objective, verifiable, uncontroversial facts'. Lal and Fortune justifiably claim that they are 'comfortable with the knowledge that scholarship is partial, fluid and changing'. They accept its 'tentativeness and inescapable subjectivity' without lapsing into the modishness and jargon that made, for example, *The Cambridge History of the Pacific Islanders* (1997), at times pretentious and uncommunicative, especially the parts written by anthropologists.

The work is admirably illustrated, with images of people, fauna, flora, artefacts, documents and maps. We are assured that 'great care' has been taken 'to select images which do not dehumanize or exoticize' people—an admirable bias as long as it is recognised as such. (See particularly the section on 'Dress and decorative art' and 'Performance'.) However, while 'the visual representation of the West's others is problematic', we need not wallow in self-doubt. I am rather sceptical of obligatory deference to deconstruction such that we have to believe that a photograph 'may provide as much information about the photographer as the photograph'. True, it *may*, but more often it does not. To test this one could ask Malcolm Fraser as a benign eminence to take ethnographic photographs in Easter Island.

Speaking of which, perhaps today the book would not be quite encyclopedic if it did not give an example of postmodern modes of discourse. So our editors have included a narrative of the mutiny on the *Bounty*, in which we find that 'the theatre' of Bligh's mutiny was held at London's Theatre Royal soon after his return. However, a little later 'the theatre of the stage' had to bow to 'the theatre of the courts', which was supplemented by 'a theatre of rumour and gossip'. Finally, we are told that 'the theatre of the *Bounty* has had its bicentenary' (1989) which does not quite mean that the *Bounty* has been a subject for 'theatre' for 200 years. Rather, what happened on the *Bounty*, according to the author, was 'pure theatre', which raises the epistemological question of what was 'actuality'. Or are time, space and events all metaphorical or metonymical these days? In which case we may need a new word for the conventional sense of metaphor. The wise editors fortunately preface this exquisitely self-conscious narrative with a 14-line summary of what basically happened and follow it with a paragraph on William Bligh himself. But it is a wordy way to have to illustrate a problem. ■

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BOOKS:2

PAUL RULE

Church, democracy and dissent

From Inquisition to Freedom: Seven Prominent Catholics and their Struggle with the Vatican, Paul Collins, Simon and Schuster Australia, 2001. ISBN 0 7318 1043 0, RRP $26.95
Upon this Rock: The Popes and their Changing Role, Paul Collins, Melbourne University Press, 2000. ISBN 0 5228 4849 4, RRP $54.85

'THE CATHOLIC CHURCH is not a democracy.' How often do we hear this from Catholic conservatives? Of course it is a not inaccurate statement of the actual situation in the Catholic Church of today, and it is defensible as a very general theological statement. But does it mean, as it usually seems to mean in the mouths of clerical bureaucrats and others, that there is no place in the church for due process, consultation of the faithful, and respect for people? Or that the Holy Spirit only operates through the autocrat, the secret delator, the non-elected?

Such a sentiment also displays historical ignorance. Many features of early church life were, indeed, democratic: the election of bishops by the whole congregation, prolonged public discussion of doctrine, and the administration of communal resources by the laity. A degree of democratisation is not just an *aggiornamento*, a catching up with current standards of public life, but also a return to Christian basics.

On the other hand, the neglect of due process by the Vatican, especially by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF), has in recent times become a scandal with consequences highly detrimental to the papacy itself. In the recent case of the Belgian Jesuit theologian, Jacques Dupuis, the Congregation succeeded in humiliating the pope by having to withdraw two versions of their list of alleged errors, already signed by Pope John Paul, which Dupuis and his Australian Jesuit theological adviser were able to demonstrate were not to be found in the book.

These and similar themes run through the two recent books by Paul Collins, as well as his earlier *Mixed Blessings* and *Papal Power*. Collins, an historian and a theologian, or perhaps better a master of historical theology, uses his expertise as well as his long experience in the media to illuminate the deeper sources of current differences within the Catholic Church.

There have been several recent general

histories of the papacy, most of them well worth the reading. However, I would have no hesitation in recommending *Upon this Rock* before its rivals. While not neglecting the political history of the papacy which has been the focus of many recent writers, Paul Collins weights his study towards theology, especially ecclesiology. The narrative is structured around the development of a monarchical papacy: its uncertain origins, its dark days when it became the toy of the Roman aristocracy, the reform from the 11th century culminating in the claim to 'fullness of power' over state as well as church, the struggle between conciliarism and papacy, and the inexorable but circuitous development of the modern 'papal octopus', omnipresent and all-competent.

All this is done with a light touch, humour and a firm grasp of the issues. What could easily have become a matter of lists and 'sound-bite' opinions is an engaging story, almost a thriller. Where criticism is offered, it is based on an understanding of the dilemmas facing sincere men often ill-prepared by training and experience, sometimes by personality, for the political role imposed on them by the history of the complex institution—part state, part church—they were called upon to govern.

In *From Inquisition to Freedom*, Paul Collins expresses his regret that *Papal Power*, a popular and polemical work, and the one that brought him to the attention of the CDF, was published before *Upon this Rock* with its more extended historical analysis. Both are essentially an historical, not a theological, critique of the papacy today, focusing on church government not doctrine. However, it would appear that this is precisely where Roman sensitivities lie.

From Inquisition to Freedom is an important book. It outlines the history and functions of the Roman Inquisition/Holy Office/Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and, through interviews and commentaries, discusses the encounters of five men and two women with the CDF in recent years. It makes disturbing but also illuminating reading.

One is struck by the issues which have brought these people to the attention of Rome's doctrinal watchdog. None of the cases, except perhaps that of Hans Küng, seem to relate to fundamental theological issues. All, including Küng's, seem to involve what is perceived by Roman bureaucrats as compromising papal authority (theirs by appropriation). Küng's case, after years of inaction, was reopened when he wrote a preface to Bernhard Hasler's *How the Pope Became Infallible*. Leonardo Boff was not questioned for his views on liberation theology until he turned his critique, in *Church, Charism and Power*, on the church itself. Paul Collins' *God's Earth*, a truly radical theological work, does not seem to have attracted attention while *Papal Power: A Proposal for Change in Catholicism's Third Millennium* did.

Another constant in these cases are blatant breaches of due process. Despite three phases of regulation of its processes since it superseded the old Holy Office, the CDF continues to breach its own rules. There are two yawning gaps. Any case regarded as urgent and serious can be fast-tracked and, since the pope signs all its decisions, none can be appealed through the usual canonical procedures.

There are, moreover, many inherently unjust procedural features. To begin with, the accused never knows who has made the complaint that set the Congregation in motion. Files are created and investigations initiated on anonymous information. In civil law those making false accusations—and there is evidence that many made to the CDF are totally false—are open to defamation proceedings.

Again, those who make the assessment are never known to the accused. There is no way of checking their competence in the areas involved. There is abundant evidence that many of the problems have arisen from lack of fluency in the languages of the original works. Edward Schillebeeckx was able to demonstrate that many of the charges addressed against his books rested on a simple misreading of his English language publications. Tissa Balasuriya, in his interview with Paul Collins, told a strange story of his request for an English translation of the Italian summary of propositions drawn from his English-language book, resulting in a list of alleged erroneous statements not found in the original. His ideas had been filtered through a poor Italian translation, which had been the basis of the adverse judgment of the full Congregation. And the judgment of the Congregation came to him in an unsigned, unheaded letter with Vatican stamps, showing contempt for an elderly and distinguished priest.

There was also a curious shift in many of the cases discussed in *From Inquisition to Freedom*, from an initial list of allegedly erroneous views to new ones not previously on the agenda. When Hans Küng was denied his licence to teach as a Catholic theologian it was on grounds of his views on Christology which had never previously been raised during over a decade of stand-off with the CDF.

Tissa Balasuriya was ordered to make a profession of faith that included some ready-made clauses totally irrelevant to the subject matter of his *Mary and Human Liberation*. One, on the ordination of women, was not explicitly discussed in the book. Omitted, however, from the Vatican version, but included in Pope Paul VI's 'Credo of the People of God' which Balasuriya was prepared to affirm, was mention of a belief in salvation outside the church, the heart of Balasuriya's position.

Jeannine Gramick and Robert Nugent, who had engaged with great sensitivity in the difficult ministry to homosexuals, were not only removed from that ministry and from discussion of the issue in what Collins calls in a delightful misprint 'the pubic forum', but were required to make a formal public statement of their private conscience on the morality of homosexual acts. This is unprecedented, and contrary to the spirit both of Vatican II and of canon

law (which, in a somewhat parallel instance, protects individuals from being forced to 'manifest their conscience').

As an eminent theologian wrote in the standard commentary on the Decrees of Vatican II: 'Over the pope as the expression of the binding claim of ecclesiastical authority, there still stands one's own conscience, which must be obeyed before all else, if necessary even against the requirement of ecclesiastical authority. This emphasis on the individual, whose conscience confronts him with a supreme and ultimate tribunal, and one which is beyond the claim of external social groups, even of the official Church, also establishes a principle in opposition to increasing totalitarianism.'

Another common feature to these cases is that they involve priests and religious, professional church people who mostly depend for their livelihood on the church. It is tempting, but probably unfair, to see in this a certain vindictiveness on the part of Roman ecclesiastical careerists. However, the effects—psychological, personal and professional—on those who have given a lifetime to the church are enormous. The anguish that comes through in Collins' interviews is heart-wrenching. No doubt they will survive, and pick up the shattered pieces of their personae. But what is the cost, and what must we think of a church that thinks such human suffering is a price worth paying?

Paul Collins reminds us that what Hans Küng once called 'creeping infallibility' has become in recent time 'galloping infallibility' as the CDF seeks to extend it to all aspects of the 'ordinary magisterium' of the church. What is needed is some historical perspective. Robert McClory, in *Faithful Dissenters* (Orbis Books, 2000), lists the dissenters, from Aquinas and Galileo to Yves Congar and John Courtney Murray, whom history has vindicated against their papal critics. A solid dose of history is needed by many defenders of ahistorical orthodoxy.

It is less than two centuries since Pope Leo XII solemnly asserted: 'Anyone who has recourse to vaccination ceases to be a child of God ... Smallpox is a judgment from God ... and vaccination a challenge hurled against heaven.' Papal fatuities from Boniface VIII's solemn statement that 'it is altogether necessary to salvation for every human creature to be subject to the Roman Pontiff' to Pius XI's rejection of 'progress, liberalism and modern civilisation' remind us of the dangers of such excesses. The first victim is the credibility of the papacy itself.

What might be done? Some of Collins' conclusions at the end of *Upon this Rock* may seem utopian, although one might argue that the Kingdom of God is itself the supreme utopia and demands a utopian government. In any case, police-state methods without police-state efficiency are hardly the answer.

Collins first directs his attention to reform of the Roman curia. Its extremely centralised structure is impossibly cumbersome under modern conditions. Can one frail old man, or a vigorous young one for that matter, bear the weight of the world flooding in by email, fax, video and print? And why should he? Might not decision-making be devolved, as it was for most of the church's history, to local bishops, local synods, local Christian communities? This could enhance the authority of the papacy by restoring its proper function.

Communion with the centre is essential but relatively easy today. Why, asks Collins, do we need the antiquated (and, I would add, non-biblical) structure of the college of cardinals, which evolved out of the senior clergy of the diocese of Rome? Might not the World Synod of Bishops play the role that it seemed destined to play for a brief euphoric moment after the Second Vatican Council?

Lastly, the church must listen, not only to its own members but to the whole world, including the disaffected, and to both sexes. An exceptionally gifted, energetic and, in all senses of the word charismatic pope has, in the eyes of many, failed to be the focus of unity and hope that he undoubtedly intended. What hope for a lesser man? ■

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BOOKS: 3

TIM MURRAY

The big picture

The Eternal Frontier: An Ecological History of North America and its Peoples, Tim Flannery, Text Publishing, 2001. ISBN 1 8764 8572 8, RRP $50

TIM FLANNERY'S latest excursion into continental megahistory begins with a massive cosmic collision and ends in prophecy. It is a 65-million-year history in 350 pages, covering the period from the end of the dinosaurs through to a late 20th-century reflection on the ecological cost (to the North American continent) of the USA's global economic and political domination. *The Eternal Frontier* is a play (or film) in five acts, the first beginning with an asteroid impact in the Gulf of Mexico, and the last ('In which America conquers the world') ending with Flannery's speculation that the bulk of North America's population 1000 years from now will be descended from today's Mexicans (a slightly more restricted racial mix than that portrayed by Ridley Scott in *Blade Runner*).

Evaluating a book like this provides some interesting challenges, the most difficult being the need to avoid an overly academic response to what some readers (and evidently the publisher) regard as an heroic effort of popularisation. Books like this, sometimes satirised as the 'what it all means' school of global history, are becoming more common, clearly attempting to meet a need for explanation on the grand scale. First made famous by Stephen Jay Gould (whose book on the natural history of the Burgess Shale, *Wonderful Life*, is simply awe-inspiring for its sheer intellectuality) and later, and much less satisfyingly, carried on by Jared Diamond (who is praised by Flannery in-text and who in turn praises him on the dust cover), megahistories of this kind usually require a strong narrative line that weaves much variation and time into a pretty simple explanatory system.

How good such narratives are as science depends on the quality of the research undertaken, the quality of the writer's understanding, the clarity and sophistication of the explanatory (read theoretical)

Top: The ivory-bill woodpecker was proclaimed extinct in May 2000, the most recent declared extinction in America.

Middle: The great auk was the first North American victim of European expansion. It was extinct by 1844.

Bottom: Titanis—a predatory bird weighing 400kg which stalked Florida and Central America until 13,000 years ago. The group originated in South America.

position adopted and, of course, the quality of the writing. The value of such narratives as literature would, I suppose, be worked out using some (or possibly all) of these criteria, but with a greater emphasis on the quality of the writing and of the story itself. The real difficulty is that in books like this it is very easy to get the two confused.

How should a reader evaluate the quality of Flannery's arguments about scientific matters, given that he synthesises a mountain of complex data from many fields, not all of which have a substantial secondary literature to work from? Should an evaluation be based on Flannery's authority as a scientist, the persuasiveness of his writing, the attractiveness of his message that we need to take responsibility for the global environment, or his ability to create a plausible reading environment where 'heroic' generalisations consort with personal reminiscence? Obviously all these and others are possible, but to my mind any evaluation should consider how well *The Eternal Frontier* answers Flannery's core questions about the nature of North America. These he states with admirable clarity:

> The great questions for me are these: what are the quintessential determinants of life in North America? Have they remained stable through time, and how strong are they in shaping flora, fauna and human societies? Has North America always been a global cornucopia, or is it only under special circumstances that some of its productions—both human and non-human—can successfully exert global influence? And can its leading nation, the United States, 'long endure' in its current form? (page 5).

Big questions indeed, made bigger by the fact that (as Flannery himself observes) the post-asteroid history of North America has complex and profound causes. *The Eternal Frontier* as an ecological history works best when time is big and human beings (hence really complex causality) are absent. As the temporal units of narrative get shorter and causality becomes ever more complex, the overarching ecological frame of reference becomes less satisfying and the core questions (to say nothing of the answers) get to look vague and woolly. The search for ecological balance is a journey many of us have already embarked upon, and Flannery's detailed discussion of how North America has been stripped of biodiversity should convert many more to the cause, but there is more to American history than the ideology of Turner's eternally expanding frontier.

But let there be no doubt about the fact that Flannery can write. His description of the consequences of asteroid impact, of the long succession of marvellous creatures and ecologies which have comprised the natural history of North America, and his historical vignettes, are occasionally captivating. Perhaps even more important is the consistency with which he stays 'on message' and the fearlessness with which he freely mixes absurd overgeneralisations with more penetrating insights. Certainly there is the air of formula about the writing—slabs of descriptive text every few pages are 'personalised' by scenes from Flannery's history (especially of his time in the USA)—but it is also true that these interventions from the author help lift the text, making it more like a movie script with regular pieces to camera.

But that said, *The Eternal Frontier* is also an infotainment with which it is easy to find fault. Part of the reason for this is the relentless subjugation of all that 'wonderful life' to the clarity and simplicity of Flannery's ecological narrative. What works reasonably well explaining the world of 65 million years ago looks pretty shallow when we get to the North America of the last 500 or so years.

Another part of the problem is the fear that some readers may mistake a point of view with 'the truth'. This is big-picture stuff, very broad syntheses of information from a multitude of sources not always convincingly glued together by Flannery's reading of the principles of ecology, and by the odd bit of arm-waving. *The Eternal Frontier* operates at a cosmic scale and subtlety, nuance, ambiguity and context obviously can't get much of a look-in as we move from past to present to future at a furious pace. Debates get pretty summarily dealt with in the form of 'some scientists say this, some say that, I agree with this or that'.

Nonetheless, there is still much here to elicit a positive response. Flannery's object is to get us thinking more clearly and intelligently about the consequences of our use of the earth, and in this I think he succeeds very well. Some of those chilling statistics about habitat loss and the collapse in North American biodiversity stay with you, as does the sense of hope which we can experience when looking at the recovery of the buffalo. Whether or not *The Eternal Frontier* convincingly answers the questions which lie at its core, we can readily acknowledge that there must always be room for big-picture syntheses with a message. Perhaps we just need to get used to the importance of building educated readers who can identify the faults and the shallowness, but still give credit where it is due.■

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BOOKS:4

MINH BUI

Revising Ho

Ho Chi Minh, William J. Duiker, Allen & Unwin, 2000. ISBN 1 8650 8450 6, RRP $45

ON A HOT September morning in 1945, hundreds of thousands of people squeezed into Place Puginier (now Ba Dinh Square) in Hanoi to wait for a man few of them had ever seen before. Sometime after 2pm, that man—their new president—dressed in a khaki suit with a high collared jacket and wearing white rubber sandals, stepped out of an American car and ascended the recently erected wooden platform to face his subjects for the first time.

Ho Chi Minh had been absent from his country for 30 years before his triumphant return to claim independence for his people and power for his fledgling communist party. Even though the crowd on that September day didn't know him in his latest incarnation, they would discover a decade later that he was no other than Nguyen Ai Quoc (Nguyen the Patriot)—the famed anti-colonial agitator the French couldn't subdue. The name may have changed, as it did more than 50 times, but the man and his ideals remained one and the same.

Which was why Vietnamese in the north as well as the south placed their allegiance in Uncle Ho, as he became affectionately known. His version of communism, couched in the language of nationalism, fed their hunger for national selfhood. His self-styled simplicity, steadfastness and selflessness were values that they would associate with traditional mandarins, who were expected to serve the nation. When he died in 1969, at the age of 79, the avuncular revolutionary was revered by many not just as the founder of the Vietnamese Communist Party, leader of the revolutionary movement and president of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, but also as a loyal son of the fatherland.

To Westerners though, especially to the French and Americans, whose nations waged unsuccessful conflicts against Ho's nationalist guerrilla movement, the Viet Minh and its southern offshoot the Viet Cong, he was simply a dangerous 'Moscow puppet'. Even today, Greg Sheridan refers to him as a 'Stalinist dictator' (*The Australian*, 3 March 2001). Herein lies the crux of the misunderstanding of Ho and his inner motivations which, many have argued, played a seminal role in fostering Western hostility to his cause for an independent Vietnam.

Was he a nationalist or a communist? In the climate of the Cold War, there was no

time to know. The French and Americans erred on the side of fear. Their failure to understand the Janus face of Ho's politics resulted in three decades of continuous warfare, leading to the slaughter and maiming of millions and the deep scarring of a beautiful country.

Ho's latest biographer, William J. Duiker, like many historians, believes he was a patriot foremost and a communist by circumstance. Although international communism coloured his mental landscape, it was love of country, expressed in his lifelong devotion to the cause, which guided his actions. Marxism–Leninism, he once told an American officer, was his 'framework' for freedom.

Duiker lays down Ho's patriotic credentials early on in his big book. In the opening pages of the first chapter, he traces the lineage linking the Comintern agent to his revolutionary ancestors. Vietnam, the author explains, has a long and honourable tradition of fighting foreign invaders; her 1000 years of military resistance against Chinese invaders stands at the centre of the nation's mythology and cultural self-awareness. The fact that Ho hailed from Nghe An, in central Vietnam, made his historical destiny that much clearer. Nghe An is a harsh rural province famous for producing national heroes and rebellious movements. Ho imbibed this tradition of resistance from his native land at an early age: at 13, he was expelled from a colonial school for anti-French activities and at 21, he went to France to continue the fight.

Despite his background, Ho was not unique. At the turn of the century, especially in the late '20s, when Vietnamese society was plunged into crisis by the failures of the traditional ruling class of mandarin scholars to resist French colonialism, a new generation of nationalists was called upon to save the nation. Young Western-educated men like Ho responded by forming political movements or going overseas in search of ideas and stratagems. *Di Tay* [*Go West*] was the name of a popular novel which also became a rallying cry.

What made Ho successful and distinguished him from his idealistic compatriots was something rather commonplace: hard-headed pragmatism. While his fellow travellers were being jailed and killed or coerced into compromises by the colonial authorities, he stayed alive and bided his time. Ho's ruthless pragmatism, political cunning and survival instincts served him brilliantly during his three decades of political apprenticeship abroad and his remaining years in Vietnam. One could say they formed the compass which guided him and later his party from the August Revolution through to April 1975.

Duiker's account of Ho's life on the run, from 1911, when he left Vietnam, to 1941, when he returned, reads like an action-packed picaresque thriller. Using new materials from recently opened Comintern archives in Moscow, the author has pieced together a definitive picture of a significant if ambivalent shaper of last century's bloody history. Those 'blurry tracks' of his daring escapes and sudden disappearances, which had frustrated previous biographers, have now been paved with meticulous research. Duiker combines scholarly analysis with biographical narrative to produce not just a biography of Ho Chi Minh but also a history of 20th-century Vietnam.

Where Duiker falters is in his undisguised sympathy for the man he describes as 'unquestionably one of the most influential political figures of the twentieth century'. Some readers may feel that he let Ho off too lightly on a few issues. Like his culpability in the failed land reform campaign of the mid-'50s, which resulted in the death of more than 10,000 peasants. And of course there is the question of his legacy. Duiker asserts that Ho was ultimately a man who worked for peace and a nation builder, yet his actions led directly and indirectly to bloody conflicts which, some would say, nearly wrecked his country. As Bui Tin, a former senior officer of the North Vietnamese Army, has contended, Ho's imperfect understanding of communism and Marxism led to the demise and suffering of many people. It seems that the party which he founded and his political epigones were bereft of the intellectual wherewithal to provide their people with enough food to eat and clothes to wear. For all his considerable achievements, Ho's place in history is still under a cloud. ■

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Gardener

If it were England, and later in the day,
she might have met him, faded shirt,
scuffed leggings and all, partly shadowed
by long allees at, say, Chiswick—
everything turned to vista, seeking out
the Statue of Cain and Abel, the Domed
Building, the Rustic Arch, the Doric Column
Topped by Venus, the Bagnio,
the Obelisk and the Deer House, and the rest.

As it was, the heart gone out of her with grief,
she picked her way through scrubby bushes,
expecting nothing but the nothing left
when love's pegged up for the sun to eat.
It was peculiar, then, to round a rock
and find some idler, hands pinked
by spiky work, but the rest of him at ease,
liking the morning, nestling a crocus,
his wide mouth practised about her name.

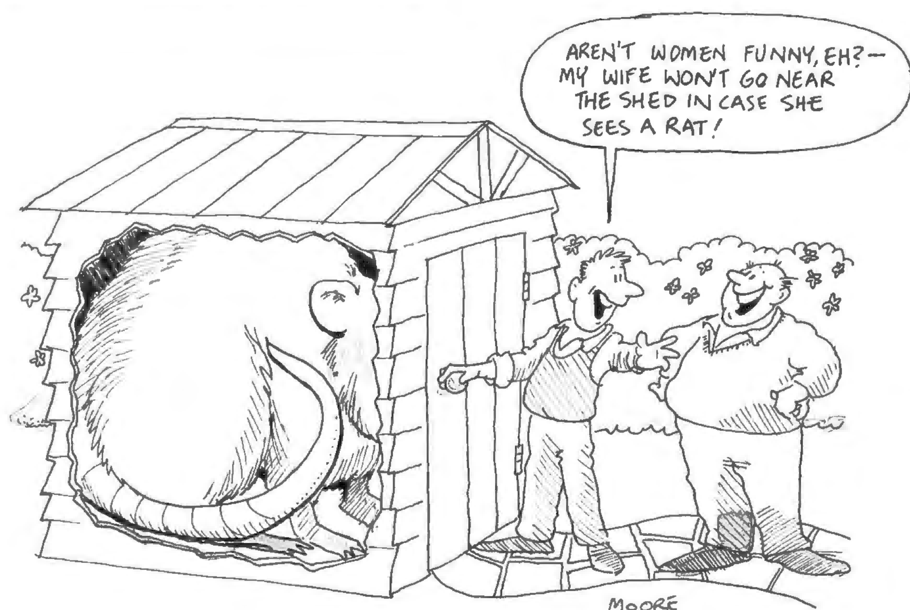
—Peter Steele

MICHAEL McGIRR

Handle with care

Cafe Scheherazade, Arnold Zable, Text Publishing, 2001. ISBN 1 876485 71 X, RRP $27.50
The Front of the Family: A Tale of Two Sisters, Renata Singer, Bruce Sims Books, ISBN 0 9577 8004 4, RRP $22

BOTH THESE BOOKS are first novels by authors who have seen a fair slice of life. It shows. Not just in their choice of subject matter, but in the way they handle it. Tact is a word which has all but been relegated to the scripts of period movies, but it seems apt for these works. Despite the social advantage sometimes gained from being tactful, the word doesn't share the same route as tactics. It just looks as though it should.



In fact, tact shares the same origin as tactile. Tact is having the right touch. Both Singer and Zable have an almost physical relationship with the stories they tell. They deal with food, smell, violence, sickness, sex and ageing in an immediate manner. They are also holding something which they are reluctant to let go of. These novels are sourced largely in the experiences of old people. Their stories are told with both sadness and awe.

St Kilda's Cafe Scheherazade is the kind of place where most people in Melbourne end up sooner or later. If you find yourself there when it's almost empty, looking across Acland Street at a surf shop, a jeans shop and a trendy homewares shop, you'll wonder why the place has such a reputation. It gets its life from the people who come there, many of them Jewish, many of them with roots in ancient European cultures which were all but destroyed in the middle of last century. Zable's book suggests that having a place to gather and tell stories, sometimes to tell the same stories over and over again, has been instrumental in preserving the identity of a traumatised community on the other side of the world. The café is a place where big stories can be told in and around small talk and banter. It's a place where a certain group has felt safe.

Cafe Scheherazade is close enough to fact. The two principal characters, Avram and Masha Zeleznikow are in fact the couple who started the café in the '50s and more or less ran it for 41 years. The café is a real place. Zable may be crafting a narrative, cobbling loose ends together, splicing bits of stories, guessing at things which are left unsaid. He may also have found a journalist, Martin Davis, to gather the stories which spill on to the floor of the café. But Zable isn't making this up.

It is curious that a café which has played such a role in the life of the Jewish community should take its name from the storyteller of *The Thousand and One Nights*, a web of stories centred on Baghdad and steeped in Islamic culture. But there is a depth of humanity in *The Thousand and One Nights* which is notably lacking in Middle Eastern politics since World War II. The manner in which the café got its name is part of the romance between Avram and Masha, a romance which germinated in arid circumstances but which, despite the anguish they both carried from their wartime experiences, managed to thrive.

Zable plays gently with the original tale of Scheherazade, a woman who told stories to survive. This was a theme of Zable's earlier memoir, *Jewels and Ashes*, in which he returns to the Polish community his father had left 50 years before. His father is drawn sympathetically both as a man who tries to release the hold of the past on him ('do not dwell upon the past' is his repeated warning) and as a man whose love of words necessitates holding on to the past ('words eternalise our experiences and express the sum total of what we have been in our lives,' he says). Similarly, the old men whose stories are held within *Cafe Scheherazade* are not idle raconteurs: 'they continue to tell their tales, as if to talk is to know they have survived.' Stories, one of them explains, are all he has learnt to be sure of. At worst, they help to pass the time.

THE *FRONT OF THE FAMILY* shares a good deal of the same physical territory as *Cafe Scheherazade*. Renata Singer's novel opens at the Springvale Jewish cemetery where Zosha Feldman's two daughters, Miriam and Felunia, are laying their mother to rest. Zosha, aged 80, was a survivor; her first husband died in the Shoah. As they are

leaving, a crabby friend lets slip that Zosha's second husband, Adash, was not Miriam's father as she had always supposed. Adash is buried at some little distance from Zosha, near his old mates, so that people can imagine the menfolk carrying on in death just as they used to do at the Scheherazade, talking and playing cards.

The Springvale cemetery also features in Zable's book: 'with each passing life I feel it more keenly: there are tales aching to be told, craving to be heard, before they too disappear into the grave.' The narrator comments that his work is to add to the mythology of an ancient land. *Cafe Scheherazade* is in some ways about allowing dust to settle.

The Front of the Family is also about healing, but it is a more raucous book. Miriam's search for her real father may allow her to tap into the stories of an older generation as she moves around the community looking for clues. If they know anything, the friends of her parents are not willing to divulge it. Both Miriam and Felunia have enough to contend with as they negotiate their own middle years. They are both in relationships which are falling apart but neither of them really knows where to head, not even which step to take first. They manage to be both frenetically busy and purposeless at the same time. Their lives are complicated but they share a sense of futility and confusion. As a portrait of two women, *The Front of the Family* is a compelling book. It is a book which appears to have been laboured over: every detail of these lives is carefully rendered. That is a strength. Singer has great affection for her characters and their world. She respects their story and handles it with care. ■

Michael McGirr is the author of *Things You Get for Free* and *The Good Life*.

Art Monthly

AUSTRALIA

IN THE JUNE ISSUE

Jacques Delaruelle wonders about the dual imperative of teaching the contemporary and critically discussing historical art.

Peter Timms talks to Geoffrey Ricardo about art and social commitment.

Marion Halligan reflects on the fog sculpture in the National Gallery of Australia's sculpture garden.

Robert Nelson queries the acquisition of Lucien Freud's *After Cézanne*.

John McPhee on Lucien Henri at the Powerhouse Museum.

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7.30pm 9pm, first Wednesday of the month
2 May: 'Men at the crossroads' Mark Byrne (author of *Myths of Manhood*) and Br Graham Neist fms (who runs spirituality courses for young men and women).
6 June: 'A conversation on alienation: crossroads for the young' Robert Fitzgerald (Commissioner for Community Services NSW) and Lisa Alonso Love (member of Young Christian Workers and co ordinator of service for young people leaving care).
Bellevue Hotel, 159 Hargrave Street, Paddington

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6pm 7.45pm every Friday
June 1: 'Selling off and selling out: Schools, Land, ADI, Compo and Callan Park' Wendy Bacon (Department of Communications, UTS); John Robertson (Ass. Secretary, NSW Labour Council); Hall Greenland (Leichhardt Councillor and Journalist)
June 15: 'ACTU and a future Labor Government: cosy or combative?' Sharon Burrow (President, ACTU) and Sally McManus (Australian Services Union)
The Gaelic Club, 64 Devonshire St, Surry Hills

CATHOLIC EDUCATION CONFERENCE
Melbourne, 4 6 June. 'The Story of our Nation. The Story of Catholic Education.' www.centreforce.com.au/ceem2001

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FLASH IN THE PAN

Crying shame

The Man Who Cried, dir. Sally Potter. There's nothing quite like Johnny Depp having a cry on screen. I don't care how sophisticated your average cinema-goer has become, this sight can't help but crack the hardest heart. But is that enough to recommend a film? Not by a long shot. While *The Man Who Cried* realises some handsome moments, on the whole it limps along under the weight of a clunky script and an icy mood.

The year is 1927 and Fegele (Claudia Lander-Duke), a young Russian-Jewish girl, is living in a village with her father. They play hide-and-seek in the forest; she laughs, he sings. But surrounded by uncertainty and persecution, the father leaves for America, with his family to follow when he has found work. With little warning, violence engulfs the village and Fegele is forced to flee, carrying little more than a few gold coins and a photo of her father. Ending up in England with her name changed to Suzie and a new Christian foster family, Fegele is forbidden to speak Yiddish and the photo of her father is hidden. Suzie grows up (Christina Ricci) and moves to Paris but never gives up hope of sailing to America to find her father.

The Man Who Cried is a frustrating picture. The audience's emotional engagement is thwarted at every turn either by a line of clichéd dialogue ('but what if I've been chasing a ghost?') or a paper-thin characterisation (Depp's mysterious, silent-but-strong Gypsy type). While John Turturro handles the role of a vain Italian opera singer and collaborator with his usual confidence, Cate Blanchett's (above) performance suffers under the weight of a thick Russian accent. I kept getting flashes of John Cleese running around in his underpants shouting 'Vladivostok, Sputnik!' and the like. It just goes to show how far off the mark *The Man Who Cried* was: even when touching on some of the 20th-century's most tragic moments it left me replaying *A Fish Called Wanda* in my head. **—Siobhan Jackson**

Casual cut

Mullet, dir. David Caesar. Oddly enough, given the current recycling of '80s fashion, the title of David Caesar's new film refers more to the fish than the hairstyle. In fact, Mullet is both the nickname of the film's main character (played by Ben Mendelsohn, whose hair in the film is more of a deconstructed shag than a mullet), and a none-too-subtle metaphor for his relationships with those around him. We're introduced to Mullet as he hitches back into the small country town he abruptly abandoned three years earlier, leaving without a word to his girlfriend, his family or his friends. Mullet doesn't know what he wants; maybe he wants his girlfriend back. Mostly he just seems to want to piss people off, and then act hurt and angry when they turn on him. And he can't understand why no-one wants the mullet he catches in the local creek and tries to sell for beer money. He can't even give them away (yes, that would be a metaphor at work).

It's all pretty familiar territory for Australian film: inarticulate lead male, the 'return home' story, the combination of quirky naivety and casual violence, the search for (masculine) identity. Interestingly, though, on several occasions it threatens to turn into a musical, with the characters regularly singing pop songs 'to themselves' as a way of trying to communicate their innermost feelings to each other (Dragon's 'I'm Still In Love With You' pointed enough for you?). Of course, the other characters never actually get the message.

Still, there are some strong performances in the film, especially from the supporting cast (Peta Brady as Mullet's rough-as-guts sister is a gem), and the fact that Caesar has now made three feature films in Australia is something of a miracle in itself. It's rare for an Australian film-maker to get funding for a second film from within Australia itself, which of course means that the inevitable career trajectory for many of our film-makers is ultimately overseas. How many of them return home to find their true selves in among all this quirky naivety and casual brutality is another question altogether.

—Allan James Thomas

Smart noir

The Monkey's Mask, dir. Samantha Lang. Most films are constructed and marketed within the framework of a particular genre—romantic comedy, action thriller, murder mystery, etc., giving the audience a set of expectations for the film to either confirm or confuse.

When a film declares for a genre and then fails to fulfil the audience's expectations, it is usually its unmaking. (And why, conversely, the pretty tired James Bond formula is still being made and still works.)

The Monkey's Mask is a murder mystery that doesn't conform to its genre. Crime and detection, and acts of derring-do—staples in the murder mystery formula—take a back seat to human relationships. There is little or no tension in the tale of detection. The investigator is female and

she is not hyper-human; she doesn't even carry a gun. During the film, she is often confused, sometimes out of her depth and painfully real. Her voiceovers are not cynical or world-weary; they are poetry. Her love interest is not a spiced interlude, but rather the central element of the film. When things don't work out, she cries. This stuff doesn't always work; there are some grating moments, but the twisting of audience expectations is not *The Monkey's Mask*'s unmaking.

Susie Porter as Jill, the private investigator, is wonderful; comic, serious, lovestruck, honest. Kelly McGillis, as the *femme fatale*, is almost unrecognisable. Even in other films when she was supposed to be tough—I am thinking of *The Accused*—there was always an undercurrent of sweetness. As Diana in *The Monkey's Mask*, there is no sweetness, no innocence. She is pure self-interest, the classic film-noir dame ('Sure, there was a dame ...').

The central relationship is between two women, and I have a sad little feeling that *The Monkey's Mask* will become (in)famous for lesbian sex scenes. Indeed, reviews published on the advertising flyer for this film call the performances of Susie Porter and Kelly McGillis 'brave'—a giveaway if ever there was one. The sex scenes are fairly explicit, but they are just sex scenes, they are not built up to be the climax, or the shock, in the narrative. They are part of the fabric of the film; not pushed as a challenge to the watcher (as often lesbian or gay male sex scenes are offered), but almost as a comfort. At one point Jill says to Diana, when the latter has suggested that they add a man to their sex play, that she is not that kind of girl, that she is 'straight'. This is contextually comic at the same time as being absolutely true. Jill is the straight line through the centre of the film. The deviants are others—heterosexual, middle class and professional.

This is not a great film, but it is subtle and intelligent. **—Annelise Balsamo**

Well-trodden

One Hundred Steps, dir. Marco Tullio Giordana. *One Hundred Steps* has received many awards and nominations and is full of good things: great art direction, splendid performances by the leads and an interesting Sicilian take on a theme monopolised by American film-makers for decades.

But the overall feel is of the sort of very worthy film you would take secondary students to, to give them an idea of an historical era and an historical figure. The hero, Peppino Impastato (brilliantly, I have to say, played by Luigi Lo Cascio) it is revealed at the end, was a real person, a young, fervent Communist who defied the Mafia in Cinisi, a Mafia-dominated town in Sicily, and was finally murdered by them in 1978. I didn't know this while I was watching it, but the credits at the end confirmed me in the vague feeling of discomfort I had had throughout the movie. Something was very earnest. Something clunked a bit—not much, just a bit.

Bio-pics can have this effect on me: they really should be documentaries. I was so bored by *Gandhi* that I have never been able to sit through it. *Lawrence of Arabia* was different because Lawrence was such a fictional construct in real life that the film was able to be a film. Costa-Gavras succeeded in *Z*, but that was after all *roman à clef*.

Perhaps it is because *The Godfather* (1, 2 and yes, even 3) films were so brilliant that somehow the real thing is flatter, more matter-of-fact, less dramatic. Giordana is good at setting the events in Impastato's life against broader history: the kidnapping and murder of Aldo Moro is neatly shown to undermine Impastato's Communist ideals and crowd out the news of the murder pretty much as Princess Diana's death overshadowed that of Mother Teresa.

The good moments were very good: using great '70s rock music and showing the impact of hippie tourists in a dusty Sicilian townlet; the death of Impastato's father (played compellingly by Luigi Maria Burruano), a man caught between two implacable foes, his son and his patron. The death of Impastato follows soon after: only his father's relationship with the smoothly horrid Badalamenti has protected him. The circumstances are dreadful, inevitable, like a pack of hyenas finally finding a lion at a disadvantage.

And if the final scene is very like the end of *Godspell*, perhaps that is what the death of all courageous activists does for us: fill us with respect for the people who are brave enough to stand up for humanity against systematised bullying.

But it would have been a far, far better thing to make a documentary of it.

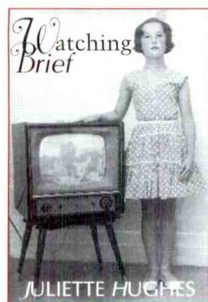
—Juliette Hughes

Tidy town

State and Main, dir. David Mamet. *State and Main* should have been a real ripsnorter of a picture: wonderful ensemble cast, sharp intelligent writing, experienced direction, and clean direct photography. But, to my chagrin, the rips and snorts were well hidden.

The plot is all hysterical possibilities. Big-town film crew descends on small-town America to shoot *The Old Mill*, a film concerning a hairy-chested fireman (Alec Baldwin) and a breast-baring nun (Sarah Jessica Parker). This is the film's second small town—the first was abandoned due to unforeseen under-age dalliances and budgetary disasters. But this fresh start quickly turns into a logistical nightmare: the new town's old mill (featured on its tourist brochures) burnt down 30 years ago, the sandwich-delivery girl is canny and under-age (Julia Stiles, below), the lead actress is going through an integrity phase and refuses to show her breasts ($800,000 might just change her mind), product placement is proving a nightmare and the writer has put a fish hook through his finger. And on it goes.

Despite having screwball insanity and crushing satire, *State and Main* only inspires discreet laughter. Mamet needed to let this picture out of the tight grip of his clever (granted) script. With talent like William H. Macy, Phillip Seymour Hoffman, Rebecca Pidgeon and George Durning, surely you can let the reins out a bit. It's not often you can criticise a film for being too clearly delivered. *State and Main* needed unwieldy mayhem—too much clarity, I cry. **—Siobhan Jackson**



Noonday devils

Greenslade:	This is the BBC.
Seagoon:	So! You admit it, then? Six months hard labour, to be done in twelve monthly instalments.
FX:	[gavel]
Greenslade:	I shall appeal.
Seagoon:	Very well. Released on bail of five long twisted things with holes in the end.

'THIS IS THE BBC' used to be the universal signal for the end of Saturday morning in our house. *The Goon Show*'s genial, mad-arsed wordplay crowned the day. Saturday mornings were more leisurely in those days, even in the mad shopping rush, because the afternoons were a sacred site. The shops would shut, by order. Governments regulated such things in those inflexible days. Noon. At ease. No-one was expected, nay, allowed, to spend the whole weekend serving Mammon. It was sometimes a pain, but a short one. It forced you to have whole slabs of time that Belonged To You. Not to your employer. If he wanted you on a Saturday afternoon he had to pay you lots extra so he didn't make you do it all the time. All time belongs to the merchants now, and 'flexibility' has become the entropy of our precious leisure hours. We're never off the hook, leisure is for the birds, the lilies of the field, the structured unemployed. When we had weekends we had jobs too. And the Goons were the fanfare for those long-gone Saturdees. (I know the ABC has kept *The Goon Show*. They rescheduled it years ago to 3pm Saturday and 8pm Tuesday, when no-one is listening.)

I have vague memories of listening to the Goons in Britain as a small child in the '50s, laughing at the funny men doing funny voices but also at my parents' Jovian laughter, the enigmatic laughter of grown-ups, full of world-knowledge and allusion to shared pasts. And these pasts were brimful of their own triumphal experience, redolent of shared victory over monstrosity. Hitler had been beaten and memories were history. Nothing, not the Bomb, not the Cold War, certainly not the Korean War would light a match next to that, the ordinary people's memories of beating the devil. The end of World War II was as close as the Gulf War is to us now. It was closer than the fall of the Berlin Wall.

On May 3 Radio National ran a ten-hour delve into 100 years of times past. Being a nation for one century concentrated the memory usefully, often poignantly, if not always wonderfully. Just as, in the best tragedies, there is always a point at which you think that this time Othello might not put out Desdemona's light, that this time Juliet might just wake before Romeo takes the poison, there were points where I was thinking: Oh no, they're not *really going* to start WWI; drop the atom bomb; vote for Reagan, are they? Doomed to repeat history no matter how much we hear it, we need to laugh at it, even incredulously.

Goon humour is invested with that 20th-century experience, with a barrack-room nuttiness that knows what any war costs, even a just one. Goon fans are becoming rare, but they are to British humour's best traditions what Marx Brothers fans are to the Americans'. Their laughter is full of arcane knowledge now, when the rest of the world laughs at *Friends*, that dismal travesty, and thinks *The Weakest Link* sharp and ironic. The Gulf War produced no comedy; no experience was shared in that phoniest of wars except CNN's ooh-ah window on the fireworks lighting up Baghdad. There was so much propagandised information rained on us that we had no time to filter it through comedy; only occasionally would outraged irony inform commentary.

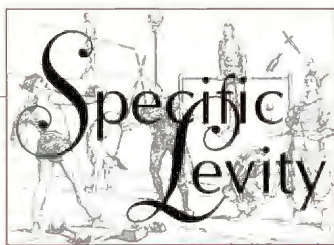
HARRY SECOMBE, God rest his sunny soul, was part of the trinity that was the Goons. (Michael Bentine, peace to his bones, was part of the phenomenon for only a short time: the essentials were Spike Milligan, Peter Sellers and Harry.) Like the theological trinity, the Goons were indissolubly three yet ineffably one. They had fought the Nazi along with the other young men of their time, making the world safe for Korea, Vietnam and internet porn. No-one questioned (except for an eccentric few) the justness of WWII. But Milligan's many memoirs of his war experiences show us how difficult it is to stay sane even when you're on the right side.

I love the story of his first, fated meeting with Secombe: Milligan's gun had fallen over a cliff. He hallooed down to the soldiers at the bottom: 'Have you seen my gun?'

'What colour was it?' replied Secombe from below.

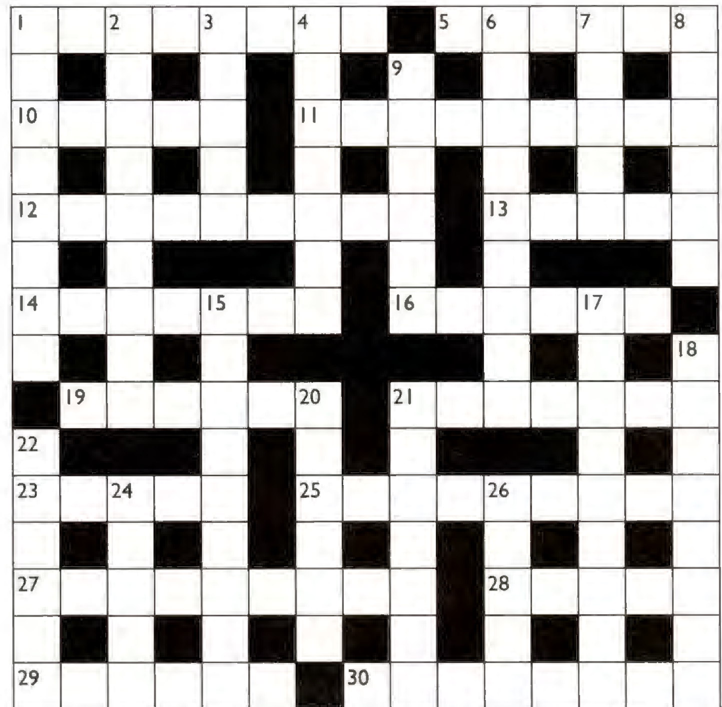
Secombe was the one you could never imitate: the playgrounds were full of Bluebottles and Eccleses but never Seagoons, because that frantic Welsh tenor could be done only by a set of vocal chords as steely-elastic as Harry's own. And the character! The pompous cunning naif, the corrupt innocent abroad, the eternal gull. Secombe's singing was essential to Ned, our inner fool—Everydag. Singers must risk total embarrassment all the time; for some this makes for arrogance and brittleness. For Secombe, it bred his special brand of undefended self respect, a great-heartedness that made a dark world lighter. ■

Juliette Hughes is a freelance writer.



Eureka Street Cryptic Crossword no. 94, June 2001

Devised by
Joan Nowotny IBVM



ACROSS

1. Rude and naif about painting? What kind of slip is that? (8)
5. Run through the agenda, perhaps—I am unable to do so as I am washed out! (6)
10. Provoke dog in front of home. (5)
11. Tread nonchalantly back after bowling spell, to applause that's somewhat exaggerated. (9)
12. The spirit's coming for the feastday celebration! Does it cost 10p, and a note, perhaps? (9)
13. 'Pinafore' on this stage? (5)
14. Edgy, initially—New England Rovers are 5–0 to America (7)
16. Cast off poor fellow who is in blue. (6)
19. Tax the queen for the privilege of keeping water bird. (6)
21. Twice to encircle boy in city. (7)
23. I would subject me to honour—in a manner of speaking? (5)
25. Marches same boy as in 21-across to first rows in theatre, for instance. (9)
27. Cherished and reassured, drops S-bend for T-square in front. (9)
28. Some come in for information, initially, on far-fetched story of adventure, perhaps. (3-2)
29. Live interview, maybe, about team. (6)
30. Complicate the situation with medical specialist's point of view. (8)

DOWN

1. Turn over and gasp at a remark so impertinent! (8)
2. Little by little, boy took in one old coin with a hundred. How odd! (9)
3. Lament, for example, free return. (5)
4. Being tender in the dream—or oust your lover. (7)
6. Amalgamation about short answer to problem concerning diving bird. (9)
7. Movie in which I star, perhaps, is up and going. (5)
8. Finish, yes, finish with a cocktail. (6)
9. Being excited, he dined on delicacies first. (6)
15. Ed's poem? It somehow made the best of the situation. (9)
17. Spending June and July, for instance, between various locations. (9)
18. See 22-down.
21. For a start Tim droned boringly on about the path that was well frequented. (6)
22. & 18. Time of year when both sun and ice are on the street—both sides! (6,8)
24. Plato's forms aside, a penny for your thoughts! (5)
26. English racecourse, unusually, hosts operatic heroine. (5)

Solution to Crossword no. 93, May 2001

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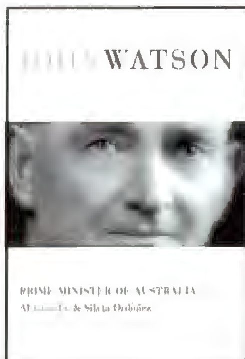

John Watson was Australia's first Labor prime minister and the world's first Labor head of government. A controversial and paradoxical figure, Watson held office for only four months and was eventually expelled from the Labor Party he had helped to form.

EARLE PAGE
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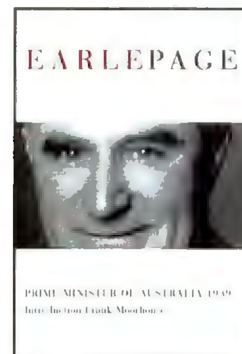

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