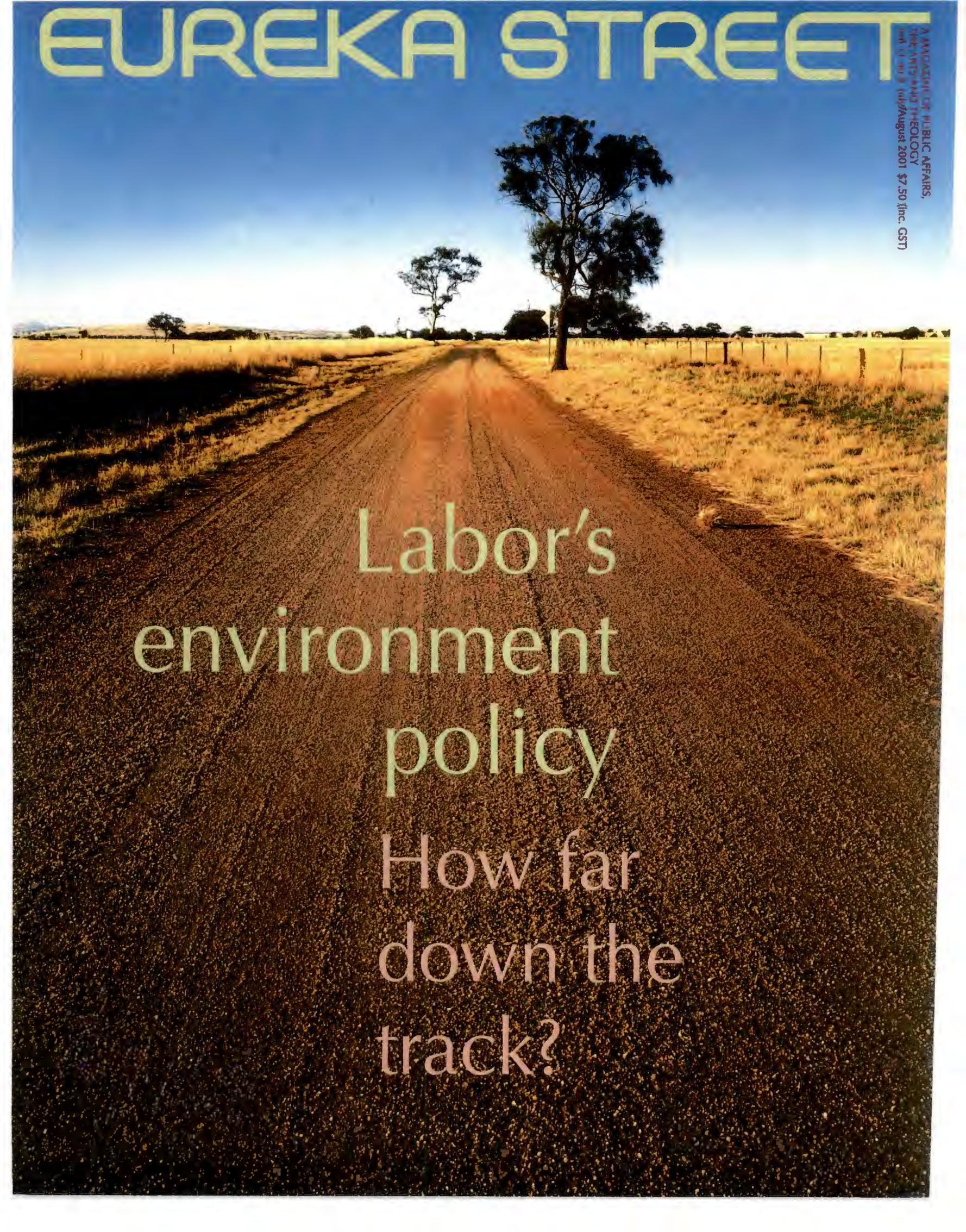


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A MAGAZINE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS, THE ARTS AND THEOLOGY
VOLUME 11 NUMBER 6 JULY/AUGUST 2001

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Assistant editor Kate Manton
Graphic designer Siobhan Jackson
General manager Mark Dowell
Marketing Kirsty Grant
Advertising representative Ken Head
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Editorial, production and administration assistants Juliette Hughes, Ben Hider, Kate Hird, Paul Fyfe SJ, Geraldine Battersby, Mrs Irene Hunter
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Patrons *Eureka Street* gratefully acknowledges the support of C. and A. Carter; the trustees of the estate of Miss M. Condon; W.P. & M.W. Gurry

Eureka Street magazine, ISSN 1036-1758, Australia Post Print Post approved pp349181/00314, is published ten times a year by *Eureka Street Magazine Pty Ltd*, 300 Victoria Street Richmond VIC 3121 PO Box 553, Richmond VIC 3121 Tel: 03 9427 7311 Fax: 03 9428 4450 email: eureka@jespub.jesuit.org.au <http://www.eurekastreet.com.au/>

Responsibility for editorial content is accepted by Andrew Hamilton SJ, 300 Victoria Street, Richmond

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

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Unsolicited manuscripts will be returned only if accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Requests for permission to reprint material from the magazine should be addressed in writing to the editor.

This month:

Cover design by Siobhan Jackson
 Cover photograph and photographs pp8-9, 23, 26-29 by Bill Thomas Graphics pp11, 19-21, 36 by Siobhan Jackson
 Cartoon p12 by Dean Moore
 Photographs pp14-17 courtesy Suzanne Edgar
 Photograph p22 by Heide Smith Photography
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COMMENT

- 4 *Morag Fraser* Open spaces

LETTERS

- 6 *Quentin Dempster, John Iremonger and Don Gazzard*

THE MONTH'S TRAFFIC

- 8 *Michael McGirr* No feather in their caps
 9 *John Rickard* Federal case
 11 *Maggie Helass* State of grace
 12 *Kevin Childs* Chilling with silks

COLUMNS

- 5 **Capital Letter**
Jack Waterford Put your money in a sock
 10 **Archimedes**
Tim Thwaites Catching ideas
 13 **Summa Theologiae**
Andrew Hamilton What's in a name
 50 **Watching Brief**
Juliette Hughes Digesting My Brother Jack

FEATURES

- 14 **Tennant Creek and beyond**
Solutions don't come easily in Aboriginal communities, writes *Suzanne Edgar*.
 18 **Not all black and white**
Moira Rayner finds remnants of slavery in a London church.
 19 **Justice in retreat**
Frank Brennan reports on the registration process in Timor.
 26 **The name of the game**
Amanda Smith and *Tim Stoney* dissect Australian sport.
 30 **Literature under arms**
John Sedy goes in search of Rolf Boldrewood.
 37 **Saharan songs**
Anthony Ham travels in Libya with the Tuareg.
 41 **Reasons for travelling**
Morag Fraser finds a few.



COVER STORY

- 22 **Promising the world**
Juliette Hughes interviews Labor Shadow Environment Minister, Nick Bolkus.

BOOKS

- 32 **Such is character**
Michael McGirr reviews *Rolf Boldrewood: A Life* by Paul de Serville.
 39 **Travel bent**
Peter Steele reviews *Holiday Business and Mediterranean Journeys in Time @ Place*.

OPERA

- 43 **Turbulent voices**
Jim Davidson reviews *Batavia*.

EXHIBITION

- 44 **Monet's floating world**
Andrew Bullen at *Monet @ Japan*.

THEATRE

- 46 **Regarding Australia**
Geoffrey Milne on the highlights of the Federation Festival.

FLASH IN THE PAN

- 48 **Reviews of the films** *Series 7*; *Moulin Rouge*; *Russian Doll*; *The House of Mirth*; *The Crimson Rivers* and *The Sacred Stones*.

SPECIFIC LEVITY

- 51 *Joan Nowotny* Cryptic crossword

Open spaces

IN JUNE, another Australian publishing venture folded.

The Australian Review of Books, the monthly Wednesday supplement of its national parent newspaper, *The Australian*, announced its closure, just shy of its fifth birthday.

There is a separate discussion to be had about the history of the *Review's* funding and the reasons given for its closure—but another place for that. I want to comment here only on one consequence of its removal from the Australian public arena. It is this.



In the final edition there was some correspondence about historian Inga Clendinnen's review of Robert Manne's extended essay, 'In Denial: The Stolen Generations and the Right'. The featured letter, written by academic and former *Quadrant* magazine editorial adviser Martin Krygier, was a model of the kind of civil, trenchant and full discussion that is too rare in this country of quick, adversarial reflexes.

Reading it, you were left not just with a sense of the complexity of the historical and justice issues to be addressed by all of us in Australia, but with some confidence also that they might be resolved, over time and with imagination and good will.

Now, with the *Review's* closure, there is one less place for the exercise of imagination, intellect and good will, or for writing of an extended, and reasonably argued kind. That in itself is a reflection on the priorities of the culture we are building. But it is also a prompt to take up such conversations, arguments and reflections and continue them in whatever other

places are available, with all the energy one can muster.

The day after *The Australian Review of Books* appeared for the last time, a documentary film had its premiere in Melbourne. Called *The Sacred Stones*, it told the story of the return, to its traditional Aboriginal custodians, of the rock that had long marked the grave of John Flynn—the famous Flynn of the inland, pioneer of Australia's flying doctor service.

It is not a simple story.

The rock itself, one of the so-called Devil's Marbles (*Karlu Karlu*), was originally taken from Warumungu and Kaytetye land in Central Australia and lowered, ceremonially, on to a plinth built over John Flynn's ashes. Its removal troubled the traditional owners for almost half a century. Meanwhile, Flynn's grave became over the years a sacred place of another kind, for another people.

And a site of conflict.

FLYNN'S SUCCESSOR was the Reverend Fred McKay. He was the man who organised the placement of the original stone. He was also the man who oversaw its removal, return and its substitution with another stone, offered as a gesture of reconciliation by the neighbouring Arrente people.

So many stones, you might think—why should any particular one matter?

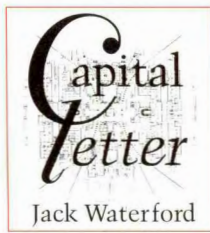
It takes a story to explain why. And some grace and ease in the telling. As the film's co-writer, Andrew Dodd, remarked on the freezing Melbourne opening night, to an audience including Aboriginal elders from Central Australia, 'Reconciliation is something that doesn't come easily.'

You could see the complexity of the story, and the strains of a reconciliatory process, registering on the face of Fred McKay as he explained, through a marvellous, animated interview filmed just before his death at 92, how he came to understand why the stone had to go back. You could also see, on the faces and in the voices of the Warumungu and Kaytetye people, what the cost had been to them.

As Martin Krygier's letter did, the film made space for thought. We need such spaces. ■

—Morag Fraser

The Sacred Stones was made by Albert Street Productions in conjunction with Oxfam Community Aid Abroad. Watch SBS for a television screening. It is reviewed on page 49.



Put your money in a sock

IT'S ALWAYS NEXT TO impossible to separate policy from politics, but when pure politics is driving the policy, rather than the other way round, it's time to get the money out of the bank and under the bed again.

A big company goes bust. Thousands of people are thrown out of work, most with less than their due in terms of superannuation and other entitlements. Suppliers and contractors have to whistle for their money, even after rescue plans come into operation. Shareholders do their dough. The company's auditors, who, only months before, certified the company as trading well, seem to escape the blame. Company managers, many of whom have earned massive bonuses even during periods when their companies were insolvent, take a break from the social scene, but do not appear to be suffering greatly, or even expressing remorse.

In what circumstances does government intervene? And if it does not have the mechanisms in place to detect and minimise potential disaster, what moral responsibility does it have to those who are affected?

The answer, it seems, depends on how many are screaming, how loudly, who they are, and whether there's a by-election coming up. There's certainly no evidence of any guiding principle.

Labor governments did not intervene in the Pyramid disasters in Victoria, though there could hardly have been a clearer-cut case of battlers being hurt. When a multinational miner 'restructures' its ownership of a declining mine in a rural town, then walks away leaving the operation unable to pay workers their entitlements, nothing is done. When a textile company with the prime minister's brother on board is run into the ground, the outcry is such that government helps the employees and proposes—then progressively forgets—a national scheme to help workers in such a situation. A major national insurer goes spectacularly bust, with thousands of folk missing out on their entitlements and lawyers facing a major loss of income, and a national rescue scheme is put together.

Of course, out in the boondocks, hundreds of small businesses go broke every day, but because they fail to make up a critical mass of voters, nothing whatever is done. In some cases, of course, the ventures were of their nature highly speculative. But in other cases, people left in the lurch have reason to feel they have been misled, not only by the owners and managers, but by the watchdogs appointed to protect their interests—the auditors and the regulatory agencies.

At issue are questions not only about what the watchdogs were doing but how well they were set up or equipped to do the job that the public seems to expect of them. Politicians and bureaucrats on both sides might have embraced and implemented

new ideologies, and have rearranged the machinery of government to fit, but the Australian public have not fallen in behind them. They still harbour expectations of state protection against the excesses or debacles of free enterprise.

When I was a boy I was taught that it was both part of the social compact and statutory reserve systems that the Reserve Bank would not rescue a bank which went broke. I am now told that not only is this not the present situation, but that, strictly, it was not the system in the past either. Whatever the legal relationship, does anyone really believe that a government would let a bank collapse? Actually, not a few Treasury economists would argue that it ought to, if only to link the risks that modern banks take with their funds to the profits they now make. But the practicalities, for a Treasurer seeking re-election, are something else.

BODIES SUCH AS THE Australian Securities and Investments Commission and the Australian Prudential Regulation Authority (APRA) have not believed it to be their job to regulate closely any of the bodies under their control. Their approach has been soft regulation—the nudge rather than the whip. APRA, for example, was well aware that HIH was in serious trouble, but consciously decided not to intervene because it was afraid that its intervention might only make things worse. All the major regulators, and some of the politicians, knew; indeed they knew that some other insurance and superannuation companies had, and have, similar problems. Nor, strictly, have they lacked the power to do something about it: their decision to do otherwise was a judgment call, in line with a philosophy that resists market intervention. They have done little about other aspects of the background problem—including accounting systems which are becoming an international joke.

There are still fairly sure guides to a business in which one should not invest. Give points for appearances by the frontman in the social pages, the gap between his age and that of his wife, the number of flash cars, aircraft, restaurants and rural retreats he owns, the depth of the carpet in his office, and the number of flattering references in the glossy business magazines. Add extra points if his company has a punctuation mark in its title or if it is involved in IT, communications, or promotes a concept one cannot explain to one's mother. Extra points for having gone to Cranbrook or having James Packer or Lachlan Murdoch as an acquaintance, or being prominently engaged in commercial sponsorship of sport. A generous gift to a political party virtually clinches one's fate—or the public's. ■

Jack Waterford is editor of the *Canberra Times*.

ABC drama I

From *Quentin Dempster*

Mark Armstrong's attempt to repudiate my book *Death Struggle* (*Eureka Street*, June 2001) is too jesuitical by half.

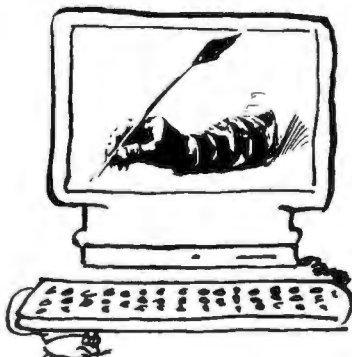
Mark assisted most generously through hours of interviews and checking early draft chapters relevant to his role as chairman of the ABC (1991–1996). He did express concern about some of the warts I wanted to expose in my warts-and-all account and through his constructive criticism and advice I emphasised the positives and adjusted the tone on some of the players and events.

To now claim, as he does, that there were no power-plays at the ABC of any great significance or within the context of a struggle for the survival of non-commercial public broadcasting in Australia is just not credible.

I would have thought an ABC Board moving to dispense with the services of a managing director like David Hill at the height of public controversies about backdoor sponsorship, erratic management, our move with equity partners into the pay TV business and the financial troubles of our commercial satellite service was a power-play in anyone's language. Don't take my word for it. David Hill himself says in the book (a claim denied by Armstrong) that he was sacked through the interference of then Prime Minister Paul Keating.

Mark says the blurb's claim to expose 'misdeeds' by political animals at their most dangerous is not backed up by evidence.

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The blurb did not claim to expose 'misdeeds'. But it did claim and does expose 'political malice' towards the ABC from the named dangerous political animals over the last 15 years of the ABC's existence.

Mark defends Brian Johns as a good bloke but conveniently skates over the context of the dispute over the sale of the Gore Hill site in Sydney, which was the potential destruction of ABC television as a production house. This concern is even greater now under Jonathan Shier's managing directorship.

Mark ignores, again conveniently, an entire chapter questioning Brian's role in the decimation of Radio Australia.

Mark, I'm sorry if the book has embarrassed you with some of your other friends

and associates or exacerbated some difficulties with your enemies, but you knew I wanted to expose the political bastardry surrounding the ABC. Your late and self-serving attempt to repudiate the book is just silly.

Quentin Dempster
St Leonards, NSW

ABC drama II

From *John Iremonger, Publisher, Allen & Unwin*

I can well understand Mark Armstrong being disconcerted by Quentin Dempster's account of the ABC from the arrival of David Hill to the arrival of Jonathan Shier ('Upping the Aunty', *Eureka Street*, June 2001). To have your stewardship of an ungainly beast like the ABC exposed for all to see can't but be painful.

Except ... I know that Quentin gave Mark access, before publication, to what he wrote of direct relevance to Mark's tenure as Chair of the ABC. I was present with both of them when we discussed the intention of the book. At no point did I say that, as the publisher, I 'only wanted a blow by blow account of what happened in the boardroom'. For a start, this would have led to a very limited (and less interesting or useful) book, and whole chapters of *Death Struggle* would never have been written. What happens in the boardroom of a major public institution like the ABC is very largely the result of pressures from outside, and Quentin always pursued the larger view—into ministers' bolt-holes and prime ministers' offices, trade union confabs, the press



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and, indeed, wherever the purposes, fate and tribulations of the ABC were battled over.

So *Death Struggle* is much more than Mark acknowledges. It deserves to be judged by larger criteria than those employed by a wounded ex-Chair who, incidentally, is sympathetically portrayed by a writer acutely aware of the enormous pressure anyone in that position as head of one of Australia's most important cultural (and political) institutions is forced to bear.

John Iremonger
Crows Nest, NSW

False economy

From Don Gazzard

The question, 'who benefits?', raised by comments about the dairy industry in *Eureka Street*, May 2001, is always asserted by the free-trade ideologues before the event but the aftermath is often so confused that their claims perforce go untested.

My own profession of architecture provides an interesting and little-known case-study in deregulation. For a great number of years the Institute of Architects had a Scale of Minimum Professional Charges which its members agreed to uphold. The basic fee for complete architectural services was six per cent of the cost of the building, and in a swings-and-roundabout way this fee scale was generally adequate; architects might lose a bit on one job but they made it up on the next. And even more importantly this fee scale permitted an adequate level of professional service to be provided.

The introduction of trade practices legislation in the 1970s forced the Institute to abandon this mandatory fee scale and replace it with a Recommended Scale of Professional Charges. It was claimed that the old system was a form of price-fixing and that competition would lead to lower fees and in turn lower building costs, which would flow on to the community in lower rents and costs generally.

For a while nothing much changed, but by the mid 1980s architects were being forced to tender for work, and fees for complete architectural services fell as low as four per cent for a while. Architects did what you might expect: they tailored the work to fit the fees they were forced to accept in this competitive situation. In effect they did less work, drawings were less detailed, architects defined their services more precisely and extra fees were claimed

for things outside the defined scope of work, just like a builder claiming 'extras' on a building contract. Common sense eventually prevailed as sensible clients realised that you get what you pay for, although fees in general have never returned to the earlier six per cent level.

But did lower fees deliver lower building costs? A CSIRO investigation in May last year by Paul Tilley revealed, as one might expect, that the quality of design and documentation influences builders' tender prices, with builders increasing their prices by up to 11 per cent to cover themselves for less complete documents. Tilley also found that the quality of design and documentation also influences the project time allowed by builders, with reduced design input often resulting in projects taking longer and construction problems leading to time over-runs. In the end owners ended up paying considerably more for their buildings than they had saved on fees.

Do we have to keep proceeding on such an ideologically driven course in so many areas of our society, with the promises of advantages that in most cases cannot even be properly evaluated after the damage has been done? We will never know objectively whether it was desirable to deregulate the dairy industry, at enormous cost to the taxpayer as it turns out, and once done it is irreversible.

The example of architects' fees is one rare example where we are able to see the documented evidence that none of the promised advantages have eventuated, and one suspects it is the same in other deregulated areas.

Don Gazzard
Jamberoo, NSW

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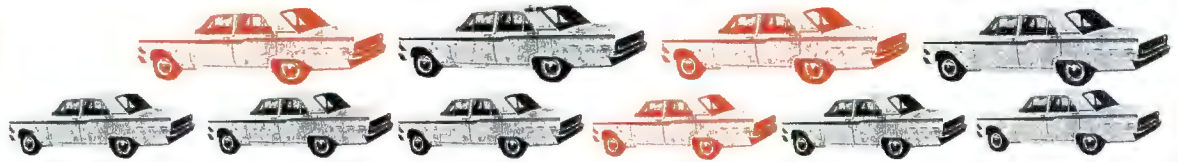


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The Month's Traffic



No feather in their caps

I reckon (said Dad) that the country's pests
Is this here wireless and these here Tests.

—C.J. Dennis

ON THEIR WAY TO England this year, most of the current Australian Ashes team made a stopover at Gallipoli. There the cricketers were photographed wearing slouch hats. The picture was worth a thousand words.

The final volume of Charles Bean's official history of World War I is simply a book of photos with captions. Among the most telling photos in the book is one of a cricket game being played on the beach at Gallipoli, a week or two before Christmas, 1915. The game was part of the subterfuge which enabled the Anzacs to slip away from the Dardanelles far more safely than they had arrived eight months earlier. They left 7818 dead behind. Manning Clark comments that, once evacuated to Egypt, 'soon the heroes of Gallipoli were once again the ockers of Cairo.'

It is understandable that the current Australian XI would want to pay homage to

that legend. They have regularly been seen as heirs to both the fighting and the larrikin spirit. Indeed, Warnie's preference for tinned food might have made him feel more at home in the AIF than in the cafés of Marrickville or Footscray. The players look like the great-grandsons of the original Anzacs: young, vital and white. But there are differences. Today's professional cricketers seem to take themselves far more seriously than the Anzacs of the original legend. And they are older. The youngest players, Jason Gillespie and Simon Katich, were both born in 1975. The Waugh brothers turned 36 at the start of the tour; their comrades presented them with walking sticks. It was a pointed gesture.

The Australian team has been increasingly anxious—as the game of cricket has become more commercialised and its players seen as more self-serving—to exploit any opportunity to cast itself as larger than life. It knows that for many people it embodies a unique cultural significance. It is so keen to reinforce this image that it tends to overplay its hand. Two images linger from the Australian tour of India earlier this year. One is of players waking to find that news of the death of Sir Don Bradman had been slipped under their hotel room doors during the night. Special team meetings indicated the reverence with

which this news needed to be treated by The Don's successors. Secondly, the team seemed to adopt a mantra in India: 'embrace the culture'. The players went out of their way to take an interest in Indian culture beyond the confines of their hotel rooms and training venues. They were acting as some kind of collective Governor-General, aware of the role of symbolic gestures in creating significance.

So it must have come as some surprise that their appearance in slouch hats has caused such angst. The players were seen as helping themselves to the use of something sacred. The official website of the Australian Cricket Board responded by creating an online poll. Visitors were invited to have their say: 'Should future Ashes touring squads visit Gallipoli?' This is as close as such a site is ever likely to get to admitting a public relations faux pas.

The Australians have reason to ponder the uses of headwear. The baggy green cap has been increasingly sacralised. Once upon a time, a test cricketer gathered any number of these items of uniform. They were reissued for each tour, a practice widely blessed among organisers of sports auctions. Now, a cap is ceremoniously presented before a player's first match. The whole team appears in them for the first fielding session in each new test. They are a talisman,





and I have sometimes wondered what kind of crisis might face a player who actually mislaid his cap. Or worse, a patriotic dry cleaner who lost track of one.

At the same time, the Australian Cricket Board makes commercial mileage out of the cap. Their official website is called 'Baggy Green'. During any television broadcast, the viewer will be invited to that site in order to buy all kinds of memorabilia. It's a bit like Dick Smith's insistent use of the Australian flag on his expanding range of supermarket goods. It's an ersatz spirituality that lends itself so easily to commercial exploitation.

It will be interesting this year to see if Don Bradman can have more influence on the team's fortunes from heaven than he did from Adelaide. Bradman is often pictured in one of his baggy greens, the cap and the man seeming somehow cast together. In his book, *The Art of Cricket*, Bradman deals with caps in his opening chapter: 'unless the weather is dull, I think it advisable to wear a cap'. He says that catches are dropped by players who lack caps and he questions the morality of bowlers who use caps to retain hair oil for them to rub into the ball. That's about it. Later, Bradman concludes that the world needs cricket 'more than ever before to help it keep matters in proper perspective'.

At the time of World War I, cricketers had a different perspective. Johnnie Moyes, whose history of Australian cricket was published in 1959, is not an emotive writer. But among his carefully compiled statistics, he muses briefly on the fact that the War, which caused the cancellation of the Australian tour of South Africa for which he had just been selected as a rookie, ended his test career before it had even begun:

The curtain was rung down on first-class cricket while many exchanged their bats for rifles and girded themselves for war ... After the 1914-15 season, we put away our bats, pads and flannels until the sterner work was over.

Later, he comments on the way in which Australian troops used to dream about escaping the battlefield for the cricket field:

During World War I, when so many Australians were serving in Europe, England and her cricket pitches had a lure which no-one but a cricketer could understand or fully appreciate.

I doubt that. Even if you hated cricket, the prospect of standing at deep fine leg must have seemed a far lesser evil than the western front. But Moyes understands that cricket was an escape. If they think otherwise, the Australian team is living a fantasy.

—Michael McGirr

Federal case

ACCORDING TO A RECENT survey, almost half the population now knows that our first prime minister was Sir Edmund Barton. This has been hailed as encouraging, suggesting that the publicity surrounding the centenary of federation has made some inroads into our lamentable national ignorance concerning our federal founders. It also confirms, however, that we still have a long way to go.

It has often been remarked that Australians, unlike Americans, do not venerate the Constitution and those who created it, and this has been seen as reflecting a culture

which is cynical about politicians and the political process. But could it also be that our Constitution is a flawed document, and that Australians tend to regard the federal system it established as something we are stuck with, a structure which in this sense is accepted but accorded only a modest level of respect?

Many of those who have written or contributed to recent books about federation have rightly stressed the extent to which federalism was a democratic movement, the Constitution Bill being endorsed by referenda in all the colonies. But by the same token, it should be remembered that there was significant opposition to the Bill in Queensland, Western Australia and, most importantly, in New South Wales. Some of this opposition could be characterised as parochial, reflecting interests which saw themselves as threatened by the coming of the nation and a national market.

But there were also those who opposed the Constitution on democratic grounds, arguing that delay would ensure that a better Constitution could be achieved in the future. The failure of New South Wales to approve the Constitution in 1898 had already led to the meeting of premiers which had negotiated some minor democratic concessions: would not defeat in 1899 mean that a future convention would be forced to travel further down the road to true democracy? These critics of the Constitution have largely been ignored in publicity for the centenary, and yet their concerns are very relevant to the current debate about constitutional reform.

Perhaps the most articulate proponent of the democratic cause was the Victorian politician, Henry Bournes Higgins, who had been an important member of the 1897-98



Catching ideas

IT'S 11 AM ON A FRESH AUTUMN Saturday morning in Melbourne—only a little over three hours before the bounce of the ball at the MCG. And 1000 people are queued up outside the Town Hall to hear three speakers spend a couple of hours chewing over the politics of water.

You read right. Melbourne. In the footy season, and people are turning out to listen to a lecture. Surely the spirit of Alfred Deakin, father of federation and believer in the occult, has come back to haunt us. His was the name under which a series of 17 lectures was convened by Federation Festival director, Jonathan Mills. They may well mark a sea change in Australian society.

For these were lectures about ideas, demanding of their listeners, providing new perspectives on Australia's past and the future, blending science, humanities, society, commerce, sport and philosophy. The speakers came from home and abroad, from city and country, from many generations and many ethnic and social backgrounds.

And more than 19,000 people came to hear them (over 1000 a lecture!). If these listeners were anything like me, they went away with views challenged, enhanced and changed. ABC Radio National is reporting unprecedented pressure on their website's audio-on-demand recordings of the lectures.

There have been similar outbreaks elsewhere. A few weeks previously, about 1200 people crowded a Sydney concert hall for an evening of debate on the global environment. In recent years Sydney has also spawned a science-in-the-pub movement that is now, in various guises, drawing crowds all over Australia. And writers' festivals seem to have sprung up everywhere like mushrooms.

How does one account for such a return of the public intellectual, a figure seemingly anachronistic in our manic, commerce-driven world? I think it has a great deal to do with the lack of vision displayed by Australia's current crop of political leaders, particularly at the federal level. People are searching for some concept, some overview of Australia, the world and their place in it, that goes beyond the value of the Aussie dollar and aping of the US.

Perhaps it is also a sign of growing maturity, a demonstration that people are concerned about the future of their nation. During the Alfred Deakin lectures, the listeners showed they were quite prepared to sit for hours and puzzle out quite complex information. The audience, young and old, seemed to want to work things out for themselves at the grass roots, instead of depending upon their leaders to come up with solutions.

That's just as well, for the list of serious issues confronting us is growing—reconciliation and race, salination, global warming, the regulation of reproduction, the brain drain, the future of sport, the politics of water, global trade, genetic screening, interaction with our Asian neighbours, the impact of the internet, people-smuggling, drugs ... All are long-term issues without simple answers. Their resolution may demand altruism and a sense of community.

One thing seems clear. Australians are thirsty for ideas. And any party which attempts to go into the upcoming federal election without a far-reaching and comprehensive vision for the future does so at its own peril. ■

Tim Thwaites is a freelance science writer.

Convention. He is particularly remembered for his role in inserting into the Constitution the provision for industrial arbitration, with which, appropriately, he was to be associated as the trail-blazing president of the Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration, 1907–1921.

The Irish-born Higgins had only entered the Legislative Assembly in 1894, and his election as the tenth and last Victorian delegate to the Convention owed much to his being included in the list supported by the influential *Age*. As a relative newcomer to colonial politics, Higgins was struck by how most of his more experienced colleagues came to the Convention with 'fixed ideas as to what federation involved'. While Higgins regarded himself as a federalist, he nevertheless was fond of saying that federation was 'a mere word', and that delegates should not be dictated to by the American precedent.

From Higgins' perspective, there was no ideological requirement for a federal legislative structure to include a states' house, with equal representation for each state, small or large. Such a house offended against the principle of one-adult-one-vote and was therefore undemocratic; the offence was heightened if this upper house had the power to refuse supply to a government which commanded a majority in the democratically elected House of Representatives. The purpose of the federal exercise was to hand certain specific powers to the central government, all remaining powers to continue being exercised by the states. Once this division of powers had been achieved, there was no logical need to impose a states' house on the federal parliamentary structure.

Most of Higgins' colleagues thought his opposition to the states' house unrealistic. The Convention itself had been elected (or in the case of Western Australia appointed) on the basis of ten delegates from each colony, so the principle of equal representation was embedded in the federal process. They felt there was little hope of luring the smaller colonies into the federal compact unless that principle was respected in the Senate.

Higgins, on the other hand, argued that New South Wales and Victoria had conceded too much too soon, and that in accepting, without a murmur, the principle of equal representation in the Senate, had significantly undermined their own bargaining position. He would have been interested to learn that when, 100 years later, a Convention was being planned, it was accepted that equal representation of

the states was no longer appropriate, and a compromise formula was adopted.

Of the small colonies, South Australia and Tasmania carried the Constitution by substantial majorities; so also did Western Australia when belatedly given the oppor-



tunity. Queensland was more divided, but it shared much of the outlook of New South Wales, the largest colony, which was the real stumbling block. So, in retrospect, the assumption that it was the small colonies which needed to be appeased looks suspect.

Higgins' other main criticism of the Constitution stemmed from its very nature as a written document. Words could be very limiting, and he was always arguing the case for maximum flexibility: writing a Constitution in 1897, they could not imagine what the needs of a later generation might be.

He also foresaw that the apparently democratic referendum mechanism for amending the Constitution could prove difficult to work. The requirement for support from a majority of states, as well as of electors, once again imposed the false federal logic that he saw as having dominated the Convention. So, he was fond of hypothesising, a massive nationwide majority in favour of amendment could be vetoed by slim negative majorities in three small states.

In fact, the dismal tally of 'No' votes over the 20th century was rarely the product of such a simple dichotomy, but Higgins was right, nevertheless, in identifying the rigidity of the Constitution as a major problem.

Higgins' reputation as a political maverick was compounded by his opposition to the Boer War in 1899. Many federalists thought it entirely appropriate that the founding of the Australian nation should be marked by a commitment of colonial troops

to an imperial war. It was not surprising, therefore, that Higgins' double apostasy led to his losing his seat of Geelong in 1900.

Yet this defeat ushered in a new career for Higgins. Ironically, the leading critic of the Constitution was elected to the first federal parliament in 1901 as the representative of the working-class electorate of North Melbourne. In 1904, although not a member of the Labor Party, he was attorney-general in the historic, short-lived Watson Labor Government. Two years later Deakin appointed him to the High Court and the Arbitration Court.

Higgins and his High Court brothers found themselves increasingly faced with the challenge of breathing new life into the dead words of the Constitution: if the people were unable to act, the onus was on the Court to interpret the document written in 1897-98 in a way that would cater for modern needs.

Higgins might well have seen his critique of the Constitution borne out by events. He never doubted the wisdom of founding the nation. But, in our haste to do so, had we settled for second best? Or had we merely got the Constitution we deserved?

—John Rickard

State of grace

FEARS THAT NEW Governor-General, Peter Hollingworth, may kidnap the public image of the Anglican Church for the government were last month allayed by the media debut of a novice archbishop in Sydney.

On his appointment in April, His Excellency the Most Reverend Dr Peter Hollingworth said he would put aside the accoutrements of episcopal office during his term as head of state. But then the prime minister said he could keep his archiepiscopal title after all. He went to see the Queen dressed in purple shirt and pectoral cross. And the Archbishop of Canterbury gave him a Lambeth doctorate for good measure.

The Anglican Church of Australia faced the perilous future of a broadly secular public accepting the Governor-General's statements as the doctrine of the church.

On 5 June, Canon Peter Jensen was elected as the next Anglican archbishop of Sydney. Two days later at his first press conference he initiated a national political brawl, by offering some spiritual counsel to Prime Minister John Howard, to help him say sorry to Aborigines.

'It doesn't worry me whether Mr Howard is out of step with the community,' Dr Jensen told reporters. 'The question is, is he out of step with God? I'd say to Mr Howard if he were here today, please Mr Howard, keep reading your Bible, keep saying your prayers, keep listening to God.'

The prime minister tackled the comments the next day on radio, saying it took a pretty brave person to presume to know the conclusive mind of God.

'It is very important with difficult issues such as this [reconciliation] that community leaders, including newly elected archbishops, not take too narrow a view,' Mr Howard said.

Dr Jensen, apparently at home in the media spotlight, made the cool riposte that he was not being presumptuous, he was merely affirming the sovereignty of God.

Cartoonists and commentators around the country seized on the spectacle of an archbishop bearding a prime minister in his den. Mr Howard, who had a Methodist upbringing but is not a regular church-goer, now has another archbishop to contend with, and one whose evangelical zeal prompts comment on public issues, not from a populist standpoint, but from the authority of Scripture.

Archbishop Jensen represents the biblically conservative evangelicals of Sydney diocese, who derive their authority via what they discern from the word of God. As principal of Sydney's theological school, Moore College, Dr Jensen has been responsible for the formation of diocesan clergy in rigorous biblical scholarship. But the 'Moore College fallacy'—as some describe their claim to possession of the absolute final truths of those texts—has long foreshadowed schism from the rest of the Anglican Church.

Sydney evangelicals believe that the Reformation was compromised and theological reforms truncated by various Acts of Parliament passed in England's Elizabethan era. Their task is to complete the process of cleansing the church and setting it up on a biblical basis.

Dr Jensen's brother, the Reverend Phillip Jensen, has recruited more than half the students at Moore College through his ministry as rector of a Sydney parish and part-time chaplain at the University of New South Wales. Both brothers were short-listed for election as archbishop, but Phillip stood aside at the last moment in favour of his sibling.

The iconoclastic Reformed Evangelical Protestant Association (REPA) has a

publishing arm in Phillip Jensen's parish at Centennial Park. This organisation regards ecclesiastical law and conventions as something other than the word of God. REPA promotes a simple, congregational ministry, which is currently provocatively planting churches in other dioceses.

It is doubtful whether the new archbishop will make any progress against the tide which elected him—its momentum is towards maintaining Sydney diocese in the Anglican Church of Australia. Indeed the question is how much undue influence the Phillip Jensen pantechnicon will exert to further isolate the diocese. This radical group regards its association with fellow Anglicans as secondary to the task of evangelising the world. Alliances will be forged on issues such as lay presidency at the Eucharist and no ordination for women or homosexuals.

This month (20–27 July) the Anglican General Synod meets for its quadrennial session in Brisbane. Doubtless the urbane new Archbishop of Sydney will maintain gentlemanly relations with his brother bishops at the synod, but his presence will bring into sharp focus the question of Sydney diocese's continuing presence in the Anglican Church of Australia.

Dr Jensen's initial position on government responsibility towards the more vulnerable members of society brings the forensic light of Scripture to bear on social justice. But the problem with the Jensen position is that he belongs to that subculture of Sydney which believes that no-one other than Moore College graduates have the proper understanding of Scripture required to interpret it. That doctrinaire

approach is fair set for battle on issues confronting the Anglican Church in the 21st century.
—Maggie Helass

Chilling with silks

JOHN HEDIGAN holds many posts. A judge of the Supreme Court of Victoria since 1991, he turns 70 later this year.

When he graduated from De La Salle College in Melbourne and studied law at Melbourne University, neither he nor almost anyone on earth could have imagined the internet. Yet here he is all these years later, early in an almost balmy Melbourne June, sitting in Court No. 6 gazing down at Rabbi Joseph Gutnick. Gutnick—mining entrepreneur and lately President of the Melbourne Football Club—had, according to his lawyers, been defamed by *Barron's*, a weekly magazine published in print and on the internet by the mighty Dow Jones empire, owners of the *Wall Street Journal*.

Gutnick claimed the article falsely implied that he had laundered money through Nachum Goldberg, jailed a year ago for laundering more than A\$40 million through a fake Israeli charity. Gutnick denies ever doing business with Goldberg, laundering money, being Goldberg's customer, or buying Goldberg's silence.

The question Justice Hedigan was being asked to decide was whether Gutnick could sue *Barron's* in Melbourne or whether, as *Hypotheticals* star and Tony Blair's friend, Geoffrey Robertson QC argued, it should be

heard in New Jersey where *Barron's* is uploaded on to the web.

The elegant points being made by Robertson and, for Gutnick, Jeffrey Sher QC, provided enlightenment and entertainment for the many lawyers, law students and even socialites who came to listen.

By day two, it was a case of 'one in, one out', as the court jammed to standing room only. Next day the 'court full' sign went up.

Robertson went back to 1848, when a court ruled that a libel occurred when a servant of the Duke of Brunswick collected an offending newspaper at the publisher's office in France. Australia's High Court also held that a Missouri court should hear a case of a Missouri accountant being sued for professional negligence for advising a NSW company that under Missouri law it would not have to pay taxes.

Not long ago the Prime Minister of Eire sued the London *Sunday Times* over an article accusing him of lying to parliament. The House of Lords found that the article was protected by privilege that extended to political information. In Robertson's view this decision elevated 'investigative journalism as distinct from reporting journalism as equally deserving of protection'.

Robertson said that cyberspace publishers should not be subject to the libel laws of the 187 worldwide jurisdictions where defamation proceedings may be brought. (In some of these countries the cutting off of hands is the punishment for publishing libel.) He added that having Mr Gutnick's case heard in Melbourne would have the 'chilling effect' of inhibiting the flow of ideas and information on the internet.





Sher's case was that, because the article was on the internet and could be read by subscribers in Victoria, his client, Mr Gutnick, was defamed where he was best known. 'It is the plaintiff's contention,' he said, 'that for approximately 400 years the law has been that publication occurs when the third party to whom the material is published comprehends the material.'

'To publish the print journal to five people, two of whom were with National Mutual (now known as AXA) and the AMP Society, two of the largest institutions involved in investing in Australia, is ... a serious matter and would be actionable ...' The internet publication went to J.B. Were, a leading firm of stockbrokers.

Sher said the court was being invited to make new law—law which would ignore a line of authority that stretched back to the 16th century.

He said that the advent of radio, TV, faxes and telexes had led to a simple commonsense rule of law which had helped spread information. 'And what the rule has done is not to prevent the spread of information, quite the contrary. In this day and age information is all around us, in every single possible form, but what this rule has done is to prevent, or have a chilling effect upon, the spread of defamation.' Mr Sher's and Mr Robertson's uses of the phrase 'chilling effect' are clearly at odds.

Beyond the court, the discussion was of defamation in cyberspace, with lawyers pointing out that a doctor in Canada had threatened *The Age* newspaper and the ABC over material which originated in South Africa. Lawyers had visions of jumbo-loads of documents and legal eagles being transported at vast costs across the globe to Canada. There is also an action pending by a Russian official involved in a controversy before the Sydney Olympics. If this goes ahead, where will it be heard?

When *Eureka Street* went to press, Justice Hedigan's decision had not been given, but most observers were betting that, whatever the outcome, this would be a case bound for a High Court appeal.

—Kevin Childs

This month's contributors: **Michael McGirr**, a former publisher of *Eureka Street*, is the author of *Things You Get For Free*; **John Rickard** is an honorary professorial fellow at Monash University and the author of *H.B. Higgins: The Rebel as Judge* and *Australia: A Cultural History*; **Maggie Helass** is a Brisbane journalist; **Kevin Childs** is media adviser to the Law Institute of Victoria.

What's in a name

THE GIVING OF NAMES is a playful activity. But to realise how serious and effective is this play, we need only think of the controversy about the Stolen Generations. Or about Columbus' voyage to the Americas. The Jesuit Ignacio Ellacuria played with the linguistic possibilities of 'discovery', remarking that the Indians never realised that they were lost. More seriously, the arrival of the Europeans was less significant for discovering Indians than for uncovering the violent and covetous character of European civilisation. Moreover, the celebration of these events was really the covering up of what had really taken place. Fr Ellacuria was murdered by the military in El Salvador in 1989.

The unmasking of names, now almost a cultural tic, is wearisome when unskillfully played. But occasionally scholars, like John O'Malley, who has spent a lifetime on his chosen historical period, review names in illuminating ways. In his recent book of lectures, *Trent and All That*, he reflects on the names that have been given to Catholic history in the Reformation period.

Protestant scholars first described the period as the Counter Reformation, to suggest that Catholic energies were deployed in trying to crush reform by coercion and harsh discipline. Catholic scholars, who saw the movement begun by Luther not as reform but as destructive revolution, eventually accepted the name.

Other Catholic scholars preferred to speak of the Catholic Reformation, suggesting that Catholics remedied the abuses in the church which led to the Protestant Reformation. The reform of clergy and spiritual renewal were carried out by a renewed papacy, assisted by the Jesuits and inspired by the Council of Trent. Protestant scholars, for whom the Catholic Church represented only opposition to reform, were originally unenthusiastic.

More recent scholars, who have placed churches within their broader cultural context, use the name of Confessionalisation to describe the pressure for inward and outward conformity found in the state and in churches alike.

O'Malley claims that, while these phrases describe some aspects of Catholic life, if used exclusively they use straight lines to draw a curvaceous reality. They emphasise too much what prominent people and institutions did, and do no justice to the uncontrollable life of the spirit. The troika of papacy, council and Jesuits, for example, often pulled in different directions. Trent hardly mentioned the papacy, which it wanted to reform. Popes resisted reform when nepotism and other interests were at stake; the Reformation was originally marginal to Jesuits, whose missions owed little to the papacy or Trent. The Baroque flowering of Catholic art and spirituality was not guided from above.

O'Malley finally commends a complementary name: Early Modern Catholicism, which sees Catholic life in its local diversity and variety.

At issue in any naming of history, of course, is an assessment of the present. In showing that the Council of Trent was not as Tridentine, that the papacy was not as reformed and that the laity were not as passive as conventional wisdom claims, O'Malley undermines monolithic accounts and ideals of the church today. His advocacy of many names suggests that the relationships encompassed in the church will never be captured in a single name, in a single order. ■

Andrew Hamilton SJ is a theologian and publisher of *Eureka Street*.



THE NATION
SUZANNE EDGAR

Tennant Creek and beyond

LAST AUGUST WHILE travelling to Alice Springs, I flew over Lake Eyre, at that stage still blue, immense and shimmering. My plane also stopped at Uluru; black, watery stains streak Uluru—why does The Rock weep? In Alice that evening, I walked down to the dryish Todd River that passes through the town. Here, groups of Aborigines sleep, sit about and chat, drink. School kids, joggers, couples with dogs and backpackers on bikes were using the path along the bank; in the sandy river-bed a cameleer tethered his camels, hoping for tourists. I set off for a spot of bird-watching.

Next morning I hired a bike and rode further out. Detouring through rocky hills, I reached the telegraph station established by Charles Todd in 1872. He supervised the completion of the Overland Telegraph Line between Adelaide and Darwin, a boon for Australia's communication with the world. The old station's fenced-in buildings and outhouses are beside the waterhole (not, actually, springs) for which the town was named. Naturally, the location appealed because of its permanent water.

The deep pool is backed by sheltering hills; the area was an important trading depot for tribes throughout the Centre. It was here too that in the summer of 1896–97 Baldwin Spencer and Francis Gillen did the fieldwork for *The Native Tribes of Central Australia* (1899), one of the most influential books in anthropological history. From 1936 the defunct station, part of an Aboriginal reserve, was a 'home', known as The Bungalow, and a school for part-Aboriginal children from all over the territory; they had been removed from their parents by officers of the Federal Department of Native Affairs. That year, Charles Perkins was delivered on a table in the former telegraph office.

In August, I was back in town by 5 o'clock to catch the bus to Tennant Creek (Jurnkurakurr), 500km further north along the Stuart Highway and also once home to a telegraph repeater station. A policeman escorted a clean, neatly dressed Aboriginal youth aboard the bus.

The halfway point of my journey was Barrow Creek, where there was yet another repeater station. In a planned assault in 1874, Aborigines attacked the

station's staff and property. For revenge, whole camps of them were shot down. The name Skull Creek, eight kilometres south, commemorates the conflict. I had been warned about possible racism at the Barrow Creek Hotel, which makes much of its Aussie 'character'. With the other white passengers, I used the entrance at the side of the pub and was served at the bar. The young Aboriginal passenger knew his place. He presented his top half at a hatch in the front of the building under a sign reading 'Staff Only'. Since the youth was not on staff, it seemed clear that he read 'between the lines' of this notice. Several passengers attempted to deflect the insult by talking to him as he smoked on the verandah. The situation recalled the Aboriginal actor and author Leah Purcell's play, *Box the Pony*. In it, the Aboriginal heroine laughs at trendies drinking coffee outside cafés in the city. 'Where I come from,' she says, 'if you're drinkin' on the footpath it means you're not allowed inside the pub.'

As our bus sped north through the dense scrub (forget clichés about 'the dead centre') that lined the road, I noticed occasional small clusters of lights twinkling in the darkness. I later learned that they were the street lamps of isolated communities of Aboriginal people. Currently, Aborigines comprise about a third of the Northern Territory's population and own 42 per cent of its land.

Tennant Creek is a thickening of houses beside the Stuart, halfway between Darwin and Alice. Its population is 3800, half of whom are Aboriginal—'two communities occupying the same space' (*Barkly News Pictorial*, December 2000). Near here in 1860 the explorer John McDouall Stuart planted a flag at Central Mount Sturt (now Stuart) as 'a sign to the natives that the dawn of liberty, civilisation and Christianity was about to break on them'. No pun intended. Aboriginal warriors later raided Stuart's party at Attack Creek, 70km further north. He was a heavy drinker, the first of many up that way.

In 1932 an Aboriginal stockman called Frank found gold at Tennant Creek. A rush followed and three years later the town was declared a prohibited area to Aborigines. During World War II they were also barred from going within five miles of the Stuart Highway. Today, Tennant spreads over flat land under the green cover of the bush. Its main street is unusually long; a few years ago the council extended the town's boundaries to fend off an Aboriginal land claim. Most Aborigines live in six town camps that house about 900 people. Beyond the town are rocky, red, flat-topped hills rising from what was once an inland sea.

THOSE IN THE CITIES want to help Aborigines campaign for reconciliation and a treaty. In the Centre, you wonder about that emphasis. It seems barely relevant to the problems facing the people today: poor health, poverty and grog (*wangangu*, in the language

of the local Warumungu people). *Grog War* (1997), written about Tennant Creek by Aboriginal author Alexis Wright, spells it out.

Like any careful white-skin, on my first day in town I wore my white, fibre hat bought at the Cancer Society shop in Canberra, and set off to explore the main street. I had to curb my curiosity because I stuck out like a bandaged toe. Black faces predominated, Aboriginal languages I did not understand were spoken on all sides. I had the novel sensation of being one of a racial minority in my own country. Salutary. Not all the faces were friendly; some were drunk. Many looked unhealthy. Some belonged to children wagging school. Jurnkurakurr now exists mainly to cater for its black residents, I was told, but I saw no black shopkeepers. At least the shop windows were not caged by the steel grilles that are so common in many western New South Wales towns; that probably reflects a lower level of street violence in Tennant. Walking in the bush on the outskirts, where some people sleep, I saw a lot of grog rubbish, the seedy relics of evening drinking parties.

The Central Land Council has an office in town and there are numerous Aboriginal welfare bodies. The Julalikari ('for the people') Aboriginal Co-operative Council began in 1985 as a town campers' association. It co-operated with the Tennant Creek Town Council to extend urban amenities to the camps. As well as an art centre, Julalikari runs the Night Patrol, which operates from six in the evening till six in the morning: a van picks up drunks in the street and takes them home to avoid a night in the police lockup. In 1995 Julalikari began planning the Nyinkka Nyunyu Centre. (Tennant Creek country is the home of the Nyinkka, or spiky-tailed goanna, a powerful Wirnkarra or ancestral being.) Nyinkka Nyunyu will be constructed as an interpretative project, on a sacred site, for its principal custodians and for the Aboriginal communities of Tennant Creek and the Yapakalangu (Barkly) region. It will contain an archive, an arid zone garden featuring bush tucker and medicinal plants, and two traditional dance rings. All signage will be in Warumungu and English. The centre will be grog-free; it will explain the history of the Warumungu people from their point of view; and young people will be educated and trained in its management. Artists Peggy Napangardi Jones and Day Day Frank Jakkamarra are creating public sculptures for it.

Another organisation in town is the Anyinginyi ('belonging to us') Congress Aboriginal Corporation (ACAC). Anyinginyi began as a health service for the town camps and now also serves outlying communities. Current projects include the Alcohol

Wangangu

*In Warumungu country
the people walk barefoot,
their leather soles uncut
by thorn or flint
or broken glass.
Brown, broken glass
that winks from chip
and shard; a sharp,
unflinching glitter
on road, foot-path,
or faint bush track
that peters out
on the edge*

*where, at the thinning
of the dark,
plastic bags bloated
with desert wind
lean drunkenly
against a fence
or dance with blonde
grass to a tune
played by a tin can
on a cracked bottle.
They whisper hoarsely
of things unsayable:
kumuntyyayi.
kumuntyyayi.*

—Suzanne Edgar

Aftercare Program. This arranges jobs for retired drinkers and sends them out to lecture and to help others on to the wagon. The friend I stayed with managed the Anyinginyi Art Gallery and Cultural Centre, located near ACAC's clinic and administrative offices, this complex contains a gallery and wood-working and ceramic studios. She was asked to arrange weekday pottery classes for Aboriginal children but declined, on the grounds that they should be in school at this time of day. Working in the studios are a number of gifted artists, among them Japurula (Jimmy Frank Jnr) and Bidjara (Duane Fraser). Japurula, at 19, is the youngest of the wood-carvers and learned the skill from his father and uncle who are Warumungu elders and traditional owners. In November my friend, Japurula, and Bidjara took *Wuwala (Spear)*, an exhibition of handmade, wooden artefacts, to the Alcaston Gallery, Collins Street, Melbourne. In Tennant's main street, the Anyinginyi shop sells paintings, jewellery, craft and didgeridoos, made by a wide range of local artists. Profits are booming. The tourists speeding between Alice and Darwin are keen, these days, to possess their own dot paintings. This year, *Bush Fruits*, an Anyinginyi exhibition celebrating women's art, will tour Australia.



Above: Bidjara
(Duane Fraser)
Right: Japurula
(Jimmy Frank Jnr)

One night, my friend's book group came to dinner. All of them were idealistic, educated, white women. Like Christians in the past, they have come to help Aborigines; with this difference: their 'mission' is secular and they are not in charge. They are notable for the deference they show to their Aboriginal bosses. One woman was a linguist, saving and teaching the five languages spoken locally. Sadly, she is being relocated to Darwin, following the removal of bilingual education programs in the Northern Territory. The International Save the Children Alliance report for 2000, *Children's Rights: Equal Rights?*, argued that this breached the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child; Australia has been a signatory since 1989. One member of the book group is a botanist who does field work with Aboriginal women, recording the names of plants and their medicinal and nutritional properties. Another woman is a teacher, another an artist.

A FEW DAYS LATER, with my friend driving the Land Cruiser, we set off down the Stuart then turned east along a dirt road to the Davenport Ranges. An Aboriginal community, one of 600 such remote settlements in Australia, was our destination but our first stop was at a cattle station, Kurundi. We bought a pie from the rudimentary store and sat under a shade cloth to have a cuppa with the owners'

daughter. She is friendly with her neighbours, sells groceries to them, speaks their language and collects their art.

Lunch over, we crossed a river and drove on to visit the community. I was instructed in the protocol for visiting a household: I must remain in the vehicle while my friend went to the gate; she would call the owner and wait to be invited through; only then might she approach the verandah. Again, she must wait to be invited before stepping up to discuss business. At no time did she expect to be asked inside the house.

Annette, who handles the community's art sales, had requested the visit by telephone. We stopped outside her house, my friend ready to distribute canvas and oils and to buy art. This she would take back to be re-sold at the Anyinginyi shop where the mark-up goes to fund ACAC activities. Annette, however, disappeared indoors when we pulled up and did not respond to calls. So we went to another house where art was for sale and were welcomed by several women. They were sitting cross-legged on the verandah, completing the decoration of coolamons and oil paintings and watched by several shy onlookers.

Despite the official nature of such visits, and the good results that flow from them, my friend felt uneasy. She had brought the goodies, the new supplies and a bank-roll; but she said it felt a bit like the bad old days of hand-outs, the mirrors and the beads. I stood back, unsure of my role and unwilling to intrude. I was also experiencing shock.

I know something of the ties which bind Aborigines to their land and I had expected to find a harmony, an honouring of the country at this place. What confronted me was squalid. The dusty red earth had been trashed by the rubbish lying everywhere. White plastic bags, which from a distance I'd taken to be chooks, fluttered at fences and under bushes. Dozens of deformed, disease-ridden dogs roamed miserably about, apparently breeding prolifically. No doubt expected to live off the land, they looked to be starving. There were also skinny cats, and one plump pig, probably fattened on the abundant refuse. Some of the colourfully painted cement houses had an outdoor, covered area containing a tap, sink and draining-board. There was a central, communal ablution block. The walls of the buildings were smeared and grubby as were many people, as were their clothes. Friends who have travelled in the Centre report similar conditions at other remote communities. (The Gurindji's settlement, Daguragu, the earliest to be set up, is evidently one exception.)

Through a doorway, that day, I glimpsed a room with mattresses crowding the floor; through another, the flames of a small cooking fire, also on the floor. There were too many flies. And although it was only August, the easier time of year, it was extremely hot. Many of the older women had damaged eyes and scars that looked like the record of blows. A sick, crying child had streaming snot and a heart-breaking wheeze.

It transpired that Annette is also the local health worker. Had she not been busy that day organising sales, she would have driven the sick child to Tennant for treatment.

Yet in the *Tennant Creek News* I read later that 90 per cent of Aboriginal infants suffer chronic otitis media and associated conductive hearing loss; 60 per cent of school-aged Aboriginal children experience educationally significant conductive hearing loss. The previous federal Aboriginal Affairs minister, John Herron, commented last year: 'One of the problems in some communities is educational understanding ... to keep the flies off the food, to put disposable nappies in containers where the flies can't get at them.' (*Canberra Times*, 21 November 2000) Herron often got bad press, but this was sound thinking. The Northern Territory Government is developing an Aboriginal Hearing Program.

I felt much better, out there in the blazing sun, when I became involved in the work: my job was to write the artist's name and other details on the back of each canvas, carefully roll it up and stow it in our vehicle. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw that the ostentatiously nonchalant men who were looking on seemed bored. There was a scrubby, dusty oval where boys were kicking a football but the place is a dry community in more than one sense; there is no water for recreation and refreshment. During the Olympics, an Aboriginal leader criticised the money squandered in training a few Aboriginal athletes. He thought it would be better spent on swimming pools for the remote communities. I'm inclined to agree. The stark lack of amenities seemed to say, 'you chose to live here, you put up with it!' At Kurundi, the owners' daughter has a picture of her property by an Aboriginal painter: it depicts a large waterhole surrounded by four smaller ones. What a contrast with the poor, waterless Aboriginal community! There is reputedly a land claim against Kurundi.

It was the same, later, when we camped at Police Station Waterhole in the nearby Davenport National Park (proposed). The park has two magnificent, secluded waterholes. The Northern Territory Supreme Court is in the process of investigating a land claim against the park. During the contact period, such isolated police stations were 'the official means by which outback areas were made safe for European pastoralism, through "pacifying" and "dispersing" the original inhabitants' (D.J. Mulvaney, *Encounters In Place*, 1989).

Yet there in the bush community, out of all that deprivation, indeed, before our eyes, beautiful paintings and ornaments were being created that incorporated designs traditionally used by the people. All the artists were women, although groups of men followed the negotiations over price and were quick to advise the women to hold out for more money. My friend preserved the artist's privacy and her right to

spend the money as she wished, by subtly handing over the fee in a tight wad.

While one woman waited for her decorated coolamon to dry, she showed us her immaculate, new baby girl, wrapped in a disposable nappy and a hot-pink towel. Finally, Annette led us to where a young woman, Stella, was completing a large, intricate work. We had to wait for her to finish it and for the paint to dry before we could leave. Then we drove off with the booty and headed for the hills to set up our camp and swags. There was a lot to think about.

IN Grog War Alexis Wright argues that one cause of the intemperate drinking in Tennant Creek is the excessive number of liquor outlets, or 'takeaways', licensed by the Northern Territory Liquor Commission. Grog is easily available and welfare dollars pass quickly into the pockets of white publicans and storekeepers. Tennant Creek has since introduced Thirsty Thursdays (welfare-cheque days) when all takeaway selling of grog is banned. It is also now illegal to sell five-litre casks in the town. A review of the local liquor laws was being carried out late last year. The hope was that fortified wine will no longer be sold in the town. Noel Pearson, adviser to the Cape York Land Council, said in October 2000, 'Our most immediate task is to get rid of grog and drugs.' No easy task.

At the Canberra Word Festival in March this year, Wright criticised the incorrigible liquor outlets which do their best to bypass the new, restrictive laws. Likewise, Paul Toohey has documented in the *Weekend Australian* (30 September–1 October 2000) that white sly grog-runners are making obscene profits from selling to Aborigines on remote communities. Of the recent spate of reconciliation marches in the east and the south, Wright commented sadly, 'Up here, we're just trying to keep people alive. In the Alice Springs Hospital, all the faces are black faces.'

Perhaps the best way to express my concern for the Jurnkurakurr people is to end with a short story. Soon after I left, an accident occurred in the main street. There was a loud bang and the screech of brakes: an elderly Aboriginal lady lay, deathly still, on the asphalt where she had been knocked down. Drunk, she had wandered into the path of an approaching van. Not one gawking passer-by went to her aid and the ambulance took too long to come. The old lady lapsed into a coma. She died later in Adelaide. The other victim, who had inadvertently killed her, survives to be haunted by the tragedy. He was an 18-year-old Aborigine at the wheel of a health clinic van. ■

Suzanne Edgar is a Canberra writer and poet.



Not all black and white

In a London parish church, **Moira Rayner** came across a paradoxical history.

ST PETER'S OF Belsize Park is a hundred yards from my flat. It's a Victorian church of no particular architectural interest, but it is surrounded by lovely trees and was built on the site of Belsize House, which was once the home of Spencer Perceval, the only British Prime Minister to have been assassinated in the House of Commons.

It is beautiful, and it is decaying, with a darkness about it that I could feel when I dropped in recently to one of its monthly free evening concerts.

I'd first come to the church for what I thought was to be Evensong. It wasn't. It was a sad little prayer meeting in the side chapel, attended by a straggling group of eight obviously odd and unhappy people who didn't know each other, and a very Anglo-Saxon vicar called Jack, who led the meeting with extempore prayers of the entirely predictable kind. In the main body of the church were photographs of the congregation: no more than 20, most of them apparently well past middle age. No children. But the evening prayer gathering, the precious few, were not of that group.

We were strangers. At least one of us was mentally ill and another unable to sit, and another of us was a backpacker, and another the man who brought the key to let us in, and we sat in our semicircle of seagrass-seat chairs. The paint on the walls is peeling off with the grey bubbles of rising damp, and the macramé ornament is grey with dust. I tried to feel meditative and felt embarrassed instead.

Yet this is a church which had once been crowded and fashionable, whose first vicar was described as 'the most wonderful old man in London', a man willing to confront his bishops over injustice. (He was sacked in Boston for setting up a church for the poor without permission.) Eleven hundred people used

Sitting at the back of the church ... I noticed five glass-fronted display boards ... A receipt for the sale of a slave, Jack Ass Goliath, in 1857; another for the services of a slave-hunter, dated 1853. Both looked original.

to attend on Sundays with a waiting list for membership, and the great man's fine marble bust—Francis William Tremlett DD, 1821–1913—was installed in the choir two years after his death and was testimony to the glory days of St Peter's of Belsize Park.

SITTING AT THE BACK of the church and listening to Beethoven, I noticed five glass-fronted display boards leaning untidily against the wall behind me. Expecting a history of the church, I had a closer look. A receipt for the sale of a slave, Jack Ass Goliath, in 1857; another for the services of a slave-hunter, dated 1853. Both looked original. The transcript of a letter from a traveller describing a slave market in Georgia. A daguerreotype of John Brown, old photographs of Abraham Lincoln and a letter from the first and only Confederate President, Jefferson Davis, referring to his visit to the vicar of St Peter's of Belsize Park! A storyboard on the British causes and effects of the American Civil War, and on the history of slavery in Britain.

About half an hour's walk from my flat is Kenwood House, on Hampstead

Heath. That was where the great English Attorney-General, Lord Mansfield, once lived. In the remarkable Somersett case of 1772, Mansfield found that English common law had never acknowledged the condition of slavery; he ordered that the black slave brought within the jurisdiction by his American owner must be released upon the presentation of a bill of habeas corpus. It was one of the highlights of the history of the common law and the independence and courage of the judiciary. It took nearly another 60 years for slavery to be abolished in Great Britain, by an 1834 statute.

So why were these things found in a church in leafy Hampstead that had seen better days and boasted a congregation of, at most, a score? Because, according to the last and most disturbing of the display boards, the 'most wonderful old man in London' was a passionate supporter of the Confederate cause.

He was not alone. The British government would have benefited from a weakened America and covertly supported the Southern cause, but would not commit support until a success seemed likely. Lancashire cotton workers had suffered terrible famine when the supplies had dried up because of the Northern blockade of the Southern states. In 1863 Francis William Tremlett had given several fiery sermons, and published them, on the nobility of the Southern states—the virtues of their cultured, gentlemanly society and of their benevolence to the slaves, who loved them, and whom they had Christianised. He was renowned for his commitment to the Southern cause. He petitioned the Houses of Parliament calling for the cessation of hostilities by granting independence to the South, and demanded that his bishop support the petition. His vicarage, known as 'Rebel's Roost', had been visited not

only by Jefferson Davis but also the Captain of the *Alabama* and Colonel Beauregard, who won the first battle of the American Civil War at Bull Run.

I talked to the current vicar about Tremlett, and discovered that 'the most wonderful old man in London', this celebrated and popular man, had been married at least twice, though no-one ever saw and he never spoke of the first wife, thought to have been 'a chronic invalid'. He had put his own money into the building of the church and had dedicated the balcony to his second wife. His daughter Louise never married and lived with her father, devoting herself to good works, according to a well-polished brass plaque in the side chapel. But the plaque dedicated to Tremlett's memory is so far above the line of sight that it cannot be read.

The display, the Vicar said, is not original but reconstructed. He had found there were no historical documents in the church archives at all, which was most remarkable, and inexplicable. He added that he found the memory of Tremlett an inspiration.

I did not ask what his example would inspire a 21st-century vicar to do. He seemed pleasant and sincere, and a bit sad. His church is very close to the post-war high-rise 'subsidised housing' where the poorest live, in the heart of fashionable and expensive Belsize Park, so perhaps his real work is done there.

I walk past his church, not my church, on the way to and from work, at dusk and at dawn and late at night, and on the way to the village, and sometimes there are dogs being walked in the church's front garden, but there are never any people. I have never seen people chatting after the services. If there are weddings or funerals there, in the whole time I have lived here I have never seen one.

On Sunday mornings a shabby chap hangs around the front door, cadging cash from the few going within. When I go in, I wonder whether there are ghosts, or at least some kind of memory recorded in the stones, of the congregation of 1100 and the waiting list of the rest, who admired, and wanted to worship in the church of, a man who believed that slavery was the work of God. ■

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



Justice in retreat

Timor: the June registration process delivered neither fairness nor security to those still waiting in camps in West Timor.

IN JANUARY last year, I attended the University of Indonesia's conference in Jakarta, marking the 50th anniversary of the Australia-Indonesia relationship. Indonesian speakers were critical of Australia's arrogance in light of the developments in East Timor and *The Bulletin* article of 22 September 1999 on the Howard Doctrine.

I knew these Indonesian claims were not just Jakarta politics when I heard Mr Noke Kiroyan, President of Rio Tinto in Indonesia, speak. Rio Tinto is a major mining company in Indonesia. Internationally, Australians have been well represented high up the corporate ladder of the company—with Leon Davis and now Leigh Clifford at the helm in London.

Kiroyan recalled that the Indonesian National Committee (predecessor to the People's Consultative Assembly and House of Representatives) had adopted a resolution only three months after its establishment, expressing thanks to Australia for support in the struggle for independence between 1945 and 1950. Kiroyan was very blunt in his message:

Unless a shooting war breaks out between the two countries—a likelihood not even worth contemplating in this day and age—

it will always be business as usual between Indonesia and Australia, as far as business is concerned.

Problems in the bilateral relationship appear to have almost exclusively occurred in the political arena.

He then gave a direct insight into the Javanese perception of Australia:

Sure, it is a continent on its own with a West to East span as wide as that of the United States, but unlike the world's only superpower, Australia is a big void with nothing else but arid desert just a few kilometres inland. Its population is not even twice the number of people living in the Greater Jakarta area alone, while we tend to judge the size of a country by the size of its population. Of course, we Indonesians, like other people, do not take kindly to arrogance, but being shown disrespect by a smaller guy adds insult to injury.

I thought it appropriate to offer an apology and an explanation:

I do not represent the Australian government nor can I claim to speak for the Australian people. But I apologise unreservedly for any statements or actions by Australian

representatives that could be rightly perceived by you Indonesians as arrogance. Let me assure you that no-one in Australia, including our political leaders, would repeat the claims that Australia is anyone else's deputy sheriff or anyone else's policeman. Any such doctrine, no matter what its name, would be seen in contemporary Australia as un-Australian. However it is important that Indonesians understand that the spirit of the Australian people who have supported and stood by the people of East Timor since September is the same spirit that motivated the Australian people

with the Indonesian government, the international community is entitled to pressure Indonesia to administer justice through its national institutions in accordance with international criteria. The international community would be justified in taking action to rectify these injustices if Indonesia, after a reasonable time, had singularly failed in the performance of its duties in accordance with the rules of political morality.

To date, the Indonesian legal processes have been too infected to render justice of any sort, even allowing for differing

itarian attempt to make up the shortfall in the exercise of national sovereignty which is currently being subverted by a power elite for its own interests. Such an international intervention could assist those angels of light in the nation state who are advocating greater democratisation and the rule of law.

At the moment, national institutions are inadequate to deliver satisfactory justice in the extreme cases arising out of the redrawing of national boundaries. Shifting the burden to a multinational, culturally appropriate, geographically proximate tribunal could provide a necessary breathing space for the development of more robust national institutions. It could also provide an incentive and a benchmark for those evolving national institutions.

THERE ARE STILL tens of thousands of East Timorese who fled across the border to West Timor in September 1999 who are still waiting in camps until they think it safe to return to East Timor. Those of greatest concern are people who fled from violence and crossed the border by force or in confusion. They are not militia. They are not in receipt of Indonesian government pensions or salaries. They have been without significant international assistance since the killing of the three UNHCR workers in September 2000. They feel trapped in the camps, either because they are uncertain about the situation back home or because militia or camp leaders dominate them.

Along with militia, Timorese TNI (Indonesian military) members and people in receipt of government payments, these 'refugees' went through an Indonesia registration process on 6 June 2001.

Two months before the registration, I wrote to the head of the United Nations Transitional Authority in East Timor (UNTAET), Sergio Vieira de Mello, noting that, 'Asking the simple question whether people "wish to return to East Timor or whether they wish to settle permanently in Indonesia" will provide little guidance about people's real intentions.'

For example: some of those who wish to return wish to do so only when East Timor is heaven on earth; others want to wait until they see what happens after the election at the end of August; others, only when assured the security of their house and their land, and so on. Some

The international community should not have endorsed (let alone paid for) a registration process which could proceed in a closed environment where militia leaders and their political masters enjoy a campaign monopoly without independent scrutiny.

to support you during those five long years in your struggle for independence from the Dutch. That spirit stands for freedom and stands with the underdog.

Having offered such an apology 18 months ago, I now feel more confident that Indonesian as well as Australian readers will also appreciate my concerns. There are, I know, many Indonesians who share my repugnance at many of the things done by some of their nationals acting in the name—and with the authority—of the state. These include: the killing of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) workers in Atambua last year and the resulting failure of Indonesia to provide security or justice; the release of Eurico Guterres from detention after only 23 days under house arrest, and the damning KPP-HAM report leaked to the Australian media in April.

THERE ARE LEGITIMATE grounds for international concern about the protection of human rights for people who were subjected to Indonesian sovereignty without their consent. While the primary responsibility for administering justice to their nationals domiciled in Indonesia lies

cultural and political perceptions about the events that have occurred. Political and economic considerations render the establishment of a special international tribunal unlikely, though in generations to come we may see a case for the establishment of a permanent West Pacific Tribunal to investigate and hear cases that arise out of cross-border disputes.

Eventually, many of these matters may be put off the political agenda by agreement between the Government of Indonesia and the freely elected Government of East Timor. This, however, will not guarantee compliance with the dictates of political morality any more than will other bilateral agreements in which governments consider their own political and economic self-interest. Where these matters are not resolved in accordance with political morality, the individuals who have continued to suffer the wrong will be entitled to seek relief, or at least agitation of their cause, from the international community, including UN bodies and international NGOs.

When international responses are offered, they should be seen not as culturally insensitive interference with the national sovereignty of either Indonesia or East Timor. Rather, they are a human-

who wish to settle permanently in Indonesian territory want to do so only if they can stay in Indonesian West Timor; others want to stay for as long as their salaries are paid; others say so because they have been intimidated or are in receipt of militia propaganda.

International participation in the 6 June exercise may have rendered more certain the count of those in the camps. But the collation of answers to the one question about people's wishes was always unlikely to distinguish their realistic expectations or practical intentions from their ideal hopes or short-term fears. Most East Timorese want to return home eventually. Most of those still in the camps want to stay in West Timor in the foreseeable future. That was common knowledge before the registration.

The registration results will now be used by the Indonesian government, UNHCR and UNTAET to rationalise the abandonment of the majority of the people left in camps on the basis that they have exercised a choice to stay.

UNHCR described this registration as 'a necessary first step towards identifying and promoting durable solutions for East Timor refugees now in East Nusa Tenggara, and in particular, West Timor'.

It was nothing of the sort. It was a further step backwards after the international community's departure in September 2000 and will now be used as a step along the way of UNHCR's withdrawal from Timor before these people have pursued their preferred durable solution.

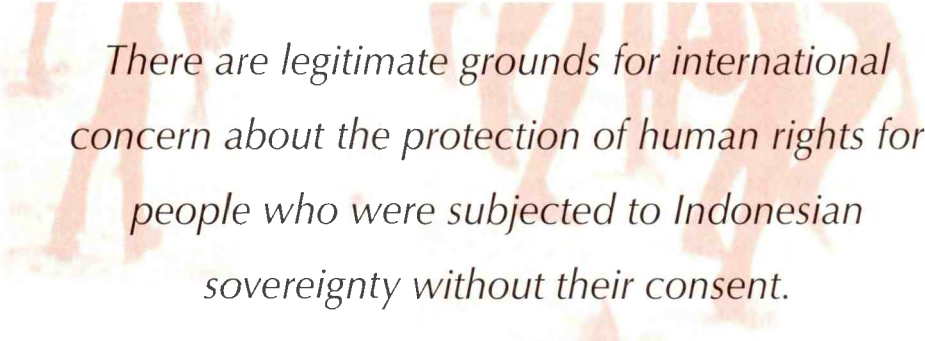
It is impossible to read any sense into the result of such a simplistic survey conducted with inadequate public education and security. It is also regrettable that UNTAET and UNHCR gave credit to such a registration process simply on the basis that nothing else was achievable. Even though it was the best solution proffered by Indonesia, the international community should have pointed out the deficiencies in such a survey ahead of time. For Indonesia, this registration has been a necessary first step in soliciting US\$25 million from foreign donors for the Resettlement Project.

Any registration of intention (to remain or return) in camps as insecure as those in West Timor is dangerous and imprudent unless the anonymity of the registrants can be assured. And even if

anonymity is assured, there is a need for a transparent, independent public education campaign about the process. It was not in evidence when I visited camps around Atambua two weeks before the registration.

The international community should not have endorsed (let alone paid for) a registration process which could proceed in a closed environment where militia leaders and their political masters enjoy a campaign monopoly without independent scrutiny. In one camp, even I was seen as an apologist for UNTAET because I was giving both sides of the story.

Clearly, there was very little public understanding in the camps about the purpose or nature of the registration process. And yet UNHCR covered half the costs of the registration. UNHCR would never have conducted such a process itself in camps where it had open and secure access: pragmatism dictated the funding of a flawed process. It is imperative that the confidentiality of the identity of those seeking to return be maintained so that militia members cannot instigate further intimidation and reprisals. And the provision of donor funds to Indonesia for the resettlement program should depend upon this confidentiality being maintained.



There are legitimate grounds for international concern about the protection of human rights for people who were subjected to Indonesian sovereignty without their consent.

On 28 May 2001, UNTAET agreed to participate in the public education phase of the 6 June registration. Agreement at such short notice indicates that UNTAET was not acting primarily in the interests of the refugees.

International donors should insist that, in future, UNTAET follow appropriate UNHCR procedures and withhold participation in processes that fail to meet the usual UNHCR standards—standards which would be applied when UNHCR has open, secure access to refugees.

My concern here is not to express criticism of the Indonesian government

but rather of the international agencies which, by dropping their standards, have placed people under their mandate at further risk from militia leaders—the same leaders who were able to exclude those agencies from the adequate performance of their duties in September 2000 by the killing of international personnel. Now the militia leaders have achieved their long-term political objective because international agencies have failed to perform their mandate.

International agencies should remain true to their mandate whether or not governments around them do deals. When the international agencies do deals and when the international NGOs become too pragmatic, there is a risk that the fundamental principles of political morality are forfeited for political advantage.

The Timorese leaders will be well served if they have access to the insights and wisdom of other leaders who have had to face the moral dilemmas that inevitably arise when they come to make the decisions for their people. The Timorese people, and all of us in the West Pacific, even the poorest and most disadvantaged, will be best served by international organisations that uphold their mandates.

And finally, we will all be best served if governments of nation states invoke national sovereignty as a shield against outside interference, not as a sword to be used in wanton attack on those within the nation state who do not enjoy self-determination through equal participation in the nation's processes. ■

Frank Brennan SJ is the Director of the Jesuit Refugee Service in East Timor. This is an edited version of an address to the University of Indonesia's seminar, *Identifying Challenges and Opportunities in the West Pacific Region*.

Promising the world



'Everywhere you turn in the environment, it's like swimming with sharks. And it doesn't matter what breed, what nature they are, the sharks in environmental waters are not endangered; there are lots of them.'

—Labor Senator Nick Bolkus, on manoeuvring the environmental ship of state.

THERE IS A characteristic timbre, a note in the voices of many of the more seasoned and powerful Labor politicians, and Nick Bolkus has it. Think of the cadences and tones in Keating's voice, in Richo's: a baritone steadiness that significantly misses the diffident upward inflections of the typical Australian conversational aria. This Labor voice can sledge, it can declaim, but there is no wail, no scream in its range: this self-assuredness doesn't require the higher notes to get what it demands. It lacks demagoguery but gets the numbers.

Senator Nick Bolkus, Shadow Environment Minister, may sound very like Paul Keating and Graham Richardson, but he differs in other, very important ways. First, he comes from the South Australian Left rather than the New South Wales Right. Second, his background is not Anglo-Celt but Greek. He is of the second generation; his grandparents migrated from the Greek Island of Castellorizo in the 1920s to settle in South Australia. Bolkus studied law at the University of Adelaide in the 1970s and worked as a lawyer before being elected to the Senate in 1980.

As did Richardson and Keating, however, he rose quickly to junior ministry. In the Hawke and Keating governments, he served as the Minister for Consumer Affairs and Minister Assisting the Treasurer for Prices (1988–90), Minister for Administrative Services (1990–93) and Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs (1993–96). Now he is the Shadow Minister for the Environment and Heritage. At the moment his job on the opposition front bench also includes particular responsibility for the opposition's involvement in the debate about the republic.

The stark beauty of the Australian bush (see opposite) does not disguise the extent of the environmental task to be tackled by whichever party is in power.

It remains to be seen whether responsibility for the environment can any longer be relegated to junior ministry. The environment is a vote-getter and a vote-loser. But in the labyrinths of an old established political party you can lose the message that the polls give you; you need to build a support base, with all that entails, to get a point across. It's a wonder that any new thing ever gets to be law with such hoops to jump through. The environment ministry has, in the past, been lumped in with sport, recreation and other areas. The portfolio has often been given to the Left in factional deals in the knowledge that the Left rarely has any clout these days. But here its twinning with Heritage is more logical, and argues perhaps a changing perspective.

His opposite number, Senator Robert Hill, the Howard government's Minister for the Environment, has ample experience of being rolled in Cabinet. Bolkus was quick to point out a recent example in a media release on 17 April:

It is becoming an all too familiar occurrence to see Senator Hill being overridden by his colleagues with the support of the Prime Minister. How much more humiliation is he prepared to take?

Bolkus says that Hill is a likeable man, and he can have a drink with him. But he is at pains to point out that there are fundamental differences between Hill's policies and his.

'I think Robert's personable and friendly, [but] with a very conservative agenda that's given a harder edge by the National Party and John Howard.'

What is this conservative agenda?





'Robert's personal agenda is to give back powers to the states ... Robert thinks of land management totally as a state responsibility, and he doesn't appreciate the importance of national and international leadership on the environment ... He himself went out of his way to set up a process to undermine World Heritage mechanisms ... Nice guy, but some sugar-coated pernicious policy directions.'

Bolkus also says that Hill has a policy to split the environmental movement, and not to negotiate with its peak bodies such as the Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) and the Wilderness Society.

The matter in the 17 April media release concerned land-clearing, something that the Labor Party had in its war chest to trade with the Greens to get their preferences in the Ryan by-election. The matter was considered important enough to warrant a joint announcement; Kim Beazley's name was on the assurance. The promise had been made. Something as important as Green by-election preferences in an election year could not be left to an environment minister alone, even if the issue involved was the business of his portfolio. Nick Bolkus knows this and works with it.

'We could run two strands there: we've got forests and we've got greenhouse ... [the interconnection] is what the old-style politics doesn't pick up. They see it as a sideshow issue, as an issue designated to a minister. OK, Hill is the Leader of the Government in the Senate, but he's not respected or listened to on environment.'

'Old-style politics' is his term for the corralling of environmental issues as 'marginal green'. The high international profile and general respectability of greenhouse issues in particular is something that prime ministers must address. But the interconnection of greenhouse issues with their less establishment-credible issues such as native forest logging, land-clearing and fossil fuel use is the area worked by environment ministers, less evident in public perception and therefore less addressed in government policies.

'I've been trying to get a more whole-of-government appreciation of environment as an issue, and I've been there long enough to know that if environment's left to an environment minister, then in the normal running of Cabinet, you can quite easily be marginalised.'

'We've set up a process, we've set up a couple of things, with a working group of shadow ministers, from people like Cheryl Kernot and Carmen Lawrence to people like Martin Ferguson and Laurie Ferguson. Laurie Brereton as well ...'

The vocal inflection goes up slightly at the last name mentioned, but the question does not mean uncertainty—you are being asked if you got the significance of that name. Graham Richardson said once that Laurie Brereton was the first person he had met who had real power.

The working group, he says, 'has the job of focusing on environmental issues, recognising that they go to economics, international affairs, industry policy, regional policy; so we've had basically a standing committee of the shadow ministry for 12 months.'

Was this a formal committee with a name?

'No, it's informal, but for instance the ACF has come along and given us huge contributions from time to time. We've had CSIRO, we've had the ACF and National Farmers' Federation on dry land salinity issues and so on. We've had huge discussions on greenhouse, so basically it's one of the few working groups in the shadow ministry. Kim's committed to setting up an Office of Sustainable Development in the prime minister's department were we to win. That means right in the core of government there will be people driving environmental issues.'

In other words, the decisions will be made on environmental issues by the same people who have always made the decisions. In practice, the environment has never really been in any environment portfolio's bailiwick, since it crosslinks with virtually all the other portfolios, from primary industry to defence and health. Environmental consciousness has to suffuse all the other areas of government before any real change comes in.

'In our policy, adopted last year, people like Laurie Brereton, for instance, has listed environment, international environmental diplomacy, as one of his top three international initiatives for a Labor party in government. It permeates a whole lot of areas. I'm just trying to get the mechanisms in place before we win government, so that people are a lot more prepared for it when we do win.'

It would seem to be an answer to one of Bob Brown's prayers—a major party greening up. But Bolkus laughs a bit at that.

'We'll never be as green as Bob would like us to be. Where would it stop, does he think?'

'We're on the cusp of an era where being green provides jobs. I don't know that it needs to say "stop". We've got some really fundamental problems in the country—loss of species, habitat, greenhouse issues plus protection of World Heritage areas. It will never stop as an ongoing agenda but the resistance to accommodating it will, I think, lessen with time. As people become more aware, as [green] technology becomes more accessible, we'll acquire a better quality of life.'

AS FAR AS TECHNOLOGY GOES, there are encouraging signs in the corporate world, something in which Senator Bolkus is interested. When the twinning of BMW with the kingdom of Dubai in hydrogen fuel cell research is mentioned, he is enthusiastic.

'There are two issues. There's the corporate world, and companies have worked out that if you can actually do things cheaper, then you'll make more money. So if they can use less fuel, they can reduce

their costs, and they've worked out the economic imperative, they've worked out that a lot of their practices are unsustainable, in the eyes of the public. And people are nervous about technology.

'But I think technology has empowered us with knowledge about what it costs individuals and nations. So when a company acts badly in one part of the world, sales in another part are affected. They can see advantages in the marketplace when they act in an environmentally friendly way.

'So there are different motivations that all lead to the same outcome. And there are those companies that actually believe in social responsibility. There are a lot more of those around now as well. But whatever the reason, as I discovered when I went to the Hague for the Climate Change Conference, there is now a huge industry lobby group pushing in the direction of sustainability. So that's why I think it's no longer "industry versus greens", it's "industry and greens" on the one hand versus some industries on the other.'

He is scathing about the level of ignorance in Australia about other cultures.

'About Dubai. That's an interesting country. We're ignorant about the Emirates. When it comes to salinity, water treatment etc., they are doing what we should be doing. They've gazumped us. The leadership of the Emirates is smart enough to realise that their resources are not endless. They're setting themselves up for a more balanced future. It's a pity other countries, other companies, aren't taking their lead. And though their attitude to women may not be as progressive as we would like ... in resources, they're moving.'

The combination of conservative attitudes to gender and far-sighted policies on resources is something that does not surprise him. 'I've been in politics long enough to know you shouldn't expect consistency,' he grins. 'You'd like to get it, but whether it's the left or the right, there's no consistency.'

He likes his portfolio. Having been on the front bench for 13 years, ten as a minister, it helps to like the work, which can be gruelling. 'The jobs get harder. I used to think Immigration was an impossible portfolio, though I enjoyed it lots. I think the challenges facing the environment are the biggest challenges facing this country. I'm actually looking forward to having a few years where we can work them through, put in some long-term policies and structures.'

He says the last few years have seen environmental policy basically on a lay-by scheme.

'They've sold parts of Telstra, they've provided some funding. By providing that funding they've claimed to have added new funding to the environment, but what they don't tell you is that they've cut back on a lot of the old funding.'

He says that the Howard government has spent around \$80 million a year less on the environment than did the Keating government. And money for

ongoing programs no longer comes from core funding in the normal course of government, but from the sale of assets. Part of his battle in a new Labor government will be to change that funding culture, where, for instance, the Coastcare program has had its yearly allocation cut from \$30 million last year to \$1 million this year. He calls that 'amateurish economics', and states that normal core funding must be there for important programs. The Howard government, he says, has removed some of the best brains from the environment department, with 'Finance Department hacks running too many areas of it.' That is something he pledges to change.

How did he come to the environment portfolio? 'Kim thought I'd be good for it!' He enumerates a number of issues he was close to or worked on when in government, including Coronation Hill, Shoalwater Bay, stopping food irradiation. He says that an 'international white-shoe corporate brigade', based in Queensland, want to start up food irradiation again. He regards this as 'plain loony' when Australia's biggest advantage on world food markets is its clean, green image. 'I think Kim thought that environment would be a sticky portfolio, needing someone with a bit of experience, and that's why I was given it.'

What does he think about the future? He says he can't wait for the next six months to be over; he longs for certainty as to whether they will be in government. 'Every day, every week, every month of this government is wasted. I just want to get in there and start shaking the apple tree a bit. Salinity, land degradation and greenhouse: huge issues. I think Kim will have to put those on the national agenda for premiers and for himself to bash out in the first few months.'

He knows he will be in for a fight; when the ALP put out its statement on land-clearing it was criticised by the National Farmers' Federation. Powerful interests, many that have influence in his own party, are still making money out of the very activities that an environmentally responsible government in the 21st century must curtail. In the meantime he is keen to demonstrate that ALP environmental policies are deeply different from the Coalition's. He says he is 'totally frustrated', for instance, with the CFMEU's position on forests. Given an electoral environment where, he says, Bob Brown will be easily as important as Pauline Hanson, given that the election is bound to go to preferences, the ALP must look to its environmental credentials.

But he is there for a fight, he enjoys the tussles in the Senate. He had carriage of the Wik issue in the Senate and he talks about it like a warrior remembering a battle.

'If there's a challenge, it keeps me going; if there's a fight, I like to be in it.' Why? 'An old Labor politician said to me once, "Enjoy the struggle, because you don't get too many victories".'

Juliette Hughes is a freelance writer.



The name of the

THERE'S A BIG paradox at the heart of sport. It's this: a sporting contest can incite extreme feelings in people—of hope, of joy, of sadness, of rage—yet sport is, at its core, trivial. It's a game played apropos of nothing but itself.

All sorts of sports get invested with all sorts of meanings by all sorts of people, but the game itself is, essentially, playful. There's no tangible product or service produced by it, as there is in business. Sport is also transient and ephemeral. The Australian historian Greg Denning magnificently encapsulates an aspect of this paradox when he says: 'There is nothing so momentary as a sporting achievement, and nothing so lasting as the memory of it.' (*Victorian Historical Magazine*, February 1982, p75)

Being at a game of football, or cricket, or netball can be like entering an alternative universe. When I walk into the Melbourne Cricket Ground, and become

encased in that giant circle, the rest of the world can cease to exist. Nothing else seems to matter until the time comes to step outside of the magic circle again. Which is why the experience of playing or watching good sport can be so transporting.

There's an often-heard and over-used phrase around professional sport these days: the one about sport being a business. I cringe every time I hear it. Firstly because it's often used to excuse or explain all sorts of uncaring or self-interested behaviour in sport. More importantly, though, it's because at a fundamental level it is simply untrue, and can never be true if sporting competitions are to continue to survive and thrive.

Before teasing this out, it's worth pausing to reflect on the extent to which the notion of 'professional sport' as 'a business these days' has been absorbed.

First, professional (and even amateur) sports organisations adopted the corporate model of mission statements and strategic plans and performance indicators for 'growing' their sport-business.

Now, cop this. There's a tourism and hospitality company in Queensland called Club Crocodile, which runs a chain of hotels and resorts. It has an annual turnover of around \$25 million. After the 2000 AFL Grand Final, the head of the company, Peter Thynne, decided to restructure the entire organisation of the business using, as his model, the Essendon Football Club. I interviewed Peter Thynne, a thoughtful and genial man, for *The Sports Factor* last year, and what follows is essentially what he said in our interview.

In this remodelling of business as sport, each of the management and coaching and playing positions in the Essendon Football Club has its corollary



game

Is it profit? Or sportsmanship? Entertainment or business? **Amanda Smith** and **Tim Stoney** examine the state of the sports that are part of the pulse of Australian life. Their discussion took place at a *Eureka Street* Monday forum at Newman College.

in Club Crocodile. So, the Executive Chairman becomes Kevin Sheedy, the coach. The Property Manager is James Hird, the captain. When the Chairman wants the Property Manager to do something that's a bit menial, or deal with a boring problem, it's Kevin Sheedy telling James Hird to play in the back pocket for a while, because there's a weakness there. What does James Hird do? He goes to the back pocket, knowing it's a lesser position than centre half forward, but he goes there, he relishes the challenge, he fixes up the problem. Within the quarter he's back to where he was on the field, having learnt more and achieved more by dint of his time in the back pocket.

This does very well as a model for how team relationships and hierarchies work. The model starts to break down, however, when you think about the relationship that the Essendon Football Club has with

the other teams in the Australian Football League, and compare it with the relationship that Club Crocodile has with its competitors. When you move beyond the possible similarities of internal structures between a sports team and a tourist business, into the wider structures in which they operate, there's a big difference. Sport isn't and can't be strictly business-like.

Geoff Dickson, a lecturer in the School of Health and Human Performance at Central Queensland University, puts it this way: he says that the difference is that the ultimate measure of success, the ultimate aim, of a business, is not only to sell more hamburgers or cars than your competitors, but to destroy the competition. McDonald's doesn't need Hungry Jack's or Burger King in order to survive; the Ford Motor Company doesn't need General Motors for it to exist in the industry. In fact,

McDonald's and Ford would be more successful businesses if they had fewer competitors. The Essendon Football Club, however, does need the Carlton Football Club and the Collingwood Football Club and all the other clubs in the Australian Football League, in order to have a reason to exist at all. If it's got no-one to play with, then, in business terminology, it's not capable of producing an output.

What this means is that the teams of the AFL, and sports teams in all Australian leagues and associations, collude. They operate as a cartel. In business, that's anti-competitive and illegal; in sport, it's the only way that there is to be competitive.

It's also in the interests of continued survival in the market-place—for teams, and the leagues they play in—that the quality of output is roughly equivalent across all those teams. That is, there's a



good, even competition. The outcome of any match between any of the teams in the league must be uncertain, and the team that wins the big competition at the end of the season should change year by year more often than not.

So professional leagues and associations need to collude in various ways. In the AFL, it's through the salary cap. This operates to stop a club that has access to lots of money from going out and buying up all the very best players they can. The AFL also has a draft system, to control the recruitment and transfer of players, and there's revenue-sharing, as in the case of the proceeds of the television rights. That's all the stuff of cartels.

It is another paradox of sport that the teams of a sports league must compete and co-operate, simultaneously. Each team wants to beat every other team. The desire to destroy the competition, however, is only metaphorical. The

In my recollection, the equivalently huge front-page story concerning a comparable scandal in the corporate world was when Nick Leeson ripped off Barings Bank. The amount of money involved there was squillions.

A matter of corporate fraud only gets this kind of major public and media attention when it involves enormous amounts of money, and/or is a very strange story. The Nick Leeson affair was both these things. Whereas a whiff of corruption in a sport, involving comparatively small amounts of money, always gets huge attention. The difference is that we expect, or at least we're unsurprised by, unethical behaviour in the dog-eat-dog world of business. In sport, it is genuinely shocking to discover that a player could also operate as a rogue trader.

Nevertheless, there are many worse things that happen in this world to get upset and angry about than discovering

does in business), it's a fundamental denial of the essence of sport. As Gideon Haigh puts it in relation to cricket match-fixing, it's 'the ultimate twisting of a game that exalts glorious uncertainty.' (*The Bulletin*, 27 June 2000, p29)

For sport to exist at all, it has to exist within an ethical framework of playing fairly. There's no point to it otherwise. A game of cricket that's fixed has lost all its meaning. In the corporate world, a rogue trader might wreak a lot of financial damage, but still doesn't destroy the *raison d'être* of business; the presence of a rogue trader in cricket or any other sport does.

This is why it's so terribly important that sportspeople understand that taking even just a little bit on the side is a fundamental denial of the meaning of what they do. It's wrong to think that the kind of cynical acceptance and resignation we might have about unethical practices in



defeated team must survive to compete another day. So, there are lots of ways that these competitors are also co-operating in a joint venture. This is not generally the way of business.

ON AN ETHICAL LEVEL, there are also clear ways in which sport is not an exact parallel with business. Our expectations of ethical behaviour in sport are not the same as our expectations of ethical behaviour in business. This relates to the uncertainty of outcome that's fundamental to sport, and what happens when that uncertainty of outcome is denied.

The biggest front-page story about sport last year was the cricket match-fixing and betting scandal: Hansie Cronje and his mates on the take, involving some thousands of dollars (and, of course, the saga of corruption in cricket continues).

that a game of cricket has been rigged. Why then does it seem so bad when a cricketer pockets a few thousand bucks to throw a game? In part, it's the sense that if you can't even trust a game of cricket to be fair dinkum any more, then what can you trust in this world?

As, in our imagination, sport exists in a magic circle, so too must its ethics. An insider trader, in business, is really just over-enthusiastically doing what business does—minimise input, maximise profit. It doesn't mean that the business universe as we know it disintegrates when that happens.

However, if you cheat in sport, by way of trying not to win, you destroy the thing itself. To throw a game, to interfere with the uncertainty of the outcome, is no longer participating in sport. It's not just breaking the rules (as the insider trader

business applies equally to our feelings about sport. This applies even (perhaps especially) in the age when sport is thought to be a business, and it fails to recognise a fundamental difference between the two.

Business matters because it matters in this world. In its own space and time, sport matters to many of us (to return to my beginning) because it matters so little. We are putting sport in a dangerous place when we absorb the business paradigm without recognising that, in sport, the paradigm does not apply. ■

Amanda Smith is the presenter of *The Sports Factor* on ABC Radio National. Transcript of Peter Thynne and Geoff Dickson interviews (17 November 2000 and 9 October 1998) at www.abc.net.au/rn: The Sports Factor, Radio National.

Asked 'Is Australian sport playing the game?',
Tim Stoney turned the question around. 'What game is
Australian sport playing?' he enquired.

AUSTRALIAN SPORT, along with much of Australian society—education, the arts, health, the media, politics—has been forced to play the corporate game.

The main value underlying the corporate game is profit. Successful outcomes are measured in dollars, efficiency, productivity and share dividends. Corporatism believes the market can solve all society's problems if left unfettered by governments and social and community considerations.

In post-Olympics Australia, sportsmen and women have never been more celebrated or rewarded for their success. The 'successful' ones quickly learn how to 'play the game'—they get managers, choose the right products to endorse, become media celebrities, rub shoulders



with other celebrities and turn up to all the A-list parties.

Sports managers thrive—stitching up deals, demanding a bigger slice of the financial rewards, carefully constructing and defending their stars' public images to keep them compatible with the needs of corporate marketeers. They're so successful at packaging their stars that success *in* sport is decreasingly about being successful *at* sport. Just ask Anna Kournikova whether you need to win tennis tournaments to have the right image to sell.

In a corporate world-view, the relationship between those who manage the game, those who play it and, ultimately, those who watch it, shifts fundamentally.

It's only a year ago that a spokesperson for the then-embattled Colonial Stadium was reported as saying that patrons would have to change the way they went to the footy. They'd just have to get used to pre-booking tickets and could no longer rely

on turning up to the game of their choice on a whim as they'd always done. In other words 'consumers'—we're not supporters any more—would just have to get used to the new 'efficient' system. A system that puts the interests and agendas of the stadium managers ahead of the supporters.

The rhetoric of the market has defined what is possible in areas such as health and education. Now sportsmen and women and sporting bodies are learning that the values traditionally associated with sport—community, identity and the common good—are expendable when they conflict with the bottom line. Turn a profit or cease to exist. That's the new rule. Values—they can be packaged and sold (this is the function of memorabilia).

To give you an example—the AFL, in the push for a national competition, has had to break down the traditional suburban identities of clubs and create new national identities. But some of the stronger clubs—clubs with robust identities—have managed to reinvent their nostalgic suburban identities on a larger

scale and reap the financial rewards for it. The Essendon–Collingwood Anzac Day clash is a good example. It has all the nostalgia of a traditional suburban clash, layered with Anzac Day sentiment and 90,000 paying reasons for both clubs to protect their asset.

The corporate culture has even altered our idea of sportsmanship. Conflict makes great TV, so the sledging in the recent Test series between Australia and India was more widely reported than were the achievements of individual players, and, in many respects, overshadowed those achievements. Shane Warne is marketable not just because he's a great player, but because he's controversial. His antics fill the sports pages more than his achievements—by any measure he's big business.

But not everyone's a winner in the corporate game. Recently, Olympic cyclist Michelle Ferris, a medallist and one of the outstanding competitors in her field,

announced her retirement because she can't afford to keep competing.

There'd be a national uprising if Michael Klim or Ian Thorpe did the same. The point is they'd never have to, because individually they're both so marketable and they are in a sport with a long tradition of success in Australia. Whereas Ferris, in a sport which is neither popular, marketable nor traditionally one we've excelled at, will always struggle.

Many people are searching for a space where emotions are freely expressed, where connections stretch beyond the fence, where people find, in participation, a sense of themselves that is at the same time rooted in the immediate experience, but also connected to a sense of community based on something other than personal gain.

Sport has always been a public space where people come together. In a world where not just public space, but the very idea of the public has been devalued, the corporate takeover of sport restricts access to those who can pay. Corporatism has so taken over sport—the AFL in particular—that a team captain can now sell his name to a brand of cat food; not one but two clubs can sell the once-sacred jumper to one-off corporate sponsorship deals; and one of the biggest stories in the lead-up to the Sydney Olympics was which brand of bathers our swimmers would wear.

The patterns repeat themselves in other areas. In universities, economics and business schools thrive because their output swells the pool of corporate workers, while arts departments which—heaven forbid—might teach people to think and understand history, struggle for survival. In politics, we make choices based on what we can afford in the short-term, instead of talking about the values that should underpin those decisions. In schooling, parents feel they are risking their child's future if they don't send them to a private school. And in health, we have virtually given up on the idea of a universal health system.

Australian sport is playing the same game. For all its beauty, energy and importance, it has lost sight of the very things that have made it such a powerful metaphor for our culture. ■

Tim Stoney is a reporter for Network Ten.



Literature under arms



'Rolf Boldrewood?' The well-spoken young Port Fairy professional puzzled over the name. 'Rolf Boldrewood? Forgive my ignorance. I'm only new to the district. Who is Rolf Boldrewood?'

In that moment my passion for research into the landscapes of Australian writers plummeted on to hard ground—but it was only winded.

This happened some years ago during my pursuit of Boldrewood around Victoria's Port Fairy district. In that chase two things impressed me. First, that ignorance of our literary heritage is widespread. Second, the jolting realisation of the savagery with which early white colonisers of south-west Victoria treated the people whose land they took and whose way of life they destroyed.

Port Fairy has been less known for literary associations than for tourist attractions and the Folk Festival held on the March Labour Day weekend

which attracts some 30,000 visitors. Port Fairy is unique and beautiful. River, wharf, fishing boats, coastline, Griffiths Island and the mutton birds and lighthouse compete with long lines of towering Norfolk Island pines and street after street of the pink-flowering Norfolk Island hibiscus, as well as cosy-looking old stone houses, sedate old hotels, banks and churches. The place encourages walking, dallying and thoughts of the past.

Perhaps it is understandable that William Earle, in the Foreword to *Earle's Port Fairy* (1896), forecast a brilliant prosperity for Port Fairy. The Moyne River, he believed, would be 'lined with the world's merchantmen, warehouses and manufactories' and



'Griffiths Island will be either a huge manufacturing centre, or, preferably, the location of the palatial residences of the capitalist ...'

Fortunately, Earle's prognostications remain unfulfilled: the Moyne is still relatively peaceful and pretty and Griffiths Island is still home to its massive shearwater colony which gives much wonder and delight.

The shearwaters, or mutton birds, are incredible. They nest on Griffiths Island and the nearby Pea Soup area. Each autumn these tens of thousands take off for their 15,000km round trip to winter in the Aleutian Islands and Kamchatka and return via the Californian coast to cross the Pacific in early spring.

At dusk during spring and summer the viewing platforms provide marvellous sights of the birds swooping to their nests. In his Foreword to J.N. Powling's history of Port Fairy, Stephen Murray-Smith recalled his memories of the scene:

... a full moon over the sea on a summer's night, and watching with awe and a high delight as the mutton-birds swoop low, backwards and forwards over the dunes, criss-crossing the moon's face and reminding us that all this was happening before the first tired and anxious seamen found their little haven.

Nearby scenic spots like Yambuk Beach and the Craggs have windswept views of the rocky monolith, Lady Julia Percy Island. They surpass the bluestone splendours of Koroit, the choice potato and onion fields of Killarney, the Tower Hill State Game Reserve and the growing glossiness of an expanding Warrnambool.

While Port Fairy retains its uniqueness and beauty, many residents fear that unrestrained modern

development may change its character. This worry has led to the organisation of the Friends of Port Fairy which actively campaigns to ensure the maintenance of natural history, built heritage and the coastline, river and rural atmosphere.

IN ADDITION TO ALL its other attributes the district abounds with literary connections—a fact which the successful Port Fairy Easter Book Fair, first held in 1999, will undoubtedly help to exhibit and emphasise.

As a youth, Thomas Browne, long, long before he started writing as Rolf Boldrewood and became one of Australia's most prolific authors, set up the Squattlesea Mere run a little over 30 kilometres west of Port Fairy in 1844. He spent 15 years there.

Close by at Yambuk, Annie Baxter kept her journals of the 1840s, which Lucy Frost brought to light in 1992 as *A Face in the Glass: The Journal and Life of Annie Baxter Dawbin*.

Henry Kingsley, it is claimed, spent time in the district in the 1850s before writing *The Recollections of Geoffrey Hamlyn* (1859).

As a child, Ethel Richardson lived at the Koroit post office some 30 years before she became Henry Handel Richardson. Her father was buried in 1879 in the cemetery on the lower slopes of Tower Hill overlooking sandhills and sea. She immortalised him in her masterpiece, *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony*, describing his resting place in the penultimate paragraph:

A quarter of a mile off, behind a sandy ridge, the surf, driving in from the Bight, breaks and booms eternally
continued on p33 ...

Above left: Lighthouse, Port Fairy, est. 1857, on Griffiths Island.

Above right: Waterloo Swamp, 4 November 1999. 'A good many Blacks were killed about Dunmore at Waterloo and other swamps', wrote Eliza Rutledge in 1885.

Photographs by Dawn Sendy

Such is character

Rolf Boldrewood: A Life, Paul de Serville, The Miegunyah Press (MUP), 2000, ISBN 0 5228 4618 1, RRP \$65.95

IN 1879, as he and his gang prepared to rob the Bank of New South Wales in Jerilderie, Ned Kelly was also trying to get an 8000-word manifesto published. The manifesto has become known as the Jerilderie Letter. In it, Kelly describes not only his grievances against the police for the treatment of his family, but he also presents an account of how he sees the treatment of his fellow countrymen by the English. He says that 'there was never such a thing as justice in the English laws' and 'many a blooming Irishman rather than subdue to the Saxon yoke, were flogged to death and bravely died in servile chains but true to the shamrock and a credit to Paddy's Land.' It is on the basis of such statements that Kelly is increasingly seen as a political figure whose career outside the law was motivated by a sense of justice.

Kelly died in 1880. Five thousand people waited outside the jail for his execution, a crowd described by one paper as 'young, well-dressed and respectable' and by another as 'a mob of nondescript idlers'.

In 1882, Thomas Alexander Browne, writing under the pseudonym of Rolf Boldrewood, began serialising *Robbery Under Arms* in the *Sydney Mail*. It was published as a book in 1888 and has never been out of print since. Characters such as the fallen gentleman, Starlight, and places such as 'Terrible Hollow' (a natural formation which provides perfect seclusion for a gang of bushrangers) have both found a place in the popular Australian imagination. To take just one example, John Marsden's series of books, beginning with *Tomorrow When the War Began*, was one of the publishing phenomena of the '90s. The books deal with a group of teenagers who fight a guerrilla resistance against the occupation of their country by an unnamed occupation force and include a natural hide-out for the young people called Hell. It is eerily similar to Terrible Hollow.

Two of Boldrewood's best known bushrangers, Dick and Jim Marston, are also teenagers when they begin life on the run. But unlike the Kellys and unlike Marsden's young heroes, Boldrewood's bushrangers are described with strict moral censure.

There is some concession that the Marstons' father was transported for a minor crime and may have reason to have a chip on his shoulder, but throughout the novel the young Marstons are seen as both foolish and reprehensible not to have followed the example of their hard-working neighbour, George Storefield, and become rich by honest means. If they weren't so stupid, they would have learned from Herbert Falkland, a squatter who employs them for a time, that the working classes and the moneyed classes should trust each other more. Even Boldrewood's depiction of landscape has a moral quality: birds hoot warnings against the life of crime. In fact, the whole novel, narrated for the most part as a remorseful Dick Marston awaits his lonely execution, has a didactic purpose.

He has come to a sad end because of moral infirmity.

PAUL DE SERVILLE'S biography of Rolf Boldrewood sheds a great deal of light both on this phenomenon and on the late-19th-century Australian society which could accommodate such divergent attitudes to bushranging. Boldrewood wrote many books. *Robbery Under Arms* comes from about the middle of his writing career. The author was prolific for the simple reason that he needed the money. He was so pragmatic about writing that he once paid a younger novelist, Louis Becke, for a manuscript. Becke thought Boldrewood might use it as an outline for a story and was unimpressed, to say the least, when he discovered that two thirds of Boldrewood's new novel, a seafaring adventure, *A Modern Buccaneer*, had been 'borrowed'. There was no acknowledgement of Becke and the legal services of Banjo Paterson were brought into play. De Serville does not sensationalise this fascinating incident. Here, as throughout this biography, he is even-handed in dealing with the failings of a man whose character he generally admires.

Browne did a lot besides write. His life story could form the basis of a Bryce Courtenay or Di Morrissey saga. He came to Sydney as a child on board a convict vessel. His family were at home in solid

colonial houses such as *Tempe* and *Enmore* which have since given their names to suburbs. He was an early grazier in the western districts of what became Victoria. Here he witnessed first-hand some of the earliest contact between European and Aboriginal populations. This was not a happy story. When gold was discovered, he did a stint as a butcher on the fields. He tried his hand at farming in the Riverina. He became a magistrate at Gulgong where he was part of the group that hosted the visit of Anthony Trollope. He settled in Albury as chairman of the Land Licensing Board, a body set up to adjudicate the competing claims of squatters and selectors. He died at a ripe old age during World War I. He had had plenty of experience of bushrangers.

De Serville's work is painstaking and thorough. He has found, for example, extensive evidence in Boldrewood's life and work of the impact of his literary hero, Walter Scott.

But De Serville's precise scholarship is undergirded by an argument. He sees Boldrewood as representative of a colonial entity known as 'conservative Australia'. The hallmarks of 'conservative Australia' are a sense of social hierarchy, tradition, family identity and so on. Boldrewood's belief in the importance of character is evident in a response he wrote to Henry Lawson's *In the Days When the World was Wide*:

There is a general complaint against society as at present constituted, the justice of which is doubtful. So keen an observer as the writer should concede that failure and success are largely governed by the individual's own attributes, in all human societies.

One of the cold comforts of this biography is the reminder of just how long that particular debate has been going on in Australian society. ■

Michael McGirr, a former publisher of *Eureka Street*, is the author of *Things You Get For Free*.

... continued from p31

on the barren shore. Thence, too, come the fierce winds which, in stormy weather, hurl themselves over the land, where not a tree, not a bush, nor even a fence stands to break their force or to limit the outlook. On all sides the eye can range, unhindered, to where the vast earth meets the infinitely vaster sky. And, under blazing summer suns, or when a full-moon floods the night, no shadow falls on the sun-baked or moon-blanching plains, but those cast by the few little stones set up in human remembrance.

The historian, journalist and civil liberties warrior, Brian Fitzpatrick, was born not far away at Cudgee in 1905. Frank Hardy spent his early childhood on the outskirts of Koroit in a tiny community called Southern Cross.

Helen Palmer, daughter of Nettie and Vance, author of many school historical texts and editor of the independent socialist journal, *Outlook* (1957–1970), taught in Port Fairy during the first years of World War II before she joined the WAAF.

David Martin and Stephen Murray-Smith were caught in a sudden storm off Lady Julia Percy Island in 1962 which nearly resulted in tragedy. The novelist, John Hooker, lives and writes in the district. The setting of his latest rip-roaring novel, *Beyond the Pale* (1998), is a fictionalised version of early white settlement there.

The 18-year-old London-born Boldrewood arrived in the Port Fairy area in 1844 with cattle, horses and two or three servants. His real name was Thomas Brown, which he later changed to Browne. He took up land which eventually he came to own, a huge run of some 30,000 acres through which flowed the Eumeralla River. He thought it a marvellous spot: 'all the land I looked upon was deep-swarded, thickly-verdured as an English meadow. Wild duck swam about in the pools and meres of the wide misty fen ...'

He gave this paradise the name of Squattlesea Mere, taken from Sir Walter Scott's novel *Woodstock* in which one of the main characters, the liquor-loving, irrepressible adventurer, Roger Wildrake, habitually introduces himself as coming from 'Squattlesea Mere, in the moist county of Lincoln'. Scott was Boldrewood's favourite author. He carried several Scott volumes to Squattlesea Mere and took his writing pseudonym from a Scott poem.

In later life, he looked back with great fondness on his years at Squattlesea Mere. His underrated memoir, *Old Melbourne Memories* (1884), recalled 'no engagements, no office work, no fixed hours, no sums or lessons of any kind or sort'. Within a few kilometres' ride he had friends at Dunmore, the pastoralist partners Irving, Campbell and MacKnight, 'men of high principle, great energy, early culture and refined habits' who possessed qualities he admired: 'elevated ideas' and 'broad and ennobling ideas of colonisation'.

When he arrived, Port Fairy had a population of over 500. He became steward of the Port Fairy Racing Club. He bred hacks and draught horses and sold them in the yard of the Caledonian Inn where he gave champagne lunches on those sale days. This hotel still operates and motel rooms grace that yard today in the remodelled stables. He attended parties and dinners at the home of the town's foremost businessman, William Rutledge, at 8 Cox Street which now houses the Youth Hostel.

The first Port Fairy Hunt was held at Christmas 1844. A trapped dingo substituted for the fox and the hunt took place on the farmlands near the huge sand dunes which still hug the coastline towards Tower Hill. The dingo headed that way but eventually took to the sea when the hounds got too close. It was recaptured to be put through a similar ordeal at a later stage.

NOT FAR FROM Squattlesea Mere near the coast, Annie Maria Baxter held sway over Yambuk homestead with eye-taking panache. Boldrewood wrote of the property in *Old Melbourne Memories*:

Yambuk was then an extremely picturesque station, combining within its limits unusual variety of soil and scenery, land and water. The larger grazing portion consisted of open undulating limestone ridges, which ran parallel with the sea beach ... wild wrathful gales hurtled over the ocean waste, rioting southward to the pole which lay beyond. Mustering then in bad weather was a special experience. Gathering on the sea-hills, the winter's day darkening fast, a drove of heavy bullocks perhaps lumbering over the sand ridges ahead of us, amid the flying sand and spume, their hoofs in the surf ever and anon, it was a season study, worth riding many a mile to see. No cove or bay restrained the angry waters. A misty cloud-rack

'I hear you've bought Squattlesea Mere,' said the friend. 'Yeah,' replied Mattie, 'and the first thing I'm going to do is change that name.' 'What?' spluttered his friend. 'Don't do that whatever you do. That place is history.' Mattie likes telling that story against himself.





It was a green and peaceful land with grazing sheep on the ridges and the ubiquitous northern hemisphere conifers dominating the horizon. The moans of the past were faint. Screams, shots and desperate yells found it hard to cross the divide of 150 years.

formed the horizon ... while giant billows, rank on rank, foamed fiercely around, to meet in the wrath and impotently rage on the lonely shore below us.

Afterwards, there awaited 'lights and glowing fires' and a well-appointed table 'presided over by a chatelaine whose soft and ever-varied converse, mirthful or mournful, serious or satirical, practical or poetic, never failed to soothe or interest.'

So Annie Baxter, the young wife and diarist, attracted the squatter bachelors around Yambuk and Port Fairy at her home and at the parties and balls of the district. She once wrote of staying up until 2am with the youthful Tom Browne 'talking very sensibly'.

Boldrewood was a skilful horse handler and breeder and an indefatigable rider. On one occasion, mounted on Hope, one of his favourite horses, he rode the 30 kilometres to Port Fairy and after dinner decided upon a ride with friends along the beach to Portland. He described the adventure: 'The tide was out. For leagues upon leagues stretched the ocean shore—a milk-white beach, wide as a parade ground and level as a tennis-court, and so hard under foot that our horses' hoofs rang sharp and clear.' On the following day, Hope carried him back to Squattlesea Mere; some 140 kilometres in two days, quite an effort for horse and rider.

About 150 years later, I stood on the beach at Yambuk looking across to Lady Julia Percy Island perched massively in the blue. A hefty fishing boat rocked in the considerable swell. The wide, inviting sand stretched round the bay to Portland. No wonder the youthful Boldrewood felt enthusiasm!

A CONSIDERABLE ABORIGINAL population lived in the Port Fairy district when Boldrewood settled at Squattlesea Mere. His future writings disclosed a contradictory attitude towards them. He expressed disagreement with the widespread white opinions that Aborigines were a lowly race. Nevertheless, he remained convinced that whites were superior. In *Old*

Melbourne Memories he maintained that many local Aborigines were 'grandly formed specimens of humanity, dignified in manner, and possessing an intelligence by no means to be despised, comprehending a quick sense of humour, as well as a keenness of perception, not always found in the superior race.' He wrote that Aborigines had been treated harshly: 'It was their country, after all' and a policy of conciliation was required.

However, after small stock losses and thefts, his white supremacist attitudes and sense of property overcame whatever enlightenment Boldrewood possessed. He supported punitive actions against the Aboriginal population, although there seems to be no evidence that he accompanied such expeditions. He believed the black 'uprising' in what he called the 'Eumeralla War' should be crushed, that the whites should not yield to 'savages' as it was not the 'English' thing to do so; they could not allow themselves 'to be hunted out of the good land we had occupied by a few savages.'

In his *Scars in the Landscape: A Register of Massacre Sites in Western Victoria, 1803–1857* (1995), Ian Clark claims that Aboriginal clans used the safety of the Eumeralla River and the Stony Rises as bases from which to launch guerrilla attacks upon settlers 'who had occupied land that contained traditional meeting places and sacred sites near Port Fairy, Mount Napier and Lake Condah, areas essential to the political economy of the Aboriginal clans.'

In his first novel, *The Squatter's Dream*, serialised in the *Australian Town and Country Journal* in 1875, Boldrewood dwells upon the widespread pastoralist massacres of black people in both NSW and Queensland as grazing land was 'opened up'. In his conservative colonialist way he conceded that such treatment provided a problem with which white consciences had to grapple. How right he was and how long it is taking!

The popular detective writer, Peter Corris, in his study, *Aborigines and Europeans in Western Victoria* (1968), estimated that 158 Aborigines were killed there by 1860. Dr Jan Critchett investigated the conflict for some 25 years. In *A 'distant field of murder': Western District Frontiers 1834–1848* (1990), she claims a figure of 350 would be nearer the truth.

Critchett produced some telling observations and reports from sources which appear to be most credible. The Chief Protector of Aborigines in Port Phillip, George Augustus Robinson, in a report to Governor La Trobe in 1842, put the ratio of black to white killings in the Grampians region of Victoria at 40 to one. William Westgarth, businessman, politician and historian, visited the Eumeralla-Dunmore district near Squattlesea Mere. His *Report on the Conditions, Capabilities and Prospects of the Australian Aborigines* estimated 200 Aborigines were killed in the area in 1842–1844.

In his *Port Phillip Gentlemen* (1980), the historian Paul de Serville saw Westgarth as 'quite the most distinguished of the men of substance' of the colony whose writings were noted for their 'acute judgements on colonial society'.

Eliza Rutledge, the widow of the notorious Port Fairy businessman and politician, William Rutledge, in a letter to Martha Hamilton long afterwards in 1885, responded to rumours about bad treatment of Aborigines in the past. She suggested that James Irvine of Dunmore could tell that 'a good many Blacks were killed about Dunmore at Waterloo and other swamps'. James Irvine, one of the three 'gentlemanly' owners of the huge Dunmore run, was an intimate of the Rutledges and a life-long friend of Rolf Boldrewood.

A.G.L. Shaw, in his *History of Port Phillip District* (1996), quotes one Western district pastoralist as saying in 1840: 'the Blacks or natives have occasioned me much uneasiness for some time. I could not stand the thought of murdering them [but] ... I believe it is impossible to take up a new run without doing so.' Similar observations were made by other colonists of the time.

Indeed, it seems that a general white settler view condoned the shooting of Aborigines who killed sheep or stole flour and held that the killing of a white man justified the massacre of many Aborigines including women and children.

According to Shaw, an approximate Aboriginal population in Victoria of 15,000 in 1836 declined to 3000 by 1851, with the diseases which accompanied the white invasion killing most.

Mrs Rutledge's comment about Waterloo Swamp intrigued me because it related to Boldrewood's neighbours and friends at Dunmore, men whom he greatly admired. Furthermore, this was the only reference to it in all the material I'd read about the colonisation of south-west Victoria.

Some residents around the Dunmore locality, I found, had not heard of Waterloo Swamp. Others, whose links with the area go back generations, do know of it. Some speak of the 'troublesome' Aborigines of Boldrewood's time. One farmer referred to what he called the 'Sunday afternoon shoots' of those days. Others knew stories of the shooting of Aborigines at Waterloo Swamp: 'They drove 'em into the swamp and shot any who showed above the water.'

Many difficulties impede research of all the clashes and incidents of colonisation violence, because so many went unreported and oral history handed down from past generations can be unreliable, contradictory and exaggerated after 150 years. Nevertheless, taking into account the comments of Mrs Rutledge, the report of William Westgarth and local oral history, it seems pretty obvious that dark deeds were done at Waterloo Swamp.

Maurie Sullivan of the Macarthur Historical Society escorted me to Little Waterloo Swamp near the Port Fairy-Hamilton road between Macarthur and

Broadwater before he went off to do his school bus run. Big Waterloo lies further away over a nearby ridge, but local legend has it that the shootings occurred at Little Waterloo.

Tall grass and reeds covered the little swamp area which had not filled for several dry years. A few wattles bloomed in the late spring. Light rain spotted down. It was a green and peaceful land with grazing sheep on the ridges and the ubiquitous northern hemisphere conifers dominating the horizon. The moans of the past were faint. Screams, shots and desperate yells found it hard to cross the divide of 150 years. Small birds twittered, a magpie carolled and, occasionally, a vehicle passed on the road to Hamilton. A strong breeze arose to make eerie noises around what is most likely one of our very own killing fields, which remains unresearched and unacknowledged.

NOWADAYS, Rolf Boldrewood is little known. Of his 17 novels published from the 1860s to the turn of the century, only *Robbery Under Arms* is in print. His conservative upper-crust English attitudes and penchant for good breeding are off-putting, as is his old-fashioned style.

Nettie Palmer, in *Fourteen Years* (1948), referred to Boldrewood's *A Colonial Reformer* (1895) as a 'heavy affair—heavy to hold, heavy to read'. Despite good chapters she was chilled by the gentlemanly starch setting in 'like a killing frost'.

Nevertheless, as far back as 1920 the literary critic A.G. Stephens nominated Marcus Clarke's *For the Term of his Natural Life* and Boldrewood's *Robbery Under Arms* as the two best Australian romances until that year. Stephens believed Clarke's work to be the better piece of literature but *Robbery Under Arms* to be the better Australian romance. He thought Boldrewood had 'a remarkable knowledge of the Australian life and character of his epoch.' Many other critics have noted that Boldrewood introduced the first thoroughly Australian characters into fiction.

The 'beautiful umbrageous blackwoods', which he claimed with arguable justification as 'one of the handsomest trees in Australia', are left only along some roadsides. The numerous wombats are gone.



Stephen Murray-Smith wrote of three less-familiar Boldrewood titles, the collection of reminiscences *In Bad Company* and the novels *The Colonial Reformer* and *The Squatter's Dream*. He claimed to have learnt more about the 19th century in Australia from them than from other books he had read, particularly about squatting life and attitudes to selectors and Aborigines. (*Overland* 99) This reading left Murray-Smith 'with an affection for the humanity and common-sense of Boldrewood ...'

When I was a child my father often referred to Boldrewood's writings. At primary school we had pieces of his *The Miner's Right* set for reading and for years I ached to read *Robbery Under Arms*. This book is better known than the author's name because several film versions have been made of it.

The huge pastoral run of Squattlesea Mere was reduced to farm size long ago. The foundation stones of the rather crudely built three-roomed homestead built in 1844 are all that remains. Nearby in the pastures along the Eumeralla River, long lines of fat lambs can laze in the sun on sheltered banks of the narrow channel-like river. Further away is the stretch of the volcanic Rocks, the lava flow which so long ago spewed out from rugged Mount Eccles.

Boldrewood's daughter, Rose, in the 1930s described the place as it had developed then: 'A smiling homestead framed in majestic pines, and elms, hedges and orchards, fertile pasture land, broad paddocks, a woolshed away in the distance, horses in the stockyard, lovely views on all sides ... the garden ablaze with asters and roses ... the

old orchard planted by my father long years ago.'

All this, except for a couple of large trees, is gone. The 'new' weatherboard white-and-green homestead stands on a sweeping bend of the road to Bessiebelle.

Mattie Dyson bought the place, some 900 acres, over 50 years ago when still in his 20s. Mattie had lived all his life only a few miles from Squattlesea Mere but he had never heard of Rolf Boldrewood and attached no special significance to the place. Shortly after the purchase he encountered an old family friend. 'I hear you've bought Squattlesea Mere,' said the friend. 'Yeah,' replied Mattie, 'and the first thing I'm going to do is change that name.' 'What?' spluttered his friend. 'Don't do that whatever you do. That place is history.' Mattie likes telling that story against himself.

Mattie and his wife came to take shy but sturdy pride in their historical site. They bought editions of *Old Melbourne Memories* at secondhand bookshops, the only places where they could be purchased, and gained quiet pleasure when, occasionally, people stopped to peer at their place.

The countryside has changed greatly since Boldrewood's time. The thickly trimmed forests have been superseded by bald farmlands liberally sprinkled with clumps and hedges of northern hemisphere conifers. The 'beautiful umbrageous blackwoods', which he claimed with arguable justification as 'one of the handsomest trees in Australia', are left only along some roadsides. The numerous wombats are gone.

But even that 20th-century landscape is changing, too. A new hardwood plantation has replaced the Dyson farm. Large timber companies, some with overseas connections, have bought up or leased huge areas of prime farmland extending from Bessiebelle to Penola to plant the quick-growing Tasmanian blue gum, *Eucalyptus globulus*. This development has created local concern about the possibility of a monoculture endangering farming towns and communities.

Although Boldrewood started writing years after he left the Port Fairy region, it figures importantly in his works. His *Old Melbourne Memories* is devoted to it. From here he borrowed much in landscape and characterisation for his novel *Babes in the Bush*. Squattlesea Mere provided the basis for Marshmead in his first novel, *The Squatter's Dream*, which his hero sold and then longed for again and finally lived upon for the rest of his fictional life. Perhaps Boldrewood had such longings, too.

Squattlesea Mere has considerable national and literary significance. The site of the original homestead surely deserves suitable recognition and preservation.

And, perhaps more importantly, further candid, unvarnished historical work on the colonisation of south-west Victoria and elsewhere, seems necessary to enlarge and suitably adjust the national record. ■

John Senty is a freelance writer.

Fair Dinkum!

'There is a folklore in language as in everything else and one of the most abiding popular beliefs about the phrase "fair dinkum" is that "dinkum" is Chinese in origin and means "true gold". It conjures up a vision of excited Chinese on the goldfields, waving lumps of gold and shouting "Dinkum! Dinkum!", probably to distinguish their offering from the brackets of fool's gold available. Alas, it is not true.

"Dinkum" is a word brought to Australia in the dialectical speech of the white settlers. It refers to a share of work requiring to be done, and then to work generally. In *Robbery Under Arms* Boldrewood writes, "It took us an hour's hard dinkum to get near the peak." "Fair dinkum" has in it the notion that the allotment of work should be moderate and just.'

—*The Dinkum Dictionary: The Origins of Australian Words*, Susan Butler, Text Publishing, 2001

ESTD DINKUM! ISBN 1 8764 8585 X

Saharan songs

Anthony Ham sets out through the Libyan desert and finds change and tradition, coexisting.

IN 1974, deep in the Sahara of south-western Libya, a nomadic Tuareg man came across a single set of tyre tracks in the sand. He came to a stop, bewildered and not a little afraid, wondering what great animal could leave such a trail. He refused to cross over the tracks until he had erased them. Only then would he continue his journey.

Little remains of this world of apparent innocence. Whole plains and valleys of the Libyan Sahara are now given over to the trails of four-wheel-drive enthusiasts and oil prospectors, their vehicles now more often than not propelled by Tuareg drivers.

Travellers are drawn to the Jebel Acacus, a range of other-worldly monoliths

At the same time as this corner of the Sahara absorbs its migrants from the north, large numbers of sub-Saharan Africans also attempt to cross from the south. Libya, the wealthiest country in Africa, draws men and women from Niger, Nigeria, Chad and Mali, all driven to this demanding pilgrimage of survival by the promise of a share of Libya's considerable oil wealth. In Niger in 2000, I witnessed poorly maintained trucks, laden with human and other smuggled cargo, inching northwards towards some ill-defined North African or European El Dorado. At checkpoints, single men from Guinea and Sierra Leone routinely faced

In the winter of 2000, a group of French tourists undertook a camel safari through the Idehan Murzuq (Murzuq Sand Sea), the same stretch of inhospitable border territory. They came across a lorry stranded in the sand. Crouched in the meagre shadows cast by the truck were the bodies of dead Africans, perfectly desiccated.

On my first night in the Sahara, I walked a short distance from the camp. Suddenly alone, I was overcome by a profound sense of abandonment. This is not a place to die.

Desert travellers now follow the ancient trans-Saharan caravan routes for two reasons—survival or adventure. In a postmodern reversal, they are now the

humiliation and the prospect that they would be allowed to go no further.

On the southern outskirts of Sebha, the largest town of the Libyan Sahara, trucks wait weeks for passengers and goods to materialise before commencing the journey south across the desert. Patient passengers wait to carry their new-found 'wealth' back to their families, wondering if they will find them alive or find them at all.

In mid-May 2001, the *Irish Times* reported:

The bodies of 93 Africans who died of thirst have been found in the desert on Libya's southern border ... A Niger-registered truck carrying people from various African countries entered Libya on May 8 and broke down, leaving the 93 to die. Another 26, including the Sudanese driver, were able to escape and receive medical care.

nomads, while only the traditionally nomadic Tuareg retain an abiding connection to a homeland, a landscape, a territory which for them exists without borders.

THE TUAREG ARE an ancient people. Some say that they are descended from the Berber nomads of North Africa. Others trace Tuareg roots to the ancient Garamantian civilisation which flourished in the oases of the Fezzan (south-western Libya) from 900BC to 500AD. Others say simply that they have always been in the desert.

There is a disparity between the way the Tuareg are viewed by outsiders and the way they see themselves. The name 'Tuareg' derives in part from the Arabic word *tawarek*, which means 'abandoned

rising up from the sand in forbidding testament to the volcanic power of the natural world. Its *wadis* (dry river valleys) and caves conceal 10,000-year-old, ochre-coloured rock paintings of giraffes and elephants and rhinoceros, of wedding scenes and lovemaking. The Idehan Ubari (Ubari Sand Sea) to the north-east consists of thousands of square kilometres of sand dunes, towering and shifting. Hidden among them are the famed Saharan lakes of Mavo, Gebraoun, Mandara and Umm al-Maa (the mother of lakes)—deep-blue water framed with palm trees and surrounded by sweeps of fine sand known as *fish-fash*. This is the desert I thought existed only in my imagination.

Judging by the tracks which criss-cross this landscape, I am not alone in being drawn to this place. The year 1974 seems a long time ago.

by God'. In the past, not surprisingly, the Tuareg have preferred the title of *imashaghen*—'the noble and the free'. Perhaps to counter a romanticising of the punishing Tuareg lifestyle, some Tuareg call themselves simply *kel tamasheq*—people who speak the Tamasheq language. Increasingly they have taken to calling themselves just Tuareg—as if to make it easier for outsiders to understand them.

Frederick Hornemann, a German explorer of the Sahara in the 19th century, called them 'a mighty people'. Hugh Clapperton, a British traveller of the same generation, called them 'fanatical' and warned that they were not to be trusted.

My Tuareg companions through the Sahara highlighted the absurdity of all such variants of exotic romanticism. Our two four-wheel-drive vehicles were driven by Sallah and Sheikh.

Sallah is a man of the town, 20-something and larger-than-life. On first appearances, he seems to have retained little of his heritage. A chemistry teacher by training, Sallah did his Masters degree in Sebha and he was completely at home in the towns. Wandering with him through the open-air market of Ghat oasis, not far from the now-uninhabited mudbrick old city and the sand dunes lapping at the town's fringe, he seemed completely in tune with the rhythms of urban life.

In the Jebel Acacus, Idehan Ubari and Idehan Murzuq he became suddenly transformed, urging his vehicle onwards through the *fish-fash* with shouts of encouragement and curses, one arm trailing out the window as if driving a reluctant camel. Sallah was perpetually on the verge of extravagant movement—an explosive celebration or a cry of anguish. His driving was as enthusiastic as it was impetuous. He would frequently launch headlong upon an impossible ascent when an easy alternative existed, occasionally becoming airborne as he misjudged a ridge of sand. And yet always we forgave him because his charisma left everyone feeling that the excitement of going over the rim of a sand dune was like traversing the very rim of the earth. He told us—without the slightest concern for his reputation—that one time, close to Kufra in south-eastern Libya, it had taken him a full two days to cross a single sand dune. When finally successful, he wept tears of exhaustion and joy.

I later learned that this giant of a man played the *oud*, a soulful stringed instrument renowned for being difficult to master. Three days into the journey, he confessed that, 'In the desert, I don't know the day or the date. Sometimes I forget my name.' His large silver watch sat in the car, ignored until his return to the town.

The driver of the other car was known simply as Sheikh, a term of respect for the elder statesman of our party. Whenever we made camp close to sunset, he withdrew a discreet distance from the group. There he would remain just within earshot and sit, uncorrupted, watching in silence from the desert. His 50-year-old face was chiselled and angular; I found myself envious of his aloof and silent dignity.

On the first day Sheikh suffered our food of canned beans and tuna. Thereafter, he disappeared to cook for himself—a simple meal of *tagila* (a damper-like bread cooked beneath the sand) and noodles. 'Desert food', as he called it. In his driving, he never seemed to accelerate, yet always arrived before us, judiciously choosing his path. Whereas Sallah prayed in close proximity to the camp with little apparent need for privacy, Sheikh would wander off to pray on the ridge-line of a sand dune, silhouetted against the towering peaks of sand.

I had taken with me to the Sahara a tape of Tuareg music. Hearing it, Sheikh announced, with some gravity, that this was the old, true Tuareg music. My most enduring memory is of him listening to the music, rocking back and forth with hands beside his head, utterly oblivious to our presence.

Other Tuareg figures inhabited the perimeter of my experience. In Ghat we met Abram, a Tuareg from Niger. He was a man seemingly plagued with aimlessness. He hovered on the edge of conversations, selling the handicrafts of his people's heritage, perhaps because they were no longer items imbued with significance in his dislocated life. Where others had adapted to the changes wrought upon Tuareg society, Abram seemed cut off from his past, unsure how to survive, with dignity intact, in the present.

In Wadi Tashwinat of the Jebel Acacus, we visited a Tuareg family, one of the few still living outside the towns

and villages of the oases. The crusty old man of the family pronounced himself weary of travellers. Such travellers appear in search of photographs of his bright blue robes, silver amulet jewellery and 300-year-old spear. They never purchase the few handicrafts he offered for sale. His public role had become that of a sideshow for tourists wanting to meet an 'authentic' Tuareg, a role he regarded with unconcealed disdain. And yet he assured us that he would not choose to live anywhere else in the world.

ON OUR SECOND NIGHT in the Acacus, we camped in one of the small tributary valleys of Wadi Tashwinat. A light soon appeared out of the darkness. The teenage son of the old Tuareg man emerged and sat with us by the campfire. Sallah and Hakim, our Berber guide from the north of Libya, began to sing, their Arabic lyrics haunting the bluffs and carried off by the wind. Sallah was in typically fine voice. From time to time, he would add an impromptu, gently teasing verse aimed at Sheikh, who laughed.

The young man, wrapped in his olive-green turban, sat quietly beside Sheikh. When he spoke, he did so in barely audible tones, with obvious shyness and only in Tamasheq. He was deferential to all, but reserved a certain reverence for Sheikh, one of the respected bearers of this young man's Tuareg heritage.

Three generations of Tuareg men together, united by language, landscape and tradition, and by the imperatives of modern life. This heritage, of which the young man will one day be custodian, will contain stories of men like Sallah and Sheikh, of the young man's father, and perhaps even of the dislocated Abram. They will be stories of men who made their own tracks in the sand, tracks which are unmistakably Tuareg and yet still very much their own, tracks which will one day be erased by those who follow. But by then, the Tuareg will have moved on, adapting all the while to new realities. They will still inhabit the Saharan landscape which others will continue to pass through. But the Tuareg alone will understand it and they alone will remain. ■

Anthony Ham is a *Eureka Street* correspondent.

Travel bent

Holiday Business: Tourism in Australia since 1870, Jim Davidson and Peter Spearritt, The Miegunyah Press (MUP), 2000. ISBN 0 522 84884 2, RRP \$65.95
Mediterranean Journeys in Time & Place: A Traveller's Guide, Toru and Mal Logan, Black Inc., 2000. ISBN 1 86395 282 9, RRP \$24.95

IT IS SOMETIMES difficult to go all the way with the French. Here, for instance, is Paul Valéry:

Our craving for fiction, for foreign travel, and for the extraordinary is due to a lack of visual imagination and an incapacity for thorough-going absences of mind. Yet it is enough to stare at anything at all for a few minutes and the known becomes the unknown, life a dream, the moment an eternity. The same holds good for mystical and metaphysical speculation.

I don't believe him—if I understand him correctly—in that last sentence, which sends a flicker of uncertainty through the rest. Yet Valéry himself can specialise in the visionary—as in, 'The whole world breathes into a seed and makes of it a tree'—as well as in the flintily acute—as in, 'Maxim for Persons in Authority. When a man is licking your boots, put your foot on him before he starts to bite you.' He is usually on to matters of significance.

'Fiction ... foreign travel ... the extraordinary': often, they have been a trio in the history of writing. When Othello bewitched Desdemona with his traveller's tales, with his 'antres vast and deserts idle', his 'men whose heads / Do grow beneath their shoulders', he was already late in the day so far as yarning went. Sacred expeditionaries like Moses, secular venturers like Odysseus, and all those who went with them or after them, have been drawn by reports which blended the remarkable, the exotic, and enough varnishing to make the eyes grow round. The time came when the novel itself was to be the offspring of all this talked-up travel, as if Herodotus had been the godfather of Cervantes: later still, countless novels have looped back into the process, revisiting the old paths, rekindling old curiosities and hankerings. In a less obvious



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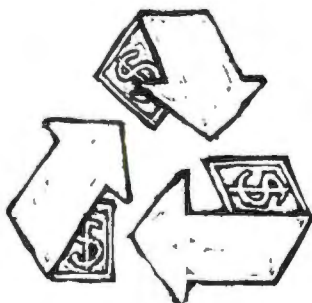
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way, but to perhaps no less a degree, poetry has played a similar hand, both formally and by implication—'The Waste Land' is at least as esoteric as *Moby Dick*.

Notions such as these come to mind when one thinks of *Holiday Business: Tourism in Australia since 1870* and *Mediterranean Journeys in Time and Place: A Traveller's Guide*. The first, handsomely produced by Miegunyah Press, reflects, as its authors say, 'a continuing conversation ... about past and present Australia, and the imprint of travel and tourism on the landscape'; the second 'does not pretend to be a scholarly work, but it does attempt to show how much more can be gained from a basic understanding of how geography and history have influenced each other over a very long time to produce what is on the ground today.' The result in each case is a book which is informative, stimulating and illuminating. The authors of *Holiday Business* are professional historians, and those of *Mediterranean Journeys* professional geographers, and on that count alone each place touched on in the books is likely to be, in a sense, a place of the mind, having the 'pitch' appropriate to the discipline which is brought to bear upon it.

Both are sober works, but neither lacks vivacity.

MEDITERRANEAN JOURNEYS assumes that the reader is travel-bent. It is 'deliberately written to be used in association with a detailed travel guide for each region', and for each of the nine territories addressed there is a section called 'not to be missed' and another on 'practical matters'. The book is written out of many years of personal experience of the region and has the flavour arising from just that: 'large areas of the Mediterranean are omitted, including the big cities, because so much has been written about them and we find them increasingly polluted, overcrowded and anonymous'. The areas addressed are in fact the island of Crete, the coasts and mountains of north-eastern Greece, the western coasts of Turkey, Andalucía in southern Spain, the Adriatic coasts of Croatia, the Amalfi peninsula, the island of Sicily, the coasts of eastern Liguria, and the hills and coasts around Nice.

Holiday Business (which has many illustrations, both in colour and in black and white), goes about its business under headings as various as: *Origins*; *Messing About in Boats*; *The Rise and Fall of the Tourist Bureau*; and *Postscript: Tourism Über Alles*.

Walter Pater, discussing travel, would speak of going 'north of the Humber', as if this were much like leaving the known world. But each of us has a Humber, or a collection of them—the borders of the familiar, the comprehended. Nobody draws a map these days and puts 'here be monsters' on it, but we all have appetites for, and often fear of, the monster-like. Hence the very possibility of tourism and the touristic, which is conducted on the supposition that our attention can be stretched without easily being snapped. *Holiday Business* is interested, among other things, in the ways in which the wondrous can be served up in manageable portions. Sometimes, it is thoughtfully rueful about the outcome. Its last paragraph, for instance, reads:

The cost of producing the movie *Titanic*, which fortunately for its backers became the highest-grossing movie of the twentieth century, was slightly more than the cost, inflation adjusted, of building the ship itself. That an infotainment product can cost more than the real thing is testament to a world where makebelieve or virtual experience seems to be valued more.

Such a conclusion has been foreshadowed in the book, and it would be odd if it had not been, given the very title. The busyness of being off-duty, the task of vacancy, the scurrying after dreams—it is a very deepset human aspiration, and it is none the less odd on that account. It is as if part of us wanted a jongleur to run the Stock Exchange, a Lord of Misrule to design the cathedrals. Shown the Humber, some will think of the Rubicon and some of white-water rafting, but either way it will stand for a 'beyond', a somewhere else. This, though potentially troubling both to the individual and to society, is just as well, since civilisation itself 'plays its way up', working with wild as well as tame cards, and embarking on enterprises which are, in Gerard Manley Hopkins' words, 'counter, original, spare, strange'. Tourism, with its constant gawping at marvels and flirting with the exotic, is really one expression of the mind's normal conduct. 'Where there is no vision the people perish', and without, say, a tiny figure waving an alpenstock in the heart, or boarding a refractory camel, so does civilisation.

Not, to be sure, that playing the tourist is all fun and games, at least when some hard facts have been established. The Logans write, in *Mediterranean Journeys*:

Twenty-two kilometres east of Ioanina at the foot of Mt Tomaros is Dodoni, one of

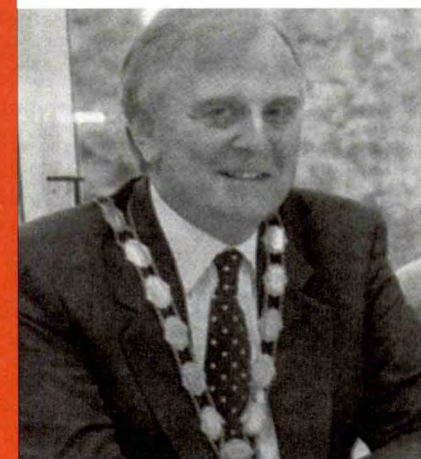
the oldest cities and oracles in Greece. Zeus, the father of all gods, was worshipped here from the earliest times, and the oracle which flourished until the fourth century AD attracted notable figures from all over Greece. It delivered advice through the rustling of the leaves in a sacred oak tree

stand for those sought-out insights which were allegedly the rationale of the Grand Tour and remain so in many more plebeian adventures; there is the rustling of the leaves in the oak tree, which is something like the countless material processes and moments—the sway of palms, exotic sunsets—which

Reasons for travelling

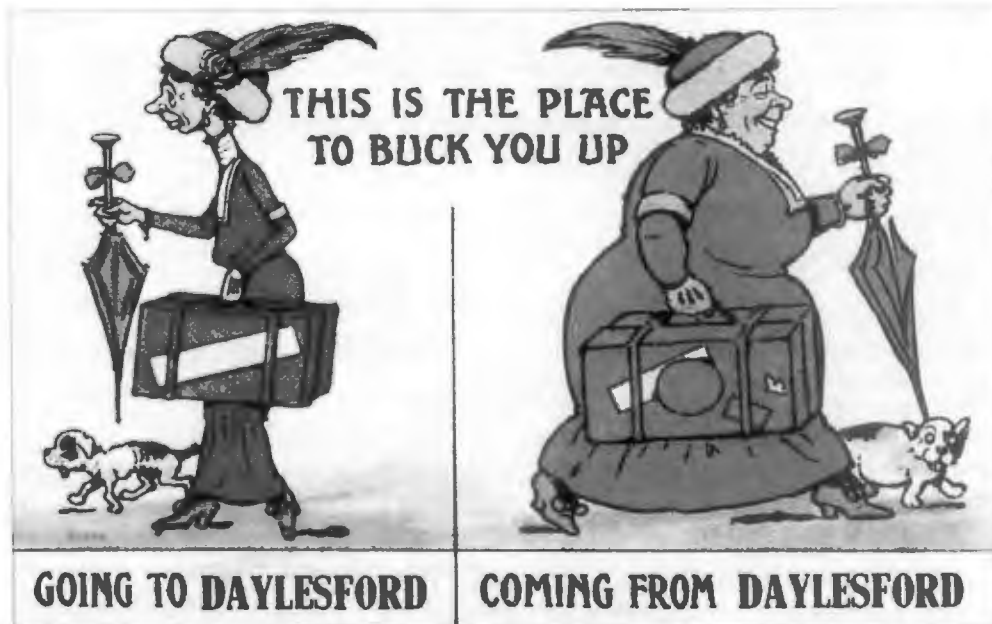
Paradox: going away just makes you think more of home.

Instance Hexham in Tynedale, a venerable spot in Northumberland, home to ancient ruins and site of a recent outbreak of 'lowping ill', a tick-borne ailment that infects hefted hill sheep and looks suspiciously like foot-and-mouth disease. The UK Ministry for Agriculture, reports the *Hexham Courant*, sent a Spanish vet to deal with the English problem (by culling). The locals were furious. Maybe a political reconciliation job for the newly elected mayor of Hexham? Here he is:



The *Hexham Courant* names him as Michael Way. But surely he is John Howard, aka John Howard of *The Games* and aka Bob Jelly, recently of Pearl Bay, now moonlighting mayorally between acting jobs.

And there will surely be a twist in the tail of any deal *he* does between the power-brokers in London and the hill-farmers of Hexham.
—Morag Fraser



'Eating in fact was one of the activities people associated with guest-houses.' Postcards, this page and page 39, from *Holiday Business*.

that was central to the cult of Zeus. Today Dodoni's major visible heritage is a huge but elegant Greek theatre, capable of holding 18,000 and one of the best preserved from ancient Greece. It was built in the third century BC in the time of King Pyrrhus of Epiros, but was remodelled by the Romans. The Greeks used it for dramatic events, but the Romans introduced blood sports. To provide protection to the spectators from the savage animals they built a barrier between the seating and the orchestra, and also dug a channel around the orchestra to drain away the blood. There are remains of an acropolis located on a hillside with magnificent views.

'A channel around the orchestra to drain away the blood': it might be an emblem of our species' proneness to match sophistication with savagery. But the passage also touches on eight elements likely to be found in the course of much travel writing, answering to experiences in travel itself. There is Zeus, embodiment and patron of the sacred, to which pilgrimages are by definition devoted, but which can also present itself in oblique forms to those with no overt expectation of it; there is the oracular communication, which might

are the boast of travel agents; there is the Greek theatre itself, emblem of 'dramatic' buildings, ancient and modern, the world over; there is the sequence of Greek-to-Roman, itself a form of drama, and an example of that possession/dispossession which is a feature of virtually all societies, given time; there is the orchestra, a token of art's ubiquity, though here also of its ironies; there is the blood-channel, eloquent reminder of the violence upon violence which has been feared, ritualised, and very often endorsed by otherwise peaceable groups; and there is the hillside with views, easily appropriated by the spectator, of a nature which precedes and will succeed each of us.

When geography meets history, some such panoply is inevitable. Left to herself, though, Clio, muse of history, singles out the individual, the corporeal, and often the comical. *Holiday Business* has a good number of such moments. So, for example, when treating of that sometimes depressing subject, The Guest-house, its authors write:

Eating in fact was one of the activities people associated with guest-houses. 'Rita is well and has got quite fat', wrote someone back to Melbourne from Adelaide, as if

with a sly smile; putting on a few pounds during a holiday was, until the 1960s, regarded as quite desirable. Indeed in Edwardian times to be seen as thin or 'skinny' (a word that has almost disappeared from the language) could excite sympathy—or derision. 'There is one thing', scrawled a youth on a postcard, 'I eat a lot. I always have a soup plate of porridge for breakfast & then some meat or egg bender. I eat plenty of milk and cream.' When they could, guest-houses boasted of having their own cows; the fare provided would then extend to fresh cream on home-made scones at afternoon tea.

At the risk of sounding like the nameless scrawler, I reflect that few things are more successful both at naming our common condition and marking out individuality than the topic of food. James Trager, in *The Food Chronology* (1995), discussing Neanderthal Man (c.75,000BC) among elephantine mammals and sabretoothed tigers, remarks that 'Like all other creatures on earth, he devotes virtually every waking hour to his quest for the food he needs to sustain life for himself and his family.' Lamentably, there are still millions of human beings for whom something like this is true. But for those more fortunate, a sifting through the names of foods from abalone to zabaglione can be a reminder of the intimate association between cookery and peregrination. Black bean, biltong, bouillabaisse ... gallimaufry, gazpacho, gefilte fish ... pavlova, pemmican, pizza—each has a long, intricate trace of travel

behind it. Two resources commended to the wandering English in the 18th century were Portable Soup and Travelling Sauce: and very likely, in his 20th-century guest-house, the gratified porridge-eater would have been offered simulations of these too. To see food as resource for a *tour de horizon* of mobile humanity is not its most obvious use, but can still take us a long way.

In the end, though, tours are about territory, and both *Mediterranean Journeys* and *Holiday Business* have it steadily in view. The first of these often enriches the account with strategic quotations from earlier authors—as for instance when, at the prospect of ruined Troy, the Logans quote from *The Iliad*:

And so their spirits soared as they took their positions down the passageways of battle all night long, and the watchfires blazed among them. Hundreds strong, as stars in the night sky glittering round the moon's brilliant blaze in all their glory when the air falls to a sudden windless calm ... all the lookout peaks stand out and the jutting cliffs and the steep ravines and down from the high heavens bursts the boundless bright air and all the stars shine clear and the shepherd's heart exults ...

This is of course a very specialised apprehension of the landscape, as the milieu of heroism, glory, and imminent death. But we know any territory, any scene, only as that which bears the imprint of awareness, of construal, and the Logans write with that in view. The same is true of Davidson and Spearritt—as in this passage:

Dismissive remarks about the Australian landscape are legendary. But as George Seddon has shown in relation to the area around Sydney, it could be dismissed—particularly in a time of scant rain—as poor country while, at another juncture, a visitor with an eye less focussed on economic appraisal might view the same tract of land as picturesque. It took a long time for Australians to develop a broadly inclusive response: different members of a band that camped near Healesville, Victoria, in 1881 likened the landscape with its fern glades to a gallery of old masters, to a museum, more aesthetically and fashionably to 'a poem as perfect as the *Faerie Queen*' and, in acknowledgement of its 'lonely and silent' character, to Pentridge gaol. The empty bush—as it was perceived—was a place that would bounce back the visitor's preconceptions and preoccupations.

'A single villa can mark a landscape', said Ruskin, 'and dethrone a dynasty of hills', rightly enough. But at some level we all long to be housed, to find the world at least a lodging. The band encamped at Healesville made, in their several fashions, moves on behalf of the intellectual and imaginative triad which has kept human settlement valuable as well as feasible, and kept voluntary travel a coherent thing: they construed what they saw, they appropriated it to their own ends, and one way or another, they celebrated it. Not so dusty, as used to be said. ■

Peter Steele SJ has a personal chair at the University of Melbourne.



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Turbulent voices

Batavia, by Richard Mills and Peter Goldsworthy.
Opera Australia, 2001.

SUMMER OF THE *Seventeenth Doll*, the previous operatic collaboration between composer Richard Mills and poet Peter Goldsworthy, had not, so I was told on returning from overseas, been a complete success. So with some misgivings I took out the video, mindful that operatic versions of well-known works often end up as a lot of sound and fury signifying nothing. I was surprised by its power. The music allowed the subtext of the *Doll* to emerge more clearly, since it manoeuvred great blocks of mood with more precise pacing. Again, instead of being handicapped by the flatness of ordinary Oz speech, the music caressed its every inflection; intensely lyrical, its negotiation of the various operatic forms—duet, quartet and so forth—became a way of expressing warmth, almost (perversely) everydayness.

The *Doll* is indubitably Australian. As far as the play's audiences are concerned, the materialities of the story centred on canecutters having their lay-off in Carlton (quite likely, in the '50s) most often eclipse the universal themes it also embodies: of ageing, of the nature of love and romance, of promise turning into compromise.

With *Batavia*, Mills and Goldsworthy have taken another Australian story, but one of clearer universal significance. It concerns the wreck of the Dutch East India Company ship *Batavia* in 1629 and its consequences, which included the murder of 125 people. William Golding, we are told, picked up the story and transmogrified it into *Lord of the Flies*; but Manning Clark, concerned at that point in his *History* to describe the country, followed *Batavia's* Commandeur Pelsaert down the coast—and missed it.

So universal are the implications of shipwreck and a utopia gone wrong that the director, Lindy Hume—in what can only be seen as a late example of the cultural cringe—insists that it isn't really an Australian story at all. It merely happened here. But marginality is also crucial to the experience of white Australia, while the Edenic inversion and criminality can also be seen to prefigure the convict period.

Besides, as Peter Carey has remarked, colonial Australia was in effect a vast orphanage. Probably on account of the geographical remoteness of the wreck, the story of the *Batavia* has not been well known outside Western Australia until relatively recently.

The themes of the opera—clearly much discussed by both librettist and composer—concern the conflict between good and evil, and the contrast between religious faith and human suffering. In addition, there is the journey—both real and metaphorical—and the transformations it brings. Difficult material to bring to book, but Peter Goldsworthy is remarkably successful in doing so. At times the libretto is perhaps a fraction too dense with 17th-century references (and misattributes the name *Batavia* to the ur-Djakarta, rather than to the original people of the Netherlands). But these are mere quibbles. It is well-paced, finely honed, and almost never intrusive. (A rare example is the use of the word 'commonwealth'—perfectly proper 17th-century English, but surely a word to be avoided given the Australian connotations during the federation centenary.) Poetic turns of phrase abound, but they are disciplined, assisting the exposition rather than indulging the author. Appropriately, an extended metaphor appears only in the work's final expansive moments:

Sleep my darling sons
In the vessel of God's Heart,
The whisper of His Breath
Doth sing upon the sail
And play about the ropes
like bow upon a viol.

Nevertheless I wonder whether framing the work with monologues from the valetudinarian Pelsaert predisposes it towards an open verdict; even the just executions become summary. This may, of course, have been intentional, since the necessity of forgiveness and the realisation that in the end we only have each other is central to Mills' interpretation of the story.

Richard Mills uses a richly diversified tonal palate in this work, and ranges across it confidently. First there is the orchestra, which is used astringently in tandem with the vocal line, but comes into its own in post-Janáčekian interludes and at key points in the drama. These are further elaborated by electronic sound effects: primal moments demand elemental sounds. In contrast, a baroque string band creates a space for the reflections of Captain Pelsaert, a sense of period being brought out by quotations from Dowland. Finally there is a brass choir, used particularly to emphasise the public and the formal in crisp, neo-baroque fanfares. As for the voices—holding centre stage for 90 per cent of this opera—

there is not here the warm lyricism of the *Doll*, nor the more obvious use of operatic forms. Instead there is something much more sophisticated: sustained ensemble passages at a number of points, elaborating and even advancing the tensions postulated in the libretto. And then, when one least expects it, a regular aria, as Wiebbe Hayes, the Everyman hero of the opera, closes the work with what is both a lullaby and benediction as he addresses his 'darling sons'.

In the Melbourne production the main set, which served both the Amsterdam scene and the shipboard ones, had been ingeniously devised. When the ship is required, a suitably curvaceous wooden frame advances and encloses the cast on a platform, holding



Francisco Pelsaert, 17th-century
Commandeur of the Dutch East
India Company (VOC),
in a contemporary portrait

them in, like an enormous rib cage. Since they have remained stationary, the point about their inherent frailty as they set out on their journey is beautifully made. Similarly the major furnishings were small trunks—chillingly assembled in serried ranks at the opera's beginning—stamped with the initials VOC, those of the Dutch East India Company. These recur throughout the work, a metaphor for the flotsam the people themselves become.

Foremost among the cast at the premiere was Bruce Martin as Pelsaert—the Flailing Dutchman—measured, world-weary, near the end of his tether. But it is only in Martin's performance, not in the music, that there is an echo of the Wagnerian character, and entirely to good effect. Opposite him as Jeronimus Cornelisz was Bernard Lewis, who sang with suitable sangfroid and purposefulness. The women were less impressive. But there was a strikingly good performance from John Bolton-Wood as the *predikant*, or preacher (who when sounding forth managed to do so in a Dutch accent). This was as well, for *Batavia* could otherwise have been sunk by the six prayers in the first act. Bolton-Wood was no less impressive in the final act, as the preacher who had lost all faith.

Parts of *Batavia* are brutal. There are executions both licensed and unlicensed, while one of the two rapes is perhaps the climax of the action. Centrally staged, so that Jeronimus might as well be also thrusting at the audience, this second rape is strong meat indeed. Richard Mills is aware that the opera 'is not a pleasant evening in the theatre', but the issue goes beyond this. It is all very well to talk of catharsis, but the problem is that the violence lasts longer and perhaps produces a deeper effect than the numb honesty of the resolution. The Greeks gave their drama a better chance of achieving true catharsis by having all violence occur off-stage. That ain't the case today. The innocence of *Hair* or the love-making scenes in Ken Russell's film *Women in Love* now seem a lot longer ago than the late '60s; now that virtually anything goes, everything becomes spectacle, entertainment. Small wonder then that the public executions once derided in schools as being brutal and uncivilised are now creeping back in the United States, or that tourists in Malaysia can, on visiting the gallows where Chambers and Barlow were hanged, hear a tape recording of heartbeats trailing away to death.

So Mills and Goldsworthy probably had little choice about the inclusion of so much violence if they wished to be contemporary.

It may have also been prompted by another compulsion of present-day opera, which (as if paying its dues for the past excesses of the form) seeks to spurn parabola and be as everyday, or as documentary, as possible. Peter Goldsworthy has been almost apologetic about the fact that the ship actually ran aground in calm seas, instead of being wrecked in an operatic storm; and that the two put ashore on New Holland at the end were both males, rather than a young man and a woman. But no-one expects historical accuracy in opera; the force of the telling of the myth, and its resonance, is what counts. Indeed I would have preferred more transformation, not less. That great man of the theatre, Meyerbeer (though not so great as a composer) knew what he was about when he made *his* false prophet a ringing tenor. The defiance of Jeronimus needed to be translated more fully into musical terms—so that while there might be a little less insinuation, there might have been a great deal more contrast and confrontation.

Batavia should travel well. Its careful diction, rooted in traditional English, will make it accessible anywhere, while the intelligence of its libretto should ensure it a safe passage. It is very much opera for export, and comes at the right time. Australian opera is better connected

internationally—particularly at the level of conducting and directing—than it has ever been before. In Europe as elsewhere, the contemporary preoccupation with all forms of breakdown and the exposure of basic instincts can only aid its progress. Our very own little holocaust is loos'd upon the world.

At home this work is even more significant. After the false dawn of *Voss*—which derailed itself at the very beginning by excursing into Bellini rather than drawing on real affinities with the outsider-figures of German romantic opera—we at long last have the beginnings of an Australian operatic repertory. *The Doll* and *Batavia* are head-and-shoulders above anything else achieved here so far. Mills has said that, if he writes another opera, it will be a comic one; Goldsworthy has already suggested an *Ern Malley*. An opera about a hoax and its consequences would really be something, and could be comic in the way *The Mastersingers* is. Let's hope they do it, and advance further along the path of setting Australian speech to music they began on so promisingly with *The Doll*. ■

Jim Davidson is Associate Professor in the Department of Asian and International Studies at Victoria University of Technology.

EXHIBITION
ANDREW BULLEN

Monet's floating world

IN *MONET @ JAPAN* at the National Gallery of Australia one could stand by Okamoto Toyohiko's screen *Pines*, with its three steadfast pines against a golden expanse of emptiness, and turn to look through the next room to Monet's vast *Waterlily pond*.

From that distance Monet's painting was as detailed and clear as a landscape, amazingly an inverted landscape. One sees through misty air to the water surface, whose reflections draw the eye into a world where the clumps of trees and a central openness to the cloudy sky are upside down. Right way up, and floating—well that's the impression—are archipelagos of lilies.

Inexorably the viewer is drawn closer, and one's eyes, like mayflies, hover and flicker over the surface, settle on the lilies particularly, skim over the water. Close up the surface of the painting reveals a pitted texture of dry paint—touches of lavender, palest green, yellowy white, like a soft rain, with a few dabs of red or pink to indicate the blooms. On this screen all imagery dissolves into coloured light. Apart from paint there is nothing to see: can that be enough? The calm of the sheer surface, full of emptiness, absorbs any questioning into a peaceful acceptance of whatever it shows.

It's the format of the huge screen that makes this possible. Monet's debt to Japanese art for the format is the final point made in the overall argument of this exhibition. The Japanese connection hints that a Buddhist understanding of mystical delight in the ambiguity of emptiness finds its parallel in Monet's art. Other connections are more boldly made. Certainly this is done in the text of the Catalogue and the notices affixed to the walls. Ultimately, however, it's one's eyes that have to be convinced, and the argument has to be carried by the telling juxtaposition of Japanese and Monet's art.

The exhibition is rich in Japanese prints, many of them examples of those Monet himself owned. The five haystack paintings on display show soft Fujiyamas, the *Haystack, sunset* of 1891 (lower right) a close quote of Hokusai's famous *Red Fuji* (in the Catalogue as *South wind, clear skies*), which was in his collection (top right). The frieze effect of Monet's poplars series is another quote from the Japanese prints. Less obviously the prints of waterscapes and landscapes have a ruggedness of line and profile and a swirl of waters that show in Monet's paintings of the rocky coast of Brittany.

More generally the prints gave to Monet, as to Degas, Van Gogh and Toulouse-Lautrec among others, a new vision of design, using sharp juxtapositions, bold cropping and overall patterning. The world of ordinary life was freshened by eyes alerted to the extraordinary. So in the early and famous *Garden at Sainte-Adresse*, the seated woman has an umbrella instead of a head. Repeatedly the proximity of over 70 Japanese prints and nearly 40 Monet paintings reinforce the point that Monet evolved a fresh visual language by absorbing the style of the prints. The common use of the rectangular format, so obvious but crucial in the framing it imposes, enabled much of the translation. Within that format Monet's sense of design shows an ability to organise the detailed and the intense without clutter, which tallies well with the achievement of the Japanese prints—look how he places those haystacks within the rectangular frame. Moreover, Monet's distinctive obsession with painting a series of one motif parallels the practice of Japanese printmasters like Hokusai.

If bold use of pure colour was a characteristic, and originally shocking, feature of

the Impressionists, the colour in these prints jolt the eye with startling contrasts that nonetheless convince you that this is how the world looks. It was the Japanese print that coloured the Impressionist palette. Although, ironically, as the Catalogue indicates, the deep blue colouring of many Japanese prints was itself imported from the West and created a fad for blue among Japanese artists. Here too, perhaps, there was an unnoticed familiarity underlying the apparently exotic which made the translation easier.

One wonders also if the prints of the 'floating world', the pleasure quarters in Japan, gave Monet a poetic phrase that developed into his obsession with his water garden. Maybe the dreamworld



Japanese women were translated into 'nymphéas', as 'waterlilies' are in French, and so the flowers themselves become water presences of mythic power.

AND YET, despite the formidable evidence, there's something that suggests that the Japanese influence is far-fetched. It's the paint. Each Monet painting flourishes such a rich oil surface, often the matt and sparkling texture of meringue, that one's hungry eyes feast upon it. This is how one absorbs the innumerable flicks and scurries of paint that cover the canvas. Grass, leaves, flowers, rocks, clothing, people, buildings, sea, sky, all are dab upon dab of colour, and one's eyes are always enjoying the play between image and dab. So much of the exhilaration given by Monet's painting springs from this. Each of his millions of brushstrokes enacts his response to the moment—his signature marks cover the canvas as he makes his obeisance before what he's seeing. Looking at his strokes brings the viewer before the wonder of his images.

Surprisingly the exhibition does not present the influence Japanese art may have

had on Monet's brushstroke. To do this firmly it needed examples of Japanese calligraphy. In Monet's paintings of his garden at Giverny his representation of willow leaves dangle in loose imitation of the vertical format of oriental writing, strikingly so in *Waterlilies*. By happenstance the point is made in the exhibition *Renoir to Picasso* (Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane, 29 March–20 May; Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, 1 June–29 July; and National Gallery of Victoria on Russell, Melbourne, 10 August–30 September), which supplements the Walter/Guillaume Collection with three of Monet's late works from the Galerie Larock-Granoff in Paris. *Weeping Willow, Giverny* drops tangled skeins of green, yellow, blue and red calligraphy all over the canvas. It's a shocking wonder of a painting.

Nonetheless, *Monet @ Japan* is an intensely focused and carefully orchestrated exhibition. It opens one's eyes to Japanese art with its rich offerings of prints and screens. It presents the full arc of Monet's



achievement. It certainly shows how the techniques of Japanese art enabled Monet to venture deeper into representing the ecstasy of the moment. It suggests Japanese art had a poetic influence upon his creative imagination. It offers a feast of Monet's paintings, including quite a number that have become iconic in our culture. One hauls oneself away from it, above all from the vast *Waterlily pond*, the resolving chord that brings this exhibition to a mesmerising end. ■

Andrew Bullen sj is Rector of Jesuit Theological College, Parkville, Melbourne. *Monet @ Japan*, after opening at the National Gallery of Australia in Canberra, is now showing at the Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth, 7 July–16 September.



THEATRE
GEOFFREY MILNE

Max Gillies in various guises:
Germaine Greer, John
Howard and Geoffrey Blainey.

Regarding Australia

THE CENTENARY OF federation was celebrated in Melbourne in surprisingly elaborate fashion with a big, one-off arts festival, running from 9–27 May. I guess it was Melbourne's turn to claim the lime-light, after Sydney's dominance in the 1988 bicentenary celebrations and the Olympics. Besides, Australia's first-ever parliamentary sitting was held in Melbourne's Royal Exhibition Building so, not surprisingly, one of the Federation Festival's music centrepieces (Mahler's *Symphony of a Thousand*) was given in that august venue, refurbished for the occasion.

There was a wide range of events, including a new opera from Opera Australia about a gruesome incident from Australia's past (*Batavia*, reviewed by Jim Davidson, page 43), a new play for Playbox about some gruesome individuals in St Kilda's present, an Australian interpretation of one of Shakespeare's late plays, contemporary stand-up comedy challenging assumed notions of national identity, a 'dance musical' celebrating the history of the old Tivoli Theatres and some very smart political satire featuring many of the

Australians who have influenced our sense of how and who we are as a nation. There were also art exhibitions, more music concerts (with a strong Indigenous emphasis) and a huge program of public lectures. The whole event was curated as an enterprising sub-contract by the Melbourne International Festival management, headed by its current artistic director, Jonathan Mills.

Quite how such a diverse range of events responded to any Federation theme remains a bit of a mystery. In the official brochure Mills draws attention to two important anniversaries—the first sitting of Parliament on 9 May 1901 and the referendum of 27 May 1967 enabling Indigenous Australians to vote for the first time (the dates neatly framing the Festival). He notes that the 'Festival recognises the ceremonial and reconciliatory nature of these occasions', but says little about his curatorial principles.

Nonetheless, the 'Fedfest' produced some memorable and very lively theatre.

Arguably the best of it was Guy Rundle's one-man show, *Your Dreaming: The Prime Minister's Cultural Symposium*, starring the incomparable mimic/satirist Max Gillies.

This extraordinary piece blends live performances on a small stage by five different personae, intercut with videotaped appearances by numerous others on a large projection screen above the performance space. The conceit framing the piece is that the Prime Minister has summoned some of our most influential Australian figures—our seminal influences—to Melbourne to help him celebrate the centenary of federation. After his opening half-hour peroration, the PM leaves the stage so that we can eat our dinner and be regaled by various 'poets, pontificators and ex-patriots' (note the spelling of the latter).

After a video session between Les Murray and P.P. McGuinness, Geoffrey Blainey takes the stage, with his shock of white hair, patrician demeanour and high-blown language the main features in Gillies' caricature. There is then another interval, during which more videotaped Australian visionaries appear. These include ABC supremo Jonathan Shier and Barry Humphries (who bemoans the disappearance from our theatre foyers of the elegant chocolates of Mr Hillier and many others—

as well as the disappearance of our elegant theatre foyers and indeed the very theatres themselves). Gough Whitlam and Rupert Murdoch (now a Chinese citizen: 'I've always felt a bit Chinese') also appear on screen.

Then it's Germaine Greer's turn on stage; she's arrived back in Australia at short notice, but still refuses to begin her latest task on Indigenous land (and it's *not* to promote her latest book, she is adamant about that!) until her Indigenous welcoming committee shows up. Next up is a shambling Bob Ellis, who's lost his notes but not his faith—especially in the fact that no decision ever taken by Gough, or Bob, or Paul (or even Chif!) was made without his advice and direct involvement. Ellis was nearly the highlight of the evening.

The show-stealer, however, simply called 'Bedtime' in the program, was the return of the PM in jarmies and gown, with Bovril, hot-water bottle and bedside lamp. It is Rundle's masterstroke that John Howard is Barry Humphries' quintessential 1950s creation Sandy Stone, complete with a typically Sandy-like list of things that have to be done ... tomorrow (or before the next election, if you want to read it that way).

Gillies and Rundle don't get all of their visionaries and pontificators dead right. Whitlam's pomp is there, for example, but little else. The writing for Greer is good, but Gillies lacks her height and angularity of physique and the razor-sharpness of her delivery. The Murdoch vision-piece is based on a one-gag idea that isn't sustainable over the length it's given.

But the best (Blainey, Ellis, Humphries, Shier and McGuinness) are excellent and the PM-as-Sandy-Stone idea is a *coup de théâtre*. Since the demise of the Pram Factory and the Tilbury Hotel—and apart from Rod Quantock's more complex hybrid of political satire and stand-up comedy—we've seen too little satirical revue of this kind and quality.

AS IF *YOUR DREAMING* were not enough irreverent comedy for a reverent festival, we also got the added bonus of a remount of last year's Melbourne Comedy Festival hit, *Black and Tran*, tightened and partly re-written for the occasion. If Gillies' and Rundle's creations are seminal Anglo-Australian figures, Aboriginal actor Ningali Lawford and Vietnamese/Australian comic Hung Le give us an entirely other view of Australia's national identity.

The minimally theatrical scene is set in a suburban pub; Hung Le is watching cricket

on TV (and barracking for the West Indies) when Lawford ambles in looking for a partner in a game of pool. Initial jokes based on racial and cultural misunderstandings give way to a series of orthodox solo stand-up pieces telling personal stories which increasingly lead to greater mutual understandings between the two 'characters'. His stories include his flight from Vietnam in a dodgy boat and his arrival in Australia. Hers include how she learnt English—at 13—on a Fitzroy Crossing cattle station before going to Perth for her secondary education and then to Alaska as an exchange student. Both are thus 'others' in Australia in ways that are different but surprisingly similar. Hung Le and Ningali Lawson are naturally gifted, skilled performers and both are deadly funny.

After its brief Melbourne season, their show went to Fremantle for Deckchair Theatre in late May and is going to the Adelaide Festival next year. I'd be surprised if it doesn't tour more widely still. This and *Your Dreaming* made for superbly juxtaposed festival programs.

Finally, I must mention Simon Phillips' production of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* for the Melbourne Theatre Company and the Federation Festival. Brisbane readers will recall a 1999 version of this in which Prospero (in a compelling performance from John Stanton) lords it over an island whose indigenes are not a monstrous Caliban and an aery Ariel but just a big blackfella and an earthy emu-spirit dancer. Phillips' new production pursues the same ideas: the shipwrecked Italian usurpers and hangers-on of Prospero's past are Georgian English adventurers (would-be invaders, in fact) and the comic duo of Stephano and Trinculo are convicts, whose provision of alcohol and promises of advancement to their ignorant subject Caliban lead to predictably debilitating consequences. This is made more poignant in that convict and Aborigine are equally oppressed in the play's world-view and in the coloniser Prospero's behaviour.

This might sound like a Post-Colonial Drama 2 exercise, but the production is so richly imagined and so thoroughly thought through in every detail that it plays like an entirely fresh work. In offering such a diversity of imaginings of an old and a new Australia, this Festival has done a huge amount to justify a centenary celebration. ■

Geoffrey Milne teaches theatre and drama at La Trobe University.

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FLASH IN THE PAN



Killing time

Series 7, dir. Daniel Minahan. I suppose *Series 7* should be described as a parody of 'reality television', given that its basic premise is more or less 'Just like Survivor—but with guns!'. The film presents itself as the seventh series of a reality TV show called *The Contenders*, in which six people (pictured above and right) are chosen randomly and given guns; the winner is the last left standing. The plot is as contrived and artificial as only reality TV can be—more akin to some kind of absurdist soap opera than it is to documentary. Of the six contenders, two are former lovers: Dawn, pregnant single mother and reigning champion of the show, and Jeff, now an ex-gay married man with testicular cancer. Will their passion reignite? Can they bring themselves to kill? Will he sacrifice himself for her? Can they confront their past—and which one of them will have a future? Imagine these questions being posed in a frenziedly dramatic voice-over as we cut to an ad break, and you'll get the feel of the film.

The problem is that reality TV is already so absurdist in its conception and execution that it seems to be virtually impossible to parody—you can't make it any more appalling that it already is. In fact, the film recreates the look and feel of these shows so perfectly that if you put it on TV and plugged in some ads, there would be nothing at all to distinguish it from anything else on the small screen. However, the fact that we're watching all this in the cinema makes us all the more aware of the conventions of the

reality TV as a genre—the repetition of sensational footage, the relentless use of teasers to hook us into the next episode, 'confessional' interviews with the contestants, and so on. More than anything else, *Series 7* seems to suggest that the content of such shows is shaped not by any 'reality' taking place in front of the cameras, but rather by the form of commercial television itself. The most unsettling thing about the film is not that a show like *The Contenders* is the logical next step for reality TV; it is that in principle, there is already nothing to distinguish *The Contenders* from what we see on TV right now.

—Allan James Thomas

More is more-ish

Moulin Rouge, dir. Baz Luhrmann. Nothing exceeds like excess, and this is one of the most extraordinary visual displays you will ever see. Imagine all sparrows transformed into birds of paradise. Don't go to this film wanting violets because all you'll get is whopping great cabbage roses, jostling with sunflowers. The eye at times quails at the barrage—you zoom into the picture vertiginously as Luhrmann works the camera-on-rails overtime. The po-mo potlatch is here: all experience, perception, objects, tossed in a gargantuan salad and served to you by a singing waiter. In drag.

Moulin Rouge does this with a small tale that betrays the writers' background in opera: Verdi and Puccini should sue. A consumptive courtesan. A fervid young writer/lover. A nasty duke. An apoplectic MC/Pandarus.

And it is that unknown thing: a new musical film. Not that the *music* is new, just the form of film musical which I think ended 20 years ago with *Grease*. Here, songs like Eden Ahbez's 'Nature Boy' and Elton John's 'Your Song' are mined ruthlessly for relevance. Suddenly those corny hooks are philosophy: 'All You Need Is Love'; 'Love Is A Many-Splendored Thing'; 'I Will Always Love You'—these become significant, and their sentiments resonate as though they were quantum theory, which in this film they in fact are. As in a wedding, popular songs suddenly coruscate with meaning for a brief hour, so it is here: a fresh take, even.

Ewan McGregor and Nicole Kidman play the lovers. He is always good value, and she has that elusive something that marks out the real star. The camera adores her. This is her star vehicle, and she rides it with relish and aplomb. She is a very able comic actress, as it turns out. This is a good thing, because the love story has very little impact—it is show that drives the show. Both stars can dance and sing nicely, but it is good to see brilliant Australian talent such as Caroline O'Connor and Christine Anu get a showing. Luhrmann has been generous in the handing out of guernseys to Australians and it has served him well; they do us proud. Even Kylie Minogue gets a funny and charming cameo as the Green Fairy, who materialises at the drop of an absinthe. (She is so like Tinkerbell that Disney probably will sue.) O'Connor's flamenco/tango to 'Roxanne' is something that will remain in the memory, as will some hilarious Feydeau-like scenes with Toulouse-Lautrec (John Leguizamo cavorting about on his knees). Cavorting. Yes. There is a lot of cavorting in *Moulin Rouge*.

And if you want to see 'Like A Virgin' camped up even more than Madonna, look no further. If you want to see spectacle piled upon showiness and heaped upon display, here you are, enjoy. Then go home and take a Panadol and go to bed.

—Juliette Hughes

Lemon Ruski

Russian Doll, dir. Stavros Kazantzidis. Screwball comedy can be a real delight. With its insane mix of loves-me-likes-me-nots, switcheroos, flawed motives, crooked laughs and crying babies, it is one of cinema's most buoyant genres. Granted, screwball's heyday may have finished in 1940 with the end credits of Howard Hawks' *His Girl Friday*, but handsome leads falling into

feeble emotional traps should always raise a laugh. But will they?

Katia (Natalia Novikova), a Russian internet bride, is flying into Sydney to meet her online fiancé. Unfortunately he is DOA—not the live wire she was hoping for. The teary young Katia is stuck in a foreign country, lacking funds and fiancés.

Enter Ethan (David Wenham) a successful, happy, married book publisher, unable to walk past a weeping woman with a plunging neckline. Add to this mix a pushy, match-making wife (Rebecca Frith), a weary, private-eye best friend (Hugo Weaving), complicated wedding plans and *voilà*, all the ingredients for a standard issue screwball—just add dialogue and mix. Unfortunately, the quick-trick recipe film rarely works—and *Russian Doll* is no exception.

The film has no shortage of beautiful comic actors (Hugo Weaving, David Wenham, Sacha Horler), nor was it light-on for plot possibilities. So why wasn't I tripping over my own laughter? Well, there was not a morsel of surprise, no screwy motives (just your regular bawdy stuff) and little if any local colour (a drunken night out in a Russian club showed promise, but alas was not exploited). Is Australia's comic style too laconic to fit the rapid-fire style of a classic screwball? Nahhhh—we just need to write them funnier. —Siobhan Jackson

Bleak house

The House of Mirth, dir. Terence Davies. I often look at the cast of a film and feel despair. I did it with *The House of Mirth*—Gillian Anderson, Dan Aykroyd, Eric Stoltz and Elizabeth McGovern. Powerful alter egos weighed two down, and the others were faded stars of promise. But this film allowed Anderson and Aykroyd to move beyond *X-Files* and *Blues Brothers*, and they both offered believable performances in a very bleak piece. Stoltz and McGovern were likewise strong.

The House of Mirth, from the Edith Wharton novel of the same name, is set in the suffocating atmosphere of New York high society, circa 1905. It follows the delicate tangle of deceit and intrigue that appears to have been daily fare for the social set, and the fall from grace of one young woman, Lily Bart. The fall is not due to any real transgression, but rather a series of misunderstandings and manipulations and, most depressingly, Lily's innate integrity.

The House of Mirth has a lot going for it: the acting is fine, the film is beautifully shot and the story is well-written. But the film only occasionally succeeds in making complex historical social conventions credible to a modern audience—a crucial fault, and one that undermines the film's finer features.

Despite these good points—the acting and dialogue are treats, for example—it is possible that *The House of Mirth* will not find an audience at all. Not only is it depressing and frustrating, but it is a period piece with neither narrative enchantment nor stylistic innovation.

—Annelise Balsamo

Stone free

The Sacred Stones, a documentary co-written by Andrew Dodd and Peter Thomas and produced by Albert Street Productions.

Drift is an occupational hazard for documentary makers. Point the camera, bounce off an incident here, lean on a fact there. Forget narrative shape. *The Sacred Stones* has the virtue of a perfect story: beginning, development, complication, resolution. It also has the astounding red land and great rocks of Central Australia. Is there a landscape anywhere else on earth that registers quite this way on film?

The narrative follows three peoples, the Warumungu, Kaytetye and Arrente, two men, and two great stones. The men are John Flynn—the iconic Flynn of the inland mission and the flying doctor service—and his successor, Fred McKay. The two stones, the first one taken from Warumungu and Kaytetye land, the other one offered half a century later from Arrente land, are objects of sacred significance to their people, and become so for the white people who come to share their land. The first is used as Flynn's burial marker. The second, an Arrente gift, finally replaces the stolen stone, which then returns to its home.

The film uses archival footage, a sparkling interview with McKay, location shots and stills to piece the resonant story together. It also uses clever re-enactment (too clever perhaps, introducing the only ambiguous note in an otherwise clear narrative).

In a different climate, you might see it as a matter of course on the ABC. Now, not necessarily so. Watch SBS. —Morag Fraser

Not red hot

The Crimson Rivers (Les Rivières Pourpres), dir. Mathieu Kassovitz. If I were controller of the universe I reckon I'd look into that sticky, age-old problem of translating books to the screen. *The Crimson Rivers*, having started life as a 400-page book, is now Mathieu Kassovitz's latest 105-minute crime thriller, and, as good as much of it is, something has been—how shall I say?—lost in the translation. It is not a loss of quality necessarily (not having read the book I couldn't comment): it's about missing information, the loss of cold hard facts that are so vital to a satisfying thriller. It is always a dead giveaway when the media notes tell you things about a character's past that the film neglects to mention.

Max (Vincent Cassel) and Pierre (Jean Reno), policemen working different crime scenes in separate small French towns, find themselves drawn together when it becomes apparent their investigations are connected. Confronted with appalling murders,



desecration of graves, ancient glaciers, eugenics and academic snobbery, the two blunder about testing the patience of the local law enforcement and resident brains alike.

There is nothing unusual about the way the plot plays out in *The Crimson Rivers*: clever murderer leaves cryptic clues leading to subsequent victims; instinctual detective leaves PC Plod floundering in his wake; snobby academics fail to realise that the detective is as clever as they are, and so on. All the film's flair is to be found in the acting and visual style.

Cassel and Reno are both great fun, their skill adding a depth that is absent from the script. With Kassovitz's arresting visual style (remember his earlier masterpiece *La Haine*) and astute visual connections, *The Crimson Rivers* is better than your average common or garden-variety thriller but it's just not as good as it should be given the assembled talent. —Siobhan Jackson



Digesting *My Brother Jack*

IN THE EARLY 1970s when I was a uni student flatting in the inner city, the ABC did a radio serial of *My Brother Jack*. I think that the reader was probably someone like Ron Haddrick (he of the grand resonating vocal chords and unobtrusive but authentic Australian accent). The theme tune was perfect: a mouth organ playing the aural equivalent of those street cricket paintings by Russell Drysdale—a Chinese burn of nostalgia before a single word was uttered. The reading was measured and pellucidly clear. We listened. Our attention was compelled by these simple things, clarity, resonance, the power of a story that meant something to everyone who heard it: that after a hard birth at Gallipoli, the infant nation was delivered damaged.

George Johnston's novel showed this to us when the ideal Australian, Jack Meredith, embodying all that was right about the new nation, has to be a 'battler', because in the damaged land both luck and justice were scarce. And his brother David, the narrator, so wounded in his courage by the father who came back soul-ruined from the war, is a perpetual outsider, the observer moulded by the forces he sees but cannot fully engage with.

There was an ABC serial of the novel in the '60s in black-and-white, and it would be interesting to compare it with the slick production values of the well-packaged mini-series version that Ten presented in early June. By its very nature the Ten production compelled you to watch, and given its limitations did a creditable job. The things that were right went swimmingly: Simon Lyndon as Jack was great, and so was William McInnes as the tortured father of the two Meredith boys, back from the war so damaged that he damages all those around him. The whole Sam Burlington affair was done so well that it raised your hopes. Jack Thompson, who would have been the best Jack imaginable 30 years ago, contented himself and us with a tour de force as the tough old newspaper editor.

There were some good things done in the style department—William McInnes as David's father was aged convincingly. So why couldn't they do the same for the mother? Angie Milliken looked ridiculously young until close to the end when she was supposed to be in her 60s, whereupon some makeup girl puffed a timorous bit of talc in her hair, which looked all wrong and '90s at the front anyhow. Such a simple thing yet seemingly beyond the powers of the wardrobe people. They had a great time doing finger waves on Helen (Ellouise Rothwell). The lass has a good head of hair and a very good figure and the directors showed it more than was strictly necessary. And for some reason they couldn't let the tone of the book show through here, especially in the second half, where tone and subtlety are

all-important. The first half was adapted pretty decently by John Alsep, but the second half, adapted by Sue Smith, was just not up to the standard of the first. No matter how much Smith may disagree with George Johnston's creation of David's wife Helen as an empty, calculating petty bourgeoisie, her bland, politically correct take on it leached all the zing out of the end of the story. The poignant promise offered in the book by the young and glowing Cressida Morley withered in her portrayal (by Claudia Karvan) as a rather tired, untidy older woman. It was an inexplicable lapse—in the book we are encouraged, rightly or wrongly, to rebel against Helen. Johnston's attitudes may have been questionable, but showing us far too much of a beautiful actress and then deciding (no doubt through using a bloody focus group) that you had to make the beautiful one more sympathetic, does not a great adaptation make.

MY IDEA OF A GOOD novel adaptation is one which takes considerably more time than television production companies want to pay for these days. In the old days the public broadcaster would take the risk and spend some of our taxes on doing a good and thorough job, something in six episodes at least, *or as long as it took*. They still do that sort of thing. They employ teams of scriptwriters to churn out interminable sludge like *Neighbours* and *Home and Away*: long, leisurely narratives whose intertwining subplots chug on for years. Soaps are the proof that you can take your time setting scenes, establishing tones and developing characters. Look at the granddaddies of them all, *Days of Our Lives*, *Coronation Street*, maundering on for whole generations, vaster than empires, and more slow.

These days it's all the ABC can do to keep track of the changing names on pigeon holes, if they can afford pigeon holes these days. Too little of the exiguous amounts the government doles out to the national broadcaster ever reaches our screens. Jonathan Shier seems content to repeat *Yes, Minister* (a phrase he must be familiar with, I suppose) more often than the cable companies, while employing ever more managers to manage other managers. It is, it seems, profligate and irresponsible to use our taxes to pay artists, writers, journalists, researchers and archivists—all the deeply skilled staff who have been the backbone of the ABC for generations, all worried about being sacked as restructures sweep through again. (Why does 'restructure' never mean 'add more much-needed people'?) ■

Juliette Hughes is a freelance reviewer.



Eureka Street Cryptic Crossword no. 95, July/August 2001

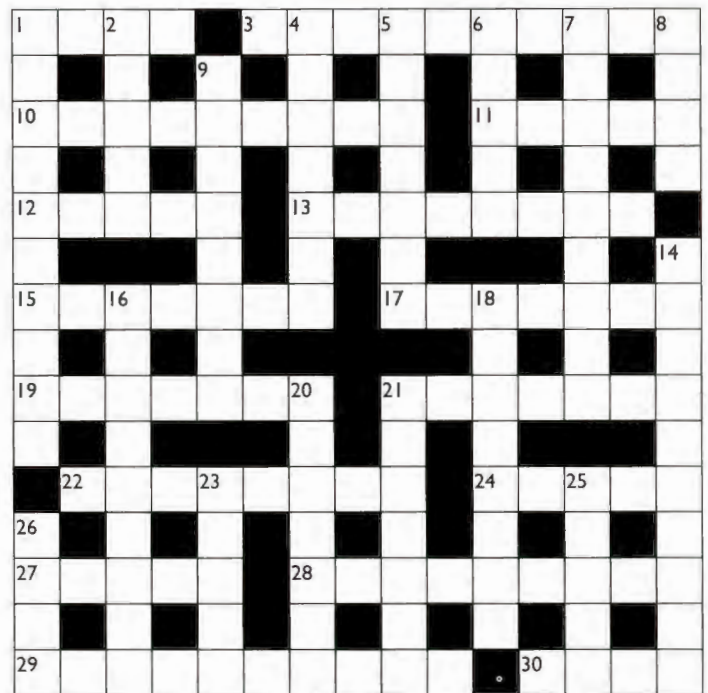
Devised by
Joan Nowotny IBVM

ACROSS

1. Some of them scared us kids in the half light. (4)
3. Attributes his good appearance to correct neckware. (10)
10. Delight about topless Eve reaching this height. (9)
11. Some limp elastic yields to force. (5)
12. Which did you say? The one on the heath, in play? (5)
13. Cut the spending, perhaps. Unusually, coin is in no purse or pocket. (8)
15. The sort of rain that can change the meeting time. (7)
17. For a model, former flame has plenty! (7)
19. Weird spectre wins this, at least, from those it frightened. (7)
21. Generally, Laura's out—towards the east. (2,1,4)
22. Message on the world wide web, finally changed, to be held in custody. (8)
24. Title claim? Correct! (5)
27. The current import. (5)
28. Best wishes for a good trip to Paris! (3,6)
29. The perpetual convalescent—one who hangs round after mother. (10)
30. I object, on ship, to the disorder. (4)

DOWN

1. In those dark still places, what I thought I saw petered out. (4,6)
2. Weary, after having been extravagant, perhaps. (5)
4. Sort of flour doing this by itself? (7)
5. All pain suffered with style! (7)
6. What the queen does, we hear, when it is 15-across. (5)
7. I'm on time; you apparently are too, when speaking off the cuff! (9)
8. To be so depressed, seemingly, makes one go it alone. (4)
9. English spa town on the hour for ablutions. (8)
14. Don't be so acquiescent towards someone so implacable. (10)
16. On the ever-changing silent sea a compass point is cardinal. (9)
18. A blonde policewoman made an arrest considered to be reasonable. (1,4,3)
20. A number with ability in a team that can be maintained. (7)
21. Rather slow producing article for poet. (7)
23. Wasted away at stylish school, it seems. (5)
25. Favour archbishop with your address. (5)
26. Cheese invented in the Netherlands. (4)



Solution to Crossword no. 94, June 2001



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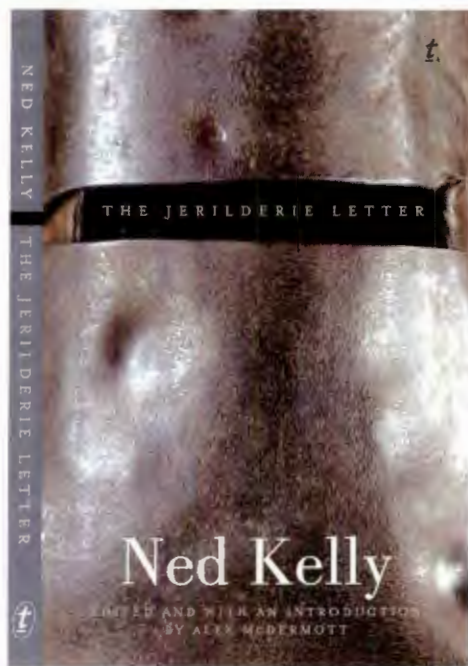
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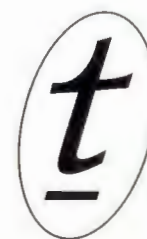
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