EUREKA STREET

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Queensland's flying high

Margaret Simons

Life after the Fall: markets and morals in Moscow and Eastern Europe

Thinking about justice for the next century—
what shape will we be in? *See p.29.*

EUREKA STREET

A magazine of public affairs, the arts and theology

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Political hope

At the Melbourne Writers' Festival in September, a young man in the front row stood up at the end of one session and, waving his arms with some passion, challenged the speaker: 'You argue impressively, but somehow you leave me with no hope.' The panel had been discussing the issue 'Who's Left?', from their various political perspectives. The young man was questioning the last speaker, Robert Manne, editor of *Quadrant*, who had indeed argued impressively, whether or not you agreed with his analysis of the necessary courses of social and political action in a postcommunist world. His questioner was insistent: 'I understand what you are saying but what hope do you leave me with?' Manne remarked that it was not his business to bring him hope. 'I'm here to make you think,' he declared.

The young man came back at him with his demand strengthened. Yes he understood that it was crucial to think clearly about political issues, but to sustain the effort he needed also to have hope. He needed to believe that the hard work of thinking and making judgements and choices would somehow be worth the effort. Manne wouldn't play the prophet for him. Instead, he made a virtue of restraint: he wasn't there to preach. But I don't think the young man was a follower, a disciple looking for a demagogue. He was poised on the line that separates commitment from apathy and cynicism. And he wanted to be given some sense that the difficult task of shaping a just society was not going to be a futile enterprise.

After all the afternoon's talk of political theory—some of it convincing, some of it banal and self-regarding, as is the way at writers' gatherings—what lingered in the stuffy, packed auditorium was not a sense of the vitality of political discourse but the vehemence of his need: 'Give me hope.'

We are not in dire physical straits in Australia. Even in a recession no one need fear cold or famine. In Moscow and in Washington people will freeze and starve this winter. We will not. But it was not physical hardship or even economic downturn that the young man was responding to. He was talking about the need for assurance that there is at least the possibility of integrity in Australian public life. And he wanted some spur to action: not to get him up on the barricades, but to persuade him that politics in Australia isn't a rigged game, or, if it is, then that there is at least some possibility of cleaning it up, of owning it and making it work for the benefit of all.

Political scepticism is strong in Australia and always has been. Its negative face is cynicism, its positive face a hardy disinclination to be conned or whipped into the kinds of enthusiasm that slide over into totalitarian allegiance. But sometimes, in our suspicious caution, we sell ourselves short. We treat our politics as a game. Even the Fairfax press has called it a game—'the greatest game of all'—in an advertisment featuring one of its senior political writers. That is more a com-

ment on the dangerously insular nature of the Canberra press gallery than a summary of our national attitude, but the two do sometimes ride in tandem. So, sometimes, it is salutary to listen to a different voice.

Buried on page 9 or 10 of most of the national dailies came the news that Burma's Aung San Suu Kyi had won the Nobel Peace Prize. Aung San Suu Kyi is the legitimately elected leader of Burma. She remains in political detention. Her political language comes from a rhetorically more formal and ornate culture. But perhaps the young man at the Writers' Festival could translate. What follows is from one of her essays, written in honour of her father, Aung San, the architect of modern Burma, who was assassinated in 1947 when she was two years old.

Photo: Andrew Stark

'PUBLIC DISSATISFACTION with economic hardship has been seen as the chief cause of the movement for democracy in Burma, sparked off by the student demonstrations of 1988. It is true that years of incoherent policies, inept official measures, burgeoning inflation and falling real incomes had turned the country into an economic shambles.

'But it was more than the difficulties of eking out a barely acceptable standard of living that had eroded the patience of a traditionally good-natured, quiescent people—it was also the humiliation of a way of life disfigured by corruption and fear. The students were protesting not just against the death of their comrades but against the denial of their right to life by a totalitarian regime which deprived the present of meaningfulness and held out no hope for the future.

'Some of the students' keenest supporters were businessmen who had developed the skills and the contacts necessary not only to survive but to prosper within the system. But their affluence offered them no genuine sense of security or fulfilment, and they could not but see that if they and their fellow citizens were to achieve a worthwile existence, an accountable administration was at least a necessary if not a sufficient condition. The people of Burma had wearied of a precarious state of passive apprehension where they were 'as water in the cupped hands' of the powers that be.

Emerald cool we may be
As water in cupped hands
But oh that we might be
As splinters of glass
In cupped hands.

'The quintessential revolution is that of the spirit, born of an intellectual conviction of a need to change in those mental attitudes and values that shape the course of a nation's development. A revolution that aims merely at changing official policies and institutions with a view to an improvement in material conditions has little chance of genuine success. Without a revolution of the spirit, the forces which produced the iniquities of the old order would continue to be operative.

'Saints, it has been said, are the sinners who go on trying. So free men are the oppressed who go on trying and who, in the process, make themselves fit to bear the responsibilities and to uphold the disciplines which will maintain a free society. A people who will build a nation in which strong, democratic institutions are firmly established as a guarantee against state-induced power must first liberate their minds from apathy and fear.

'Nehru, who considered the instillation of courage into the people of India as one of Mahatma Gandhi's greatest achievements, was a political modernist, but as he assessed the needs for a 20th century movement for independence, he found himself looking back to the philosophy of ancient India: "The greatest gift for an individual or a nation ... was fearlessness, not merely bodily courage but absence of fear from the mind."

'Fearlessness may be a gift but perhaps more precious is the courage acquired through endeavour, grace that comes from cultivating the habit of refusing to let fear dictate one's action, courage that could be described as "grace under pressure" ' ■

—Morag Fraser

Australian 'aid' misfires

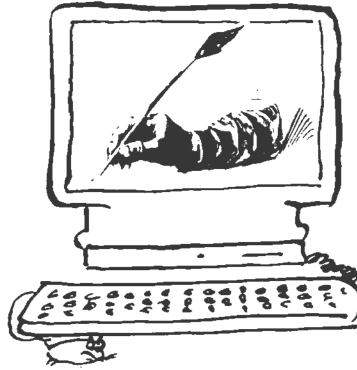
From Melody Kemp

I wish to congratulate you on publishing the article resulting from the mission to the Marag Valley in the Philippines ('Caught in the Crossfire', *Eureka Street*, July 1991). Forgive the lateness of this response but when one lives overseas, one has to sacrifice immediacy for the sake of discourse.

While living in the Philippines I had contact with the tribal peoples through a non-government organisation named TABAK, whose activities focused on human rights violations in the tribal communities.

My concern about the Australian article was that, while the evil spectre of Marcos was in evidence, no mention was given to the role played by Cory Aquino in the escalation of such activities in the rural areas. Cory fell prey to the American arguments for the use of low-intensity conflict methods to deal with the 'NPA problem'. This method was devised during the war in Vietnam, and history has revealed the outcome of that in both political and human terms. These methods are being used throughout the Philippine archipelago.

Eureka Street welcomes letters from its readers. Short letters are more likely to be published, and all letters may be edited. Letters must be signed, and should include a contact phone number and the writer's name and address.



While used ostensibly to control the so-called insurgency, the other effect is to quell tribal objections to the wholesale destruction of their land for both timber and mineral resources. The military and well-known members of the Philippine Congress are both owners and beneficiaries of the logging and mining concessions.

TABAK's records of the effects of burgeoning militarism indicate that since Aquino came to power there has been a fourfold increase in bombings, strafing of villages, forced evacuations, summary executions, food blockades and other such crimes against tribal communities. They estimated that 300,000 people have been internal refugees from militarism and ecological destruction. The death toll among children alone would arouse front-page headlines if it happened in Eastern Europe.

There is a reluctance to admit that Aquino, the ubiquitous 'mild-mannered housewife' of Asian politics, has presided over the wholesale destruction of tribal lands for the profit of the few—including her relatives—and the systematic destruction of tribal communities.

Australians should be aware that a major component of Australian aid to the Philippines is military aid, in the form of training, and the sale and provision of military hardware. Therefore we stand accused of complicity in the destruction of tribal people's land and of their lives. Last year the Australian ambassador to the Philippines expressed support for the use of the Citizens' Armed Forces Geographical Units (CAFGUs) which amount to no more than armed vigilantes, to support military activities. During my three week stay in a Catholic mission in Mindanao, CAGFUs were implicated in the shooting of three villagers and the beheading of another.

It is perhaps easy to point fingers at what used to be the USSR, as complicit in the deaths and torture in Angola and Afghanistan, or at the US for similar activities in Central and South America. It is less comforting to know that Australian aid and expertise is used to destroy and oppress our closest neighbours. It is a shame that groups such as Greenpeace cannot turn their considerable resources to the preservation of tribal communities who live as one would aspire to live: communally and in harmony, and in touch with their gods.

Melody Kemp
Pasar Minggu, Jakarta, Indonesia

Windsor in the wrong castle

From Christina Rye Laming

I write in response to Gerard Windsor's essay 'The New Zealand Traveller Sketches the Ruins of St Patrick's' (*Eureka Street*, September 1991). I began reading this article as my three-year-old climbed onto my shoulders to watch *Playschool*, thought about it as I discussed hair-pulling and scarlet fever with other mothers at playgroup, attempted to finish reading it when my son launched into a discussion of girlfriends and exam marks. I continued composing this letter as my daughter made biscuits and an electric guitar throbbed in a bedroom of unbelievable untidiness. I got the whole thing together about 11pm when the house was quiet.

I see myself as a pretty ordinary person of our times, except perhaps that during the eight years it took me to do my theology degree, my marks were not as good as those of some of the other women also studying. I found Windsor's essay a little confusing, so rather than deal with his points, I offer an alternative picture. I don't know

how many women graduate or study theology each year but there are many many more than men. Most of the women are married with children, sometimes they also have a job, sometimes they have other educational backgrounds.

Equally, I don't know how many do pastoral majors or minors. I majored in systematic theology and minored in scripture. The classes were full of women, with one or two men in each. I didn't choose liberation theology or feminist theology. It seemed to me that in order to understand the church I love I should come to terms with its hard core. Other women did too, though I couldn't come at canon law.

I began my letter as I did because that was the way I did my academic study, totally integrated with my daily life. So, I think, did my fellow students. Study time cut out of a busy life was too precious not to be made maximum use of, so subjects that could not be integrated with our personalities and relationships were exchanged for subjects that gave greater meaning, depth, hope, insight and challenge. I find going to Mass difficult at present, not because it's a long time since I've heard a homily which is interesting, intelligent and spiritually enlivening, but because I have to give whispered answers that Rahner and Lonergan would be proud of to questions from a three-year-old about why the bread is special.

It is unfair of Windsor to bemoan the state of the church. I find it absolutely miraculous that the Holy Spirit has caused a pressure-cooker full of sound theology to fill the homes and hearts of our children. As a child, I would rather have had my Rahner integrated into mum's personality in her response to pussy cats covered in playdough, than given as an examinable text by a teacher I disliked, or in a stuffy church by a priest I couldn't see—especially if the boy under the pew in front was dressed as Batman.

I wonder what the outcome of this situation will be. In order for the horrific problems of human suffering in the world to be dealt with, we need, individually, to 'turn back', as a world population. That surely is the direction of the effect of sound theology in hearts of the women in pews.

Christina Rye Laming
Ashburton, Vic.

SPORTING LIFE

PETER PIERCE

The withering of The Heath

AT THE TURNSTILES, a grizzled desperate made a case for taking his shillelagh into the course. Inside, he quickly became inconspicuous among the rich, scurrying to their temporary members' quarters, and the lumpenbourgeoisie, sporting bar-room tans and Desert Storm tee-shirts. This was Caulfield, October 12, and for the 111th running of the Caulfield Guineas and the Toorak Handicap, it was an unseasonably glorious day.

For more than a decade Caulfield, most beautiful of Melbourne tracks, has been a disaster for those who market it, whether as employees of the VATC, or radio stations. Since the demise of Bert Bryant, race-callers have ceased to be outraged spokesmen for hapless punters and have become mouthpieces for 'the industry'. From them you'll hear little about the withering of The Heath, or how Caulfield has suffered regularly from dire weather during its Spring Carnival, from the decline in status of the once peerless Caulfield Cup, from the bizarre outcomes of so many recent renewals of the course's classic race, the Caulfield Guineas, and from a grandstand rebuilding program that is still a year away from completion.

But on October 12 the track was fast, Glorious Day—trained by Rick Hore-Lacy—ran a decent fourth in the Guineas, the amenities in the new Rupert Clarke stand were excellent and its rear aspect an art-deco triumph. Tucked away below is the estimable Racing Museum, better visited on quieter days. For those keyed to fast-lane reminiscence, there were shields that listed the Caulfield Cup winners, together with the names of monarchs, governors-general, prime ministers, wars involving Australians and 'sundry events and achievements'. One could learn that in 1920, when the Western Australian Eurythmic [sic] won the Cup, a pot cost fivepence. At Caulfield it's now $1.85, and there is the choice of Laurent-Perrier.

Much abides at Caulfield from bygone racedays. This is the most amiable track at which to stroll round the stables and the saddling paddock, and drift back and forth to the Boomerang Bar for an ale. The urgency eases for a time, and the excitement of the walk to the stand, past the construction site, via the tote or bookmakers, is allowed to build.

The first race was won by a Sydney jockey, Mick Dittman, on a neat, quick filly called Catchfire. But this did not presage the usual depressing recent pattern of interstate riders' domination of the Caulfield Carnival. Although Jim Cassidy won the 'time honoured' Toorak Handicap—for every race a cliché and a sponsor's name—on Comrade, and Brian York the Guineas on Chortle, that most elegant and accomplished of Melbourne jockeys, Darren Gauci, rode a treble. He steered the massively framed Umatilla, which carried 60kg and thrashed its field. In the day's prettiest ride he threaded through on the longshot Cushion, a filly of much promise.

Before Gauci topped off his work, the Guineas had done its routine worst for Caulfield. The winner, Chortle, brought no outstanding form to the race and as it faltered near the line, offered no promise of better deeds. The literary tip, Naturalism, could not run it down. Again the Guineas looked a jinx race, in which the best performed three-year-olds either fail to front or to flatter. And again Caulfield proved to be the track at which Hayes-trained horses perform worst. The stable could not manage a place-getter. The momentum which Colin Hayes gave to his son is palpably slackening.

After the Guineas there was still a great weight-for-age race, the Caulfield Stakes, to come. Saturnine trainer Bart Cummings had warned that Shaftesbury Avenue was 'bucking his brand off' and Gauci rode him to prove it, by breaking two minutes and comfortably defeating the champions Super Impose and Sydeston. The crowd rose along the length of the straight as Shaftesbury Avenue beat off its challengers with authority. Here was racing; this was the race, the horse, the jockey of the Spring. ■

Peter Pierce lectures in Australian studies at Monash University.

World Report 1

Damien Simonis

To market, to market

It is two years since Czechoslovakia was swept up in the euphoria of 'velvet revolution' and an overly enthusiastic West began to celebrate the victory of democracy and the free market in Eastern Europe.

At Prague's Central Research Institute of National Economy, Dr Marie Bohatá wonders whether there has been some kind of misunderstanding. 'I am sure everyone wants a free market, but what type? I worry whether people really understand what such terms mean.' After 40 years of central control and the inculcation of a deep mistrust of anyone doing noticeably better than his or her neighbours, Dr Bohatá fears that Czechs and Slovaks have little idea of what the market involves and have been, like many of their companions in misery in other former Eastern Bloc countries, victims of their own misconceptions.

'The market' was, and to a degree still is, perceived as a more efficient system than the now discredited command economy. Yet even now, Dr Bohatá said, 40 per cent of Czechs and 60 per cent of Slovaks held the state, not individual initiative, to be responsible for the standard of living. Instead of rushing out to compete and produce, many are waiting to see what the new system can provide. And they are increasingly restless about the fact that it appears to be performing considerably worse than its creaky predecessor.

The West has found it easy to gloat over the collapse of its bogeyman, but has not been so keen to clean up the mess.

In September Dr Bohatá attended a conference in Londonon business ethics and found that she was not alone in her fears. Dr Elizabeth Vallance, of London University, warned that the former Eastern Bloc countries could 'cross from a totalitarianism of the state to that of companies'. For Dr Vallance the problem lies in the fundamental difference between the two ideologies. Communism, she said, sought to provide a total social model, in which production was 'good' insofar as it served society. Outstanding personal contributions tended to be rewarded with medals rather than bonuses. Free-market capitalism was, however, a simple economic mechanism.

To prevent tragedy, said Dr Vallance, the East needed 'not only a total restructuring of macroeconomics but a total shift of thinking. There is no stock market, no accounting system, no company law and, more importantly, no appreciation of the responsibilities of private ownership ... even fast-track economists in the East are on a slow learning curve. People were sold the idea of the market and are now, quite reasonably, disappointed.'

Production figures in the former German Democratic Republic, once considered the showcase of the Eastern Bloc, and which Bonn is now flooding with billions of marks, give an indication of the depth of the problem. In the three quarters to June this year, according to *Der Spiegel* magazine, heavy industry has declined by about 50 per cent and precision engineering and optics by about 80 per cent.

The fate of the five new *bundesländer* is instructive. For years West German television provided the *Ossis* (Easterners) with an almost nauseating window on capitalist luxury. Dr Vallance and Dr Bohatá argue that people in the East have read their experience of the past 40 years into their appreciation of the free market. The shock has been rude, but it is not unprecedented. It was not unknown, prior to 1989, for East Germans who had risked death to flee westwards to return home, chastened by the competitive realities of the market. Socialism East-Berlin style may have been drab, but at least the state provided—minimal rent, child care and often fictitious jobs.

The illusions are fast evaporating. An American businessman at the London conference told of being dumbfounded by the distrust and the widespread feeling of hopelessness and exhaustion he has found in Poland. For him a simple line of Warsaw graffiti summed up the attitude: 'A better tomorrow was yesterday.'

Dr Bohatá is alarmed by the listlessness of the young. Many, she said, felt only a certain class could benefit from the new environment—that which milked the old system, under which, as Dr Vallance says, business was 'not only inhibited but outlawed.' Most attribute success to corruption, connections or luck, rarely to hard work. Envy is a potent store of trouble, and almost a quarter of the population of the Czechoslovak federation still believes there should only be slight difference in wages.

The problems of the East do not all come from within. The West has found it easy to gloat over the collapse of its bogeyman, but has not been so keen to clean up the mess. Dr Bohatá was polite when she cited Volkswagen's investment deal with the Czech car manufacturer, Skoda, as an example of the 'difficulty of valuing [industries and property] in our non-transparent situation

'Before the deal, Price Waterhouse valued Skoda at half a million deutschmarks, another valuer at two million ... ' Moreover, Dr Bohatá could not help suspecting that western companies interested in joint ventures and investment, particularly in Germany and Austria, were waiting for the situation to worsen before moving in and picking up factories at bargain-basement prices. Not a bad subject for a business ethics conference, perhaps. ■

Damien Simonis is *Eureka Street's* European correspondent.

LIZ JACKSON

Who should 'scape whipping?

*One effect of the failed Soviet coup has been a sharp increase in the population density on the moral high ground. But preaching is only easy from a distance, as **Liz Jackson** discovered when she prepared a program in Moscow for Radio National's* Background Briefing.

WHAT'S BEEN INTERESTING about the reaction to the program has been the response to a particular part—an interview with a former highly-placed bureaucrat, Natalia Yakovleva, who was editor in chief of the North American department at the Novosti Press Agency.

Like everyone else at Novosti, Natalia was sacked within days of the coup. What I suppose has surprised me is the extent of sympathy she has evoked, even though she herself admits to cowardice and claims that she does not respect herself.The deputy mayor of Moscow, Sergei Stankievitch had said after the coup: 'This has sorted out for us who is with us, who is against us.' But it is not quite as simple as that. I guess listeners to the program felt like me, when I spoke with Natalia: would I have done anything different?

Jackson: *What's changed in Novosti Press agency since the coup?*
Yakovleva: Well we have had enormous changes—I think drastic changes. Our agency was nationalised. Our president was sacked by Mr Yeltsin, first by his decree; and then Mr Gorbachev issued a decree concerning the decision of Mr Yeltsin. Now we have a new president. He is very young—35.

What sort of personnel changes have happened? I mean have people lost their jobs already?
We are all sacked. Ah, you know, I welcome all this, and all the changes. I was a dissident in my heart, though not in my life. And this was one of my weaknesses I would say. Because I saw, for quite a long time, that we are going not in the right direction, but I hadn't enough courage to say this openly. And, you know, I was in the privileged class. I had all these privileges before because I am in a high position for quite a timebeing.

And now I have lost all the privileges and my life has become much more difficult, I would say. I mean in the material sense. But I would prefer not to eat sausage, not to have a lot of nice things, but to have the freedom of expression; and at least some future for my children.

So many years we've had this terrible life here, without any opportunity to say what we think. And this double life really is terrible for people who conducted it. And I have to tell you that I conducted a double life. My friends would tell you that I am frank and sincere, but on the surface I was a very true Communist. That is the tragedy, my tragedy too. That is why I started weeping. I don't respect myself.

But do you retain your party membership?
No, not now. But again I did it too late. My husband left the Communist Party two years ago. I haven't followed him because I knew that if I followed him I'd have to quit my job, the same day. And that is why I retained my Party membership card.

So when did you resign?
During the coup.

NOVOSTI PRESS AGENCY EMPLOYS, or used to employ, upwards of three thousand people. It puts out those booklets and journals like *Soviet Life*, or Mikhail Gorbachev's *Address to the 42nd Congress*, that you see in places like the Soviet embassy, the ones that put the best gloss on life in the Soviet Union. They did, of course, change with *glasnost*, became more critical, but the coup caught them out.

Novosti sat on the fence and the workers are paying the price. I spoke to their new boss, Andrei Vinnigradov, who will decide who gets re-employed.

Vinnigradov: It is a paradoxical situation. I don't want to talk about anybody in particular. I know many good people among the agency's journalists who feel free here in the building and outside; but there are others who feel free only when they leave the building. Here, for some reason, they feel obliged to obey some absurd instruction in which they themselves do not believe. You can't play two roles. You can't be a bureaucrat here and a free person on the street. That is precisely what we will need to overcome.

Jackson: *I know that you don't want to name any names, and I wouldn't ask you to, but are you saying of those people who were able to live in that paradox, able, on the one hand, to go down to the barricades, but, on the other hand, in their official work, to put out material that did not condemn the coup,—are you saying that those are people for whom there is no place here, now?*
Alas, yes.

Liz Jackson is an ABC producer and presenter. *Background Briefing* is broadcast on Radio National at 9.10am on Sundays and on Tuesdays at 7.45pm.

Photo: James McEwan

Still Mr 70 Per Cent in the polls: Queensland Premier Wayne Goss.

Democracy on the boil

In 1986 ***Margaret Simons*** *went to Brisbane as correspondent for* The Age. *She covered the Fitzgerald inquiry into police corruption, and during the concluding months of the inquiry was a consultant to the commissioner, Mr Tony Fitzgerald QC. She returned to Queensland for* Eureka Street, *to report on the new shape of the state's politics.*

When I left Queensland in July 1989, many people were debating whether Queensland was different from the rest of the country, or whether its less desirable characteristics were subtropical symptoms of a common Australian disease.

Queenslanders, especially National Party politicians, inclined to the latter view. The then Premier, Mike Ahern, claimed that the only difference between his government and those 'down south' was that the National Party had set up a proper inquiry and was tackling corruption. But Ahern was a drowning man, clutching at a straw. It did him no good: he went under and the government followed soon after.

In these debates, I tended to argue that Queensland was not all that different. Queensland does have an exceptionally brutal European history, having been a convict colony *for* the convict colony. But that is only one chapter of a larger story common to us all.

The gerrymander? Many states have had them, and, given the way governments of all complexions play the marginals, there is little room for self-righteousness about democratic principle. Venal public policy, favours for mates, legislation made on the run and persecution of critics? Look at the federal government's handling of media policy, or the airline dispute. And look at Western Australia. Parliament abused and largely irrelevant? Where is it not? Bribes to public figures? Defamation laws do not permit public speculation. Supine media, aroused only by shallow sensation? Those outside the journalistic profession are better qualified to judge than I am.

Perhaps Queensland was the butt of so many southern jokes precisely because it was an exaggerated reflection of the country's vices. Laughter is easier than self-examination. The Westminster system is a delicate plant at the best of times, and can easily be used as a screen for undemocratic practices. Transplanted into these foreign soils, it has developed an interesting antipodean pathology which is hardly surprising, considering the circumstances in which it grew.

Returning to Queensland more than two years after the release of the Fitzgerald report, however, I find that things have changed. This time I was struck not so much by the similarities, but by the ways in which Queensland is becoming different.

One of the doughtiest subversives in Queensland is the conservationist, Dr Aila Keto, who fought the National Party government for many years. Describing two years of Labor rule, she says: 'Initially there was an enormous change. Under the previous government there was this enormous feeling of oppression. You would be told your phones were tapped, or you would be followed and you would feel paranoid. All that has gone. The bureaucracy is more open to consultation, and there is no feeling of oppression.'

But Keto and other members of community groups say that along with the increased openness has come an extraordinary sensitivity to criticism. Keto says: 'They defintely need to develop a more mature attitude to consultation, and what it entails.' Nevertheless, although opinion polls show that some issues, such as homosexual law reform, have cost Labor dearly, the Premier is still Mr 70 Per Cent; the Goss gloss shows little sign of tarnishing.

Journalists say the Goss government's news-management techniques are as bad as those of its predecessor, and that ministers are less accessible. Being abused in parliamentary cafeterias by ministers and their press secretaries has become a commonplace hazard for reporters who are out of favour. Ironically, one of the media management techniques Fitzgerald criticised in his report—politicians leaking a report to selected journalists before its official release, in return for subtle favours—happened to Fitzgerald himself when he submitted his later report into logging on Fraser Island.

The Fitzgerald report has become the touchstone of political reform up north. Whole parliamentary debates are conducted in terms of which party is closest to what is referred to, without irony, as the 'Fitzgerald spirit'. Perhaps this reverence is itself anti-democratic and unhealthy, but so far it has been the driving force behind liberal reform.

Almost before he had set pen to paper, Fitzgerald had been assured by all parties that his report's recommendations would be implemented. Yet Fitzgerald decided not to make prescriptive recommendations. In a chapter of the report titled 'Progressive Social Change', he said: 'The [Fitzgerald] commission is an appointed body, not an elected one. It is an adjunct to the democratic process, not a replacement for it. It is not infallible or omniscient ... the commission has no mandate to impose opinions on the community. The recommendations in this report are aimed at allowing permanent institutions and systems to work properly.'

The Fitzgerald approach was widely criticised, most notably by the investigative journalists Bob Bottom and Brian Toohey, each of whom was disappointed that Fitzgerald had not made more of his opportunity to make findings against individuals—which could then be quoted, under privilege, by journalists. The report was compared unfavourably with that of inquiries such as the Costigan royal commission, which had named names, sometimes publicly and sometimes in secret volumes that were leaked.

Instead, in a section titled 'Guilt and Innocence', Fitzgerald declined to cast stones, saying: 'Where misconduct is institutionalised, guilt and innocence are not a matter of black and white. There are infinite shades of grey. Some people have been merely incompetent, or the victims of inertia ... the shadows fall differently depending on one's point of view.' The

Some things have not changed in Queensland. There are all sorts of tensions between the independent commissions and the government. Only some of them are healthy tensions. But public attitudes have altered. Queenslanders express horror and indignation at practices that, in the south, are greeted with a cynical shrug of the shoulder.

Photo courtesy of *The Age*.

Goodbye to all that: Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen at the time of the Fitzgerald inquiry

main object of the report, Fitzgerald said, was 'to bring about improved structures and systems. The past misdeeds of individuals are of less concern, except as a basis for learning for the future.'

Fitzgerald recommended the setting up of two independent commissions, the Criminal Justice Commission [CJC] and the Electoral and Administrative Review Commission [EARC], each of which would be answerable to an all-party parliamentary committee. A large part of the analysis of how Queensland is emerging from its crisis consists of an analysis of how these bodies are going about their work.

The Criminal Justice Commission was always going to attract the most antagonism, since it is responsible, among many other things, for continuing the Fitzgerald inquiry's investigations into corruption.

In fact, it has come under insidious attack. The CJC is unpopular with the government—partly because of the natural antagonism of governments to powerful, independent bodies, partly because the CJC has made some errors, but also because it is about to release a report on the abuse of parliamentary expense accounts, including those of some Labor members.

The CJC released a report saying that the number of police assaults on civilians was increasing. The report received front-page treatment in the Friday newspapers. Predictably, for those used to police manipulation of the media, the following Sunday a story appeared in the local press, saying that the chairman of the CJC, Sir Max Bingham, had 'got off' receiving a fine for driving on a Tasmanian licence. The incident to which the stories referred was six months old. Bingham was within his legal rights, and had not received preferential treatment. Nevertheless, the story was remorselessly beaten up, and was damaging. CJC staff believe the story was pushed not only by police but by senior government ministers. If the staff are right, it is to the Goss government's lasting shame.

EARC brought in a system of one vote one value for local government. By doing so, it rocked the foundations of the level of government most Queenslanders identify as their own, and put an end to networks of power and mateship throughout the state.

Thank heavens for the ABC, which on the *7.30 Report* ran a critical analysis of the way the story had been handled. After that program went to air, the ABC was not invited to a news conference held by the Police Minister the next day. Finally, after Bingham called his own news conference to rebut the attacks, which he said were 'calculated and deliberate' attempts to undermine the CJC's credibility, the government belatedly issued a statement supporting him.

All of this is not to say that the CJC is without fault. How could it be? The comparable bodies federally and in NSW—the National Crime Authority and the Independent Commission against Corruption—have both had their problems. And the CJC, with a budget of $17 million and a staff of about 250, including seconded police, has an even more difficult job than its sister bodies. As well as being responsible for continuing investigations into misconduct, it receives complaints from the public, is responsible for witness protection and for the tribunal that adjudicates on allegations against police. It also reviews the laws on prostitution, drugs and gambling.

Any criticism of the CJC should be tempered with a recognition of the enormous difficulties of each of these tasks—together with the realisation that such criticism plays into the hands of the corrupt. Yet today some of the CJC's sternest detractors are former Fitzgerald commission staff members. They claim that the chairman of the CJC, Sir Max Bingham, failed to capitalise on the momentum built up by the Fitzgerald inquiry. By appointing former colleagues from the National Crime Authority to top positions, they say, Bingham imported a new culture and new methods. There was a low tolerance for the Queensland way of doing things, however successful.

'It was almost as though they thought we hadn't done badly for Queenslanders, but now they were going to show us how it was done,' one former Fitzgerald staff member said. These people believe many opportunities were lost, and that momentum is only now being regained.

On the plus side, the CJC has an active investigation record, much of it in cooperation with other police forces. Bingham claims the commission has tracked down 'about 20 or 30 big crooks'. And Bingham claims to have learnt from his experience at the NCA. For example, he believes other states could adopt the Queensland legislation that makes the parliamentary committee to which the CJC answers subject to the same legal obligations of confidentiality as the CJC itself—meaning MPs can go to jail if information is leaked. Both Bingham and the head of the CJC parliamentary committee, Mr Peter Beattie, agree that this provision has meant the committee is kept fully informed about CJC activities.

There are moves to hive off parts of the CJC's functions. Bingham favors placing the Misconduct Tribunal under the aegis of the new Public Service Management Committee. Others argue for even more radical changes: for the law-reform function to be returned to the Law Reform Commission, for example. There are risks in such approaches. Smaller bodies are more easily attacked. Although the Law Reform Commission, which has been worthy but ineffectual, is itself due for a reform process conducted by the EARC, the history of such commissions is that they have difficulty getting their recommendations implemented. As well, part of Fitzgerald's aim in setting up such a large body was to allow the reform process to be integrated and planned. Fragmentation puts these aims at risk.

There is almost too much public confidence in the CJC. One poll showed that 77 per cent of the population had heard of the CJC, and that when its purpose was explained, 82 per cent supported its aims and its con-

Photo: James McEwan

Other states could learn from Queensland legislation: Criminal Justice Commission chairman Sir Max Bingham

tinued independence. And, unlike its bodgie predecessors, the Police Complaints Tribunal and the police internal investigations bureau, the CJC has been swamped with complaints—2900 since its inception. Given that the CJC must investigate every complaint, this is very much a mixed blessing.

Nevertheless, the importance of this huge vote of public confidence cannot be underestimated, since in the long term it is public opinion that will ensure the survival or otherwise of the CJC, just as public opinion ensured the survival of the Fitzgerald inquiry in more hectic days.

JUST DOWN THE ROAD from Queensland's Parliament House, in a modern glass skyscraper, is the quietest yet most dramatic evidence that Queensland is changing. It is the reading room maintained by the Electoral and Administrative Review Commission. EARC is much smaller than the CJC. It has a budget of only $3.9 million and a staff of just 35. Yet its job is perhaps more fundamental. Its responsibilities concern the checks and balances on power that lie at the heart of the state's abused democracy.

In the reading room, any member of the public can, without identifying themselves or giving any explanation, and using state-of-the-art computer technology, access virtually all the documents held by the commission—including those embarrassing to it. The reading room is a radical institution, symbolising the extraordinarily open and public means by which EARC conducts its reviews. I am not aware of any statutory body in Australia that has anything to compare with it.

EARC got off to a fiery start with its review of the state electoral system [see panel on next page]. Inside Queensland, this was far outshadowed by the review of local government electoral boundaries, some of which made the parliamentary gerrymander look good. In Kingaroy, for example, some electors had a vote worth 27 times that of citizens in neighbouring wards.

EARC received a staggering 3140 submissions on local government boundaries, compared to only 268 on the state government guidelines. The figures are a sobering reminder of the extent to which Queensland, unlike every other state, is a collection of regions. That is one of the few fundamental differences between it and other states. EARC brought in a system of one vote one value for local government. By doing so, it rocked the foundations of the level of government most Queenslanders identify as their own, and put an end to networks of power and mateship throughout the state.

EARC reviews begin with the release of issue papers to promote debate. There follow several periods during which the public can make submissions, all of which are published. Once EARC releases its report, the parliamentary committee can hold further public hearings and take further submissions, before making its own recommendations to parliament. All these issue papers, submissions and reports are sent to every public library and court house in Queensland.

The chairman of EARC, former Australian government solicitor Tom Sherman, claims that EARC's processes mean that Queensland has developed public participation in policy making to a greater extent than anywhere else in the country. He is probably right.

The Government's openness to this approach is yet to be tested. A batch of EARC reports awaits the new session of Parliament. Some of the proposals will test

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THE VOTERS

MARGARET SIMONS

Setting the bounds

WHEN THE FITZGERALD REPORT was released on 3 July 1989, the main surprise was a recommendation that Queensland's notorious gerrymander be reviewed. It was a sensation, not least because the recommendation meant that Fitzgerald had stretched his terms of reference to the limit.

In the hoopla that followed, many overlooked the fact that Fitzgerald had *not* specified that the zonal system be done away with, nor had he recommended a system of one vote-one value. Many simply assumed that these things would follow from the independent review, which was to be conducted by the new Electoral and Administrative Review Commission. But things did not turn out like that. Instead of coming down in favor of one vote-one value, EARC recommended a system of weighting for Queensland's most remote electorates.

Why did Queensland have to be different? Why did it not merely adopt the methods already established federally and in the other states? The chairman of EARC, a former Australian government solicitor, Tom Sherman, claims that the review was the first in Australia to examine the fundamental principles underlying suffrage. As such, it may have implications for other systems in Australia—the more so since there is no question that, however controversial its recommendations, EARC conducted a thorough, fair, and open review.

Since Australia has no bill of rights, and no constitutional guarantees of equal suffrage, the commission had to look overseas for basic principles. The EARC gave weight to Canadian experience, because it was a mature Westminster system operating in a jurisdiction with large remote areas. Canadian court decisions suggested that deviations from one vote-one value could be justified if they contributed to better government.

EARC concluded that although equal suffrage was an important civil and political right, remoteness disadvantaged citizens in terms of their effective access to elected representatives. So under the EARC system now in place, one vote-one value applies, with a variation of 10 per cent allowed in the population size of most electorates. But electorates bigger than 100,000 square kilometres can include 'notional'—i.e. non-existent—voters, who may number up to a figure equal to two per cent of the area of the electorate in square kilometres. The formula will have little practical effect, probably applying to only five of the 89 Legislative Assembly seats and perhaps creating one more seat.

The principle has been enormously controversial. In correspondence with the Queensland government, the federal Human Rights Commissioner, Brian Burdekin, claimed that EARC's recommendation was inconsistent with Australia's obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which specified that elections should be by 'universal and equal suffrage'. Burdekin urged Goss not to implement the EARC scheme. His letter was passed on to Sherman, who responded by saying that Burdekin's conclusions 'are wrong, have no authority to support them, are not firmly based in any proper inquiry, and involve an impermissible intrusion into Queensland affairs.'

Under the machinery set up by Fitzgerald, EARC's report went to an all-party parliamentary committee for review. It was anathema to the majority of Labor members, who had suffered under decades of gerrymander. The committee slammed EARC's research and presuppositions, pointing out that although remoteness may disadvantage electors, so did poverty, language difficulties and the like.

Yet the parliamentary committee recommended the adoption of EARC's recommendations. The reasoning behind this move is almost as interesting as the recommendations themselves. Three weeks after the release of his report, Tony Fitzgerald had made his last direct intervention in the public affairs of Queensland. The then Premier, Mike Ahern, had announced the holding of a referendum to extend the term of his government so the electoral review could take place before the election. Perhaps by accident—though probably not—the suggestion that the referendum was Fitzgerald's idea crept into public debate.

It was an impression Fitzgerald felt bound to correct. On 21 July, he called the three party leaders to his chambers. They came out with a joint media release, stating that the referendum had not been his idea. More importantly, the three men publicly pledged that regardless of the referendum result, EARC's recommendations on the electoral system would be implemented.

The parliamentary committee concluded that politically, if not legally, the leaders had delegated to EARC the law making powers of Parliament. In an agonised chapter entitled 'What Is To Be Done', and quoting sources as diverse as Locke and Garran on the sovereignty of Parliament, the committee report concluded that it was 'honour bound' to accept the recommendations.

Queenslanders may wonder whether Fitzgerald would have agreed, given his report's emphasis on restoring the proper role of Parliament, and limiting the powers of non-elected people and bodies. Such restoration was, after all, one of the reasons he had EARC's recommendations subject to review by a parliamentary committee. He clearly anticipated that there would be times when the two disagreed.

The chairman of the parliamentary committee, Matt Foley, still disagrees with what EARC did. 'But,' he says, 'the difference between this and the gerrymander is the difference between good and evil.' ■

From page 13

the complexion of the Goss government in an area where it has made no promises. The recommendations include a Peaceful Assembly Act, which would make Queensland the first state in Australia to specifically provide a right of peaceful assembly. EARC also recommended the setting up of a speakers' corner in central Brisbane. The days of the right-to-march demonstrations seem far away. In a report on the judicial review of administrative decisions, EARC recommended that the scope of statutory judicial review be wider, simpler and cheaper than elsewhere in Australia, and that public servants be required by law to give written reasons for their decisions when an aggrieved person asks them to do so.

Freedom-of-information legislation has also been recommended, and here again EARC has departed from normal Australian practice by abandoning the appeal process through tribunals and courts and appointing an Information Commissioner, similar to the New Zealand and Canadian systems. This will make FoI cheaper to use, but there are concerns about whether the commissioner, appointed by Cabinet on address by Parliament, will be sufficiently independent.

There is also a proposal for a 'parliamentary counsel', an independent statutory officer who, as well as drafting bills, would have wide powers to scrutinise them for adherence to basic legislative principles, such as whether there are sufficient guidelines for the exercise of bureaucratic discretions, whether the government is pushing through by regulation measures that should be dealt with in legislation, and whether laws show respect for the traditions of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders.

SOME THINGS HAVE NOT CHANGED in Queensland. There are all sorts of tensions between the independent commissions and the government. Only some of them are healthy tensions. But public attitudes have altered. Queenslanders express horror and indignation at practices that, in the south, are greeted with a cynical shrug of the shoulder. Sherman says: 'I think Queenslanders are a very proud people, and the Fitzgerald inquiry and what it revealed shamed them. Now there is a very strong feeling that the body politic should be fixed up.'

It may be that, as Queensland struggles out of its darkest hour, it is blazing a path for the rest of us. ■

Margaret Simons is a freelance journalist who lives in South Australia. She writes regularly for *Eureka Street*.

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Integrity and calculus

WE MEASURE AREAS in terms of squares. But how are we to measure areas that have curved sides? Archimedes devoted much thought to this. Inside a parabola, for example, he drew a series of rectangles, getting smaller and smaller, with a series of similarly smaller triangles on top of each smaller rectangle. The area under the parabola could thus be approximated as the sum of all these little areas. In the same way, Archimedes measured the value of π by inscribing a polygon with many sides inside and outside a circle. He never said that a circle was a polygon with an infinite number of sides, but he headed in that direction. He certainly formulated a mathematics with tendencies to infinite smallness.

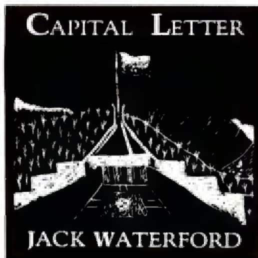
The Greeks usually avoided infinity in their mathematics. Infinity is a rather imprecise notion, and precision was what the Greeks were after. But Archimedes did invent what he called the 'method of exhaustion' and mathematical formulae that look remarkably like modern geometric series. In his efforts to 'square the spiral' he took his method to the most exhausting of all limits, infinity. In doing so, he anticipated, if not discovered, the modern method known as calculus.

The discovery of the calculus is a vexed issue in the history of mathematics. There is much evidence that Isaac Newton came upon the formulation of infinite mathematical series and the calculus in 1665-66. He did not publish his discovery widely, however, and Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz, perhaps assisted by correspondence from Newton to Oldenburg, printed his version of the calculus in the *Acta Eruditorum* in 1684. A number of articles were then published claiming that Newton had in fact discovered the calculus prior to Leibniz. These articles were written by Newton himself, though published under the names of his friends!

Leibniz appealed to the Royal Society to settle the puerile argument. This was an unfortunate tactic, for Newton was the president of the society at the time. Appointing his partisans to a committee of inquiry, Newton wrote their report himself and had the society publish it, accusing Leibniz of stealing his own ideas. He went further, even writing an anonymous review of this report in the society's journal. He deleted all references to Leibniz's method from later editions of his *Philosophiae Naturalis Principia Mathematica*, and is said to have rejoiced, after Leibniz's death, in 'breaking Leibniz's heart'.

A great mathematician, Mr Newton, but not always a very nice man. A pity he didn't give some credit to Archimedes. Why is it so difficult for us to imagine that the greats of the past could possibly be our equal, or worthy of our respect and reverence? ■

—John Honner SJ



It's only dry under the umbrella

Could the Liberal Party snatch defeat from the jaws of victory yet again? Unlikely as it might seem, it is far from impossible. I have to confess that I was among those who did not think that Bob Hawke could pull it off in 1990. And, for most of the time since, as Australia sank deeper and deeper into the recession we had to have, I have regarded his, or the Labor Party's, prospects of doing it again as so remote as to be fanciful. The fact that Bob Hawke is an incorrigible optimist who always believes he can do it is irrelevant.

So could Labor be looking at a record fifth term when it calls the next election? It will do so at a time of its choosing during the next 18 or so months, presumably well after the economy has begun moving again, unemployment has started to fall and the trading outlook has improved. Still, the odds ought to be against it. Even at a buoyant time, the electorate might be expected to recall some of its present pain. And it is hard to say that Labor, after a decade in office, is in much of a position to advance fresh ideas or policies, whoever is leading it.

There is a cliché that holds that oppositions do not win elections, government lose them. The reverse has been true in the Hawke era. Major splits in the coalition (the Joh-for-Canberra campaign and the Howard-Peacock jousts); appalling opposition blunders (the arithmetic on budget cuts and the failure to come up with a health policy); shrewd Labor polarisation of key swinging voters (the greens); and the marginalisation of traditional Labor voters who have no option but, cursingly, to support the old side, have seen Labor scrape home each time.

It could do so again. The Liberals are extremely vulnerable on the consumption tax, and the more they succumb to pressure to be specific about its practical application the more difficulty they will be in. The policy may be courageous—any politician who talks of raising taxes shows courage—and, arguably, it may even be good economics. The Liberals plan to sell it in the context of income-tax cuts, of course, but history has shown that the pain of new taxes rankles long after the benefit of any reductions is forgotten. The campaign against consumption taxes, and the anxieties that those running it can stimulate, are obvious enough. It is not clear what a successful counter campaign could be.

The Nationals have already shown some nervousness about Liberal plans to cut out the dole for those who have been receiving it for more than nine months. Some people may be pacified by assurances that deserving cases will not be allowed to suffer. But the fact that the Liberals have pencilled in $750 million as the saving they expect to make from this reform must make many voters wonder just how much sympathy and discretion will be shown. On the other hand, if the economy is climbing out of recession and unemployment is falling, a scare campaign on this issue might not be as potent as it is now.

But there are more fundamental problems. One scratch against the pre-Hewson Liberal Party was disunity; it has long been clear that the voters will not choose a disunited party. Everyone has to pull together, right? Hewson is maintaining a tight discipline over his team but he has done this by narrowing the party's philosophical base. The Liberals are now officially 'dry'. Virtually all Liberal frontbenchers have good economic rationalist credentials, and those with a heretical past, such as Fred Chaney, Andrew Peacock, and Robert Hill, take care to keep their mouths shut. Most Liberal state leaders have similar views, and so do most party officials.

The Liberals, like Labor, used to be an umbrella party, containing a range of views on the role of government in the economy and society. But so dominant is the economic rationalist line, and so fervent is the party curia in punishing those of heterodox opinions, that many traditional Liberals must wonder whether there is any shade under the umbrella left for them. The drift of small-'l' liberals from the party, which began with Don Chipp and has since included people such as Ian Macphee, Chris Puplick and Peter Baume, has been accompanied by considerable dismay among some of the party's conservatives. The latter might favour a non-interventionist approach to the economy but are unabashed advocates of a government role in matters of morality.

There are indications that the electorate regards the narrow Liberal monolith with considerable suspicion. That 'wet' independents can win blue-ribbon Liberal seats in a string of state elections and byelections is a clear message that mere Liberal endorsement is not enough. The near-defeat of the Greiner government in NSW and the subsequent defection of Terry Metherell; Sally-Anne Atkinson's failure to hold the lord mayoralty of Brisbane; and the Liberals' failure to make headway in opinion polls in Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia, despite the fact that on Labor's performance they ought to be holding an open *misère*, suggests that the Hewson mixture has yet to gel.

Don't put your shirt on Labor, but if you can get good odds a small investment might repay.

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

Photo: Michael Coyne

PAUL RULE

The two great 20th century Chinese revolutions, of 1911 and 1945-9, were both in essence military struggles won by the stronger military leader. The next Chinese revolution, however, might mark the end of that tradition. That bloodless revolution might be very close indeed.

The emperors without clothes

CHINA WATCHERS LOOK BACK WITH ENVY to the old days of sparse information and clear ideological stances. Our task has become more, not less, exacting in recent years, and one suspects that this feeling is shared by the old men in Beijing. They must make decisions about their vast and diverse country while divested of theoretical certainties, a stable world and reliable local support.

Trevor Hay (*Eureka Street*, October 1991) pointed to one ingredient in China's surprise cake, ethnicity. As the Soviet Union disintegrates, the Muslims in Xinjiang and Mongols of Inner Mongolia look across their borders, which were always much more permeable than is often imagined, to the growing independence of their ethnic, religious and linguistic brothers and sisters. The plight of Tibet continues to corrode China's international image, and even the dialects and cultural loyalties of China's old provinces seem to be resurgent. The demand for local autonomy is not fuelled by economics alone but, as in Eastern Europe, by more basic, perhaps regressive, but nonetheless powerful emotions.

The apparent indifference of China's leaders to a rapidly changing world seems like whistling in the dark. Their eager and in retrospect ill-advised support of the coup attempt in the Soviet Union is but one signal of their desperation. And their condemnation of the election results in Hong Kong, while superficially indicative of confidence, may be read in the opposite sense. Are they such bad Marxists as to believe that the fundamental economic and social changes they have wrought for more than a decade will not generate ideological and political change?

Reports from all areas and all levels in China suggest that outside Beijing the writ of the central government is increasingly ignored. It seems that the dissidents who escaped the post-Tiananmen Square purges did so not only through an efficient underground network but because many officials, even in the security forces, were sympathetic. The harsher measures of control are simply not being implemented. An historian is reminded of the classic symptoms of dynastic decay: revolt, dissent, contempt for the old regime and loss of faith in its mandate, corruption at the centre.

A case in point is the selective retaliation used against China's premier university, Beijing University, for its role in the mid-1989 demonstrations. Incoming classes have had to undergo a year's special training in a People's Liberation Army camp. Despite press accounts of the beneficial impact of this process, reliable reports from Beijing suggest that its main effect has been boredom and cynicism. One wonders whether Beijing University is still automatically placed first on the

preference list of China's top middle-school graduates.

Another case of ill-judged and counter-productive actions has been the tougher religious policy. The Bureau of Religious Affairs is thought to have become too sympathetic to its charges, and a harder line emanating from the United Front department has taken its place. The reaction to the appointment of Gong Pinmei, the prelate Rome recognises as Bishop of Shanghai as a cardinal—or rather to the Vatican's announcement that it had occurred in secret some time ago—seems to have been to impose petty restrictions on outside visitors. These will not slow the growing regularisation of bishops not appointed by Rome, nor the rapprochement of 'patriotic' and 'traditional' Catholics, a distinction that in any case means little in practice in many areas. Those most likely to be adversely affected are hardliners within the Patriotic Association.

As for Australian relations with China, the criticism directed towards Senator Chris Schact's parliamentary human rights delegation again illustrates the Chinese government's isolation from reality. Despite some misguided early criticism of the personnel of the delegation, there was never any possibility that such a well-informed and experienced group would have been party to a whitewash. The apparently startled and excessive reaction to its measured criticisms would indicate either a blunder on the part of the Chinese government or a very subtle game being played by some internal critics. Chinese are used to a mirror reading of their own press: the best way to communicate unpalatable ideas is often to engineer their detailed refutation.

Reports from all areas and all levels in China suggest that outside Beijing the writ of the central government is increasingly ignored ... An historian is reminded of the classic symptoms of dynastic decay: revolt, dissent, contempt for the old regime and loss of faith in its mandate, corruption at the centre.

By its own measure of success—the pace of economic reconstruction and growth—the Chinese gerontocracy's post Tiananmen policies have hardly been on target. Growth in gross national product has slowed, the deficits of the state enterprises increased (doubling in the first half of 1990 over the previous year), unemployment has increased, and taxation revenue has been half what had been estimated. There are signs of an improvement in 1991 but many Chinese are questioning the policies themselves. Like the Soviet Union, China has suffered from the deficiencies of an untenable dual system: a private sector subject to the vagaries of a volatile world economy, and a state sector run as competitive fiefdoms by unaccountable political elites.

It would be misleading to compare the Chinese and the Soviet economies. Whether the comparative success of China should be attributed to cultural factors—an entrepreneurial tradition, peasant shrewdness, the exigencies of survival—or to a more enlightened leadership, or to the sheer size of the internal market, is debatable; but there is no doubt that the fundamentals are sound. Long-term problems remain to be solved: population growth out of control—despite the savagery of the one-child policy—environmental devastation, and China's relations with Japan. Most Chinese, however, seem to regard their prosperity as having been achieved despite, rather than because of, the Chinese Communist Party. With Hong Kong, Taiwan and Singapore as ever-present, if idealised, models of Chinese prosperity, combined with a more open society, pressure for change will continue.

THE MAIN QUESTION REMAINING is one of timing. Will there be another Tiananmen, either an ethnic one as Trevor Hay suggests, or an urban workers' movement much more like Marx's vision than was the actual Chinese communist revolution? (Recent waves of strikes have been little noted in the Western press.) Or will the students try again, having done their preparatory work with the army, as in 1911?

The key to the succession to the old men lies with the People's Liberation Army. Despite recent speculation, the 84-year-old President, Yang Shangkun, seems unlikely to follow Deng Xiaoping, and if he did he would be an interim leader in the fullest sense of the term. But would the PLA accept one of the middle generation, and on what terms? It is here that there is an analogy with the Soviet Union, where the army's reluctance to support the August coup was decisive, just as the deal done with the PLA in June 1989 was decisive in what amounted to a coup in China. But would the PLA go the same way in 1992 or 1993?

It should not surprise us to conclude that the fate of modernisation, democracy and prosperity in China might in the end depend on the army. Apart from its size, China is in other respects a Third World country, an Afro-Asian nation. The two great 20th century Chinese revolutions, of 1911 and 1945-9, were both in essence military struggles won by the stronger military leader. The next Chinese revolution, however, might mark the end of that tradition, with the army retreating to a supporting professional role. That bloodless revolution might be very close indeed. ■

Paul Rule is a China specialist who lectures in religious studies at La Trobe University. He is the author of *Mao Zedong* (UQP, 1984.)

Trevor Hay (see 'China, Red and Ethnic', in the October issue of *Eureka Street*) has won the 1991 Braille Book of the Year Award for *Tartar City Woman: Scenes from the life of Wang Hsin-ping, former citizen of China.* (MUP)

Parallel lives

For those interested in getting to the bottom of the Jesuit murders in El Salvador on 16 November 1989, the recent momentous history of the USSR offers, not a distraction, but new possibilities. No one can now credibly claim that US support for the right-wing military in El Salvador is necessary to block a Soviet takeover in Central America. Pumping up the Salvadoran armed forces with military aid makes it clearer than ever that we are merely supporting one part of the Salvadoran population against another. When the 'crack' Black Berets who murdered Latvians and Lithuanians finally went scuttling home from the Baltics, the world cheered. One difference between those Black Berets and El Salvador's 'crack' Atlacatl Battalion, whose troops murdered the Jesuits, is that the Atlacatl Battalion was trained by US Marines. These are 'our' Black Berets.—*America*, September 14, 1991.

Déjà vu

... America does not appear by any means as particularly fresh or untouched. She appears with all the weakness and weariness of modern England, or any other Western power. In her politics she has broken up exactly as England has broken up, into a bewildering opportunism and insincerity. In this matter of war and the national attitude towards war, her resemblance to England is even more manifest and melancholy. It may be said with rough accuracy that there are three stages in the life of a strong people. First it is a small power, and fights small powers. Then it is a great power, and fights great powers. Then it is a great power, and fights small powers, but pretends that they are great powers, in order to rekindle the ashes of its ancient emotion and vanity. After that, the next step is to become a small power itself.—G.K. Chesterton, 'The Fallacy of the Young Nation', in *Heretics*, published 1905.

Keep it clean

In 1747 an upward-striving 15 year-old in Virginia named George Washington laboriously copied out maxims from a new translation of the French Jesuits' *Rules of Civility and Decent Behaviour* (1595). Some of the more decorous tips transcribed included the following: 'Put not off your Clothes in the presence of others, nor go out of your Chamber half Drest.' 'Bedew no man's face with Spittle by approaching too near him when you Speak'. One particular maxim joined precision to delicacy: 'Kill no Vermin as Fleas, lice, ticks, etc in the Sight of Others; if you See any filth or thick Spittle put your foot Dexterously upon it; if it be upon the Cloths of your Companions Put if off privately, and if it be upon your own Cloths return Thanks to him who puts it off.'—*America*, September 7, 1991.

100-year wait

US Catholic hospitals have been accused by labour organisers of trying to discourage employees from joining unions. The Queen of the Valley Hospital in Napa, California, faces charges before the US National Labor Relations Board of 'interfering with, restraining and coercing' employees during a union membership drive. The board has also ordered St John's Hospital in Springfield, Illinois, to post notices pledging not to 'interrogate' or 'threaten' pro-union employees. And in Buffalo, New York, nurses at Mercy Hospital voted to set up a local branch of the Communications Workers of America—but only after the administration had suggested that pro-union nurses should work somewhere else, because unions 'promote hostility'.

To counter union-busting, church and union officials have turned to congregations of religious sisters, who control 95 per cent of America's Catholic hospitals. Monsignor George Higgins, a church spokesman on labour issues, made the appeal in several speeches marking the 100th anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*, the encyclical of Pope Leo XIII that endorsed labour unions. In an interview, Higgins said the question of religious women and union busting was a sensitive one because women had been deprived of many leadership roles in the church. Yet what the sisters decided, he said, would affect large numbers of low-paid women workers.—*National Catholic Reporter*, June 7, 1991.

Virtue in fiction

Jane Austen is in a crucial way—along with Cobbett and the Jacobins—the last great representative of the classical tradition of the virtues. It has proved easy for later generations not to understand her importance as a moralist because she is after all a novelist. And to them she has often appeared as not merely 'only' a writer of fiction, but a writer of fiction concerned with a very restricted social world. What they have not observed and what the juxtaposition of her insights with Cobbett and the Jacobins ought to teach us to observe is that both in her own time and afterward the life of the virtues is necessarily afforded a very restrictive cultural and social space. In most of the public and most of the private world the classical and medieval virtues are replaced by the meagre substitutes which modern morality affords. Of course, when I say that Jane Austen is in a crucial way the last representative of the classical tradition, I do not mean to deny that she has *any* descendants. Kipling, in a short story now seldom read, with a good deal of insight made one of his characters say that she was the mother—he might better have said the grandmother—of Henry James.—Alasdair Macintyre, *After Virtue* ch.16.

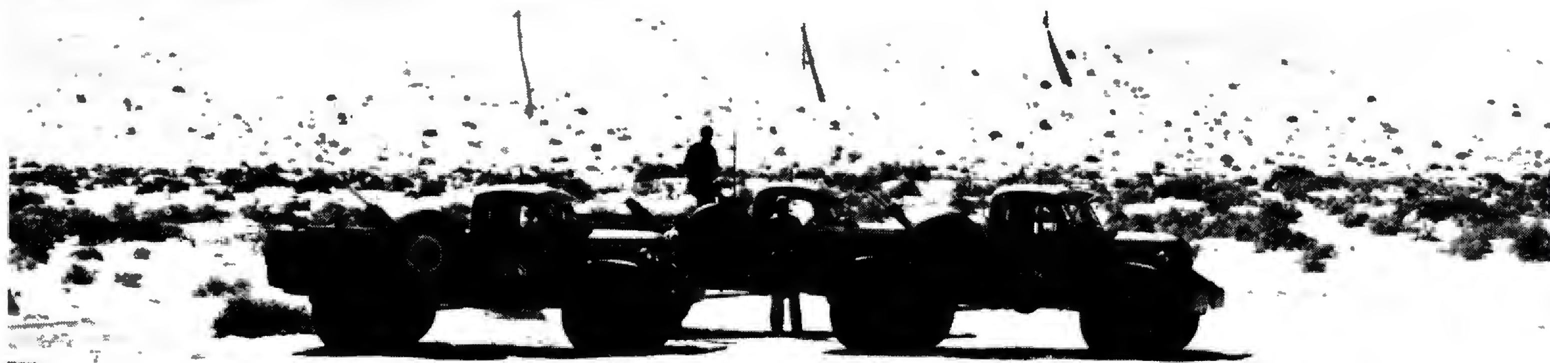
A fiendish game

It is rumoured that cricket began in the Benedictine monasteries of 13th century England, as a religious exercise. The church, in this allegorical game, was represented by two batsmen (vicar and curate), while the forces of evil were represented by Lucifer (the bowler) and his 10 disciples, whose names I have forgotten. The aim of the Devil was to bowl a ball (the human soul) down through the gates of hell (the wickets). The aim of the church was to hit the soul away from the gates of hell, but not in such a way that it was caught on the rebound by one of the devils fielding for Lucifer.—Giles Pickford, *St Mark's Review*, Autumn 1991.

Interview

Michael McGirr

The stones are laughing



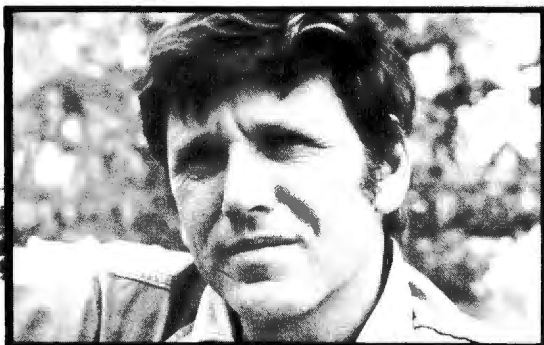
Whatever 'side' they take, outsiders tend to see the Arab-Israeli conflict in terms of stark contrasts. But from the inside it looks very different, as ***Michael McGirr*** *found when he spoke to the Israeli novelist and peace activist,* ***Amos Oz****.*

McGirr: *I've heard you say that Israelis are passionate about literature. Why is that?*
Oz: There is a tradition in Israel which is very different from the English-language tradition. There is an expectation among Jews that writers do not write fiction, but that they have some gospel, that they be the heirs of the prophets. In fact, there is actually no Hebrew word for 'fiction' and it's not a word I like. In our bookshops you will find sections marked 'narrative prose'. Not that the contemporary writers can always deliver a gospel, but the expectation is there. I think some Slavonic countries share the same tradition; in Russia, for example, where poets read their poetry in huge auditoriums. Possibly in Latin America as well. The expectation is that writers not just tell a story but show the way. The cultural expectation is there in the genes of the Jewish people, all the way back to the Bible, I believe.

Is this an expectation that puts pressure on you personally?
It does, because most of the time I cannot deliver. I don't hear any voices from high above and all I can do, in a political essay, is to use my common sense and my logic, and hopefully my integrity. Not any divine inspiration. But the strain there is enormous because those who are disappointed with what you have to say or to suggest turn very furious at you. Israelis read books for rage, not for enjoyment, you know. Reading books is not an entertainment business in Israel. It's not, as it is in the English-language tradition, a subtle entertainment. It's a passionate matter. People read books sometimes in order to pick an issue with a fictitious character in the novel.

You don't claim divine inspiration yet it's part of your life that every morning you walk out into the desert not far from where you live. You've described the desert as the cradle of monotheism.
Yes. If you compare the desert to northerly landscapes where paganism thrives—perhaps to this very day—you can understand why. These shady, misty varied landscapes that change with light and weather and season and climate; and where there is forest and mountain and bush and hill and river. Those beget the faith in a variety of deities: demons, goblins, you name it. Whereas the desert is always the same. Summer and winter, spring and autumn it's the same desert. There is this monotoneity: magnificent, magnaminous monotoneity. Which makes you unmistakeably aware of the fact that there is one unmistakeable presence all over the place. Now what you call this presence is, of course, a matter of your conviction or your belief. But it's one presence.

No doubt you know that the desert looms large in the Australian imagination. But the white Australian imagination is also stereotypically secular, almost defining itself against the emptiness of the desert.
There is a bit of that in the attitude of the Israeli early pioneers at the beginning of Zionism: when they want-



ed, so to speak, to conquer the desert, to civilise the desert. This is pretty much the equivalent of your national ethos. It is changing now. Many people prefer to keep at least parts of the desert intact as a source of inspiration. Let some of the desert be preserved as no-man's-land where you can roam and lose yourself and knock things back into proportion. You know, you wander in the desert in the early morning for half an hour or an hour, and you go back home for your coffee and turn on the radio and hear this or that politician saying 'forever' or 'for the rest of eternity'. You know the stones out there are laughing.

In To Know A Woman, *you have spoken about the search for truth of the principal character, Yoel, and have described his life's option as metapolitical and, in the same breath, theological. Could you shed a little light on what you mean?*

This man expects forever an illumination, an epiphany. He retires in middle age from a career as a master spy and uses his professional, intellectual equipment not in pursuit of happiness but in pursuit of knowledge. He has great care for detail, a sharp eye for detail. He uses this in order to discern a pattern in everything, hoping that something will reveal itself to him. I would call this theological rather than social or political. In almost a comical way, he looks at the wall paper in some God-forsaken hotel somewhere and hopes a pattern, a something, will emerge.

Whatever this something is is not for me to say. The book does not end with a theological conclusion. It's not a Jewish or a Christian or a Muslim book. But it terminates with some sort of a deep expectation for something to reveal itself. A pattern or reason behind the plentitude of seemingly disconnected phenomena. Yoel is searching for some kind of truth. He is a credible liar. A liar who never lies. A liar who, out of the depth of lie, seeks if not truth, then at least a glimpse of it.

Another striking feature of the book is the presence, in the life of all sorts of people, of political people, of art. You draw attention to paintings on the walls of the Intelligence Office and a sick woman reading poetry. What is the role of art in these lives ?

If I had to answer this in one word, I'd say it's a comfort. A comforting impact in an immensely tormented society with a very traumatic past and a very painful present and a very uncertain future. Art is a great comfort for many Israelis. Different forms of art. Not all of it great art. Jewish creativity is ultimately the outcome of incredible suffering and of a tormented mind. Jews are forever asking themselves, 'What's wrong with us?' It's a terrible fact because, having been persecuted and discriminated against for thousands of years, after a while one stops asking what's wrong with my oppressor and starts asking himself or herself 'What's wrong with me?' It's a terrible state of mind. It happens to every victim. Hence the persistent soul-searching.

You've become identified with a piece of political advice which is to 'make peace, not love'. Could you explain this ?

In the Christian tradition and vocabulary, love and compassion and forgiveness and brotherhood are synonymous. Not in the Jewish tradition. The opposite of war is not love, the opposite of war is *peace*. The Christian concept of universal love differs a great deal from the Jewish concept, which regards love as a very private and intimate feeling which could only be bestowed upon those to whom you relate intimately. Family and friends. Universal love is by definition, to me as a Jew, bound to be very thin, very abstract, very impersonal. Whereas love prevails in the Christian mind and tradition, in the Jewish tradition the key notion is justice, not love. I think in Jewish scripture you will find the word 'justice' in various forms as often as you will find 'love' in Christian scriptures. This is one of the theological differences between our two religions.

On the other hand, there is the intense, family-like intimacy within parts of Judaism. The sense that everyone is everybody else's family. And of course, the family business of inflicting guilt on one another. We Jews have, indeed, invented guilt. The Christians have spread it all over the world but the Jews invented it. When I say guilt, I do not necessarily imply the guilt of sin, nor any kind of original sin. I think some of us Jews are champions at suffering the agonies of guilt without first enjoying the delights of sin.

In your estimation, the supreme value, greater than political justice or national interest is life itself. This is the only value for which you have said you personally would go back into battle, as you did in 1967 and again in 1972.

This is almost axiomatic with me. Personally, I would say, because I have seen the face of death very many

times. On the battlefields and elsewhere. I hate death immensely and the thought of people inflicting death on other people is a thought I just cannot take. I value and cherish life, even unhappy life, even miserable life. But not at all costs. If anybody tried to turn me into a slave, I'd fight. But I cherish life because the only alternative to life is death. As simple as that. Death I hate. Life means compromise. There is something in me still raging about the fact that I've been compromising and I'm advocating a compromise. I have become politically an uncompromising advocate of compromise.

The conflict between Arab and Israeli is not a wild-west film with good guys and bad guys, not in the least. If anything it is a tragedy, a clash between justice and justice. Between one very strong cause and another very strong cause. Now, tragedies can be resolved in one of two ways. There is a Shakespearean resolution to tragedy in which the stage is covered with dead bodies and justice hovers high above. There is also a Chekhov resolution. At the end of a Chekhov tragedy everybody is bitter and disillusioned and shattered, but alive. And I want a Chekhov resolution for any conflict.

This goes against the nucleus of my education and perhaps against my own genes. There is this perpetual Jewish aching for the absolute—absolute justice, etc. Many of my characters believe in something I do not. Absolutes. Absolute love or whatever. They believe in perfect peace. They believe in everlasting happiness, which I think is a kitschy notion. They believe passionately and, I hope, convincingly in religious or political ideas which I resent wholeheartedly as a person. So there is a certain civil war going on within myself and it's this that provides the need to tell stories with a certain distance and perspective and detachment.

Speaking of that detachment, one thing I pick up from your novels is an almost Dickensian sense of Australia. For Dickens this was the last place on earth. When one of your characters wants an escape hatch, he starts thinking of becoming a taxi driver in Brisbane. Melbourne is the least likely place for an attack on the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra. And so on.

Australia excites me for some striking similarities and striking differences with Israel. There is in our respective histories a certain subdued guilt towards our indigenous peoples. There was the ethos of the pioneers and always this question about who we really are. But Israel is, in contrast, incredibly little and beleaguered. Australia represents the other world. It's almost stereotyped as heaven to many Israelis—away from the maddening conflicts. You see, we have an overdose of adrenalin in our part of the world. You may have a sad sense of remoteness away from the arena. Saying this jokingly of course, but you and we could have cut the barter bargain of all times. You could have our adrenalin as much as you wish, for a piece of unwanted desert.

The Middle East is seen as an affair between Arabs and Jews. Is there a specific role for Christianity?

I find it difficult to think of a role for Christianity as a whole. But there is a particular responsibility for Christian Europe. I think Christian Europe is the past oppressor of both Jews and Arabs, in two different ways. The Arabs have been victimised by European colonialism and exploitation. The Jews have been persecuted and partly destroyed by Christian Europe. Now it would have been an ideal world if two victims of the same oppressor had developed a gut solidarity. This is how it always happens in the plays of Bertolt Brecht. But in real life the worst animosities are sometimes those between the victims of the same oppressor, looking at each other and seeing an image of their past tormentor in the other victim. It's like the relationship between two children oppressed by the same horrendous parent.

Christian Europe has the same specific responsibility to help create the necessary provisions for a Mid-East peace. For instance, to initiate a Marshall Plan in order to resettle both Palestinian refugees and Jewish refugees pouring into Israel from countries where life isn't bearable for them. Now, if Australia wished to contribute to such a Marshall Plan that would be really something for both Jews and Arabs. ■

Michael McGirr SJ is a student at Jesuit Theological College, Parkville, Victoria. He is a regular contributor to *Eureka Street*.

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Thy neighbour's watch

THE DOOR BELL RINGS earlier than I usually wish to hear it on a Saturday morning. Perched on my doorstep is an immaculately attired, carefully coiffured woman of indeterminate age, who announces that she is my Neighbourhood Watch representative. 'Oh,' I reply, forbearing to add 'that's nice'. This is less out of a reluctance to say something silly—politeness frequently leads me to say silly things—than because it is difficult to say anything at this hour of the morning. I blink as my visitor stares disdainfully at my dishevelled state. Unnecessarily she inquires: 'I'm sorry, did I get you out of bed?' I explain that I like to get up when the sun is warm, about one or two in the afternoon. It is a simple statement of fact but she seems to think I have made some sort of feeble joke, and titters appreciatively. Politeness makes people do that, too. Then she wrinkles her nose as the fresh morning air loses the battle against the noxious odours emanating from my airless flat.

This is fortunate, because at last she explains the purpose of her visit. Waving an adhesive label with 'Neighbourhood Watch' printed on it, she asks if I will take it. I agree to do this, as it seems to be the quickest way of removing her from my doorstep. I do not tell her that I have no intention of affixing this label to my door, to the wall around the overgrown garden planted by the previous tenant, or to any other part of my abode. Politeness still rules. Then she explains that receipt of a shiny new Neighbourhood Watch sticker is normally considered an occasion for the recipient to make a donation. See where all this civility has got you, I tell myself as I stumble back into the flat, groping for my wallet. My eyes are still trying to focus and I cannot find it. Instead I scoop up some pseudo-gold coins and clink them into her outstretched hand, noticing that she is peering over my shoulder into the darker recesses of the flat. Perhaps she also works for the health department, and is trying to locate the source of the noxious odours. Either that, or you just can't keep a good Neighbourhood Watcher from watching whatever there is to watch.

I decide that there are times when one should just should say a firm 'No, thank you' when offered unwanted wall stickers, and that I must do something to regain my self-respect. So I hand the shiny new sticker back along with the pseudo-gold coins, saying that she can keep the money as a pledge of my good faith, but that I do not want to be a Neighbourhood Watcher. She looks hurt and asks why. I explain that if I see any of my neighbours being burgled or assaulted I will do what I can to prevent these acts, and then call out the constabulary. This I would do anyway, and I do not need to attend meetings of the professionally suspicious to learn the elements of neighbourliness. I have now woken up and am at my indignantly rhetorical worst, so I throw in a few cheap shots about Neighbourhood Watchers being busybodies whose chief delight lies in knowing their neighbours' business. My visitor pouts and departs.

Having just inveighed against people spying on their neighbours, I proceed to the kitchen window to see how she will be received by *my* neighbours. They all are happy to become Watchers, and green-and-white stickers go up on doors all round the block of flats. My door is conspicuously bare. I see my visitor standing on the doorstep of Mrs Chodorowski, who is a kind of *concierge* for the block. They glance back towards my flat disapprovingly, and I know that the Watchers will probably spend much of their time watching me. Mrs Chodorowski is 65-ish, six-foot-five-ish, and an exponent of the martial arts. She would terrify most prowlers even without the Neighbourhood Watch. She intimidates me everytime she asks about the weeds in my garden and I have to say 'They're doing very well, thank you.'

Oppressed by the fact that I have become suspect by declaring my intention not to be suspicious, and not relishing an encounter with Mrs Chodorowski, I decide it is a good time to take a walk. So I wander down to the shops, doing my best not to loiter or look suspicious. The sun is shining, the cops I pass on the street do not arrest me, and I am accosted only by the Salvation Army officer who rattles a tin in the local pubs on Friday nights. He is still on duty the morning after, a fine testimony to the virtues of sobriety. I fumble in my pocket for loose change and drop it into his tin. He beams an assurance that Jesus loves me. Still trying to sort out the morning's experiences, I mumble 'The weeds are doing very well, thank you' and keep walking.

Paranoia abates. I sit in the milk bar by the supermarket, spread the morning paper in front of me and spill coffee over it. After a while I enter the supermarket and narrowly escape having my picture taken as shopper of the week. I return home and see Mrs Chodorowski weeding *her* garden. I do not return her stare. The rest of the day passes without incident until I switch on the television for the evening news bulletin. There is an item about a state convention of Neighbourhood Watchers. On the screen is a vast auditorium, filled with Mrs Chodorowskis. Several are interviewed and they say they are just doing the best they can for their neighbours. A police superintendent looks on benignly.

Paranoia returns. I switch off the television and take a book from the shelf. It is *Crime and Punishment*. I decide this is a bad choice and return it to the shelf. I flick through *Don Quixote*, wondering whether my distinguished ancestor ever became a target for the Neighbourhood Watch.

But the Don is silent. Dark night. Nothing. ■

Ray Cassin is production editor of *Eureka Street*.

Damien

'Self-portrait by Matisse'—the artist at work in a
fascinated by North Africa, but most still pre

Almost 30 years after Algeria's bloody war for independence, France is still struggling to digest one of its more painful colonial legacies—the Algerians who sided with France during the war. They fought against their own countrymen in the FLN (National Liberation Front) and came to be known, as have their children and grandchildren since, as 'Harkis'. Many of their parents and grandparents 'did 1914-18 and 1939-45' in the French armed forces.

Concentrated mainly in satellite social housing districts in cities across France and claiming unemployment levels of up to 90 per cent among their young, the second and third generations are bitter and frustrated by the rejection they say French society has reserved for them. Vague official statistics put their number of between 300,000 and 450,000, although spokesmen for the Harki community say the true figure is closer to a million.

In the hot Mediterranean town of Narbonne, with 45,000 inhabitants and lying about 100km north of the Spanish frontier, the frustration spilled into violence in June, when young Harkis clashed with riot police in the 'City of Olive Trees', a housing estate well outside the town centre. Weeks later, a young Harki was found strangled in the same area. Few Harkis believe the interim coroner's report, which suggests that the cause of death was suicide. A campaign of protests and road blocks, and demonstrations in Paris, has helped increase the tension. Although one 'French Muslim', a name by which the Harkis also sometimes go, claimed in the daily *Le Monde* that the Harki unrest could 'become France's intifada', so far there have been few incidents. It has, however, begun attracting attention to what they feel is the culpable neglect of their plight.

The young Harkis of Narbonne, who see themselves as a catalyst for their growing nation-wide movement, are bursting with demands. French citizens in law, they wants their 'full rights in fact'—employment opportunities, special aid to improve their poor education record, and an end to what they say is a deliberate policy to bury them in urban ghettos.

Harkis, they emphasise, are French citizens of Arab origin. They are not *beurs*, North African migrants—nor are they *pieds noirs*—European colonists who returned to France after Algerian independence in 1962. A local journalist who has covered the 'Harki problem', Serge Boulbés, says that, in law, the Harkis did not even choose to become French; in a sense they already were, since before 1962 Algeria was a *département* of metropolitan France. French employers and landlords apparently don't make such distinctions. As a Harki cartoonist put it: 'We're treated worse than the Arabs.'

Salah Bouaziz, a 42-year-old welder, simmers with a quiet fury. 'We don't even have the advantage of consulates, like migrants do, because we are "French".' But not, it seems, French enough. Bouaziz repeats stories confirmed by the experiences of other Harkis: job applications rejected for years on end—'as soon as you tell them your name, they say "we'll write to you" '—ensuing family problems, drug abuse and delinquency among the young, poor school records and the apparent impossibility of finding housing beyond the 'ghettos'.

The Harkis who chose to come to France, mostly illiterate Algerian peasants, were lodged in camps and housing blocks isolated from the towns, and administered by their erstwhile employers, the army, supposedly as an interim measure. Some are still there. In many cases, the land between them and the towns has since been filled with cheap housing, into which many of the Harki families have spread, unable to move anywhere else. A common justification suggested by other French citizens for the mistrust in which many hold the Harkis—not to mention North African migrants—is that 'they all stick together'. The Harkis reply that they would like nothing better than to disperse, in the hope that this would help end discrimination against them.

The term *harka*, Arabic for movement or action, was first used to describe units of Algerian auxiliaries in the latter half of the 1950s. Other Algerians joined paramilitary police units and some enlisted in the French regular army. The Evian peace accords of 18 March 1962 made no provision for the fate of pro-French Algerians, and there is evidence that the French authorities moved to resist an influx of what are now generally known as Harkis and their families across the Mediterranean. Bouaziz was 13 at the time and says he witnessed mas-

ıobody wants

Vorth African market. The French have always been 'er to go there rather than have it come to them.

sacres of Harkis by the newly independent Algerian authorities. An estimated 150,000 died in the two years after Evian. Bouaziz cites a letter from an Algerian teacher who, in spite of what he has read of the Harkis' troubles in France, would like to join them: 'My father did not have the chance to save himself. He was murdered on 31 August 1962 ... Here, we still live in fear ...' Enclosed was a copy of his father's recruitment record.

FOR YEARS, HARKIS IN FRANCE, isolated and afraid of a forced return to Algeria, kept quiet. Says Bouaziz, 'everything was *Oui, mon capitaine*'. Their children and grandchildren are not so amenable. They are convinced that their virtual separation from wider French society is motivated partly by a desire to keep the dark side of their history mute. To Algiers, they were traitors and now do not exist. For Paris, in a hurry to extricate itself from the vice of colonial war, they were a complication best ignored. Some members of the army, disturbed by their government's capacity to simply drop the Harkis into the too-hard basket, helped them cross to France in spite of directives aimed at stemming such 'repatriation'. *Le Monde* recently quoted a secret note dated 25 May 1962 stipulating that 'auxiliaries arriving in the metropolis outside [the limits of] the general repatriation plan will be sent back to Algeria ...'

'The nation has a debt [to those] who so courageously served France,' declared Edith Cresson, the prime minister, in the wake of the violent incidents of June. Soon afterwards 100 million francs ($22 million) originally destined for projects for the Harki community, but cut in post-Gulf war budget tightening, was restored. Few Harkis got carried away, though, as the sums allocated in the previous three years were double or more.

On July 17 the Minister for Social Affairs and Integration, Jean-Louis Bianco, announced 25 measures to help the Harkis, including creation of '100 to 200 jobs' through agreements with local government; more scholarships and better access to education; improvements in housing for those still 'in transit' and incentives to move elsewhere; and debt aid for families who bought homes in the cheap housing belts that grew up around the old 'camps'. Bianco said that 'this community has almost been forgotten ... the French must know that the Harkis are French like the rest ...' The same minister observed two weeks later that the problem was thus effectively wrapped up, for the measures 'should be sufficient for the integration of those who really want it'. After all, only about 10,000 Harkis were in any real difficulties.

Salah Bouaziz, like most Harki spokesmen, judged the measures well short of what is needed. Worse, they served only to 'fool public opinion', making it appear all that is necessary was being done. 'People hear this and say it's those Arabs asking for more money again ...' He is especially suspicious of any plans to establish follow-up groups and monitors. 'Whenever they appoint a monitor or social worker, do you think they ever employ a Harki?' The press reacted cautiously, but tended to view the pronouncements as yet another exercise in plugging holes before the dam bursts. Said Serge Boulbés: 'At best, it is insufficient.'

In the same way the Americans have their problems with Vietnam, France, 30 years on, has not succeeded in resolving the problems of the Algerian war.

In 1986 France's General Administration Inspectorate investigated the National Office for Social, Educational and Cultural Action (ONASEC), an agency which, among other things, was supposed to aid the Harki community. The inspectorate's report accused ONASEC of seeking permanent clients, and said its main purpose appeared to be 'the maintenance of a particularly advantageous material situation for its own employees'. ONASEC has now been wound up, but the inquiry revealed that three billion francs destined for the Harkis ended up elsewhere.

A committee formed by the previous prime minister, Michel Rocard, had already presented a 30-point plan for resolving the issue, but the government chose to ignore most of its recommendations and adopted Bianco's measures instead. The Rocard committee had stressed giving due recognition for the services of

Algerian combatants, and measures to prevent discrimination against their children. The last attempt to deal with the question came with similar proposals in August 1989, after violent incidents in the Harki community.

As early as 1975, Harkis were protesting against their living conditions and exclusion from the wider community. A statue at a crossroads in the midst of the Narbonne housing estate is covered with graffiti: 'Thirty years of contempt.' Their malaise seems an almost contradictory combination of tired frustration and a desperate determination to achieve change. At a regional meeting in late August, young Harkis mapped out plans to elect national leaders and to hammer out an alternative list of demands to that of the Rocard-inspired commission.

The uniqueness of the Harkis' situation is not short of unexpected twists. As racism increases and migration, especially that of the *beurs*, becomes a target of growing intolerance, the Harkis have discovered a surprise supporter—Jean-Marie Le Pen's National Front (FN). Salah Bouaziz admits that the extreme right FN's backing has been greeted positively by some Harkis. That a party is simply talking about them, he says, is enough to convince older Harkis to throw in their lot with the Front. The general sentiment is far from favourable—at some marches in Paris, FN representatives have been given to understand that their presence is not required. Although even some younger Harkis are attracted, Bouaziz says they are knowingly hoping to turn FN support to their advantage. Serge Boulbés believes the opposite, fearing the Front is manipulating the Harkis for its own ends. Police in fact suspect that an extreme right agitator was behind the shooting of a policeman during one of this summer's clashes with Harkis.

BOULBÉS FEELS ONE of the Harkis' greatest difficulties is the vagueness of their demands, particularly at a local level, where individual grievances vary widely. Moreover, special aid, schools, debt relief and the rest of the 'measures' suggested or demanded do little more, in his view, than accentuate what makes the Harkis different; it confirms their dependence and isolation. For him, the problem goes deeper than job programs. 'In the same way the Americans have their problems with Vietnam, France, 30 years on, has not succeeded in resolving the problems of the Algerian war.'

The biggest task is to ensure the full story of the Harkis finds its due place, passing into 'the collective consciousness' much as has the Resistance. He sees the national lay education system as 'the melting pot' through which this process can take place. After 30 years the Harkis remain caught between two flags, accepted neither by Algeria nor by France. For Boulbés, once real recognition—'the most difficult objective because the least palpable'—is achieved, when the Harkis have finally 'come home', their other problems will be no greater than those affecting the rest of the French population. 'At the moment, many [Harkis] miss out. I don't say all, but more than in the rest of the French nation.'

Salah Bouaziz says that if the government really had the political will to act, it could solve the problem 'in one fell swoop'. He would like to see some pressure exerted on employers to take on Harkis. He also wants the appointment of an ombudsman to monitor cases of discrimination. Not for himself and his generation, for whom he feels it is probably too late, but for his young children. 'I am afraid for them, if this continues ... We are the American Indians of France.' He and other parents of the second generation are pushing their children hard to do well at school, to equip themselves with every advantage they can. He speaks calmly, but cannot hide his bitterness.

Bouaziz admits there is a contradiction between the Harkis' profound desire to integrate, to be fully accepted, and a competing instinct that recoils from the price they would have to pay. Becoming fully absorbed within the French community would mean a total erasing of their background, and of the memory of what their fathers and grandfathers did—those proud men who still wear the medals won in combat. 'We are the shame of France.' ■

Damien Simonis is *Eureka Street's* European correspondent.

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TOGETHER WITH Rahner, Lonergan, Murray, von Balthasar, Chenu and Congar, Henri de Lubac stood among the giants of the great theological revival that culminated in Vatican II (1962–65). His death on 4 September this year leaves Yves Congar OP, ill and in hospital, as the only surviving member of that brilliant *pléiade.*

Henri de Lubac SJ 1896—1991

Born in 1896, de Lubac entered the Society of Jesus in 1913 but was called up for service in the French army in World War I, during which he was severely wounded. After the war he again studied for the Jesuit priesthood, under excellent masters, and gained an enthusiasm for Thomas Aquinas, interpreted along the lines suggested by Blondel, Rousselot and Maréchal. Without any specialized training or doctoral degree he was assigned to teach theology in the Catholic faculty at Lyons, where he taught, with some interruptions, from 1929 to 1961. There, and in his occasional courses at the neighbouring Jesuit theologate in Fourvière, de Lubac began to forge new directions in theology and comparative religion.

De Lubac's first book, *Catholicisme* (1938), was intended to emphasise the unitive power of Catholic Christianity and its capacity to transcend all human divisions. Developing his interest in the fathers of the church, in 1940 he and his friend Jean Daniélou SJ began publication of *Sources chrétiennes*, a remarkable collection of patristic texts and translations that by now includes more than 300 volumes. During the Nazi occupation of France, he became co-editor of a series of *Cahiers du Témoignage chrétien*. In these papers and in his lectures, de Lubac strove to exhibit the incompatibility between Christianity and the antisemitism that the Nazis were seeking to disseminate among French Catholics. On several occasions his friends had to spirit him away into hiding to prevent him from being captured and executed by the Gestapo, as happened to his friend and colleague, Yves de Montcheuil SJ.

De Lubac's most famous work, *Surnaturel* (1946), maintains that the debate between the Baianists and the scholastics in the 17th century rested on misinterpretations of both Augustine and Aquinas. Each party to the debate, he maintained, was operating with philosophical and juridical categories foreign to ancient theology. Contemporary neoscholastics, especially in southern France and Rome, took offence at this charge and interceded with the Holy See for a condemnation of de Lubac's views. When Pope Pius XII published the encyclical *Humani Generis* in 1950, many believed that it did condemn de Lubac's position. De Lubac, however, was relieved to find that the only sentence in the encyclical referring to the supernatural reproduced what he himself had said in an article published two years before.

Seeking to deflect accusations against the Society of Jesus in France, which was being accused of promoting a supposedly modernistic 'new theology', the Jesuit general, John-Baptist Janssens, removed de Lubac and several colleagues from their teaching positions and required them to submit their writings to a special process of censorship. Because of the restrictions placed on his research, in this period de Lubac turned towards the study of non-Christian religions. He published three books on Buddhism, which interested him as an example of religion without God.

By his own admission, de Lubac was not a systematic thinker, yet his work possesses a remarkable inner coherence. As his friend and disciple Hans Urs von Balthasar pointed out, de Lubac's early work, *Catholicisme,* is programmatic for his entire career. The various chapters are like limbs that would later grow in different directions from the same trunk. The title of this youthful work expresses an overarching intuition: to be Catholic, for de Lubac, meant to exclude nothing, to be complete and comprehensive. He saw God's creative and redemptive plan as including all humanity and, indeed, the entire cosmos.

'LIBERAL' AND 'CONSERVATIVE' are terms ill-suited to describe theologians such as de Lubac. If such terminology must be used, one would have to say that he embraced both alternatives. He was liberal because he opposed any narrowing of the Catholic tradition, even at the hands of the disciples of St Thomas. He sought to rehabilitate marginal thinkers, such as Origen, Pico della Mirandola and Blondel, in whom he found kindred spirits. He reached out to the atheist Proudhon, and sought to build bridges to Amida Buddhism.

The suffering of his long years of adversity, including two world wars and decades of great tension in the church, are still bearing fruit. In the last few years, as his earthly life drew to a close, his disciples and admirers became more numerous and influential. De Lubac's creative reappropriation of the ancient tradition has earned him a place of honour in a generation of theological giants. **—Avery Dulles SJ**

This obituary first appeared in *America* magazine. **Avery Dulles SJ** is McGinley professor of religion and science at Fordham University, New York.

MARK COLERIDGE

When is a ruin really a ruin?

I HAPPEN TO BE one of Patrick O'Farrell's hyphenated priests (priest-biblical scholar) and I'm just back in the country after some fairly bruising intellectual work among the ruins of Rome. No sooner was I safely back in the shadows of St Patrick's than I struck Gerard Windsor, in chorus with O'Farrell, lamenting the ruin of Catholic intellectual life in Australia [*Eureka Street*, September 1991]. Not quite the zestful and enthusing note I had looked for on my return.

Mind you, I think it's a fine thing that people like O'Farrell and Windsor raise such questions in the public forum, and in a way that is free of the ideological cant that can beset discussions of this kind. And although I agree wholeheartedly that 'the matter needs more sustained and less impressionistic discussion', I found many of Windsor's impressions bracing and unexceptionable. My quibble with him is not so much about the *data* he has gathered, but about the *interpretation* of that data.

The key to Windsor's interpretation is the metaphor captured in his title: 'The New Zealand Traveller Sketches the Ruins of St Patrick's'. A puzzling note of lost glory sounds through the Windsor lament, as though the mighty intellectual edifices of medieval Christendom, built by Australian Catholics in their own land (anyone for gothic revival?), had been allowed to fall into ruin in recent decades. Whatever about Europe, that was never the scenario here: Christendom and its mighty intellectual edifices did not get much of a run Down Under. That's why I was hard put to explain the simmering nostalgia of the piece.

The question is, what are we really looking at? A ruin, as Windsor suggests, or an unfinished building? A ruin and an unfinished building can look much the same, just as the pangs of birth and the pangs of death can feel much the same. It is important to know the difference.

We are clearly at a point of transition: the only question is, what kind of transition? For one thing, we are moving from a theological curriculum geared to seminary education to a broader curriculum geared more to the study of theology for its own sake. Within this process of fragmentation and rearrangement, old stars like philosophy have been downgraded—to our impoverishment, I suspect—and new stars like history and the behavioural sciences are in the ascendant, to our great enrichment. This process of revising the theological curriculum is tied to large questions of the nature and purpose of theological study, and it is by no means complete.

A further element of the transition is the move to a style of theology attuned more directly to human experience. The move is not without its ambiguities, but it came because the Catholic system of doctrine and morals, for all its wonderful internal coherence, at times left people's lives untouched at points where they badly needed touching. Hence childhood memories of my mother complaining of sermons full of 'all that theological stuff'. Postconciliar slogans pointed to the need to fuse theology and life, doctrine and life etc. Theology was to become more evangelical; the gap between theology and preaching was to be bridged. If the Trinity Sunday preaching is as poor as Windsor suggests, then the task has barely begun.

Recent decades have also seen the demise of the theologian as hero. The years before the Second Vatican Council saw the work of heroic performers like Chenu, de Lubac, Congar, Rahner, von Balthasar. Now all except Congar are dead, and no new heroes have risen in their place. What has happened is that more and more scholars in all sorts of places are doing less and less. What is true of scholars is also true of scholarly institutions. It is not just the traditionally strong centres of theological learning that now dominate, but important work is being done in unlikely places and by people once thought of as unlikely theologians: lay people, women.

One thing the demise of the theologian as hero means is a loss of visibility at the point of theological production. In other days excellence was more visible as a few great individuals elaborated their great systems. It is less visible these days when more are doing less: team work is less striking to the eye than the spectacular solo. Perhaps theology needs to find new forms of visibility.

It is certain that a key element of the transition is the move of theology from a seminary context to a university context. Monash University, for example, has established a centre for the study of religion and theology, and the Australian Catholic University is in the throes of establishing its theological component. The effect of these moves may not show itself immediately, but in the long term they will mean a sea change for the doing of theology in Australia. And it is such moves that leave me enthused by the unexpected theological ferment I find here on my return.

All of which suggests that what Windsor was sketching, and what I have sketched from a different angle, is not so much the ruins of St Patrick's, as a building splendid in plan and prospect but as yet unfinished. Windsor's lament has laid another chunk of bluestone, to which I add my own modest gargoyle. ■

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Past imperfect, future indefinite

How do we talk about justice for the next century? Pope John Paul's encyclical Centesimus Annus *tries to address this question, and has in turn prompted reflection on the tradition of Catholic social teaching from which it stems. In the articles that follow, US Senator* **Daniel Patrick Moynihan** *looks at the relation between Catholic teaching and the changing shape of western society;* **Frank Fletcher MSC** *and* **Brad Taylor** *look at the implications of this teaching for the NSW Industrial Relations Bill; and* **Bruce Duncan CSsR** *reviews* **Michael Hogan's** *edition of the Australian bishops' social justice statements.*

LOOKING BACK AT POPE LEO XIII's *Rerum Novarum,* it becomes clear how great a distance Western society has moved in the period separating that encyclical from *Centesimus Annus*. At the close of the 19th century there was a seemingly unreconcilable conflict between the doctrines of laissez-faire capitalism on the one hand, and some mode of collectivism on the other. Economics was the only issue—war, for example, had evidently become obsolescent.

In this atmosphere the church set forth what can be seen as a sensible middle ground where most industrial democracies would eventually settle. By middle ground I do not mean splitting the difference. Rather, Leo XIII, while asserting the rights of private prop-

erty, even so set forth a radical doctrine of workers' rights that extended to a 'just wage', and most especially, the 'natural human right' to form private associations, including trade unions. Many proposed measures, the limitation of working hours, special treatment for children and women, Sunday rest and such, seem routine at this remove. But they were hardly such at the time. Still, the important event was the extension of the concept of rights to the marketplace. Labour, it was decreed, was not a commodity.

As John Paul II puts it, *Rerum Novarum* pointed the way to reforms under which 'society and the state ... both assume responsibility, especially for protecting the worker from the nightmare of unemployment.' Responsibility, that is, for a general level of well-being that we have learned to call the welfare state. It is notable, then, that the present Pope goes on to a sharp exchange with this 'so-called welfare state':

> In recent years the range of such intervention has vastly expanded, to the point of creating a new type of state, the so-called 'welfare state'. This has happened in some countries in order to respond better to many needs and demands, by remedying forms of poverty and deprivation unworthy of the human person. However, excesses and abuses, especially in recent years, have provoked very harsh criticisms of the welfare state, dubbed the 'social assistance state'. Malfunctions and defects in the social assistance state are the result of an inadequate understanding of the tasks proper to the state. Here again the principle of subsidiarity must be respected: a community of a higher order should not interfere in the internal life of a community of a lower order, depriving the latter of its functions ... By intervening directly and depriving society of its responsibility, the social assistance state leads to a loss of human energies and an inordinate increase of public agencies, which are dominated more by bureaucratic ways of thinking than by concern for serving their clients, and which are accompanied by an enormous increase in spending.

Michael Novak, professor of religion and public policy at the American Enterprise Institute, responded with great enthusiasm in an article in the *Washington Post*. Pope John Paul, he wrote, had offered 'the papacy's strongest language ever about limitations on state power ... no neoliberal or neoconservative ever made the case more profoundly and with so resounding a ring of truth.'

How's that? The Pope a conservative in the Burkean mode? This suggestion did not escape the notice of Harvey Cox, of the Harvard Divinity School. Indeed, it provoked him to something like anger, which is not at all like him. Writing in *Newsday* shortly after, Professor Cox was dismissive equally of the 'triumphalist' commentary by 'the American Enterprise Institute's resident theologian' and of the encyclical itself. 'Unfortunately, his years in Rome have not sharpened Karol Wojtyla's pen,' Cox wrote. 'He succeeds in being pretentious, provincial and pedestrian at the same time.

'He credits his predecessor Leo XIII with exerting "far-reaching influence" on the birth of social security, pensions and health insurance. But don't the labor unions and citizens' movements that, like Al Smith, could probably not even pronounce the word 'encyclical' properly get a little credit too? Did Franklin Delano Roosevelt read *Rerum Novarum*? ... Do we need someone who is carried around on a palanquin by Swiss Guards to tell us this? The conservative theologians who complain that liberals too often borrow their ideas from the secular realm must be wincing in embarrassment about the derivative quality of this ho-hum document. But let us be more generous. What is exhausted is not the Pope but the social encyclical genre itself, with its improbable claims to universal validity and its consequent temptation to resort to bland truisms. My hope is that *Centesimus Annus* marks not only the 100th anniversary of papal social teaching but the end of that chapter in Christian history.'

Professor Cox has a point about the medium. Encyclicals have the quality of an imperial decree. Americans do not instantly take to such modes of address, although he should be careful about patronising Al Smith. There is not the least evidence that Smith had difficulty pronouncing the word. We have it on the authority of a not-inconsiderable theologian, Reinhold Niebuhr, that when this subject arose during the 1928 presidential campaign, Smith simply asked: 'Will someone tell me what the hell a papal encyclical is?' [Al Smith was Democratic governor of New York and the first Catholic to contest the US presidency—ed.]

Format apart, there continues to be a real problem of English translation. Thus the new encyclical observes: '*Rerum Novarum* criticises two social and economic systems: socialism and liberalism.' Three decades ago, in *Beyond the Melting Pot*, referring to *Rerum Novarum* and the message of Catholic social teaching, I wrote: 'Catholic spokesmen have used the term "liberal" to refer to laissez-faire economics of the Manchester school, and have generously denounced same.' The result, we continued, had been total confusion among the Catholic laity, who had to assume that in denouncing 'liberalism' Rome was anathematising Roosevelt's New Deal. And here again we have the same usage. Misusage. No wonder Harvey Cox got mad.

That being said, *Centesimus Annus* could turn out to be as seminal a statement as its predecessor. *Rerum Novarum* concentrated on issues of the workplace, as did social policy in the United States in the years that followed. Labour, declared the Clayton Antitrust Act of 1914, is not a 'commodity'. Workers, declared the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, must be paid a minimum wage. Minorities, declared the Civil Rights Act of 1964, could not be discriminated against in employment.

Photos: all taken in Sydney by Andrew Stark

These may seem routine matters today. They were anything but when the issues first arose. The dislocations associated with industrialisation were absolutely baffling when they first appeared. What was unemployment? Why did it happen? Who was responsible? An era of fierce doctrinal argument preceded the era in which a consensus of sorts was reached. There is no sense in which unemployment is a problem of the past; but we know how to measure it, and within limits we know what to do about it. It is not *the* problem of our age.

BUT A NEW ISSUE HAS ARISEN: the growing number of children born to single parents and dependent during childhood on 'the social assistance state'. In *America* in 1965, I published data suggesting that we might be moving into an era in which destitution in childhood, relatively independent of economic forces, would be our principal social problem. I think it important that this proposition arose during research on the 'earlier' problems of unemployment, wages, working hours, etc. In brief, the US Department of Labor had come upon indications that the connection between child welfare and the workplace was breaking up. Earlier, when unemployment had dropped, new welfare cases dropped. But no longer: dependency was seemingly an independent variable, possibly out of control.

We now know that of children born in the years 1967-69, 22 per cent were dependent on welfare before reaching age 18. This breaks down to 16 per cent for white children; 72 per cent for black children. The data tell us that children under the age of eight were, on average, 37 per cent more likely to have been on welfare in the 1970s than their predecessors in the 1960s. If we assume that this same increase will show up for the whole of the 18 years (0-17), then we can project rates for children born as late as 1980. This gives us a white rate of 22 per cent, and a black rate of 83 per cent.

This surely raises the issue of social justice, if, that is, it can be shown that such destitution in childhood is, in the main, a debilitating event. Not for each individual, but generally speaking for a class of individuals. Lawrence Mead of New York University believes this to be so. In *The New Dependency Politics* he writes: 'The inequalities that stem from the workplace are now trivial in comparison to those stemming from family structure. What matters for success is not whether your father was rich or poor but whether you had a father at all.'

NOW THIS WOULD APPEAR to be a new social condition. Thirty per cent of US children are paupers before attaining their majority. Not a pretty word, but not a pretty condition. That is what it means to be 'on welfare': no income of your own and virtually no possessions. This rise in dependency has been paralleled by a rise in extramarital births. For 1988 the overall ratio was 26 per cent, which breaks down into 17.8 per cent for white births and 63.5 per cent from nonwhite. There are now health districts in New York City where more than 80 percent of live births are extramarital. There has also been a rise in a social behaviour. By the 1980s it was common to hear of 'children having children'. In the 1990s we begin to hear of children murdering chil-

dren, as firearms have moved into urban neighbourhoods and down the age scale.

This year, in a preface to the final report of the National Commission on Children, its chairman, Senator John D. Rockefeller IV, wrote: 'Too many of today's children and adolescents will reach adulthood unhealthy, illiterate, unemployable, lacking moral direction and a vision of a secure future. This is a personal tragedy for the young people involved and a staggering loss for the nation as a whole. We must begin today to place children and their families at the top of the national agenda ...

'Many young people believe they have little to lose by dropping out of school, having a baby as an unmarried teenager, using and selling dangerous drugs, and committing crimes. When they lack a sense of hope and the opportunity to get a good job, support a family and become a part of mainstream adult society, teenagers are frequently not motivated to avoid dangerous or self-destructive behaviours. These youth can see few compelling reasons to avoid or delay activities that provide immediate gratification. Unfortunately, their actions often make their expectations a self-fulfilling prophecy.'

NOTE THE SHIFT IN TERMS. We are not talking about unemployment here. We are talking of children who come of age 'unemployable'. We are not talking of the blameless victims of impersonal market forces. We are talking of adolescents 'lacking moral direction'. We are not talking of the need for social security programs; we are talking of the youth who have no 'vision of a secure future'.

In February this year, some months before the National Commission report appeared, the Senate Democratic caucus had approved a legislative program titled *Strengthening America: The Democratic Agenda*. A section on children included this passage: 'Children now make up the largest proportion of poor persons in the United States. There is no equivalent in our history to such a number or such a proportion. All this is new. This circumstance did not exist during the era of the New Deal, a half century ago. It did not exist during the era of the Great Society, a quarter century ago.'

However, before the document was sent to the printer, a 'error' was spotted by the committee staff. The text that read: 'This circumstance did not exist during the era of the New Deal, a half century ago. It did not exist during the era of the Great Society, a quarter century ago,' was changed to read: "This circumstance was not *as recognized* during the era of the New Deal, a half century ago, nor during the era of the Great Society, a quarter century ago' (emphasis added).

As I had written that passage, I asked about the change. It became transparently clear that those responsible simply thought they were correcting a mistake. This is becoming the liberal orthodoxy: that there is nothing new. It is not, come to think, so very different from the views of those in the 19th century who, on observing an industrial society all around them, could not conceive that society had changed to the extent that institutions needed to change as well. Thorstein Veblen called it 'culture lag'.

If Veblen has a successor today, in stature as in style, it is James Coleman, of the University of Chicago, who traces our present situation back to the emergence of the corporation in medieval Europe and its gradual displacement of kinship structures. 'The central fact about the modern corporation,' Colman writes, 'is that it is not an outgrowth of the family, but constitutes an alternative institutional structure, independent of the family and little by little drawing power and strength away from it.' He notes that only about 20 per cent of 19th century American households were without children under 18; this proportion is now something like 65 per cent. Thus, raising children is now carried out with the incomes of a minority of adults, and child welfare becomes a minority interest.

Before the transformation of society represented by the rise of the corporation 'the family was the central institution of society on which all others were built, and children were part of that centre, an immediate economic asset and an investment for the future. Now that the transformation is largely complete, the family is a peripheral institution and children an economic burden on that periphery.'

When I wrote my *America* article in 1965, I assumed that this new social condition would be addressed by public policy. That article began: 'The United States is very possibly on the verge of adopting a national policy directed to the quality and stability of American family life.' In this I was quite wrong. We did nothing of the sort. The evidence was rejected as inconclusive or worse. It is still rejected in the sense that orthodox opinion rejects the notion that there is anything qualitatively different about the present.

ENTER POPE JOHN PAUL, asserting that what we have been doing is precisely the problem. We have been creating the 'social assistance state', which has led to 'a loss of human energies and an inordinate increase of public agencies.' Not to mention 'an enormous increase in spending.' Well, now.

What we have here is a considerable role reversal. A century ago, addressing the social question of that time, the church called for more intervention by the state. Now it appears to be saying that state intervention has to some extent created or at least worsened the social problems of the present age. This is high irony. The intriguing aspect of this, of course, is that the papal pronouncement has American fingerprints all over it. It would be well for those involved to come forward, and it would help if Rome let it be understood that to do so is not only acceptable but necessary.

How so? Because the argument must proceed from evidence. There are natural law elements in the encyclical. We are told to distinguish between the society and the state; fair enough. We are reminded again of subsid-

iarity, which again has doctrinal sources. (Not least the ecclesial sanction of Edmund Burke!) But this is a matter for social science as well, and we have a right to hear the complete argument.

Further, we need to learn from these American Catholics whether they think something new is going on. This may just be a fixation of mine, but I cannot puzzle my way out of it. If there is a new social circumstance, then there is no contradiction between the two encyclicals.

The industrial economy that *Rerum Novarum* describes continues, but the enormous dislocations of the past have been overcome. The question is whether some general theory will come along that can tease out the sources of welfare dependency and get this problem back down to an acceptable level, as Keynes did with unemployment. ■

Daniel Patrick Moynihan is Democratic senator for New York and former US ambassador to the United Nations. This article first appeared in *America* magazine, September 1991.

Industrial justice: shattering the symbols

BECAUSE OF THE LIMITS of state jurisdiction, the Greiner government's Industrial Relations Bill does not have wide practical import. But its symbolic importance—for all Australians, and not just the people of NSW—is clear. The bill ushers in a fundamental change in the industrial relations system, and the unions fear that it may inspire future federal legislation. The real aim of such legislation, they believe, can only be to erode the strength and achievements of the union movement, through reducing the number of workers protected by union membership. The government, for its part, portrays union opposition to the bill as a self-interested fight to hold on to positions of power, and to wages and work practices that hamper economic recovery.

Similar legislation in New Zealand has drastically diminished the role of unions and of the award wages system in that country. When the legislation was intro-

Photo: Andrew Stark

duced, the New Zealand Catholic bishops strongly condemned it in the name of the church's social teaching. This year marks the centenary of that teaching as set forth in Pope Leo XIII's encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, which endorsed the right of workers to form unions. It is appropriate, therefore, that pastors and theologians should contribute to the debate on the NSW bill.

As Pope John Paul makes clear in his own encyclical *Centesimus Annus*, the church's social teaching prescribes no particular model for the economy, for such matters can only be judged 'within the framework of different historical situations'. Thus, the tradition of teaching that includes *Rerum Novarum* and *Centesimus Annus* has affirmed the worth of markets and private property—while insisting that they must function in accord with the common good. Where they do not, the state has a duty to intervene in the interests of justice. Similarly, this teaching defends the right of workers to associate, but does not require compulsory unionism. It proclaims a right to work, but leaves open the question of whether or not some work practices may prevent opportunities for increased employment. The right to strike is endorsed when other means of obtaining a just settlement in an industrial dispute have failed or are not available.

So the church does not claim to know how the industrial relations system in NSW ought to function. But it does claim that those who make decisions in concrete situations—and in a democracy this sometimes mean all of us—should do so by consideration of the common good, or as it is usually called in Australia, the public interest. It is from this point of view that the Greiner government's bill needs to be scrutinised.

UNDER THE PROVISIONS OF THE BILL, the Industrial Commission and the Industrial Court would, in all but a few circumstances (sections 201-2), have restricted powers to oversee and alter industrial agreements. Section 345 states that 'in the exercise of its functions the commission must take into account the public interest'. But the bill reflects a very limited concept of the public interest, seeing it as primarily a matter of economic considerations, without social, environmental and cultural aspects (sections 3, 19, 24[2] and 345). Further, the limited role envisaged for the commission would be reduced even further if enterprise agreements become the norm for many workplaces.

The bill provides for three types of industrial agreements. *Former industrial agreements* denotes all existing arrangements; they cannot be changed or ended except by mutual consent of the parties involved (section 147). Thus, if changes are desired the parties have to go into the new system. *Awards* are to be made by the commission, whereas the third category, *enterprise agreements*, will simply be registered by the commission. Our comment focuses on these.

The commission will not consider enterprise agreements in relation to the public interest. While awards will relate to an industry, enterprise agreements will relate to an individual employer or even an individual workplace, and will have precedence over any awards or former industrial agreements. Both awards and enterprise agreements are subject to a set of minimum conditions. And once entered into, neither can be changed except by the mutual consent of both parties (sections 111-12 and section 125), or in limited circumstances (sections 201-202).

A BROADER CONCEPTION of the public interest would allow an industrial relations body the power to oversee all industrial agreements, to ensure that they did not lead to conditions that may be socially disruptive. For example, enterprise agreements can result in people who do the same work, but are in different workplaces, receiving different wages. If this happens because of incentive payments for higher productivity, or because of profit-sharing schemes, the wage differences need not be unjust. But if such differences merely reflect the relative bargaining power of workers in different workplaces, then the wage-fixing procedure offers no mechanism to prevent exploitation of the weak. Commentators assume that this will be the effect of the Industrial Relations Bill. In Catholic social teaching, considerations of human solidarity and a concern for the poor are vital elements of the public interest. Thus, while industry has to become more efficient, the bill should be amended to strengthen the powers of the commission and the court to prevent the weakest from the community carrying an undue burden. ■

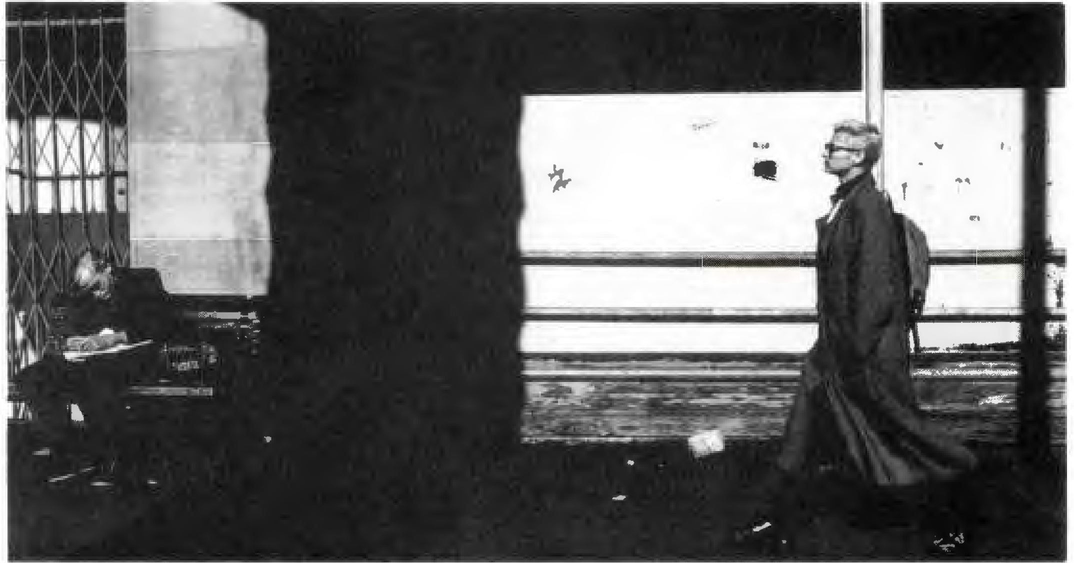
Frank Fletcher MSC and **Brad Taylor** work at the MSC Justice and Welfare Office, Erskineville, NSW.

Rescuing the texts

Justice Now! Social Justice Statements of the Australian Catholic Bishops 1940—1966, edited by Michael Hogan. Department of Government and Public Administration, University of Sydney, 1990. RRP $20.00

THE SOCIAL JUSTICE STATEMENTS of the Australian Catholic bishops have long needed to be collected and made available to contemporary readers, as the original pamphlets are now almost unprocurable. So Michael Hogan has performed a great service in editing them, reviving a project which lapsed in the late 1970s for lack of funds. As well as the 1962 *Statement on the Second Vatican Council* and the 1966 *The Moral Code*, in a useful appendix Hogan has added the 1943 ecumenical *Twenty-Point Program*, the 1951 ecumenical *A Call to the People of Australia* and the 1955 Catholic bishops' *Pastoral Letter on the Menace of Communism*. The only other document which would have been useful is Eris O'Brien's alternative Sydney statement of 1940, *The Catholic's Duty in Australian Social Reform*.

Photo: Andrew Stark



Hogan offers a neat one-page introduction to each of the statements, setting the context, outlining the main ideas in them and giving an evaluation. In his general 'Introduction', Hogan brings out well the centrality of B.A. Santamaria's thought within the church at the time. Santamaria is perhaps best known today for his role in the Catholic Social Studies Movement and the National Civic Council, but as Hogan rightly notes, that was only one aspect of Santamaria's activity. Hogan considers that the social Justice statements give a more enduring legacy to Santamaria's thought.

REREADING THE STATEMENTS TODAY, I cannot help feeling how distant from Australian social realities was the ideology behind some of them, especially the early ones. It was a worldview which owed much to traditionalist Catholic social thought, particularly coming from the English distributists and the French literary revival at the turn of the century. Yet it was a powerful critique of capitalist society, especially for its emphasis on making every worker an owner of productive property, and was solidly endorsed by the Catholic bishops of those days.

The statements also remind us of the many sides to Santamaria's political and social thinking. Following the trauma of the Split in the Catholic Action movements and the Labor Party in the 1950s, a careful and objective appraisal of Santamaria's role and thinking has been hard to find. Too often his thinking has been trivialised by opponents in polemical disputes. Hogan reminds us that Santamaria has been a major political thinker on the Australian scene for more than 50 years, with significant influence on the shaping of the Australian Catholic community, and to a lesser extent on Australian politics as a whole. The picture of Santamaria as the anti-communist campaigner of Movement days must be set within the intellectual framework of the proposals summarised in these Statements with their radical vision of an alternative agrarian-based society. It is not irrelevant that Santamaria's first love was for the National Catholic Rural Movement, of which he remained secretary till 1960.

The future biographer of Santamaria faces a daunting task. Santamaria's intense political activity and writing covers a half-century, during which time his thinking developed and changed greatly. He has been the focus of some of Australia's most acute political conflict, and can still arouse quite passionate loyalty or opposition. Many people can testify to his devotion to his family, his personal charm and his commitment to his views about building a more just world, a commitment which has undoubtedly cost him greatly. Taking him more seriously as a thinker would involve exploring the origins of his thinking, explaining his sometimes sharp polemical style in debate, and elucidating the logic and force of his politics which generated a reaction even from within the Church and his former Catholic Action colleagues. How are we to explain the conflict in the Church between committed anti-communist Catholic intellectuals of immense goodwill and sincerity? When will the Sydney side of the dispute be adequately told? What were the basic intellectual issues involved, especially from the point of view of church-state theory and of Catholic Action?

SANTAMARIA IS WELL-KNOWN for his outstanding mind, his breadth of reading, his prodigious workload and his genuine piety. Moreover, he is not unself-critical, as his writings show. One can only speculate what his contribution might have been had he not been propelled into political activity so early, and especially if he had studied economics seriously.

Given his life-long commitment to the church, it is a personal tragedy for him that he feels so alienated from much of the Catholic community today. For the church, too, it is a great loss that he is not widely revered as 'the grand old warrior' of Catholic social thought and activity. Indeed, one of the unhappy consequences of the Split was to create a hiatus in the tradition of Catholic social thinking, so that many of the later generation grew up knowing little of the social activism of their parents. Hogan's collection of the Social Justice Statements will help overcome that hiatus by making them available to other generations.

Some good contributions to the history of this period have been made, particularly by Santamaria himself with *Against the Tide* and *Daniel Mannix*. Gerard Henderson's *Mr Santamaria and the Bishops* also offered much new material from a critical perspective. And Robert Murray's *The Split* remains a standard work. But the definitive biography remains to be written. Perhaps Hogan's collection will be the stimulus for someone to take up the task. ■

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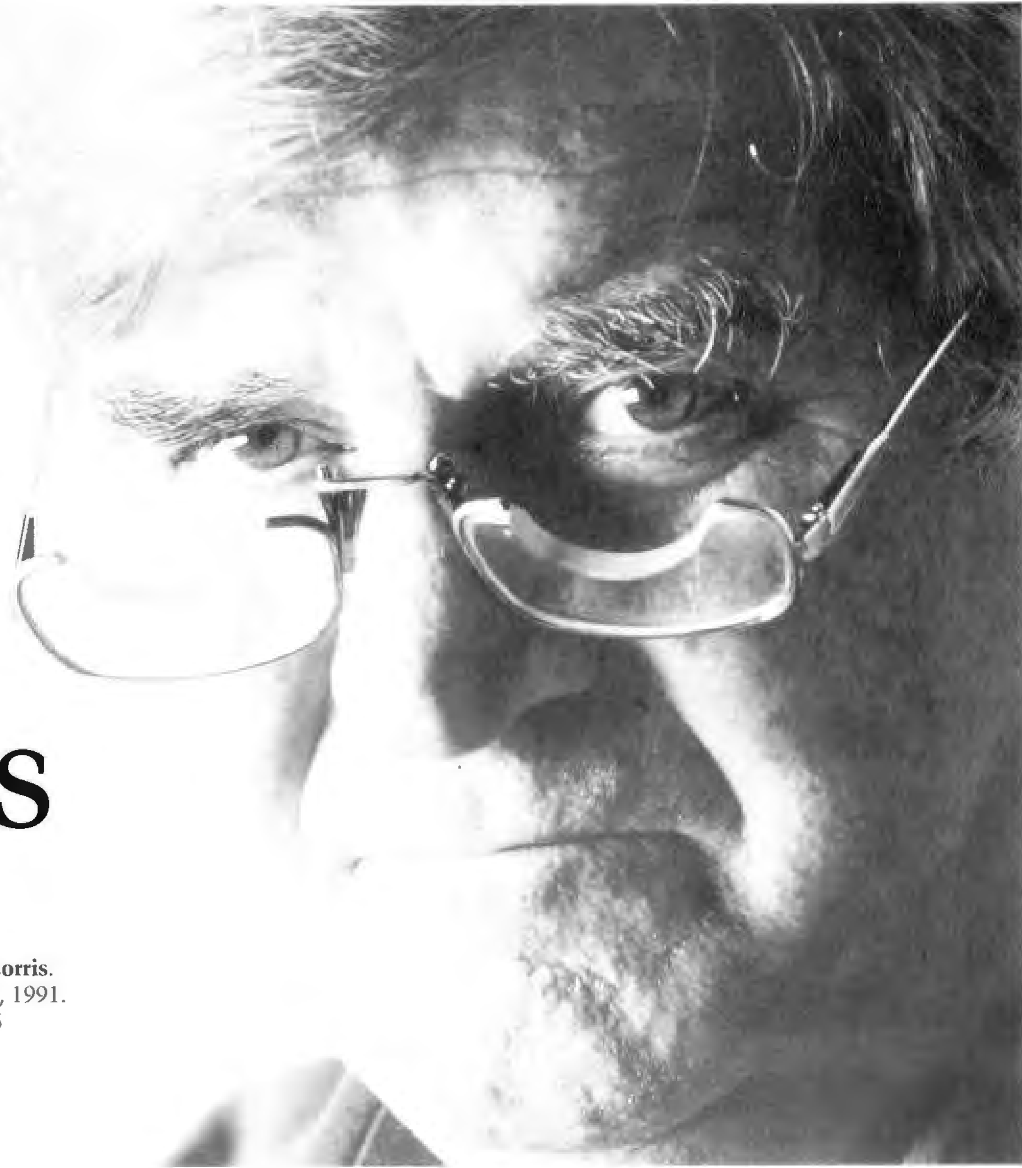
BOOKS

JACK WATERFORD

Fred in focus



Fred Hollows: an autobiography with Peter Corris.
John Kerr, Richmond, Victoria, 1991.
ISBN 0 95888004 6 4 RRP $29.95

THE FIRST TIME I MET Fred Hollows, about 15 years ago, he gave me the starter in a line of many great quotes—some of which he would later claim I made up: 'If Aborigines in the Northern Territory were animals, the RSPCA would prosecute the Northern Territory health department.'

At the time, Fred was leading the National Trachoma and Eye Health Program, one of the most remarkable public health programs ever conducted in the world. For two years it travelled through all states of mainland Australia, particularly in remote rural towns and settlements. It examined more than 60,000 Aborigines, some several times, looking for eye problems but also gauging general indices of health. A further 40,000 or so whites were examined as well. Up to 100 pieces of information were gathered about each client. About 500 separate places were visited.

But it was not just another scientific expedition of the southern blow-in variety, with which Aborigines were all too familiar—a visit by a team of experts who came, weighed, measured, estimated then left, having considerably disrupted the community while rendering it no service, immediate or long-term. By 1977 more was known about Aboriginal ill-health than about white ill-health: there was one medical paper in the scientific literature for every 70 Aborigines and not a few of the MDs and other letters after the names of distinguished doctors had been gained from such research.

Fred had learnt his epidemiology by working in remote mining valleys in Wales with the remarkable Archie Cochrane, one of the true pioneers of the field. Cochrane was the man who had stressed to Fred the idea that there should be 'no survey without service'. The trachoma program tried to be a total program. Before it sent its teams into Aboriginal communities, it sent in Aboriginal liaison teams to talk with members of the community. It employed local liaison officers. In some cases, it had to haggle and negotiate about the sort of services that would be provided because the local community had different ideas of priorities: one large community, for example, wanted simultaneous work on sexually transmitted diseases.

At initial surveys people needing nurse or general practitioner treatment were identified, others were fitted with glasses—about 6000 pairs of spectacles were prescribed—and surgery was arranged for others. About 1600 operations were performed, some with help from army field hospitals. In some areas trachoma was so endemic that month-long treatment programs of the entire population were required.

Aboriginal health workers were trained and worked alongside medical and other university students recruited from around Australia, many of whom were exposed to Aborigines for the first time. The findings in particular areas were discussed with community leaders. Out of these discussions developed much of the push for Aboriginal-controlled medical services. There were two when the National Trachoma and Eye Health Program

started and 13 by the time it finished.

Fred was not a popular figure with many state and federal health bureaucrats or their political masters. He was very critical of what he saw: appalling living conditions, inadequate and poorly organised medical services which not even very competent and dedicated people in the field could bend to much use, and a failure to consult and involve Aborigines in service design and delivery. He was 'political': what was a mere eye doctor doing ranging over the field of Aboriginal administration? His use of Aboriginal liaison officers was 'embarrassing': some of the people he hired were activists in their communities and antipathetic to state administrations. Joh Bjelke Petersen threw the team out of Queensland during an election campaign, claiming that the NTEHP was stirring up Aborigines against the National Party.

Our trachoma program teams worked weeks on end without breaks, travelling hundreds of miles, packing delicate equipment and seeing hundreds of people, packing up and making camp then shifting on again. We became a little like Hells Angels, incessantly quarrelling with each other but utterly united against the world.

FRED'S PERSONALITY dominated all. He was often bullying, abusive and unfair to us, but simultaneously inordinately generous. I have yet to meet another doctor so easy-going with patients, so able to communicate with an old woman or to settle a screaming one-year-old who did not care to have its eyelids everted. Once the loupe —a small magnifier like a watchmaker's aid—was on, Fred's attention was 100 per cent on the patient. He was a marvellous teacher, not least of fellow ophthalmologists—many his senior—who, in years of comfortable city practice had simply never seen the sort of pathology we were encountering all the time. An urban ophthalmologist can spend a year without seeing a blind person, and that one he or she is unlikely to be able to do much for; on some occasions we saw as many as 20 in a day, some of whom could be made to see again by surgery, and many of whom could at least have chronic pain ameliorated.

When not irascible, Fred was a yarner in the class of his great mate Frank Hardy, the man who first twisted his arm to look at Aboriginal health conditions, and his ordinary delivery, unabated for minsters of the Crown, nuns or society ladies, would be full of scatological metaphor and simile: 'This condition is as rare as rocking horse shit'; 'There we were, bouncing up and down like peas in a referee's whistle'; that 'stands out like piss-holes in the snow'. He is not a bad chess player—I taught him how to play like a gentleman and Fred later described what he'd learned: 'None of this bullshit about "touch move". We win by superior strategy not by taking advantage of temporary insanity'. He smoked Erinmore Flake through a pipe that fitted snugly on to a worn-down couple of teeth. He was a fanatical runner, even out in the desert, but his wheezing and puffing was enough to put one off it for life.

At one stage, an MP on a parliamentary investigation of Aboriginal health was briefed by health department officials to cross-examine Fred about not sticking to his brief. The questioning went like this:
MP: Professor Hollows, you are an eye doctor, aren't you?
Fred: Yes.
MP: Now, I understand that there aren't many ocular complications of leprosy?
Fred: There are some, but they are far from the most significant problems of leprosy.
MP: Well what are you, an eye doctor, going around talking all the time about the amount of leprosy you have seen among Aborigines?
Fred: Well, I am a doctor, and I recognise leprosy when I see it. And I think I can say that I have shaken hands with more lepers in Australia than any other doctor.

At home he was a careful and patient carpenter, with a marvellous workshop, until the dust and his cancer made him stop. He makes a fine damper, and enjoys the company of the poets; his house is ever full of Aborigines in transit, overseas medical students he is training, feminist film-makers, old comms and prisoners, mates of 100 causes.

After the grind of the trachoma program was over, Fred continued to harry politicians and push Aboriginal causes. He had a celebrated confrontation with one Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, whom he very publicly called a 'dissembler', and the then Prime Minister, Malcolm Fraser, had to intervene to make peace. Increasingly Fred fell out of sympathy with an emerging Aboriginal bureaucracy which he saw as failing to get to the issues or to adapt to change. He is still revered for his work, but treated with some caution.

ALONG THE WAY, he also became a little more civilised. He married Gabi, one of the true heroines of NTEHP days, who even now would recognise and put a name to thousands of Aborigines from all states of Australia. He had five children, the last two twins, who have brought out his gentleness and his patience, and eradicated much of the personal abrasiveness. He rejected an Order of Australia, commenting with some asperity that 'Now is not the time for people to be getting accolades for progress in Aboriginal health.'

At the same time, however, he became involved in more international public health work, going to Nepal, to Burma and most recently Eritrea, providing services directly but also helping to train doctors, advising on ways of establishing services, and helping lobby to get resources. He has also become a scourge of the international public health club, which all too often holds expensive conferences with flash facilities only hundreds of metres from direct evidence of the problems they are supposedly addressing.

His autobiography provides samples of Hollows with the whip out: in Egypt, at a palatial reception organised by the World Health Organisation's World Blindness Program, he got up and remarked 'Isn't it great [that we get this opportunity to see] the real problems of Egypt. We've just been to a village where most of the kids have trachoma and many of them are certain to be blinded by it. There's a total absence of even rudimentary

hygiene facilities there, and now here we are in this beautiful place with its bathrooms and all this clean food on the tables. It's good to see the real problems of Egypt so strikingly demonstrated.'

Fred is a Marxist, with a strong passion for South American liberation theology. He continually quotes Paolo Friere: 'God is the force within us that strives for liberation'. Fred's current great cause, Eritrea, has aroused his passion and sense of romance because he is moved by the way in which people have mobilised, despite war and persecution, to organise their own health care.

This year he has placed himself at the disposal of aid agencies seeking to attract attention and support to the plight of Eritrea. The honours which have been showered on him have been welcome to him because they have been a vehicle to attract attention to the cause. On the embarrassment side, when professional colleagues organised a weekend conference to honour his contribution to science, ophthalmology and public health, he was much chuffed—but told them pointedly that 'most of you are only pissing in my pocket because I am dying'.

FRED'S CANCER WAS DIAGNOSED nearly three years ago. It has given him a renewed sense of urgency. As part of this process, Fred sat down and yarned with Peter Corris, who organised the yarn in chronological order but left Fred fairly unvarnished in the process. The book tells this, and 100 other stories: of falling into medicine by accident, of his pleasure with working with his hands, of mountaineering, of bore-sinking in central Queensland during the 1950s, and getting arrested at Springbok demonstrations in the early 1970s, of going to a Church of Christ seminary determined to be a preacher in the 1940s, of his late father, Joe, a Christian socialist from the English tradition, a railway worker and chrysanthemum grower, a gentle and a saintly man.

'I'm a humanist', Fred says in the book. 'I don't believe in any higher power than the best expressions of the human spirit, and those are to be found in personal and social relationships. Evaluating my own life in those terms, I've had some mixed results. I've hurt some people and disappointed others, but I hope that on balance I've given more than I've taken. I believe that my view of what a redeemed social condition is has been consistent—equity between people—and I've always tried to work to that end'.

Copyright proceeds of the book go to the Eritrean eye program. With Fred's usual flair for a phrase, he says that every copy sold will buy an intraocular lens for an Eritrean. It's well worth the read. While unlikely to assist any proceedings for canonisation, it gives an authentic picture of a complex, good man. ■

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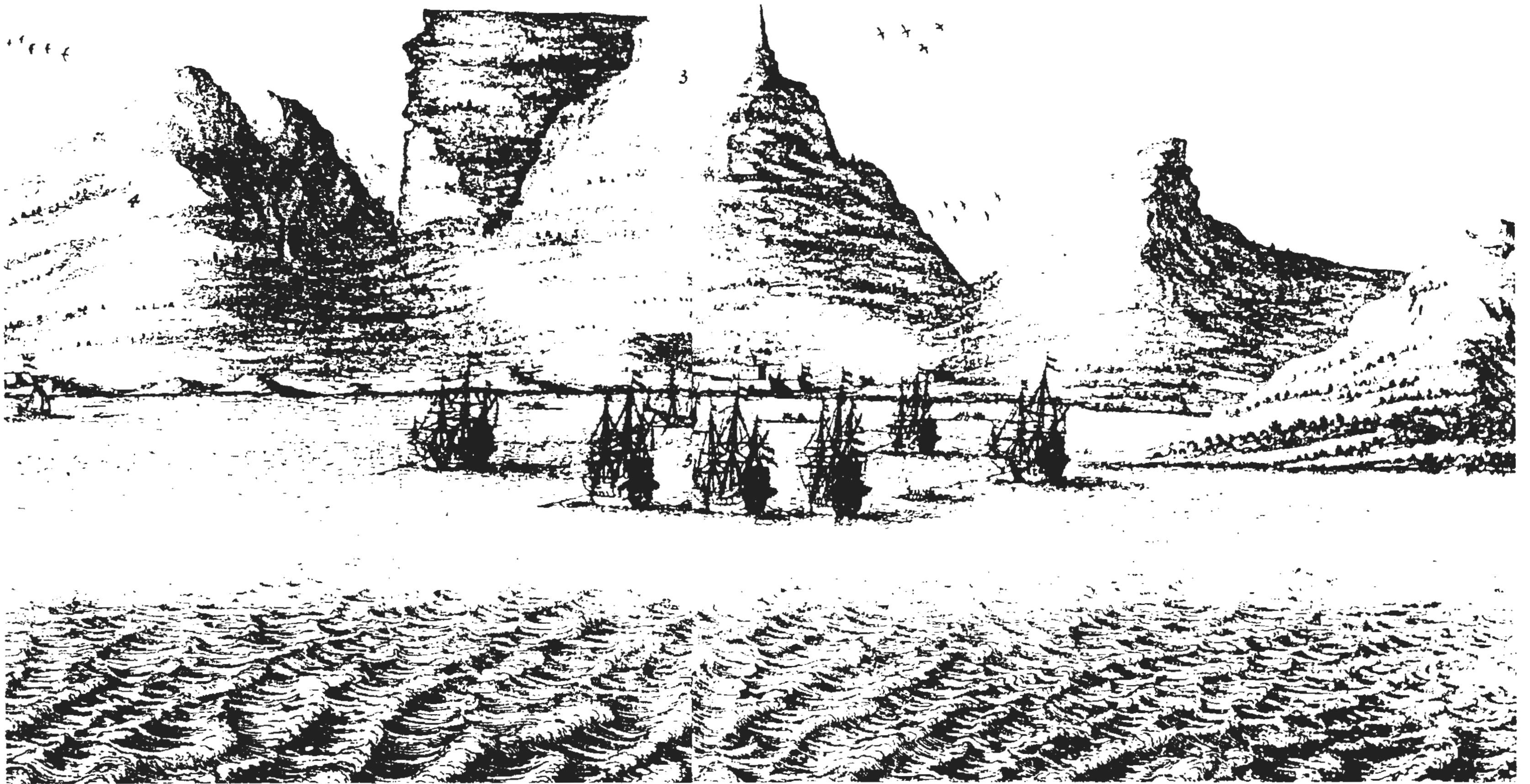
Spirit

Think of your body
as a hot, dry country.
Feel your spirit
lifting with the wind,
and ecstatic,
smell the coming rain.
Then, look at the bright stars,
shifting, trailing,
and fall down annihilated
... slain.

Patrick O'Donohue

M.J. Crennan



Necklaces and bitter almonds

The Mind of South Africa: The Story of the Rise and Fall of Apartheid, Allister Sparks. Mandarin Paperback, London,1991. ISBN 0 7493 0598 3. **My Traitor's Heart,** Rian Malan. Vintage paperback, London,1991. ISBN 0 09 974900 9 RRP $19.95

... In strange way
To stand inquiring right, is not to stray;
To sleep or runne wrong, is. On a huge hill,
Cragged and steep, Truth stands, and hee that will
Reach her about must, and about must goe;
And what the hill's suddenness resists, winne so.

John Donne, Satyre III

The title of Sparks' book, *The Mind of South Africa*, is instructive, for he is at all times concerned to trace thought to its roots. In white South Africa's case, these roots are to be found in the mire of European history: the militant end of Dutch Protestantism, British colonial efficiency, and, eventually, Nazism—that sink of European spiritual vices. All these played a part, with pathological synergy, in the erection of that hideous edifice which it is our historic good fortune to observe being dismantled.

Sparks tells this story with absorbing pace, illuminating juxtaposition and judiciously chosen detail. The incidents are chosen beautifully, as little epiphanies of the antinomies of violence. Thus, when 1000 members of the *Afrikaanse Weerstandbeweging* break up a rally to be addressed by Pik Botha, then Foreign Minister:

'Now, at 7pm, time for the rally to begin, there is a thunderous commotion outside the hall. At the door I see Pik Botha's private secretary, Awie Marais, looking pale and shaken. "My God, have you been in there?" he asks. "They're barbarians."

'And indeed they are. The hall is jammed with a stamping, cheering mob waving hundreds of the little swastika flags ... The frenzy peaks as the movement's leader, the appropriately named Eugene Terre' Blanche, mounts the stage. Hands shoot up in stiff-arm salutes. He announces that Botha has cancelled his meeting. A

great roar. "Tonight," Terre' Blanche bellows above the noise, "was Blood River here in Pietersburg. Tonight the *volk* has won a great victory in the fight to get back our fatherland."

'Suddenly a police officer appears. He gives an order for the hall to be cleared ... The crowd mocks and jeers ... Pandemonium. I manage to scramble out in the stampede. A window shatters above me as a man hurls himself through the glass . He gets up, blood pouring from his cut face. "The bastards!" he yells. "They're supposed to do that to the kaffirs, not us." ' (p.325)

THERE IS A SIMPLE PLEASURE in seeing racism outflanked to the right, just as there is in seeing revolutionaries outflanked on the left. Nonetheless, this incident, illuminating as it is, has a large historical subtext—you need to know what Blood River is, what 'the fight to get back our fatherland' is, the significance of the location of the rally, and much else. It is the strength of Sparks' book that he supplies, often in contiguous passages, the historical information that provides this subtext.

To understand is not, of course, to forgive. And understanding, in the sense of tracing the causes of present discontents, is not the same as being able to solve them. As we shall see, this is the question posed by Malan. Nonetheless, there is a quiet exhilaration for the reader, so many miles away, in getting a sense that what has happened in South Africa is not a bizarre outbreak of pure bastardy, but something which once was not, and now is, and therefore can be seen developing.

There is no 'normal' South Africa that will return once the pressure on the nerves is lifted. There is only a society that, in crucial respects, has been maddened by its experiences.

And what a story it is. Sparks is wonderfully alert to the rich ironies of his country's history, and is not so sophisticated as to avoid selecting themes for his narrative. Themes, we are often told, do not correspond to the motivating elements in the historical mix. Yes, but they can train the reader to attend to significant detail. Moreover, much of the motive force of apartheid came from the historical imagination of the Afrikaners, a people whose relationship to the past—or at least to their version of the past—is like nothing else in the civilised world so much as that of the Orangeman to his.

Sparks' account begins with the observation that the Cape was settled by a trading company, and not by the Dutch government. The Dutch East India Company did not set up a colony in South Africa, but a base to supply its Java-bound ships with vegetables to combat scurvy. There was no interest in financing the venture beyond what was needed for this end. When even this modest aim was not met, the settlers had to spread beyond the limits of the outpost, to places where the company had no interest in policing or protecting them. From these beginnings, says Sparks, came that peculiar Boer cast of mind: both anarchic *and* authoritarian. This embryo trekker mentality was developed and hardened through the experience of isolation, conquest and endurance in the succeeding centuries. It was thus that the Afrikaners acquired the land Terre' Blanche proposes to recover.

But how did they lose it, and what happened to the original Africans? On these questions Sparks is particularly good, taking the reader through the paradoxical effects of a modernising society, and the pressures of economic change, on Afrikaner and African alike. The Afrikaners became poor whites in the cities, and the Africans became an industrial proletariat almost overnight after being released from rural servitude.

Sparks makes the point that the African, although subject to changes far more catastrophic and precipitate than those of the *déclassé* Afrikaner, actually adjusted more successfully. African forms of political organisation developed a tradition of looking outward, of expressing a wish to join the larger world, whereas the Afrikaner, in the manner of oppressors on the run, acquired inward-looking and obscurantist attitudes. The parallels with Europe in the 1930s and the postbellum American South are plain enough, and Sparks does not labour the point.

He does, however, spend quite some time citing chapter and verse for the Nazi influences on white South African thinking. Soon after World War II put paid to that form of redneck wishful thinking, supporters of the Nazis became difficult to find in South Africa. Yet, as Sparks convincingly documents, they were there. They were both simple barrackers on the sidelines and men who had formative experiences in German universities during the 1930s. The contribution of the Broederbond to proto-apartheid, and the thinking of men like Kuyper and his disciple Cronjé, are carefully dissected. Cronjé had pursued doctoral studies in Nazi Germany, and his books disseminating what would become the ideology of apartheid were produced by the publishing house of the Dutch Reformed Church. Verwoerd himself, as Sparks points out in a mordant footnote, sued the Johannesburg *Star* for defamation after it had accused him of falsifying the news in support of Nazi propaganda. The court held that the accusation was true, and Verwoerd lost the action.

Sparks' book is imbued with cautious but strong optimism. It proceeds on highly liberal assumptions, not the least of which is that there is a real connection between the provision of a historical explanation of an evil and its demise. Sparks does not imply that explaining something necessarily makes it go away, but expresses a hope that, once the crippling and anomalous pressures are removed from it, the mind of South Africa will be cured of its dark fancies. He concludes on a note of uplift:

'[South Africa] is a hobbled giant, and once its political shackles are removed, it can lend its energy to the huge continental hinterland north of it. When that happens South Africa could become to Africa what Japan has been to the Pacific Basin, the dynamo that energises and drives those languishing countries to become economically viable. It has that potential and more. For, South Africa also has the ability to transform itself into one of the world's few truly nonracial societies.' (p.397)

IT IS DIFFICULT TO BELIEVE that Malan would agree. The premise of Sparks' explanation is stated in his prologue: 'White South Africans are not evil, as most of the world believes. But they are blind.' (p.xvii) If Sparks' book is a work of explanation, Malan's is one of exorcism. It is driven, relentless and uncomforted. His name—yes, he is

'Africans became an industrial proletariat almost overnight.'
Prophecy 3, linoleum relief print by Billy Mandini, 1988

one of *those* Malans—is his burden. He lived in exile for many years, but finally decided he had to go back to South Africa to face the truth about himself and his country.

The questions his narrative raises are not so much those of explanation, as of essence. In other words, he says that it is one thing to explain the present, but another thing entirely to make it go away. There is no 'normal' South Africa that will return once the pressure on the nerves is lifted. There is only a society that, in crucial respects, has been maddened by its experiences. When applied to the fine structure of that society, liberal explanations rapidly lose their force and point. The distinction between liberal values—tolerance, consensus, gradualism, liberty, egalitarianism and the like—on the one hand, and the procedures of liberal explanation on the other, must carefully be made.

Malan's book is sharply realised and consistently gripping. His method is anecdotal and personal—how could it be otherwise? The incidents described are usually more garish and arresting than those in Sparks' book, although the latter are bad enough. The tenor of Malan's narrative, in a way, is more directly moralising than that of Sparks. This may sound paradoxical, given that Malan is driven by his own demons and by a sense of despair, which is partly despair at the unreality of the kind of liberal thinking found in his own circle.

HIS MORALISING SPRINGS from the intimacy and detail with which he describes incidents of violence and horror. The immediacy and stink of the events makes the reader ask: What kind of people can do these things? The intractably willed nature of the actions somehow deflects the more patrician historical ironies that form one of the main strengths of Sparks' book. Thus, anarchic, even nihilist, though he is, Malan forces us to ask questions that go beyond those necessary for a strategy of amelioration. Indeed, they make us doubt the very possibility of amelioration, as we recoil from the corrupted spirits of his South Africans.

The African, although subject to changes far more catastrophic and precipitate than those of the déclassé *Afrikaner, actually adjusted more successfully.*

Many instances could be cited, but perhaps the most striking is Malan's detective job on the emergence of a black mass-murderer, who used to creep into whites' bedrooms and despatch his sleeping victims with hammer blows to the head. Yet he was always careful to look after any children in the house. Malan attended his trial, where he was typecast as a vengeful black.

This explanation appealed to both liberal and conservative, for different reasons. Malan, however, was struck by incongruities in the murderer's statements and spent much time in unravelling the man's background. This is an utterly enthralling journey of discovery, forming the book's centrepiece, and I will not spoil it by revealing the outcome, except to say that the true explanation of the killer's actions turns out to be far removed from the conventional assumptions. In tracing it, Malan comes upon a story of folklore, taboo and spiritual dislocation that would take a Faulkner or a Conrad to imagine.

Malan's South Africa is in many ways scarier and more obdurate than Sparks'. Which of the accounts is the truer? They seem to me to be complementary visions. We can better understand the realities of Malan's narrative within the urbanely sketched perspectives of Sparks. Sparks seems to believe that reasonable men and women of goodwill can overcome the legacies of tyranny, can dismantle the spiritual bitter almond fences still standing. Who, contemplating Eastern Europe, can easily dismiss him? Malan, however, leaves us with the question: If history has made these monsters, what will unmake them? Who, looking at the Balkans, can easily dismiss him? ■

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BRUCE WILLIAMS

Grace notes and gross notes

It's not over until the fat lady sings, they say. An innovative young Australian opera company turns stereotypes on their head by having its heroine eat herself into a fat and then sticky death, singing all the while.

FOR MANY YEARS, those of us who care about opera have been hoping for a company that would bring us regularly what the flagships only rarely do: contemporary music theatre. Now, in Chamber Made Opera, we have one, of impressive enterprise and skill. The company's directorate, presided over by Douglas Horton, has managed in three lean years to stage six major works, and to collaborate in a number of others.

Horton is a younger director who has sought out and worked with comparable overseas groups (e.g. Zurich Opera Factory) He established himself in Melbourne with lively productions of the standard repertory, including what the company calls a bonsai *Coronation of Poppea*, before moving on to contemporary works.

Around him he has gathered an impressive collection of musicians and theatre people. Those who think that opera begins and ends with what's on CD should take a careful look at the potted biogs in the Chamber Made programs. They reveal a whole new generation who work across older boundaries—between theatre and music, between the popular and whatever is its opposite.

Directing opera well demands an unusual combination of abilities: you must be good at music, at spectacle and at complex logistics. You must also know what acting is, as distinct from what it is that opera singers mostly do. Horton knows. He directs actors with the finesse, the inwardness and the inventiveness that characterise the best contemporary work in theatre.

His sets, whether entirely his or those he commissions from skilled designers like Trina Parker, are always memorable: Horton at work can be represented by the opening scene of *Sweet Death* (premiered at the Melbourne International Festival), a piece in which the heroine eats herself into the grave. Trina Parker developed a Horton idea into a Russian-doll set of five refrigerators. Helen Noonan, looking ultra-glamorous, swans on, unfurling behind her a 50-foot train. Standing next to a life-sized fridge, she mimes a conversation with her little daughter, who stands upstage by the biggest of the fridges, burbling and gabbling upwards. The essentials of the mother-daughter relationship are given at once, and, equally essentially, the piece establishes its sardonic attitude towards operatic glamour.

Attitudes towards opera are not just the precondition, but often the subject-matter of Chamber Made's work. Its best-known achievement so far is *Recital*, a solo vehicle for the remarkable Noonan, devised by director and singer, with music by David Chesworth. So far this production has toured five states, and is headed for the overseas festival circuit. Noonan plays The Ghost of Opera, a diva schooled in the mannerisms of the great Callas. *Recital* would make an attractive introduction to postmodernism. It has no narrative, but evokes many; by drawing attention to the tricks of the trade it questions their purpose; it offers the performer, rather than the performance; it is cool, detached, ironic, with just enough openings for empathy to keep it from icing over. And, like most of what is dubbed postmodern, it is essentially parasitic. What keeps the piece alive are the standard romantic arias interspersed through it, without which it would be reduced to a mean-spirited, uncomprehending attack. With them, it works like those love poems of Donne in which wit and sensuality combine to seduce the eager listener. *Recital* is an anti-opera for opera-lovers.

CONTEMPORARY MUSIC-THEATRE people sometimes want to believe that their work is entirely independent of the operatic tradition, has 'gone beyond it'. But opera is a difficult matrix from which to escape. At its centre is the voice. People trained in the *bel canto* tradition can do other things as well—growl, shout, bend notes like a blues singer, use an extended range, but always, as a reference for the performance, there must remain that pure, open stream of sound that flows

unimpeded through Mozart and Donizetti. If that isn't there, it's no longer opera, and the escape has been effected—but at what cost? (The phrase 'rock opera' is oxymoronic.) While the voice is there, as it is in every one of Chamber Made's regular singers, the work remains affiliated to opera, simply because that sound is by no means natural, as voice teachers like to pretend, but instead replete with cultural codings. What to do?

Both *Greek*, which the company staged earlier this year, and *Sweet Death* are stiffly laced with operatic parody, and a very conscious deployment by the composers of a range of means supplementary to *bel canto* that serve as prophylactics against the Voice Beautiful.

In *Sweet Death*, for example, diatonic recitative is used to express the Cruel Mother's phoniness. But not all the operatic techniques can be got rid of, or the piece would have to be recast, the company renamed and a whole range of vocal resource abandoned. So we find, in both *Sweet Death* and *Greek*, at moments of expanded feeling, the regular use of *melismata* (long chains of notes on a single sound). This, to a listener familiar with, say, Britten, is an entirely standard operatic resource.

A good thing, too. Who would complain, at a Chamber Made production, that Helen Noonan can pluck her high notes out of the blue, or lament the rich, dark, almost Italian timbre of Gary Rowley's baritone? Grant Evans, the tenor in both *Greek* and *Sweet Death*, is a classic *comprimario* who can turn on all the traditional neighing, cooing and rasping, as well as sing sweetly.

This company, then, is still more than half in love (sorry, Keats) with easeful breath. In its own terminology it has 'reappropriated' the operatic voice. Behind this jargon, with its implication that sometime back there *bel canto* was stolen from The People, we can hear the manic voice of French utopian politics. These are what inform the libretto of *Sweet Death*, devised by Abe Pogos from a novel by Claude Tardat. A little girl, stigmatised as 'plain', by her *haute-bourgeoise* Betty-Friedan mother, neglected by her supposed father and sexually exploited by her actual one, decides to get very fat, rejects all offers of help and understanding and opts finally for calorific suicide. If we, the audience, read this as the sad case history of someone who never outgrew the position of victim, we will assuredly be mocked for bringing such bourgeois categories to bear. Indeed, the program tells us so.

So many things lately remind me of the 1950s. We've heard this stuff before, about the fascinating freedom of the individual to declare all reactions to them irrelevant, to make up their own rules and call them ethics. Nothing in the private world of the protagonist of *Sweet Death* convinces me that she is any more than a woefully familiar case, surrounded by stylish but, in the end, banal stereotypes. What inflates our poor heroine beyond endurance is not so much the cream she licks off her costume as the thesis with which she is stuffed.

ALL THE WIT AND ELEGANCE of the staging, and the redoubtable performance by Annette Tesoriero as the girl, could not finally persuade me that *Sweet Death* was any more than a small story, one which does not demand music for the telling. If that seems harsh on Andree Greenwell's eminently theatrical score, I should temper the judgment by adding that signally few contemporary works achieve a necessary relationship between music and drama.

Signally few works in the standard repertory, either. But it happens that in our period both arts, music *and* drama, are in that state of continuous crisis which we moderns and postmoderns have come to accept as normal. There are patches of recent history in which the most distinguished work is impossible to imagine in combination: *Waiting for Godot* in the high serial manner of Pierre Boulez? Peter Maxwell Davies' setting of *Jumpers*?

Another energising conflict for Chamber Made is that generated between attitudes presently favoured towards what used to be called life and those carried by the operatic tradition. I don't mean just romantic afflatus, or elitism. Opera, from Monteverdi to Britten, is an artform developed to express grandeur, nobility, heroism, tragic suffering and the depths of feeling. Its natural province is the mythic. What made *Recital* such a balanced experience was the tension between a nostalgia for those traditional experiences and the impulse towards comic detachment from them.

This intelligent dalliance distinguished *Recital*. In *Greek* the antiheroic attitudes were cruder, and their outcome distinctly mean. Steven Berkoff adapted his own play, which transfers the story of Oedipus to the East End, and the improbably named Mark-Antony Turnage set it to a well-wrought atonal score. Here again the drama is solipsistic. The only realised character is Eddy (Oedipus); everybody else exists only in relation to him. The action is violent, the dialogue scatological and the myth shorn of dignity, compassion or complexity.

Sophocles' Jocasta, when she realises what has happened, makes a famous silent exit, to her death; this one says 'Oh, shit!'. No Creon, no chorus (except of ridicule), no children, just a fascinated dwelling on the incest motif and, at the end, an adolescent attempt to shock. Eddy breaks off his lament to announce that he's not going to punish himself, he intends to carry right on with mother, and at least they really love one another and they're not violent like the imperialists. These are ethics that would not convince a middle-school debating society: hapless sexism, and a sub-Reichian hymn to male potency. No, I did not care for this opera.

What lingers in the mind from this Chamber Made production are images of nifty staging—duets on tabletops, two power-dressing Sphinxes in barred light, the car driven on through the dockdoors—and the finely-disciplined work of the ensemble of singers. The *doing*, in fact, the operatic *doing*.

At the moment Chamber Made is a company with more skill and verve than we could have hoped for, and I look forward to seeing them make or discover those works which really survive inspection under the vast magnifier of music theatre. Whatever reservations I may have entered about the productions discussed here, I am grateful to have had the chance to see them. ■

Bruce Williams is senior lecturer in drama at La Trobe University.

FLASH IN THE PAN

Eureka Street Film Competition

If Mary Astor and Humphrey Bogart look worried, it's not just because they haven't found the Maltese Falcon. It's because of the pressures of age. *The Maltese Falcon* had its 50th birthday last month, and a new 35mm print of the film has been released to celebrate the fact. *Eureka Street* salutes the memory of those who made the film possible—Bogart, Astor, Sidney Greenstreet, Peter Lorre, director John Huston, and of course, Dashiell Hammett. But these are the familiar names. Tell us who played Sam Spade's partner, Archer, in the film, and if yours is the first correct entry opened we'll award two tickets to a film of your choice. Write to: *Eureka Street* film competition, PO Box 553, Richmond, Victoria 3121.

The Field, dir. Jim Sheridan (independent cinemas). Richard Harris is reputed to have described his performance in *The Field* as 'my King Lear'. The story may be a publicist's fiction, but if so let us not blame the publicist for getting it right. Superficially this film, adapted from John B. Keane's play of the same name, has all the ingredients of melodramatic sludge: stage-Irish peasants, starkly beautiful Connemara coastline, and a plot concocted from the consequences of greed, suicide and murder, leavened with a little sex and a lot of religion. Sheridan's direction and screenplay, however, make *The Field* considerably more than the sum of these parts. Add in fine performances by Harris, John Hurt and Brenda Fricker, and the result is indeed the stuff of classical and Shakespearean tragedy.

Sheridan weaves his tragedy out of the clichéd images of Ireland found in films such as John Ford's *The Quiet Man*. In both films the setting is a small village in the 1930s. Both concern the arrival in the village of an Irish-American, with money to spend and his past to recover. And in both, American expectations run foul of Irish sensibilities.

The Field strips the sentimentality from this kind of story, however, telling it from the point of view of a villager, the Bull McCabe (Harris) rather than of 'the American' (Tom Berenger). The Bull is intent on buying a field he has rented for many years, so that his son will have a secure living. The American is intent on buying the field to cover it in concrete, for easy access to a limestone quarry. This sounds like the beginning of a green parable—in both senses of the adjective—but Sheridan is not interested in preaching nationalism or ecology.

Instead he gives us a very moral tale about that deadliest of sins, pride. In this case, it is literally as well as metaphorically the kind of pride that goes before a fall. And before we witness that fall, he takes us on a tour of all the other deadly sins as well.

In the Bull's village, ownership and inheritance have the kind of obsessive importance that is only possible where people possess little, and have bitter memories of what happens to those who lose everything. The Bull and his wife (Fricker) have not spoken for 18 years; they have lost one son, and have a troubled relationship with another, because of the Bull's obsession with the land. Like Lear, the Bull is alternately goaded and abetted by a 'fool'. But this fool is the Bird O'Donnell (Hurt), a feckless cadger of drinks and prattler of village gossip. There is no counsel, no hint of redemption in his words. As the Bird, Hurt is a kind of malign mirror-image of the Fool he played to Paul Schofield's Lear.

The winner of last month's film competition is Deirdre O'Farrell, of Longueville, NSW. Asked what the family in this still were discussing, she gave us this line: 'The ape's hopeless. Let's give Quasimodo a ring.' A consolation prize goes to the Rev. Andrew Knight, of the Anglican parish of Borowa, NSW, who thought the topic of conversation was vine grip and family power systems. (Note who has left over right and right over left; it strongly indicates a leadership challenge.)

The Bull's conflict with the American and the parish priest (Sean McGinley) leads, Lear-like, to his own disintegration and the destruction of all that he loves. There is no faithful Gloucester to suffer for his master; but the villagers suffer when the priest, accusing them of complicity in murder, drives them from his church. The Bull's son Tadhg (Sean Bean) is too weak and too venal to be a Cordelia; but like her he leaves his father and then returns, out of love, to become the final victim of the Bull's pride. It all amounts to *Lear* taken down a notch or two, with no reconciliation or self-knowledge at the end.

In *The Field* Sheridan has given us a film that is as deeply pessimistic as his first feature, *My Left Foot*, was optimistic. But *My Left Foot* was about a man overcoming natural affliction; *The Field* is about a man who makes his own affliction.

—Ray Cassin

Backdraft, dir. Ron Howard (all cinema chains). *Backdraft* has been condescended to, but I come not to bury it but to praise it. It is suitable for lovers of Chicago, that most filmable of cities; for students of domestic tension, between siblings and within marriage; for lovers of spectacle, especially if that involves more fire than you will see in your whole life, unless you yourself are a fireman or an attender of wars; for connoisseurs of bravery, physical and other. It's not much good if you are looking for sophistication of dialogue, but then who except the shortsighted goes to the movies for that?

Kurt Russell and William Baldwin play brothers working nowadays in

the Chicago fire service, having trouble with the past and the present, and as all such persons must, with whether they are to have a future. Robert De-Niro, former contestant with what a congenital arsonist calls, creepily, 'the animal', namely fire, is now an investigator of arson, and eventually a prober of conspiracy. Donald Sutherland, Scott Glen, Jennifer Jason Leigh and Rebecca De Mornay get on with a variety of supporting roles. Hans Zimmer's music is laudable when it is audible, but it is sometimes given a hard time by explosions, traffic roar, and similar afflictions of this fallen world. I went, resigned to mocking, and came away cheered. But then I love Chicago.

—Peter Steele SJ

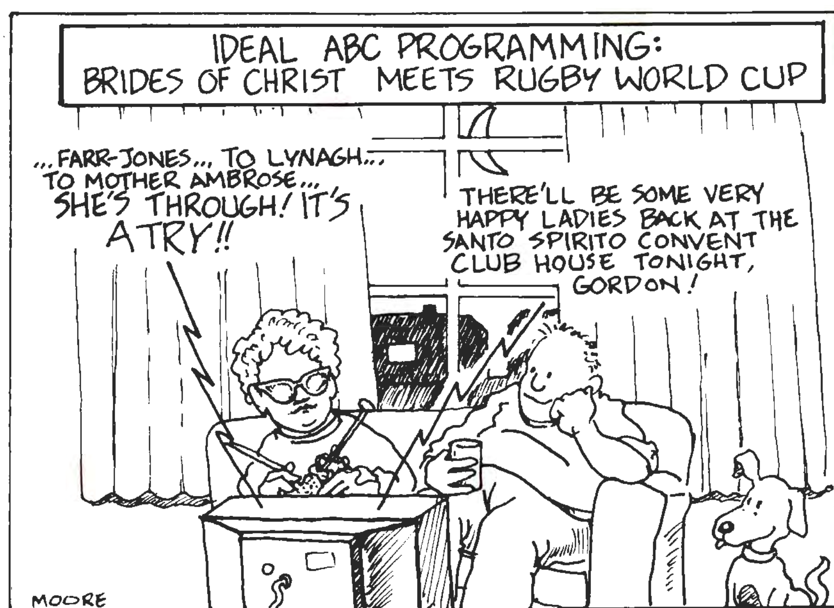
Life is Sweet, dir. Mike Leigh (independent cinemas). This delightful comedy, set in a working class suburb of North London, revolves around food. It does so with all the concentration of Peter Greenaway's *The Cook, the Thief, his Wife and her Lover,* or Itami's *Tampopo,* but with a humanity that eludes those films.

Everything that its characters are escaping from has to do with food, and so has what they are escaping to. Nicola (Jane Horrocks) is a bulimic who won't eat with her family, but who won't have sex with her lovers unless they eat thick brown chocolate-hazelnut spread over her body. Her twin sister has escaped eating disorders. Instead she is a plumber, attending to the final product of all that food.

Andy (Jim Broadbent) is a cook, wounded by an encounter with a fork, who dreams of escape into a decrepit fast food caravan. Wendy (Alison Steadman) regulates the pulse of family life with Sunday roasts and regular snacks. Aubrey (Timothy Spall), the obese foil to the anorexic Nicola, plans to bring *haute cuisine* to the suburbs through his restaurant the *Regret Rien.* Against all odds, one of his dishes looks quite appetising. Then he proudly announces that it is Prawn on a Bed of Jam.

The big achievement here is a delicate balance between astringency and sentimentality; a balance achieved by piling on lots of both. I've always liked Leigh's films, and this might be his best yet.

—David Braddon-Mitchell



Thelma and Louise, dir. Ridley Scott (Greater Union). With *Thelma and Louise* Ridley Scott and cinematographer Adrian Biddle add another mini-chapter to America's long running saga of the search for innocence, lost or otherwise.

'Buddy' heroines from Arkansas, Thelma and Louise, set out to go fishing, leaving behing them grinding routine and Thelma's farcical husband. They don't make it to the mountains because Thelma is almost raped and Louise kills Thelma's attacker in a furious reflex, thereby turning them into fugitives. And so, like their literary and cinematic predecessors, they seek escape and new life by lighting out for the territory, creating the usual mayhem along the way.

The film's trick—reversing the usual male and female roles and stereotypes-- doesn't really turn it into a feminist revelation, but the performances of Susan Sarandon (Louise) and Geena Davis (Thelma) are so good you could cheer the film for that reason alone. And the 'territory' itself, sometimes Edenic, mostly ruined, is enough to break your heart.

Ridley Scott speeds his characters and audience across a scarred and desecrated America, but one with enough fragments of splendour left to convey a sense of what has been wrecked and lost, even without the vogue cross-refencing to past cinema classics. (The shadow of John Ford is a long one.) Sometimes in *Thelma and Louise* human energy and ideal landscape don't seem to be on a collision course; the film has some moments of cinematic realism at its best. But mostly it is in thrall to romantic notions of tragic incompatibility.

—Morag Fraser

Noted, a video-shop poster for Mei Gibson's latest release: '*Hamlet*, in the tradition of *Excalibur*.'

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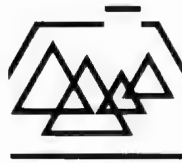

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