

EUREKA STREET

Vol. 4 No. 3 April 1994

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A black and white close-up photograph of Nelson Mandela. He is looking slightly to the right of the camera with a thoughtful expression. His hands are clasped together in front of his chest. The background is out of focus, showing what appears to be a body of water and a distant shoreline.

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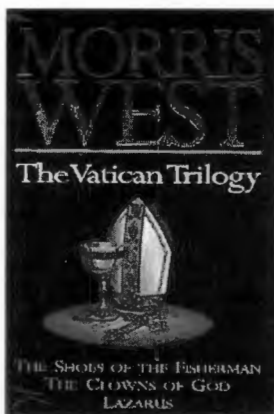
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EUREKA STREET

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A magazine of public affairs, the arts and theology

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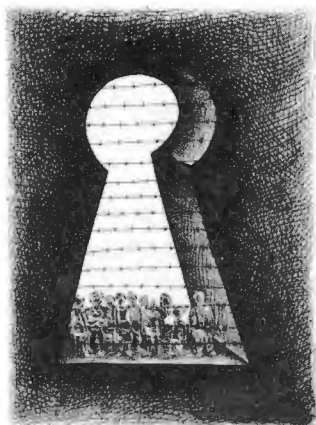
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Cover: Nelson Mandela, courtesy *The Age*.

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The big picture

DESPITE ITS SANDWICH BAR AND WHITEBOARD difficulties, the Keating government is riding high. The Fremantle doctor has blown in, bringing welcome relief to Labor strategists confronted by serial by-elections. A year after winning John Hewson's unlosable election, Paul Keating is turning from Mabo and APEC to employment and industry. He likes to work just one corner of the big canvas at a time. The artist does not like to be distracted, especially by minor parties or those who are not major stakeholders. In his more creative moments, even the routine chores of question time and accommodating the Senate can be an irritation. As the unrivalled artist-in-residence at the Lodge, he expects the discerning public to appreciate his broad-brush reforms even if they entail occasional disregard for good form.

Paul Keating is into managing change; as he reads it, we have an appetite for change. He is there not only to feed us but to lead us. Even while remaining rusted on to Ros Kelly's safety net, he told us that his government was the first to give ministers, rather than the public service, the free run of policy. In cooperation with the ACTU and the Reserve Bank (the latter having what Keating describes as 'prerogatives of its own which it operates in tandem with the government'), an 11-year series of Labor governments has produced a 'low-inflation productivity culture' and a commitment 'to price stability and full employment'. The commitment to full employment is secondary, given the concession that unemployment will remain at five per cent at the turn of the century even if there is strong, uninterrupted economic growth and given the kitten-like play with the 'jobs levy' ball of string.

Keating is rightly proud of his capacity to sell change—change to market institutions, labour institutions, capital institutions and institutions of government. There are two risks—change for change's sake, and change that fails to conserve the values and protect the interests held in balance by the institutions.

Proclaiming the Labor Party to be 'a party of economic reform, social democracy and social progress', Keating says 'it will never regress to being what it was in the 1950s and 1960s or even the 1970s.' Given the disarray of the Coalition, the poverty of their leadership, and the vacuum of their policies since *Fightback!* was voted down and out, Labor is the natural party of government. Unlike Labor in opposition in the 1960s, Labor in government in the 1990s is prepared to test to the limit the tolerance of the unemployed, hoping a strengthening of the economy, widening the gap between rich and poor, will not rend the social fabric.

In the wake of the Sydney fires, Keating promised that economic recovery was not just for those at the top end of town. Leaving behind the unemployed would be like abandoning the bushfire victims. Long-term unemployment is no one-week wonder; it is a fundamental problem that tinkering will not

resolve. But, with a weak opposition, a politically inactive and disparate group of unemployed, and an economically bamboozled public, there will be no fundamental change in work opportunities.

The government, the ACTU and the Reserve Bank will maintain their co-operative attempt to accelerate growth so that there will be some benefit for those who have suffered longest. But fundamental redistribution of work opportunities, whether or not there be growth, is just not on the agenda, for Labor or the coalition. It will not be a live political issue until we have snapped the tolerance of the long-term unemployed.

Never having occupied the ministerial suites of the new Parliament House, the coalition parties have grown impatient with arguments about matters of principle. Whiteboards, sandwich bars and piggeries have their place in politics but they are not the whole story. Parliament's Joint Standing Committee on Migration has tabled its report on 'Asylum, Border Control and Detention', which recommends a continuation of detention for boat people seeking asylum. Conceding that 172 of the 735 detained boat arrivals have been granted refugee status, the majority of the committee recommended closing off access to review and appeal in the higher courts, even on grounds that the decision-maker denied the applicant natural justice, was unreasonable or acted in bad faith.

Not one opposition member joined in dissent with the government's Barney Cooney, a lawyer who chairs the Senate Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs. He expressed his trust in the judiciary, who 'should have jurisdiction to release people held in detention under the Migration Act'. Cooney made the ominous observation that, 'Were Parliament and the executive, because they lacked trust in the judiciary, to move successfully to reduce its proper role, unwarranted strain would be thrown on the constitutional balance of this country.'

Cambodian boat people may not be a popular issue. But not even the Liberal Party's chief strategist on this issue, lawyer Philip Ruddock, could break ranks and join with Cooney's principled dissent, though he returned from the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna expressing disappointment 'at the lack of attention at the conference and in the Declaration Action Plan to the issue of refugees and internally displaced people.'

THERE WAS A TIME WHEN the Liberals prided themselves on their attachment to the rule of law and defence of the judiciary. Incidents like this make it hard to know what the Liberal Party stands for. That is not a good thing for democracy.

Eureka Street notes with regret the passing of one of our benefactors, Mr F.G. Gargan, of Bendigo, Victoria, after a brief illness. We extend sympathy to the Gargan family.

The Senate debate on Mabo highlighted the Liberals' abandonment of principle and lack of political acumen. They were so locked into a spoiling role that they could not join the National Party backbenchers to support government amendments sought by miners and pastoralists, their natural constituents. This was no belated Liberal Party gift to Aborigines. The instability of their leadership and the lack of principle in their policy have left them directionless and clutching at opinion polls, confirming the artist at the Lodge in his view that the major changes to the canvas of public life are devised by him, his ministers and his party in their own good time. That is why he labels the Senate 'a spoiling chamber' and 'unrepresentative swill'.

No government has ever had less control in the Senate. For any measure to pass, the government needs all the Democrats aboard plus two. It must deal with the two WA Greens and Tasmanian Independent Brian Harradine. But the government's frustrations are not necessarily bad news for the rest of us. Without the overt sympathy of the Democrats and Greens for Aboriginal demands in the Mabo process, Aborigines would have perceived themselves coming away with less. At the June 1993 Premiers' Conference, the secretary of the self-styled 'Aboriginal Provisional Government', Michael Mansell, led a demonstration outside Parliament House in Melbourne. His offsider, Geoff Clarke, said: 'The fact that we are sitting outside when our interests are being negotiated inside is inappropriate. We believe that we should be there as well, negotiating with the premiers on an equal footing.' Six months later they held a doorstep interview outside the Senate, 'commending the Keating government's flexible approach' and endorsing the legislation. The parliamentary checks and balances that give Keating's minders their headaches ensured Aboriginal participation and delivered a good political result, strengthening the canvas rather than rending it asunder.

Keating may be the current artist without rival, but he needs to concede that, but for a High Court judgment and a Senate he did not control, he would never have attempted such a work. Without rivals, and without checks and balances, his canvas would be marked by none of the fine brushwork that converts broad notions into the masterpiece of a free and confident nation, secure in its identity.

Government and people need a strong, principled Opposition and a parliamentary system attentive to the voices of the disenfranchised and dispossessed. Otherwise, the master's canvas will portray less and less of the picture—a portrait only of himself and his supporters, or, worse still, the idle doodlings of one indulging in change for change's sake. At Easter, we contemplate the vision of substantive and abiding change, for the better and for all. ■

Frank Brennan SJ is a visiting fellow in the Law Program at the Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University.

Vox populi, sort of

From Don Allan

It's pleasing to note that at least one political writer knows the difference between 'populism' and 'populism'.

Jack Waterford clearly shows he knows the difference when, in the penultimate paragraph of his Capital Letter column, February 1994, he avoids the trap that seems to have caught every other political writer: he describes Bronwyn's ideology as 'populism', not 'populism', which it ain't.

Were they around to comment, I'm sure the worthy people who founded the Populist Party in the United States in 1892 would be pleased with Jack. I'm also sure they would be less than amused that their beliefs are being confused with Bronwyn's.

Whatever else she might advocate, somehow or other, I cannot imagine Bronwyn advocating increased currency issue, free coinage of gold and silver, and, especially, public ownership of railroads.

Don Allan
Canberra, ACT

Duelling friars

From Christopher Dowd

Cardinal Ratzinger and his collaborators are unlikely to appear, tears streaming down their faces, in the foyer of Mannix College demanding to speak to the author of 'Lost, all lost in wonder', your review essay on the *Catechisme de l'Eglise Catholique* (Eureka Street, vol. 4, no. 1, Feb. 1994).

It is a tribute to the quality of the *Catechisme de l'Eglise Catholique* that Fr Denis Minns has been able to ferret out so little of substance with which to find fault. Space prevents me from dealing with all of Fr Minns' points but I would like to offer some comments on the method underlying the *Catechisme*.

Fr. Minns takes the *Catechisme* to task for giving the appearance of supposing itself to be above any entanglement in the particularities of culture, history, tradition and society by juxtaposing quotations from authors who lived at different times. The abundant and assiduously compiled references make it clear that the authors of the *Catechisme* are fully aware of the historical, cultural and theological diversity and complexity of the literature pertaining to each

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theme. As Fr Minns points out, 'one has to pay the closest attention to the footnotes'. Moreover, the *Catechisme* describes itself quite openly as 'synthetic', that is to say, as an assemblage of different elements taken from a variety of sources.

Fr Minns complains of the absence of 'commentary or linkage' between the quotations, but surely the surrounding text supplies this dimension. Fr Minns' difficulties might have been eased had he paid more attention to the front of the book, or its title page, which explicitly proclaims the work as following a particular literary genre, namely, that of a catechism. One would not expect a catechism to treat of theological matters in the same way as a scholarly monograph or a university thesis.

Fr Minns objects to some of the sources deployed by the *Catechisme*. He has it in for Pope Vigilius and Tertullian, *inter alia*. But so what if Vigilius was inconstant and a liar and Tertullian a misogynist? Do personal failure and cultural conditioning disqualify people from having their good or helpful deeds, sayings and writings remembered and quoted? Incidentally, the case of Pope Vigilius has no bearing on papal infallibility as described by the carefully measured wording of the dogmatic definition of the First Vatican Council.

Fr Minns tells us that he felt oppressed by the frequency of the *Catechisme's* references to the Council of Trent, the Roman Catechism, the Code of Canon Law and Denzinger-Schönmetzer. However, the *Catechisme* is hardly overburdened with such references. Consulting the Index of Citations at the back, I counted just over 112 columns. On my calculations, the citations to the Roman Catechism, Canon

Law, Denzinger-Schönmetzer (which includes the references to Trent) and the decrees of the Roman congregations (which, I imagine, also excite Fr. Minns' annoyance) comprise 15 of these columns. To call this a 'vast gibber plain', even by metaphor, is a wild exaggeration, particularly as five of the nine and a half Denzinger columns refer to creeds and to councils other than Trent.

Sacred Scripture occupies sixty one and a half columns. Is that, too a 'vast gibber plain'? I have always been bemused by the attitude towards the Denzinger-Schönmetzer collection displayed by comments such as Fr Minns'. I remember seminary professors frothing at the mouth, figuratively speaking, as they issued dire warnings about Denzinger to classes of which I was a member. They seemed to be convinced that the book itself gave off some noxious exhalation that induced a horrible and possibly fatal disease in anyone who had the misfortune to be in the same room as it. Denzinger is, of course, a completely harmless publication which is often useful as a reference tool.

Much of Fr Minns' review of the *Catechisme* is given over to identifying what he claims are oddities, inconsistencies and contradictions. On consulting the references he provides, I found his claims puzzling. Let me give some examples.

While there are grammatical ambiguities in *Adversus Haereses*, bk. 3, ch. 3 (and lacking the complete Greek text does not help), it is clear from the context that Irenaeus of Lyons is making a claim for the uniquely authoritative role of the Church of Rome among all the other churches.

Fr Minns ridicules the *Catechisme* for 'relying' on the 11th Council of Toledo of 675 for its exposition of the doctrine of the Trinity. This council is cited in four paragraphs, nos. 245 and 253-255, but the overall treatment of the Trinity extends across 40 paragraphs, nos. 232-267 and 290-292, with 70 references to Scripture, general councils, creeds, the liturgy and the Fathers. I suppose the question turns on what Fr Minns means by 'To rely upon'. I would have thought that it means something like 'to be significantly dependent upon'. That is clearly not the case with the *Catechisme* and the 11th Council of Toledo.

I am mystified as to why your review essayist was flabbergasted at the *Catechisme's* comparison between the love of God for his people and that of a

mother for her children. The self-evident meaning of this section is that the love of God is even stronger than one of the most attractive, intense and tender human loves that we can think of. There is no need to have recourse to speculation about some sinister women-hating pathology on the part of the compilers of the *Catechisme*.

Gregory of Nazianzen's and Augustine's views on sanctification are not contradictory. They are not even speaking of the same thing. Gregory's point is the special obligation that is on a priest to pursue personal holiness. Augustine is concerned with sacramental effects in the recipient that are not impeded by the absence of such holiness in the minister because the sacraments are always primarily the work of Christ.

Nor is there any contradiction between what the *Catechisme* says about



the mandate to proclaim the gospel. No one gives himself this mandate precisely because it is given by God through ecclesiastical commissioning.

To conclude, Fr Minns is scraping the bottom of the barrel to find significant criticisms of the *Catechisme de l'Eglise Catholique*. It is not perfect, as is only to be expected with any human endeavour, especially one so monumental as this, extending as it does to almost 700 pages and 3000 paragraphs, supported by a rigorous critical apparatus comprising thousands of footnotes. However, it is a magnificent production, lucid, comprehensive, well-organised, scientific, balanced, readable, firmly rooted in the tradition and open to the contemporary world and its problems. It deserves to be received with gratitude and liberality of spirit as a help to the church's mission of preaching the gospel in the

Catholic tradition with identity, coherence and confidence to the peoples of our day. We can certainly do without the grizzling that I have heard in gatherings of the clergy in this country about the horrors that can be expected to break out once the laity get their hands on the English-language edition.

Christopher Dowd OP
Canberra, ACT

Denis Minns OP replies:

The fostering of theological argument is, in my view, one of the greatest and most needed services *Eureka Street* offers to its readers. My only hesitation in engaging with your correspondent arises from the fact that Fr Christopher and I have, for many years, been something of a comic turn among our brothers. Some of these we have initially amused, most of them we have ultimately distracted, by arguing, always jovially, quite trivial points at disproportionate length.

Although this is an ordinary part of the pathology of religious life, it would be unacceptably self-indulgent to allow a private joke to spill over into the pages of a journal seeking to make a serious contribution to the intellectual life of the country. However, I suspect that if, on this account, you were not to publish Fr Christopher's letter, it would go to a journal more congenial to his unusual cast of mind, with the implication that its rejection by *Eureka Street* was censorial or cowardly. So may I offer the following rejoinder?

Even without access to a version, in any language, of the *Universal Catechism*, no open-minded reader of *Eureka Street* should need any prompting from me in assessing the fairness or relevance of Fr Christopher's comments, or simply the accuracy of his reporting. When the catechism is available in English, everyone will be able to decide for himself or herself whether Fr Christopher's euphoric pleasure in this text has any objective foundation, and whether my review was scraping the bottom of the barrel, rather than the cream from the top. It would, however, be unfortunate if Fr Christopher succeeded in making any of your readers debtors to his own disquieting ignorance of church history.

One example, clearly, will not satisfy Fr Christopher, but then, how many would? When I say that Irenaeus of Lyons did not make a claim for the authority of Rome over other churches Fr Christopher says that he did. My next line should be 'OH NO HE DIDN'T!',

but a panto 'dames' routine hardly seems a fitting or decorous vehicle for theological debate. Fr Christopher's foam-speckled seminary professors would appear to have been guilty of something far more serious than merely bemusing their student.

I said that the authors of the catechism ought to have known that Irenaeus made no such claim. Now I am obliged to say that Fr Christopher ought to have known this. Anyone boasting a bachelor's degree in theology ought to know it. Fr Christopher's research in this matter would appear to have been recklessly superficial. He might have spared himself some embarrassment had he found the time to consult Luise Abramowski's brief but classic discussion of this much chewed-over passage of *Adversus Haereses* in the *Journal of Theological Studies* 28 (1977) 101-104. A cursory account of the matter, intended for the general reader, will be found in my forthcoming *Irenaeus*, in the series *Outstanding Christian Thinkers* (Geoffrey Chapman: 1994, p121.)

Denis Minns OP
Clayton, VIC

That girl

From Brigid Venables

I am disappointed that a simplistic and wholly inadequate study of female sexuality and the rock industry, 'Bare Faced Madonna' was printed in such a well-researched and intellectually provocative magazine as *Eureka Street*.

How, precisely, is wearing trashy gear, sticking out the tummy like a child and dancing madly to the words of *Like A Virgin* a vigorous display of female sexuality? Why is this so refreshing? How is it different to the dazed, tongue-in-cheek, child-like performances of Marilyn Munro [sic], the guttural promises of Christine Amphlett ('I'll make you happy, just like your mummy did') as she sprayed urine over the front row of her audience, or the pleading by a half-naked, leather-bound Pat Benatar to hit me with your best shot.

To brand the singer who represented sexual and social ambiguity throughout the 70s as austere, is a telling error on Jackson's part. David Bowie was a performer who, like Madonna, dashed frantically through opinions, hair-styles and whole images. He openly vacillated between heterosexuality and bisexuality with an ease similar to that of the late Freddie Mercury. But blind Freddie could

see that Jackson did not do her research properly. Had she done so, she'd have found out that the press weren't up in arms over the Girlie Show. Or Madonna, for that matter.

At best, Madonna's public face equates female sexuality to a cross between a 13-year-old Filipino prostitute and an oversexed Brooklyn teenager. Unapologetically vulnerable. And unfortunately, there is nothing unique or sensational about that. At worst, Madonna's music sinks to monotonous depths otherwise uncharted by any of the pap served up by ABBA.

On the whole, the press are bored senseless. The papers who do take her seriously, treat her like an overdressed page-three girl. A little research will tell you that all the scandal, gossip and outrage has a stamp of approval from Madonna's publicity machine.

Brigid Venables
Athelstone, SA

Opportunity cost

From Michael Furtado, lecturer in social and cultural theory at the University of Newcastle.

Three cheers for Noelleen Ward! The notion of equal opportunity lies at the heart of the gospel, and rejection of it rests on a mistaken reading of the parable of the workers in the vineyard. Christians, especially those with a major stake in Australia's non-government schools, should note this.

The Catholic Worker frequently carried sharp and insightful critiques about private, and in particular Catholic, education, generally on justice issues but particularly in regard to the question of access by the 'have-nots' to a just share of society's educational resources. *Eureka Street* could do with a focus on such issues. Of particular concern is the shattering silence of the churches to a recommendation about 'integrated' schools which has recently been made by the Berkeley report into funding of non-government schools in the ACT.

If this recommendation were considered and accepted it would have the effect of moving all Catholic and some Anglican (and other) schools from the private to the public sector as in New Zealand. All Catholic schools in New Zealand fall into this category, and although ownership of those schools continues to reside with the church, the net effect has been to strengthen the claims of the public sector in education to a

fairer share of public revenue, while dislocating church schools from identification with the private sector, with all its paraphernalia of fees and elitism, to which Ms Ward refers.

Of equal note is the fact that more Christians now attend integrated schools in New Zealand than ever before, and that this has enabled schools to refocus their curriculum from unsuccessful attempts (in Greeley & Rossi's estimation) to teach Christian values to a much more real construction of a curriculum that mixes faith with life. This surely is what evangelisation is about. We are not sent to nurture the remnant.

I for one, am tired of hearing elderly archbishops with one foot at Grammar and another in the Club chiding politicians about the rights of the poor. Let those people look to their own backyards as a means of facing up to the double standards at the root of a peculiarly Australian example of social injustice, viz the perpetuation and growth of publicly funded private schools for the rich at the expense of good church and government schools for everybody.

Michael Furtado
Callaghan, NSW

Pius revisited

From Ross Saunders

In reply to Bob Bergout (*Eureka Street*, March 1994), the archaeological fragment from the vault of Pope Pius XI proved to be a palimpsest. Computer enhancement produced the following paragraph that had been rather heavily overwritten: 'Both marriage and the use of marriage rights have secondary ends—such as mutual help, the fostering of reciprocal love, and the abatement of concupiscence—which husband and wife are quite entitled to have in view, as long as the intrinsic nature of the act, and therefore its due ordination to its primary end, is safeguarded ...' Here the fragment is damaged beyond legibility.

Further diggings in the vault revealed a faded Latin dictionary wherein an almost illegible entry—no doubt much thumbed by chaste scholars for the word *conjunx* – husband or wife, from which the adjective *conjugalis* was no doubt derived. Thus the 'conjugal act' is something that husband and wife do together. Being a good Catholic Pope, Pius XI would not have had any personal experience of what husbands and wives do together. Since videos had not been invented, illustrated marriage guidance

courses were not available to the Vatican. Likewise, the Kama Sutra and such like manuals being on the Index, there was no method whereby pontiffs could actually see what happened in marriage. This meant that the pious imagination was the only avenue available for the assessment of the validity of 'marital rights'.

Bob, I hope the foregoing will undevastate your marriage so that you can go to your grave knowing that you know a great deal more about 'conjugal acts' than any celibate pontiff.

Ross Saunders
Newton, NSW

Memorial days

From Brian Pullen

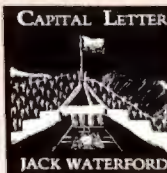
I have just finished reading Ken Inglis' article 'The Rite Stuff' (*Eureka Street*, Dec. '93-Jan. '94), and I write to thank you for printing the piece and Professor Inglis for writing it.

A couple of years ago my daughter and her family visited the War Memorial in Canberra and I was able to point out to her the names of my two great-uncles (yes, not so surprising, the great-grandmothers had insisted our grandfathers stay at home) inscribed on the roll of honour. She was impressed to know that there was such a memorial to one of her, almost unknown, relatives. I don't know why my daughter was so impressed that day but I remember feeling so glad when I saw the two names on the wall because immediately what had been two vague images of my youth had become reified for me.

I am now 64 so for me 'the war' was always the 1939-45 war, but I had been brought up with the story of these two young men going off to the other side of the world and not coming back. I could see it was painful for my great-grandmother but never really knew why, and in spite of the faded photos and the incomplete recollections I could never really get a 'hold' on them until that sunny day in Canberra with my daughter and son-in-law and their child. It seemed to become real just by seeing the names on the wall.

I think that is why I am so grateful to Professor Inglis. I knew when I saw the ceremony of the Unknown Soldier on TV that we were celebrating something important to us as a nation but his words have made it real.

Brian Pullen
Dingley, VIC



Upper house seeks the upper hand

THESE DAYS THE SENATE makes a more interesting opposition to the Government than does the official Opposition in the House of Representatives. So obsessed are the Liberals with their own problems of leadership and accountability that they make little more than ritual squawks—not always in chorus—before being crushed by the numbers. In the Senate, it is different. There, the official Opposition almost has a majority in its own right, and even when it hasn't a clue what to do it only has to vote with the minor parties to make life more difficult for the Government.

This has meant that the Senate is continuing to develop a parliamentary role that in some respects makes it even more powerful than the House—especially if it leaves appropriation to the lower chamber. It is not only the Senate's power to amend legislation, but its assertion of a right to review government activity, that is making life miserable for Labor. Three recent cases illustrate some of the strengths, and some of the pitfalls, of this development. The Senate shot down two Kellys, one justly and one unfairly, and made a few Treasury officials sweat before letting them go. Each case involved issues of responsibility, a subject that is becoming the Senate's forte.

Ros Kelly, of course, deserves a book by herself. Her career had been full of bloopers but she survived, partly because she was a woman and partly because she was a member of the tribe that comforted Paul Keating when he was in the wilderness. In the NSW right, as someone once said, loyalty means defending your mates when they are in the wrong. The sports rorts affair saw Kelly involved in pork-barrelling. For most people, however, it was not the use of public monies to reward friends and punish enemies that was the issue, but the blatancy of it: the complete lack of records, or of notional justifications for making one discretionary decision at the expense of the other. Paul Keating's instinct to defend her was strong, and went on too long, but his problem was that condoning such sloppy administration would send the wrong signal to the bureaucracy and to the voters.

It was the Senate that got her, though by remote control. Its persistent threat of an inquiry prompted the Government to refer the matter to a House of Representatives committee, on which it would have a majority. But in giving evidence Ros Kelly came up with the whiteboard version of events that made her a national laughing stock, and the committee felt unable to defend her. Then the Senate's indication that it would persist with its own inquiry produced her resignation, and a formal denunciation of her conduct from the Government Leader in the Senate. The Senate was only bought off, however, when the Government committed itself to increasing the powers and the independence of the Auditor-General, to an even more powerful joint parliamentary committee supervising audits, and to the development of a ministerial code of conduct on such matters.

The next issue was more complicated. The Senate set up an inquiry into the Fairfax takeover by Conrad Black, for the purpose of scoring easy points about Government attempts to manipulate the press. This inquiry subpoenaed officials from the Foreign Investment Review Board, which had given advice about the takeover, to give evidence, but under orders from the Treasurer, Ralph Willis, they declined to do so. Did the Senate have the power to make them give evidence, and if they refused should it jail them for contempt? There is ample precedent, going back to the 17th century, for questioning officials—even ministers—during inquiries and impeachment proceedings, but the coercive powers of modern parliaments in relation to the executive have never been

tested. The issue is complicated by the question of the powers of each chamber in relation to the other, and by the fact that the executive claims, in relation to Parliament, rights of crown privilege it can no longer sustain in the courts. In any event, the Senate's doubts about its powers, and perhaps a lack of stomach for jailing a public servant just to make a point, seems to have made it back off. This is a pity, because the principle involved is important for a chamber determined to act as a house of review.

We do not ask much of our parliamentary martyrs these days—in 1663, poor old William Prynne's ears were cut off, he was fined £5000 and then degraded from the bar and from his university. When he repeated his offence (by saying 'from bishops, priests and deacons, Lord God deliver us'), his ear stumps were hacked at again, he was branded on both cheeks, fined a further £5000 and then imprisoned for life, without visitors and with no books or writing materials. By comparison, for a Treasury official to spend a night in chokey on a matter of principle seems no great handicap.

Perhaps the Senate was waiting for a better issue on which to pursue the principle. But I have little doubt that by the end of the decade the Senate will have claimed all the privileges of the US Senate, including a right of veto over executive appointments and a right regularly to summon public officials for examination, on issues of policy as much as on issues of administration.

It is the way parliaments are going, and more power to them.

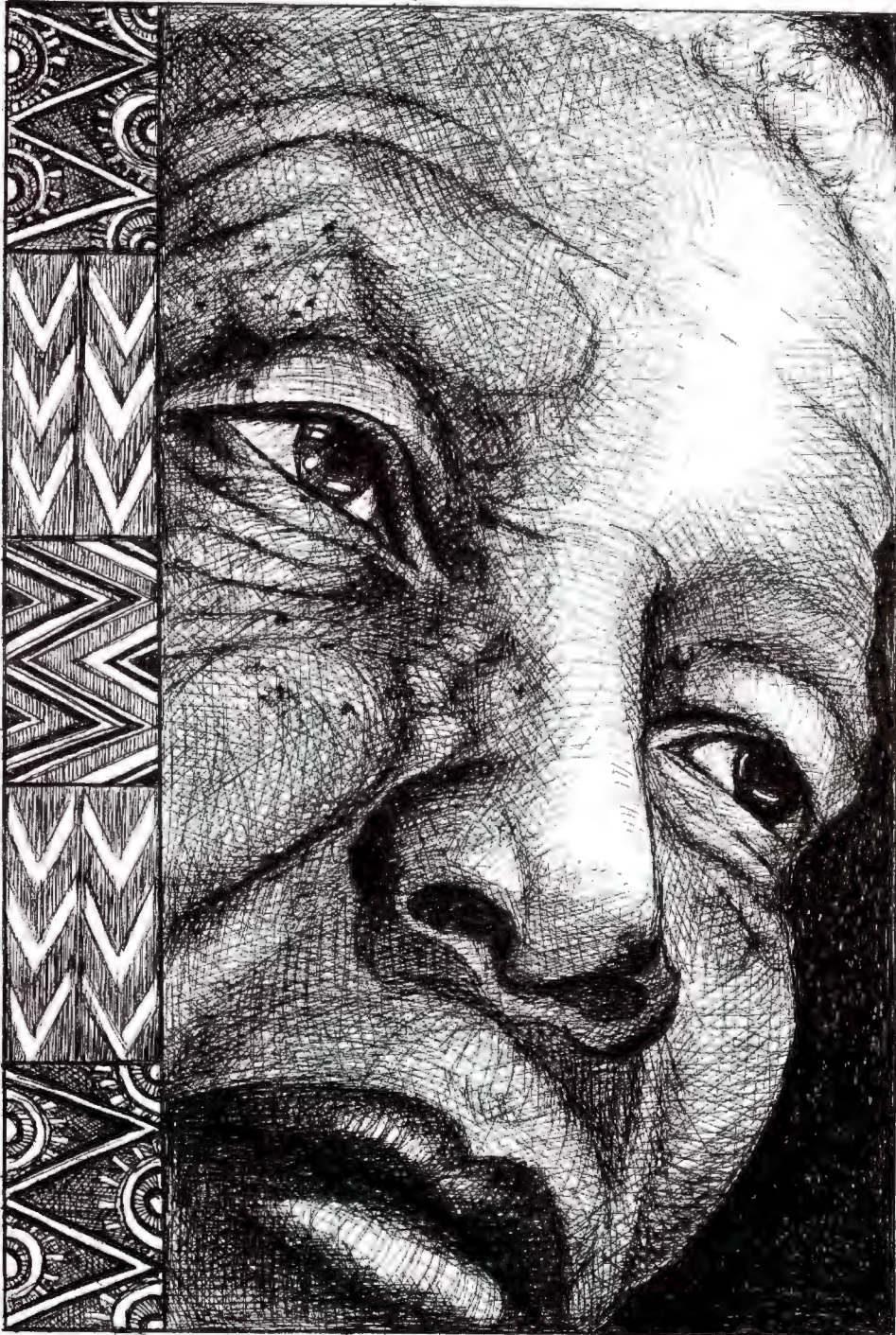
BUT A THIRD CASE OF SELF-ASSERTION by the Senate suggests that, if the upper house is forging a path, it needs a compass. This case involved another Kelly—the former Comptroller-General of Customs, Frank Kelly—who became the scapegoat for some appalling blunders by the Customs service. The mismanagement was comprehensively detailed in a model Senate report. Then, after a further inquiry conducted by a private-sector banker whose own performance had once been so called into question that he was sacked, the Government decided to remove Kelly from his job. That is not done easily—public servants and statutory officials have rights, after all. But a compromise saw him resign his position while retaining his salary, because a position was 'found' requiring just the sort of talents he was seen to have.

The Senate, however, decided that Kelly had not been punished enough, and voted to disallow the statutory instrument that had maintained his salary. It acted as judge, jury and executioner, but gave the accused no hearing. Such behaviour is not likely to foster confidence in the Senate's awareness of the delicacy of its search for a proper role. The only person who distinguished himself was Brian Harradine, who asked whether it was the Senate's prerogative to deal with the fate of an individual public servant in this way.

Obviously, the Senate's reach for power is in part a function of the power of minor parties. To govern, Labor has to negotiate with the Democrats, Harradine and the Greens, none of whom is shy about demanding a genuflection before one favoured idol or another. Given the numbers at present, it is tempting to attribute all of the Senate's ambitions to such spoiling tactics against the Government. But in fact it is part of a wider trend that has gone on uninterrupted since the 1960s—when governments had the numbers—of Parliament seeking to assert itself against an increasingly powerful executive. ■

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

On the brink of democracy



Two Australian visitors to South Africa describe their experience of that country's fearful preparation for democracy. **Jim Davidson** witnessed the work of a voter education team in the Eastern Cape, and **Paul Rule** served as a peace monitor in Natal.

THERE ARE A NUMBER of political entertainments available in South Africa just now. One is the self parody the right wing provides whenever Eugene Terre'blanche, of the Afrikaner Resistance Movement, appears on the platform. Another is the tour members of the Prisons Department have arranged to show people over Robben Island. It's a macabre experience being shown over cells by former warders, so these visits are booked out for months ahead.

For a more forward-looking political diversion I had to wait until I reached Grahamstown, in the Eastern Cape; famous for its churches, schools, university—and black poverty. It's a place where, amid Georgian buildings with engaging fretwork, a cart drawn by two ponies will briskly trot past, perhaps on its way back to the African township, with its corrugated iron shanties caked with mud for insulation.

The office of the Black Sash—the famous women's organisation that first came to prominence in the '50s, when its members would trail cabinet ministers and wear a sash to mark the loss of liberties—is in one of the town's many restored buildings. A voluntary organisation, the Black Sash performs many watchdog functions. It is also a place where Africans can come for advice. They may need help sorting out ID cards, getting the dates right so they can claim pensions; evading rapacious insurance salesmen; or wanting clarification about their rights, particularly if they are domestic servants. Once the Sash also had a more political function, helping families cope with the police detention of breadwinners. But now that role, in the new South Africa, has been replaced by voter education.

Glenn Hollands, a political science graduate from Cape Town, explains that technically the voter education he organises is the work of the Independent Forum

for Electoral Education. No country is so addicted to acronyms as South Africa (it helps to get over language barriers), so the forum is referred to as IFEE, pronounced 'iffy', which is certainly how local farmers regard the Black Sash.

Grahamstown became the nodal point for the 1820 Settlers, and was a key defence post in the frontier wars. Frontier attitudes not so different from those of the Afrikaners linger among the English-speaking farming community, many of whom are descendants of those settlers. At a college in nearby King Williams Town a few years ago, there was an appalling incident where some boys, having half-jokingly formed a Kaffir-beating Society, fell upon an African intruder and killed him.

Their fathers are relatively temperate, but some would never allow political education on their farms; indeed, the largely Afrikaner farmers' organisations in the Orange Free State and the Transvaal have banned it completely. It's a bit too subversive, and the slightest hint of political bias is likely to make them shy away. Still, since they rely on their own informal networks, the fact that the work is done honestly by IFEE is sometimes known before Glenn puts the request. After all, the farmer has to provide the venue and allow his workers to attend.

W E SET OFF: Glenn, myself, two middle-aged white women, an eager young African man and a sophisticated, smartly dressed African woman. It's the end of the working day, and we're headed for a stock farm near Alicedale. About 20 workers are expected: if it were one of the chicory or pineapple farms, there'd be more.

We turn on to a dusty road. The tufty scrub of the Suurveldt extends on the side. There are few trees, but the occasional cactus and aloes rise from low hillocks. It's all quite green as a result of recent rains: much less desolate-looking than usual.

We enter across a series of ramps. There is misty rain now; when we pull up at a large shed and look back at the old homestead with its hipped roof, we could be in the Yorkshire dales.

The shed is where the educational session is to take place. Two or three men push and shove large bales of wool into position to provide seating. Suddenly a voice pipes up from one of Grahamstown's legion of middle-aged bluestocking ladies. 'Do you know why they sat on the Woolsack in England?', she asks rhetorically. 'I think it was to remind them where the wealth came from.' This delivered, she trots off to one of the cars.

A TV set has appeared, and two posters now hang from the table on which it has been placed. One is the ballot paper, another simply shows a big X.

Only three or four Africans have turned up so far, but more can be seen coming down the hill. An old man hobbling with a stick; two women, wearing the traditional *doek*, or headdress, while another has the customary blanket around her shoulders, enclosing a baby. Eventually, there are 25 of them. They sit quietly on the bales, expectantly, like a good primary school

class in the '50s. They know they now have the vote—and at last—and they want to use it properly.


The owner of the property, Adrian, turns up on his scooter. He seems obliging, good-natured; he apologises for the state of the shed, and says that he'd have cleaned it up if he'd realised that this is where the session would have to take place. (There is still light drizzle.) Glenn explains that this is not a political program, but an educational one; some have objected to people like Tutu appearing in the video, but that's less important than what they say. He's balanced by a Nationalist, a farmer, a television identity, and others. The farmer nods. He says he would like to stick around. Glenn asks if he knows Xhosa. He nods again.

Adrian's knowledge of Xhosa (unlikely to extend to a mastery of all six clicks) is demonstrated as he asks a question of his 'staff'—the politically correct term for farm workers. There won't be any people coming from the neighbouring farm, he tells us. 'Ron Currey is often away, and the message doesn't seem to have got through. I think he's made arrangements with the Rural Foundation.' 'That's OK,' says Glenn; as long as someone does it. 'Well, nearly all my staff are here now,' continues the farmer. 'Only four or five very old people are missing.'

The video runs for a quarter of an hour and is soaked up avidly. Tutu and all the others have been dubbed in Xhosa. There's a ripple of laughter when the sitcom actor is seen being unaccustomedly serious.

Glenn then makes a short speech: the sophisticated young Xhosa woman translates. 'We are telling you how to vote,' he says, 'not who to vote for.' That information has to be got elsewhere—from newspapers, radios or television. (Later we learn that there are four television sets among the Africans on the farm.) Next he addresses the concern about who controls the election. Not the Nationalists, he assures them, nor the police, nor the security police. It's under the control of the TEC, the Transitional Executive Council. This represents all political parties.

A PLAY BEGINS. The largeish lady acts the part of a white madam, badgering her servant about voting. She speaks in English, in a pained voice—exactly as a bored white housewife would seem to her Xhosa maid, who,



The papers are laid out on the table and counted. One pile rises above the others: 22 for the African National Congress, one for a smaller Bantustan party (a mistake), and another for the Democratic Party. Does someone share the liberal aspirations of the well-heeled white suburbs? Or is it that the word 'democratic', so much the catchcry of the 'new' South Africa, confused them into turning their vote away from the ANC?

on producing a how-to-vote card, is told by Madam that she isn't fed, clothed and looked after so that she'll go out and vote Communist. The point being made is that, thanks to the secret ballot, she or anyone else can vote as they please. (This gets across more clearly now that the play, Madam apart, is entirely in Xhosa.) The next scene shows a woman stirring the pot while talking to her husband: her resistance to his point of view gets a laugh. The play, written by Glenn, is enjoyed a lot.

ASIMULATED VOTE is next on the agenda. After all, these are rural Africans, who, in addition to being largely illiterate, until recent years always had to enter public buildings by separate entrances; often they were not allowed into white establishments at all. So the prospect of entering a polling booth, with queues, tables and lots of white people standing around, is quite daunting. Three of the party (white and black) therefore reappear in the official observer jackets that will be seen on the day.

Glenn describes the procedure, and takes questions through the interpreter. If you're illiterate, how will you know which party to vote for? Glenn explains that on the ballot paper, with its dozen or so options, a distinctive symbol will appear alongside the name of each party. But if you still have trouble, he says, you can ask the head of the polling station to mark the ballot paper for you. There will be two monitors dressed like that, he says indicating his coated colleagues behind the tables, to see that it's done properly.

But today there is a complication. To persuade Inkatha to take part in the election, the ANC has just conceded a double ballot—i.e. a separate simultaneous vote at both the national and provincial levels.

Previously, the same vote would have been counted twice, a proposal very much in the interest of the bigger parties. 'Don't worry too much about it,' says Glenn, though he is actually quite concerned: it may result in many more spoilt papers.

A woman asks about those who might find difficulty in voting. Nervousness? No, age; she's virtually blind. She is told that in

that case she's entitled to take someone she trusts—over the age of 18—who will be allowed to make a cross on the ballot papers on her behalf, the electoral officer

making sure that it is done according to her wishes.

An elderly white woman with a crisp English accent and efficient manner to match is recording all these questions on a clipboard. Later she tells me about other difficulties about voting. When they went to nearby Southwell, a large number were so illiterate that they could not even make a cross; they had never held a pen or pencil in their hands. In her brisk manner she recommended practising, with a stick in the sand.

There's another question. A woman has no identity papers. The Home Affairs office will issue temporary ones, says Glenn. But it turns out that she has neither birth nor baptismal certificates nor anything else. He urges her to come along to the Black Sash office in Grahamstown. This one will take some sorting out.

At least no question has sent him diving into the Electoral Act, brought along just in case. Or been about intimidation: at some places there has been real anxiety that somehow ink on their fingers could reveal the way they had voted.

Enthusiastically, people get up to queue. One by one, they show their identity cards, move across to collect and mark their papers, and then put them in the ballot box. The women are tentative; their papers have to be helped in. When all have voted, 15 minutes later, Glenn up-ends the ballot box so that the papers are heaped on the floor. He picks a man from the audience and asks him, as he picks up two or three papers, which one is his. This one? This? This?

The man looks blankly, and the point is made. Because they are all simple crosses (made quite firmly, actually), no one can tell. Still, ratification is needed. The people are asked if they think the ballot is secret, or not. There is a shout of affirmation. Good, says the lady with the clipboard, they know it's secret.

MEANWHILE, THE PAPERS ARE BEING LAID OUT ON THE table and counted. One pile rises above the others: 22 for the African National Congress, one for a smaller Bantustan party (a mistake), and another for the Democratic Party. Does someone share the liberal aspirations of the well-heeled white suburbs? Or is it that the word 'democratic', so much the catchery of the 'new' South Africa, confused them into turning their vote away from the ANC? One paper has not been marked at all.

The result is announced, and applauded. Twenty-two votes for the ANC. 'That's the Eastern Cape for you,' Glenn says to Adrian, who has followed the proceedings with evident interest. His staff are now seen in a new light. There's a slight touch of apprehension about him, tinged with resignation, as if only now, when literally brought home to him, has he fully realised what the election may mean. ■

Jim Davidson teaches humanities at the Victoria University of Technology. His *Lyrebird Rising*, a study of Louise Hanson-Dyer of L'Oiseau-Lyre, has just been published by MUP.

Frontier attitudes not so different from those of the Afrikaners linger among the English-speaking farming community, many of whom are descendants of those settlers. At a college in nearby King Williams Town a few years ago, there was an appalling incident where some boys, having half-jokingly formed a Kaffir-beating Society, fell upon an African intruder and killed him.

INSTANT EXPERTS, IT IS SAID, are to be avoided like plague bearers. Regular readers of *Eureka Street* will know that my expertise lies in China, not Africa. In fact my recent stint in South Africa as a peace monitor was my first visit to the African continent. I had the fortune, however, to be posted to the canefields of the north coast of Natal and KwaZulu, which have recently been the killing fields of South Africa. Hence the following remarks, although impressionistic and necessarily superficial, at least have the merit of being a view from the area that may well determine the post-election fate of what is confidently being called 'the new South Africa'.

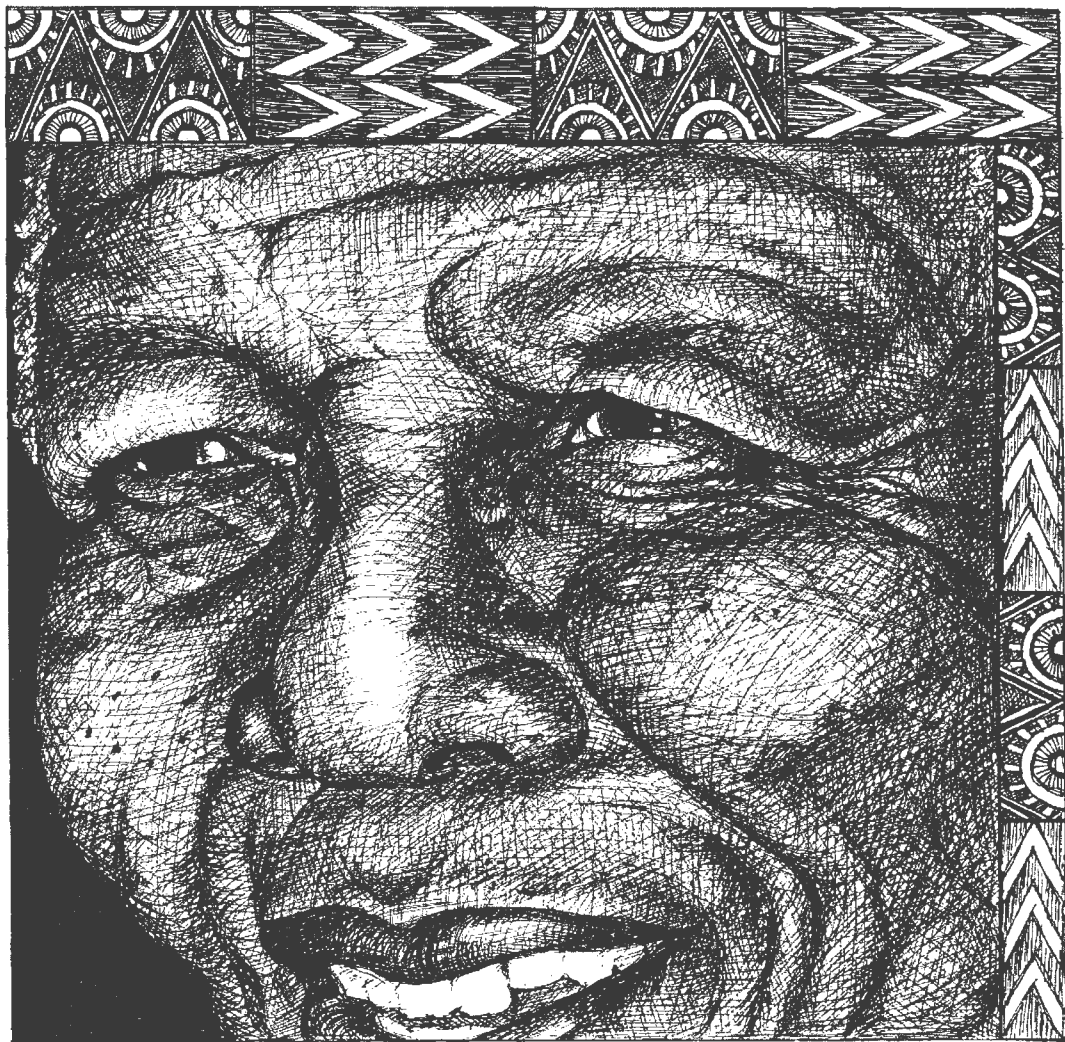
For a generation South Africa has been crippled—socially, economically and culturally—by apartheid, the systematic separation of its peoples on the basis of race. In the emerging new South Africa, we are told, apartheid is being swept away. Some few extremists on the black left, like the Azanian People's Liberation Army, and the white right, such as the Afrikaner Volksfront, may still yearn for an all-black or all-white state, covering all or part of South Africa, but there is no place for such divisions in the new order.

In fact, as the new South Africa emerges under the Transitional Executive Council, there are ominous signs of a new apartheid developing, in anticipation of an African National Congress (ANC) victory.

This new apartheid is primarily based on political rather than racial grounds, although if the Volksfront had its way a racially pure white *Volkstaat* would be created on the veldt. This political apartheid is particularly evident in Natal, but is also evident in some of the black homelands and the townships of the East Rand and elsewhere. Here 'no go areas', of solid allegiance to the ANC or the Inkatha Freedom Party respectively, have been created by 'clearances' similar to those produced in the former Yugoslavia by 'ethnic cleansing', or in Belfast by politico-religious divisions.

The areas involved are often quite small, mere sections of townships, but the exclusion and enclosure is absolute, extending to schools, hospitals, even churches. The purpose seems to be to anticipate an opposition victory in the elections.

Now that the Kwazulu ruling party, the IFP, has definitely decided not to contest even the regional elections, the ANC is faced with a resistance campaign, holding on to its scattered domains. Conversely, the IFP will attempt to hold on to its jigsaw pattern of party-controlled areas in the face of an ANC national or provincial victory.



Graphics pp10-13
by Liz Dixon

What makes this scenario, hardly plausible to outsiders, seem realistic to many South Africans is the continuing existence of KwaZulu (often miscalled Zululand), which is just such a collection of separated pieces of land, governed from a central extensive area with its capital at Ulundi in northern Natal. KwaZulu has its own elected government, its own police and magistracy, who rule over many of the townships outside mainly white towns as well as their largely rural domain. KwaZulu is a constitutional anomaly in that it did not opt for independent status under apartheid, but for continued financial support from Pretoria. However, under its astute leadership, which appeals both to Zulu tradition and the power of its ruling IFP, and gleans considerable white support from farmers and businessmen in northern Natal, it has become a major power in the land.

THE KWAZULU QUESTION successfully delayed agreement over the interim constitution, through an unlikely alliance between the IFP and white extremists in the so-called Freedom Alliance. It has also precipitated the most deadly political violence. In the Human Rights Commission report, *Three Years of Destabilisation*, covering July 1990 to June 1993, 3653 deaths from political violence are reported for Natal alone (nearly 40 per cent of the national total) and the commission estimates that the 'Natal War' has claimed 7500 victims since 1984. This figure must by now be nearer 8500. In the com-

mission's *Monthly Repression Report* in November 1993, Natal, with 198 deaths, exceeded even the notorious East Rand which had 164 deaths (many of these in turn reflect the ANC/IFP struggle in Natal, through the presence of IFP workers in the East Rand hostels). The Christmas/New Year period saw an even greater escalation.

There was a marked decline in political violence in Natal through January and early February this year, but apparently more through exhaustion than agreement: the maximum possible boundaries for both parties had been set, and both the ANC and IFP were preparing for an even more fierce election battle. The ANC's February 2 decision to concede a double ballot to the IFP—i.e. separate ballots for provincial and national governments at the 26-28 April election—weakens the IFP's case against the interim constitution and opened the way for it to contest provincial seats. But the real issue has always been regional autonomy, which the ANC could never concede. At this point it seems clear that none of the Freedom Alliance partners will risk exposing their *idées fixes* to the scrutiny of the electors, but even if they were to it would by no means end the violence. The disputed ground would simply have shifted from whether or not to vote, to for whom to vote.

What are the prospects for the elections? Public opinion polls in January showed support for the ANC hovering between 63 and 67 per cent. This figure is in the crucial range, because a party or alliance with a two-thirds majority will be able to change the interim constitution which, most agree, is an unworkable compromise. But,

despite a vigorous voter education program in most of the country (KwaZulu and some homelands are obvious exceptions), it is not certain that a high proportion of eligible voters will actually vote.

There has been liberalisation of the documentation required to vote. No longer will the new ID cards be necessary but a number of standard documents will be accepted. Since many South Africans have no birth certificates, other forms of identification are approved. Security at voting stations, however, will be very difficult to maintain. The proposed peacekeeping force is far too small and too undisciplined, and the existing law and order forces are discredited. Many South Africans may simply stay indoors during the elections as they have become used to do at all periods of political crisis in recent years. Law and order remains a major problem in South Africa. By Australian standards, the incidence of

criminal and casual violence is shocking. The newspapers are full of accounts of armed robberies in which criminals and business people are killed; of apparently random shootings that may or may not be politically inspired; of unidentified bodies found, children missing, mass murders and stabbings.

A few anecdotes may make the point better than statistics. Our group of peace monitors met a young German priest whose parish church abutted the stadium where we helped to monitor an ANC rally. A few nights later, intruders in his church were disturbed by the police who shot dead a man taking refuge in the confessional. The priest was told of this only several hours later. The church has had to be reconsecrated after this act of murderous violence.

Only a few blocks from the hotel in Johannesburg in which we were staying during our debriefing, two Swedish members of our group were suddenly attacked and knocked to the ground by five knife-wielding young blacks in the middle of a busy shopping centre. Just then a police patrol car drove by; the police opened fire and one of the attackers was killed and a woman passing by critically wounded. The incident merited a brief paragraph in one only of Johannesburg's several newspapers.

And in the town in which we lived, the black chef of a popular restaurant was stabbed to death while getting money from an automatic telling machine in the middle of the afternoon. Now there are armed security guards at all such machines as well as in banks and shops.

The South African police have a deservedly bad reputation created by their role as upholders of the apartheid state. The ubiquitous ISU (Internal Stability Unit) 'Hippos', armoured cars of fearful appearance manned by young blond-haired tanned conscripts, have become a symbol of oppression. The recent replacement of the police in the East Rand townships of Katlehong, Thokoza and Vosloorus by the South African Defence Forces has been greeted as a first and indispensable move towards peace in those shattered communities.

Yet the police are changing. They now emphasise community relations, and blacks are gradually being appointed to higher ranks. But the stress levels of the black police is enormous—last year 169 committed suicide. The policing problem is also best illustrated by examples. Here is a tale of four senior police officers whom we met in the course of our monitoring duties.

One was outstanding for his wholehearted acceptance of the new order. We heard him praised by both ANC and IFP supporters, and he had close links with the civic authorities. He had defused a taxi strike last year that resulted in much violence in other towns by personally organising the taxi owners' protest procession. He had an open door to all the interested parties. He was a Boer, and proud of his people, but one who looked forward to a new black-white society.

Another was a young recently promoted Indian officer. We met him at a stressful planning meeting for a political rally in a township where the previous such rally had resulted in many deaths. He defused the ten-

The black-on-black violence is disturbing and paralysing to many black community leaders and clergy. There are sneaking suspicions that an ANC government might prove as venal and intolerant as its predecessors, and the inclusion on the ANC list of several leaders associated with extremist and violent incidents is not reassuring.



sion by an act of shrewd diplomacy, ceding the command of the various security forces at the rally to his KwaZulu confreres who were both surprised and gratified. The meeting ended with the KwaZulu police brigadier shaking the hand of the ANC party secretary in a scene that reminded me of the famous Low cartoon of Hitler and Stalin shaking hands.

But—and this is the important point—the rally was peaceful, and Zulu Radio described the event as marked by an historic cooperation between the two police forces and the army. In no small measure this was due to a simple act of courtesy and I was left wondering how often in the past the absence of it had caused bloodshed.

A third senior police officer we met was a native of the area, one of those often referred to as 'white Zulus'. He spoke Zulu, was a great admirer of Zulu culture, and a sympathiser with the Zulu desire for independence and restoration of the Zulu kingdom. Which way would he go in the event of a civil war? It would be hard to predict. Presumably he will opt to serve in the planned regional police force rather than the national force.

Yet another police captain we met was clearly an unreconstructed, old-style South African policeman, concerned only with his panoply of Hippos, dog teams and heavily armed white and black constables. It was significant that in his command a number of police had been killed as well as blacks. He seemed content to be waging a kind of war against the population with little thought for the long-term consequences.

It is perhaps not surprising to find an absence of any sense of a civil society based on the compromises and power-sharing normal in other parts of the world. We found that the worst violence had occurred in areas most seriously disrupted by the 'clearances' and relocations under apartheid. Yet, even so, the black-on-black violence is disturbing and paralysing to many black community leaders and clergy. There are sneaking suspicions that an ANC government might prove as venal and intolerant as its predecessors, and the inclusion on the ANC list of large numbers of communists as well as several ANC leaders associated with extremist and violent incidents is not reassuring. Many, too, are unhappy with an electoral system that allows no choice within the party lists and no local constituencies.

Few people I met thought the elections would not take place; and few, too, thought they would be rela-

tively peaceful. But it is post-election violence that most fear. South Africa is flooded with guns, some held legally, most without licences. And there is no reason to disbelieve the threats to take up arms in the inevitable event of an ANC victory.

In the long term it is hard to credit the creation of viable independent states in the north of the republic. A *Volkstaat* would lack access to the sea unless it secured Richards Bay, which some of its maps include by the creation of an untenable corridor across northern Natal. It would have few natural resources and no labour except through a renewed slavery. And KwaZulu is only economically viable with massive outside money.

Both the Afrikaner Volksfront and the Inkatha Freedom Party, however, would very likely use the arms they have been storing to resist the new government. In the short term that could damage the economy as well as the international standing of the ANC, which will desperately need to attract foreign finance capital, stem the outflow of South African funds, and create new jobs to meet the inflated expectations of their supporters. The nuisance armed resisters might cause could destroy the government's prospects, either tempting it into unconstitutional measures or costing it the next election.

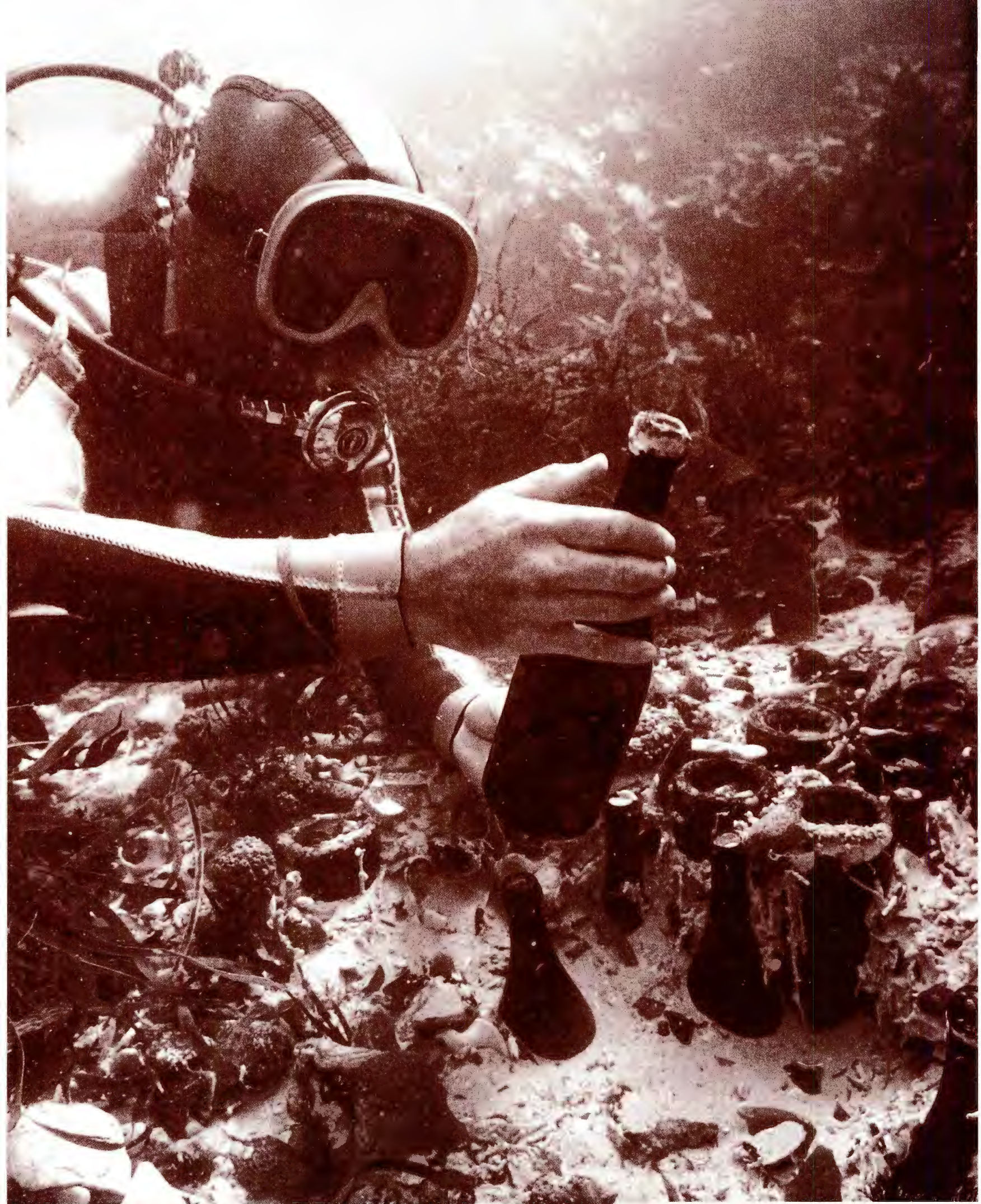
As yet there are no alternatives. The National Party's efforts to attract black voters are hollow, and the Democratic Party has been discredited by the defection of many of its most able people to the ANC as well as its past policies of limited franchise. New parties like KISS ('Keep It Straight and Simple'), which advocates a single tax, and the African Christian Democratic Party, seem unlikely to take off. But the Pan Africanist Congress with its simplistic anti-white program could well increase its support among a disaffected black electorate.

There is a naïve and touching faith on the part of many black South Africans in the goodwill of the rest of the world. It would be sad if that faith were to be frustrated. As one South African said to me: 'You would not let us lose what we have gained, would you?' ■

Paul Rule has just returned from South Africa where he worked as a peace monitor with the Ecumenical Monitoring Program in South Africa in North Coast Natal. The views expressed are personal, not those of EMPISA.



ANC election sticker courtesy of Jim Davidson



A wreck need not be a ruin

MARITIME ARCHAEOLOGISTS ARE GENERALLY A patient lot, but the \$250,000 reward offered to locate Victoria's so-called Mahogany Ship had them sighing. The legend of a 16th century Portuguese caravel or something similarly exotic on the Victorian coast near Warrnambool, is based on two stranded sealers seeing wreckage there in 1836, a child's description of seeing a wreck, a captain's description of seeing the remains of a much smaller vessel, and a theory about the sandhills shifting at a slow rate. The reward was a successful tourism gimmick that was withdrawn after at least 20 searches.

Yet as the song says, our land is girt by sea, and until the 1960s almost everybody and everything came by boat, including the ancestors of Australia's Aborigines. Australia has about 5000 shipwrecks and only about 12 per cent have been located. These include convict ships, immigrant ships, traders, whalers and warships.

The sensational discovery of two Dutch East India-men off the Western Australian coast in 1963 established the practice of maritime archaeology in Australia. After blasting and pillaging at the wreck sites, the WA government legislated in 1964 to protect historic wrecks. The WA Museum was given responsibility for recovery, preservation and display of artefacts, although the Dutch ships were not excavated until the 1970s.

A High Court challenge to the WA legislation led to the federal government enacting the Historic Shipwrecks Act in 1976. Other states have since introduced complementary laws, and Australia is now a world leader in protecting and studying its underwater cultural heritage, despite the tight funding found in all our museums. The National Maritime Museum in Sydney is the latest testament to interest in our seafaring past.

The world's oldest known shipwreck, found by a sponge diver off Turkey, dates from about 1300BC. An excavation in 1984 recovered the only existent royal scarab of Nefertiti, queen of the heretic Pharaoh Akhenaten, and what is perhaps the world's oldest book, a folding wooden writing tablet with ivory hinges. Much later, but marvellously preserved, are the Tudor warship *Mary Rose* and Sweden's *Vasa*. Dr Jim Delgado, director of the Maritime Museum of Vancouver, told *The Australian* a few years ago: 'Almost any ship can be seen as one of the greatest technical expressions a culture can achieve. The old clippers were known as cathedrals of technology in their day.'

Australia's earliest known wrecks date from after 1611, when the Dutch pioneered a faster route from the Cape of Good Hope to Java. Dutch East India Company ships leaving the Cape would first head south to catch the winds that became known as the Roaring Forties,

and then east for about 1000 Dutch miles. The problem was deciding when to turn north. Latitude could be measured by observation of the sun using an instrument known as an astrolabe, but longitude could only be estimated by dead reckoning—calculating the ship's east-west position using log, sand glass and compass with estimated corrections for factors such as current. In the case of Dutch ships bound for Java, a miscalculation could cause the traders to come to grief on what is now the WA coast.

The Dutch first sighted Western Australia in 1616 and five ships are known to have thudded into its massive coastline over the next two centuries. They were English trader *Trial* in 1622, and the Dutch East India-men *Batavia* (1629), *Vergulde Draeck* (1656), *Zuytdorp* (1712) and *Zeewijk* (1726).

The discovery of the *Vergulde Draeck* ('Gilt Dragon') and the *Batavia* caused something of a free-for-all. Even after the *Vergulde Draeck* silver coins had been recovered from the wreck, a feverish syndicate searching for ye olde buried treasure on the mainland used an excavator to dig a hole more than 20 metres into limestone before running out of money.

THE WRECK OF THE *Batavia* on the Houtman Abrolhos Islands, about 80 kilometres off Geraldton, was known for the bloody, debauched mutiny after Commander Francisco Pelsaert and his senior officers left 268 people stranded while they sailed to Batavia for help. Under the leadership of Jeronimus Cornelisz, a group of mutineers killed 125 men, women and children before Pelsaert returned.

The *Vergulde Draeck* and the *Batavia* are among a handful of Australian wrecks to have been fully excavated. The first step being to make very accurate plans of the site. The basic tool is a suction pipe known as an airlift and heavy items like cannon are lifted separately. Materials like timber, metal and ceramics require painstaking, individual conservation.

Historical research is compared with the archaeological record which can be gathered in comparatively calm, shallow water or in conditions which have been compared to being in a very big washing machine. The director of the WA Maritime Museum, Graeme Henderson, had wet hair and was popping his ears when interviewed in his office for this article. He had had the morning off in lieu of weekend work and couldn't resist going for a dive.

One of the most exciting and earliest wrecks is that of *HMS Pandora*, which sank after hitting a remote coral outcrop about 100 kilometres off Cape York in 1791, while returning from Tahiti with 14 of the *Bounty*

Wine bottles, still crated together, from the Europa, wrecked near Cervantes in 1897.

*Photo: Patrick Baker.
© WA Maritime Museum*

mutineers. Items from the *Pandora* already on display in the Queensland Museum include cannons, stonewear, bottles and jewellery.

More important for Australian history is the wreck of *HMS Sirius*, which Graeme Henderson has been studying for more than a decade. The struggling settlement at Sydney Cove was devastated by the loss of the *Sirius*, the principal warship accompanying the First Fleet, while on a food run to Norfolk Island in 1790. But was the *Sirius* an 'old tub' sent to an out-of-sight-out-of-mind penal colony or a sound vessel for establishing a strategic port in the Pacific, close to potential naval resources like flax and timber?

Henderson says the historical and archaeological record shows the *Sirius* was a 'very appropriate' vessel for the task of setting up a longer-term presence. The ship's remains don't prove that theory, but they support it. 'That's the big challenge with the site, to continue to develop that sort of argument and see how it goes in the long run.'

YEARS AFTER GETTING THE SHOVE from Fletcher Christian and crew, Captain William Bligh became governor of NSW, only to be deposed by army officers when he tried to disrupt their grip on the rum trade. Henderson has studied one rum trader, the *Sydney Cove*, which was wrecked in Bass Strait in 1797 *en route* from India to Port Jackson. He says the lightly-built ship leaked

and that some of the underfed Indian crew died of exhaustion at the pumps. Overall, the indications are of a 'scrappy sort of trade run by a crowd of ratbags'.

The *Sydney Cove* also yielded remnants of its cargo, including middling-quality Indian and Chinese ceramics. 'That sort of material you just don't get on land,' says Henderson. 'There has been very little material found from the 18th century, either in Australia or on its way to Australia. The original Government House in Sydney is the big site for that sort of material but there's not a huge amount of it there.' Henderson is also intrigued by wrecks that came between WA's exploration by the Dutch, French and British and its settlement in 1826-29. These include a sealer, the *Belinda*, which came unstuck supplying a base on Middle Island in the Recherche Archipelago off Esperance. Sealers operated from similarly remote locations along the south coast, on either side of Bass Strait and as far south as Amsterdam Island on the way down to Antarctica.

Some archaeologists who stick to dry land reckon their aquatic brethren have been a bit gung ho. But this has to be measured against the material taken from wrecks by Australia's burgeoning number of scuba divers. After a slow start, a national amnesty on relics taken from shipwrecks has located 20 shipwrecks in Victoria alone. The fine for not reporting an historic shipwreck (one more than 75 years old) is \$5000 for individuals and \$20,000 for a company, but many divers appear to have kept a low profile, as it were.

Maritime archaeologists, governments and diving groups are trying to encourage a look-but-don't-touch attitude. Meanwhile, romantic landlubbers can savour historical tidbits such as the story of the slave trader Don Francisco Felis de Souza, who added a French-built vessel to his fleet in 1836. De Souza, aka Char Char, operated from Africa's Bight of Benin and was a friend of King Chezo of Dahomey whose regular human sacrifices prompted the ditty:

*Beware and take care of the Bite of Benin
There's one comes out for 40 goes in.*

De Souza's new ship, the *Don Francisco*, was seized in 1837 with an illegal cargo of slaves bound for Havana. The ship was re-registered as the *James Matthews* and more legitimate trading later took her to London.

In 1841, the 25-metre brig left London for Western Australia, carrying slate roofing tiles, farm tools, general cargo, 15 crew and three passengers. One of the passengers, Henry de Burgh, wrote in his diary of a fleeting shipboard romance over a game of chess with a young woman from a passing ship. The *James Matthews* arrived safely off Fremantle, but was blown ashore by squalls and holed. In 1973 the wreck was rediscovered, 132 years to the day after it sank. An underwater excavation found the first surviving hull of an Atlantic slaver, with cargo and personal effects including a complete chess set.

Mark Skulley is a freelance writer. The story of the *Don Francisco/James Matthews* is from Graeme Henderson's *Maritime Archaeology in Australia*.

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Samples of the summer

IT'S BEEN A TESTY, querulous couple of months of racing. More emphatically than usual, the Melbourne summer and autumn season was marked by poor excuses for over-rated horses and by scepticism about the ability of those who had delivered. All around the country the fields in top races declined in size and in quality. Humour was scarce, but jockey Simon Marshall did his best by persistent failure to urinate when called upon by stewards. They were drug-testing, he was struggling. Marshall was suspended for a month, but has appealed on behalf of his bladder.

Back to the horses. A new speed star, Hareeba, came out of the bush to break a course record at Moonee Valley, ran no more than a creditable second at his first crack at weight-for-age, then went amiss with breathing problems. He may return, but the fine Sydney filly Angst (which died after a throat operation), and the flashy chestnut Rancher (put down at the Arrowfield Stud, where he'd stood for a decade) will not.

Sprinting from obscurity to celebrity, former jockey Gerald Ryan trained city trebles, prepared eight individual two-year-old winners and capped this with Hurricane Sky's victory in the Group One Blue Diamond Stakes. Other success was more predictable. On Blue Diamond day, David Hayes trained eight winners (at Balaklava, Camberra and Caulfield) to pass the 1000 mark in only three-and-a-half years. Other developments were to be regretted. The powers of former topline sprinter Schillaci continued to ebb. By contrast, some horses that prospered (such as Durbridge) had their success explained in seasonal terms. Top-rating new year cliché was the notion of an 'autumn horse', although no one explained who told the animal that it was time to perform.

Moonee Valley saw in the 'autumn' season on Australia Day, also by chance the summer's hottest, when the temperature reached 41.4C (and flattened Schillaci, who evidently prefers it cool). In 1993 the feature race of this meeting was the William Reid Stakes, which the champion Manikato won five years in a row. Manikato is buried at the Valley, whose authorities chose to bury the William Reid as well. It became—not even the Australian, but The Australian Made Stakes—in a misguided gesture of patriotic commercialism. The white shoe brigade would wince.

On the punting front, the day started well (and presaged an unseasonably successful autumn). Gerald Ryan's filly Egyptian Ibis pleased me by saluting at 20/1 in the first, a dose it repeated at still generous odds at Flemington in February. What of Hareeba? He missed the start, raced wide, led into a brutal northerly headwind and then was ridden too quietly into the straight. The

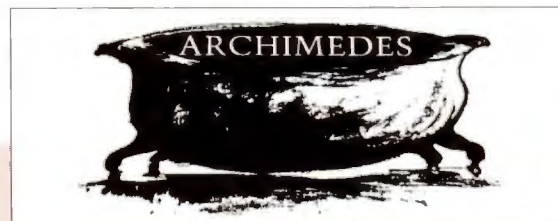
good filly Lady Jakeo (last year's Blue Diamond winner) just caught him. The Hareeba ride was one that Michael Clarke may have gone to Hong Kong to forget. Failing to fire, Schillaci was fourth.

He returned for the Sunday meeting at Flemington on 20 February. The racebook cover threatened punters with 'a celebration of Irish culture', although this did not get much worse than the injection into the crowd of a notable proportion of faces like maps of the old sod. The Lightning Stakes did not suffer the indignity of a name change, and Schillaci was back to seek an unprecedented third win in a row. Before then I'd decided to be fair to a course which has recently seemed inhospitable: vast, poorly signposted, unwelcoming in its design, contemptuous in its public amenities. The attempt to eat and drink undid my good resolution.

Red wine (even by cask) was unobtainable; the beer fridge offered a doleful array of Carlton products, unenlivened by even the blandest of international beers (or even such beer substitutes as Corona). The food came from some grisly museum of culinary horrors. By comparison, Caulfield offers four different brands of tea for the discerning, besides well-priced and various things to eat. Sadly, the dead hand of Carlton has also fallen on its fridges. The terraces there and elsewhere are full of

Australia's unhappiest new spectacle, men sucking bottles of Carlton Cold.

THE RACING PROCEEDED REGARDLESS: Schillaci was taken on down the straight by two fine three-year-olds, Keltrice and Kenvain, each out of a mare by the great racehorse (and sire of broodmares) Vain. Damien Oliver rode Schillaci in behind the small field but got him clear too late. The horse was beaten a half head by Keltrice in a mighty contest, and Steven King won this round in the acrid contest for top jockey. A week later, at Caulfield in the Oakleigh Plate, it was Kenvain's turn to beat Schillaci. Accordingly, three-year-olds had won the three big sprints to that stage of the year. What of the stayers? The 1993 Victoria Derby was one of the oddest recently seen. Mahogany, a part of whom Kerry Packer had just purchased, won by five lengths with the other runners bunched behind him. Now in the autumn he continued in the winning vein, scoring first up, before overcoming strife to take the Vanuatu (formerly the Debonair). That day at Flemington, the Vanity, equivalent race for fillies, went to the beautifully-named Balm in Gilcad, which beat Lady Jakeo. Mahogany went on to a short half head win in the Cadbury Guineas, confirming the pattern of tight and competitive racing. It was the performance of a quality colt who had again taken advan-



The odd angry Schacht

A RCHIMEDES HAS A LOT TO ANSWER FOR—Newton too, for that matter. If it weren't for them, Science Minister Chris Schacht might not find it so easy to consider 'reallocating' \$50 million—which translates to more than 500 jobs—from the CSIRO budget for next year. Schacht wants the money to establish his planned national institute of marine sciences, a scheme which the CSIRO helped to scuttle last year.

But what has all that to do with this column's namesake and his mathematical colleague? Well, Archimedes and Newton represent the kind of person that most of us think of when we hear the word scientist. They were such brilliant scientists that they changed the course of history, and became the stuff that myths are made of.

And there's the problem. They are often portrayed as little more than stereotypes of the absent-minded professor—thinkers who were struck with brilliant insights, apparently literally in the case of Newton when an apple fell on his head. And what an unforgettable sight Archimedes must have been, streaking home through the streets of Syracuse shouting, 'Eureka!' because he realised there was a consistent pattern to the amount of water he displaced when getting into the public bath.

As a model of the modern working scientist these stories are ludicrous, but they fit a classic stereotype that is very convenient for politicians. Scientists who sit around hatching occasional breakthroughs, don't seem to need all those resources they receive—the money for laboratories, and expensive equipment, and books and journals for their libraries.

And that makes their squeals of indignation just sound like whingeing when the government, in the person of someone like Schacht, wants to take funds away. Cabinet's decision on the \$50 million probably already has come too late; the organisation is having to plan on carrying out its routine work of testing, experimenting and probing without it.

In fact, the real stuff of science is not sitting around waiting for an apple to fall, but the daily grind of accumulating data, of looking for patterns in that data and testing to see if those patterns are consistent. It can involve monitoring for years, decades even. And most of the advances are incremental, another brick in the wall. It's true, that every so often, someone like Newton or Archimedes takes a tremendous leap and changes the whole outlook of science, but that's the rare exception that proves the rule.

The media has not helped to present a realistic picture of science. Journalists rely on news to interest and hold the attention of their audiences. And the routine of research is not news; what scientists discover is. So the media concentrates on the product of science rather than the process. And we are fed a constant diet of scientific 'breakthroughs' that seem to drop out of thin air, almost by chance, like the fall of the proverbial apple.

The reality of science is neither so magical nor inhuman. In fact, science is one of the most human of enterprises. It can be seen at work in the efforts of a toddler learning to walk and exploring her world. And, just like a child, science is a drain on resources and an investment in the future. ■

Tim Thwaites is a freelance science journalist.

tage of poor opposition. Trainer Lee Freedman gave Mahogany a week off, which enabled Waikikumukau, one of the horses who had regularly chased him home, to win the Autumn Classic over 1800m. Students of New Zealand humour had big collects.

The initial autumn race meetings (by the calendar) were held at Caulfield on the first Saturday and Sunday in March. Still Schillaci could not find the winner's stall, being relegated to third in the Futurity behind the much-improved Primacy, and Deposition. Next day the highlight was the Blue Diamond. Only 13,000 attended. If Sunday racing is being covertly canvassed as the optimum weekly date by city race clubs, other aspects of their programming need work. At present, two average meetings are offered instead of one top day on which a set of feature races is run. But don't give up on Sunday racing: before long it will supplant Saturday in importance.

As a dull summer traipsed into a cool autumn, the rain stayed in Queensland. Caulfield has never been faster. On the Saturday poor Vo Rogue almost lost two track records in an afternoon, to horses which don't deserve to be mentioned in the same sentence. Primacy broke his 1400m record. Waikikumukau equalled Vo Rogue's 1800m time. No wonder that tender trainers, looking for excuses, pleaded that their charges were 'jarring up'. Hand-timed, You Remember cut more than half a second off the 1200m record, erasing the unfashionable Ben's Rocket from racebooks forever. It was nevertheless a shock when, on Sunday, the plodding eight-year-old Wodzac Hill beat a poor lot of stayers in the maliciously named Vo Rogue Handicap (for he surely deserves more generous remembrance) and ran within a few tenths of a second of the time of brilliant Caulfield Cup winners, Sobar and Silver Bounty.

The Blue Diamond time gave one less to cavil about: the winner, Hurricane Sky, equalled the day-old 1200m record. In a gruelling finish he beat the Hayes horse, Mr Vitality. Hurricane Sky cut a scarcely credible 1.7 seconds from Zeditave's race record. No two-year-old, and few horses, have run a quicker 1200m in Australia. On goes Hurricane Sky to Sydney for the Golden Slipper.

Favourite backers have been hammered all year. At Caulfield, one dead-headed for first in the 16 races; the rest were nowhere. I had backed one of this beaten gang with confidence, reckoning that Sheikh Hamdan Bin Rashid Al Maktoum's Maraakiz, sired by an English Derby winner, trained by Hayes, ridden by Mick Dittman (who has confirmed the year's big rumour that he wished to move to Melbourne as Hayes's stable jockey) would score in the Carlyon Cup. Perhaps I was over-influenced by the Istanbul form, for Maraakiz was a good winner of the Bosphorus Handicap in July 1991. A fast track at Caulfield had him longing for Turkey and he's still coming. Look for him in Sydney nonetheless; follow Balm in Gilead for the A.J.C. Oaks; back Hurricane Sky in the Slipper; and don't put the rent on Mahogany. ■

Peter Pierce is *Eureka Street's* turf correspondent.

Avoidably detained

Those who have been agitating for an end to Australia's policy of detaining asylum seekers found little joy in the report on the subject recently presented to Federal Parliament..

REFUGEE SUPPORT GROUPS were disappointed but not surprised by the report on the detention of asylum seekers released last month by Federal Parliament's joint standing committee on migration. The delayed report endorsed the current policy of detention, despite continuing protest by community groups. Lawyer and immigration specialist Kerry Murphy, who works with the Jesuit Refugee Service, said 'it was clear from the beginning of the inquiry that there were significant people on the committee who had strong views in favour of detention.'

The committee's chairman, WA Labor Senator Jim McKiernan, rejected claims that the committee was biased. As chairman, McKiernan set the tone for the inquiry with a news release in July last year, in which he said those opposed to detention had been 'found wanting when a real opportunity has arisen to recommend improvement and change'.

The 10-member committee contained like-minded people, including McKiernan's Labor colleague, Laurie Ferguson MHR, and Liberal front-bencher Philip Ruddock. As Opposition spokesman on immigration in May 1992, Ruddock ensured bipartisan support for amendments to the Migration Act.

Those amendments, rushed through Parliament just two days before a legal challenge to the detention of the Cambodians was due to be heard in the Federal Court, stated that no Australian court could order the release of the detained Cambodians, or of other 'boat people'. Three High Court judges later commented that 'one of the objects of the Act was to

clothe with legislative authority the custody in which the boat people were being kept, a custody that might have been brought to an abrupt end once a court ascertained that that custody was unlawful.' All but one of the joint standing committee members supported this legislation.

Those with strongly held views in favour of detention have seemingly carried the day in the report. With the exception of WA Greens Senator Christabel Chamarette, the committee has recommended only minor changes to Australia's current detention practice.

The committee's recommendations were at odds with the views contained in the vast majority of submissions received by the inquiry, which condemned the current policy as unjust and called for substantial change. These submissions came from groups and individuals of diverse and respected backgrounds.

Fifty-eight were from organisations, including the Australian Council of Churches, the Society of St Vincent de Paul, the Australian Refugee Council, the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Amnesty International, the Law Council of Australia, various state legal aid commissions, other federal and state departments, and many community and church groups. Twenty-seven were from individuals, including a senator and a Federal Court judge; many of them had had first-hand contact with people in detention centres.

Yet, when interviewed for this report, Senator McKiernan described some of those who had called for change as 'uninformed'. Others, he

said, had 'used detainees as pawns to elevate their public profile'.

Only 22 submissions to the committee supported the existing policy of detention: these included 14 from the Immigration Department and eight from individuals who had never visited detention centres.

'The report,' says Kerry Murphy, 'basically says "no real change", with a few sweeteners thrown in'. The 'sweeteners' include a recommendation that the minister should have the discretionary power to release, after six months detention, asylum seekers who had been torture victims in their country of origin, or who were old or infirm, and to provide education for children. But such measures, says Murphy, are 'owed to asylum seekers as part of their internationally accepted human rights. It is inaccurate of the committee to portray them as generous concessions.'

Eve Lester, co-ordinator of the Victorian office of the Refugee Advice and Casework Service, agrees: 'The report reveals a government obsessed with controlling borders and not protecting the rights of asylum seekers.' And Lester says that the recommended six-month limit on detention is a ruse. 'Under the old law, with its nine-month limit, the clock stops whenever an asylum seeker takes legal action, or is switched off by the department while reviewing cases. There are people who've been in detention for over four years whose nine months is still to expire.'

The six-month limit, Lester says, is harsher than that applied by any other Western country, and Australia stands virtually alone in not having independent review of detention. 'The

complete lack of accountability of government with detainees is frightening. The six-month limit does not oblige the minister to do anything except *consider* release. And the report expressly says the minister is accountable to Parliament only if they [the Immigration Department] allow someone to enter.'

This means that if the minister refuses release he is effectively unaccountable.

As well as leaving the minister unaccountable, the report leaves asylum seekers with no right of appeal, and no recourse except to hound the Immigration Minister. The present minister, Senator Nick Bolkus, would not be an easy man to sway. In a letter published in *The Age* in July 1993, Bolkus stated that 'it was time to put on record the fact that the 300 boat people in detention are not refugees'; yet a significant number have since met the department's strict criteria for the designation of refugees. Moreover, Bolkus has not used his discretionary power to release anyone from custody on humanitarian grounds.

The detainees have not only had to contend with unfavourable public comments from the minister and senior government MPs. Kerry Murphy points out that 'the report is filled with suspicion of courts and legal processes and implies that it has been "meddlesome" lawyers who've held up the release of the detainees. In many court cases involving detention, the judge has ruled in favour of the detainees. In some cases the court was highly critical of comments by politicians detrimental to applicants' cases and were also critical of some senior immigration officials.'

The report, Murphy says, effectively closes the door to any legal recourse for asylum seekers. 'It is unjust to guard against prolonged detention by denying the opportunity for refugees to have direct review of decisions by courts.' Murphy refers to an addendum to the majority report by Victorian ALP Senator Barney Cooney. 'Senator Cooney strongly supports the continuing role of the courts in the refugee appeal process. He states that if we cannot trust the judges reviewing refugee applicants cases, then "this country is in a crisis which must be addressed immediately."'

Refugee groups support Cooney's recommendation, Murphy says, that the Migration Act be amended to give the courts power in the appropriate circumstances to release people from the time they are detained. 'After all, as Cooney argues, courts decide day after day whether people lawfully in custody pending the hearing of a criminal charge against them should be released in the meantime. That is a function they have performed for generations.'

A further problem, Murphy says, is that the committee's report did not address the psychological traumas of prolonged detention on asylum seekers.

Evidence was presented to the committee revealing that these survivors of Pol Pot's killing fields had been severely affected by their prolonged incarceration. In Villawood detention centre in Sydney, some Cambodians stopped eating. One woman ingested half a packet of laundry powder and a dozen others have attempted suicide, including a woman who became a paraplegic after she jumped from the roof of a compound building. She remains in custody, as do three of the original Cambodian asylum seekers who arrived in Australia way back in November 1989.

According to Eve Lester, the committee failed to recognise properly that Australia has a duty to treat unauthorised entrants as asylum seekers, and to provide appropriate protection and a fair way of assessing their claims.

Lester accepts that the government does have the option of repatriating asylum seekers, but believes that policy ought to encourage the Immigration Minister to use his powers of discretion to grant asylum to people who, although not fulfilling the strict criteria as refugees, are nonetheless genuinely fearful of returning to their homeland. She says that the policy envisaged in the report may violate UN covenants on human rights to which Australia is a signatory.

Australia's shameful treatment of Cambodian and other detainees is more than just a possible breach of international obligations. Covenants of human rights exist only because there are prior moral obligations to respect the basic rights and dignity of all human beings. The committee's

failure to devise a policy that upholds the rights and dignity of asylum seekers means that little will be done to help the 214 people who, in January 1994, were languishing in detention centres in Australia. It will also further damage Australia's international reputation.

In 1945, when Britain and the United States were turning boatloads of survivors of Nazi concentration camps away from their shores, it was the welcoming voice of Australia, through Immigration Minister Arthur Calwell, that those survivors heard.

It is a like voice that 87-year-old Ngor Chay, a Cambodian asylum seeker in her fifth year in detention, needs to hear so that she too can walk in freedom. ■

Peter Collins SJ writes regularly for the Melbourne *Herald Sun*.

• For a full analysis of the detention of Cambodians in Australia see 'The Fourth Year Hard', by Andrew Hamilton SJ, p26.

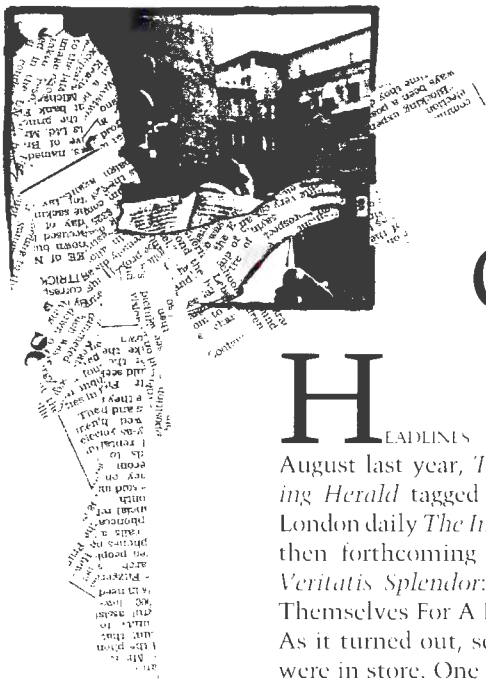
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Good news, bad press

Religion and the media

HEADLINES TELL IT ALL. On 4 August last year, *The Sydney Morning Herald* tagged a story from the London daily *The Independent* on the then forthcoming papal encyclical, *Veritatis Splendor*: 'Catholics Brace Themselves For A Hard Moral Line'. As it turned out, several 'hard lines' were in store. One popped up in *The Age*'s front-page headline on 24 September—'Hard Line By Pope On Moral Mores'—and, not to be outdone, the next day *The Sydney Morning Herald* repeated the line: 'The Pope Takes A Hard Line On Morality, Church Dissent'.

The Australian implied a 'hard line' on 24 September with a news item headed 'Pope Takes Stand Against Liberal Morals', and headlined a leading article on 7 October with 'Historic Test Of Papal Authority'. A day earlier, *The Canberra Times* had decided that this test would mean 'Anguish In The Catholic Church'.

Meanwhile, Sydney's tabloid *Daily Telegraph Mirror* and *The Courier Mail* in Brisbane personalised the story of the encyclical with headlines about Gabi Hollow's reaction. 'Pope's Paper Irrelevant' was the headline the *Telegraph Mirror* dripped across a photo of a young, vibrant Gabi Hollows on 8 October; 'Catholic Gabi Can Take Or Leave Pope' oohed *The Courier Mail* on the same day.

The newspapers had decided that the story was about conflict, insubordination and disarray within the Catholic Church. But if it wasn't that, what was it?

On 11 October, ABC television's senior current affairs program, *Four Corners*, conducted a 'debate' on the encyclical and what it meant. At least, that was the sales pitch. The program

was actually set up to demonstrate the rift between liberals and conservatives in the church. But the ABC didn't invent the rift. It was clear that most of the audience not only hadn't read the encyclical they were supposed to be debating but probably wouldn't bother to read it, either. For them, the issue was not the content of the document but whether or not its author was on solid ground in asserting his moral authority.

The result was calculated confrontation. But isn't that what the great bulk of viewers expected, and why they watched the program? The alternative would have been sombre discussion between moral theologians, and *that* would have left most people stone cold. In the wake of all the publicity, about 10,000 copies of the encyclical were sold in this country. That's not bad by Australian standards, but it's not good, either, considering that more than four million Australians profess to be Catholic. More people probably read extracts from the encyclical in the Catholic press or in specialist journals. But not many more. If it wasn't for the fuss, most Catholics would simply have ignored the encyclical altogether. The fuss *was* the news.

Even so, the media's treatment of *Veritatis Splendor* will have confirmed some people in their belief that, when it comes to religion, journalists abandon whatever they regard as their normal standards of professionalism and go feral. Coverage of religion or, more specifically, the church, so the argument goes, provides a field day for sceptics to uncover 'hypocrisy', for rationalists to expose 'superstition', and for hedonists to demonstrate just how laughable the whole thing is.

The problem with this argument is that it doesn't stand up to close scrutiny. Last year, Vanderbilt University's Freedom Forum First Amendment Centre published findings of its study into religion and the press in the US. The study revealed a 'wide chasm'

between a media culture rooted in the search for facts and a religious culture 'grounded in the discovery of faith beyond fact'—whatever that means. But it found no evidence of overt anti-religious sentiment among the vast majority of media people it surveyed.

In fact, contrary to expectations, most journalists and editors surveyed for the study said that religion was important in their personal lives. They just didn't think that it was particularly newsworthy. Consequently, there were few reporters assigned full-time to coverage of religion in the US, even fewer resources committed to the subject, and a certain laziness when it came to exploring new angles or even getting the facts straight.

A recent study by Griffith University's Deborah Selway uncovered similar findings in respect to the Australian press. Religion, Selway reports in a summary of her findings in the *Australian Religious Studies Review* [vol. 5, no. 2, 1993] generally is regarded as a 'second-class' news round on metropolitan dailies. This constrains what even senior, subject-literate journalists may do with the subject. Time is limited and, more importantly, so is news space. As a result, those religious stories that tend to get published are the ones that 'fit the news values of our modern mainstream press'—which, given the cutthroat world of circulation and ratings, may well be an accurate reflection of the tastes of the mass market. That means stories need to have a controversial or novel angle. Journalists don't have to create the controversy or invent the novelty; they simply have to know how to recognise these things when they see them.

What it seems to boil down to, then, is that religion gets a bad press because it gets so little press. But that prompts the obvious question: *why* is religion regarded as so unworthy of regular and extensive coverage? It can't be that religion doesn't concern enough of us. After all, 87 per cent of Austral-

Religion tends to give rise to creeds and codes that stifle the emotions; sport gives rise to dramas and myths that stir them. Religion produces saints we are supposed to emulate; sport produces heroes whom we look up to.

ians identify with one religion or another. About 95 per cent still prefer some form of Christian burial. And, as critics of the media's coverage of religion are fond of pointing out, more Australians attend religious services than attend sporting fixtures on most weekends.

Perhaps the last comparison holds the key. In the *First Letter to the Corinthians*, Paul urges the fledgling Christian community to greater efforts with the example of the discipline that sprinters and boxers take upon themselves. He uses the example of the sprinter again in the *Letter to the Philippians*. Paul was a consummate communicator. He knew that although his readers might not grasp the internal logic of his argument there'd be no stumbling over the lesson in the metaphor. This, after all, was a culture that took sport seriously. To the Greeks, sport was a moral exemplar and builder of character. In that sense, at least, theirs was a culture like our own.

In his book *Game Day*, the baseball columnist for *The Washington Post*, Thomas Boswell, argues that sport has become crucial to what remains of the American sense of culture: 'In an age that is a political, religious, artistic and cultural kaleidoscope of relativist values, how can we feel united? What can we agree about? Or even discuss calmly, yet enthusiastically, with a sense of shared expertise and a glimpse of a shared ideal?'

His answer is sport, which may be a case of self-serving exaggeration. But in the US, and no less in Australia, sport is a central part of the cultural conversation. Religion clearly isn't. Why?

For a start, sport, like nature, abhors a vacuum. That vacuum, in a materialist, rationalist culture is the result of uncertainty and irresolution. Sport demands final scores, winners and losers, an end to the contest and release from conflict. But because none of us can be certain about absolutes anymore, we need a regular fix of resolutions all the time.

Sport delivers them, and that is a fundamental part of its attraction. But it is not a sufficient condition for the intense interest people take in sport. If the game was just about winners and

losers there wouldn't be much to talk about. No, sport is highly nuanced and every level of meaning is accessible even to casual observers. With sport it's not just a case of who won or lost but of the infinite possibilities of 'why?'

We are invited to express opinions freely. And we feel we can express opinions because nothing of substance hangs on the outcome and no hierarchy of specialist knowledge is involved. To express a view on sport it is not necessary to be bound by a particular philosophy. It is not necessary or even advisable to be logical. Sport, writes Boswell, invites the 'luxury of unsystematic insight' and this may be its essential appeal.

Sport, of course, can also be exhilarating. In *The Joy of Sport*, Michael Novak describes basketball as something that is 'jazz, improvisatory, corporate, sweaty, fast, exulting, screeching, torrid, explosive, exquisitely designed for letting first the trumpet, then the sax, then the drummer, then the trombonist soar away in virtuoso excellence'. The odd mystic and some obscure saints may have felt the same about their religious experiences. But for the most part, religious observance has been privatised, routinised and made plain dull. It may be part of our everyday experience, but it's not the stuff of our everyday highs and lows.

Religion tends to give rise to creeds and codes that stifle the emotions; sport gives rise to dramas and myths that stir them. Religion, or at least some religions, produce saints we are supposed to emulate; sport produces heroes whom we look up to because, from where we stand, they don't seem that far away. And there is something crude, almost primitive, about a sporting contest. 'He can run but he can't hide,' said Joe Louis

of Billy Conn before their 1946 heavy-weight title fight. The champ proved his point by knocking Conn out in the eighth round.

In the same edition of the *Australian Religious Studies Review* mentioned above, Muriel Porter, who teaches journalism at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, captures the essence of why the women's ordination debate in the Anglican Church received so much media coverage: 'It is a rattling good story [as] women pit themselves against a male hierarchy as the suffragists did nearly a century ago. There is controversy, conflict, high emotion, and impassioned argument. There has also been some posturing and public "baiting" over the years, that has provided some first-class copy. But more than that, press representatives [sic] have often felt themselves drawn to something powerfully elemental happening in this debate.'

How often does the religion that involves us contain those elements? And when it doesn't, is there any wonder the media fail to report it? ■

Chris McGillion writes for *The Sydney Morning Herald*.

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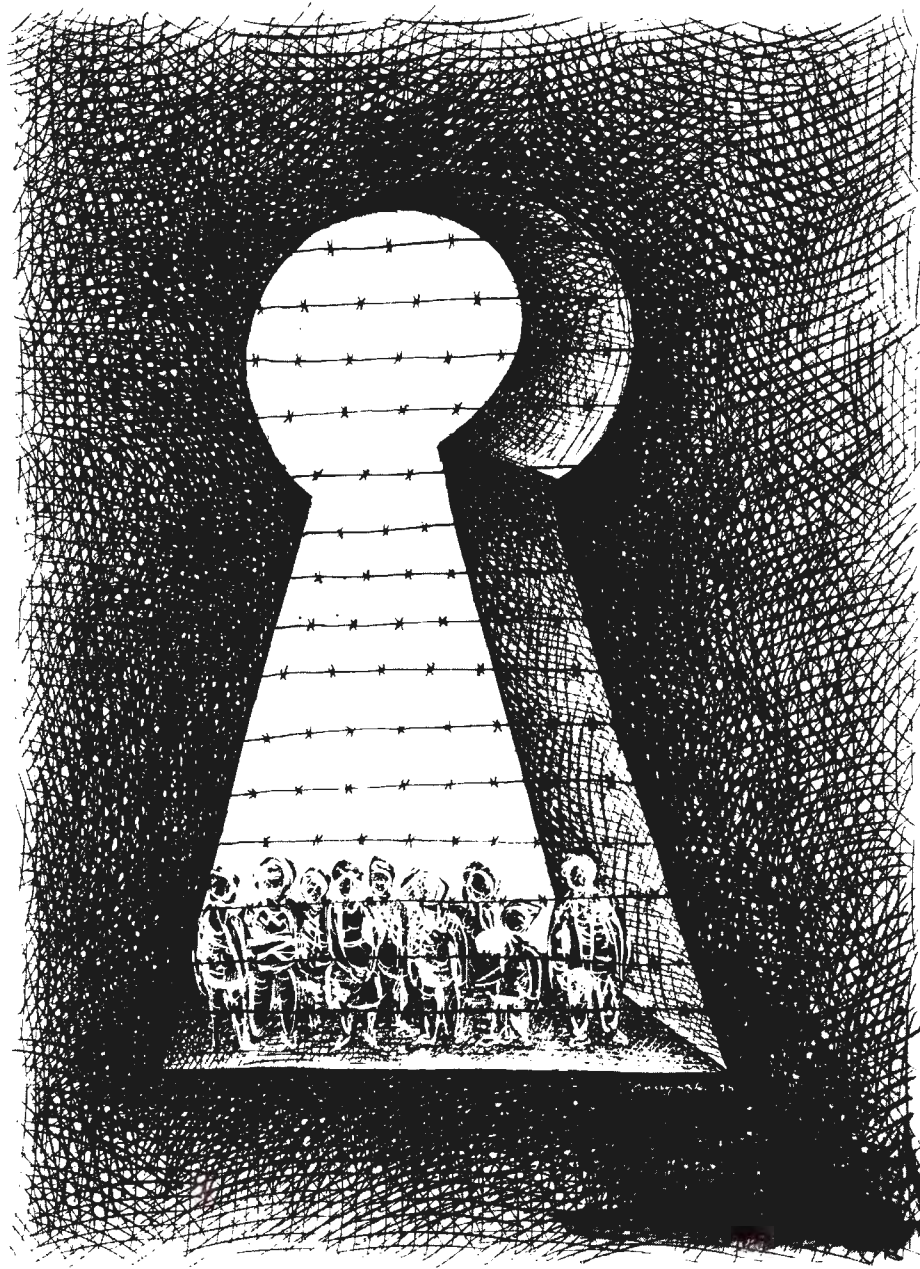
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The Fourth Year Hard



Once, indeed, he (Marcus Aurelius) rebuked a praetor who heard the pleas of accused men in too summary a fashion, and ordered him to hold the trials again, saying that it was a matter of concern to the honor of the accused that they should be heard by a judge who really represented the people. He scrupulously observed justice, moreover, even in his dealings with captive enemies. He settled innumerable foreigners on Roman soil.

—**Historiae Augustanae, Marcus Aurelius 24.**

In February and March last year, Eureka Street published 'Three Years Hard', Andrew Hamilton's account of the experience of the Cambodian boat people in Australia. This month he continues their story in this the second of the Caroline Chisholm series on aspects of Australian national life.

IN NOVEMBER LAST YEAR, many Cambodian boat people began their fifth year in detention. Some commentators pointed out that they had then endured imprisonment in Australia for a longer period of time than they endured the government of Pol Pot in their own country. It appeared unlikely, however, that many would complete this fifth year of detention within Australia. Like the events of the first three years, those of this year of continued suffering for the Cambodians and of continued shame for the Australian community should be recorded and remembered. In this article, I shall first narrate the main events of the year and then comment upon their broader significance.

The events of 1993

AT THE BEGINNING OF 1993, it appeared that the government was determined that the Cambodians denied refugee status should be returned to Cambodia, and that their return would be delayed only by a series of court cases brought on their behalf. These court cases in turn promised to leave the government more frustrated with the lawyers and agencies who represented the refugees, and to further persuade asylum seekers, lawyers and agencies that the government was not acting in good faith. Meanwhile, those who visited the asylum seekers were increasingly concerned for their personal welfare. In the course of the year, the Cambodians continued to suffer from the destructive effects of imprisonment, but their hopes and the relationships between government and its critics were affected by a series of developments, both political and judicial.

Elections

The political events which most affected the boat people were the climactic Cambodian elections in May, and the Australian federal elections in March. Despite widespread doubts about their feasibility, the Cambodian elections were held as planned. The Khmer Rouge had boycotted them and threatened to disrupt them. But peace marches and other popular actions had also given evidence of a widespread interest in the elections and desire for peace—evidence confirmed by the heavy voting during the elections, despite the Khmer Rouge threats. After FUNCINPEC, the party of King Norodom Sihanouk, secured a majority of the votes and in protracted negotiations agreed to share power with the existing government, Cambodia seemed precariously balanced, but offered a larger opportunity for peace than might have previously been expected. The result was also seen as reflecting credit on the Australian Foreign Minister, Gareth Evans, who had pressed the peace plan and on Michael Costello, who had brokered it in the face of widespread scepticism.

The importance of this election for the boat people lay both in the changed situation in Cambodia which resulted from it, and in the formal relations between the Australian and Cambodian governments that it made possible. It would now be easier for the Australian government to negotiate the conditions under which boat people would be returned to Cambodia.

The Australian election in March was notable for the unexpected return of the Labor government. The election affected the boat people only indirectly, most obviously through the change of Immigration Minister. The previous minister, Gerry Hand, retired from Parliament at the election and was replaced by Nick Bolkus. More significantly, however, the government now needed and had the space to address some issues concerned with immigration. In particular, it needed to decide the future of the Chinese students who had been in Australia since the Tiananmen Square massacre, and whom the previous Prime Minister, Mr Hawke, had promised that they would never be forced to return to China. Since the temporary residence they had been granted was due to expire in 1994, the government had to decide whether to grant them permanent residence, to renew their temporary residence, or to judge their cases individually. The change of minister also offered the government an opportunity to review the treatment of the Cambodian boat people, and to address the strained relationships between itself and the agencies and lawyers who represented the asylum seekers.

Meanwhile, by the ordinary business of government, two issues to which the story of the Cambodians had given prominence were dealt with. The first issue was the Australian practice of indefinitely detaining asylum seekers who came to Australia without a visa. This is what had caused the Cambodians such prolonged suffering. During 1993 the Joint Standing Committee on Migration Regulations conducted an in-

The apotheosis of arbitrariness was consummated in the report on detention, a hymn to the sovereign national will. The report recommends that the duration of detention can be shortened by the arbitrary decision of the minister; he need have no reasons for declining to release from detention, and his decision cannot be appealed. It is consistent with the ideology of control that appeal to the courts, the place in the community where power may be required to offer reasons, is also to be limited.

quiry on detention, to which the Immigration Department and all the major groups representing refugees made submissions.

The second issue was the independence and impartiality of the procedures for determining refugee status. On 1 July the new procedures for the review of initial decisions regarding refugee status came into existence. Single-member review tribunals, independent of the department and supported by secretarial and research staff, came into existence. The independence of this body has been widely welcomed. Although neither of these measures affected the Cambodian boat people directly, they were broadly relevant to the questions which the Cambodian experience had raised so pointedly about the humanity, fairness and efficiency of the Australian treatment of asylum seekers.

The court cases

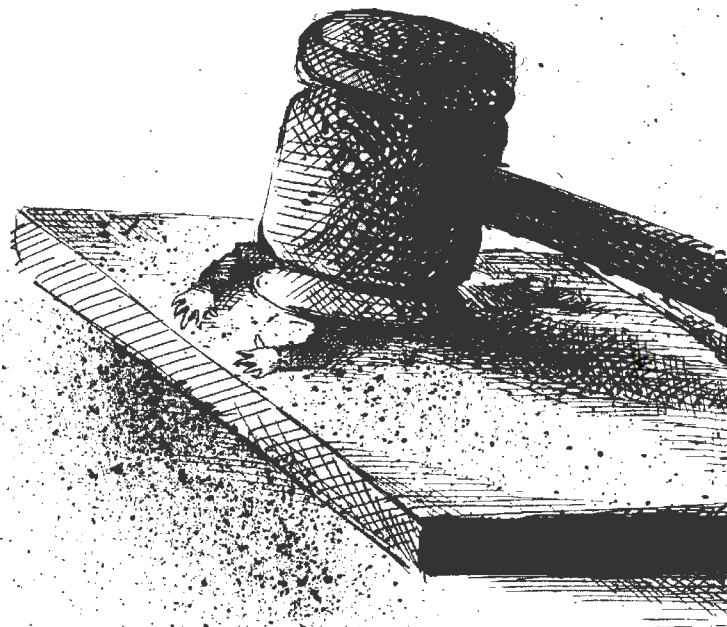
Two court cases brought in the Federal Court, before Justice Willcox in Sydney and before Justice Keely in Melbourne, were of direct relevance to the Cambodians. Appeals against both these decisions were heard early in 1994. In addition, two other cases have been of indirect relevance to the Cambodians: that brought in the Federal Court in Canberra before Justice Neaves by Chinese asylum seekers, and the challenge in the High Court to the December 1992 legislation that had effectively limited compensation for any unlawful imprisonment of the boat people to one dollar per day.

The most significant case, both for its length and for what it revealed of the procedures followed by the Immigration Department in treating the Cambodian asylum seekers, was that brought in Melbourne before Justice Keely. Because the decision was handed down later in the year than the Sydney case, I shall postpone my discussion of its findings to their chronological place. But even before its conclusion, it had significant effects. In the course of the hearing, documents requested by the plaintiffs were found to be missing from the department, the Australian Federal Police were called in, and high-ranking officers who were said to have had a significant role in formulating and executing policy towards the Cambodians were transferred or suspended from their duties.

The first decision to be handed down was in the case brought before Justice Willcox in Sydney by Dr Lek as representative of 48 other detainees. Justice Willcox held that there was no error of law common to all the decisions rejecting refugee status, nor were there errors of law in the decision made about Dr Lek. In September a subsequent judgment about the 48 individual cases confirmed the denial of refugee status in 45 instances. Three will now be heard by the new review tribunal.

Justice Willcox, however, found that the minister in fact had the power to decide whether the Cambodians should be allowed to stay in Australia on humanitarian grounds. This was contrary to the previous minister's view that he did not have this power. The judgment did not benefit the Cambodians, for Senator Bolkus chose not to decide whether to exercise this power, thus at once confirming the denial of refugee status and avoiding any possible legal challenge. But the finding unmasked the fiction that it was only the law that kept the Cambodians detained, and the law which would return them to Cambodia. Their fate was the result also of political will and decision, and the minister's decision not to decide was in fact a decision that they should be returned to Cambodia. Justice Willcox also found that these asylum seekers were not lawfully detained under the legislation in force at the time of their arrival. Thus he supported the judgment of the High Court that the boat people may have been illegally detained for two and a half years.

In the light of these judgments the government amended its defence in the the High Court challenge to the legislation restricting compensation. Whereas it had previously argued that the detention was lawful throughout, it modified its position for this case to accept that the boatpeople had been unlawfully detained prior to 5 May 1992. Although this concession was made only for this case, it would appear to



have more general significance for others imprisoned before that date. On 6 August, judgment was given in Canberra by Justice Neaves in the case brought by 25 Chinese boat people. It found that the asylum seekers had been detained for longer than the 273 active days allowed by Australian legislation. Consequently, it ordered their release. The minister acceded to this judgment, and they were released into the care of community groups with the responsibility to report to the proper authorities. Thus, the department unwillingly made these detainees a test case of the procedures that the critics of detention had consistently urged upon it. The department appealed against the decision, which, in the judgment of representatives of the asylum seekers, also raised questions of liability for compensation.

The decision in the Lck case to confirm the denial of refugee status to so many applicants appeared to strengthen the claim that decisions about refugee status were, for the most part, being properly made. But it also strengthened the impression that the treatment of asylum seekers was infected by arbitrariness.

The spectacle of a minister declining to decide on matters that lay within his competence, and of a department being forced to release detainees after illegally detaining them, was seen to argue to the lack of clear and effective policy.

Detention

This impression was strengthened in public controversy about detention. The minister defended the practice of prolonged detention only on the grounds of its strict legality, supported by an idyllic description of the conditions under which the detainees lived. Conspicuously lacking were the previous justifications offered for the practice in terms of deterrence or queue jumping, supported by sustained attack on the good sense or integrity of lawyers and agencies that supported the refugees. But the omission of broader arguments for current practice led critics to ask more insistently why the few asylum seekers who had arrived without visa should be treated so differently from those who had visas.

At the same time, it appeared that the Opposition policy may have changed to one of opposition to detention.

The spokesman for immigration, however, made it clear that the party deplored the long imprisonment of the Cambodians, but wanted only quicker procedures for dealing with asylum seekers. It did not specify how these procedures were to operate.

Meanwhile the Joint Standing Committee inquiry into detention was receiving submissions. Of the hundred or so separate submissions, eight per cent—brief submissions by individuals—supported the existing practice of indefinite detention, many as part of a wider opposition to all immigration or reception of refugees. About three per cent, mainly by government departments, were neutral, offering information. Of these, one offered by the Immigration Department was notable for offering alternatives to detention and for its claim that detention had a limited role in deterrence. The remaining 89 per cent were opposed to the existing regime. They included all organisations and individuals directly concerned with refugees. Most of these submissions proposed that detention should be strictly limited, and open to judicial review.

Decisions and judgments

In October 1993 the government announced a decision which affected the Cambodians: in November it resolved the future of the Chinese students, whose case had been linked with that of the Cambodians since 1989.

In the first decision, the Government announced that if the Cambodian boat people agreed by June 1994 to return to Cambodia, they would be eligible to apply for residence in Australia on humanitarian grounds. Furthermore they would be eligible for some government financial support and assistance in making their applications in Cambodia. From the government's point of view, this proposal had clear political merits. It offered the Cambodians a roundabout way of achieving their goal: a safe life in Australia. It also promised to remove the occasion of long-standing community criticism of the government. Moreover, the consistent determination to send home those who were not judged to be refugees would

When refugee policy is assimilated to immigration policy, the desire to control immigration is translated into a culture sceptical of refugee claims, resentful of boat people and willing to treat them shamefully ... It may be less costly in the long run to construct a refugee policy on a proper ethical basis which accepts the claims that strangers make on us by their humanity and their need.

Australian policy towards asylum seekers, however, unravelled during 1993. Although previously it had been possible to identify a refugee policy and to argue that it was based on bad ethical grounds, it is now difficult to recognise a reasoned policy. There remains only legislation and makeshift decisions, supported by whatever political or ethical slogans appear expedient at the time.

also be vindicated. The Cambodians initially greeted the offer with scepticism and anger, having learned to suspect the government's good faith. Moreover, after four years of imprisonment and dependence, they were naturally fearful of life in Cambodia and many were overwhelmed by the magnitude of the decision which they faced. The offer put especial pressure on those who had begun court action, since they had to decide within a limited time whether to accept it. But many came to see that they were offered a sure hope of eventually being able to settle outside Cambodia. Beginning with those who had been most demoralized by their long imprisonment, they began to accept the offer. To date a minority have remained obdurate in their refusal to accept the government's offer, because they are afraid to return to Cambodia.

Those who represented the asylum seekers were ambivalent about the government measures. They recognised that at last the Cambodians had been offered a sure hope of release from detention and of gaining residence in Australia. But to send them back to Cambodia appeared to be a costly way of saving the government's face, in which the Australian community would pay the financial and moral cost, and the Cambodians pay in the coin of unnecessary and unmerited suffering. The latter would face acute anxiety about return, the difficulty of adjusting to a brief life in Cambodia, and shortly afterwards of meeting the demands of life in Australia. The only reason for not giving the Cambodians immediate residence on humanitarian grounds appeared to be that to do so would call into question the morality and wisdom of having kept them imprisoned for so long.

The arbitrary character of the refusal to grant the Cambodians permanent residence was revealed on 1 November, when the minister allowed those Chinese students who had arrived in Australia before 20 June 1989 to apply for permanent residence. His other options were unattractive: to renew their four-year visas, which would merely postpone the decision, or to examine each case on its merits. This last option would have overwhelmed the processes of refugee determination, and have dishonoured Bob Hawke's promise that no one would be sent back against their will. At the same time it was announced that those who had won temporary residence upon being adjudged to be refugees would now be entitled to apply for permanent residence. Although commentators disagreed about the wisdom of the original promise made to the Chinese students, most judged the resolution sensible. (Bruce Ruxton was the most striking exception, reportedly arguing that as massacres occur routinely in China, and the Chinese people are accustomed to them, they are presumably not entitled to claim fear of persecution merely on these grounds.)

Later in November Justice Keely delivered his judgment in the prolonged case brought in Melbourne. He found that there had been serious defects in the way in which the Immigration Department had processed the cases, and that they should be heard again. The part of his judgment with perhaps the most serious implications for the government was his finding that those who hear claims for refugee status must judge them by a two-stage process. They must first evaluate the claims against the conditions which obtained at the time when the application was made, and then take account of any changes in the situation. The decision was of general significance because it appeared to call into question the legality of many previous decisions taken on refugee status, and because it gave apparent substance to the argument that more asylum seekers were entitled to refugee status. It was of particular significance in the case of the Cambodians because so long a time had elapsed before the cases were heard. The decision also made clear that the Australian government was in the business of imprisoning refugees. The department has appealed.

The day this decision was delivered was a day of judgment in many respects. Earlier in the day, the Immigration Minister spoke before the Senate Estimates Committee. He harshly judged some of the lawyers who had been involved in the case in Sydney. At the same time he referred to the plaintiff as *Sister Lek*, claiming that Lek was not really qualified as a medical doctor, but only as a nurse. Whatever of the propriety involved in using specifically female descriptive terms to demean a male, and of the assumptions about gender equality revealed, the minister was also badly informed. Dr Lek holds both qualifications. He has received no public apology. By the end of the day, however, the court judgment had vindicated the lawyers, and had shown in detail that the continued imprisonment of the asylum seekers was due to government impropriety and delay. (See box, p32)

1994

By the beginning of 1994, many Cambodians had agreed to return to Cambodia in return for the opportunity later to take up the offer of a place in the humanitarian programme. On 21 January, immediately before a court hearing, nine Cambodians of Vietnamese extraction and their dependants were released from detention. While they had previously been denied refugee status, the government admitted that it was dangerous for them to return to Cambodia and granted them refugee status.

On 26 January, a bizarre incident drew the case of the Cambodians to public attention. A young Australian of Asian extraction, who had become obsessed by the treatment of the Cambodian boat people, allegedly rushed towards Prince Charles, after firing a starting pistol. The incident, fully covered by the international press, drew public attention to the treatment of the Cambodians in Australia. Comment was generally

sympathetic to the Cambodians and gave a history of their sufferings. It offered a reasonable barometer of public opinion about the treatment of the boat people. Public comment concentrated on the long imprisonment of the Cambodians and the criticism which this had generated by representatives of humanitarian and human rights organisations. Some commentators defended government policy, based on deterrence, and elevated clerics to join lawyers as the principal perceived enemies of rationality. But the most significant aspect of the debate was the relative lack of response from the public: the issue drew few letters, and the Government did not feel it necessary to reply to criticism.

On 3 March, the *Report on Detention* was published. It recommended that asylum seekers who arrived without visas should continue to be detained indefinitely, but that the Minister should have the discretion to release them after six months. The report also recommended that consideration be given to some more humanitarian treatment of imprisoned children. It went beyond its brief to recommend further limitation of judicial review of decisions made about refugee status. Its substantial conclusions thus were totally opposed to the informed submissions offered to the committee.

As March began, a minority of the Cambodian boat people remained in Australia, determined never to return to Cambodia. Court cases yet to be heard included the hearing by the full bench of the Federal Court of appeals against the earlier Melbourne and Sydney decisions, and the High Court case on compensation.

Reflections

ONE OF THE MOST PROFOUND EFFECTS OF DETENTION is that many detainees feel that they are being denied justice. They feel that in seeking freedom, Australia's response is to deny them freedom ... This feeling of being denied justice is further exacerbated when it is apparent that only people who arrive by boat are automatically placed in detention. When asked to explain/justify this by detainees our fundamental principle of impartiality precludes us from comment. The detainees rightly point out, however, that the only method of flight available to them was by boat! (Submission by the Australian Red Cross to the Enquiry into Detention.)

What has 1993 meant for the Cambodians? For most of the boat people, it meant another year in detention. The body of evidence on the effect of detention on asylum-seekers now being built up, confirms the anecdotal accounts of depression, demoralisation, loss of perspective and of energy and initiative already reported by visitors to the detention centres. For the Cambodians, their fourth year of imprisonment was indeed bitterly hard, and that is the most important thing to say about 1993. The destructive effects of detention were put on the public record in the submissions to the Inquiry on Detention. But 1993 was not only hard; it was a continued unjustified and unnecessary imposition by the Australian community. 1993, however, saw the Cambodians offered a circuitous and difficult way out of imprisonment and hope of eventual settlement in Australia. Whatever one may think of the rationality and humanity of this measure, it is impossible not to rejoice with those Cambodians who found in it a way out of prison.

Secondly, for those who had followed the Cambodian story, 1993 also offered some judicial review of it and an opportunity for commentators to revise previous judgments. The court case in Melbourne, in particular, permitted some scrutiny of the procedures adopted by the Immigration Department. It confirmed the judgment that these procedures were notably inefficient, and that therefore the prolonged detention of the Cambodians was notably unfair. This court case also made me question the judgment I formed last year that the Cambodians were not specifically discriminated against. In the light of the evidence offered in the case in Melbourne, I can no longer dismiss this charge simply as improbable. Even though it was legally unproven, it remains a disturbingly open possibility.

The events of the year reinforced my judgment of the grounds on which the Cambodians should have been given residence in Australia. They comprised both the situation in Cambodia when they had left it, and the moral obligation on the Australian community to make adequate compensation for the inefficiency and unfairness of the treatment which they have received here. A visit to Cambodia late last year confirmed my judgment that conditions in Cambodia and the possibility of peace have improved after the elections, so that not everybody returning to Cambodia would face the danger of persecution. Those of Vietnamese extraction, however, must live with considerable anxiety there, and the decision of January 1994 to allow some of them refugee status recognised that fact.

Thirdly, 1993 saw some change in government attitudes. While it continued to insist, as Bob Hawke had done in 1989, that the Cambodians must return to Cambodia, the government also appeared more ready to compromise with its critics. By the end of the year, a high proportion of Cambodians relative to other groups had been given refugee status. Furthermore, all the Cambodians were offered the opportunity of eventually returning to Australia. The conditions at the detention centres had been improved cosmetically, the asylum seekers were offered some access to counselling, and those who returned to Cambodia were

offered some assistance. While in some cases these measures were grudging in execution, they represented some willingness by the government to meet community criticism.

Australian policy towards asylum seekers, however, unravelled during 1993. Although previously it had been possible to identify a refugee policy and to argue that it was based on bad ethical grounds, it is now difficult to recognise a reasoned policy. There remains only legislation and makeshift decisions, supported by whatever political or ethical slogans appear expedient at the time. Last year, it appeared that the Australian government gave preference to asylum seekers who sought refugee status offshore. Those accepted won permanent residence. The government penalised onshore asylum seekers by denying them access to welfare and health care before their case was heard, and giving them only temporary residence if they were judged to

The Melbourne judgment

Of Mr Hawke

In my view it was quite improper for Mr Hawke, as Prime Minister, to express publicly any opinion on the question of whether the Cambodian boat people were genuine refugees. It was, however, far worse for him to say 'I will be forceful in ensuring that that is what's followed'. In my opinion it was grossly improper for him to state publicly, with all the authority, prestige and influence of the office of Prime Minister, that he would be forceful in ensuring that his opinions would be followed.

Of Mr Hand

Mr Hand's attempt to overcome the danger created by Mr Hawke's statements was totally inadequate. A specific, unequivocal contradiction of their (Mr Hawke's and Senator Evans') statements was necessary and the delegates should have been told that fairness required that those statements be disregarded by them. Such a statement was never made to the department.

Of Mr Ian Simmington, first assistant secretary of the refugee determination branch

I am unable to accept his answers as being accurate except where they give some support to the applicants' case and that only occurred, a) where the facts were common ground, or b) the documentary materials put to him compelled the answer, or c) he inadvertently gave an answer of some value to the applicants' counsel.

Of the tests used in determining refugee status

The delegate considered that a real chance of persecution of the applicant two months after her return to Cambodia 'wasn't relevant'. In my opinion, the question of whether there was a real chance of persecution necessarily required the delegate to look at the future in so far as it was reasonably foreseeable at the time when he was making his decision.

The parallel case

It may be useful to contemplate the hypothetical case of an Australian woman, kept in detention in a foreign country for three years while waiting for an administrative official to make a decision as to whether she was a refugee. Assume for the purpose of the case:

- That the Australian woman watched on television and/or read in the newspaper the next day that the Prime Minister of that country had expressed views that the Australians who had recently arrived there were not refugees and should not be allowed to stay;
- That the Prime Minister had stated that he would be forceful in ensuring that his views would be followed by the administrative officials who would decide in cases which included her case;
- That the administrative decision maker was on a salary level which could be broadly called 'middle management';
- That the view that these Australians were not refugees had also been publicly expressed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

In my opinion such an Australian citizen would be likely to suspect—and it would not be unreasonable for her to suspect—that the administrative official who was to decide her case would not bring an unprejudiced and impartial mind to the making of his decision —Justice Keely, in the Federal Court

administration of the government policy was open to ministerial discretion, and that therefore consistency could not simply be guaranteed by regulation.

Secondly, the decision that the Cambodian boat people should be eligible for entry on humanitarian grounds if they returned to Cambodia made an arbitrary distinction between the Cambodian boat people and others in detention. No reason was given for this preferential treatment, which was therefore a pure exercise of legislative will. Furthermore, the concession made to the Cambodians weakened the argument based on the need to deter. If people were indeed looking for signals, the wrong signals were being sent. But if no one

be refugees. It further penalised asylum seekers who arrived in Australia without visa by detaining them indefinitely until their case was heard, and then giving successful applicants for refugee status temporary visas. The different treatment was based on the arguments by spokesmen like Gerry Hand and Senator McKiernan that boat people were queue jumpers and that harsh treatment was needed in order to deter other would-be asylum seekers, and that this constituted a consistent policy in which all applicants knew what to expect. It was apparently guaranteed consistency by the minister's claim not to be able to exercise discretion in the case of asylum seekers who arrived without visas.

Critics, including myself, disagreed with this policy on the grounds that it was unethical and unreasonably based. In 1993, however, the policy itself has collapsed under the clear evidence that asylum seekers are treated arbitrarily, and the abandonment of appeals to reason in favour of the assertion of mere compliance with the law. The evidence of arbitrariness appeared early, when a court ruled that the minister could consider the Cambodian cases on humanitarian grounds. It became clear that the ad-

was looking for signals, how was such long detention justified? The release from detention of the Chinese asylum seekers without incident also tested the pragmatic argument made for detention that undetained asylum seekers would disappear into the community.

Thirdly, the decision to give permanent residence to the Tiananmen Square Chinese, and the contemporaneous decision to give permanent rather than temporary residence to onshore successful applicants for refugee status, abolished the distinction between offshore and onshore applicants for residence. It also favoured the Chinese arbitrarily at the expense of other onshore applicants. Moreover, if the government could make such arbitrary decisions, it became clear that the decision to deny the Cambodians permanent residence on humanitarian grounds was also essentially arbitrary. It was no more than the plasterer's nostalgia for the long-lost fig leaf of policy. It is no wonder that the Government defence of Australian policy towards refugees became increasingly legalistic and formal. The minister and department preferred to justify policy simply on the grounds that it met domestic and international legal requirements, and that it was relatively humane. The myths of queues, of signals and of deterrence were rarely heard in the land. Only in the more populist press were the larger arguments used, and usually relied on the strength of the personal abuse of those unpersuaded by this conventional wisdom.

The apotheosis of arbitrariness, however, was consummated in the report on Detention, a hymn to the sovereign national will. It is asserted that the detention of unvisa'ed asylum seekers is necessary for control, itself a category of power and not of reason. The report recommends that the duration of detention can be shortened by the arbitrary decision of the Minister; he need have no reasons for declining to release from detention, and his decision cannot be appealed. It is consistent with the ideology of control that appeal to the courts, the place in the community where power may be required to offer reasons, is also to be limited.

So in 1993 the exercise of arbitrary will mitigated the ill effects of a wrongly conceived policy. That is to be applauded. But the government's preferred advice appeared to be to make arbitrariness the basis of its new policy. In the long run, however, to rely on arbitrariness to clean up the mess caused by an unethical and unreasonable policy is destructive. Over that way lie the shadows of totalitarianism.

The roots of arbitrariness

The inherent contradiction which begets such arbitrariness lies in subsuming refugee policy under immigration policy. Within Australian immigration policy, the goal has been to control entrance into Australia by limiting admission to those who have obtained a visa offshore. Settlement in Australia can also generally be obtained only by those who have applied for it outside of Australia. Those who attempt to enter without visas are detained until they can be deported. The government has attempted as far as possible to exercise bureaucratic control of immigration by constructing a system of detailed and comprehensive regulation, and as far as possible removing from the minister the need or opportunity to make decisions on particular cases.

These measures generally provide an adequate framework for migration, provided that they are flexibly and humanely administered. But they are inappropriate in the case of asylum seekers and undermine Australia's commitment to protect refugees. For by definition refugees are driven by fear of persecution to seek entry to Australia, and that fear magnifies the destructive effects of detention. If they are driven by fear of persecution it is as unreasonable to demand that people fleeing for their lives use the ordinary immigration channels to enter Australia as it would be to expect accident victims to make appointments before consulting a doctor at the local hospital. Australian practice therefore inevitably means that those many who are later accepted to be refugees are not given proper protection, and that a discrimination is made between different asylum seekers by the quite irrelevant criterion of how they entered Australia.

When refugee policy is assimilated to immigration policy, the desire to control immigration is translated into a culture sceptical of refugee claims, resentful of boat people and willing to treat them shamefully. The inequities and harm to which such a culture gives rise inevitably arouse public disquiet and lead to successful judicial appeals by wronged asylum seekers. Under such pressures governments inevitably intervene in order to remove the source of disquiet. In doing so, they appear to compromise the integrity of Australian immigration policy, which they have identified wrongly with a refugee policy. That leads to further harshness, and to the desire to take the administration of refugee policy out of the public, and particularly out of the judicial, eye.

So it has happened and so it will happen again. It may be less costly in the long run to construct a refugee policy on a proper ethical basis which accepts the claims that strangers make on us by their humanity and their need, and works to resolve the apparent conflict between those claims and those of others in the Australian community. This surely demands a Refugee Act, separate from the Migration Act, in which our international obligations are articulated and given legislative force. ■

Andrew Hamilton SJ teaches at the United Faculty of Theology, Parkville, Victoria. He has worked with the Jesuit Refugee Service since 1983 and has been a chaplain to the Cambodian community in Melbourne.

Talking Points



Mary Kunji, 69, is one of the artists whose work will be presented in *Out of the Chrysalis*, an exhibition by Aboriginal women from the Daly River, NT. It can be seen in Sydney at the Blaxland Gallery, 6th floor, Grace Bros city store, from 8 April till 1 May, 1994.

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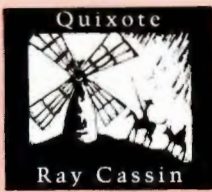
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Beware the good-neighbour policy

I NUDGE THE CAR INTO THE USUAL SPACE, and am pleased that the manoeuvre requires no more than the usual amount of scraping the kerb. This pleasure is slightly diminished, however, at the sight of next-door neighbour no.1 vomiting copiously down the side of her front fence. I cross the footpath and tentatively inquire if there is anything I can do to help.

She smiles weakly. 'No, thank you, I can do this all by myself.'

Everyone wants to be a comedian. I rephrase the question, and she assures me that she will be all right.

'It's just the fumes from the solvent, you know. After a couple of hours they start to get to me.'

I restrain the impulse to tell her that they have been getting to most of the rest of the street as well. For some weeks, the façade of next-door neighbour no. 1's house has been encrusted with ladders, buckets, plastic bags full of shavings and scrapings of various kinds, and tins and bottles containing toxic and corrosive substances. The smell of the last, individually and collectively, is putrid. I normally dislike the smell of paint but am actually looking forward to next-door neighbour no. 1 reaching the painting stage. She has been quite friendly, in a non-intrusive way, since we moved in and it would be a pity if an otherwise tolerable neighbour were to sacrifice her life in the cause of home renovation.

So I content myself with suggesting that she could use some of the solvents to clean the glutinous mess clinging to the side of her fence. Everyone wants to be a comedian.

Turning towards our house, I am greeted by next-door neighbour no. 2, who has been effusively and affectedly friendly, and in an intolerably intrusive way, since the day we moved in. Why isn't *she* risking death by stripping layers of old paint from her house? Why, indeed, is it usually the innocent who suffer in this world, instead of repellent fiends like our next-door neighbour no. 2?

She interrupts this reverie on the problem of evil before I can build a Calvary in the unsuspecting suburb of Richmond. 'How is your friend?'

'My friend? Uh, she's fine, thank you.'

'Oh, it's just that I haven't seen her around for a while.'

'We're very quiet people.'

She tries hard to remember how to smile, and produces something which I imagine is the look a cobra has before it strikes its prey. 'Yes, of course you are. It's just that I haven't *seen* her.'

I could extract myself from this one easily enough. I could tell next-door neighbour no. 2 the truth, which is that my friend, like most people, is hard to see when she's not in the country. I could say, 'She's in Phnom Penh at the moment and she'll be in Saigon next week and Hanoi some time after that. But then she's coming

back to Melbourne so there's a reasonable chance that you'll see her on the streets of Richmond. Except of course if she sees you first.' But it goes against the grain to satisfy this intrusive person's curiosity. So I simply produce what I hope is the look a cobra has before it tells its victim, 'Mind your own business. Or you die.'

The front door has never looked sweeter as I turn the key in the lock. Even if it hasn't been stripped and repainted lately.

Next morning I am woken by the phone. It is she whom next-door neighbour no. 2 likes to call my *friend*. I decide against shouting 'Good Morning Vietnam!' because no one wants to be that bad a comedian. We have just got past the exchange of fondnesses and are immersed in travellers' tales when I am distracted by a scratching from outside the bedroom window. I do not have to look to see that it is next-door no. 2, whose garden has a nondescript shrub that is uncomfortably close to the window and which seems to be in eternal need of pruning.

The scratching must be audible in Saigon, because there is a giggle at the other end of the phone. 'Is that next-door no. 2? Do you think she's missing me too?'

'Undoubtedly. She seems to think I've done away with you because she accosted me yesterday afternoon and demanded to know where you were.'

We drop the subject of next-door no. 2 because we have better things to talk about, after all. But the shrubbery intruder reclaims my attention when I leave the house later that morning. So does next-door no. 1, and more urgently, because she is wearing a respirator and the kind of coverall seen in 1950s documentaries on the correct procedure to be followed in case of nuclear attack.

These precautions have obviously been adopted too late, because no. 1 is also crawling along the ground. The aroma wafting from a sodden nylon brush she has presumably just dropped suggests the cause of her distress, and as I am vaulting the fence I realise that I, too, might need a respirator in order to do anything useful.

Next-door no. 2 arrives at the scene at almost the same time. I blabber something about calling ambulances and being careful of the fumes but am cut off in mid-sentence.

'Don't you touch her!' next-door no. 2 screams, interposing her body between me and the convulsing next-door no. 1. 'And what have you done with your friend?'

I am not, I think, a violent man. I am certainly not the kind of violent man next-door no. 2 thinks I am. But, looking at the steel in her eye, and knowing that there is a bottle of poison on the ground in front of me, I find myself tempted. Oh, for the morals of a cobra. ■

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

Petrov aftermath

The Petrov defections were to Australia's Cold War what the bombing of Darwin had been to the Japanese threat in World War II. As *The Bulletin* editorialised at the time, the episode brought home once again the implications of nationhood and participation in world defence. Parallels to Gallipoli were invoked—Australia had shown its mettle on the Cold War battlefield of security intelligence. (Looked at another way, the same dearth of independence in Australian foreign policy had been given stark expression in a new international context).

The impact these events had on Australian consciousness can be measured in part by the depth and bitterness of the debate over their interpretation that has raged ever since between historians and myth-makers of the left and right. The Petrov story is, after all, a valuable historiographical prize: the defections were to change the course of post-war Australian history by placing new and added pressure on the ideological faultlines which ran through a wrong-footed Labor opposition, thereby bolstering the Menzies government's then precarious hold on power.

Conspiracy theories advanced by both sides have given the events of April 1954 added potency in the popular mind. They explain, to a great extent, how the Petrov defections became 'The Petrov affair'. For the left, the Petrov exercise was a cynical plot hatched between the Menzies government and its intelligence service to secure victory in the May 1954 election and destroy Labor leader Evatt and his party. For the right, the only reason the royal commission into the Petrovs' revelations failed to turn up any spies was that it had its hands tied by the inadequacies of the law, uncooperative witnesses and the squeam-

tale: she had even lost a shoe in the process.

In the silver light of movietone newsreels, those events now take on a surreal quality. Even so, one can understand the degree to which they captured the imagination of a sheltered and insular Australia. The images of Mrs Petrov being bundled onto a plane by two typecast Soviet 'thugs' brought the Cold War home to the living rooms of middle Australia. As Kathy Skelton writes in her account of her 1950s childhood, this was the stuff of Cold War Hollywood:

'Holding her arms were the hands of two huge, unsmiling men ... They looked mean and ferocious and determined not to let her go. These must be real Communists. One wore a gaberdine coat and a grey felt hat and carried a briefcase and a bulky parcel tied up with string. Nanny said he was probably taking something home for his wife and children in Russia but Dad said it was bound to be top secret information. Or maybe it was the radio they used to send messages back to Russia ... The other wore a cardigan under his striped suit and had a little moustache, a dark smudge under each nostril, not unlike Hitler's.'

FORTY YEARS AGO THIS MONTH, Vladimir Petrov—third secretary and intelligence officer at the Soviet embassy in Canberra—signed a statement seeking asylum in Australia, thereby unleashing a political and diplomatic storm. On 13 April 1954, only six weeks before a federal election, Prime Minister Menzies announced Petrov's defection to a stunned parliament. A royal commission was appointed to investigate the 'outlines of systematic espionage' revealed by documents Petrov brought with him.

Petrov's wife Evdokia, in the meantime, was being held incommunicado at the Soviet Embassy. On 19 April, during a ham-fisted attempt to spirit her out of the country, she was 'rescued' amidst a wave of public hysteria. Headlines howled 'She Stays!'; children stood in class shouting, 'She's free! She's free!'. Mrs Petrov had become the princess in a Cold War fairy-

*Photo courtesy
Australian Archives, ACT,
Reprography Unit.*

ish objections of civil libertarians—all part of a communist-controlled conspiracy to conceal the truth.

In this anniversary year, the conspiracy-theorists are at it again. Their arguments turn on the few key questions: when did Menzies first learn of Petrov's impending defection? Was the operation delayed so that it could coincide with a federal election? What impact did the affair have on voters in the May 1954 poll? Could the documents which Petrov brought with him, which included references to members of Dr Evatt's personal staff, have been concocted or forged? The documentary record, which remains partial despite significant releases under the 30-year rule, has confused as much as it has clarified.

IN RAKING AGAIN AND AGAIN over the coals of the Petrov affair, historians have largely focused on its political dimensions. In doing so, they have missed an important part of the point. In many ways, the Petrov Affair can be viewed as a social phenomenon, less the product of a deliberate and mechanistic conservative conspiracy than of far broader social and ideological forces.

The Menzies government used the Petrov affair for much more than short term electoral advantage. For a start, it helped to revive a rigid pro-western outlook, of which anti-communism was a keystone, at a time when the certainties of the Cold War had been called into question by the revisionist Soviet doctrine of 'peaceful co-existence', the impasse in Korea and sharp political realignments elsewhere in Asia. And, more importantly, it served to reinforce popular assumptions about the relationship between communism, a far broader spectrum of political non-conformity and dissent, and outright disloyalty.

Humphrey McQueen has argued that anti-communism is neither wholly negative nor defensive, but is the product of a set of values, a unifying concept for moral and social conduct. In post-war Australia, these values were enshrined in a new social construct—the 'Australian way of life'—in which dissent, let alone communism, had no place. Ironically, this contradistinction can be seen in

Petrov's own formal request for asylum: 'I no longer believe in communism since I have seen the Australian way of living.'

The Petrov royal commission actively harnessed and reinforced these attitudes to individuality and perceptions of threat which pervaded 1950s Australia. It was by these assumptions—and not by law—that witnesses called before it were tried. They provided the framework in which the evidence of the Petrovs and Australian security was construed, dictated the way in which witnesses were treated and, through the press, forged public perceptions of those under attack.

Many of those called as witnesses were neither known to the Petrovs nor mentioned in the documents they brought with them. Many had been cleared by security of any wrongdoing before they were summonsed. The commission's interest was in exposition rather than investigation.

Witnesses found themselves being questioned about their political beliefs and activities in a way that went far beyond the commission's terms of reference. Ric Throssell, a Department of External Affairs official, was questioned extensively about the political beliefs of his mother, communist author Katherine Susannah Prichard, and her associates. Bruce Milliss, a communist businessman connected with Chifley, was interrogated about his involvement with 'Sheepskins for Russia' and the 'Citizens' T.B. League'.

For the commission, the interest was in *potential* for espionage, as much as any overt act. The measures of that potential were avowed communism, sympathy with communism or a willingness to associate with communists and their activities. In this way the commission's proceedings reinforced popular ideas about the dangers of political dissent: through association with communists or 'communist fronts', one could indirectly, unknowingly or innocently aid and abet the enemies of the 'Australian way of life.'

Those witnesses who failed to cooperate with the commission were branded 'unsatisfactory', a finding used to qualify their evidence. A refusal to answer questions often led to a presumption of guilt. Informers, on the other hand, were given special treat-

ment and protection. Attacks on their credibility were held in contempt. As Chifley had predicted before his death, the Menzies government's approach to security had opened 'the door for the liar, the perjurer and the pimp'. As in the United States, informing functioned as an act of positive loyalty and self-clearance.

For some witnesses, the ordeal did not end with their appearance before the commission. Some would find themselves in a career purgatory akin to the American 'blacklist'. While the commission had found no evidence against them and recommended no prosecutions, their exoneration remained conditional. In the aftermath of the commission, the security services were able to enforce their own judgment on their own assumptions through continued denial of security clearances.

Ric Throssell, for instance, would find his career progress stymied for more than two decades. Dave Morris, a talented engineer and active communist, found himself hounded out of his profession. University appointments were affected, as Brian Fitzpatrick argued: 'Politically safe persons are preferred for university sinecures; self-respecting (and therefore self-expressing) journalists are put aside when they apply for teaching jobs; security considerations are applied to distinguish sheep from goats ...'

For many witnesses, the ramifications of the Petrov affair were felt most acutely in their social lives. The Petrov royal commission may not have recommended any prosecutions, but middle Australia came to its own judgments and enforced its own sanctions.

The Petrov affair was to split some families asunder. When Clem Christesen, a leftist intellectual and editor of *Meanjin Quarterly*, was called before the commission, his mother sent him a missive which neatly illustrates the Cold War mindset of the wider community. She accused Christesen of having 'associated with the enemy', of 'flirting with' and 'running after the Comms'. He was 'not well balanced and (was) easily led by people who would use him'. The whole business had been caused by 'his own silly mug activities and talk'. What did he expect when he had forsaken



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his religion? After all she had done to bring him up within the straight and narrow, 'he had let (her) down'. Christesen and his mother were to remain alienated for some years.

Christesen's wife Nina—head of the Russian language department at Melbourne University—was also to be called before the commission. Her father, a right-wing Russian emigré, would suffer greatly as a result. He was ostracised and spat at by other people. Old friends would cross the street to avoid talking to him. He was forced to resign his position in the Russian monarchist movement in embarrassment.

Rupert Lockwood, a Communist journalist at the heart of the affair, found himself 'cut off dead' by his older brother Lionel, a high-ranking and conservative naval officer. Lockwood's sister Elfreda recalls: 'Lionel's hands trembling each morning as he picked up the paper to see what his little brother had been up to.'

Witnesses' children were also to suffer. The social world of playground and neighbourhood reflected in microcosm the tensions and conflict of the community at large. Lockwood's daughter Penny found herself ostracised. Child after child was moved from the seat next to her after complaints from parents. She was forced to take refuge in a foul-smelling pan toilet as her schoolmates beat the door and jeered outside. She faced abuse from neighbours, shopkeepers and security men who followed her to school, telling her how evil her parents were and how they were 'going to get' her father: 'You'd keep very quiet about who you were, you'd stay in the background because you didn't want anyone to find out.'

Penny Lockwood was withdrawn from school for some four months, two of which she spent in bed, close to physical and emotional breakdown. The snub, the cut and cold shoulder were powerful weapons in this context. The Christesens recall it was 'as though a curtain had come down.' Clem wrote to his lawyer, Jim Meagher: 'We both feel under a cloud ... we even imagine looks of enquiry on the faces of friends.' Old friends no longer invited them to their homes and parties. Staff at the university were polarised between coldness and support.

Meanjin's sales fell away—even longtime supporters of the magazine cancelled their subscriptions. Rupert Lockwood recalls friends 'running a mile when they saw you coming'. Few would talk or drink with him at the Journalists' Club.

Many witnesses had trouble obtaining services from local shopkeepers and tradespeople. Some found it difficult to obtain legal representation for their appearances before the commission. When Bruce Milliss approached his family solicitor 'he demonstrated palpable alarm ... he'd never been mixed up in politics ... and this Petrov business, well...'

In some instances, conformity became manifest in harassment and physical violence. Rupert Lockwood, who embarked on a speaking tour of New South Wales and Queensland to raise support and funds for the Communist Party's campaign against the commission, detected a 'lynch spirit' in many quarters. He travelled under a false name with a bodyguard of waterside workers and seamen for protection. Lockwood's public meetings were frequently attacked. In Mackay, he 'set a record as the only speaker in history hit in one meeting by four eggs, seven tomatoes, one paw-paw and two mangoes'.

In Rockhampton, a mob was prepared for Lockwood's arrival with bags of flour and powdered glass, putrid fat, piles of green fruit, stones and even tar and feathers. They planned to throw him into the nearby Fitzroy River. Fortunately, he lost his voice. On each occasion, the police offered no protection.

These episodes demonstrate some of the ways in which the Petrov affair functioned at a popular level. As in the United States, McCarthyism in Australia gave particularly ferocious expression to the conformity which characterised post-war life. The McCarthyist experience was as much the product of the prejudice of ordinary Australians as of the machinations of security men in trenchcoats. ■

Rory Mungoven is a freelance writer living in Canberra. With help from the Australia Council, he has interviewed a number of witnesses who appeared before the Petrov Royal Commission.

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PHOTOGRAPH OF BEARER

PROFILE

NAME NOM: DAVID LODGE

Place and Date of Birth. Lieu et Date de Naissance.

Occupation Profession



Birmingham pilgrim

David Lodge, the English novelist better known as a comic chronicler of the fads of academe and the travails of Catholicism, is also an enthusiast for the revived medieval pilgrimage to Compostela. Edmund Campion asked Lodge about his journeys, literal and metaphorical.

DAVID LODGE, THE BRITISH novelist who has just been in Australia, is so anonymous he could be a spy. Whereas other British novelists visiting Australia tend to be peacocks in long flowering print dresses or flash suits with especially flamboyant shirts, Lodge favours off-the-rack clothing. He stands still, his conversation is spare, his lips are thin and grinless, his eyes hidden behind tinted aviator spectacles. When he speaks it is in a blunt London accent, neither languid Oxbridge nor concrete-cutting Bloomsbury like the others.

Yet this dun presence is not some kind of camouflage for a novelist seeking 'material'. More than most of them, Lodge is stable, assured and centred. His novels may be comic histories of our time but they come with a point of view that has authority. 'I use comedy to explore serious subjects,' he says. Lodge is interested in how a person who is apparently settled, even rigid, in his or her convictions and way of life, can be brought to change by another person equally settled or rigid, even if in a contrary way. The comedy of his novels comes from the interaction of such tight personalities. Often his novels have two main characters, each opposing the other. Gradually they learn the attractions of the other's convictions and so are brought to cross borders and change.

His three campus novels, now re-

leased by Penguin in a single volume, are good examples. In *Changing Places* (1975) Philip Swallow, a dim Eng. Lit. academic from an English red-brick university, Rummidge, goes to California as an exchange lecturer and is sucked into the delights and turmoil of flower power. Morris Zapp, a ferocious academic entrepreneur and sexual sportsman, replaces him at Rummidge. Both men are changed and in the process Lodge has fun exploring the contrasting worlds of Rummidge and California. In *Small Worlds* (1984) the academics are still travelling, only now it is the ceaseless international academic conferences that engage Lodge's ironic interest. In *Nice Work* (1988) he returns to Rummidge, where a theory-ridden female academic from Swallow's department interacts with a factory manager and both have the edges knocked off them.

THESE NOVELS ARE NOT autobiographical but they come from a world Lodge knows well. He stays close to his own experience and personal, rather than researched, material. Thus his growing-up years in wartime London with his RAF father away from home gave him *Out of the Shelter* (1970). The local cinema as the focus of suburban common life is the centring point of *The Picturegoers* (1960), a novel that also draws on his experiences as a

student at London University. *Ginger, You're Barmy* (1962) came straight out of his two dead years as a soldier during national service between his BA and MA degrees.

In 1960 Lodge won an appointment to the English department at Birmingham University. He stayed there until 1987, with time out for teaching stints in California and elsewhere and a surprising number of international conferences. There are half a dozen critical works too, ranging from *The Language of Fiction* (1966) and *The Modes of Modern Writing* (1977) to his occasional essays collected in *Write On* (1986) and *The Art of Fiction* (1992), which began life as a series of weekly newspaper columns. Half his life has been spent at Birmingham University, which has given him the Rummidge experience for his campus novels and the spur to write those lit. crit. books.

So when I met him I asked for his reflections on this half-a-lifetime of academe. At the beginning, he said, he was 20 years younger than anyone else on the English department staff. There were only about a dozen of them. 'Such was the gentle rhythm of our life that most of the staff had lunch together each day.' Most of his early students were, like himself, from families who had never known university education. The competition to get into a university was intense, so

there was considerable excitement about being there. Teaching was done in tutorials of two or three students and the syllabus ran from Old English to about 1900. 'Very bright students might be admitted to a seminar on 20th century writing.'

BY THE END OF THE DECADE, that had changed. Students and staff united to break open the syllabus and make it more modern. He recalled staff battles over examination papers, which sometimes went on for days. By now, too, the university population was expanding. More and more students were being squeezed in and new universities were started with inadequate resources, such as libraries. These new universities suffered from the turning off of financial taps in the Thatcherite '80s. 'They would never have the one million books which in the United States are considered adequate for a university library.'

The changes at Birmingham that Lodge finds most remarkable are in the students. 'In the 1960s student social life amounted to having a rave at disco parties, experimenting mildly with pot and wearing outlandish clothes. By the 1980s students were dressing up like people in *Brideshead Revisited*. Their idea of a good night out was to dress up in dinner suits and strapless gowns and go to a ball. In the 1960s the student union was left wing; by the 1980s it was very conservative.'

Speaking of Birmingham, I told him that *Eureka Street* readers knew the city best for its having been the home of John Henry Newman. 'Perhaps', he said, 'his stocks are going down as the promoters of his cause (for canonisation) take over. He stressed the *difference* of Catholicism—to be a Catholic was to be different. Now that sense of difference has lessened. When I was growing up I was influenced by the literary Catholicism of, say, Waugh and

Greene and I found Newman very exciting, especially his passage about how the human race is "implicated in some terrible aboriginal calamity" which is original sin.'

'Newman's idea of development is a key idea for contemporary Catholicism—the idea that the faith is not set in one form and has to be accepted in that form forever by every generation of Catholics. As a critique of fundamentalism, Newman's idea of development is very valuable.'

But when I suggested that Newman would not have indulged in the triumphalist thuggery of some English Catholic writers who are currently enjoying the Anglican Church's difficulties over women priests, Lodge showed little interest. 'I don't think Newman would have approved of women priests,' he said, 'although, on the other hand, Manning might have.'

The collapse of state-enforced secularism in the former Soviet empire interested him more. 'It was a release of pent-up yearning for the spiritual, although what brought about the overthrow of the Stalinist empire was the desire for what was in the supermarkets of the West. The saddest thing about the collapse of tyranny is that the first thing to happen is that pornography flourishes. Still, however many supermarket goods they get, people want something beyond materialism, even if it is New Age therapies.'

This led him to tell me of his recent TV documentary, as yet unseen in Australia, about the modern revival of the medieval pilgrimage to Compostela in Spain. 'In the 13th century the whole of Europe was on the move. Half a million people went to Compostela each year, walking or on horse for up to 1000 miles. Today tens of thousands go each year in cycling clubs or backpacking—not by car. Only a small proportion of them are Catholics; others are drawn by the cultural aspects of it. At the monastery of Roncesvalles the monks continue to offer hospitality as they have done for 500 years. Yes, Roncesvalles, where Roland of *The Song of Roland* fell—there's a rather ugly monument to him. Today there is a very moving blessing ceremony at the end of Mass each evening, when all come forward together and are blessed.'

Lodge's enthusiasm for the Compostela pilgrimage stirred my memory and I recalled that his first novel, *The Picturegoers*, had a brief reference to another modern pilgrimage, Student Cross. In this annual pilgrimage Catholic undergraduates carried a full-size wooden cross across England to Walsingham, the Marian shrine in Norfolk. For over a week they would walk through the day, turn and turn about under the cross, pausing each hour for rest and a short religious talk, and in the evening carouse in a friendly pub before sleeping on the floor of some church hall. It was, as Lodge said, 'male and rather hearty'. 'It was witnessing to Christianity in the face of a secularist world.' It was also, as I know myself, a genuine experience of medieval religion.

This is the world from which Lodge came. The only child of a 'mixed' marriage, his boyhood experience of the church was dutiful rather than pious—he did not become an altar server at the parish church. What opened his mind and stretched his Catholicism were books: *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Francois Mauriac, Graham Greene... Authentic religious belief, he found, was 'equally opposed to the materialism of the secular world and to the superficial pieties of parochial Catholicism'. And so to London University, the Newman Society and Student Cross. It is no surprise to find that his first publication, today excised from his bibliography and extremely rare, was a booklet *About Catholic Authors* (1957). In a series called 'Tell Me Father', it purports to be a packet of letters from a priest to a former pupil, Anthony, (like Lodge) doing his national service in the army.

CLEARLY, ANTHONY HAS PLENTY of time on his hands because the priest's recommendations of what he should read would fill a library. There are all the predictable names, like Chesterton and Belloc, Greene, Mauriac and Waugh; but also some now forgotten bestsellers like Robert Hugh Benson, Bruce Marshall, Giovanni Guareschi and Canon Sheehan. Poets get a goodly mention; Newman hardly any at all. There is a perfunctory nod to historians and theologians; and Lord Ac-

No one can write an adequate history of the modern church without reading How Far Can You Go? One sentence—'At some point in the nineteen-sixties, Hell disappeared'—is worth a chapter in a more formal history.

ANDREW BULLEN

ton is awarded a book whose title is quite unknown to any Acton scholar. *About Catholic Authors* is a youthful indiscretion but it deserves notice because it tells us what young Catholic intellectuals read (and didn't read) in the mid-1950s. Also, it is a map of David Lodge's mind then, an irreplaceable source for a future biographer.

Next, he wrote an enormous MA thesis on Catholic novelists, got married and went to Birmingham. His Catholic novels chart the vicissitudes of his generation. They are a history of the modern church, lived through and laughed over. *The British Museum is Falling Down* (1965) takes a reader into the strained world of non-contraceptive Catholics before the watershed of *Humanae Vitae* in 1968.

Those were the salad days of Vatican II. The hopes, failures, idiocies, shames and successes of the Vatican II Catholics are recreated in *How Far Can You Go?* (1980), which became a cult novel for many readers. No one can write an adequate history of the modern church without reading this comic novel. One sentence—'At some point in the nineteen-sixties, Hell disappeared'—is worth a chapter in a more formal history. His latest, *Paradise News* (1991), has at its core the discovery of life by a former priest, now an agnostic theologian. Again, here is poised and delightful irony; but the laughter is subversive of solemn certainties.

David Lodge is writing another novel, its working title *Therapy*. One can only guess what aspect of modern life will be caught in its ironic sights. One Sunday I introduced him to an Australian novelist who is a member of an agnostic sect and is planning to be ordained to its priesthood. I told him that she had already been to church that morning but had to go again in the evening because, as she said, it was the full moon, the source of energy. Absorbed in another conversation, I lost track of what they said to each other. But I did hear in passing, his question to her, 'Will you be a fulltime priestess?'. Australians should await *Therapy* with interest. ■

Edmund Campion is a contributing editor to *Eureka Street*. His *Place in the City* will be published by Penguin in September.



Mother and son

A Mother's Disgrace, Robert Dessaix, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1994. ISBN 0 207 17934 4 RRP \$16.95

PART OF THE INTEREST in *A Mother's Disgrace* lies in the way it anatomises storytelling; it is a very knowing book about how books are put together or, indeed, fall apart. As Robert Dessaix tries to shape his story into a whole, he keeps signalling to his readers that the material is edged all round with loose ends. This may not make it everybody's read. But, for those readers who draw pleasure from drafts and outlines as well as from finished artefacts, the book virtually asks to be relished as a work in progress.

So this account of his recent finding of his natural mother is the story of an unfinished story. It is also an account, perhaps *the* account, of Dessaix's discovery of his homosexuality and his deciding to be gay. He makes it clear that that part of his story is especially written to help his new-found mother understand him. This book has a unique reader: it is not only dedicated to Yvonne Dessaix and about her, it is written *for* her.

It gets off to a great start, as Dessaix vividly recalls an incident in Cairo when his life was in danger, an incident that triggers his search for himself, his mother, his story. Here is one summary he gives of his life: 'Abandoned yet again (as I saw it), this time rather abruptly by my wife, I moved to

Sydney, thought I'd seize life by both hands and put an ad in the personal columns. In 1982 I met P., took up with him and he with me, and two years later we flew off to Europe for a grand tour, he straight to Italy and I via Egypt. And so I came to Cairo, to Groppi's and to my spiralling moment on the twenty-second floor of the Sheraton Hotel. And although it grew out of a sense of nothingness, of being stripped bare of any self, of being brutally silenced, untongued, reduced to animality, it was also a luminous moment in its way. Perhaps in George Steiner's terms it was even quite a Modernist moment, the point at which the covenant between my lived life and the stories I'd told myself about it broke' (pp10, 11).

For me, there are traces of death and resurrection in the pattern of the writing. There's an ancient classical moment here, too, and old broken covenants can be replaced by new enduring ones, but Dessaix has the right to tell the story his way. There's an engaging freshness in the energy with which he reveals himself, and humour in his serious account of himself. There is an honesty throughout this book, a high quality of self-revelation, that makes for compelling reading—and for a loose storyline.

Dessaix has the gift, too, of conveying mystery forcefully in a phrase. At the end of his first chapter, he says: 'And speaking of false leads, red herrings and outright lies, four years later in Sydney I had another pivotal experience that grew out of that moment in Cairo. It grew out of it because in my spiralling upwards that night I realised that in all the stories I had told about my life up to then I'd always circled around the question of my mother ... After Cairo I wanted to fill in this shaft of silence running up through the centre of my life, at least with words. I didn't think much beyond a story' (p20).

How do luminous or pivotal moments generate narrative? How else move close to shafts of silence, if not through spirals? The coincidences and mystery of actual life seem to make a straight narrative line impossible. How can one negotiate fairly with all that clamours to be expressed, and how keep the threads untangled? Whatever of that, Dessaix keeps true to that 'shaft of silence' (what a phrase).

He can, nevertheless, give a clear, apparently straightforward account. For me the most memorable passage in the book begins this way: 'Let me describe for you a city I know well, but you could not be expected to. The old town, where some of the zigzagging streets are cobbled and the castle keep called Mokko still stands intact and grey-black on the highest point, is on a promontory at the mouth of a small but swiftly flowing river. If we walk north from the keep ... (p2)'.

The city he describes with so many convincing physical details, however, exists nowhere other than his own imagination, where it has been developing since he was six years old. Though now, of course, it exists in his reader's imagination—if we want to be knowingly modern (that is, post-modern?) about it. But that's what happens if you spin yarns. Since Dessaix has been working on this one for more than 40 years, he's honed it until his imagination is fully satisfied; this story, at least, is complete. It's intriguing that he has succeeded in creating a complete story, but only as an alternative in the imagination to the actual and intractable world.

The city, he says, is his 'Pure Land'. Although Dessaix says he doesn't

'wish to sound mystical', he does. Luminous moments, shafts of silence, Potalas of the imagination and Pure Lands are ways of putting it that sound utterly mystical. He suggests that these symbolise his missing natural mother and makes one wonder if she also might symbolise them. There's a chapter called 'Motherlands', another called 'Mother Russia' and another, 'Mother'—the structure of the book spirals around the central, mothering shaft of silence. The man's a mystic.

The book tells of how he actually met his mother and how their relationship has developed. Dominating that relationship is *her* Mother, whose control over her daughter's life and that of the grandson she put out for adoption lies at the heart of the plot—and 'plot' is the word for what this dauntingly grand 'Mother' is capable of; no wonder Dessaix's book is wary of something as ruthless as a dominant storyline.

It is striking that Dessaix speaks of Mother and his mother (as also of his adoptive parents, of his former wife, and of his companion, Peter) with a reticence that somehow conveys a sense of their personal presence. He does not presume to force their stories to fit wholly into his. He shows where their stories intersect with his, and so leaves us feeling they are at liberty to tell their own stories. For her part in this book, Yvonne stands at its heart with courageous, non-complaining suffering and resilience. She is all the more memorable for the modesty of her presence.

AT 195 PAGES Dessaix's book is a quick, even an easy, read. Rather than concluding it breaks off, in a chapter ironically titled 'Full Circle'. Dessaix tries out three possible 'fairly happy endings'. Actual life, whatever else it does, goes on. So loose ends, although aggravating to our desire for a tidy conclusion, do this justice to the truth. Modern readers know all about the divergences between the exigencies of life and the exigencies of storytelling. Although Dessaix's sensibility declares itself in this regard on every page, Yvonne, in so many ways the conventional person at the hidden centre of the book, belongs to another age. It is not surprising, therefore, that

his modern style spirals about her.

Another way of putting what is happening in this book is to see its concerns symbolised in this passage: 'As I've told you, in my childhood the bush and brambles with their spiders and snakes and blue-tongued lizards always belonged firmly down the back. In summer the faintest smell of fire sent Jean and Tom out into the backyard to peer through the trees into the gully. The street, on the other hand, was kerbed, the front lawn clipped and there was a proper geometry to the front garden. The backyard and the front yard met at the trellis at the side of the house; viciously beautiful climbing roses facing the street, the back a warm jungle of honeysuckle, never trimmed and rustling and creaking with small animals and insects dealing death to each other' (p188).

Taking this as symbolically as we like, or indeed as we can—and it's not only Dessaix's story—'The Rose and the Honeysuckle' is a very Australian story. Dessaix, however, finishes the paragraph this way: 'There was, you see, in that child's prototype of paradise a clear division. It's taken years to start to break that down'. The book pulls down some of the trellis.

Although usually he does this with skill, it's sometimes a scratchy job for the reader, too. I confess myself repeatedly aggravated by those direct addresses to the reader in the second person, such as the 'As I've told you', or the 'you see' in the above passage, and the 'surely's' elsewhere. In the latter half of the book he seems less sure of his readers and so either overtly seeks our approval or aggressively affirms his position against us. Even if I were to disagree with his opinions or disapprove of the way he chooses to live, I'm reading this book with another and richer purpose: I want to hear his story, and he can tell it any way he wants, and every way. That's the contract.

Despite this distraction, *A Mother's Disgrace* is a great read. I could read Dessaix's story again. One day, like all storytellers, he will, I think, tell it again. ■

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The Other Woman at home

Maidenhome, Ding Xiaoqi, Hyland House, 1993.

ISBN 1 875657 14 2 RRP \$24.95

ON THE BEWITCHING DUSTJACKET of this collection of stories Helen Garner refers to the way in which 'women (and men) of an utterly foreign nation are brought close to us and made familiar'. This is a regrettable but truthful admission. Despite the talk of Asianisation and the success of Australian novels containing an 'imaginative journey to China and back', (Robin Gerster, describing Alex Miller's *The Ancestor Game* and Brian Castro's *After China* in *The Age*, September 9, '93), there seems little doubt that China remains an utterly foreign nation for the vast majority of Australians, including the young. And, despite the landmark literary status of these and other works, few Australian publications would make much difference to this state of affairs.

In contemporary Australian writing China is no longer a load of old orientalism but a source of significant and alluring metaphors for transition, identity and displacement (disorientalism perhaps?). But it is still not a place where people actually live, and in the absence of a strong body of authentic description many quite sophisticated Australian readers continue to think of China as a freak show to gawp at, rather than as somebody's home.

There's plenty of both gawping and thinking to be had in *Maidenhome*, a collection from a Chinese woman writer who shows us where the land of mystery and imagination and gothic horror and bizarre cruelty and freaks and monsters really is—everywhere. All but one of the stories are set in China, describing, in the

main, life in the 1970s. We see the effect of constant, small-group psychological pressure and manipulation, rather than the hysterical mass violence which has become such an incomprehensible, alienating cliché of the Cultural Revolution.

There's a Poe-like story, 'Black Cat', in which a tormented girl stuffs a cat with raw pork liver, ties it to a pole and swings it round until it is rendered mute, and one, 'Killing Mum', in which a girl stabs her mother to death with a pair of scissors, and rejoices at the way the fresh-bubbling blood makes the onions grow. There are also stories of bitter tenderness and irony—the title story 'Maidenhome', and Ding Xiaoqi's personal favourite 'The Other Woman'—in which the repressions and frustrations of long-suffering Chinese womanhood are laid painfully bare through shifting tenses, voices and perspectives. But none of it is really 'foreign' unless we allow all that culture and history to get in the way of common, grubby, perverse humanity.

These are gripping tales, deftly translated by Chris Berry and Cathy Silber from idiosyncratic and idiomatic Chinese. The translators have done a marvellous job of invisibly mending the holes left by language, although at times Cathy Silber's fine touch with the streetwise parlance of Ding's youthful protagonists goes a little over the culture-specific top (as when the girl in 'Killing Mum' describes her weapon as 'scissors from Hell').

What I particularly admire in Ding Xiaoqi is her tough, smart-arse wit; refreshing, funny and defiantly auton-

omous (as so many Chinese people are) in the most debilitating psychological struggles with China's 'work units' and moral majorities. The author's many voices are frequently crude, aggressive, and original, and the stories are full of those incongruous thoughts, sounds, smells and sensations that accompany us in tense and tragic situations—a wet skirt is 'as heavy as a dead pig', 'saliva turns to glue' in the narrator's mouth, a conversation is brought to a perfectly satisfactory close by 'a crisp, clear fart' and the creases in a woman's stomach smell like a 'hot drainwater stench'.

Chris Berry provides some useful and perceptive comment on *Maidenhome*, in a postscript to the book entitled 'Maidens and Other Women: The Fiction of Ding Xiaoqi'. He mentions in particular the 'psychological realism' of the author, and its departure from officially sanctioned literature in which moral/political judgments are provided with colour-coded precision. In fact, Ding's psychological realism is an important development in the broad genre of neo-realism that has become a notable and popular style of Chinese fiction in recent times. The Confucian canon provided the Chinese Communist Party with a readymade, 1400-year old tradition of linking moral/political and literary virtue, and the tradition is still alive and well. But perhaps the linguistic violence of the Cultural Revolution (the 'big character poster' denunciations, the party editorials, the writing of 'self-criticisms' etc) has brought about a kind of literary counter-attack, in which the vocal cords of the moralists have been severed for their crimes against the people.

As for Ding Xiaoqi herself, it is fascinating to think of her as one of those who ultimately prospered intellectually as a result of the closure of schools, although I know it is a great heresy—inside and outside China—even to think this about the Cultural Revolution. Ding Xiaoqi is also curiously reminiscent of that long-standing tradition in which women could only become educated by means of secret raids on the family library. When her parents were away and she was left alone at home as a teenager during the Cultural Revolution, she read enough to give herself intellectual indigestion

for the rest of her life. But it has all gone into the making of a writer with a turbulent, ulcerated imagination.

The final story in the collection, 'The Angry Kettle', was written in Australia, where Ding Xiaoqi now lives. It is a tersely funny, and sad, story of modern Australian urban madness. Despite all the sententious piffle that people talk about our 'coming to terms with 'The Other', this is

one of the few pieces that might genuinely be termed cross-cultural with regard to the contact between modern Chinese and Australian cultures. Ding Xiaoqi has noticed that even in Australia there are times when there isn't enough room for two people and a kettle.

As the Chinese say, much to Ding Xiaoqi' disgust, 'Welcome! Wel-welcome!' to *Maidenhome*. I can't

help thinking she is describing herself when, in 'The Other Woman', she describes a writer whose 'keen mind, original expressions, pointed words and sometimes rather coarse descriptions really make people listen'. ■

Trevor Hay is the author of *Tartar City Woman* and co-author, with Fang Xiangshu, of *East Wind, West Wind*.

BOOKS: 3

JAMES GRIFFIN

Made for a Roman holiday

The Victory of the Cross: A History of the Early Church in Rome,
Desmond O'Grady, HarperCollins, London 1993. ISBN 000 599 322 9 RRP \$19.95

THERE IS A MESMERIC LITERAL in O'Grady's book on early Rome. In the second half of the second century, we are told (p110), the Eastern and Western parts of the Empire 'were no longer sure what each other were talking about' as Latin gradually replaced Greek as the church's language. So, was *substantia* the equivalent of *hypnostasis* (sic)? If O'Grady had arrested his narrative to explain what

credit. However, *The Victory of the Cross* is not about recondite theological issues. Nor does it provide an adequate explanation for that victory over other contemporary religions. It is best seen as a *vade mecum* for the pilgrim who wants a chronological context for sightseeing 'the traces of early Christianity in modern Rome'. Having lived mostly in Rome since 1955, O'Grady is well equipped to provide it. The book is unusual in placing emphasis on the Christian community rather than the pagan city itself. We begin on the Capitoline Hill with a view of St. Peter's and descend to contemplate the apostle's tomb and the catacombs ('the dormitory of the dead'). We end with Emperor Constantine, after whose pro-Christian ordinances, O'Grady says, 'Christians had only themselves to fear'.

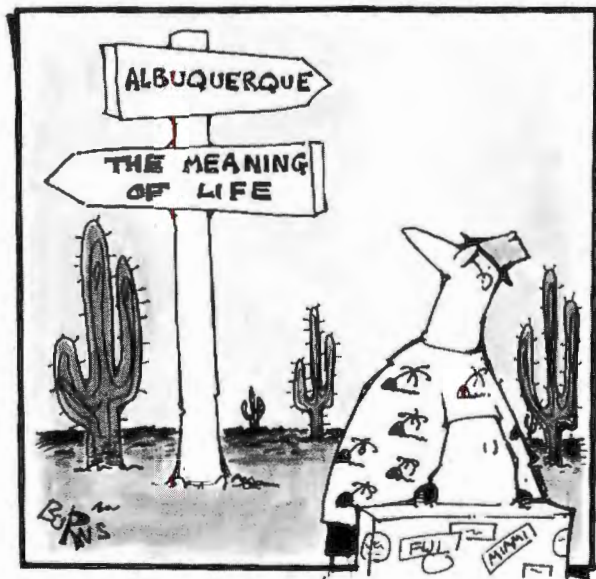
That is a crisp conclusion but I doubt that St. Augustine would have agreed. He well knew how Alaric the Visigoth got inside the walls of Rome in 410, while in 452 Attila the Hun left some extra-mural graffiti and Vandals sacked the city again in 456.

Some nit-picking finds Jesus being crucified (p10) under Augustus although the latter died in AD14 (p30) and Persians (p180) are said to have breached 'the empire's western (sic) frontier'. HarperCollins' proof-readers may well have been hypnotised as even 'Christian' is misspelt on the first page. And in its zeal not to clutter with footnotes and bibliography the firm underestimates the reader, who

may like to know, for example, which book by J. G. Davies—he has 14 publications in the National Library of Australia—is the source of the quotation on the Sardinian miners. In the 'Index of Names and Places' he is cited simply as 'historian'.

O'Grady's fluent and informative narrative deserves better, even if an irrepressible facetiousness keeps breaking in. A chapter on Roman cults is captioned 'That Ol' Time Religion', to which it may be rejoined that the book's title has an ol' time apologetical look about it, being the same as a school text which pre-1960, according to my copy, went into nine editions at the Melbourne Catholic Education Office. 'The Victory of the Church' would seem a more accurate title today. ■

James Griffin is a Canberra historian and critic.



Fortunately Stan realised he was carrying an environs map of Albuquerque

the terms meant, the misprint may not have occurred, although a friend has suggested that, where theologians tried for over a thousand years to get a meaning-shift to make *hypostasis* = *substantia*, O'Grady's spelling-shift might work. And O'Grady, both a creative punster and an authentic humorist of note, would deserve the

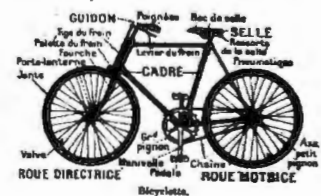
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Unsettling paradise

Thea Astley's music of the north

THEA ASTLEY WILL BE 70 NEXT YEAR. For half a lifetime, her fiction has followed the evolution of a world that closely resembles Australia's deep north. Her stories continue to sprout from places such as Charco and Reef-town, which bear an uncanny similarity to Cooktown and Cairns, and from other places such as Tobaccotown, Mango and Swiper's Creek, which can't be too far away.

'It's one of the few places that's affected me emotionally,' she says. 'Where I live now in NSW is very pretty. It doesn't move me a scrap. But I've been back north a couple of times to visit friends and go to a wedding. It's horrendous what's happened. All that high rise; a million tourists passing through. I'm still in love but it's like being in love with a tart.'

At one level, casting an eye back over Thea Astley's career is not a bad way to be reminded of the way our language and mores have been recast since the '50s. The 22-year-old teacher at the hub of her first book, *Girl with a Monkey* (1958), relieves the monotony of life in Townsville by going to a Catholic Church rally. In those days before airports, people arrived in Townsville at the 'air depot' and daringly strolled 'stockingless' along Flinders Street, 'tending to shop and yarn beneath the wide shop awnings.' Her latest book, *Coda*, finds Kathleen, a 75-year-old, coping with the pace of life in what has since become of Townsville: 'It was a new soulscape, this once-familiar town with its highrise hotels and plethora of shopping ritz ... Flinders Street had been transformed into a lengthy walking mall of trees and cafes, the esplanade a relentless string of motels.'

'I wanted to write a life affirming book about growing old,' says Astley. 'I remember, when she was 80, my mother saying that she loved life. Young people think of the elderly as brain dead, soul dead, feeling dead. The lot. I think it's committing the



Photo: Andrew Rankin

Coda, Thea Astley, William Heinemann Australia, Melbourne 1994, ISBN 0 85561 544 3, RRP \$24.95

sin of despair which we were always told at school was the worst possible sin.'

With the passage of time, Astley's imagination has become more probing, her wit more nimble. Parts of *Coda* are scathingly funny. When Kathleen wonders if someone has snatched the luggage which she has left at the Townsville airport, 'she hoped it would be a disappointed transvestite confronted by four sets of practical underwear.' Astley's humour is sometimes compressed to a single image ('the scratch of the weather', 'the meridian of marriage') or even to a name (Kathleen wants to call her retirement home 'Spent Forces' or 'Twigdroppers').

BENEATH THE CLEVERNESS, HOWEVER, *Coda's* dominant tone is loss. When Kathleen's husband learns that he has cancer, he decisively says 'right' and drops dead in the doctor's surgery. Astley turns from this moment of dark humour and deftly sounds the question of mortality. Kathleen confronts 'the mortality sentence' with verve. At the end of the story, she makes a crossing to an offshore island.

'She's not crossing the Styx,' says Astley with a verve of her own. 'She's just going over to Magnetic. They have terrific fish and chips over there.'

Is this how she confronts mortality herself?

'No, it's not because, my God, I hope there's a beyond. I do believe in God. Otherwise the whole thing is just a terrible mess.'

Astley has already gained a toe-hold on some kind of immortality. She is one of the very few Australian writers whose books have survived three decades in print. They are notoriously difficult to buy second-hand.

Coda fits cleanly within the pattern of Astley's work. Kathleen's married years were spent in a retail business on an island nation, a type of community Astley explored in both *A Boatload of Homefolk* (1968) and *Beachcombers* (1984). In some ways, her 14 books string together more like a loosely woven net than a single unbroken narrative line. *Coda*, for example, brings to centre stage one Brian ('Brain') Hackendorf, Kathleen's son, whose marriage breaks down after 20 years. Brain had a cameo in *Hunting the Wild Pineapple* (1979), where the narrator, Leverson, observes the development of a bizarre poolside romance between Brain and the arty yet conventional Mrs Waterman. Leverson's unsettling experiences germinate, in turn, from his appearance as a difficult teenager in *The Slow Natives* (1965) where his mother, the arty yet conventional Iris Leverson, is bored in a marriage that has also survived 20 years.

There are certain personalities whom Astley will not leave in peace. Self-indulgent priests have always been a red rag to her pen, as have been the money-hungry. Before most Australians had learnt to recoil from the word 'entrepreneur', she was laying the wood on fat moguls in country towns who spend money on themselves because they regard their bod-



ies 'as something special, a temple not of the Holy Ghost but of business enterprise'. (*A Descant for Gossips*, 1960).

In *Coda*, Astley experiences the same rush of blood to the prose as Brain Hackendorf puts the wind up his brother-in-law, the 'minister for transports' by building a 10-metre high statue of him called 'The Big Developer', a cousin of numerous other attractions such as the Big Merino and the Big Banana. But these continuities, and there are many of them, have not staled the originality of each successive work. As Astley draws alongside some fresh form of human eccentricity, recognisable types endure as reminders that 'normality' can be a surprisingly unpleasant alternative.

Astley's intention has often been to disturb the otherwise calm pace of change, to worry the values that her more rapacious characters take for granted. One of her most effective means of doing this is by telling tales through the eyes of throwaway people, those who have failed to massage the egos of the powerful and have found themselves left to one side. Before the noble fringe-dweller became a literary commonplace, these have sometimes been either Aborigines (*Hunting the Wild Pineapple*) or those trying to account for past treatment of Aborigines (*A Kindness Cup*, 1974). In *Coda*, the disposable person is old. Kathleen wants to write a guide to grandmothering divided into 'the four ages of women': 'Bimbo, breeder, babysitter, burden.' She has rather proudly reached the burden stage and conspires with her granddaughter, Bridgie, to rock the boat of her daughter, Bridgie's mother.

A more subtle means of unsettling convention has been through music. Astley's own workroom in her house high above the Shoalhaven is pretty bare: a desk, a filing cabinet and a manual typewriter. But there is also an upright piano in the corner. Her stories tend to find audiences and performers in the least likely circumstances. Only in a Thea Astley story would you find the life of a failed motel proprietor and businessman overturned by hearing a 'crazy wacker' sing Tosti's last song while standing on a bridge in Venice. This is what

happens to Brain Hackendorf in *Coda*. Astley creates an outdoor setting for Tosti's drawing-room music in much the same way that a character in *It's Raining in Mango* (1987) tries to carve a nursery out of a tropical jungle to the strains of the music of Delius, whose music is more readily associated with a country garden.

The first novella in *Vanishing Points* (1992) tells of a retired academic, Mac Hope, who runs 'a bus beating up the Peninsula Road to the strains of Mozart, Palestrina, Allegri.' When patrons are offended, he buys a small atoll and wages war on an intrusive resort by training vast speakers to play Wagner at it through the night. *A Descant for Gossips* tells the grim story of Vinny, a schoolgirl whose life and death are set over the sinister melody of life in a northern township. A woman in *Reaching Tin River* (1990) loses her mother to a career in an old time jazz band and sets herself the strange task of counting precisely the number of convent girls between 1945 and 1960 who learnt to play a piece called 'The Rustle of Spring'.

But, a little beyond Astley's stock in trade, *Coda* is also concerned for a person losing their grip on language. 'I'm losing my nouns,' is Kathleen's first utterance. The changes in her environment are braced to Kathleen's personal adjustment to life 'in a world of names that more and more frequently refused to attach themselves immediately to the right object.' It's an experience that Astley relates to. 'I'll say "can you put the margarine away in the TV" because I can't think of the technical word for fridge.' But as Kathleen has trouble 'scrabbling and rooting about for words in that old handbag of hers', as she pieces together enough 'fragments of phrase, shreds of metaphor' to get herself onto the boat that takes her offshore, you realise that impoverishment of language is a loss which Astley takes in deadly earnest.

At one stage Thea Astley thought, as the title suggests, that *Coda* might have been a swansong. Almost to her own surprise, she's 15,000 words into the next journey. The subject? She's been reading a history of the Catholic Church in Townsville. ■

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A tale of two times, and two-timers

Memories of the Ford Administration, John Updike, Penguin, 1993. ISBN 0 14 017875 9 RRP \$12.95

THERE CAN'T BE MANY American writers who teeter on the edge of greatness like John Updike. Here is a novelist with gifts so self-evident that they dazzle: one of nature's word-smiths who also knows everything about the craft of writing, a writer, too, who has created his own vision of familial and sexual life on the American eastern seaboard. Updike has passed into the general consciousness as the prototype of well-heeled, not-quite-suburban *angst* among the cultivated upper-middle class. No American writer, except perhaps Bellow, is as much a classic in his own lifetime yet no one elicits so readily the 'Oh, yeah' of bored familiarity.

It is, of course, only part of a window, and hardly a clear one, onto a complex literary figure who has also been touched by a controversy that his popular fame has done its best to render unproblematic. But it must be about 35 years since Leslie Fiedler said of *Rabbit, Run* that to read it you would think nothing had happened to the novel in the 20th century. It's also characteristic of Updike's reputation that Anthony Burgess should've linked him with Nabokov (an obvious affinity) only to indicate in each of them a lack of syntactical muscle behind the obvious gorgeousness of diction and phrasing. Not that Burgess can talk.

But in the past couple of years it's seemed that Updike's stakes are on the rise again. The publication of the completed *Rabbit* tetralogy looked to

a lot of people like the achievement of a work more major than they had imagined and the company who applauded included younger novelists like Martin Amis and writer-critics like Susan Sontag, who might not be thought to have much sympathy for the Updike world view—that compound of Protestant moral pernickettiness and a *New Yorker* style so self-deprecating and urbane that it covers its own traces and makes any other stance look like a form of spiritual coarseness.

Updike's most recent novel, *Memories of the Ford Administration*, is, whatever else, an enchanting piece of writing. I was going to say diverting but it's an example of the novel as entertainment so consistently well-written and so cunningly controlled that it gets an effect of 'magic' from the juxtaposition of effects that should in themselves be mundane or, at any rate, contra-indicated according to very different realist dispensations.

Memories of the Ford Administration is the story of an historian in a small-town, girls-only college, who cheats on his wife—Norma, the painter and 'queen of disorder'—with Genevieve, the 'perfect wife' of the local deconstructionist. Alfred Clayton, our hero and narrator, is writing his memories not of the Ford administration, which has left little enough impact on his mind except for memories of Nixon being pardoned or the fact that Gerald Ford came from Nebraska and was a committed skier. No, what preoccupies our far from idyll-making Alfred and what he is dishing up for the benefit of the editors of *Retrospect*, no less, is not a portrait of Ford's time in office but of 40-year-old, middle-class America in that impossibly remote period which stretched from the prelude to Vietnam to the post-Watergate trough, with Reagan and AIDS round the corner.

IN OTHER WORDS, *Memories of the Ford Administration* is an ironic paradigm of the period of greatest sexual liberation that Western civilisation has known, whose last phase happened to be coincident with the period when American liberalism (after the headier lunacies of the counter-cul-

ture) was sufficiently alive to ditch one of its trickier, if collusive, antagonists.

Of course Updike is preoccupied with the sex rather than the politics, at least overtly, but what gives this bitter-sweet novel its distinctiveness is 'Romance' in a rather different vein. 'A Romance' was, of course, the subtitle of one of the most popular class novels of recent years, A.S. Byatt's *Possession*. In that extravaganza Byatt played off two kinds of writing. There was a foreground of adventure and Mills & Boonery as two young

not alienating the slave states.

Of course the narrator is not allowed the luxury of a straightforward telling of history, nor is he a scholar of the greatest stamina; apart from anything else he is affected by the deconstruction which is in the air and which is constantly asserted by his mistress's husband. So *Memories of the Ford Administration* is not only an ironic sex comedy that is constantly diverting itself into a history of the immediate pre-Civil War administration, it is also an historical novel, full of self-conscious erasures and false starts, that is both intoxicated with itself and self-questioning.

The historical fiction is partly a send-up of people like Simon Schama, even as it tips its hat to Byatt. The sub-title 'A Novel' is an ironic counterpoint to her 'A Romance' because nothing could be less obviously romantic than the ageing white-haired Buchanan, even though Updike does allow himself an extended pastiche in the representation of an early love affair and the girl's death. By the same token the recent past setting allows our novelist such helpings of goopy middle-aged sex from the male point of view that he not only beats Byatt at any erotic stakes (one meaning of Romance perhaps) but he also seems to be sending up the author of *Couples*.

Memories of the Ford Administration is a remarkable *tour de force* that manages to do two things better than one could have imagined *and* make their 'reaction' seem a richer thing than anyone would have predicted. The representation of the adultery is self-mocking and prurient in equal measure, though it is never separate from the delineation of a more or less likeable academic nut, who has most of the scheming qualities of his age and gender as well as the quirks of sensibility that make him a kickable charmer but a charmer nonetheless. One of the defining characteristics of Updike characters is the quality of the moral sensibility they exemplify even though the perspective that such self-consciousness yields tends to show them as morally flawed.

The whole moral *mise en scène* is neatly small-town, cultivated and etched with a realism which is never



Photo: Ray Charles White

researchers attempted to track down the MS (and the relationship) of a notable Victorian duo. But the narrative was constantly being interrupted by them, and they spoke in Antonia Byatt's best pastiche of Christina Rossetti and Robert Browning, respectively.

The two-time novel is always diverting, whether in Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita*, where a reimagining of the Passion story meets early revolutionary Russia, or in Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*, where a mad actor of Indian 'theologicals' has his head taken over by a comic-strip Origins of Islam saga. In Updike's case the story of what the narrator gets up to with Genevieve and Co. is juxtaposed with the book he is writing—and not succeeding in writing—about James Buchanan, the president before Lincoln, who prevaricated endlessly with both Southerners and abolitionists, who did everything in his power, or so he thought, to preserve the Union by

allowed to lose its cosiness and glow, its Virgilian beauty of utterance. The narrator's feelings for his family are shown as warm and fluffy and flawed. Part of the novelist's trick is to present his own loneliness as continuous with what is least likeable about him. The technique is insinuating and comic, so that you're continually suspicious of the slippages between narrator and novelist but (even though this fellow isn't as cute as he takes himself to be) the novelist is covered by the ironic distance of his narrative device, with the academic jackass every so often interrupting himself to address the editors of *Retrospect*.

Thematically the two sides of the story (the daggily dated story of marital toing and froing and the history that is the story the narrator seeks to tell) are linked, effortlessly enough, by passages like this:

'We chatted. How strangely charming it was to be standing with one's estranged wife and one's mistress's estranged husband, all very civilised in our party clothes, in this provincial pocket of Western civilisation, North-east American branch, in a gracious brick mansion in the twilight of a lovely early-fall day, the sugar maples turning, the swamp maples turned, the oaks still holding their chlorophyll. The days and nights now were of equal length. Brent and Norma were the same height, their eyes—vermouth green, dead-fish blue—at the level of my worried, busy mouth. The pit within my stomach began to seal shut, and the work of digestion rumbly to resume, now that Norma made our duo a trio. The effect of massing—in an airline terminal, say—is to give an illusion of safety. Surely so many casually, even clownishly, dressed prospective passengers, fussing with their babyslings and chewing on their newspapers, will not crash. Surely at a party like this the bottom cannot fall out of one's newly renovated life. The buried escapade with ample and appetitive Ann Arthrop—it seemed quite possible, as nonchalant, know-nothing Norma joined us, that it had never happened. After all, doesn't history demonstrate over and over how hard it is to say what actually *did* happen, so that even the Nazis' fanatically documented extermination of six million Jews and Lee Harvey Oswald's

broad-daylight shooting of John F. Kennedy and (let's not forget) Patrolman J.D. Tippitt are still seriously debated.'

It's not a spectacular passage but it shows how easily Updike weaves the wind and keeps the action credible while also reminding us of fiction's curve and the silly theories it may engender.

THE REST OF THE NOVEL, the flashback to Buchanan, is done with what looks like (in 1993) Rembrandtian grandeur and a flawless mastery of mid-Victorian reference and diction. By fooling about with notions about the fictionality of history Updike is able to present his protagonist writing not a historical novel but the flawed ruins of a history conceived as story.

Memories of the Ford Administration is an ironic paradigm of the period of greatest sexual liberation that Western civilisation has known, whose last phase happened to be coincident with the period when American liberalism (after the headier lunacies of the counter-culture) was sufficiently alive to ditch one of its trickier, if collusive, antagonists.

The effect is eerily brilliant while never quite usurping the centre of the novel. The narrative is not, in fact, anti-history or history subjected to the undecidabilities of theory; it is history conceived as a putatively straightforward narrative that is nevertheless constrained by the traditions, or at any rate the impulses, of the anti-novel. This reconstructed memoir of the Buchanan administration is a great slap in the eye to Gore Vidal's *Lincoln* and all those other attempts at late-20th century 'epic'. It is so successful in its recreative ambience and in its anal preoccupation with the minutiae

and dailiness of Buchanan's mousey administration during those momentous years that it insinuates, subtly and comically, the thesis that history can only find us napping.

Memories of the Ford Administration is both a self-deflating coup and an anti-glamorous historical novel. The conflation is ridiculous and very graceful. It is, in part, a book about missing out on the Big One, the Apocalypse, the plunging one's hands in blood for the sake of justice, the possibility of true love, the glimpse of God. It remains a civilised sidelong glance at such things by a deeply creative critical intelligence which has to mock what it might like, intuitively, to celebrate.

' "No." I lied, with a passion hollow but still expectant, still hopeful of being justified. Modern fiction—for surely this reconstruction, 15 years later, is fiction—thrives only in showing what is *not* there. God is not there, nor damnation and redemption, nor solemn vows and the sense of one's life as a matter to be judged and refigured in a later accounting, a trial held on the brightest, farthest quasar. The sense of eternal scale is quite gone, and the empowerment, possessed by Adam and Eve and their early descendants, to dispose of one's life by a single defiant decision. Of course, these old fabulations *are* there, as ghosts that bedevil our thinking.'

Yet there is empowerment, almost of the highest kind, in this bedeviling of an entertainment (it's that in the end rather than 'a novel' or 'a romance') by John Updike. As with John Ashbery or Wallace Stevens, you get the spectacle in Updike of great gifts being expended on spectral ends. The difference is that he remains, however playfully, a realist even if his linguistic gift in the end usurps the realities it conjures.

How odd it is that even the likes of John Updike find themselves fiddling about in the house of fiction and its treacherous cousin history. Postmodernity hasn't got much to do with it but it's part of a movement that concept tries to name. ■

Peter Craven is a Melbourne writer and critic. His *The Arts Racket* will be published by Pan Macmillan later this year.

The door opens wider

Australia's women playwrights

NOT SO LONG AGO, if one were asked to name the leading women writing for the Australian stage, one would probably think immediately of Dorothy Hewett and Alma De Groen, and then Doreen Clarke, Hannie Rayson, Thérèse Radic and Linda Aronson. Robyn Archer would also ring a bell, but more likely as a performer than as a writer. Casting the mind back a bit, there are names like Dymphna Cusack, Mona Brand and Oriel Gray, while those with longer memories will recall Betty Roland and Katharine Suzannah Prichard.

The only woman playwright to receive a separate chapter in Peter Holloway's influential book *Contemporary Australian Drama* (Currency Press, revised edition 1987) is Dorothy Hewett, although a further 20 are among the 70 playwrights who get single paragraph entries in the 'Playwrights Profiles' checklist at the end of the book. Only three women playwrights (Hewett, Alma De Groen and Thérèse Radic) receive more than two mentions in Leonard Radic's more recent study of Australian drama (*The State of Play*, Penguin, 1991) while Mona Brand, Doreen Clarke, De Groen and Hewett are the only four to receive more than cursory mentions in Leslie Rees' earlier book, *Australian Drama 1970-1985* (Angus & Robertson, 1987), mostly in a short chapter entitled 'Female Sexuality and Self-assertion: Dorothy Hewett and Others'.

The number of female playwrights who find themselves in the apparent canon of Australian drama appears to be rather small, although it's interest-

ing that both Rees and Radic state that women playwrights, although numerically under-represented, are gaining increasing prominence. 'The doors may not be as wide open to women as they are to men,' said Radic, 'but they are open, and that is a significant and welcome change.'



It is certainly true that more work by women playwrights is being produced on the professional stage in Australia today than in the recent past—of the 94 Australian works for the theatre I saw in Melbourne last year, 46 were written by women. But it is also interesting to note that not one of those featured by Holloway, Radic or Rees had a play professional-

ly produced in Australia in 1993 and only De Groen (with *The Girl Who Saw Everything*, Sydney Theatre Company) and Radic (with *The Emperor Regrets*, Playbox) had professional productions the previous year. I am not suggesting that any of these writers is a spent force—far from it—but there is obviously a new wave of women playwrights currently hitting the Australian stage.

Katherine Thomson is one of three who have attracted a lot of recent attention among theatre companies. Having worked for a time as an actor with the NSW regional theatre company Theatre South (at Wollongong), Thomson turned her hand to writing when she was commissioned in 1985 to research a play based on the community of the south coast fishing town of Eden. The play that resulted from that research, *Tonight We Anchor in Twofold Bay*, had its première in Wollongong in March 1986. It took the form of a quasi-documentary history of the town, with episodes from the gold rushes and the whaling days, a bushfire and other significant incidents portrayed in rapid vignettes punctuated with songs and poetry. It revealed a lively sense of character, rhythm and theatricality and was favourably reviewed when, in a revised version, it played in the Sydney Theatre Company's Wharf Studio in October 1986.

Thomson next surfaced in January 1988, when a musical play celebrating the seamy heyday of King's Cross in the 1920s and 1930s (based on the poetry of Kenneth Slessor and with music by Max Lambert, who was the

originator of the project) was performed by the Sydney Theatre Company at The Wharf as part of the Sydney Festival. This was *Darlinghurst Nights* and it featured characters with names like The Green Rolls Royce Woman, The Gunman, The Gunman's Girl and The Girl from the Country in a nostalgic and mellow entertainment well suited to Sydney's Bicentenary. Reviewers again commented favourably on Thomson's splendid incorporation of poetry, music and atmosphere into her text, along with her clever use of the montage (or vignette) style of *Twofold Bay*.

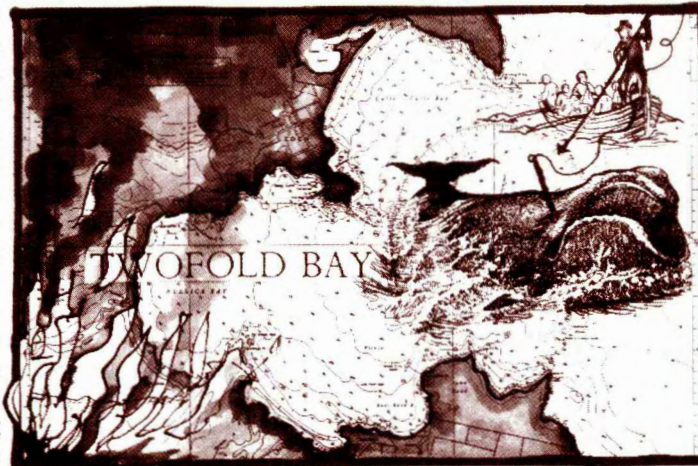
Her next two plays, which appeared on different sides of the continent in 1991, differed markedly from the nostalgic/historical style of the first two. *Diving for Pearls*, which premièred in an over-designed but splendidly performed Melbourne Theatre Company production at Russell St Theatre in March of that year, is a quasi-naturalistic study of contemporary working-class people in a large, industrial seaport (probably Wollongong, but it could be Geelong or Newcastle or Fremantle) at a time when economic rationalism and industrial reconstruction are having dire consequences on the lives of its battling inhabitants.

The local engineering works is preparing for a takeover that will put one of the central characters out of work, while a flash hotel development promises to give work to another. It is a mark of Thomson's skill as a writer (and, as several critics attested, her huge respect for her characters) that the tragic events which unfold in this play avoid bathos and mawkishness. A subsequent production at Belvoir St Theatre in July (directed by Neil Armfield and starring Robyn Nevin as Barbara, the would-be Pink Hotel receptionist) was, by all accounts, even more effective.

Barmaids, which premièred in November 1991 in a production directed by Angela Chaplin for Deck Chair Theatre in Fremantle, is different again. This is a two-handed play faintly reminiscent of the Englishman John Godber's *Shakers*, in that it

is set in a bar in which two live characters (the eponymous barmaids) communicate with, and serve 'drinks', topical references and witty repartee to, life-sized effigy characters in presentational rather than naturalistic style. The audience is also directly implicated in this brash, bawdy but deeply poignant portrayal of five days and nights in the working lives of two older bar-workers. Their livelihoods (like Den's and Barbara's in *Diving for Pearls*) are also threatened by the onset of new initiatives, in this case the threatened introduction of topless waitresses.

KATHERINE THOMSON IS CLEARLY most comfortable with well-researched plays dealing, in lively montage style, with ordinary people in adversity. She also has a marked capacity to write marvellous parts for



actors; all of the characters in her most recent plays are gifts for good actors, the small parts as well as the central ones.

Barmaids has now had seven separate productions, in Fremantle, Darwin, Newcastle, Adelaide, Hobart, Sydney and Brisbane. There were two Sydney productions: one opened at Belvoir St Theatre in September last year, and another, directed by the successful commercial entrepreneur Peter Williams and starring Noeline Brown and Joan Sydney, opened in the Playhouse of the Sydney Opera House in June 1993 and then went on to play at The Rialto in Brisbane a month later. There was also a production at the Fortune Theatre in New Zealand in May 1993. *Diving for Pearls* has been nearly as successful, with six separate productions in Melbourne,

Sydney, Wollongong and Wagga Wagga, Adelaide, Brisbane and Darwin. It has also been voted best new Australian play of the year by critics in at least two cities. This is national prominence on a scale matched only by the David Williamsons of this world.

Mary Morris is another writer who has achieved considerable prominence in the past couple of years, with a string of highly successful productions in several cities of her stage adaptations of novels for children by Robyn Klein and Morris Gleitzman. *Boss of the Pool*, for example, has been performed by Acting Out (WA's leading professional theatre-in-schools company) in 1990 and again in 1993 on an extensive eastern states tour.

Two Weeks With the Queen was premièred by Sydney's Toe Truck Theatre in January 1992 for the Sydney Festival and was given a new production by the Sydney Theatre Company in May 1993. The STC's production came to Melbourne in November of the same year for the Melbourne Theatre Company. In September last year another Gleitzman adaptation, *Blabbermouth*, was premièred for the Melbourne International Festival of the Arts in a co-production by the MTC and Arena Theatre. Yet another production of *Two Weeks* appeared at the Circa Theatre in Wellington, New Zealand, last year, making at least eight productions of the three plays in the past three years.

Morris has been writing original works for young people for some years, but it is typical of the mainstream press's reluctance to review young people's theatre that it is only her high-profile adaptations for flagship theatre companies and festivals (of books already well-known among young people, their parents and arts editors) which have won her wide media prominence of late. She is not the only writer of children's drama (of either gender) to suffer that fate.

The Sydney-based stage, screen and radio writer Tobsha Learner has also achieved wide national prominence in a relatively short space of time, but with strictly adult works of which

most are monodramas dealing with contemporary city dwellers. Her first play to attract major attention (after a short piece for NIDA about Jewish family life called *Feast*, in 1986) was *Witchplay*, which premiered downstairs at Belvoir St Theatre in Sydney in 1987. This featured the actor Rose Clementé as Batcha Blattstein, a 75-year-old survivor of the Holocaust who gives séances for \$25 a session in her rented Sydney flat.

In an entertaining evening (enlivened, by all accounts, by Clementé's virtuosic performance) Batcha all-too-often finds herself overtaken by spirits other than those she sets out to summon from the other side. Much of the fun in this play derived from the complex narrative Learner and Clementé extracted from Batcha's comic encounters, particularly given that the characters sketched along the way are men and women of various ages and from different eras. *Witchplay* is very much a character-oriented comic piece. The Sydney première production was later seen at the Universal Theatre in Melbourne.

LEARNER, LIKE MARY MORRIS, has also done some adaptation; her next professional theatre writing assignment (after *Witchplay*) was a stage version of Jacques Prévert's classic film, *Les Enfants du Paradis*, for Belvoir St in September 1988. This was universally condemned by critics, although many were quick to point out that the production was as much at fault as the script for the failure of what H. G. Kippax, in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, called 'an ambitious experiment' that 'misfire[d]'. Angela Bennie, in *The Australian*, was interested in the way Learner explored the parallels between life and art but found the whole 'pedestrian' and 'common-place'. 'Instead of poetic heights', she opined, 'there is only melodramatic tedium.'

Despite the critical savaging of *Les Enfants*, Crossroads Theatre in Darlinghurst was prepared to mount a revival of *Witchplay* in October 1990 in a double-bill with a new monodrama (also written for an actress, this time Michele Williams) entitled *Mistress*. The latter, which was nowhere near as good as its predecessor, is a

narrative account of a woman who sits at home and enjoys a number of relationships via the medium of a television set. Again, a number of characters are portrayed in interaction with each other, but neither the actor nor the writer could conjure much interest in the characters or their tribulations in the Melbourne transfer season I saw in 1992.

A further monodrama, this time featuring a male narrator who outlined mostly comic aspects of his somewhat fractured domestic life through a variety of characters, was *S.N.A.G.*, which premiered downstairs at the Seymour Centre for the Sydney Festival in January 1992. This production toured extensively (and successfully) through 1992 and 1993. Another production of the same play was also seen in New Zealand.

Learner developed a further play (with a large cast, for her, of four) about a medium for Adelaide's Vitalstatistix Theatre Company in August 1992. This was *Miracle*, in which the voice of God was heard through the cash-register of a suburban supermarket by one Immaculata Santini, a 36-year-old and rather plain shop assistant (played by Rose Clementé) who is called upon to perform tasks somewhat beyond the call of everyday duty. *Wolf*, Learner's commissioned play for Playbox Theatre Company in Melbourne in April 1992, was another imaginative comic fantasy for a multi-actor cast (this time of five) who, by reference to a number of fairy tales, most notably that of Red Riding Hood, portrays the domestic saga of a philanderer named Daniel Lupus over a period of 30-odd years.

Something like a dozen productions of these plays during the past three years make Tobsha Learner another of the most prolific playwrights of either gender writing for the Australian stage at the moment.

There is no doubt that what the august chroniclers of Australian drama in the 1970s and the 1980s predicted is coming true in the 1990s: the doors of Australian theatres are increasingly open to women playwrights, even if they remain merely ajar for women directors. ■

Geoffrey Milne is head of the division of drama at La Trobe University.

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French connections

Blue, dir. Krzysztof Kieslowski, and *L'élégant criminel*, dir. Francis Girod (both at independent cinemas) Kieslowski is one of many Polish artists who, like Chopin, have found in a French milieu something that either completes, or compensates for, aspirations that could not be realised in their own country. Hitherto he has been best known for *The Decalogue*, a series of short films about the Ten Commandments. He is avowedly not a Christian, and his declared aim in that series was to transpose the prescriptions of the Decalogue into a different key, one more concordant with contemporary ethical realities.

With *Blue* Kieslowski is in demythologising mode again, but this time a renowned secular symbol is the object of his suspicion. *Blue* is the first of a trilogy of films named after the colours of the French flag, with each meant to evoke part of the slogan of the revolutionaries of 1789: blue for liberty, white for equality and red for fraternity.

But these are not, in the formal sense, political films; in France, as in most western countries (including, for present purposes, Poland), the civic goals of the revolutionaries have largely been accomplished. *Blue* is not about the liberty to profess creeds, unite in factions or oppose governments; it is about what it means to choose, to own one's actions, to be in control of one's life. For *liberté*, here read autonomy.

Julie, the protagonist of *Blue*, is played by Juliette Binoche, whose luminously beautiful face is captured to every expressive advantage by the cinematography of Slawomir Idziak. The film won a clutch of awards at last year's Venice Film Festival: best picture; best actress, for Binoche; and best cinematography, for Idziak. Binoche

also won a César (the French Academy Award) for her role in *Blue*.

Julie, the wife of a composer who has been commissioned to write a concerto celebrating European union, survives a car crash in which her husband and daughter are killed. Her response is to sever ties with her former life and to remove any physical associations that might feed her memory of it. She orders the destruction of her husband's unfinished work and the sale of their house, and sets off to Paris to live alone.

Whether this is simply grief, or is mixed with relief at the prospect of being 'free', in the sense of unencumbered, is unclear; but what is apparent is the amount of fear in Julie's quiet determination. The question posed by *Blue* is whether her kind of freedom amounts to self-assertion or to the reduction of selfhood to an empty, purely formal notion.

In Paris, Julie is soon tripped up by the past. Her husband's former assistant, now trying to complete the concerto, tracks her down and declares his love for her. He has acquired music manuscripts saved from the shredding she ordered, and other papers and photographs which reveal to her that her husband had a mistress.

But it is not only the circumstances of her past life that she cannot escape, for *she* continues to be the person whose self-awareness was formed by that past, and her responses to people, familiar or newly met, express a continuous character. Julie, we are shown in various ways, never defines herself by hate. Her relations with a prostitute she befriends, and with her husband's mistress, begin with curiosity or simple kindness and progress to a form of love.

The forms of love that Julie's—or anyone's—choices may express are presented in the tableau-like climax of *Blue*. Threading through them all, and through the deepest recesses of Julie's memory, is the *leitmotiv* of her husband's unfinished concerto, a setting of I Corinthians 13: 'Though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, if I have not love I am nothing'. With that musical intimation of transcendence, Kieslowski points the way to *White* and *Red*. In my beginning is my end, as Mr Eliot might have said.

A mirror image to Julie is the eponymous hero of Girod's film, Pierre-François Lacenaire (Daniel Auteuil), a thief and murderer who kept 19th century Paris scandalously entertained by his frankly acknowledged misdeeds. Lacenaire, who is reputed to have been Dostoevski's source for Raskolnikov, will be familiar to film buffs as a character in Marcel Carné's and Jacques Prévert's classic *Les Enfants du Paradis*. In *L'élégant criminel*, Girod and his script collaborator, Georges Conchon, are toying with both the 'real' history and the film history of France: theirs is the postmodernist question of how far, if at all, individuals can experience a sense of identity more profound than that bequeathed by the culture which has moulded them.

Lacenaire, as intriguingly portrayed by Auteuil, is a stark reminder of what life becomes when someone does not hear the music.

—Ray Cassin

Best dressed

Raining Stones, dir. Ken Loach (independent cinemas). Away from the mainstream cinema circuit one finds *Raining Stones*, winner of last year's Jury Prize at Cannes. A quirky, entertaining story about unemployment and poverty in 1990s Manchester may sound like a contradiction in terms, but Loach clears this hurdle without even clipping the top. The excellent script written by his longtime collaborator, Jim Allen, lightens the otherwise gloomy setting by drawing out the ingrained humour of the characters.

Bob Williams (Bruce Jones) is out of work but he is a survivor—by fair means or foul. He supplements the dole by odd jobs: cleaning drains, rustling sheep, or whatever comes his way. Bob is also a Catholic. His daughter is preparing for her first communion, and he wants her to have the traditional outfit—white dress, gloves, veil, shoes, the whole bit. But the problem is money, as Bob's wife, Anne, (Julie Brown) know only too well.

The twist in the plot comes in the role played by the local priest. And it's done beautifully, raising some interesting questions about life and faith—indeed, about theology and ethics—

without proffering set answers. Not that is some quasi-spiritual film. Quite the contrary. It has a raw feel to it, is pocked with violence—usually verbal, but sometimes physical—and is nothing like, for example, *Shadowlands*. But it does present a perception of the church—from below.

Does Bob get his daughter her outfit, does he end up in trouble, is the priest compromised? Discover for yourself. Depressing subject or not, I came out of this film with a smile.

—Brad Halse

Highway vision

Broken Highway, dir. Laurie McInnes (Hoyts and some independents) is the first feature film from the director of *Palisade*, which won the award for best short film at Cannes in 1987. It explores the quickening of life and the retreat of evil when a stranger arrives in 'Honeyfield' a miserable Queensland fishing town.

Angel (Aden Young), a young merchant sailor, has been sent by his mentor, the 'ancient mariner' Max, to free the ghosts, living and dead, of Honeyfield. With Angel among them, freedom, so fearfully hoped for, seems possible for the townspeople and Angel himself is transformed. From being a John Wayne figure, heroic protector of the weak, he becomes like Billy Budd, a sacrificial victim to be destroyed for his own goodness.

Although it at times comes close to melodrama, *Broken Highway* is sustained by convincing performances from Young and from Claudia Karvan as Catherine, the woman Angel loves. And Steve Mason's black and white photography gives the film much of its emotional strength: a desolate landscape, rusting cars in a wrecker's yard and a sighing house by the sea convey, better than words could do, the pain and stagnation in Honeyfield.

—Jane Buckingham

Help, police!

Police Rescue, dir. Michael Carson (Greater Union) To watch this film is to take a trip into the void: it is inert, dumb, and lacking in dramatic tension. You get the feeling that the script

was written in a fortnight, and that *Police Rescue's* problems in other departments—lacklustre direction, acting, sound, photography, editing and design—reflect a similar timetable.

The plot is tedious. Suffice to say that there are a few minor rescues to establish professionalism and a major rescue at the end, all ploddingly constructed. Woven in lumbering fashion through the police work is a personal story involving 'Mickey' McClintock (Gary Sweet), the Mr Popular of the rescue squad, and Lorrie Gordon (Zoe Carides), newly arrived from the drug squad.

Lorrie becomes a member of the rescue 'family' (it has a mother, father and assorted siblings, though unlike other human families it functions perfectly). But 'can she be trusted as a rescue family member?' Lorrie is under suspicion because she is being investigated by the heavies, (aka internal affairs branch) because of an incident that forced her transfer from the drug squad. All is resolved, however. The final rescue goes smoothly, Lorrie is cleared of being a dirty cop, and the way is open for her and Mickey to find uncomplicated love.

Action movies, if done well, can be as entertaining as any other film genre. But *Police Rescue* is witless. Don't see it in a fit—or in a cinema either, for that matter.

—Tim Mitchell

Pedro's past

Pepi, Luci, Bom and all the other girls (1980), dir. Pedro Almodovar, is being shown at Melbourne's Valhalla cinema with two other early films of his under the banner of *The Lost Films of Pedro Almodovar*. It's fascinating in what it reveals of his recurrent themes and obsessions.

The story involves what could be tragic relationships, but he never lets go the reins of comedy. Some of the benignity of his vision of the camaraderie of women, seen at its fullest in *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown*, is here, but rough as bags.

Pepi, played by the brilliant Carmen Maura, is a person bent but not broken. Raped by her policeman neigh-

bour, she sets about avenging her stolen virginity (literally stolen—she had planned to sell it) by getting her punk-band friends to beat him up. Of course, it's not as simple as that. The policeman escapes; it is his decent twin brother who cops it.

Bom, the lead singer, a 16 year-old lesbian dominatrix, falls for the policeman's downtrodden, 40ish wife, Luci, who revels in the new freedom to be humiliated fairly harmlessly (urine at least breaks no bones) in the stylised ritual ways of the *louche* nightclub crowd. Bom writes her a hilariously gross lovesong, and performs it in a way that makes you realise where Chrissie Amphlett might have been coming from if she weren't such a lady.

Alas, it can't last. The acerbic vignettes of marriage that Almodovar plants throughout the movie come to fruition in the violent reassertion of the policeman's hold over his wife. And in case you hadn't guessed, she

Almodovar competition

Worried about queues to see *The Lost Films of Pedro Almodovar*? The first five people to write to the Valhalla/Eureka Street Almodovar Competition, PO Box 553, Richmond, VIC 3121, will receive free double passes to see *Pepi, Luci, Bom and all the other girls* at the Valhalla Cinema, Melbourne, from 29 April.

Eureka Street Film Competition

Look, we're *really* serious about this International Year of the Family stuff. And what better model for the postmodern family than a small girl, a scarecrow, a tin man and a cowardly lion. It's all about *difference*, you know. So caption this heartwarming scene from Hollywood's most heartwarming musical and we'll award two tickets, to the film of your choice, for the line we like best. Send entries to: Eureka Street Film Competition, PO Box 553, Richmond, VIC 3121. The winner of February's competition was the Rev. Tony Baker, chaplain at the Memorial Hospital in North Adelaide, who thought the *Godfather* bride was telling her escort: 'Put it down! You've made poor Father Vitus dance.'



just loves being beaten nearly to death. Almodovar's people are not fragile. We realise, however, that it can be very dangerous to mess with a *real* masochist.

The cinematography seems tatty, betraying its low budget, until we notice that at times the movie takes on a flickering, porny look, and realise that we're being served a much more sophisticated dish than we first realised.

—Juliette Hughes



A month of *Sundays*

RECENTLY IN HIS REGULAR SPOT ON Channel Nine's *Sunday*, film critic Peter Thompson observed of director Jim Sheridan: 'He captures what happens in the space between one heartbeat and the next.' This kind of remark is the antithesis of 'theorised' film critique but Thompson can do that too, and his capacity to mix the two styles successfully is one of several things that make *Sunday* such a good program.

Others include its unusually literate news scripts, the wryness and restraint of its host Jim Waley, and above all the intelligence and seriousness of its journalistic style: no heartwarming tots displaying to the camera an array of rare medical conditions; no self-righteous reporters' feet in the doors of small-time camera-punching sociopaths; no brokenhearted parents, rendered inarticulate by grief and microphones, who 'just want to know *why*' when the answer, however unsavoury, is staring them in the face.

Sunday returned in February after a summer recess. The format, unchanged for several years now, is based on standard newspaper structure: after a brief overview of the show's contents, delivered by Waley in three-quarter-profile and sitting on what appears to be a bar stool, the camera moves in while swivelling 45 degrees to end in a head-on, head-and-shoulders close-up (implication: now for the serious stuff, which we are telling you 'straight') for the morning's news. This is followed by a more magazine-style 'week in review' news segment; then Laurie Oakes's interview with whatever politician seems worth talking to that week; then the cover story; and finally the more leisurely things—movies, music, and the TV equivalent of weekend feature journalism. Because it invites comparison, this resemblance to newspaper structure reveals how much more coercive a medium television is than print. You can decide which part of the paper to read first, what to save for later, and what to throw away; but with TV, where the ordering is temporal rather than spatial, those choices are largely lost.

The 'political' interview often becomes a news event in itself, a focal and sometimes a pivotal point in the affairs of government. While it purports to deal with the events of recent days, bits of it frequently end up in everybody's news bulletins on the following Monday night; constructed thus as 'news', it sometimes produces further consequences.

Keeping track of these unfolding causalities is disquieting. Among other things, they indicate just how much power Oakes has to help make things happen; his recent interviews have had a hand in the ebb of Ros Kelly's fortunes, and in the flow of Bronwyn Bishop's. Remarks edited out of context, and then repeatedly re-broadcast both by Nine and by other stations, can have major consequences; and sometimes those remarks have been lured, coaxed or goaded out of reluctant ministerial mouths in the first place by strategies comparable in subtlety and sympathy to a well-aimed jackboot in the groin.

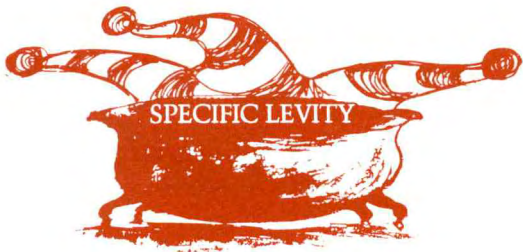
Cheryl Kernot, interviewed a week or two before Ros Kelly's resignation and taking a tough stand on accountability, is one of the few politicians I have ever seen remain unflustered by Oakes throughout an entire interview. Kernot, like Gareth Evans but unencumbered by what Jane Austen would have called his uncertain temper, is both spectacularly well-informed and possessed of high-level debating skills; at one point she left Oakes speechless, sweetly but mercilessly showing him up through a hole in his own research.

One of the most noticeable features of this interview was the difference in its participants' rhetoric: Kernot's images and metaphors were those of consensus and integration, Oakes's those of strife and fracture. His language, illuminated by the difference, revealed his view of political affairs as essentially antagonistic, competitive and hierarchical: 'win' and 'lose' are two of his favourite words. This world view, like the medium through which it is expressed, is coercive; in shaping his questions according to it, Oakes builds whole suburbs of verbal dark alleys down which it becomes very difficult for his subjects not to go. Most politicians' terror of silence is such that a simple 'I don't accept the terms of your question' would never occur to them, even when that is clearly the case. Oakes doesn't actually ask people whether they've stopped beating their wives, but he might as well; it would surprise few of his viewers and none of his interviewees, not even the ones with husbands. (*Especially* not the ones with husbands.)

THE OTHER MOST MEMORABLE SEGMENT SO far this year has been Peter Thompson's review of *In the Name of the Father*, where incisive commentary and judiciously chosen clips demonstrated yet again the ardour and abandon of actor Daniel Day-Lewis when hurling body and soul into whatever film he happens to be working on. Thompson is one of the best wide-audience film reviewers in the country, sometimes run close by Robert Drewe in *Who Weekly* but well clear of SBS's *Movie Show*, where both the girlish enthusiasm of Margaret Pomeranz and David Stratton's paternal *gravitas*, laced with sternness or goodwill as the occasion demands, are directed towards the all-important goal of deciding how many stars make five. Thompson is considerably more interested in commentary and analysis than in point-scoring, and while it's usually clear whether he thinks a movie is good or bad, that judgment emerges incidentally from his discussion of its content, style and history.

If I only ever remembered one thing from any given episode of *Sunday*, it would usually be some remark of Thompson's. This column, for instance, had its genesis in his line about the space between one heartbeat and the next. And while he may be one of the most sophisticated and articulate talking heads on TV, my favourite Peter Thompson moment is still his opening remark in last year's review of *The Piano*: 'I love movies.'

Kerryn Goldsworthy is a Melbourne writer and teacher.



Eureka Street Cryptic Crossword no. 22, April 1994

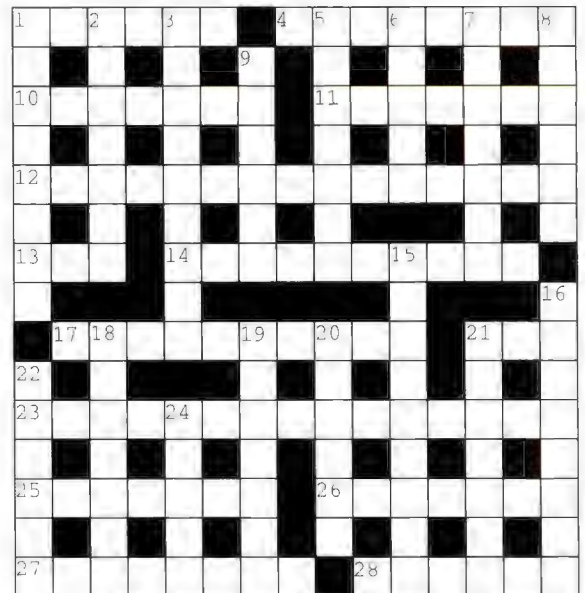
Devised by Joan Nowotny IBVM

ACROSS

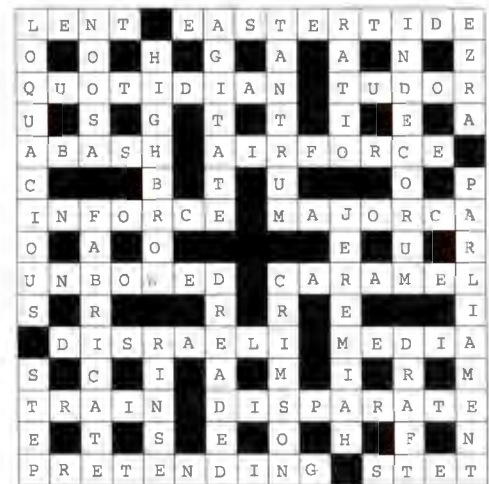
- 1 What a disaster! As if Company re-organisation could be such a washout! (6)
- 4 Arm vestment includes 100 for the steward. (8)
- 10 Teetotaller and Member of Parliament ate mixture and had a go. (7)
- 11 Play on a harp, perhaps with the Spanish archangel. (7)
- 12 Would his mate, Jill, be so universally accomplished an artisan? (4, 2, 3, 6)
- 13 Signal to pot the ball? (3)
- 14 In adding bill, the assistant clergyman was mistaken. (10)
- 17 Negotiated in order to stand crate otherwise. (10)
- 21 Farewell to extra cricket this season. (3)
- 23 In Uluru, I'm vicar etc, possibly because of the list of my accomplishments. (10,5)
- 25 Gratify me, please, by having the constituents glued in. (7)
- 26 Quietly tell us about the chickens. (7)
- 27 Become a writer? Lamb, perhaps, tries it. (8)
- 28 What one does with time and money in the ordinary pursuits of life! (6)

DOWN

- 1 Toss the knave for a pancake. (8)
- 2 The object is definite. (7)
- 3 Firm proposal about the capital of Macedonia creates turmoil. (9)
- 5 See Carl shivering with icy stuff! It's only synthetic. (7)
- 6 Could it be a saucy frolic? (5)
- 7 At the races, perhaps, dual tip wins praise. (7)
- 8 Secure cooperation in engaging seven listeners to radio. (6)
- 9 At Arts review, layers were uncovered. (6)
- 15 A biology experiment that was somewhat bizarre proved eel would grow again. (9)
- 16 Goes back over the poems. (8)
- 18 Arranged red rose against the screen in the church. (7)
- 19 Does sailor make employers into exploiters? (7)
- 20 Turps mixed with the top of meths comes up a winner! (6)
- 21 Some sea bird becomes another—a wader perhaps. (7)
- 22 Confined space between points for the Hebrew teacher. (6)
- 24 At home, set the table that has the woodwork pattern. (5)



Solution to Crossword no.21, March 1994



Thanks awfully, chaps, but I was rather hoping for a subscription to Eureka Street.

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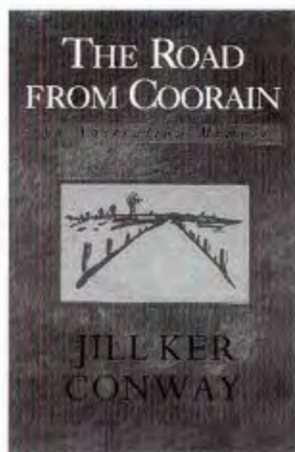
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