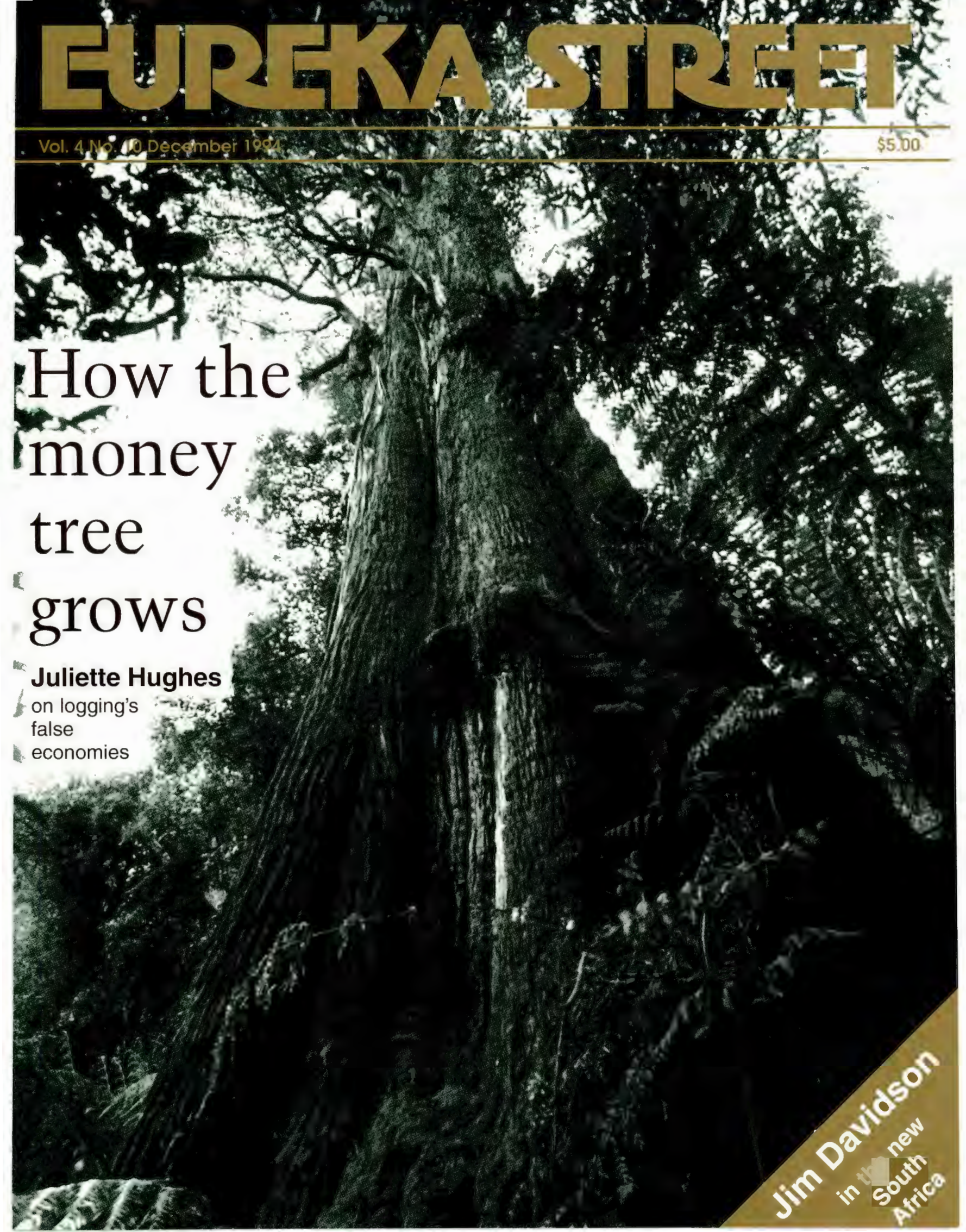


EUREKA STREET



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on logging's
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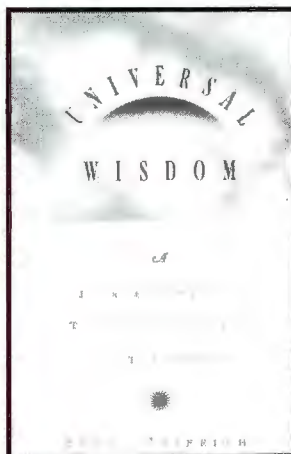
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FANFARE



Eureka Street's
Production editor, Ray Cassin,
has won the
1994 Walkley Award
for the three best headlines
published in the
Australian print media.

Cover Photograph: Four-hundred-year-old messmate, 15.4 metres in circumference at chest height, discovered in the environs of Ellery Creek, East Gippsland, in hitherto untouched old-growth wet sclerophyll forest. The area is now slated for logging coupes. Photograph by Bill Thomas.

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You never know your luck in a big city

AFTER THE RECENT REPUBLICAN DÉMARCHE in Wash-
ington, the story drifted around that the Devil appeared to a
prominent politician and offered him comprehensive power
on condition that he lose his soul, to which the candidate
said, 'Where's the catch?'. This sour little tale catches up a
readiness to attribute both knavery and folly to politicians—
or to some of them, an attitude familiar in Australia. A dif-
ference between the two countries is that whereas Americans
tend to believe in the sacred nation state, Australians do
not, so our slanging of our politicians, whether or not it slurs
the offices they may hold, does not perturb us greatly, though
of course it can't be much fun for them. It is impossible to
imagine an Australian equivalent of the sitcom routine in
which an ordinary citizen, finding that a telephone call is
from the White House, automatically comes to attention.

No devil took me up to the high spot overlooking the
Potomac and much of the District of Columbia, but the scene
turned me thoughtful anyhow. This self-fabbling city is a
pretty small place physically, and lowslung, by design. As a
result, the well-known monuments and other buildings are
easy to desecrate. The Washington Monument, until the build-
ing of the Eiffel Tower the tallest man-made structure on
earth, and still a kind of North Pole of national devotion for
the millions who visit it each year. The Kennedy Center, in
whose cultural ceremonies the complex, gifted, flawed, and
murdered President is well remembered. A good stone's
throw away from it, the Watergate Complex, a monument
of a different kind to a different presidential toppling. The
Capitol building, humped on a small hilltop, its dome an
object of admiration, detestation, or sheer perplexity through-
out the world. Near it, the Library of Congress, as with
more information than anybody could possibly begin to deal
with. Downhill, at the various segments of the Smithsonian
outfit, more of the same: space capsules, a stuffed elephant,
Foucault's pendulum, Dorothy's slippers from *The Wizard
of Oz*, the Hope Diamond, Renoir's *Girl with a Watering
Can*, the original Star-Spangled Banner, a mummy ...

Swing this way and that from the observation point,
and other things are scanned in. The National Cathedral,
implausibly clean by comparison with the Gothic hulls on

which it has been modelled. In the distance, National Airport, from which planes gun up with a manic constancy that suggests a battle zone, but which is really the playing out of the local hunger for mobility. At an arc from the airport, the Pentagon: and conveniently close to it, Arlington Cemetery. Something, so to speak, for everyone.

Which is, I suppose, much of the point not only of this city, but of them all. The archaeologist ferretting away at the earthed-in corridors of Pompeii or Troy or Jericho is going to find any amount of material specific to that spot, but what they all stand for is the human appetite for variety, for options. The city itself is, we have hoped for thousands of years, a bazaar of alternatives. The preferred yield may be quite palpable—brighter woollens, more succulent peppers—or less tangible—the flux of opinions, the repertoire of procedures; and access to this cornucopia is usually regulated by many considerations, some named and some not. The wrong pigmentation, the wrong accent, the wrong cut of one's clothes, the wrong distribution of genetic material, and streets become cul-de-sacs, the most urgent outbursts inaudible. But the dream of the city, its modelling in the mind before the real thing is attained or after it has been flooded, bombed or burned, is a dream of fully-engaged human capacity, fully encountered outreach, fully vindicated reflection.

Hence all the hymns, secular and sacred, to real or imagined cities: 'The last time I saw Paris', 'Chicago, Chicago', 'Jerusalem my happy home', 'Arrivederci Roma'—sentimentality blurs their reception, but a deep and necessary sentiment mobilises them in the first place. It may or may not be true that 'the unexamined life is unliveable', but it is certainly true that the altogether unenchanted life is unliveable. And the city is the locus of enchantment. Scarred, filthy, unjust, tottering—even *in extremis* it is a kind of talisman of human aspiration. Aeneas, fleeing burning Troy, carrying his father and trailing his son, is already headed for the foundation of a successor-city—'The City' as the Romans immodestly called it. In America, there can be something irritating about the constant reference to 'our goal' and 'my goal': but to be quite without goals is simply to be out of the human game. Cities house, and indeed themselves are, so many reminders of that fact.

If cities encompass avenues of opportunity, they are also knots of intersections. When, years ago,

Kansas City had only two automobiles, they contrived to meet and have a collision: cities do that for you, as well as provide the wherewithal for clearing up the mess. As you read this, the betting is that at least half a dozen celebrated cities in various quarters of the world will be coming up both with triumphs of human intelligence and moral vitality and with yet more violations of elementary hope: we will be, once more, both in the black and in the red. The mildest brooding on the physical scene in Washington makes for reminders of this fact. Warmakers and peacemakers sit at adjoining tables in restaurants: the abundant

museums are shrines of retrieved stability and of incessant change: black mayor splits the photo space in the newspapers with white president: outside the glitzed mall, Georgetown Park, ragged beggars shake their paper cups in front of the bustling and well-heeled.

To all seeming, Christmas here will be gone in a welter of materialistic theatre—as if Jesus had a sibling, who was a Barbie Doll. I shall be glad to be elsewhere when this happens. Still, the harshnesses which will no doubt find a place in Washington, the broil of one set of hopes and hungers in competition with other sets, are of course

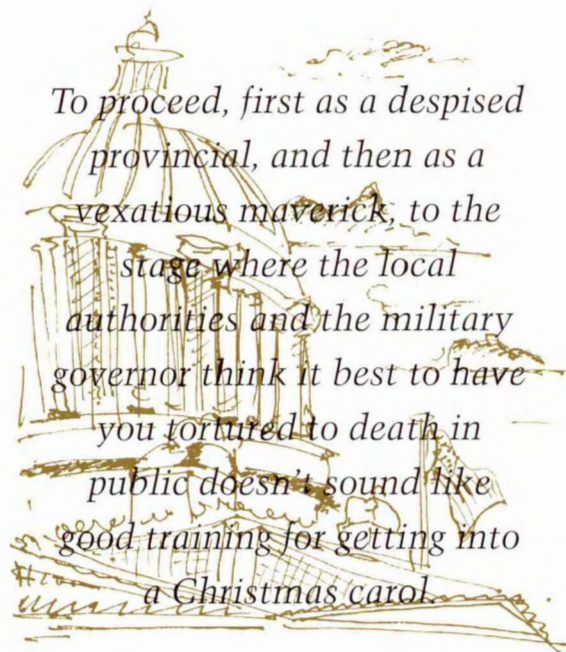
the very mirror of the first Christian circumstances.

To be horn away from home at the disposition of an occupying power, and then harried under threat of death into refugeedom is not a propitious way to be starting a flourishing life. To proceed from that point, first as a despised provincial, and then as a vexatious maverick, to the stage where the local authorities and the military governor think it best to have you tortured to death in public doesn't sound like good training for getting into a Christmas carol.

As for the city itself, Jerusalem, it is already, in pre-Christian experience, both the oasis of the sacred and the menace of prophets—the fertiliser and the frustrater of hopes. It may be hard to get a 'proper'

Christmas in Washington: it was damned hard to get one in Jerusalem.

MIND YOU, WHEN ONE THINKS of how cities either serve hopes or subvert them, it is a good idea not to take them too rapidly on their own terms. Near the centre of Washington, the equestrian statues face, loyally, towards the heart of government: across the Potomac, in Virginia, the horses have a different orientation. Alternative views are always possible. Auden, musing on many upheavals of our time, wrote,



'It is the unimportant/who make all the din: both God and the Accuser speak very softly.' As those words make clear, just listening to still small voices is no perfect solution—what one may then hear is what Auden also called 'the oceanic whisper' which says, 'there is no love; There are only the various envies, all of them sad.' But among the repertoire of possibilities offered by life in the intricacy of cities is that of having second thoughts. This can be the beginning, and for good, of conversion: but it is at least the first step towards having ampler views.

Whatever does happen in Washington, or emanates from it, at that deep-winter moment, the

Potomac will still be there, as it was before the blacks came north, before the Europeans came west, before the Amerindians came south. Whatever the shuffling on its banks, or on the Seine's, or on the Swan's, that primal street, the stream, will go indifferently about its business. It may be a reminder to ease back on self-absorption. The Republic of Solitude, after all, does not have much of a future. ■

Peter Steele SJ has a personal chair in English at the University of Melbourne. During 1994 he has been visiting Professor at Georgetown University, Washington DC.

COMMENT: 2

PAMELA FOULKES

Minding our language

All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability ... And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in their own language. —[Acts 2:4-6]

THE PENTECOST GIFT of hearing the Word of God in one's own language has been denied to the women of the Catholic Church by the Vatican's Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith. Last month, the congregation banned the use in liturgical and catechetical texts of the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) of the Bible, because of its use of inclusive language. The decision came as a shock to bishops' conferences in English-speaking countries. The US bishops had approved the NRSV text for liturgical use in 1991, a decision confirmed by the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Sacraments. The Canadian bishops published a lectionary using the translation in 1992, and work has been proceeding on an NRSV lectionary for Australia.

The NRSV is the work of an ecumenical team of scholars who had been charged with producing a translation of the Bible reflecting recent advances in the study of the ancient languages. In other words, the NRSV represents the state of the art in biblical translation and the ban sets the Catholic Church outside mainstream scholarship.

The translators, sensitive to the awareness of linguistic sexism in contemporary culture, also set out to remove the masculine bias of previous English translations, which had in many cases restricted or obscured the meaning of the original texts. As well as providing a more accurate translation, they used inclusive language wherever it was historically and culturally appropriate. For example, the translation of the Greek *anthropos* by the more accurate 'human

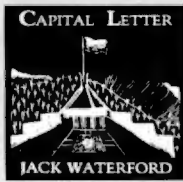
being', rather than 'man', and the replacement of the exclusive term 'brothers' by the inclusive 'brothers and sisters' in the Pauline letters, where the apostle is clearly addressing a mixed congregation.

But are we not still hearing the word of God, regardless of the translation? For some women in the Catholic Church, the answer to this question must now be 'no'. The Word of God is not just words on a page but something that issues forth in action; this is the understanding expressed in the first creation story in Genesis, where God speaks and the world is formed. The texts read each Sunday become God's word for us as we incorporate them into our lives, when they are not only heard but received.

That is why, down the centuries, people of different cultures have translated the scriptures into their own languages, so that they might speak directly to their particular experience. The ban on the NRSV denies women the right to hear the Word of God in language expressing *their* experience. Language both describes and shapes the world, and if only masculine language is used to mediate and describe the experience of the world and the divine, women have no place in the liturgical assembly into which they were drawn by baptism. How can women celebrate a liturgy that refuses to name them?

I find myself thinking of a man standing by an empty tomb in a garden, who announced a resurrection for all when he called a woman by her name (John 20:16). ■

—Pamela A. Foulkes



Where there's a Willis, there's a way to go

ON THE SURFACE, the contrast could not be more stark: while the Liberal leadership founders, Labor is contemplating a peaceful succession that does not turn the incumbent into a lame duck. Keating does not expect to die by the sword and few of those manoeuvring for his position are particularly anxious for him to go before early 1997. So there is an opportunity to organise a succession. The Deputy Prime Minister, Brian Howe, is in the front rank of parliamentary non-performers, and is now disliked intensely even by his own faction. He remains in place only because the messiness of prising him out would be compounded by damaging competition for his job.

Kim Beazley wants it, and the ruling faction thinks he deserves it. Carmen Lawrence wants it too, and although few think she deserves it, many believe that a Keating-Lawrence team at the next election would be as marketable as you could get. Marginal members are always pragmatic, even about people who have not been found out yet. Lawrence has charm, is quick on her feet, and has developed a great media image and some capacity to attract votes. But she has impressed few of her colleagues either by her grasp of the details of policy formation or by an ability to win a political argument. She is suspicious of her formal advisers and of most of her colleagues, surrounding herself with adoring flatterers. And she does not do her homework: in public she can bluff her way out of that, but in Cabinet it shows.

Kim Beazley, on the other hand, is thought to have done the hard work and to have solid political instincts. No one could call him charismatic—or even, any longer, a person with ideas—but he has a marketable decency and rugged charm, and might be just the ticket for consolidation after the erratic excitement of the Keating era. The bargain, of course, may be that Lawrence gets the deputy's post now on the understanding that she will not be a serious runner for the top job. But, even though being deputy is no longer as powerful a position as it once was, those who want the leadership might think that installing Lawrence as deputy leaves too much to chance.

There are more contenders than Beazley, of course. Gareth Evans, once he's in the House of Representatives, will think himself foreman material, as does Simon Crean, plodder though his colleagues now think him to be. And Keating is making sure that some of the juniors, such as Michael Lavarch and Michael Lee, get a chance to be considered. But it's hardly a glamour field, especially for the completion of the tasks which Keating set himself: the republic, the maturing of the nation, including Aboriginal reconciliation and a new social contract, and the recognition, inside and outside Australia, of this country's significance in Asia. It would be a kind observer indeed who would credit any of Keating's potential successors with his imagination or skill, though a few share his weaknesses.

And in that respect, the fact that most people assume the government's return at the next election to be virtually assured is more a mark of Opposition ineptitude than of a steady ship of state. The end of the recession has not

markedly improved economic conditions and the brakes are already on, with interest rates climbing to historic levels in real terms. The next budget, an election one, will probably see further tightening, including real tax increases—not necessarily a prescription for popularity.

Keating's APEC 'triumph' was largely public relations hype; in the short term, at least, it is unlikely to bring any real change. And the performance of his ministers, including some of those lining up for the succession, has been lamentable (though the Opposition appears to be almost incapable of telling the public so). There are major headaches in industrial relations, privatisation, aviation, communications, immigration and health, and nothing much is being done about them. Even some of the 'master-strokes'—using racial vilification legislation to divide the Opposition, for example—have the capacity to blow up in the Government's face. Aboriginal affairs is already doing so.

If Paul Keating were to fall under a bus tomorrow, the best man to lead Labor would probably be Ralph Willis: not only the party's best performer, after Keating, but also its next most experienced man. He is no darling of the press, and has a long-earned recognition for moving slowly and deliberately, but he thinks more strategically than most of his colleagues and is far more rarely caught up. A veteran perhaps, but far from old (at 56 he is two years older than Bob Hawke was on becoming Prime Minister and the same age Gough Whitlam was), Willis is the hardest to shake in a parliamentary debate, and he radiates decency and purpose, even if he is somewhat lacking in charisma.

Unlike most of the pretenders, he has rarely shirked a battle in the Cabinet. Beazley, though a good minister, has rarely made an impression in Cabinet debates outside his portfolio area, and, though a sound parliamentary tactician, his debate style is largely bluster and advanced jeering. Gareth Evans has obvious abilities—though a once-shiny idealism and healthy cynicism, most particularly about himself, has ebbed away. He could perhaps lead with ideas, but cannot lead men and women. Even those who think his brain even bigger than his ego doubt his political judgment and his temperament.

Yet Willis is rarely mentioned in any calculations about change. He is extremely popular in Caucus, but has no factional support and no great and powerful friends. He eschews the press (a former press secretary once commented that he paid her a bonus if his name did not appear in the paper) and his record usually passes unremarked. But you don't become leader by being self-effacing; indeed, you may not deserve the job if you aren't prepared to do the work of persuading people about your abilities.

Still, as the Liberal Party might remark in its cups, at least Labor has choices: hardheads who can win without getting into trouble, and a softhead who can talk his way out of it. And that's without considering the Keating 'A' team. ■

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

I accuse

From Craig Minogue, 'I' Division, H.M. Prison Pentridge

I was pleased and heartened that you chose to publish my commentary on the closure of 'H' Division. Among the numerous radio and television reports and written articles which purported to cover the end of 'H' Division's infamous (and, of course, illegal) cruelties, yours was the only one which gave prisoners a voice.

As you may well be aware, there is in our society a legislative, administrative and cultural weave that effectively denies prisoners and ex-prisoners their status as human beings.

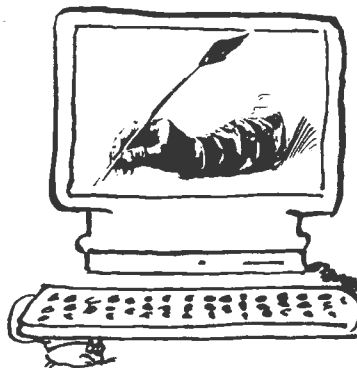
I would cite the fact that prisoners are not covered by Work Care for the injuries they sustain while operating power tools, heavy machinery and articulated vehicles; I would cite the fact that prison kitchens, filthy as they indubitably are, were specifically exempted from Health Department inspections and regulations; I would cite the fact that the forced labour of prisoners who are paid \$5.00 per day for their work contributes to the profits of prominent businesses, industries and marketing chains in this state; I would cite these and a hundred other breaches of international agreements governing the treatment of a nation's citizens as evidence of the culture of dehumanisation, as evidence of the fact that prisoners are simply not covered by the 'Human Beings Act'.

It is difficult to gauge how much of this culture of neglect derives from a consciously contrived agenda, and how much proceeds from unconscious prejudices.

In the final analysis it matters little to a man whose aged mother was strip-searched on Mother's Day (nothing, of course was found during this humiliating and degrading procedure), or a man who learns that his debilitating work injuries are not covered by Work Cover, if the denial of his status as a human being results from prejudice or policy: the effect, and its pain, is the same in either case.

What does matter, in a society that displays too little sympathy for its imprisoned citizens, is that inhumane treatment diminishes the humanity of every man and woman within that society. Much attention has been

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.



focused upon the suffering of victims of crime.

The emotion generated by this legitimate concern can sometimes cause us to forget that prisoners, for the most part drawn from the poorest and least well-educated ranks of our society's citizens, are themselves victims of crime. Injustice towards them demeans us all and impugns our claim to join the forum of humane and civilised nations.

I take heart from your interest in our welfare and your willingness to publish my commentary. In the end I believe that compassion and humane concern have the power to change a society, no less than an individual man or woman, for the better.

Craig Minogue
Coburg, Vic.

We accuse

From the Victorian Brigidine Social Action and Awareness Group.

There are dilemmas in educating girls within a sexist society and even greater dilemmas in a sexist church within that society.

It is true that Catholic schools have contributed much to the education of girls, challenging them to be independent, creative and unselfish members of society, and to be committed to working for justice. The young women in our schools need to explore their emerging faith and spirituality,

but it is difficult to do this within a community that denies their basic equality with men. The real dilemma lies in the apparent lack of will within the church to address the question of the inequality of men and women, a question which is much broader than the ordination of women to the priesthood. An approach to ministry that values shared leadership and decision-making, and which sees service as essential to Christianity, is needed.

The issue of equality of educational opportunity for girls has been highlighted by some major policy developments, such as the National Policy for the Education of Girls in Australian Schools (1987). Since then the National Action Plan for the Education of Girls (1993) has recognised that many areas of study exclude or trivialise women's contributions, experience and knowledge. This mirrors our wider society where roles that are more interesting and influential are often portrayed as male. A society such as this must be labelled for what it is—sexist.

That similar sexist attitudes and structures exist within the church is even more disturbing. Women are not only the 'silent majority' in secular society but within the church as well. There is a quandary in educating young women to be articulate, thinking and active members of the Church when they will have little opportunity to live out such a role in that Church.

We expect the church to act according to its own teaching that individual humans are created equal before God. When the English edition of the Catechism of the Catholic Church was published this year, however, the text read 'God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him. Man occupies a unique place in creation: he is in the image of God' (par. 355).

Such exclusive language does nothing to uphold the Church's teaching; indeed, it is so offensive to many that it blocks them from hearing the real meaning of God's word.

In order to sharpen our understanding of the roles of women and men in the Church we would do well to give greater importance to scriptural texts that affirm the truth that all are made in God's image and that there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, neither male nor female, that we are all one in Christ (Gal 3:28). In the light of this truth it is surely more

significant that Jesus was human than that he was male!

Sexism, against which we protest and which is named as sinful in the new *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, is aided and abetted within the Church. If decisions about who does what, and who decides what, are made on gender lines they are unjust and irrational. It is particularly difficult that God is enlisted on the male side, when the Church teaches that God is neither male nor female!

We need open and honest dialogue. The future of young women within the Church is at stake. Indeed, the future of our Church is at stake.

The Victorian Brigidine Social Action and Awareness Group

Springvale North, VIC
(Signed: Brigid Arthur, Margaret Cassidy, Louise Cleary, Margaret Fyfe, Catherine Kelly, Ged Lannan, Pat Long, Cecilia Merrigan, Maureen Minahan, Dorothea Pini, Helen Toohey).

Lies, damn lies

From James Rodgers, *housemaster at St Ignatius College, Riverview.*

The publication of Graham Richardson's book *Whatever It Takes* does Australian politics and politicians little credit.

His boasts about 'necessary' lying, his statement that 'leadership contenders have to lie, and do so publicly'; his subsequent revelation that, at times, lying is 'compulsory' should make those of us who attempt to teach ideals and values to the young squirm.

This is not just a question of leaping immediately to moral high ground. It does make us question the point of exhorting our young men and women to consider a career as representatives of the people. What does Richardson wish to achieve by such (presumably truthful) revelations? A boast? A confession? A justification?

The issue invites comparisons. When Brazil's Finance Minister, Rubens Ricupero, made remarks (which were incidentally broadcast) to a journalist about economic statistics in September of this year—'What is good, we use; what is bad, we hide'—at least he had the grace to resign. The American people's rejection of Oliver North who admitted lying in the Iran-Contra affair may give some further hope here. When Vaclav Havel was elected Czech

president in 1989, there was a prevailing sense that truth at last would prevail. Under communism, many had to live a double life, telling necessary lies to survive. Havel's New Year's Day broadcast in 1990 commented on this 'contaminated moral environment' in a memorable and uplifting speech:

'My dear fellow citizens, for forty years you heard from my predecessors on this day different variations of the same theme: how our country flourished, how many million tons of steel we produced, how happy we all were, how we trusted our government, and what bright perspectives were unfolding in front of us. I assume you did not propose me for this office so that I, too, would lie to you ...

The worst thing is that we live in a contaminated moral environment. We fell morally ill because we became used to saying something different, not to believe in anything, to ignore each other, to care only about ourselves ...'

When will the type of politics practised with such enthusiasm by Mr Richardson and his mates cease to become just a game for those who seem to hold such values in contempt? When will we be able, with confidence, to encourage our best young people to consider this profession? When will a Havel emerge again to put to shame such pretenders?

James Rodgers
Lane Cove, NSW

Sell-off a sell-out

From R.W. Carroll

This lemming rush towards the sea cliffs of privatisation of utilities seems to be proceeding as if its benefits are a 'given' in the same way that economic rationalism was adopted. The jury still has not reached a verdict but it may yet be decided that the cure is worse than the illness or at least, that the wrong medicine was given, or that the dosage was wrong.

Be that as it may, our masters are not answering known resulting deficits that the policy has caused, such as the price and quality of water supply in Britain. Dare one suggest that the cost of implementing and enforcing safeguards in these regards would exceed any possible savings.

Corporatisation, so that financial results can be easily measured, and the results of mismanagement sheeted home, would seem preferable, except

that this course makes it easier for governments to impose additional taxation in the form of so-called 'dividends' necessitating higher charges for services.

John Legge (*The Age*, 18 August 1994) analyses shortcomings on the technical side of the proposed break up of the State Electricity Commission of Victoria, but he does not consider the fact that two or more levels of profit margin will be included in our power bills. The same will apply to water. Presumably Governments will extract high prices for the sale of these

GOOD LORD! A CHRISTMAS CARD THAT ISN'T MADE OUT OF RECYCLED PAPER, AND DOESN'T SUPPORT A THIRD WORLD CHARITY!



monopolies ostensibly to reduce State debt, but the real result is that citizens will be paying more through their utility bills to provide for private provider company return on capital and profit margin. It is merely a sleight of hand hire-purchase and we all know how expensive that is.

Perhaps some possible motives for privatisation could be explored. It could be said, with some justification, that labor unions have too tight a grip on utilities. Would it be loosened or would private owners be softer union targets?

Could these companies be a source of well-paid sinecures for 'mates' or even ex-politicians, heaven forbid! Or is it just possible that these characters actually believe their own rhetoric?

R.W. Carroll
Shoreham, VIC

Cape of doubtful hope

CAPE TOWN HAS ALWAYS had a reputation for agreeableness. Part of it has been PR, first evident when the King of Portugal traded in the name 'Cape of Storms' for the more auspicious Cape of Good Hope. This endorsed his aspiration of finding the elusive new route to the Indies; but in other, more specifically local, ways the name appeared well-chosen.

Nature had endowed this jagged peninsula with hundreds of wildflowers found nowhere else; and travellers who put in at the 'Tavern of the Seas', as the infant city cradled by Table Mountain soon became known, would marvel at its beauty and, perhaps, be soothed by the cooings of the Cape turtle dove. Earlier this century, old whitewashed buildings from the Dutch period were still plentiful. Within living memory, it was possible to leave your ship and walk up the main street, past Parliament House where Queen Victoria extended an unscathed hand, and on through the oaks of the Avenue to reach the Mount Nelson Hotel, Cape Town's equivalent of the Windsor.

Today Cape Town feels quite different. Extensive land reclamation thirty years ago brought into being a whole new quarter of office blocks, and the continuation of the main street enabled the Nationalists to recycle its old Dutch name, the Heerengracht. In the '70s and '80s the office blocks marched northwards, destroying



much of the fabric of the old city. Then arrived the mall, pedestrianising—in both senses—one of the main streets. Coffee shops and souvenir shops are there in force, along with pavement stalls and street vendors.

Meanwhile a massive redevelopment of the old docks has occurred, turning them into a high-class Darling Harbour, with quality shops, restaurants, cinemas and a theatre. Victoria and Alfred it is called, after the Queen and her sailor son. (No one seems troubled by the hint of incest.) This postmodern fantasy seems to cater largely for tourists and wealthier Capetonians: Coloureds and blacks are scarcely in evidence.

Quite otherwise is Long Street, which leads out of the city proper to the south. Long Street used to be scruffy and down-at-heel: when browsing in a junk shop there in the '60s, I witnessed an African being attacked by others with steel rods. Today the junk shops have gone, replaced by second-hand book shops and a few upmarket antiqueries. In one of these I met an Afrikaner who despaired of understanding his own people and who, after a 10-year absence, found it impossible to renew his friendships with Coloureds. Apartheid had then bitten too deep.

Further along, when I ventured my dislike of the new central city to another shopkeeper, he snorted 'Calcutta by the sea!' As far as he was concerned, Coloured and African street vendors were ruining the place. When I gently suggested that the recent changes had been overdue, he disagreed: 'The people are just the same. It was fomented from outside.' Prod a white South African and politics always dribble out.

In an art deco building also in Long Street will be found the activists of ABIGALE, the Association of Bisexuals, Gays and Lesbians. The

legacy of apartheid has given a peculiar twist to radical sexual politics. Traditionally excluded from many venues—and from white, middle-class gay organisations—Coloureds and blacks decided to form a new one. They have some 300 people on their books, but only five per cent of them are white. Multiracialism—expressed as multiculturalism—may be the mood of the moment in South Africa, but it still has a long way to go. ABIGALE even had to persuade the AIDS education unit to broaden its constituency and go and work in the black townships.



Mandela was swept to power in April, but in Cape Town there has been little evidence of change since my last visit in January. Queen Victoria is still there, outside Parliament; having survived the Afrikaner regime, she will probably last forever. More surprising is the way the big picture of P.W. Botha's cabinet is still there too, in the building he constructed for his tricameral legislature. Only Verwoerd, the high priest of apartheid, seems on the way to being extirpated: a statue was toppled in Bloemfontein, and some

Cape Town government offices have been renamed.

APARTHEID HAS GONE from the trains, of course; but in its place are first-class and third-class tickets, sold from the old racially-categorised windows. Once in a while a white male pensioner will

be seen buying a third-class ticket, and some blacks and Coloureds frequently travel first-class. But all this amounts to a softening of the old order, rather than its replacement.

A good many whites still impute too much to the glow arising from their having yielded power with good grace—some are surprised when you suggest that further changes, real and symbolic, must be made. But, as Nelson Mandela wrote in the preamble to the recently-released draft Reconstruction Development Plan: 'Our people have elected us because they want change. Change is what they will get.' The government is committed to reducing the national debt and to scaling down the public service, so development for blacks will depend on a redeployment of existing resources. Whites have been promised that there will be no further tax rises, but now that black townships and white areas have been amalgamated there will be some dramatic shifts in spending.

Many white South Africans have perhaps not paid as much attention to these harbingers of change as they should have done. But then, they always tended to take things at a gentle pace. In many respects South Africa is still an old-fashioned country. Religion remains an important part of national life—most Africans profess some variety of Christianity—and the press duly noted how the South African Broadcasting Corporation was reallocating its 'Godslots'. Many whites dress very plainly; the men, despite the hot climate, generally regard hats as an affectation, and wearing one singles you out as a tourist. Many people smoke, or have 'pudding' with their meals. But this is also a country of residual sternnesses. Fathers can make arbitrary wills, and go unchallenged; condoms in jails are unthinkable.

The very accent of English South Africa upholds an old order, its fractured Edwardianism eliciting the genteel from women and a kind of verbal strut from the men. But this, at least, is now changing. The young, probably because of the influence of television, are as fluent in hoon-speak as their contemporaries anywhere: the use 'she goes' and 'he

goes' to mean 'she says' and 'he says' is as common in Grahamstown as in Geelong. And even the old circumlocution 'bioscope' is now giving way to 'movies'. In contemporary popular culture, the appeal of ancestral England—still very much there for older generations—is being displaced by the glitter of America.



One change that has already occurred is the appearance of white beggars. There are not many, but with the government's implementation of affirmative action there are bound to be more. The system no longer cossets feckless whites, as it used to do with

job reservation, which effectively excluded blacks and Coloureds from competing for desirable jobs. Older white South Africans—particularly if they live in the towns, unchallenged by the day-to-day practicalities of rural existence—often strike one as ineffectual, too accustomed to having everything done for them.

Encountering the retirees who ran a commendable charity to relieve distress in the black townships, I was struck by how easily they were flummoxed. A request for a receipt for books bought threw a couple of them into a flap; I ended up writing it myself. Then they had no idea as to whether the Post Office sold packages or not—my ringing up to find out was a radical departure. Meanwhile a woman continued to demonstrate her helpfulness by fetching cartons that were three-quarters complete. Compared with this, the young are relatively resourceful. A group hanging about a suburban caravan park hassle passersby for money, and—being hip—try to sell key rings bearing the new South African flag.

There has been a steady increase in crime rates during the past few years. Proportionally, many more people were murdered in South

Africa during the first eight months of this year than in Russia or the United States. Recently a man was stabbed to death in the short distance that lay between his car and the concert he was attending in the Town Hall. People find it expedient to give young boys the money they ask for when parking their cars, because if they don't, there's a good chance they will return to the cars to find them scratched or the tyres slashed. Most people seem to have stories of thefts, burglaries or muggings.

SOME SAY THERE HAS BEEN a mood shift since the beginning of the year, and perhaps there has. Everyone knows that a nasty civil war was narrowly averted, and most people realise that if the new South Africa is going to succeed, then it is up to everybody to make it do so. What is striking now is the old-fashioned courtesy people often extend to each other. 'Pleasure', someone—of whatever community—will say when you thank them for information over the phone.

Given the relative brusqueness of Australians in similar situations, this led me to ponder the differences between multiculturalism in the two

countries. In Australia, the recognition of diversity has been encouraged in order to ease the acceptance of migrants by the majority community; up to a point, this legitimates segmentation. But apartheid gave South Africans a gutful of any kind of separatism, and energy



now flows from a coming together. Again, nearly all the cultures of South Africa draw confidence from being basic elements in the configuration of the country (except perhaps newer communities, such as the Portuguese). So to an Australian eye South Africa seems to be exemplifying

cross-culturalism, rather than multiculturalism as we understand it.

Nowhere is this plainer than when watching the South African Parliament in session. It is an extraordinary assembly: one or two Cape Malays in their white caps, dignified Zulu men with knobble, polished ebony faces, Natal Indians, African women dressed flamboyantly in contemporary style and brilliant colours, together with a swathe of Afrikaner Nationalists, capped by the shock of white hair of General Constand Viljoen, a (respected) emissary of the right, rigidly sitting there in a state of coiled alertness.

YOU REACH FOR A HANDSET to translate when people are speaking in Afrikaans, as many whites do, or in any of the African languages. The instant translations are not always available, but since people are entitled to speak in any of the 11 official languages such hitches are inevitable. South Africa is run by a 'government of national unity', which includes Nationalists as well

as the ANC, but this does not prevent keen point-scoring in debating. A former Education Minister, Piet Marais, asked some questions of the present minister, Sibusiso Bengu, about the lack of clear planning (a fair question, one gathers); he was immediately countered by a reference to the iniquitous legacy of the former regime, to applause from the ANC benches.

In a trice the Speaker, magisterial in her blue sari, called the house to order. A tight rein has to be kept on proceedings, as the past is covered by very thin ice indeed. 'We are still in a pathological state in this country', said an old friend, explaining arson attacks and resenting the way the Nationalists are hell-bent on repackaging themselves as the one true non-racial party. It is all still there, just beneath the surface. During a debate on correctional services, an ANC member recalled her prison experiences, and broke down.

Although Parliament sits in Cape Town (as it has done habitually, the country otherwise being administered from Pretoria), there is a certain irony about this now since the Cape, once seen as the bastion of liberalism, in April elected the only white provincial government in the whole country. (The new flag is not a common sight here—most of the masts in Adderley Street are bare.) The provisional government is led by former National party strongman Hennis Kriel, and was returned because of the Coloured vote. A friend of mine out shopping was astounded to hear a young Coloured behind the counter shout to another, on the morning the results came in, 'We've won!' 'What!', she said, 'After all the Nats have done to you people!' The young man replied that all that had nothing to do with him.

What's past is past. What remains

real for the Coloureds, as for right-wing Afrikaners, is the *swart gevaar*, the danger from the blacks. Others, too, are flocking to the Cape for that very reason: it has always been a place of retirement, but now those executives who can move about are beginning to settle there, pushing up land prices. (Cape Town already has the highest inflation in the country, and the world's twitchiest taxi meters.)

It's not surprising that there should be an undercurrent of tension in Cape Town, and that it should spasmodically erupt. In the one week I was there late in October, Pan-Africanist Congress student activists greeted the murderers of the idealistic young American Amy Biehl with cries of 'One settler, one bullet!'; the University of Cape Town was trashed by striking support staff; and 10 people were killed in the continuing taxi wars, shots being exchanged between rival taxi groups in Cape Town's main street.

A few days before, there had been a march by the Municipal Workers' Union. A group broke away and headed for the Civic Centre, where they began taunting the police and their dogs. Soon they forced the police to beat a retreat, then began throwing things. Warning shots were fired and had no effect, so the police fired into the crowd. At least these days the bullets are made of rubber, so no one was killed. Tear gas could have been used to disperse the rioters, but otherwise the police response was graduated, complete with an order to stop firing. The police have a difficult role in the new South Africa: they are being killed at an alarming rate, and some have suicided. At this demonstration matters were further confused when a police dog turned round and bit his master.

THE MUNICIPAL WORKERS were striking against plans for privatisation and job retrenchment: national goals now, apart from being a particular tug-of-war in the Western Cape between the Nationalists and the ANC, as the ANC says that facilities in the province are well above the national average. Managerialism and supply-



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Take a letter, please

SEVERAL OF ARCHIMEDES' FRIENDS believe in a kind of reverse evolution—as technology evolves, people lose their skills. They argue, for instance, that television has been responsible for a demise in reading and conversation, that recorded music has taken the place of music making and that the telephone has stifled the art of writing letters. Reverse evolution or not, the only thing about which Archimedes is sure is that technology regularly makes monkeys out of most who try to predict its course.

Take letter writing. A decade ago, it seemed self-evident that the telephone would triumph over the postal system. Why go to all the effort of writing a letter, putting it into an envelope, finding a stamp, and trudging down to the local letterbox, when you can lift the telephone receiver and be talking to your correspondent within seconds?

But therein lies a paradox. Because, far from making letter writing redundant, technology has led to its rebirth as probably the fastest growing form of communication in the world. We just call it by a different name—electronic mail, or e-mail, which allows one to write and store a letter on computer. That electronic message can then be sent through the international telephone system to another computer, which will hold it for collection. To collect e-mail, the recipient merely connects to the computer by telephone and asks to see any incoming messages.

But knowing how e-mail works does not explain why it has become so popular. Despite the excited boosterism of addicted users, one would have suspected e-mail was devoid of the best features of both telephone and mail—it does not give users the immediacy of a telephone conversation or the solidity and permanency of a letter. At least that's what Archimedes thought until driven to use e-mail to keep in touch with a globetrotting spouse.

Hidden and unforeseen advantages of e-mail began to reveal themselves. For a start, e-mail tames the time zone. Archimedes finds international phone calls fundamentally unsatisfying. It is because the people on either end of the phone are on different time schedules. There is never a convenient time to ring. If you ring in the midst of the morning hustle to get to work, chances are the person at the other has just put the cares of the world away and settled down with an evening drink. Under these conditions communication becomes stilted and irritable. Each is forced to face family or business issues at a time which is inappropriate psychologically.

E-mail avoids that. It allows you to communicate on your own terms. You can choose when in the day you want to think about a particular issue. The message you send arrives almost instantaneously and awaits an answer, without intruding at the wrong time. What's more, putting what you have to say in writing means you have to think about it more, and distil the essence. It also means you can build your message slowly, as ideas come to you.

Although e-mail is not free (except to those subsidised by their employers, such as academics), it is a cheap form of communication—cheaper than telephone and even mail. That gives scope to use it for triviality as well as weighty matters of policy. It also means there is no financial pressure to write more than a few lines at a time.

Finally, e-mail is a footpath that leads gently to the 'information superhighway'. Once you can navigate through the gateways and connections involved in communication by e-mail, you are ready to reach out and grasp information from anywhere in the world. And as you do so, you will discover a cyber world of letter writing—not letter writing as a 19th century craft, but letter writing in the language of the 21st century. There are strange messages posted on bulletin boards, scientific and literary journals that only exist in electronic form, and conferences or even games of chess that you can tap into. This column is just about to be sent off via e-mail, too, saving Archimedes a hair-raising duel with the Melbourne traffic.

In fact, the only thing dead about letter writing is the pronouncement of its demise. But that is nothing new. One of Archimedes' favourite pastimes is to read predictions from a decade or more ago. Rarely are they uncanny, often they are hysterical. ■

Tim Thwaites is a freelance science writer.

side economics can be and are being paraded as another form of libertarianism. 'Create jobs, end restrictions', says a large billboard near Newlands station. 'Stop unfair tobacco legislation. We want freedom of commercial speech.'

Managerialism, with its heartless capacity to reduce everything to itself, could do untold damage in South Africa. Years ago, when visiting a farm in the Eastern Cape, I was astonished by the primitive dairy: 20 cows were being milked by hand. It was soon explained to me that

mechanisation had not taken place because if it had, 18 people would be out of work. Given South Africa's current economic problems, and the contagion of this distemper of the right, managerialism in the name of efficiency could push unemployment levels even higher



than the current 40 per cent.

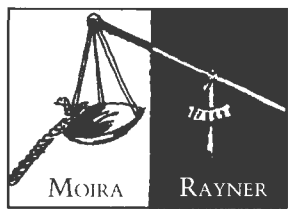
The one bright light is that privatisation might mean empowerment of Africans. If that starts to happen, as surely it must, then many whites will begin to feel even more cast aside than they do today. ■

Jim Davidson teaches humanities at the Victoria University of Technology. His *Lyrebird Rising*, a study of Louise Hanson-Dyer of L'Oiseau Lyre, won the Victorian Premier's Literary Award for non-fiction for 1994.

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If you, or someone you know, could benefit from confidential professional counselling, please phone Martin Prescott, BSW, MSW, MAASW, clinical member of the Association of Catholic Psychotherapists. Individuals, couples and families catered for.

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Bearing the burdens of proof

TWO WORDS SEEM TO STRIKE FEAR into the hearts of men, even unto the vitals of lumberjacks and bouncers: 'sexual harassment'. Or so it would seem. Some of my friends—New Age men, practitioners of the law and even of politics—have expressed a kind of fellow-feeling for Terry Griffiths, who protested that he had been the victim of a Star Chamber inquiry into complaints that he sexually harassed his staff. My friends are uncertain about the duty to be fair to an accused, while also being responsive to the alleged victim's complaint.

In the public interest I offer a circuit breaker. Men do, often enough, genuinely misread women's friendliness as 'come ons', which is significant when sexual harassment is defined as an 'unwelcome' sexual advance, an 'unwelcome' request for sexual favours or 'unwelcome' conduct of a sexual nature. But harassment is not a sexual crime. Old-fashioned gentlemen need not be worried. Courtesy, or even condescending behaviour, including compliments about dress or jewellery (though not about someone's body) are not sexual harassment. If in doubt, consider the etymology of the word. 'Harassment' comes from an Old French word for hunting hounds pulling down a wounded quarry. Essentially, sexual harassment is bullying of a sexual nature. There are at least three levels of work-based harassment, all of which require different responses. The worst is the most obvious and statistically the least complained about: blackmail, i.e. an implied threat about the consequences to someone of not granting sexual favours.

At the other extreme is what one might call 'gender harassment', where the environment is sexually hostile or unsettling or heated, with (for instance) displays of pictures of women as objects of sexual fantasy, a culture of sexually suggestive jokes or derogatory remarks about women (or gay men, a growing class of complainants). Its principal danger lies in its desensitising effect. Whether or not a formal complaint is lodged, if left unchecked it almost always escalates. In a recent case in WA, the first women to be employed on a construction site asked for porn posters to be removed. In response they got hardcore porn depicting bestiality and sodomy, toilet graffiti and threats. But after they left and made formal complaints they also got \$95,000 in damages from the union that, like the employer, hadn't bothered to protect them.

Right in the middle is the so-called 'grey area' that is personally directed: uninvited physical contact, such as touching, stroking or standing too close, or the making of personal remarks, practical jokes and inappropriate social conduct. This requires clear codes of conduct.

But why have a law at all? Why don't women just tell men to stop offensive behaviour? Well, as the WA case shows, they usually won't stop. It is also hard to do this, precisely because the harassers are either numerically, or hierarchically, superior, and it is close to impossible if it's their boss or supervisor. Besides, the usual response is to trivialise or personalise the complaint and attack the complainant's work record, personality or sense of humour, or bluster about defamation.

The duty not to discriminate is an integral part of the new federal industrial relations law, which has also imposed 'due process' requirements on dismissals procedures. On the other hand, courts have started to award signifi-

cant, punitive damages against employers for proven sexual harassment. Law firm Baker and McKenzie was slapped with \$US7.2 million in (mostly punitive) damages for failing to prevent, or act appropriately upon the complaint of the sexual harassment of a secretary by a former partner (punitive damages are not recoverable under most professional liability insurance policies) mostly because a jury was unimpressed by a history of women's complaints against the same man, which the firm had not taken seriously, or by some disdainful evidence from the partners. Two years ago, the Tasmanian Supreme Court awarded partly punitive damages against the Hobart City Council for its failing to respond appropriately to a young woman's complaints of assault and deprivation of liberty: the total award and the costs must have come close to \$A1 million in total.

Most harassment complaints are dealt with through conciliation, and settled. However, damages awards are a kind of Zen stick, which the Master applies unexpectedly to the person of a drifting meditator. It makes a lot of noise and doesn't do any damage, but it sure focuses attention.

Griffiths' case is another big *Schtick*. We can expect more, from women who have been forced to tolerate harassment as an informal condition of employment, in indirect discrimination complaints. Failure to develop policies and training might well be 'wilful and contumacious disregard' by employers of workers' rights which is what leads to punitive damages awards. The message is clear. Griffiths was not denied a hearing. He knew, and responded to, every allegation. He did not have a public rape trial, the threat of which would certainly have deterred any complaints being made at all. It was John Fahey's political decision to stand him down from the portfolio. Greater men than he have suffered similar indignity. Anyway, sometimes a choice has to be made between formal proceedings and stopping a potentially dangerous practice. Would we tolerate 'hearings' before removing a driver whose workmates said he had been 'teasing' them by goosing them with his forklift, from behind its controls?

Finally, are formal complaints appropriate for dealing with sexual harassment by superpowerful men? Probably not. Relatively few self-identified victims of harassment, especially of the most serious kind, make formal complaints. They fear, rightly, the informal repercussions, notably publicity and blame. If Griffiths' victims had made formal complaints to the Anti-Discrimination Board, they could only have been offered conciliation. This would almost certainly have got nowhere, and they would not have taken the option of a public hearing.

Any employer who does not have a clear harassment policy, education and grievance process is endangering staff and running avoidable risks. A complaint can be dealt with by general training, individual counselling, internal informal procedures, or internal formal procedures with disciplinary or dismissal possibilities (when 'natural justice' is essential) or by going to outside bodies. When the bully is the boss it's difficult to see any way in which a worker could stop harassment without resigning, unless there is a champion for their right to be safe at work. John Fahey did it for Griffiths' staffers. Who does it for all the others? ■

Moir

Half a story tells no story at all

The Australian media sometimes portray the war on Bougainville as a conflict between heroic resistance fighters and an oppressive government in Port Moresby. James Griffin argues that those better acquainted with Bougainville would see it differently.

REPORTING ON THE WAR in Bougainville continues to be unbalanced and uninformed.

The last item in this year's final session of the ABC's *Foreign Correspondent* was a report by a venturesome journalist, Wayne Cole, hitherto unheard of as an authority on the South-West Pacific. To be fair, we were told that the viewpoint was solely that of the rebels and supporters of the Bougainville Revolutionary Army, but, uncontested as it was, what is the ordinary viewer to think? Such a disclaimer hardly compensates for yet another tear-jerking plea for the rebel cause without any balancing perspective, not just from Port Moresby but from those Bougainvilleans who oppose the BRA. And they are almost surely the majority. From what was said—that the PNG army violated the recent ceasefire and prevented attendance at the recent peace conference in Arawa—it was difficult to believe that some previously hardcore guerrillas turned up and remained unscathed.

Moreover, several local leaders came out of the central redoubt where the most recalcitrant rebels have dug in during the past six years. In particular, a certain Theo Miriung emerged, an ex-seminarian, lawyer and former acting Supreme Court judge, and a longtime adviser to the BRA leadership. Known to me personally over 25 years as a man of keen intelligence and integrity, Miriung chose to suffer for secessionism with his own people during the blockade but now realises that peace and rehabilitation should supersede, at least temporarily, full sovereignty as goals.

Yet in *Foreign Correspondent* Joseph Kabui, former premier and now billed as a deputy leader of the interim government, could say that 'any sensible person would be scared to go the conference.' Certainly the PNG troops can be ill-disciplined and unpredictable and the rebels had cause to be wary, but their ultimate failure to make any gesture of cooperation in the peace process is due more to their convictions that intransigence will bring victory, that the PNG government is in dire financial straits and cannot maintain forces indefinitely, and (correctly) that another sympathetic Mamaloni government would soon be re-elected in the Solomon Islands.

While Cole's report presented the burning of villages and infrastructure by PNG troops, it overlooked the fact that the greater part of destruction was the work of the BRA. Atrocities against individuals have been notorious on both sides. It is a pity that Cole did not interview some ex-BRA supporters such as Nick Peniai and Misac Rangai of South Bougainville, men who were marked for execution along with former MP, Anthony Anugu, in 1992.

Cole also did not make it clear that officially the blockade of Bougainville has been lifted and that areas released from BRA control have been getting sup-

plies since 1991. When the PNG government sent the supply ship *Cosmaris* into Central Bougainville in January 1992, it was burnt to the water by the BRA. So much for their cooperation. Schooling has long recommenced in a rudimentary way in areas freed of BRA.

The revolutionary government president, Francis Ona, was particularly concerned to blame Australia

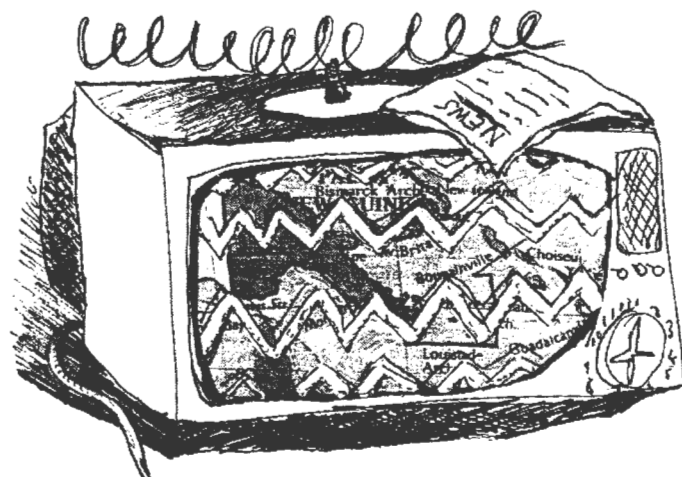
for fighting a war against the Bougainville people which Port Moresby alone cannot win. It is true that one can hardly expect Ona to see Australia as being obliged to honour an obligation to support a state it helped to create, but it should not be beyond media observers. If PNG

were to be assaulted on its western flank, one can imagine the cry that would go up to 'support' Port Moresby.

The sad fact is that this is not just a war between Port Moresby and elements in Bougainville but a civil war among Bougainvilleans themselves. So, even if there were a convincing case for secession, the government of the breakaway province could not be handed over to those with guns to use against fellow Bougainvilleans. While Chan's peace initiative failed to get the response it needed from the BRA, the emergence of Miriung and others represents a breach in the hardcore BRA which should be widened. Chan can do this by making it clear that he will restore provincial government as soon as possible and give it control over the copper mine and other resources. An amnesty will also have to be worked out and some future constitutional convention foreshadowed where degrees of autonomy can be canvassed. Chan has already made some gestures in this direction and progress can be expected within 12 months.

Meanwhile, *Foreign Correspondent's* convenor, George Negus could plan an opening 1995 session with some balanced opinions on what constitutes a right to secede and what legitimacy the BRA has to talk for its fellow Bougainvilleans. ■

James Griffin is Professor Emeritus of History, University of Papua New Guinea. He has been writing about Bougainville for 25 years. He lived in PNG from 1968-76, 1981-84, 1986-90, and has visited Bougainville 30 times.



‘Even if there were to be aggressive investment in native-forest industries, there is no hard evidence that these industries could be competitive in the world markets opening up in the next five to ten years. Demand for forest products is increasing in the economies of the Asian ‘tigers’, but so are the sources of raw material available to them. Since the break-up of the Soviet Union, for example, a cash-strapped Russia has been selling its native forest at a prodigious rate to the same customers that Australia needs to attract. Japan’s demand for pulp or chips from Australian native forests may be in doubt if a \$1.4 billion project to exploit Siberia’s untouched forests goes ahead, and South Korea’s second biggest industrial group, Hyundai, has been logging in Siberia since 1989.’

Spitting chips

‘GREENIES ARE UNREALISTIC TREE-KISSERS who want to halt an important resource business. Some of them will even resort to sabotage to get what they want.’

That kind of rhetoric is familiar enough in forest-industry circles. What is wrong with it is not only the crazy hyperbole, but the fact that it ignores real points of agreement between conservationists and the industry. Both sides, for example, accept that wood-chipping will always be necessary—it provides too many essential items to think of doing away with it.

The real disagreement is over the source and type of raw material, and whether Australia’s woodchip exports will be able to compete with the vast eucalypt and pine plantations in Brazil, Chile, China, Indonesia, New Zealand, Spain and Thailand that will be in production before the end of the decade. When that happens the higher-quality plantation chips will flood the world, creating a buyer’s market. For some economists, the real issues are about timing.

There is reason to believe that investment in Australian plantations has been hindered because the forest departments in most states effectively subsidise logging of native forests. (Consulting economist Francis Grey has identified 23 types of effective subsidy from recent state and federal government commissions, inquiries and reports.)

When rural Labor backbencher Peter Cleeland was shown a secretly filmed video of high-quality logs

being fraudulently downgraded to end up as woodchips, he was told that this was only the tip of an iceberg of rorts and inefficiencies. The industry’s response was that the practice was not widespread, and that offending companies should lose their licences. But that penalty has rarely, if ever, been applied. And some economists and many conservationists warn that the logging of native forests, with or without rorts, has fundamental economic flaws.

One of the most serious of these flaws is the incompatibility between native forest logging and efficient water catchment management. A hectare of old-growth mountain ash, clear-felled, may produce \$270 worth of woodchips, once. A generation later it may produce half as much (regrowth is sparser, drier and more fire-prone).

According to Read, Sturgess and Associates, consulting economists commissioned by the Victorian government, if that same hectare is left unlogged it produces more than \$6000 worth of water, year after year. After logging there is a significant long-term decrease in the amount and quality of water produced. Logged catchments are subject to more intense variation of rainfall—floods in winter, droughts in summer—which sometimes has to be fixed by building a dam, costing the economy even more. Contamination of the source is also an issue, one well known to the inhabitants of Phillip Island, with its single pipeline drawn from a logged and grazed mainland catchment





that is subject to eutrophication (see glossary), and therefore to blooms of blue-green algae.

Logging companies say they cannot afford to lose the native forest as a resource. No wonder, say the conservationists: the combination of risibly low royalties to the taxpayer and log-grading rorts make it very unlikely that the timber companies would want to leave the native forests for quite some time. They also say that if Australia fails to make the transfer to plantation timber now, or at least within the next couple of years, the inevitable transition to a plantation-based industry will be much more disruptive—to jobs and to production—than it needs to be.

Francis Grey says that native-forest harvesting is losing money for the taxpayers. The product is still being sold, but agro-forestry and timber plantations have been sidelined and jobs are disappearing. The main reason for the decline of jobs in forest industry has been an increase in automation, but it is easy to understand the resentment of unemployed timber workers who believe that the environmental lobby is to blame.

AT PRESENT, SOUTH AUSTRALIA is the only state that does not log any native forest. Its plantations are almost exclusively softwoods logged on a 'sustained

yield' basis, which the South Australian Woods and Forests Department defines as 'the level at which timber can be harvested without reducing future yields while providing for the long-term conservation and maintenance of other forest values.'

By contrast, Victoria's Department of Conservation and Natural Resources admits in its *Forest Management Strategy for East Gippsland* that native forest logging in the area is not yet sustainable. But it is claimed to be necessary because business and employment in East Gippsland, especially near Orbost, depend on logging. There is a proposal for a large pulp mill in the area, but if the pulp mill is built Daishowa would close its woodchip mill at Eden in southern NSW. Almost as many jobs would be lost at Eden as would be gained in East Gippsland.

Pulp mills are expensive to build, costing up to \$2 billion, and are considered by bankers to be a very low-return investment even under ideal conditions. And Australia has much higher chemical costs than, say, the US, which has the world's biggest pulp industry. Overseas pulp producers tend to have cheaper finance and running costs, and bankers have been nervous about loans for Australian pulp mills ever since the mill proposed for Wesley Vale in Tasmania was defeated by determined environmental

Young native logs being trucked out of East Gippsland.

Photograph: Bill Thomas.



Glossary

Bequest value: the value the current generation obtains from preserving the environment for future generations.

Clear-felling: the removal of all trees on a specified cutting area. Modified clear-felling involves the removal of only some of the stand: trees are retained for environmental protection or conservation reasons.

Conservation: the management of human use of the biosphere so that it may yield the greatest sustainable benefit to present generations, while maintaining its potential to meet the needs and aspirations of future generations.

Contingent valuation: a technique for valuing non-market uses of a natural resource, whereby people are directly asked, by means of carefully prepared surveys, what they are willing to pay for a benefit and/or what they are willing to receive in compensation to tolerate a cost.

Ecologically mature forests: stands of trees approaching the limit of their life span. These stands are often either not or only slowly increasing in biomass and they usually support a high diversity of plant growth forms as well as a high diversity of plant and animal species.

Eutrophication: the over-enrichment of a body of water with nutrients, (such as fertiliser run-off) resulting in excessive growth of organisms and depletion of oxygen concentration.

Existence value: the value obtained from the knowledge that an asset such as an environmental amenity exists. Includes benefits from knowing that culturally important resources are protected.

Externalities: the imposition of costs or benefits on another producer or consumer, for which no market transaction occurs; for example, cost of a water-treatment plant to deal with eutrophication, or value of crop damage caused by downstream salinisation.

Forest management agencies: departments, commissions or services charged with the responsibility for managing publicly owned forested land primarily for wood production.

Hardwood: timber from broad-leaved, flowering trees irrespective of physical hardness. Includes eucalypts, wattles and most rainforest species. Predominant uses include sawn timber, fine paper and railway sleeper production. (Softwoods are coniferous trees irrespective of physical hardness.)

Kraft: a chemical pulping process that can successfully pulp most species. The essential chemicals used are sodium hydroxide and sodium sulphide. [It produces] strong unbleached pulp. (The bleach used is usually chlorine-based, which reacts with the pulp to create highly toxic dioxins.)

Native forest: forest of Australian species, growing on land that has never been cleared for agricultural purposes. It may be re-growth forest or old growth forest.

Old-growth forest: biodiverse forest that has had little or no interference from fire or logging. (see ecologically mature forest).

Taiga: Coniferous forests of the Siberian wilderness, habitat of unique wildlife and repository of one-third of the world's carbon.

campaigning. So any attempt to build a new mill of world capacity in this country would be extremely costly, and the costs will materially increase through community opposition to the project.

Barry Traill, a forest campaigner for Environment Victoria, says: 'Green groups have made it clear that we are not against new pulp and paper mills. However, any new mills must have their raw materials sourced from sustainably managed plantations, and they must use the best available clean and green technology.' (Germany has banned the building of any more 'kraft' pulp mills. The kraft process is the commonest pulp technology, but the high sulphur content of its effluents contributes to acid rain.)

The main industry group, the National Association of Forest Industries, contends that old-growth native forests have to be logged to provide high-quality timber for engineering and joinery purposes, and that woodchipping is a useful sideline to the sawlog industry. But sawmills have mostly been retooled to cope with the smaller-diameter logs that come from plantations and younger native forests, and old growth is in fact more likely to be woodchipped. And most structures no longer depend on large single beams—most of the world uses trusses, and the large structural timber used in Australia usually comes from Douglas fir plantations in New Zealand. Nor are house frames as likely to use sawn timber as they were in the past: by next year, the steel industry expects to have 25 per cent of the house-framing market.

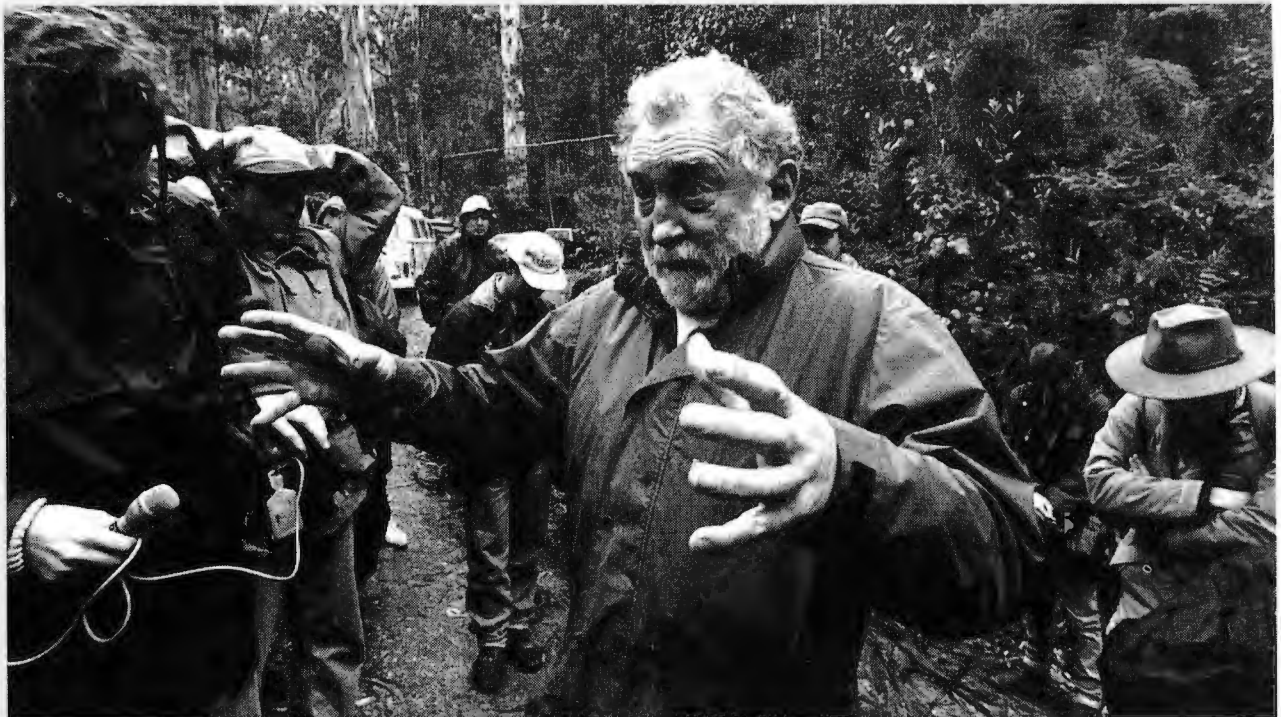
There has also been considerable progress in developing plantation products that can replace old-growth wood in structures and joinery. 'Valwood', developed by the Department of Conservation and Land Management in WA, is processed from 10-year-old plantation bluegum. It is a strong, attractive material capable of being made into high-quality furniture. 'Gluelam', another process using relatively small pieces of wood, is more suited to replace structural timber.

But there is still no clear strategy for creating an economically viable and environmentally feasible timber industry in Australia. 'Resource security' has been the industry catchcry, but it is increasingly apparent that the only really secure forest resources are plantations, whose development can be achieved without affecting areas such as water catchments, with what the Resources Assessment Commission calls 'externalities'.

Externalities include the depletion of 'bequest' and 'existence' values (see glossary), and it may cost the taxpayer a lot more to fix such problems than was earned by development of the resource. Community concerns about such issues shadow potential investment, creating what is known as 'sovereign risk'. The Industry Commission's report *Adding Further Value to Australia's Forest Products* (1993) noted that 'the Wesley Vale incident has added about half a

Continued p20

For whom the Bellamy tolls



Environmentalist David Bellamy during the East Gippsland expedition in November 1994. Photo: Bill Thomas.

What brought you to Australia?

Really, to learn a lot more about these amazing south-eastern forests, which I saw for the first time 18 years ago. But also to plead with your government to say 'no' to any more logging in this forest, which is of high conservation value. Because now we're beginning to look upon it not just as a thing of interest to botanists and conservationists but as an economic entity.

The fact is that if rain forest is logged, that turns the tap off 50 per cent of water that just doesn't go to the rivers any more. And then there's the fact that if you replace all this with regrowth forest you've got to put in fire breaks and look after it, whereas at the moment it looks after itself ... The more rainforest that disappears, the drier and drier [the land becomes]. So it must be conserved.

Is part of the problem the fact that the environment often gets a low profile in government? In Australia, for example, apart from Graham Richardson the portfolio usually hasn't gone to ministers with much clout in cabinet.

Well, take the United States of America. We all know Al Gore is a very good environmentalist, but has he really been able to get anything done? Probably quite a lot of the senators are held in power by the logging companies, by the water companies, and it really comes down to this, the common denominator of your investors.

I'm chairman of the Environmental Trustee Savings Bank, and I have 21 million pounds of other people's money invested in what we call environmentally sound [projects]. We go to meetings of shareholders and ask, 'Wouldn't you like to see an environmental and ethical side so you would be investing your money in a better future'. That's what we've got to find. You see, we haven't got to give up having things, but we've got to have a stock market which actually does realise that some of its profits have got to go into revitalising [the environment].

You've got a chance [with these forests]. As far as I understand, you, the taxpayers, are subsidising every ton of

woodchip that goes to Daishowa or one of these companies. Now why aren't these the banner headlines I see, and why don't I see these as stickers in the back of people's cars, saying 'Daishowa does away with jobs'?

I've never really understood why the green movement doesn't have a real big go at Japan. If we said [to the Japanese] 'We will not buy anything from you until you put your house in order,' they'd have to do something. Because they have one of the dodgiest economies in the world—they can't feed themselves, clothe themselves, house themselves; they depend on those raw materials around the world.

I would love to see a list of the Australian names who are making money out of woodchipping and somewhere, perhaps in Canberra, you could have a monument saying these are the bastards who took away the heritage of all Australians. Actually put on *that* the people who are making money, and the people of the government who haven't stood up.

The forest industry sponsors advertisements implying that logging native forest is sustainable. What would you like to say about the industry's definition of 'sustainable'?

They are talking about sustainable-yield logging, and it's only sustainable because they use ever more, ever greater areas, and as they are now finding in Canada and in the western USA, the second growth is about half what the first growth was and then they have to turn around and say 'well then we'll have to start managing it' ... you end up with the worst way of making a plantation. It's much better to go into degraded farmland—and by God there's plenty of that in Australia—and actually plant the right trees.

Economically, all [logging native forests] does is to keep fewer and fewer people in jobs. The thing I would love to know is, who are the people who make the money? Because somewhere, somebody must make enough money to think it's worth going on. I think deep down they do know they're doing the wrong thing, and they're handing that over to the future, a very degraded environment to Australia. ■

From p18

percentage point to the cost of capital for investment in Australian forestry projects or Tasmanian projects in general ...'

The commission also stated that the native hardwood industry was failing to maintain productive capacity. Its report quoted *Forest Use*, a 1991 government survey prepared by the Ecologically Sustainable Development Working Groups: 'In the present environment, the native hardwood industry in Australia is characterised by low levels of investment, minimal value-added processing, diminishing competitiveness and a failure to restructure.'

EVEN IF THERE WERE to be aggressive investment in native-forest industries, however, there is no hard evidence that these industries could be competitive in the world markets opening up in the next five to ten years. Demand for forest products is increasing in the economies of the Asian 'tigers', but so are the sources of raw material available to them. Since the break-up of the Soviet Union, for example, a cash-strapped Russia has been selling its native forest at a prodigious rate to the same customers that Australia needs to attract.

Japan's demand for pulp or chips from Australian native forests may be in doubt if a \$1.4 billion project to exploit Siberia's untouched forests goes

ahead, and South Korea's second biggest industrial group, Hyundai, has been logging in Siberia's Taiga forests since 1989. Hyundai has applied to increase its annual cut to a million cubic metres in the Sikhote Alin area of the forest, and has contracts for other areas as well.

So how are the problems of the native-forest industry being dealt with? In the states, government agencies whose job it is to balance the demands of industry with the requirements of conservation have often been compromised in this task by departmental restructuring. In WA and Victoria, for example, a single department now has responsibility for both conservation and the forest industry, and this has effectively resulted in the ascendancy of forestry agencies over conservation.

The costs of this have been apparent even in the lack of coordinated accounting procedures in Victoria's Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, as the Victorian Auditor-General's *Timber Strategy Audit* noted in 1993. The *Audit* reported that the department was effectively subsidising native forest operations, failing to prevent log-grading rorts and implicitly restricting new entrants to the industry: 'In the case of hardwood operations, the department reported a loss of \$13.2 million for 1990-1. However, due to limitations in its financial data, the department is unable to accurately assess the extent to which this loss represents a subsidy to industry, production inefficiencies or adverse market factors.' (emphasis as in the original)

Changes are under way, but the task is Herculean, costly and 80 years overdue. Nor is Victoria the only state with accounting problems in forestry—the Industry Commission reported that there was a nationwide problem with the underpricing of the resource: 'To the extent that logs are underpriced, the activities of the forest products industries are subsidised by taxpayers. Underpricing by forestry agencies also depresses the prices obtainable by private wood growers and, hence, discourages private sector investment in plantation and agro-forestry activities ... Inappropriate pricing of logs by government bodies can distort investment decisions by wood using industries and growers of private wood.'

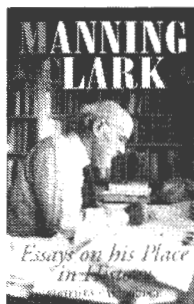
UNDER SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES it seems unreasonable to continue to insist that the cause of the industry's problems is the 'locking up' of native forest. In fact, current practices in federal and state agencies are more likely to 'lock up' plantation resources, with private owners waiting until it becomes cheaper to harvest from their own sources rather than native forest. The Commonwealth would do well to change illogical tax requirements that deter all but the most determined large-scale plantation investors.

Any serious attempt to address the economic issues facing the forest industry also needs to consider wider ranges of value, and in 1991 the Resources

MANNING CLARK

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Edited by
Carl Bridge



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Assessment Commission conducted two surveys to measure the industry's 'contingent', or non-market value' (see glossary). One survey calculated that if logging of native forest were to cease in southern NSW and East Gippsland, the immediate financial effect would be a loss of \$11 million in trade. A further \$32 million would need to be spent on 'adjustment assistance', making a total cost of \$43 million. That would amount to a nett lump sum payment of \$6.05 per adult living in NSW and Victoria, or alternatively, a continual annual payment of 43 cents.

The other survey measured the willingness of Australians to pay for the preservation of the National Estate forests in south-eastern Australia. The median willingness was estimated at \$43.50 per household per year, or \$22 per person per year. The samples were rigorously conducted and evaluated, with 5000 respondents drawn randomly from the Commonwealth electoral rolls in NSW, Victoria and ACT. The expected return was 50 per cent; the final valid response rate was slightly over that amount.

If, as the survey suggests, people are willing actually to lose money in order to keep the National Estate forests, then what might be the community support for a profitable, sustainable plantation industry that provides employment while protecting the native forest? And what might be the gains for tourism in such a buoyant atmosphere? In 1992, the Resources Assessment Commission's *Forest and Timber Inquiry* noted 'that innovative commercial approaches are required to generate more revenue from the use of parks and services, to support required management function and provide better services to the community, particularly in relation to ecological objectives.' (my emphasis)

The merits of park land and biodiversity may seem vague to an unemployed Orbest timber worker, but the bureaucratic wilderness may seem more of a threat to the small sawmiller who has been squeezed out of business, or to the desperate field worker whose reports are suppressed so that a different agenda may prevail.

With overseas demands for Australian woodchips likely to wane in the near future, and with community resentment at the loss of native forests unlikely to decrease, the time has come to make money by preserving unique Australian resources. The outcome could be a flourishing forest industry, supported by community attitudes, and unshadowed by sovereign risk. ■

Juliette Hughes is a *Eureka Street* staff writer.

ENNEAGRAM PERSONALITY TYPES

Workshops by Don Richard Riso
in Melbourne and Sydney, February 1995.

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(054) 41 6877

T Come buy with me

THERE'S PLENTY OF EVIDENCE that people think the recession is over. In Melbourne, every Saturday in the months leading up to Christmas, there are about 160 buses competing for parking space in the streets near inner-city factories. This impressive fleet is evidence of one of Melbourne's boom industries, the shopping tour. Having spent years looking for reasons to come to Melbourne, it seems that the rest of Australia has at last found one.

Rhonda O. Rust is the managing director of 'Shopping Spree Tours'. Recently she has had 47 buses, each with an average of 30 passengers, doing the rounds of the bargain outlets in one day. Her record is 53. The cost of the expedition is about \$30 and this includes lunch in a restaurant. The average shopper spends \$217 in the day. A driver for a rival company, Kevin Jarvis, says it's nothing for a busload to spend \$15,000 and utterly exhaust themselves in the process. They start at 8am and finish around 6pm, although by the last two or three outlets most passengers have to force themselves off the bus. 'But they usually make it,' he says, 'they think they might miss out on a bargain.'

What lies behind the phenomenon?

Rhonda Rust explains that many tours are organised as a fundraiser by clubs. The club gets about 8 per cent of what its members spend. The company also provides prizes to raffle on the bus and so on. But for committed shoppers, signing up for a tour off their own bat, the appeal is being able to spend up big and save money all at once. The brochures tell you that you will save your fare at the first outlet. At a place called Faulty Towels, a couple can be seen going through a bundle of towels which has been marked down to \$50 for the lot. They are wondering if they throw out the black towels in the bundle, which they abominate with enthusiasm, will they still be ahead? It appears they will. And somebody at work might score the 'disgusting' black ones for Christmas. A decision is made and the couple squeeze out to the door and trundle off to Newman's Chocolates, then Bollé sunglasses, then Siricco leather goods ...

'It's great,' says Kevin Jarvis, 'people can do their whole shopping for the year in one day. By the end of the tour, you can't move in the bus. People are literally jammed in with their shopping.'

Rhonda Rust has busloads booked from Adelaide and sells tickets in Brisbane. She has a special tour for Tasmanians. They can come overnight on the *Spirit of Tasmania*, shop all day, and go back on the ship the following night. From 1 February, she will be operating around Redfern and Alexandria in Sydney.

Is there a greed factor in this business? 'There certainly is', Rust says, 'there are too many people trying to get into the industry. There's some real cowboys out there. It's too competitive.'

David Crow is the general manager of Newman's Chocolates. He says that the outlets at one end of Church St, Richmond, can take 'several hundred thousand' in a day. He notes that residents are worried about noise, litter and parking problems. But the outlets are bringing money into the district.

'If you live in the inner city,' says Valerie Hockin, manager of Just Right Shopping Tours, 'you have to put up with inconveniences. I wouldn't live here if you paid me.'

Kevin Jarvis, a tour-bus driver, stresses the fun that people have. 'Some of the people on this bus were out with me two weeks ago. They're shopaholics. They should do the same thing for men. A tour of spare parts and hardware outlets. They'd love it.' ■

Michael McGirr SJ is the consulting editor of *Eureka Street*.

The law turns about-face on justice

AS WE HAVE LEARNED RECENTLY in *Janus*, the law has to do with wisdom. It is about analysing conflicting claims with intelligence and compassion, and resolving them elegantly. It is self-confident enough to welcome review. The other side of law has to do with will. It spurns elegance or wisdom, for these are superfluous when conflicts can be resolved by unfettered power. This face of law does not welcome review, because it gets in the way of the effective use of power.

In immigration legislation, generally both faces have been seen, but the face of power has more recently been visible. Two pieces of legislation recently before Parliament present the two faces of Janus: one must handle genuinely conflicting claims, while the other has to do with asserting executive power. The Migration Amendment Bill (No.4) 1994 attempts to deal with a real dilemma, arising from the arrival by boat of Vietnamese asylum seekers from Galang Camp in Indonesia. These boat people had been rejected in screening established under the Comprehensive Plan of Action (CPA), which has been supported by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees.

The CPA was introduced to cope with the frustration of nations like Hong Kong, Indonesia and Malaysia and Thailand to which the boat people had come. Because few were being accepted for resettlement, threats were made to push off new arrivals. The CPA ensured screening of the existing boat people, resettlement in developed countries of those found to be refugees, and the eventual repatriation to Vietnam of those rejected. It therefore offered a defined future for the boat people, and in the meantime guaranteed their temporary protection in the countries to which they had come. For all its faults, the CPA has provided some security and some definition to the future of the Vietnamese boat people. It is unlikely that a more generous policy of resettlement or of temporary protection will ever be offered.

Therein lies the dilemma for Australia. If people who have been rejected under the CPA can come to Australia and win a new assessment of their claims for refugee status, this will undermine the CPA. New and unrealistic hope will be offered to people whose only real future lies in Vietnam, and they will effectively submit themselves to screening by wind, storm and piracy. This consideration suggests that new assessment should be denied.

On the other hand, those who have participated in the processes of screening know that they are flawed. According to newspaper

reports, some asylum seekers have bought their refugee status. More importantly, however, many of those rejected have had good cases. Of the first 17 people to be interviewed in Australia, three were given refugee status at the first stage. This is the normal proportion for any group of onshore asylum seekers. It suggests, as lawyers working with the process already know, that in most countries the process yields very rough justice indeed.

These defects of the CPA suggest that Australia, whose policy is to judge each individual application for refugee status, should hear again the asylum seekers' applications: justice would seem to demand that they have the opportunity to make their claim by Australian standards of justice. The wise response in this difficult situation would be in principle to refuse to reassess people who have already been rejected under the CPA. The fact that they had the opportunity to apply for refugee status elsewhere, and the harm done to the Vietnamese asylum seekers as a whole would justify this step.

Given the serious flaws in CPA screening, however, asylum seekers should be entitled to an interview in which they could make their case for a fresh assessment of their case. To ensure transparency, that interview and decision should be made by the Refugee Review Tribunal.

The Government's response has been to recognise strongly the claims of the CPA, but to allow for some little flexibility in individual cases. Its legislation will prevent those assessed under the CPA from making a valid application in Australia for refugee status. The minister, however, has an overriding power to allow applications to be considered in the public interest, though he is not accountable if he declines to exercise that power.

Under the legislation, however, the Government has also taken on powers which do not bear on this problem. It will be authorised to make agreements with prescribed third countries, under which asylum seekers can be returned without having had their cases heard in Australia. 'Safe third countries' are defined as those where the asylum seekers have resided for a time or have the right of entry: the concept was born in Europe, where it appeared that asylum seekers were shopping around for the forum most favourable to their applications. In Australia, however, it poses a future dilemma.

On the one hand, it would be ethical to return asylum seekers only to countries

where human rights, and particularly the right of asylum seekers to protection, are recognised effectively in law. Otherwise, Australia's own duty to protect refugees would not be exercised. But on the other hand, few nations, and almost none in our region, guarantee a full protection of refugees. Thus, in any crisis in which the Government may be tempted to appeal to this new legislation, it will have little scope to do so ethically.

In summary, this amendment does deal with a genuine conflict of interest, and resolves it with some discrimination. But the legislation is too preoccupied with power, in that it leaves the Minister unaccountable for what he fails to do. Furthermore, the legislation gives the Government practical powers which are likely to be of practical use only if the human rights of asylum seekers are disregarded.

The second piece of legislation, the Migration Law Amendment Bill (No.3) 1994 is the latest episode in the saga of the Cambodian boat people. The goal of this legislation is to ensure that the Government does not have to pay compensation to the asylum-seekers for unlawful imprisonment. The Government's problem was created when some High Court Judges said that the boat people may have been imprisoned unlawfully before May 1992. After some asylum seekers took action to seek compensation, the Government enacted legislation to limit any compensation to one dollar per day.

Another decision by the High Court, however, in a case unrelated to refugees, suggested that this legislation may be declared invalid. Accordingly, the present Bill will repeal the limitation of compensation, but will amend the Migration Act to declare that all people ever detained under it were validly detained. Thus, they will have no grounds for compensation.

This legislation is a naked exercise of power, by which the Government will award itself impunity for its past actions. Unlike other members of the community, who are accountable before the courts for their actions, the Government will enjoy the privileged position of being able to put the actions of its officials beyond judicial review. Some commentators believe that the Government will use the bill to trigger a double dissolution of Parliament. It is hard to imagine that the electorate would be attracted by this brutal face of Janus. ■

Andrew Hamilton SJ teaches at the United Faculty of Theology, Parkville, VIC

Joseph Cindric, 1906-94

FOR THE PAST 35 YEARS, Joseph Cindric has been one of the most familiar figures on the streets of Sydney. But possibly one of the least well known. Day after day, through city crowds, he pushed a trolley laden with the tools he carried onshore when he was dismissed as a ship's engineer in the '50s. He slept in bus shelters and wore a helmet to protect himself from the house bricks that had been occasionally been dropped on his head. He lived entirely in public but was a private man. He didn't welcome conversation, nor assistance, nor any kind of intrusion into his world. Occasionally he accepted a sandwich from a shop in Wynyard. On 4 November, at the age of 88, he died of pancreatic cancer.

During the 10 years that Fr James Ware was stationed at St Patrick's, Church Hill, he worked at getting to know Cindric. He recalls that Cindric, Croatian by birth, had been a member of the Hitler Youth and had 'given his soul to a system which fell apart'. Cindric sometimes told him 'we will rise again.' Along with his tools of trade, Cindric's suitcase contained letters from the son with whom he'd lost contact after the war and longed to be reunited.

Cindric's trolley has been acquired by the Powerhouse Museum as part of its social history collection. 'This is the first thing we've acquired that belongs to a street person,' says Eddie Butler-Bowdon, one of the curators. 'Normally you think of them as having a non-material existence. But this trolley will intrigue the thousands of visitors who are going back to their own homes.' ■



Photographs by **Andrew Stark**
Text by **Andrew Stark** and
Michael McGirr

NINETEEN-NINETY-FOUR marks the 50th year since the Liberal Party was founded to represent the interests of middle Australia. But, although the Liberals are in power in every state except Queensland and only narrowly lost last year's federal election, the mood of Menzies' party during this anniversary year has been less than buoyant. The Liberals continue to be obsessed with self-scrutiny, unsure of what will cure their crisis of confidence.

That forming the government in five states cannot compensate the Liberals for being the Federal Opposition for a record 11 years is one measure of the shift in power from the states to the Commonwealth. Before 1983, the Liberal Party had been in government for all but eight years since 1944. Labor has now assumed the mantle of 'the natural party of government', and the Liberal machine is struggling to find the magic formula that will convince the electorate *not* to vote for the ALP.

The troubles of both the Hewson and the Downer/Costello leadership teams suggest that the party is still looking for its soul. Hewson took the Liberals to the extremes in search of an economic panacea and in the process lost the 'unlosable' election. Downer is struggling in his attempt to paint a softer portrait of the party that spooked the electorate in 1993, and current speculation that John Howard might be resurrected is an indication of how limited the

Liberals' options are. So where to for the good ship Liberal as it rounds the 50-year buoy and sails towards the next century? The answers might lie with the generation waiting in the wings.

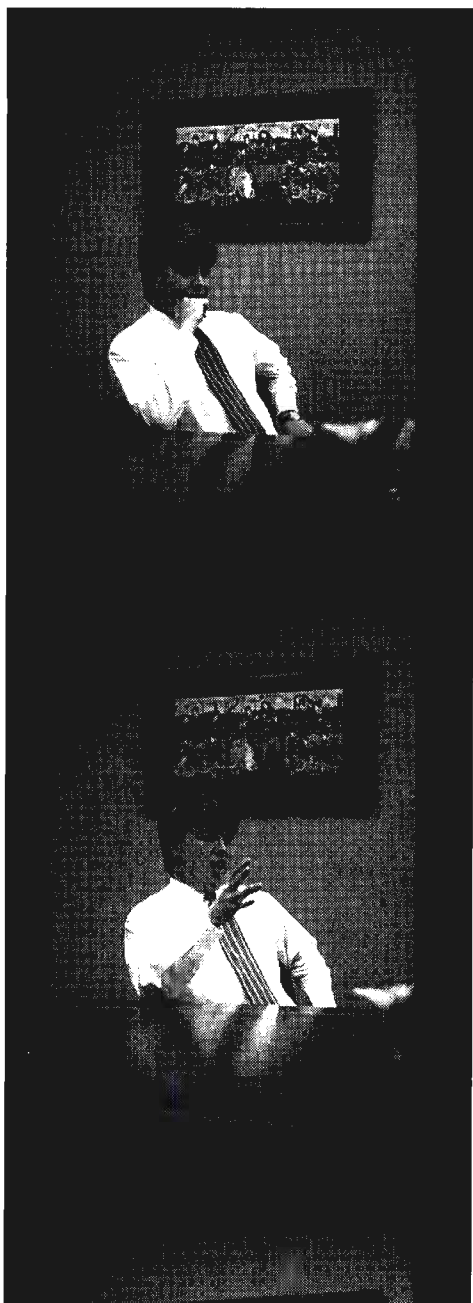
Ross McClymont is 25, a Melbourne solicitor, and national president of the Young Liberals. He concedes that the party is undergoing an identity crisis that has its origins in the loss of the middle ground to Labor during the 80s: 'Our traditional constituency is saying "Well the Keating government is doing things that we agree with." The Labor party has had to jettison all its ideology and all its baggage to get where it is today, and we now have the Liberal Party fighting another liberal party.'

McClymont attributes the shift to the past electoral success of the Liberals: 'In 1949 it was a free-enterprise, middle-class party versus the socialist working-class party. Chifley and all those were openly socialist; these days "socialist" is a word that has negative connotations. We have won the battle of ideas. The Labor Party federally now is in many respects more rightwing than Bob Menzies ever was.'

But, though the Liberals may be having trouble coming to grips with Labor's shift to the right, McClymont believes this augurs well for the long term because Labor's MPs are leading the ALP away from its traditions. 'I think what's going to happen is this: it's OK when you are in government to paper over problems but ultimately, when the Labor Party does lose government federally, there will be a backlash and the party will move back to the left because the rank and file of the party are far more leftwing than the leaders.'

Achieving that elusive electoral success is the current challenge for the party. For Margaret Fitzherbert, who at 25 is retiring as the Victorian president of the Young Liberals, what is needed is not a reinvented party but a more consistent adherence to traditional Liberal values. 'I think what the Liberal Party really needs to do is stand its ground on issues', she says. 'During the '80s, when I was at university, there was a lot of talk about the Liberal Party moving to the right. If you look at the figures in the Liberal Party who saw that as the way to go ... there has been an acknowledgement that this is not a popular message in the electorate.'

Fitzherbert, a politics graduate from Monash University, and currently working as a projects officer for the Victorian Automobile Chamber of Commerce, disputes the notion that the electorate has tolerated Labor's to shift to the right because it is more interested in the conflict of personality than the conflict of ideology. 'I think Australia—certainly since the war—has had personality politics', she says. 'You couldn't say that Menzies was not part of personality politics. Whitlam is still a folk hero, not only to the Labor Party but to many Australians. Personality politics is a worldwide trend but we still see a big battle of ideas at the same time.'



Photographs: Tim Stoney

'I was having a chat with Michael Kroger a couple of weeks ago and said to him that the problem with the Liberal Party is that we could staff every golf club committee in Victoria with great people, but it's not golf club committee members we're after. We've got to get political animals.'

—ROSS MCCLYMONT

ing ones

McClymont and Fitzherbert both recognise that the Liberals trail Labor in the selection of candidates sufficiently hardened to survive the rigours of Canberra politics. McClymont believes that the cause lies in an innate conservatism among the party rank and file. 'In the '40s, '50s, '60s and into the '70s the Liberal Party membership was very large, middle-class and mainstream. What has tended to happen now is that membership has atrophied. It's the same people, getting older and older.

'What we have seen as a result is that those people, who tend to be quite conservative in their judgment, tend to preselect those who are very good community people but are really not a politician's bootlace.' He reinforces the point: 'I was having a chat with Michael Kroger a couple of weeks ago and said to him that the problem with the Liberal Party is that we could staff every golf club committee in Victoria with great people, but it's not golf club committee members we're after. We've got to get political animals.'

Fitzherbert and McClymont also stress that Labor's talented individuals are encouraged to rise within the party organisation, while the tendency among the Liberal membership is towards sideways movement into lucrative careers, which often preclude active involvement. 'The Labor Party is like a machine', McClymont says. 'They just churn them out like sausages. They get them in from uni and train them up and put them in a union.'

BOTH ASSERT, HOWEVER, that the Liberal Party has learnt that it must produce seasoned politicians or face the prospect of more time on the opposition benches. As evidence they point to the success of Petro Georgiou in gaining preselection for Kooyong: 'It's an outward symbol of something that's been happening for a while,' Fitzherbert suggests. She points to the recent round of preselections for federal seats in Victoria. In her opinion, they have thrown up a more capable type of candidate, 'I think there has been a change in the sort of person we're going for. They're tending to be people a bit younger, often women and often people who have that political experience.'

What has made Young Liberals prominent in the Liberal Party apparatus—more prominent than their equivalent in the ALP—is their presence as a discrete body within the party proper that Liberal Party members can join voluntarily. It has its own organisation and budget, and at times its public statements have opposed the activities of the party proper. Most recently the Young Liberals voiced their concern over the direction of the party under Hewson's leadership, particularly after the '93 election. Their criticism of him for not appointing a representative to the Republic Advisory Committee drew the attention of the media and resulted in a hastily convened meeting between Hewson and the federal executive of the Young Liberal movement.

McClymont believes that such incidents have raised the stocks of the Young Liberals. 'We have a reputation for being outspoken and maybe, sometimes, publicity seekers. But because of the policy work we've done in recent years and the profile we've built up, politicians are coming to us with their views because they don't want to do battle with the Young Liberals.'

McClymont himself is a minimal-ist republican, but believes that because of general suspicion of the ALP agenda it will be 30 or 40 years before the republic is brought in—by a Liberal government. Fitzherbert, on the other hand, is indifferent about republicanism, citing unemployment as a more important issue.

In most respects Fitzherbert and McClymont concentrate on the issues that interest the party generally. They differ only on points of emphasis. The economy is the first priority on their list, but they point to its effect on youth unemployment. While McClymont expresses an interest in issues of national identity, Fitzherbert, like many of her older colleagues, is critical of Labor's target of filling 35 per cent of preselections with women by the year 2002.

'If you look at countries where women have done well in government they are countries where women have the services available to enable them to get out and make a career', she says. 'I think if the Labor Party was looking



'If you look at countries where women have done well in government they are countries where women have the services available to enable them to get out and make a career ... What the Labor Party is doing at the moment is fixing up its own backyard but ignoring the needs of most Australian women.'

—MARC'ARET FITZHERBERT

at issues like child care with any great detail and commitment then we'd see more of a change. What the Labor Party is doing at the moment is fixing up its own backyard but ignoring the needs of most Australian women.'

Both express a general satisfaction with the attempts of the party's federal leadership to reclaim the centre ground despite the problems of division and rancour that have marred the process. And McClymont is quick to play apologist for Alexander Downer for the sake of stability. 'I think people are concerned about Downer's performance, which was initially very good,' McClymont points out. 'He's got himself in a bit of trouble, which he freely acknowledges, and now he's having difficulty in rebuilding his position. But he's only been there for six months. I think the party has got into a cycle now where they think that changing the leadership is going to change everything. It's getting ridiculous!'

Fitzherbert is quick to deny that any leadership challenge is in the wind. McClymont offers the explanation that the clamouring for Howard has more to do with dissent over Robert Hill's missing out on preselection for a lower-house seat than dissatisfaction with Downer as leader. 'I think there are a lot of people who are not Howard supporters by any stretch

of the imagination but want to give Downer a bit of a kick in the backside for that.'

The common ground between the people who represent the party present and the party future is the significance of the last federal election loss. And perhaps the repercussions will be felt in the Australian electorate not so much in *what* policies the Liberals present to us but how they present them.

'The lesson that all major political parties learnt from the 1993 federal election was "don't be honest with the electorate"', McClymont argues. 'When you hear someone in the community say that politicians are all liars, that they don't do what they say, point to the '93 election and say, "Well the Liberal Party told you in 750 pages what they were going to do and you absolutely punished them for doing it." No political party in Australia will ever again spell out its policies in such detail.'

Whether the Liberals are to blame or not, the party must solve the dilemma of what particular incarnation will reverse the results of the last four federal polls. The version that eventually works may well be created by those who formed their politics while the party was in the woods. ■

Jon Greenaway is a *Eureka Street* staff writer.

• In *Eureka Street's* next issue, Jan-Feb 1995, *Jon Greenaway* looks at the future with *Young Labor*.

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Shaving Dr Grace's beard

teams before being picked in the NSW open side in 1990, at the age of 20. She was selected in the Australian team the same year and has been captain for the past two years. Garey, 23, a physiotherapy student, first played for the NSW under-18 side when she was 14, and at 16 she was chosen as captain. She spent a year in the under-21s before being selected in an under-25s team to go to India, but the tour was cancelled. Last year, playing in the newly formed under-23 squad, she represented Australia for the first time, in three one-day internationals against NZ.

Clark and Garey are from rural NSW where, because of the lack of women's cricket teams in these areas, both began their competitive careers in boy's competitions. 'I started playing at school in the under-12 boys,' says Garey. 'To start with, it wasn't too good and they didn't really want me there, but after they could see I could catch and bowl and get wickets, then I was just like one of the team.' Clark played in an under-16 boys' competition when she was 14: 'It was far too good for me, but it was fun. They were in long pants, I was two years younger, turning up in shorts with little skinny legs, looking like their kid sister.'

Even though both women have been committed to cricket from a young age, they agree there were times when playing a 'boys' sport' made them consider giving up. 'There was a stage when I thought, why am I doing this?', says Garey, 'but it just became a matter of deciding what I liked. I love

Belinda Clark (left) and Jo Garey (below) in action.

Photographs: NSW Cricket Association.

IF BELINDA CLARK AND JO GAREY were men, kids all over Australia would spend their summers emulating them in the backyard. But for Clark, captain of the Australian women's cricket team, and Garey, vice-captain of the Australian women's under-23 team, fame is not yet one of the rewards of success.

The offices of the NSW Women's Cricket Association, where Clark works as a part-time development officer for the state's Women's Cricket Association, acutely reflect the status of women's cricket in Australia. It's a long walk down the halls lined with memorabilia of more than 100 years of male cricket, past rooms with panoramic views of Darling Harbour, to reach Clark's own cramped, makeshift office.

Both women began their careers in typical Australian fashion—in the backyard at home. 'I started playing cricket with my brother', says Clark. 'He always wanted me to throw balls to him, so I said "You throw balls to me as well".' And Garey? 'During summer the cricket was always on the TV and during the breaks we'd play test matches in the backyard. My brother always wanted me to bowl to him, so I started off as a bowler.'

Clark, 24, first made the Hunter regional team at the age of 13. She played in under-18 and under-21





If women's sport is so boring why do people watch women's tennis? They have their own sponsors, they draw the same crowds, they train as hard and they are just as athletic as the men. They give the ball a fair belt, too. That's the sort of cricket we want to play. —BELINDA CLARK

Photograph of Belinda Clark, right, and Jo Garey, left by Tim Stoney.

playing cricket and I didn't see why a few hard times should make me give up what I love, so I stuck at it. That was about the time I started playing women's cricket. Not playing with the boys any more made things a lot easier, and once I was selected for the NSW under-18 team, people realised I was going somewhere.'

One of the chief obstacles to increasing the profile of women's cricket is its amateur status. Since none of the players gets paid, they need to rely on the grace and favour of their employers to get time off to play locally. Overseas tours are generally short, usually during players' annual leave, and sponsorship money is always scarce. As Clark points out: 'The guys have a lot of big sponsors and a very structured organisation that's been around for a long time. Compared to them we're quite new and, being a female sport, there's not a lot of money around. We do have sponsors, it's just that the money they give us goes to the cost of running an event, rather than going to the players.'

'Everyone playing cricket has an occupation, or they wouldn't be around for very long. I wouldn't call myself a professional cricketer, but I would say that my approach to the game is professional. We'd both train as much as any of the guys who would play for Australia.'

Clark cites the 1993 World Cup as her most disappointing moment. 'We went really badly. It was probably one of the worst team efforts I've ever been a part of. We'd been World Champions for the last four World Cups, and then to go away as hot favourites and come home third, that was ugly ... very ugly. We just didn't play well.'

One of the criticisms levelled at women's sport, particularly by male spectators, is the lack of excitement and physical intensity. While both women agreed that in the past women's cricket has lacked the intensity needed to pull big crowds and sponsorship, neither thinks this is the case generally in women's sport, and they believe that the attitude to cricket is changing.

'If women's sport is so boring why do people watch women's tennis?' asks Clark. 'They have their own sponsors, they draw the same crowds, they train as hard and they are just as athletic as the men.'

'They give the ball a fair belt, too. That's the sort of cricket we want to play. Even though we can't bowl as fast, hit the ball as hard or run as fast, if the game is intriguing people will watch it. You won't get people to come by making women's cricket look sexy. It's

not that sort of game. But if we wear coloured clothes, if we use white balls, if we play day-nighters, that sort of attractive cricket is conducive to crowds. People can't say women's cricket is boring—because I can guarantee you not many have seen it—they just assume it's boring.'

Garey, too, believes the future of women's cricket lies with a more aggressive approach to the game. 'If you compare it to five years ago it's really a very different game. We've really become much more professional and much more attacking. I mean there are plenty of boring men's cricket games as well.'

For Clark, the biggest obstacle to women's cricket is not how the game is played, but the will of administrators and players to encourage women to take part. 'I think the game can go places in the next ten years, but it's purely up to what the administrators and players are prepared to do. If we actively promote the game in schools and encourage girls to play, then I think the game can be a lot bigger.'

'The problem we've got at the moment is that girls are being taught earlier and earlier, so they now have the skills—we just have to find competitions for them to play in. The biggest obstacle in this is finding people willing to do voluntary work. Most junior boys' associations are made up purely of people that do voluntary work. With the number of boys who play cricket, to get those administrators is not a big deal. But to get the same number of administrators with the number of girls playing is unbelievably difficult.'

'We need to link in with the guys, rather like basketball. Girls' and boys' basketball have separate competitions, but in schools basketball is promoted as one sport and every person in Australia, whether they are male or female, knows they can play. We've got to make cricket in the same sort of mould. Considering half the people who buy tickets to the cricket are women, I think it's worthwhile for the Australian Cricket Board.'

BOTH WOMEN BELIEVE they can play a positive role in promoting women's cricket.

'When I finish playing', says Clark, 'I'd like to be able to say that I've given the game everything I possibly could. Whether that means I score 2000 runs or 20, if I feel I've reached my potential, I'll be satisfied. I don't think many people leave sports these days satisfied they've reached and maintained their potential for as long as they wanted to. All the training we do is aimed at that.'

'I think we'd both like to do as much as we can to help make cricket for girls more acceptable. I think sport is really important for kids, particularly girls. If they can get out and run around and play sport then I think that's a big plus for society.'

Tim Stoney is a *Eureka Street* staff writer.



How the ram brought home the bacon

IT LOOKS LIKE it's been there for centuries, waiting for us.'

'Enough with the *Picnic at Hanging Rock* jokes. It's just a big ugly old ram. A laughing stock in itself, but with absolutely no mystical significance.'

Celia swung the car off the road and into the car park of something called a Life Australia Centre. There are many Life Australia Centres, but that which we were entering was special. Not only did it have several score of petrol pumps, a barnlike pub, a restaurant with fake Viennese décor and various other Life Australia Centre accoutrements, it also had a Big Ram. There are many Big Rams too, of course. In fact, at least one town in each state claims to be the home of *the* Big Ram, and they're all wrong. Several Australian country towns own *the* Big Ram in the way that several medieval monasteries owned supposedly unique relics, like the head of John the Baptist. But the Goulburn Big Ram is special nonetheless. It's the only Big Ram that stands beside a Viennaworld.

Some people might think this noteworthy simply because of the unfortunate architectural juxtaposition. In other words, two displays of bad taste are worse than one. I have long suspected, however, that there is a more esoteric connection between these two hideous edifices. I concede that my evidence for this belief is anecdotal and circumstantial, not conclusive. But it's at least as good as anything you'll hear from the UFO lobby about why God was an astronaut and how space aliens control your mind. The following incident is submitted for your consideration.

I followed Celia into Viennaworld and surveyed the limp offerings in the *bain marie*. Lasagna, sweet and sour pork and several other classic Viennese dishes, ladled on to plates by a bored adolescent in a dirndl skirt. Celia opted for a salad and I, less wisely, for the sweet and sour pork. The meal really needed beer to wash it down but we collected a couple of Cokes from the fridge instead and headed for a table. After a swig of fizzy black fluid I forked some pork and raised it to my lips. A heady aroma misted my eyes and a vision of the animal I was about to eat hovered before me. A greasy, dung-encrusted brute, rolling in its own mess and snorting out the message, *Go ahead. Eat me and see what I make of your day*.

I wrinkled my nose and replaced the dead-swine slice on my plate. Now I am not saying, of course, that Viennaworld of Goulburn (and, I am sure, Viennaworld of anywhere else) serve rotten meat. No sir and no ma'am, no way would I even imply such a thing. Clearly they would never do that. For one thing, it's illegal. And for another, we were sitting in a restaurant full of dead-swine munchers, each of whom looked as healthy and happy as a pig in, er, my vision.

So the vision itself must have had some other explanation.

Celia smirked at my lack of enthusiasm for the meal. 'I told you not to eat that in a place like this. It's always deep-fried leftovers drowned in something sticky from a bottle.'

'I think not. It's a sign. From Jumbuck.'

A dead-swine muncher at the next table turned round to stare at us. 'Keep your voice down,' hissed Celia. 'People will think you're *strange*.'

'They should be afraid of Jumbuck, not me,' I said gesturing at the Big Ram outside the window. 'He has sent me a vision because he is angry. People come from all over the world to worship at his shrine and they are forced to eat pig meat. Not sheep meat, the pure food that nourishes Jumbuck's children.'

Celia groaned and switched seats to a stretch out on a bench beside the table. 'If I have to listen to any more of this I'll go into labour right here and it'll be your fault. Yours and Jumbuck's.'

By now the man at the next table had abandoned his plate of dead swine too. Celia propped herself on an elbow and addressed him: 'He,' she said, meaning me, 'believes that Jumbuck's statue is a cosmic beacon placed here to guide the return of ancient star travellers. And he thinks it has a mysterious relationship to Viennaworld, guarding it like the Sphinx guards the pyramids in Egypt. In fact, he reckons that Jumbuck, Viennaworld, the Sphinx and the pyramids are all aligned on some astral map.'

THE MAN STOOD UP SLOWLY, mopping the last streak of dead-swine grease from his lips with a traditional Viennese paper napkin. This exercise completed, he dropped the object and walked out, striding towards Jumbuck's statue. Celia turned her gaze in my direction and gave me one of her you-deserved-that looks.

'You shouldn't have told him that we know about the alignment,' I said as we returned to the car park. 'He may have been sent by Them. To prepare the way.' Her expression switched back from you-deserved-that mode to labour-is-imminent mode. 'And a distinctly unpleasant way for Them to come back, too,' she said, pointing to where our luncheon companion now stood gazing up into the Ram's posterior. 'I hope for Their sake that Jumbuck isn't flyblown.'

Celia started the car and drove in a circuit round the car park, towards the exit nearest the Big Ram. And, as we drew level with the dead-swine muncher, she slammed on the brakes.

I wouldn't swear to it, but I think he was levitating. ■

Ray Cassin is the production editor of *Eureka Street*.

A life and some letters

Out in the Open: An Autobiography, Geoffrey Dutton, University of Queensland Press, 1994. ISBN 0 7022 2681 5 RRP \$39.95.

Letters, Patrick White, edited by David Marr, Random House Australia, 1994. ISBN 0 09 182992 5 RRP \$49.95

Luther King were assassinated and Chicago burned.) I found that the combined impact of the two books was to bring alive earlier times, especially the 1950s and the early 1960s, a period which the gregarious Dutton calls 'a season for solitaries in the arts'. Nolan was painting, Clem Christesen editing *Meanjin*, Manning Clark was at work on his *Dreaming*. Those were the years of *The Tree of Man*, *Voss*, *Riders in the Chariot*, *The Solid Mandala*—the novels that (together with *The Aunt's Story*) remain for many of us the essential Patrick White.

Geoffrey Dutton, meanwhile, laid the foundations of his multiple careers as poet, biographer, publisher, editor and roustabout-of-letters. In reckoning his output, his own books (over fifty of them) need to be supplemented by editorial activities with *Australian Letters*, Sun Books, Penguin Australia, his organising role in the Adelaide Festival Writer's Week, his championing of the Russian, Yevtushenko — the list is prodigious. His autobiography also shows what a complicated, busy and demanding life he has led. There have been money troubles, made more galling by his reputation as 'the smiling Mæcenat of Australian Literature', a comprehensive extra-marital life, and a strenuous amount of conviviality: we hear in White's letters about the Duttons feeding one hundred and forty guests at a christening with only 'a bit of hired help on the day'.

Compare and contrast — the old, irresistible rubric. Dutton and White came from privileged backgrounds which gave them the freedom to transmute money into cultural cap-

ital. White went to Cambridge, Dutton to Oxford and their private incomes, though not lavish, kept them, when young, off Grub Street. Both spent World War II in the Air Force. Each did some farming, though White's goats and chooks just helped to top up dividend cheques, while Dutton went in for serious pig-farming and lost a packet. They were republicans, long before the present bandwagon was built. (Dutton published *Australia and the Monarchy* in 1965.) Both believed passionately in the Cause of Australian Literature, though Dutton hoped to serve it, whereas White gave the impression at times of thinking he *was* it. To work out and work through the meanings of 'being Australian' was a life-project that engrossed their energies and their creativity. (Neither would care much for the people who sit around today 'deconstructing Australian-icity'.) They were friends, for twenty five years, and their falling out is a piece of gossip that has begun to fossilise into literary legend.

Much of Geoffrey Dutton's life has been shaped by a house: 'Anlaby', outside Adelaide, where his parents lived the lives of colonial gentry, mingling respectability with booze, opulent motor-cars with a dwindling real income. Lotte Lehmann sang to the sheep; Hans Heysen drew the house; Sybil Thorndike made a ritual visit:

'When the car was brought around for them to leave, my mother farewelled the guests with a raised hand and a slight curve to her tall figure. As they drove down the avenue, Sybil turned to Ursula and said, "Oh, I would love to play that part".'

THE GOVERNMENT'S NEW CULTURAL policy statement *Creative Nation* is suitably gung-ho: 'During the past 25 years, Australian culture—now an exotic hybrid—has flourished. Enlightened government support for the arts, an equally enlightened migration policy, a growing respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples ...'

It was in fact 26 years ago, in 1968, that John Grey Gorton established the forerunner of the Australia Council, to focus all this enlightenment. Geoffrey Dutton, typically, was a founder member. Patrick White, typically, was not impressed by the membership: 'Apart from Geoffrey,' he wrote to Maie Casey, 'I shouldn't think any one of them has any taste.'

There is for all artists a watershed, after which they cease to be the people whose work defines the age and become, for better or worse, the elders. These two new and important books have much to say, between them, about the years since 1968. (A watershed if ever there was one: the year the Prague spring ended, *Humanae Vitae* was promulgated, students went to the barricades in Paris, Bobby Kennedy and Martin

There is endless complaining about Australia, how White is fated to live here but the place stinks and he's a Londoner at heart... By the end I came to feel as Dutton does, that all this was plain tiresome and wrongheaded and even began to wonder what, from a psychoanalytical standpoint, 'Australia' might mean.

headed and even began to wonder what, from a psychoanalytical standpoint, 'Australia' might mean.

For me, a main interest of this new volume is its revelation of what it is like to be one kind of writer. White belongs in the company of Yeats and Lawrence, the Romantic Moderns. 'I am a romantic at heart' he says. He quotes Baudelaire: 'Genius is recaptured childhood.' There is evidence here of his mysticism, his love of the exotic, his sense of

himself as an outcast, his trust in intuition. What offers to be about the world always comes back, in the end, to that giant inexhaustible Self which the romantics bequeathed to psychoanalysis. 'I am always walking on eggs' White tells Dutton 'when I become a Greek character.'

'Expect all my characters are really bits of myself, and it inhibits me when foreignness forces me into a certain amount of objectivity.'

Writing is not for this man a trade, or even a calling; it is a fate: the writer 'must read and write, read and write, and forgetting all about being a writer, live, to perfect his art'. He is compelled and condemned to work, each new book burning and pressing inside him, Lear's *hysterica passio*—or a bad case of indigestion—until he heads for the desk. Yet this is as it should be: 'Thank God for the Demon Work to combat the other Devils.'

Viewed this way, White's egotism and exclusiveness are less character defects than they are aspects of a way of being in the world. The letters reveal a man who found out rather quickly what his necessities in life were, and answered to them with great purity and ruthlessness. (Dutton sees this, as he sees so much else about White.) He wanted to

share his life with a lover; he found Manoly Lascaris, and they were together for over forty years. He wanted the tangibilities of land and the daily routines of a farmer and he found them outside Sydney at Castle Hill—until the day came when the city's call was stronger, and off he went to Martin Road. On Sunday mornings he would spend hours on the telephone to Maic Casey or Elizabeth Riddell but his telephone number was silent. His circle of friends was so tightly controlled that those excluded from it decided he must be a recluse. All this, always, for the sake of the writing.

These are the letters of a slave and a tyrant. Visionary writers serve their visions, and where the appearances of the world resist inclusion, they must somehow be subdued.

'Perhaps I am not a realist. When we came to live here I felt the life was, on the surface, so dreary, ugly, monotonous, there must be a poetry hidden in it to give it a purpose, and so I set out to discover that secret core, and *The Tree of Man* emerged'.

'Reality' or what passes for it, must be effaced and replaced. The letters show White checking facts and asking correspondents for details of manners or period, but in the tapestry of his writing these are coloured wools that he stitches onto the fully-drawn cartoon.

AS WITH THE NOVELS, so the reader of these letters must suspend distance and allow the particles of the self to be pulled into White's gravitational field. Full contact or nothing, vassal or enemy. It was the same with his friendship, which depended on your remaining the person he had decided you were. When you changed, or he decided you had changed, he dumped you.

Some of the most concentrated writing in *Out in the Open* concerns White, about whom Dutton is perceptive, not only because of their long friendship but because they are so gloriously and painfully unlike—and, I think, because White hurt him so badly that he has been forced to think hard and long.

We now have both sides of the famous rift, the letter in which White announces that he's 'had enough of

Duttonry' and the one Dutton shot back: 'as for telephoning, I wouldn't waste the ten cents on you.' Grist for the gossips. What is more substantial is to follow through the references to one another in both men's books. It is not just that Dutton is astute; he is also a persuasive witness to the moral squalor into which the great man was capable of descending. (Try the dinner party scenes at pp. 379-81 of *Out in the Open*)

But equally, Dutton's claim in the severance letter that White was once 'a humane, generous and even good man' is borne out by the new collection. There is a beautiful letter, for example, to a young relative, Philip Garland, later to be diagnosed as schizophrenic. As for the generosity, that is by now well-known: turning the Nobel Prize money into an award for neglected writers, giving away—over a long period—scads of money to the Smith Family. And it is not fair to remember only the cast-off friends: to a handful of people—not, interestingly, the famous—White was persistently loyal and steadfast: Peggy Garland, Frederick Glover, Ben Huebsch, Jean Scott Rogers, Ronald Waters.

In 1969, Dutton was in crisis. He wrote to White: 'that I was profoundly depressed, that in the old phrases, my soul was afflicted and disquieted within me. But I felt guilty about these feelings, because (so I wrote) I lived in a beautiful place with a loving family . . . So why should I not be happy?'

White replied: '. . . I don't see why you need be plunged in such gloom and remorse for having it good in life and an amiable character thrown in. There are so many depressive, violent, irritable, sleazy, destructive people about, it's a relief to think of somebody attractive and enviable. So relax and enjoy your spiritual status.'

And keep smiling. Those who still think of Patrick White the man as a colossus rising from the shallows of Australian culture have much to ponder in the new volume. ■

Bruce Williams is Head of the School of Arts and Media, La Trobe University.

Hail, high flier

Flying the Kite: Travels of an Australian Politician, John Button, Random House, Sydney 1994, ISBN 0 09 182872 4, RRP \$16.95

NEVER APPEAR for a friend in court is a good rule for a barrister. I learned that rule when I broke it many years ago. Don't 'shadow' a minister who is doing a good job might be another one for a politician. I broke that rule of prudence when I shadowed John Button in the earlier part of his years in the industry portfolio. A third rule I am breaking now is never review the work of someone you know and admire.

It is hard to be objective and most readers of John Button's 'Flying the Kite' will find it hard to separate out the impressions they already have of a well known figure from what he has written.

This author may be regarded as a rare, endangered species. He left Parliament after 19 years in 1993, well liked in industry circles where he had worked for a decade and popular with the public as a man not like other politicians. A bit franker at times, a bit funnier at others, a good bloke really. He has the figures to support the proposition that he was an effective minister. He presided over the industry portfolio for a decade during which there was massive restructuring.

In the steel industry for example, the Button Steel Plan required the loss of about half the jobs in the industry to achieve competitive productivity. Some opportunities were lost. Expressed ambitions to move from woodchip export to adding value in Australia foundered in part on the failure of the government to bring together environment and industry policies. But the rapid growth of manufactured exports to a wide range of countries during the latter part of his decade suggest that he got a lot right—a detractor might in more grudging vein say he didn't muck it up but I would give him a better mark than that.

Part of his success lay in his pro-

motion of a new culture in industry. That is what makes this book so interesting. It lays out some of the experiences which led him to advocate approaches which fell outside the fashionable hands-off markets-are-all view but still put a lot of pressure on individuals and industries to perform.

The book is made up of 16 essays written around Button's ministerial travels abroad and earlier visits to the United States and the United Kingdom as a backbencher in opposition in the seventies. This is his account of his attempts to break out of 'a morass of tired and borrowed ideas', the response of a thoughtful man to the sense of a 'Lucky Country' drifting without confidence or purpose down 'the Argentinian Road'.

For most of us the criticisms of Australia's position became accepted clichés without our ever coming to grips with the substance of our problems, let alone finding solutions to them. Button is not clichéd, and, as we have known since the New Testament, a tale works better than a lecture. Button's travels were no doubt real, but they also function as parables about what works in the modern competitive world and what doesn't.

IT IS AN EASY READ. The quirkiness of the man is reflected in the quirky selection of events he chooses to deliver his message. In part it is easy to read because he is not always kind to those he describes including those who served him below his exacting standards. Some public servants—both Australian and British—will not enjoy his description of their inanity and ineffectiveness. Acts of kindness delivered in the context of slack irrelevance to the job in hand are held up to ridicule. Coasting on the job with no clear objectives does not

bring out the author's amusing side: indeed, he is savage about incompetence. These negative sentiments come through more strongly than the praise for work well done which is acknowledged from time to time. Phillip Flood, a previous ambassador to Indonesia, can rest easy, which accords with my own experience. On the other hand, as someone who has had a similarly hosted visit to the United Kingdom, I can say that John was dead unlucky to strike all duffers.

He is much more at ease with America and Americans. Sure those are problems but 'I felt good about the visit' and 'All the competencies were there' reflect an apparent liking and there is regret rather than contempt about the fact that in Reagan's America there is no one to bring it together.

And that is perhaps the key to his even more relaxed sense of Asian countries. Here you find people who are both competent and directed. This is a personal parable of the opening up to Asia which is happening and has to continue.

There are two related things or ideas which emerge from this book.

The first is the learning experience which being a minister in a Westminster system government involves. Button is frank about his uncertainties when he started on the job. Some readers may find that confirms their fears about our system of government. Others, like me, might welcome it as encouraging an approach to government which is practical and based more on reality than ideology mindlessly and carelessly applied.

Paul Hasluck wrote, correctly in my view, that 'policy is shaped and developed best when it is the outcome of practice rather than of theory'. These essays describe a man looking at practice around the world and shaping national policy around the successful outcomes he observed. I hope they are read by lots of politicians and would-be politicians. ■

Fred Chaney is a former Liberal Senate leader, Cabinet minister and MHR. He is now a Research Fellow at the Graduate School of Management, University of WA.

Tristan's quest

IT IS AN INDICATION of Australia's literary insecurity that the nation worries about how it should react to Peter Carey. If he weren't so successful, there'd be no confusion: he'd be regarded as an inventive storyteller. Because he's successful some feel that his facility must be regarded with suspicion.

Interviewed by Andrew Riemer (*The Independent* September '94), Carey gives as a foundation inspiration for *Tristan Smith* the sight of a young, severely handicapped man in a wheel chair. 'The man had a weird look of intelligence in his eyes. I was repulsed.' Repulsed and yet drawn. Carey wondered how that intelligence could have its release, an application. He responds like the average person, but as an artist he proceeds to build a world around this deformed 'creature'.

No mystery there. Carey's inventiveness and craft is excruciatingly good and that world he creates around Tristan is both fabulous and real, but he employs no tricky artifice of fogged and distorted mirrors to lure the reader into believing that there is a deep and meaningful hidden message. Carey does not seem afraid of the narrative, or the stigma of being known as a mere teller of stories, a slight to send the expensive haircuts of many current novelists quivering.

The fable of Tristan Smith cuts back and forth between time and perspectives, and the questionable validity of those perspectives, but the story does not suffer because of it. Carey succeeds where many fail because of his supreme language craft, imagination and lack of fear. He sees structure for what it is, a vehicle, rather than an end in itself.

Perhaps the ambivalence felt towards Carey by critics and academics has more to do with his wealth and fame than it has to do with craft. Carey is not the first advertising executive to launch into novels, but of those who have he is the best I've read. And that skill is more apparent

The Unusual Life of Tristan Smith, Peter Carey, University of Queensland Press, Toowong, 1994. ISBN 0 7022 2626 2 RRP \$29.95

in *Tristan Smith* than in any of his work since *The Fat Man in History*.

Tristan Smith is the physically repulsive child of Felicity, the director of the *avant garde* Feu Follet theatre collective. It could be the Stables in Sydney or the Pram Factory in Melbourne. Tristan's father describes the theatre as 'a group of professionals who feel they are beyond criticism, who elevate sloppiness to a style of acting ... you cheer up the lonely liberals, you annoy the fascists. It entertains.' This dismissiveness is typical of Bill Fleur, a founding actor of Feu Follet who deserts for the theatre world's version of Disneyland. But the preciousness and self-consciousness of the Feu Follet is palpable. Forget the audience, think of the *truth!*

The dominant empire of Voorstand intimidates the world with its culture and the tiny archipelago state of Efica is swamped by it, except for that area of land reclaimed by the national bulwark of Feu Follet. The

American-Australian parallels are blatant but you always believe in Efica; you feel if you were dropped off there you'd know where to get a newspaper and a good cup of coffee. The world is elaborately created, complete with political intrigue, betrayal and rigid correctness. A vicious contest of political wills is

THIS YEAR WE'VE GONE FOR THE FULL DICKENSIAN CHRISTMAS — THE TABLE'S LAID WITH A SUMPTUOUS DINNER, A COUPLE OF HALF-MAD NEIGHBOURS AND AN ORPHAN ARE OVER AS GUESTS, AND THE APPLE OF OUR EYE'S UPSTAIRS ABOUT TO DROP DEAD FROM CONSUMPTION!



behind every Efrican conversation, the left and right struggle for power while the spectre of cultural obliteration looms over them.

THESE ARE MANY WAYS TO write this novel. Charles Dickens, the great

creator of worlds, would have worn his heart on his sleeve, Marquez would have strangled the whole narrative in the fine webs of alchemy and mythic histories, Felicity wouldn't have survived unscathed from the pen of Patrick White and Gunter Grass has already done it in *The Tin Drum*.

Carey doesn't get as close to his subjects as any of the above. He writes like a distant professional, a careful plastic surgeon conscientiously trying to re-create the smashed face of humanity, but, like

most surgeons, he's from a different class, suburb and life to that of the patient—an incredulous interest in the stranger.

Part of you wants the authorial voice to position itself in the novel to tell you what the writer thinks, to give some reason for the creation of another chaotic and vicious world, but another part of you wants it left alone, as you wish the developers had left *The Rocks* in their fecund slumminess and Collins Street to its silly Victorian dream of old money. Sanitising slums and levelling playing fields is for other writers.

Carey is distant from the principals of his novel but he is no less interested in them than a more passionately partisan writer might be. It seems that Carey doesn't know what to make of them—and there's justification for that stance: they are very peculiar people, even if you do see them on every tram and train.

There is room for the convinced and unconvinced in all societies. The unconvinced act as a wry and whimsical conscience for the Joans of Arcady.

The critics are wasting their time if they demand that Carey declares himself finally, takes the side of red or blue, for he sees too much folly in

both. It's not a stance to drive social organisations bravely forward but perhaps it creates the ballast for the keel of the passionate yacht with its sails full of wind and the rigging screaming with brave noise. ■

Bruce Pascoe is the co-editor of *Australian Short Stories*.

BOOKS: 3

JULIETTE HUGHES

Big Mac

Mary MacKillop: An Extraordinary Australian, Paul Gardiner SJ, E.J. Dwyer/David Ell Press, 1993. ISBN 0 85574 993 8 RRP \$39.95 (HB), \$19.95 (PB);

Mary MacKillop Unveiled, Lesley O'Brien, CollinsDove, 1994. ISBN 1 86371 396 4, RRP \$16.95;

Julian Tenison Woods: 'Father Founder', Margaret M. Press RSJ, CollinsDove (revised edn.) 1994. ISBN 1 86371 321 2, RRP \$24.95;

Mary MacKillop: No Plaster Saint, Clare Dunne, ABC, 1991. ISBN 0 7333 0136 3 RRP \$12.95, audio tape 0 642 17610 8 RRP \$16.95.

LATELY THERE HAS BEEN a plethora of MacKillopiana engendered by the prospect of the first Australian beatification. The current crop of biographical treatments form a mosaic of different approaches; every reader, it seems, is catered for. But the essence of canonisation is to make 'heroes' out of real humans, to create rallying symbols for a community of believers. This process can create conflicts between the demands of rigorous scholarship and those of constructing a good defence case. This is not to say that historical facts are distorted, but that the weight of authorial intent and commentary may end up telling us more of the agenda for the subject than it does of the subject herself.

The best-known of these titles is Paul Gardiner's *Mary MacKillop: An Extraordinary Australian*, which the Introduction says is 'substantially identical' to the *Positio*, or historical study presented to the Vatican in support of a candidate for canonisation. The limitations imposed by such an approach can be imagined, and Fr Gardiner readily admits that 'human interest' was not 'the criterion'. The centrality of focus on the main player is, strangely enough, a problem here; the other characters

surrounding Mary MacKillop's life were often enormously interesting in themselves, their eccentricities and influences having an important bearing on one's understanding of the woman and her times. And a determination to present all of the subject's actions in the best possible light serves the purposes of a *Positio* but does not necessarily make fascinating reading. There are tantalising glimpses of letters, allusions to meetings and conversations between MacKillop and various people, but the engine of agenda runs a very straight line through them. Gardiner's book is honest hagiography, painstakingly researched, and will be the dominant text for a long time to come.

To meet the demand for further knowledge of the bit players in the MacKillop saga, a revised edition of Margaret M. Press' 1979 book, *Julian Tenison Woods: 'Father Founder'* has been released. Again, there is a charity in the account that blunts the interest, especially when the subject was, despite the author's hovering benevolence, a neurotic whose selfishness, vanity and weakness was difficult to excuse despite his desire for holiness. The extracts from letters, again, are tantalising. As with



the Gardiner book, there is a sense that the reader is being urged to judgment—the thinking is being done for us. Fr Woods was an extraordinary man. He was a scientific explorer and observer whose published papers, listed at the end of the biography, earned him the respect of the major scientific bodies at the time, yet his credulity in spiritual matters led him to make some bizarre decisions.

Duped (as the eminently sensible MacKillop was not) by the antics of two unhealthily obsessed young nuns in the new order he had founded, he encouraged a kind of mystical rivalry in which diabolical manifestations, visions and divine revelations were the currency. When finally the two women took their frauds to the point of arson and sacrilege, a scandal erupted, severely embarrassing the order. He was never to admit that he had been wrong, indeed he himself had a habit at the time of falling into ‘trances’ during ordinary conversations. Eventually he was to spend the last years of his life being looked after by a devoted community of ex-nuns who included one of the ‘mystics’.

The other publications are for a much lighter market. *Mary Mackillop Unveiled*, by Lesley O’Brien, is a quick trip through the essentials, a readable and occasionally revealing accompaniment to the other books. Snippets of the real woman are revealed through the sort of anecdote for which Gardiner and Press couldn’t find a place. Two of the most agreeable come from near the end of her life:

‘One day mother Mary was in her wheelchair down the garden,’ Sister Mary Protase recalled. ‘When she needed anyone she would blow a whistle. I happened to be near at hand and heard it, so my companion and I ran to see what she wanted. Mother looked at us and then got a fit of laughing. When she recovered she said, “I wanted two big horses to lift me up and two little Shetland ponies ran to me.”

New Zealand’s Sister Mary Inceen also remembered a visit to the wheelchair-bound Mary: ‘Mother Mary was sitting in her invalid chair the morning we arrived in Sydney as

postulants. I was so excited when I went to kiss her that I almost fell on her. She laughed outright and said, “My dear, you’ve come all the way from New Zealand to kill me!”’

The ABC offering is a tape and a transcript of a radio play by Clare Dunne, both sold separately. The blurb describes it as ‘simple and accessible’. It is a brief atmospheric piece, notable chiefly for its use of archival letter extracts narrated by various actors. The commentary is rather simplistic, completely uncritical and often banal, but should be useful for a first overview for, perhaps, RE classes. The world is still waiting for the publication of a representative selection of the voluminous correspondence between Mary

MacKillop and the people she knew. The recurrent impression for me as I read all these works (and others about her) was how much the text of the biographies pales in comparison with the sheer life that leaps from the extracts of the letters and documents. All the nuances of personality and motive, all the quirks of expression and fashions of thought are there, waiting for us to read for ourselves and make up our own minds about them. We may still decide she was some kind of hero, but we won’t have been nudged into it. ■

Juliette Hughes is a *Eureka Street* staff writer.

• See ‘Flash in the Pan’, p43, for a review of the feature film *Mary*.

BOOKS: 4

MATTHEW RICKETSON

Desperately seeking Sylvia

The Silent Woman, Janet Malcolm, Picador, 1994.

ISBN 0330 33577 4 RRP \$14.95

CURIOS FACT NO. 1: Since Sylvia Plath’s death in 1963, no fewer than six full-length biographies and a memoir have been written about her.

Curious Fact No. 2: a book has just been released in Australia that prunes the biography industry that has flourished atop Plath’s grave. That is, it’s a book about the books about a writer of books.

Curious Fact No. 3: this new book is attracting more attention than any of the previous five.

Curious Fact No. 4: the author of this book—Janet Malcolm—is being talked about as much, if not more, than the much-discussed Plath herself.

Curiouser and curiouser. Let’s take them one at a time. The multiple biography treatment is usually reserved for the literary heavyweights, and then only over many

years. While Plath was a gifted poet, it seems likely the biographers (and their readers) have been drawn as much by the tragic story of Plath’s life and suicide aged 30. In February 1963 she put out mugs of milk and a plate of bread for her two small children as they slept, closed up the kitchen door of her flat in London, put her head in the oven and turned on the gas.

Apart from any apparent ghoulishness, the reason there are five biographers and one meta-biographer, as Bernard Crick recently described Malcolm in the *New Statesman and Society*, is because biography is the hot literary genre of the moment. Once the poor cousin of the literary world, biography used to be dismissed as too lightweight by the scholars and too prosaic by the writers with a capital ‘W’. Now, says Hazel Rowley, author of the ac-

claimed biography of Christina Stead and co-convenor earlier this year of a conference on biography, colleagues of hers in university English departments are reading more biographies than novels. 'Biography is at the intersection of being a scholar and a writer. If you get the scholarship wrong, then the academics will hound you and if you get the writing wrong then readers will desert you.'

Get it right though, she says, and the rewards, both literary and financial, are great. Biography sells: in Australia Paul Barry sold over 80,000 copies of his exposé of Alan Bond and has already sold over 90,000 copies—in hardback—of *The Rise and Rise of Kerry Packer*, according to his publisher, Judith Curr, at Transworld. It is more popular than any other non-fiction category with the exception of those hardy perennials, cooking and gardening. Mark Rubbo, owner of Readings Bookshop in Melbourne, says: 'It is very hard to sell hardback books these days. Biography is one of the few areas where you can.'

These days it is not uncommon for biographers to win the non-fiction section of any of the literary awards that proliferate around Australia. Rowley's Stead and David Marr's 1991 biography of Patrick White are two shining examples. Publishers are anxious to secure the right to these authors' next projects. Brian Boyd, author of a respected biography of Vladimir Nabokov, wants to write a literary critical work about Shakespeare but his agent is hissing, 'put that to one side, what's your next biography?' In England, where the biography boom began in the late '60s with Michael Holroyd's book about Lytton Strachey, there is a new round of lives of writers because, according to English journalist and biographer Michael Davie, readers want to know what Victoria Glendinning has to say about Rebecca West, or what Holroyd will make of Bernard Shaw's life. Holroyd was paid a massive \$1.4 million advance for his three-volume Shaw.

If this information goes a long way toward explaining curious facts numbers one and two, the explanation for the third and fourth lies in Janet Malcolm herself.

First, she is an exceptionally fine writer. Second, she is a genuinely provocative one. Try this on for size: 'The biographer at work, indeed, is like the professional burglar, breaking into a house, rifling through certain drawers that he has good reason to think contain the jewelry and money, and triumphantly bearing his loot away. The voyeurism and busybodyism that impel writers and readers of biography alike are obscured by an apparatus of scholarship designed to give the enterprise an appearance of banklike blandness and solidity.'

THE BIOGRAPHER IS PORTRAYED almost as a kind of benefactor. He is seen as sacrificing years of his life to his task, tirelessly sitting in archives and libraries and patiently conducting interviews with witnesses. There

but is now researching and writing one, I wince every time I read that passage. I'm skewered, like a butterfly on a collector's display board. Malcolm has already written with a similarly sharp stylus about psychoanalysis in 1980 with *Psychoanalysis: The Impossible Profession*, about the Freudian establishment, in 1983 with *In the Freud Archives*, and about journalism in 1990 with *The Journalist and the Murderer*.

However, third, and most interestingly, there is a curious and compelling tension between what Janet says and what Janet does. It is also dual-edged, Malcolm's critics, and it is not surprising she has a number, triumphantly point to her errors to argue that she is no better than the people she sacrifices. But Malcolm also has a knack of demonstrating many of the best qualities of the



is no length he will not go to, and the more his book reflects his industry the more the reader believes that he is having an elevating literary experience, rather than simply listening to backstairs gossip and reading other people's mail.' (*The Silent Woman*, p9).

As someone who has not only read and enjoyed many biographies

professions that fall under her searching gaze.

She became mired in a decade-long, \$A11 million lawsuit after the publication of *In The Freud Archives* when Jeffrey Masson, her apparent to the archives, who had become a savage critic of Freud, sued for libel, accusing Malcolm of fabricating some of his quotes. For instance,

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Masson repeatedly boasted of his ability to charm or seduce senior analysts. He said they regarded him as a private asset—they enjoyed his irreverent jokes—but a public liability—he was too young and brash to be taken seriously. Although the phrase did not appear on Malcolm's interview tapes she quoted Masson saying, 'I was like an intellectual gigolo.' In the middle of this legal imbroglio, Malcolm nevertheless launched into her dissection of journalists' capacity to seduce and betray the subjects of their stories. She mercilessly pummelled journalist Joe McGinniss who had deceived a Navy doctor accused and convicted of murdering his family.

MALCOLM WAS EVENTUALLY cleared of libel because Masson had failed to prove that any of the quotations were deliberately or recklessly falsified (reported in *The Australian*, November 4, 1994), but the jury in San Francisco District Court still found that Malcolm had falsified two quotes attributed to Masson. *The New Yorker*, which is the publication where most of her books have originally appeared as long articles, decided in spite of the libel case to commission and publish her work on Sylvia Plath and Ted Hughes.

And I think they were right. Reviewers have widely praised *The Silent Woman* (published in the United States last March). *The New York Times Book Review* said she had achieved the metaphorical feat of sawing off the tree limb she sits on, yet not falling, while Bernard Crick, respected biographer of George Orwell, said 'it contains some of the best thinking on both the practical and philosophical problems of biography.' (*New Statesman and*

Society, October 7, 1994). This is what I meant by saying Malcolm demonstrates the best qualities of the professions she probes. Her analysis of people's actions and motives would do the average psychoanalyst proud; her ferreting investigations make for excellent journalism, and now in *The Silent Woman*, she has combined this with a nose for mood and nuance and an ability to draw character to produce a fresh, sensitive portrait of Sylvia Plath and Ted Hughes.

What needs to be clarified is Malcolm's purpose in writing so provocatively; her critics charge her with arrogance, and she certainly comes across at times, in the four books of hers I have read, as aloof and icily analytical. But I think she is also witheringly honest, not only about her subjects but about her own work. (She confesses in *The Silent Woman*, to feeling the 'early symptoms of infection: the familiar stirrings of reportorial desire.')

What she has to say about the power struggles and unspoken agendas that underlie the relationships between journalists and their subjects or about the biographical enterprise (as quoted above) is certainly true. It is also true that at least some journalists and biographers are honest with themselves about what they are doing, and strive for an ethical balance between their interests and those of their subject.

But if Malcolm had written a one-the-one-hand, on-the-other hand masterpiece of vacillation, her work would have had nothing like the impact it has had.

■ **Matthew Ricketson** is a freelance journalist. He is currently researching a biography of financier Staniforth Ricketson, his grandfather.

How will they face up?

EUREKA STREET



Versus QUADRANT

The Inaugural Cricket Match

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Taste and see

AN OLD BOYFRIEND OF MINE ONCE asked 'What's the point of writing about food?' Pointing to my well-leafed copy of *The Art of Eating* by M.F.K. Fisher (who was often asked the same question) I told him to look up the answer for himself. Back in 1943 Fisher wrote, 'It seems to me that our three basic needs, for security, food and love, are so entwined that we cannot think straightly of one without the others. So it happens that when I write of hunger, I am really writing about love and the hunger for it, and warmth and the love of it ... and then the warmth and richness and fine reality of hunger satisfied.'

Not all this summer's food books display so much profundity, or common sense. But there is no doubt that, when writing about food, people often end up writing about the things they think are really important, be they precision and a perfect result every time (which I happen to think is impossible), or the courage and creativity to take risks and hope for the best.

It is said we are living in an era in which no one cooks at home anymore. That's nonsense, but just in case there is even a suspicion of a trend let's begin with the handful of new cookbooks written for the uninitiated. Geoff Slattery's *Good Food No Fuss*, and Gabriel Gaté's pocket size *Fast Pasta*, both make cooking sound possible and enjoyable. And I think both succeed.

Gaté is a bumblingly charming media chef who has played a large part in demystifying French cuisine



Fast Pasta, Gabriel Gaté, Anne O'Donovan/Penguin, 1994. RRP \$5.95 ISBN 0 14 024303 8
Good Food No Fuss, Geoff Slattery, Anne O'Donovan, 1994. RRP \$19.95 ISBN 0 908476 72 8
Creative Casseroles, Anne Willan, Reader's Digest Australia, 1994. RRP \$25.00 ISBN 0 86438 565 X
The Classic Italian Cookbook, Marcella Hazan, Macmillan Papermac, 1992. RRP \$26.95 ISBN 0 333 48518 1
Allegro Al Dente, pasta and opera, Terry Durak, Rinaldo Di Stasio and Jill Dupleix, William Heinemann Australia, 1994. RRP \$45.00 ISBN 0 85561 620 6
50 Great Curries of India, Camellia Panjabi, Readers Digest, 1994. RRP \$45.00 ISBN 0 86438 720 2
Fine Family Cooking, Tony Bilson, Angus and Robertson, 1994. RRP \$45.00 ISBN 0 207 18242 6

for Australians. *Fast Pasta* is a quick run through of noodle and pasta dishes that can be thrown together in record time. One thing Gaté doesn't mention is that many of the pasta dishes are also very cheap. The first 20 pages or so read like a menu from my first student share house: macaroni cheese, spaghetti with napoli sauce, with garlic and parsley, with tomato and beans. It is a tribute to their fundamental goodness that I can still feed anyone, anywhere, with these dishes.

Good Food No Fuss is a catalogue of Geoff Slattery's favourite recipes along with a full-frontal assault, aimed pretty squarely at blokes, on the idea that cooking is a chore. Rather than forming the core of the book, the recipes here are illustrations of Slattery's views on how to live well, and many cooks will disagree with at least some of what he has to say. Personally I don't like his

reliance on the microwave, or his habit of putting lime peel into everything. But Slattery's point is that preparing a meal is a creative process that every cook should make his/her own. The recipes in this book, says Slattery, are things to be read for inspiration and then used, or changed, or discarded as the cook sees fit.

The latest in the Look and Cook series, *Creative Casseroles*, is the polar opposite of Slattery's come-as-you-are approach to cooking. English author Anne Willan runs a cooking school with branches in the United States and France, and her book describes itself as the 'ultimate step-by-step guide to mastering today's cooking, with success every time'. The Look and Cook television series is currently running on SBS, and watching a recent episode I did pick up some handy surgical hints on how to dissect a chicken into equal

Above:
Eating on a high note,
from Durak, Di Stasio
and Dupleix's *Allegro Al
Dente, pasta and opera.*

Photograph:
Rob Blackburn

Decoys are for wimps



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eighths, and how to tell if the joint of beef is done. This book does exactly what it says it will do. It lays out every step of the cooking and preparing process, in pictures and words, so that nothing is left to chance. But *Creative Casseroles* includes unnecessarily complicated recipes that couldn't help but make nervous cooks even more nervous, or perhaps just tired. Cooking is not an exact science, with guaranteed 'success every time', and really, who'd want it to be?

Every day it seems there are new cookbooks on the shelves, but some oldies are so good that they stay there. Marcella Hazan's *Classic Italian Cookbook* was first released in 1973, was reprinted numerous times, then revised and reissued in 1988, and reprinted again since. If you want a comprehensive and mouth-watering account of Italian cuisine, this is the book to buy. In the best Italian tradition Hazan is informative, welcoming, exacting, and immodest. In the chapter on first courses, for example, she describes the treatment of homemade pasta in other books as 'cursory, inadequate or, even worse, misleading'. *The Classic Italian Cookbook* is an invaluable reference book, listing essential herbs, equipment and techniques, and a great read. And I agree with her: mushy lasagne is an abomination!

Allegro Al Dente, pasta and opera, is a very different, but no less Italian, cook book, which comes from the people who last year put out the first food and music compilation *Hot Food Cool Jazz*. The idea here is that you play the CD of great Italian arias that comes with the book, as you create! According to authors Terry Durack, Jill Dupleix, and Melbourne restaurateur, Ronnie Di Stasio, 'as long as there is pasta and opera in your life you will never feel hunger of any kind'. *Allegro Al Dente* is a very stylish, you could say slick 'concept' book, with spectacular photography throughout. What saves it from death by pretension is the simple excellence of the pasta dishes from Cafe Di Stasio chef, Valerio Nucci. The opera's not bad either (especially Cecilia Bartoli singing *Una voca poco fa* from *The Barber of Seville*).

In the proper tradition I've saved

the best until last. The two finest cook books out this season are *Fifty Great Curries of India*, by Camellia Panjabi, and *Fine Family Cooking*, by Tony Bilson. Both really make you want to cook. And in different ways they provide a rare reminder of just how good books written by restaurateurs can be when the cook cares about more than culinary high wire acts.

PUNJABI HAS SPENT almost two decades researching and promoting regional Indian food. Her restaurants in India and Britain, and this exceptional, broadly researched book, are the result. She explains that food served in Indian restaurants, inside and outside India, is predominantly North Indian. Much of the rest of the subcontinent's rich culinary heritage is kept in private hands. Panjabi has put some of this heritage down on paper for the first time ever. There are some regional variations of familiar favourites, but most are seldom-seen recipes from individual families or regions. *Fifty Great Curries of India* is not just a tour of rare delights, it is an induction into Indian culture, theology and cuisine, mixing Ayurvedic texts with guides to basic curry making and familial duties: 'He alone can remain healthy, who regulates his diet, exercise and recreation, controls his sensual pleasures, who is generous, just, truthful and forgiving, and who gets along well with his relatives.'

Tony Bilson is not, like Panjabi, rescuing aspects of an ancient cuisine. But he certainly is creatively re-inventing—perhaps resuscitating—an Australian tradition, which he aptly describes as fine family cooking. Bilson's approach reminds me of my grandmother's: like her, he hunts out the best Australian produce (but not necessarily the most expensive) and combines old and new techniques to produce spectacular results. Refreshingly, there is not a strand of pasta in sight. *Fine Family Cooking* is not just a showcase for Bilson's talents, it is an inspiring and irresistible spur to action—to get into the kitchen and have a go. ■

Catriona Jackson is a freelance journalist.

A valuable Currency

AN IMPRESSIVE HANDFUL of play texts has arrived on my desk from Currency Press, the intrepid publisher of Australian drama founded more than 22 years ago in Sydney by Katharine Brisbane and the late Philip Parsons. Currency has published all of Australia's major contemporary playwrights, and this latest batch of four plays suggests that it still has a keen eye for spotting publishable new work.

The plays all come fresh from productions by various New South Wales companies during the past three years, and each text bears the stamp of theatrical exposure. This distinguishes them from those published in Currency's Current Theatre Series, which offer only the version of a text provided by the author for the beginning of rehearsals.

The four new plays have several elements in common, including the fact that all are written by men, all deal with events and/or characters drawn from real life, and all have had the benefit of 'workshopping' or similar involvement by theatre professionals other than their authors. Three of the plays concern male violence, and two are about the theatrical arts themselves.

First of the bunch is the neatly (if ironically) titled *A Property of the Clan*, a play commissioned from Nick Enright by Freewheels Theatre in Education and first performed by them in Newcastle in August 1992. Enright, who was born in Sydney, has written, co-written or translated many plays and music-theatre pieces, such as *The Venetian Twins* (premiered by the lamented Nimrod in its late heyday), *On the Wallaby* (SATC) and *Daylight Saving*, along with TV and film scripts (like *Come in Spinner* and *Lorenzo's Oil*). More recently he has turned to darker



Nick Enright photo: Currency Press

themes, as in the autobiographical *St James Infirmery*, the quasi-biographical *Mongrels* (also in this group of plays) and the present work.

A Property of the Clan is set 'in a large Australian industrial city in the present day' (the Newcastle of its première production?) and it portrays the rape and subsequent murder of a teenage girl by a group of boys attending a welcome-home party for one of their drop-out schoolmates. The story is based on events widely reported a year or so before the play's opening.

ENRIGHT'S VERSION OF THE STORY focuses on the victim's friends and their families, all of whom are having troubles of their own. The girl herself, Tracy, is never seen onstage but is much talked about (as 'a moll' by the boys, 'a real friend' by her schoolmate Jade, who maintains a vigil over her grave until justice is done, and as 'mature for her age' by Jade's battling mother). The action is interrupted—and theatrically counterpointed—by parallel voice-overs of the boys' court appearances and by a subplot portraying the rela-

tionship between working-class Jared (Jade's brother and a close friend of Ricko, whose drunken party was the locus of the rape and murder) and Rachel, a student from across the river.

The staging is simple and anti-naturalistic but the relationships and issues are complex. So are the outcomes. The community has lost a number of its young (one permanently, others for the term of their prison sentences), friendships are broken and community confidence and trust are shattered, but life will apparently go on. What is not much dealt with in the body of this play are questions like why and how routine male-female violence and hatred are perpetuated in our society. Presumably, these issues are to be tackled in the follow-up material that typically accompanies Theatre in Education programs. This Enright play is a classic example of the best of the issues-based TIE plays that, according to David Carlin (whom I quoted last month), have died out. Clearly, they have not.

Gordon Graham's *The Boys* (which premiered in 1991 in a Griffin Theatre production at the Stables in King's Cross), is similarly concerned with male hatred and violence towards women, and in it, too, the focal event (the rape and murder of a young woman by three working-class suburban brothers, one of whom is just out of prison) takes place offstage. When the play was workshopped at the Australian National Playwrights' Conference in 1988, and again when it was fully produced, obvious parallels with the awful Anita Cobby case

'While women believe, men rape, torture and kill. Who is to blame?'

—JOCELYN SCUTT,

introducing

Gordon Graham's *The Boys*

were apparent. Graham's treatment of the story focuses, in a linear and grittily realistic narrative, on the relationship between the Sprague boys' mother and girlfriends, who form a strong bond among themselves: they are supportive of each other and blindly supportive of their men, who in their eyes couldn't have done anything to hurt anyone. (As Jocelyn Scutt suggests in an illuminating introductory essay, 'While women believe, men rape, torture and kill. Who is to blame?') The all-female action is punctuated by flashbacks to the fateful day of Brett's homecoming and the fatal night that followed.

The play is overlaid with heavily articulated dialogue, designed to help the audience to understand every character's every action. When reading the text this almost makes their actions *unbelievable*, but by all accounts Alex Galeazzi's production was so well-acted that this shortcoming was not a problem on the stage.

Another play of Nick Enright's, *Mongrels* (first performed by the

Ensemble Theatre in Sydney in 1991), is also rooted in violence of a kind. Early in the piece, Edmund Burke is freed from prison (where he spent a long stretch for violent crimes), but Enright's Burke—unlike Gordon Graham's Brett—is set up for a successful career as a playwright. He is nurtured by a wealthy theatrical producer, Elaine Vanderfield, who soon introduces him to another of her stable of playwrights, the homosexual Vincent O'Hara.

The two writers strike up a bond of mutual respect and envy. O'Hara, for example, gives Burke considerable dramaturgical assistance early in his 'outside' career but resents being partly supplanted by him in the theatre's favours. He is nevertheless one of the few to come to Burke's deathbed, even though he is very ill himself. In fact, it is the relationship between the ratbag but genuinely talented Burke and the sensitive (but campily acid and by then mediocre)

O'Hara that provides most of the interest in this play.

READERS FAMILIAR WITH the Sydney theatre scene in the 1970s will have little trouble recognising Jim McNeill and Peter Kenna in these two characters, and Enright liberally sprinkles events and character traits from the men's lives throughout his fast-moving and well-observed action. Seeing the play published by Currency adds a certain extra *frisson* to one's enjoyment of its nuances: that press's proprietors were prominent among McNeill's supporters, and published both playwrights. This is a good and lively play, and its interest in art and artists is an added bonus.

Arguably the best of the four plays in this group (and the one which has had the greatest success) is Timothy Daly's *Kafka Dances*, also premiered by the Griffin in 1993 but revived this year as a Griffin/Sydney Theatre Company production at the Wharf. Daly is a writer whose previous main achievement was his translation and adaptation of Patrick Süskind's excellent monodrama, *The Double Bass*, with Henri Szeps for the Ensemble in 1990. *Kafka Dances* is set simultaneously in the drearily conformist home of the young

Czech-German writer Franz Kafka and in the inspiring café of the Yiddish Dream Theatre in Prague, *circa* 1912. The two settings are complemented by no less than three simultaneous frames of action. One concerns the consumptive, acquiescent and utterly indecisive Kafka's domestic life: he does pretty much what he's told by his authoritarian father Hermann. His weird dreams, in which the Yiddish actors teach him to 'act' (in many senses of the word), form the second action. The third, from which the play derives its title, concerns Kafka's long and indeterminate engagement with Felice Bauer, with whom he corresponded for years but rarely met. In these scenes, she teaches him to dance.

In learning from the Yiddish actors and from Felice how to act (i.e., to take responsibility for his actions as well as to act his proper role in life) and to dance (i.e., to let his spirit take flight), the hopeless Franz is emboldened to read fragments of his masterpiece *Metamorphosis* aloud to his bewildered family during the play's remarkable climax, when all hell breaks loose around him and them. The utterly anti-naturalistic fabric of Daly's play is further enriched by deliberate character-doubling, whereby the actors playing Kafka's family also play the archetypes (The Father, The Mother, The Daughter etc) in the Yiddish Dream Theatre.

This is a fantastic piece of theatre, blending Strindberg's kind of realism, Breton's surrealism, German expressionism and Pirandello's metatheatricality (not to mention moments of ironic Aussie and age-old Jewish humour) into a dream-play form peculiar to Timothy Daly. Having vastly enjoyed reading it in the form of a Currency Press play text, I can only say I would love to have seen it in Ros Horin's stage production. If one of the functions of play publication is to provide the reader with a vivid sense of what the written text might be like in performance, then Currency is continuing to do its job conspicuously well. ■

Geoffrey Milne is head of the division of drama at La Trobe University and a drama critic for the ABC.



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FLASH IN THE PAN

St Mac meets St Lucy

Mary, dir. Kay Pavlou (selected cinemas). Conventional drama interspersed with comments from 'talking heads' is this well-accredited director's means of making Mary MacKillop's life intelligible, and the device works well. The talking heads, filmed in locations that match the drama, insist on the soundness and reality of Mary.

She is played as a young woman by Lucy Bell, who is one of the best things about the film. There is character in her work. It was a bit of a rude shock when she left the screen to be replaced by Linden Wilkinson as the older Mary, although in the film's terms there wasn't much left to tell. The choleric bishops, the jealous Fr Julian Tenison Woods and the neurasthenic nuns had all been ably dealt with by Lucy Bell.

The film does nothing for the bishops, who are either thick, belligerent, alcoholic, or all three, and does even less for their clerical off-siders. And Vatican's man on saints, while charming and commonsensical, is above all, old and toothless.

There are glimmerings of the social context to which Mary responded, and of the religious culture that shaped not just her response but that of the hundreds of other young women who joined the Josephites—enough glimmerings to make the film worthwhile.

—Margaret Coffey

War cry

Once Were Warriors, dir. Lee Tamahori (independent cinemas) The best-known film to have reached this country from New Zealand (the one

named after a musical instrument) had ambiguous national origins. Once Were Warriors, adapted from Alan Duff's bestselling

book of the same name, will suffer no such identity crisis—it is unmistakably a New Zealand film.

Warriors tells the story of a Maori family, Beth Neke (Rena Owen), her husband Jake (Temuera Morrison) and their five children, living in squalid, crowded conditions in Auckland. Such has been its impact in its country of origin that it has outstripped The Piano in box office

Eureka Street Film Competition

Perhaps you thought you would let 1994 end without mentioning the International Year of the Family again. Silly you. Here's a still from that most saccharine of Hollywood family sagas, Lassie Come Home. Tell us, in 25 words or less, what Lassie's love means to you and we'll award two tickets, to the film of your choice, for the answer we loathe most. Send entries to: Eureka Street film competition, PO Box 553, Richmond 3121. The winner of October's competition was the Rev. Dr Kim Miller, of St Alban's Anglican Church in Wagga Wagga, NSW, who thought that Marilyn Monroe was saying, 'Stick with me, Simba honey, and I'll show you how a leopard can change her spots.'



receipts there, and created a storm of controversy because of its portrayal of the Maori community. The film is like The Piano in being much decorated, however, and has picked

up a swag of international awards.

Jake, a hard man with a chip on his shoulder, is out of work and spends his days drinking at the local pub, where he rules the roost with his fists. Beth loves her husband deeply; she is drawn to his powerful sexual presence but suffers physically at his hands if she defies him. The eldest son, Nig (Julian Arahanga), has joined a gang and another, Boogie (Taungaroa Emile), has been taken to a welfare home.

Amid all this violence the eldest daughter, Grace, tries to help Beth bring up her two younger sisters, and escapes the harsh realities of her surroundings by writing short stories. But despite her apparent strength, Grace is ultimately the most vulnerable member of the family, and it is her fate which determines theirs.

Once Were Warriors is an emotionally and physically violent film. It is also a magnificent piece of cinema about survival, courage and reclaiming a sense of dignity. Australians, grappling with the plight of their own indigenous people, will find its message especially poignant.

—Tim Stoney

To life I

No Worries dir. David Elfick (independent cinemas). If you are bit jaded by the usual offerings for kids at Christmas, you and they will enjoy this fresh film from a director who believes in using actors instead of extruded chromium globs with Arnold Schwarzenegger's head on them. The children's jury at the 1994 Berlin Film Festival liked Elfick's version of Australian country life during the 1990s drought well enough to award it the Golden Bear for Best Children's Film. But you may have to hunt for No Worries: the major distributors are playing safe this season and sticking with guns, sex and robots.

If your kids get to see No Worries they might learn what guns are really used for on a working farm. The Bell family run sheep in rural New South Wales, where they face the consequences of natural and manufactured hardship: drought, dust storms and bank deregulation. The film focuses

on Matilda, the 11-year-old daughter, played with engaging severity by Amy Terelink. Matilda is old enough to drive a ute to the school bus pickup and young enough to sulk when life is hard. When her father has to take a shotgun to his stock and her ancient heeler/kelpie she doesn't forgive him, at least not for a convincing gap of time.

The film is unembarrassed about archetypes verging on stereotypes—Matilda's family and friends are sunburnt and laconic; the banker villains wear ties and pressed mole-skins, and lack humour. But good acting and some sharp scripting guarantee authenticity. And there are some quirky and enchanting moments. In one marvellous scene, Elfick has the rangy, cash-strapped farmer (Geoff Morrell) break into an unlikely Zorba dance, more game energy than parody, which carries his family and audience along with him.

The Bells lose their farm and have to head, like Steinbeck's Joads, for the promised land. Sydney is not kind but it is convincing. So is Elfick's film. —Morag Fraser

The main chance

The Music of Chance, dir. Philip Haas (independent cinemas), based on Paul Auster's novel of the same name, concerns itself with control, personal and political. It is about how power is given and wielded, how one's vulnerability is affected by chance, and how patterns are imposed arbitrarily on the world and on people.

Two eccentric millionaires inhabit an American Olympus—their wealth allows them caprices of benevolence or cruelty. Two drifters, one a louche 'pro' cardplayer (James Spader), the other a quiet, decent Ishmael type (Mandy Patinkin), meet by chance and go into business together. The 'business' is a serious poker game with the two millionaires. To come under their power is to take a risk—the kind of risk known to gamblers and the powerless as they attempt to multiply their chances in a game that signifies so many American cultural realities.

This film is an interesting début feature for its director, sharing its

themes and concerns (obsession, endurance, the search for meaning in a journey, the dark side of power) with such great American myths as *Moby Dick*, *Easy Rider*, *Deliverance*, even *Duel*. The fairytale symmetry of the beginning and ending places it firmly in a high category of American art. —Juliette Hughes

Fischer king

Searching for Bobby Fischer dir. Steven Zaillian (independent cinemas). I'm one of those people who learnt to play chess because of Bobby Fisher. For a few brief years in the '70s, he captured the imagination of the West. He was a child prodigy, an eccentric world chess champion and, in 1972, a Cold War hero. He was also a political fanatic and a downright difficult customer.

This film is about who Bobby Fisher could have been. At the age of seven, Josh Waitzkin (Max Pomeranc) plays an occasional game of chess with the passing parade in New York's Washington Square. His friend, the streetwise Vinnie (Laurence Fishburne), schools him in a kind of aggressive game called 'blitz chess'. Pomeranc, who what is problematically known as 'real life' is himself a chess whiz kid, rattles pieces round the board with an authority you couldn't learn in acting class.

People start to whisper behind their hands that Josh is the next Bobby Fischer, and his father, Fred (Joe Mantegna), takes him for lessons to the legendary Bruce Pandolfini (Ben Kingsley). At first Pandolfini shrugs them off, but he realises that Josh, unlike the 'competent fakes' who lurk around the chess club, is a creative player.

What follows is a model education for the talented. Josh is urged to succeed but allowed to fail. And, of course, Josh ends up as a well-balanced kid with good friends. It never happened to Fischer, but it makes a heart-warming story.

—Michael McGirr SJ

Recycle, recycle

Miracle on 34th Street, dir. Les Mayfield (Hoyts). Mention the title of this film and most people will think

of the 1947 original with Maureen O'Hara, a classic comedy that gets dredged up each Christmas by some TV station in need of a movie for the insomniac slot. The association with Ms O'Hara will probably ensure a short run for this remake, because its chief defect is that she's not in it.

Sure, dismissing it in this way is a bit hard on Elizabeth Perkin, who puts in a creditable performance as the character O'Hara played in the original. But Perkin would probably play a competent Ilse Lund, too, were anyone ever stupid enough to remake *Casablanca*; and that wouldn't change the fact that the role is forever Ingrid Bergman's.

Apart from the absence of Ms O'Hara, the remake of *Miracle* is noteworthy for its fidelity to the original—perhaps because the writer-director of the 1947 version, George Seaton, collaborated on the screenplay for this one. And there is one casting triumph: Richard Attenborough as Kris Kringle, the department-store Santa Claus who believes he is the real thing. It is a role that the director-turned-actor has been growing into for years.

Miracle on 34th Street (version II) also prompts a question about the relationship between the world we actually live in and the world as Hollywood presents it to us. If you were looking for a 1940s comedy that could plausibly be remade in the '90s, would you choose one about a single mother/business executive type who will only find happiness by starting to play house again?

—Ray Cassin

Mrs Prufrock

Tom and Viv, dir. Brian Gilbert (independent cinemas), which tells the story of T.S. Eliot's first marriage, lingers in the memory long after the final credits have disappeared from the screen. Eliot met Vivienne Haigh-Wood before World War I, when he was still an ambitious young American studying at Oxford, and the pair fell in love and eloped. Only after their marriage did he discover Viv's mental illness, caused by a hormonal imbalance. Her erratic mood swings gradually forced them apart, and eventually she was declared in-

sane and committed to a psychiatric institution.

The film (adapted from a stage-play by Michael Hastings, who co-wrote the screenplay with Adrian Hodges) touches on many issues: prejudice, justice, sexism, creativity. And faith. Like Eliot's poetry, the film is replete with ambivalent religious symbolism—the scene in which Viv (Miranda Richardson) stands banging on the locked doors of a church, screaming for admission, while Tom (Willem Dafoe) is baptised inside, is a searing one.

Tom and Viv explores suggestions that some of the poet's finest work, especially *The Waste Land*, was an expression of his marital problems, and implies that the vivacious woman who loved him has been unfairly written out of his story.

Since the film's release, Eliot's widow, Valerie, has challenged the accuracy of its claims about Vivienne's contribution to her husband's writing, and about his role in her committal to an asylum. The truth may never be known, but *Tom and Viv* will leave many with an urge to reach for that dusty anthology to brush up on the man and his poetry. —Brad Halse

To life II

Country Life, dir Michael Blakemore (independent cinemas), Chekhov has been well served by Australian interpreters. Those who relished John Pierre Mignon's innovative productions for the stage will find something entirely different but equally satisfying in this screen version of *Uncle Vanya*, which takes its name from the subtitle of that play, 'scenes from country life'.

Blakemore has relocated the events from the Russian countryside to the Hunter Valley, and moved them forward in time to the years immediately after World War I—a period that, in an Australian context, provides the sense of a brittle world on which Chekhov depends.

Country Life shares Chekhov's sharp eye for self deception. For years Jack (John Hargreaves) has been sending part of the earnings from his sheep station to his brother-in-law,

Alexander (Blakemore), a theatre critic in London. Having been sacked from his newspaper, Alexander returns with his beautiful new wife, Deborah (Greta Scacchi), to the property of his first wife's family.

He is said to be on first names with Bernard Shaw and—despite the fact that he has abandoned his daughter Sally (Kerry Fox) for his literary career—is welcomed home as a conquering hero. As Alexander is exposed as a fraud, Uncle Jack is faced with the chilling discovery that his own life has been wasted work-

ing to send a monthly cheque to London. To confront Alexander would mean confronting himself, so after a momentary unpleasantness, they shake hands and return to their separate lives.

A more productive style of living is embodied in the figure of Dr Max Askey (Sam Neill). If you are tempted to dismiss Askey's concern for land degradation as a politically correct anachronism, go and check your Chekhov. It's all there. And it's skilfully rendered here.

—Michael McGirr SJ

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SHOWCASE

A brief tour of Caledonia with Dr Connolly



A few years ago I went with friends to see Billy Connolly perform in Melbourne. As we walked out into the night at the end of the show we realised we were all in pain, from armpit to kneecap; we had been laughing so hard and so unrelentingly

that we had all almost gone into spasm. There are no half measures with Connolly; either you watch him entranced and howl with laughter (and if you are my parents you forgive what the ABC warns is his 'coarse language', which they sure wouldn't do for anyone else), or you have no idea what the fuss is about. Either you think the title 'Billy Connolly's World Tour of Scotland' is funny, or you don't. If you don't, don't read on.

This three-part special was shown on the ABC's *The Big Picture* over three weeks. It was a unique piece of television, mixing genres that don't often all converge, especially on TV: travel documentary, autobiography, stand-up comedy. For two of these to merge is in no way unusual; it takes someone like Connolly to indulge in all three at once. As he reminisced about his not especially happy childhood in Glasgow and his first sexual experience in Arbroath, as he talked about the taste of smoked haddock or the smells of the countryside round Kelso that you could take in if you rode your bike, it became clearer and clearer that this was a program about the convergence of memory, the body, and the map.

It made riveting television. Brisk editing provided constant movement back and forth between Connolly's travels round Scotland and his performances in the towns he visited; what emerged was nothing less than a demonstration of the creative process, as he turned the day's travels into material for the show. A lot of emphasis was put on the act of travelling itself—by car, boat, bicycle and aeroplane—and one of the effects of this was to indicate just how small Scotland really is, and to reveal the immense density of its history: monuments, nuances and ancient rocks as far as the eye could see.

Connolly's meditations on the process of being a comedian were interspersed with landscapes and stories. In the first of the three episodes he talked about the way he was energised by anger (at complacency, exploitation, prejudice, abuse of power) and how this fed his comic performances; this comment was recalled by a moment in the third episode when, spitting as is the custom on the Heart of Midlothian (yes, it's an actual heart shape picked out in bricks in the middle of Edinburgh), he pointed out that Parliament was nearby: 'A spit at Parliament is never a bad idea.'

Another aspect of performance uppermost in his own discussion of it was the importance of direct connection with the audience. 'I like to perform to small audiences - to improve the conversational side of my act, an' the conversational side of my

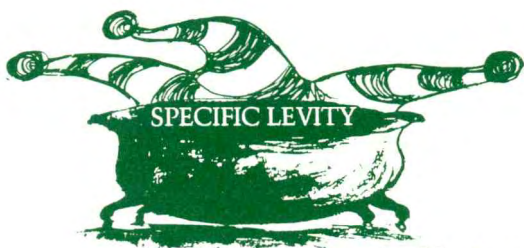
behaviour.' The small audiences were in tiny halls on the Orkney Islands, and it was to one of these performances that the camera then cut; Connolly was cadging lollies from the audience. 'Ooooh it's a Chocolate Eclair, m'fuckin' favourite ... I'll have some of your sweeties, too—are these the ones that are in the shape of the fruit? Oh, they *are!* I havenae seen these in *years* ... See, that's what happens when ye laugh wi' a sweetie in your mouth. It's shot right up your nostril.'

The scene that typified the whole slant of the show and its aims as good television was shot on Culloden Moor, with a Connolly version of the central and defining moment in modern Scottish history. ('Bonnie Prince Charlie was actually a wee Italian person.') Dressed in an unlikely but fitting and dramatic combination of classic Levis, check lumberjack shirt and a red plaid shawl with fringes flying in the wind—the outfit in which, elsewhere, he recited an entire poem by the Great McGonagall in the middle of a snowstorm—he told the story of the Battle of Culloden. 'After such a sensational victory for the English, they then banned the wearing of tartan, they banned the use of bagpipes, they banned the use of the language. And we were really dominated from then on, and so it occupies an extraordinary place in the Scottish psyche.' He went on to demonstrate the new, battle-winning techniques ('chop and slash—from the *side!*') of the English, and the charge of the Jacobite army. 'But this is *verra verra* marshy ground. An' by the time they got to where the English were waitin' for them they were completely knackered.'

His treatment of this classic example of cultural blitzkrieg was typical of his practice as a performer: making dire things funny as a way of refusing to forget about them. More than anything else I have ever seen him do, this program demonstrated how central his Scots identity is to his work. He mentioned his loathing of nationalism a number of times, but he's one of those people who understands that the love of a place is a different thing from the impulse to get aggressive about its boundaries. At one point he arrived on his bike at the English border by mistake: 'Oh dear, I've come a wee bit far. An' me oot wi'oot me passport.'

One of the most extraordinary and revealing moments of the program, in fact, was the point at which he talked about his passion for the country and the way that travelling around it feeds and energises his performances. 'Ye have tae learn to get into a mental state that is neither sleep nor wakefulness, an' meditation is quite useful to you. In recent times I have taken to drivin' meself aroond, an' I have great joy in this. I used to have a driver, but I got rid of him. Because now I can stop and have a scone. I can drive to the gig on the B roads. I can walk, if I want to.' ■

Kerryn Goldsworthy is a Melbourne writer and teacher.



Eureka Street Cryptic Crossword no. 29, December 1994

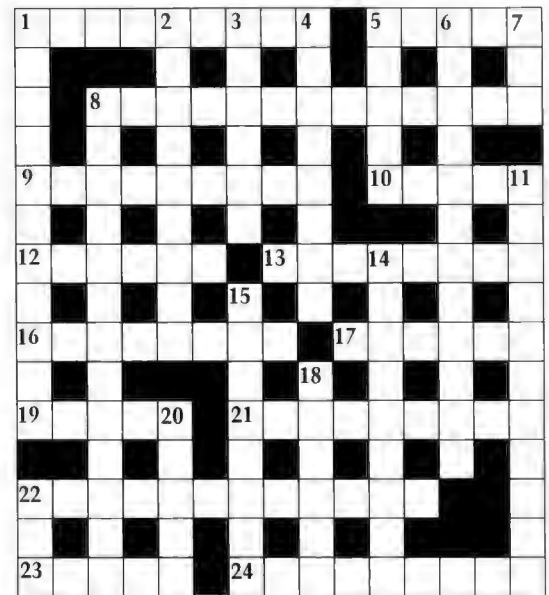
Devised by Joan Nowotny IBVM

ACROSS

- 1 & 5 Carts oils with March medley. Could be seasonal song. (9, 5)
- 8 Girl from French town who faced awful ideal of man's instigation, initially. (4, 2, 7)
- 9 For cocktail, stir limes without desert or reward (9)
- 10 See 2 down.
- 12 Old hunter found in dorm? Unusual! (6)
- 13 Unorthodox P.R. video right for this supplier (8)
- 16 Current coin before journalist emphasised the pronunciation. (8)
- 17 Price of the battery? (6)
- 19 Quiet yet? (5)
- 21 Friends in the spirit enjoy the same lotus flower arrangement. (9)
- 22 Swap right for left in acts of thinking about joyful festivities in honour of 8-down, perhaps (12).
- 23 What do you think about wool thickness? Answer please. (5)
- 24 Evert disaster with ease on the day after Good Friday. (6-3)

DOWN

- 1 In Roma silence involves these ritual observances (11)
- 2 & 10-across. The name of 8-across—who faced trial by fire, literally, as did 8-down, metaphorically. (5,4,2,3)
- 3 Arranged in mode or secured by ropes. (6)
- 4 Do they provide funds for godparents? (8)
- 5 A cold mixture here is hot in Italy. (5)
- 6 Rita wandered in confusion until taught to do this by 8-down and her followers. (4,3,5)
- 7 The French cultural attaché? Ask Dame Edna. (3)
- 8 Girl and Scotsman kill member of the Order of Preachers. But she's almost a saint! (4,9)
- 11 Somehow crooner nets something of prime importance. (11)
- 14 In some parts, they give he-men celebrations marked by intensity of feeling. (9)
- 15 In case peas, mingled with paint, cause problems, calm yourself with this ocean view. (8)
- 18 Without you, it seems, I'm inquisitive about collectors' items. (6)
- 20 Vestibule subject to influence. (5)
- 22 Back the RACV outside Victoria with this vehicle. (3)



Solution to Crossword no. 28, November 1994



Old Scottish show biz proverb: never appear with children, animals or Eureka Street.

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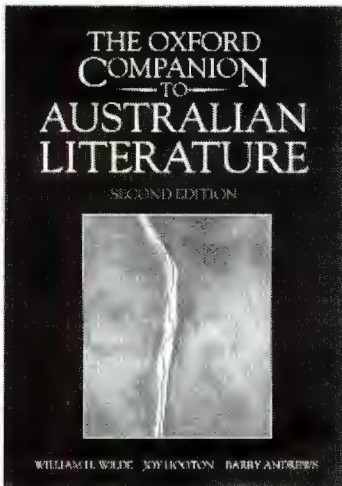
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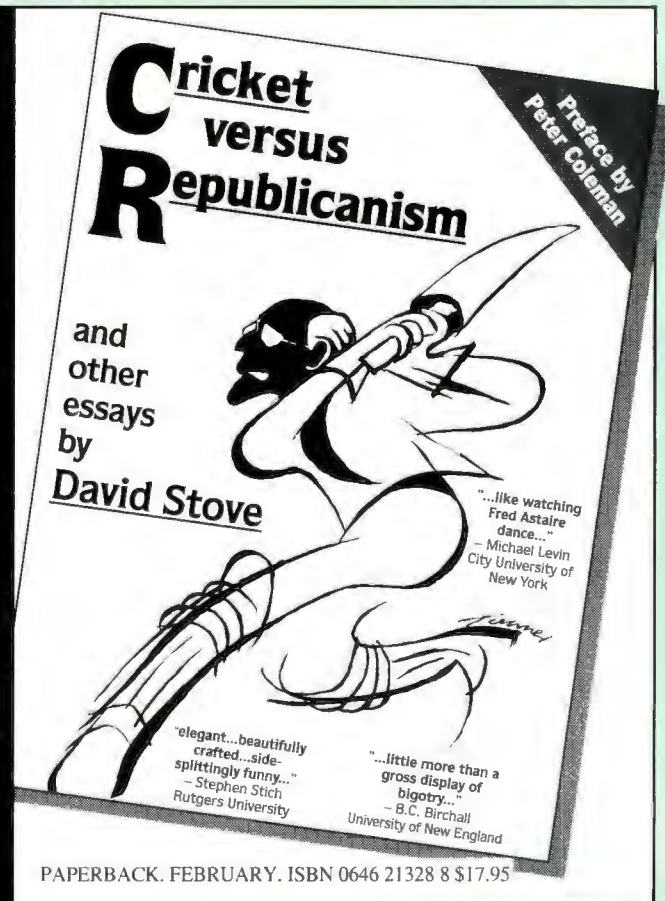
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