EUREKA STREET

Vol. 7 No. 4 May 1997

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ON THE BRINK

the state of Australian public education

— ANN MORROW

BACKDOOR BUDGET

— JACK WATERFORD

Creationism *is utterly unbiblical*

— ANTONY CAMPBELL

UNIVERSITIES

and freedom of speech

— SPENCER ZIFCAK

'We are presently in the grip of a powerful, fashionable fetish for economic solutions in education and elsewhere. In my view, these need urgently to be balanced by a more democratic position. In this, we need to make a clear and firm restatement of the value that should attach to intellectual independence, academic freedom, institutional plurality and critical thought.'

—Spencer Zifcak

See 'Brave new world', p24

EUREKA STREET

Volume 7 Number 4
May 1997

A magazine of public affairs, the arts and theology

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What I object to intensely is any claim by creationists or on behalf of creationists that their view emerges from a literal understanding of the Bible. That is my bailiwick and I will defend it. Creationism as a literal understanding of the Bible is bunk.
—Antony Campbell

See 'Creationism! Utterly unbiblical', p30.

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A magazine of public affairs, the arts and theology

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COMMENT

JAMES GRIFFIN

Coup de grâce

WATCHING A RIOT IN TRAFALGAR SQUARE on TV—or, better still, remembering how trade unionists some time ago crunched the doors of Parliament House on camera—I could not help reflecting how much less consternation such incidents aroused than the jubilant free shopping sprees we witnessed during the recent 'mutiny' in PNG. Why, even Ray Martin went up there, apparently to witness the last days of civil society. The doom-croakers wagged their sage heads: they had told us the military would eventually take over. And Whitlam's precipitate grant of independence was to blame.

Paradoxically, what actually happened was an appeal to constitutionality through some disobedient whistle-blowing by the Defence Force C.O. Brigadier-General Singirok. Not only did the Prime Minister allegedly bring into PNG a mercenary military squad, but there were potentially such grave consequences for national security and human rights that only a well-timed mutiny would forestall them.

Singirok consulted his Governor-General (who sympathised with his action) and accepted the consequence of his mutiny, namely, dismissal and a possible indictment for treason. Whatever personal agenda Singirok may turn out to have, the tears shed before the camera were not of the crocodile variety. Educated Papua New Guineans are in the main respectful of their constitution, even though when in politics, like some Australians we all know, they are apt to rort the system. In the end, Sir Julius Chan went through the prescribed forms, asserted the supremacy of Parliament by decisively defeating a vote of no-confidence, but the following day admitted error ('100 per cent wrong', he said, trying to look contrite) and stepped aside, pending the result of a Commission of Inquiry.

What is concealed behind the 'barbaric' image generated by the media is the general influence the Christian churches have had on Papua New Guineans, at least in establishing norms for behaviour. Singirok's professed reliance on his Christian principles carries more sincerity I believe than do invocations of God by American leaders like Reagan and Clinton. The preamble to the Constitution proclaims PNG to be guided by 'noble traditions and Christian principles'. The Education Act also asserts that PNG is a Christian country. This is not simply wormwood. Both sources prescribe respect for communality, democratic government and human rights.

This is not negated by brutal atavistic behaviour on the part of security personnel, individual citizens or mobs any more than the behaviour of Queensland police towards Aborigines or the Port Arthur massacre proves the absence of a civil society here.

Certainly there is fragility and a lack of capacity in major PNG institutions, and a failure to establish adequate law and

order and to curb kleptocrats. There are reasons for this, but critics of PNG often seem to know more about that country than they know of their own. It was always ironic instructing PNG students about 'conflict of interest' when many Australian premiers had little awareness of it.

While identities like Singirok hold out for a political rather than a military solution to the Bougainville tragedy, there are others with faith and heroism toiling away in villages to bring about 'restorative justice'.

Brother Patrick Howley's Peace Foundation Melanesia (formerly, Foundation for Law, Order and Justice) issues a monthly newsletter which is the best record of what is happening on the ground in Bougainville today. The PFM's logo is inscribed 'Peace and Community Empowerment'. Brother Howley relinquished a distinguished teaching career both within Marist schools and as principal of one of the four national upper secondary high schools, to focus on the art of conflict resolution. He has a group of instructors working throughout the province.

What is surprising is the amount of constructive work being done. Obviously most people are sick of war and want peace. This includes even some combatants from among both the Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA) and the pro-government Resistance. In the North-West of the main island recently, some 200 BRA surrendered and handed in their weapons in spite of the risk involved, and were seen in Buka town for the first time in years. Along with such hopeful signs, however, are now anarchic alliances forming when BRA squads fragment. They comprise young 'rambos' who were seven or eight when war began and are now carrying weapons. They are uneducated—in 1988, 90 per cent of Bougainville children were in school—and susceptible to violent cultism.

In the Bana area (population 24,000) on the fringe of the BRA redoubt in central Bougainville, five community schools now cater for most school-age children after having had all schools closed during 1990-96. Adult literacy classes try to cope with those who missed out. Courses in spiritual rehabilitation and reconciliation have been effective, if slow. Brother Howley writes that 'many people believe the road to peace is for each village to make its own peace, then peace with its neighbours, then with the areas further away until the units are able to join up into districts'. Bana is moving in this direction. Slow, certainly, but better than being blown away by mercenary fuel-air bombs. Similar community resources are being mobilised elsewhere with sporadic progress.

Bougainville is not yet a black hole. Singirok's decisive and well-timed action has averted a major disaster, and there is a resourceful quest for peace at village level. The military has shown it too wants a political solution. It is up to Port Moresby to provide a framework for this, and that means compromise over the status of the province. ■

James Griffin is professor emeritus at the University of Papua New Guinea.

Brother Howley's work can be encouraged at PO Box 4205, Boroko, N.C.D., Papua New Guinea.

Comment: 2

Michael McGirr sj

If Wardell could speak

Rod Quantock is a Melbourne comedian and doyen of advertisements for bedroom furniture. For some years, he has been running one of the few viable alternatives to the bucks' night bus binge. He takes groups on uncharted evening excursions where they 'drop in' on unsuspecting institutions and social functions. One night, after a merry dinner, they dropped in on the presbytery where my community was also enjoying a merry dinner. Ever optimistic, we decided to take them across to the adjoining church.

The church happened to be designed by William Wilkinson Wardell, the architect of St Patrick's Cathedral in Melbourne. Much has been said about Wardell's genius as a creator of neo-Gothic churches and Italianate public buildings. He was one of a small number who imposed an indelible style on Melbourne which to this day resists easy description. But I dipped my lid to him that night. Quantock's group did not look much like church goers and were certainly not in the mood for church. But they were awe-struck by the interior of the building. It resisted trivialisation.

St Patrick's Cathedral is this year celebrating the centenary of its completion. It has been undergoing renovations in the lead-up to this milestone: almost five million dollars towards the cost of this renovation has come directly from the pockets of parishoners. Books have been published and all sorts of events, including a flower festival, have been planned for the centenary. But possibly none of these will be as arresting as the first exhibition of the year, curated by John Rogan, which focuses exclusively on Wardell. Wardell has always been a mystery to me. His ability to create a pacifying interior and an aggressive exterior within a single building and a single style reflects a subtle ecclesiology. This talent is not unlike the work of Utzon. It's a pity Utzon never got to finish the interior of the Sydney Opera House, although any building in that location hardly needs an interior. That, of course, is the classic Sydney dilemma.

The Wardell exhibition tells the story of his life. Born in London in 1823, a convert to Catholicism in 1843 (the display includes a letter from Newman), exiled to Australian in 1858 by his ill-health. Off and on, he spent forty years on the cathedral. There is breathtaking evidence of his attention to detail over the course of that time. Like Burley Griffin, he designed the furniture as well. Near the recreation of his study is a box of his rulers. One of them measures a thirty-second of an inch; there is a magnifying glass beside it.

It's quite something to ponder the significance of a thirty second of an inch when there are stones arching 95 feet over your head. ■

Michael McGirr sj is consulting editor of *Eureka Street*.

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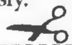

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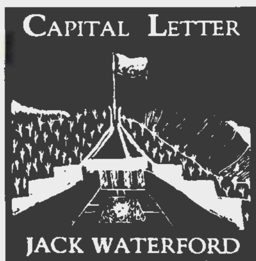


The coy Budget

JOHN HOWARD IS PROBABLY CURSING his Colston strategy now—a piece of cleverness which showed him to be like any cynical old politician.

But even as the strategy has unravelled, making almost everyone look rather unattractive, Malcolm Colston has been delivering more to Howard than the extra vote which makes up a Senate majority. So intense has been the focus on the affair that the Budget process has been able to go without any public attention, hardly a single leak and not a little Liberal and National Party discipline. Just whether, however, this is a good thing depends on how long term John Howard's strategies are.

The first Howard-Costello Budget was a much more public process, which suited the Government well, even if it did not appreciate the amount of leaking by a public service being set up for serious cuts. First, the cuts could all be Paul Keating's fault, because of the famous black hole: all that Peter Costello had to do, as he gleefully flung away the election sheep's clothing, was to pretend that these were austerities forced as reluctant duty upon him by Labor profligacy and dishonesty.

The leaks, even the unexpected ones, meant that by Budget day the public was well prepared for the bad news and prepared to focus on the compensations. Moreover, the Budget was based on doling out nearly all of the nasty medicine early in the political term, in the expectation that both the economic and the political cycle would permit successor budgets that proved the efficacy of the medicine and delivered some payback for the voters just before a triumphal re-election.

Alas, Costello's advisers got some of their own revenue sums wrong and the Government now has its own black hole.

With so much dogma and credibility focused on balanced or surplus budgets, Costello has another year of tightening, making the political equation a closer-run thing. This is the more so given that the source of his shortfall comes from the patchy nature of economic growth and the uneven way it is distributed.

Sectors which have traditionally fueled business and consumer confidence, and which traditionally provided jobs growth, have been visibly lagging. The retail and the housing sectors are doing badly. The global economy, which the bipartisan architects of the economic market reforms have made so crucial to Australia's prosperity, is not looking as well as it did.

And, in part because of the government changes to industrial relations, job insecurity is inhibiting consumer spending, which is in turn impairing business confidence. This then threatens that resurgence of private sector activity which the fantasists of modern economic theory think will flow automatically once the public sector is taken off its back.

After the ritual spending slashes of health, welfare and education, and with defence still apparently quarantined from any cuts, the most obvious way of making up budget deficits is by attacking taxation expenditure—the myriad of concessions and deductions available for business and families. But many of these are difficult to justify on equity grounds and the revenue they promise has a great capacity to evaporate. Allow tax concessions for personal superannuation, for example, and the punters will put their money there; take it away and they will switch it elsewhere, probably faster than the tax man can catch it.

It's a difficult juggle, the more so when it is orchestrated around the electoral cycle. But so cocky are some of the players that dogma still tends to run ahead of common sense. The first rounds of public service cuts, for example, hit rural regions hard. For many a country town, the closure of a social security office and the closing down off a labour market program was just another blow in a cycle that has seen those towns lose banks and other private sector service institutions, then population, then teachers and policemen.

In some states this has been compounded by simultaneous assaults at all levels of government. Rural and provincial politicians have had a hard time explaining to their voters that it's all for the greater good.

Yet many of the economic zealots within government are still keen to have unilateral tariff cuts, which will have further and immediate sectional impacts. Public sector job and program cuts are still being planned, without much sign of increased private sector activity to pick up the slack or any job creation as private enterprise performs functions hitherto carried out by government.

It's within this context that the recent Defence Efficiency Review was somewhat bemusing. Its proposed defence efficiencies involve the centralisation of a host of defence facilities, with a little base here, a piece of the Army's support services there, a bit of the Air Force's infrastructure over there all marked down for closure.

In those communities, the defence presence meant jobs not only for the servicemen and women but for a wider community. Yet the rationales for the cuts were pretty sketchy, not least in a time when transport and communications infrastructure are such that location doesn't matter much at all. But it was endorsed by Government without the blink of an eye.

ONCE UPON A TIME, OF COURSE, the process of locating such facilities involved some conscious pork-barrelling, just as the location of social security offices or community services did. Politicians lobbied hard to do something for their electors. An area feeling the pinch, say because of drought, structural change or the collapse of a financial institution, might be given some major government project as a piece of conscious Keynesian pump-priming and levelling out. Now, it seems, government is consciously stripping itself of just such powers of intervention. The further changes to the financial sector recommended by the Wallis committee will take away even more.

The zealots would say that the capacity of government to achieve outcomes by the old levers is now much reduced, because of our vulnerability to international competition, and that market solutions are often better ones than well-intentioned but clumsy interventions by government. To an extent they are right, but some of Government's impotence derives from their own strategies.

What has this to do with the budget and Malcolm Colston? First, the Government is taking a great risk if it thinks that some Budget-day prestidigitation will amaze, delight and persuade everyone. We've had that from Paul Keating and he could not deliver either. The more open the Budget process and the more time and attention given to expectations, the more likely a Budget strategy will be accepted.

And this is even more the case when the electorate is cynical not only about the capacity of politicians to deliver outcomes, but suspicious and cynical about the character of the politicians themselves. The higher they are, the lower they fall. ■

Jack Waterford is editor of the *Canberra Times*.

No excuse

From John East

Michael McGirr's article on sexual abuse within the Catholic education system (*Eureka Street*, April 1997) is, I think, a generally fair and compassionate attempt to view this very painful issue from all sides, and he is not sparing in his criticism of those institutional flaws within the Church that made sexual abuse not only possible but inevitable.

I was however very disappointed that one paragraph—something of an apologia for the Catholic education system in this country—was highlighted on the inside front cover of that issue. There were in my opinion other paragraphs in that article which better deserved such prominence. More importantly, I disagree with McGirr's attempt, in the final sentence of that paragraph, to blame the whole country for the prevalence of sexual abuse in the Catholic education system. The sentence in question runs thus: 'If a life of personal privation forced some individuals into distorted behaviour, then the whole country is subtly complicit.'

This is, I believe, quite unfair, as the problem lay very much within the institutions of the Catholic Church, and not in Australian society as a whole. If we look at the issue from the point of view of the abuser, then the main consideration which kept him (or her) within their life of 'personal privation' was the knowledge of the ostracism by their Catholic family, friends and colleagues which would be their lot upon leaving the order, to say nothing of the threat of ecclesiastical sanctions if perpetual vows were broken.

From the point of view of the victim, the only adults in whom an abused child could confide—teachers, parents, parish priest, family doctor—would probably all have been Catholics who had been thoroughly brain-washed into believing that their Church and their clergy were incapable of error. And had one of those adults dared to complain to the ecclesiastical authorities, they would probably, at best, have been fobbed off with bland assurances, or, at worst, have been threatened with loss of livelihood or denial of the sacraments if they did not hold their tongue.

McGirr's suggestion that the country as a whole was guilty of the flaws in the Catholic education system, on the grounds that Australia was not prepared to pay for the education of Catholic children, is quite unconvincing. The Church demanded that all Catholic children be educated in Catholic schools, and parents who did not comply were denied the sacraments. It was the Church that imposed that burden on itself—not the Australian people—and the Church was motivated to do so, one suspects, mainly by a determination to maintain control and domination over its flock.

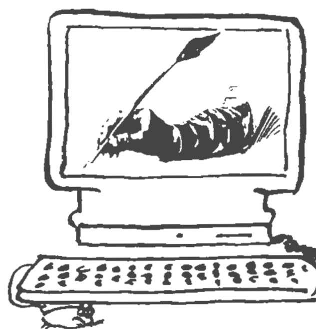
There is one further point that I would like to make about the Catholic education system in Australia as I knew it as a schoolchild in the 1960s. Although sexual abuse was no doubt the exception rather than the norm, I believe that physical and psychological abuse were so widespread as to be taken for granted. Of course, the victims of sexual abuse suffered more severely, but the far from insignificant sufferings of victims of physical and psychological abuse, when multiplied by the much greater number of those victims, suggests that this is a major problem whose long term effects are still being felt in our society today, without any attempt being made to address or redress them.

McGirr cites the many effects of child abuse—from post-traumatic stress disorder to low self-image. But there is one serious effect that he has not listed: loss of faith. How were those who were abused by the Church to learn to know and love the God that the Church worshipped? In many cases they naturally ceased to believe in that God and so lost touch with their own spirituality. What internal resources did they then have to cope with the continuing legacy of their abuse?

Of course recrimination and name-calling will solve nothing. But the Church used to teach (and perhaps still does teach) that there can be no forgiveness without confession and true penitence. If this is so, then before the Church can be reconciled with those it has wronged it must reveal and explore the long, sorry history of its failings to all those in its care. It must also determine to learn from those failings and so remove the institutional weaknesses which made it all possible in the first place.

John East
Greenslopes, QLD

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



No mistake

From Rev Dr Kim Miller
St Alban's Anglican Parish, Wagga Wagga NSW

J.S.Gregory (*Eureka Street*, March 1997) responds to Robert Crotty's article 'The Jesus in Question' by submitting the opinions of two people. The first is Phillip Adams, the second Dr John Barrett.

Adams wrote 'of course Christianity will continue to rely on a hybrid Christ, a mixture of a tiny amount of fact with enormous dollops of faith.' Dr Barrett replies 'Phillip Adams is the last man I would have writing about Jesus and Christianity.' Gregory then relates several paragraphs of Barrett's views.

Barrett reduces the formation of the gospels to the following terms: 'So, to give Jesus credentials, they invented the birth stories. They invented frameworks and situations for the "life". All of them, and not only John, turned their "lives" of Jesus into theological interpretations into which

TALKING UNDER WATER

'The Prime Minister has finally unglued the limpet, having had him attached umbilically—virtually, at least—by a sucker over the course of last six months or so, and he is adrift.'

—Opposition Leader, Kim Beazley, commenting on the Prime Minister's repudiation of Senator Colston, during an interview with Andrew Denton on 2MMM.

This month, the writer of each letter we publish will receive a *Eureka Street* T-shirt. Marlon Brando couldn't make it look any better.

any helpful, though invented "act" could be justifiably worked—according to their cultured and literary conventions.'

Barrett concludes: 'Crossan and his mates are only clearing the ground of fundamentalist claims; they need to go beyond the trifling impedimenta and consider why all the impedimenta are there in the first place. ... they are very much more than a tiny amount of fact with enormous dollops of faith.' Barrett does not say where the faith really fits into the story.

The irony for me is that Barrett makes himself fit Adams' criteria perfectly. He has described a view of gospel formation which cannot reasonably form the ground of faith, except the faith that Barrett claims for himself, that 'this Jesus could cope with life and its problems; we never knew anyone who could cope better.'

I wonder whether the world is not better served by Adams' 'tortured mind' and 'certain longing' than by Barrett's reduction of Jesus to the good example who 'could cope with life and its problems.' My suspicion is that most people would relate better to Adams than to the Jesus given in Barrett's analysis.

A further irony for me is that my doctorate is in certain aspects of psychology and religious symbolism. I read for this in the theology department of Exeter University, UK, under the professorship of David Catchpole, one of the current stream of those interested in 'the search for the historical Jesus'. In 'deference' to Catchpole I called one chapter of my thesis, 'The Search For the Non-Historical Jesus'. One day the real Jesus will stand up as asked.

Kim Miller
Wagga Wagga NSW

No nonsense

From John Doyle

For some time now I have been trying to get action about defective signs. I want signs that are easy to see and easy to recognise.

Signs of that kind make even a short journey safe and comfortable. Now, punctuation marks and white spaces are the reader's road signs. Of recent years they have increasingly become obscured by the letters around them and increasingly hard to recognise when they are sighted. The very physical process of reading has become tedious and laborious, even for eyes that are neither tired nor lazy.

Concern for the Republic of Letters suggests a campaign to have all punctuation marks separated by an en-space and sentences by an em-space.

This simple return to an older, hot-metal tradition would greatly relieve strain and stress, and fit well with the wider pitch and wider spacing that is becoming more common in good books and magazines.

John W. Doyle
Kew, VIC

No problem

From Warren Horton
Director General, National Library of Australia

Robert Barnes' article 'The National Library of Australia: From Big Bang to Black Hole' *(Eureka Street*, March 1997) continues his campaign against our strategic policy directions. He has now published over 25 articles or letters in the media on these issues.

Barnes laments that he has received little support in this campaign, saying 'equally tragic has been the almost complete silence of scholarly institutions elsewhere in the country. No academy, learned society, university or library association has made any public statement on the National Library's collections or electronic policies.'

There has indeed been little comment. Not one academic in Australia, for example, subsequently commented on the lead article about our collection/access policies in the important *Campus Review* weekly issue of 15 May, 1996. The 'controversy' concerning the National Library about which Barnes constantly fulminates seems largely confined to him and a small group of other Canberra users.

The Library in its 1993 Strategic Plan *Service to the Nation: Access to the Globe* said its role was changing, with a stronger emphasis on collecting material relating to Australia and Australians, our prime collecting responsibility, while continuing to build the resource sharing infrastructure for the Australian library system. The time has passed for us to aspire to a collection from all over the world. The growth of the higher education library system over recent decades encourages shared collection building, and technology increasingly allows us to acquire material, especially journals, from elsewhere. But we still spend heavily on material from overseas, including world class Asian and Pacific collections. And we cherish our splendid printed collections.

Libraries are changing profoundly. The recent major review of the ANU Library commented on the great growth since the 1982 review in the rate at which knowledge is being generated. While no research library, no matter how well resourced, now meets all its own information needs, technologies are emerging which promise greater access to information irrespective of its physical location.

The review said 'This has impacted on university libraries world wide and has even led national libraries to reassess their goals ... Many, like the NLA, have had to focus more closely on their primary goal which is to collect on matters directly related to their own country within a set of fairly closely defined interests'.

The main thrust of Barnes' arguments is that the National Library has narrowed its collecting ambitions over recent decades. We would describe what has happened as sensible policy changes reflecting the opportunities and constraints outlined above.

LETTING GO AND MOVING ON
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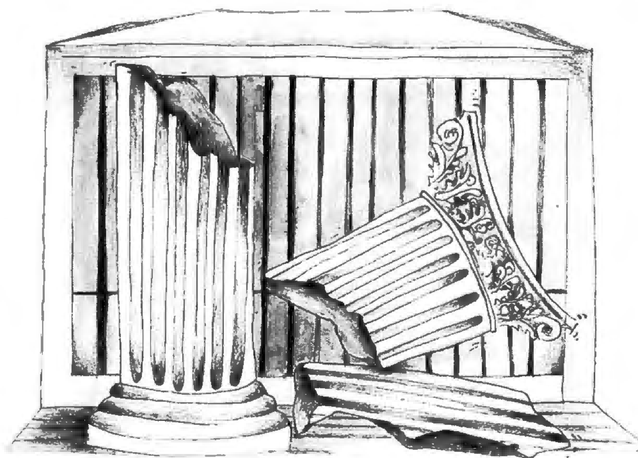
The world we now operate in is quite different to those few years in the late 1960s early 1970s when the Library acquired the Speros Vryonis and some other formed overseas collections. We have made no similar purchases for 25 years, and are unlikely to ever do so again, and nor has any other Australian library. This is simply a reflection of reality, and our primary interest has to be Australian special materials including manuscripts, pictures and oral history. Acquiring and servicing this material is also a very labour-intensive activity. Barnes himself says 'In retrospect, it could well be argued that the library took on too many responsibilities for its funds to support.'

We steadily cut back purchasing of overseas print material throughout the 1980s, because we operate under the same cost pressures and economic restraint affecting all other Australian libraries and Commonwealth-funded institutions. The Library has no more chance of avoiding them than any university or other public institution, and to argue we have failed to convince the Government 'we were worth supporting fully' is just fanciful. And we are already the second highest revenue earner for any national library in the world. We now have 500 staff as opposed to 650 in 1985, who by their ingenuity and good management practices have met greatly increased demands on all our services over those years. But we could not go on like this.

The 1993 Strategic Plan reflects very careful thought about what the Library's key strategic priorities should be in these circumstances. In the case of collection and electronic access policies, where the issues are far more complex than in past better economic times and with only print material to consider, the title accurately reflects our ambitions. We still aim to collect print exhaustively for the Australian and world-class Asian/Pacific collections, and judiciously from elsewhere in the world against the objective of being 'the world's leading documentary resource for learning about and understanding Australia and Australians, linking closely with other sources of information throughout the nation'.

The last phrase is important, because it reflects the fact that we work in a highly co-ordinated environment. Australia is extraordinarily well served now in terms of research library collections compared to two decades ago, reflecting the great growth in the higher education library system. We spend one in every 20 of the dollars now spent on Australian research library collections, as compared to one in every four 30 years ago, and there is location information for over 20 million volumes in over 2,000 libraries in our ABN system. Concentrating on our prime collecting responsibilities in a national resource-sharing environment where everyone has funding problems, rather than any foolish pretence we are the only library in the world apart from the US Library of Congress building a world collection of print materials, is obviously sensible.

This policy has meant significant cancellations of overseas print materials. In the case of serials we have in the last two years cancelled some 13,000 overseas subscriptions, although we still subscribe to some 13,000 titles and acquire another 13,000 by gift and exchange and other methods. We would with staff decreases probably find it impossible to now physically process that material anyway, but the decision has to be seen in the context of electronic developments including facsimile and the Internet, and establishment of dedicated document delivery services. The American CARL UnCover service alone, to which we add Australian content, offers 24 hour full text access to over 20,000 titles.



While it is a minor issue, our subscription to *Antiquity* (which is also held in the ANU Library in Canberra) was not 'discreetly reinstated, after protests in the national Press'. It was cancelled in error on 27 July 1995 and reinstated on 16 August 1995. Barnes' letter in the *Canberra Times* complaining we did not subscribe to it was published on 24 September 1996. I accept he did not then comprehend the reinstatement from our catalogue entry, but he certainly does now.

Barnes says that the user has to meet the costs, and that such developments are 'no adequate substitute for the traditional library, where the researcher can browse freely in a wide range of journals'. We still of course take a huge number of journals, but this is a very Canberra-based argument. The small group of Canberra residents vigorously opposing these changes, who can of course visit the Library, have never commented on the fact that all inter-library loan use since 1987 has attracted substantial charges. We are still exploring ways to carry these costs for our prime client group of the serious researcher needing access to the National Library. However university libraries have the prime responsibility of meeting the library needs of their communities.

We believe there is a problem in the overall intake of overseas monographs in Australian research libraries, although our policies have not caused it. We have been talking to the academies, university libraries and other interested parties about how this might be explored.

We do strongly support the concept of the Distributed National Collection, unanimously endorsed when first articulated at the Australian Libraries Summit of 1988, and since also taken up by the Commonwealth Government and cultural communities. In the simplest terms this concept argues libraries should think of the nation's library resources as one collection, comprehensively in the case of Australian material and selectively in relation to the rest of the world, and while accepting every library has its own prime client group, develop collaborative resource-sharing policies in the national interest. We have been disappointed that there have been few contractual collecting agreements to date under that policy, although the informal agreements, as in the health sciences subject area for instance, should not be underestimated.

But the DNC concept is far wider than just collecting agreements. It includes the National Bibliographical Database operating through ABN of Australian library holdings, Conspectus description of collections, national preservation strategies, national access, electronic and inter-library loan protocols, and a raft of other collaborative activities where there has been notable achievement. It is pleasing that the National Scholarly Communications Forum, whose membership includes the learned academies, libraries and other relevant parties, is soon to hold a major forum to further invigorate the concept.

It is said that our 'total spending on all printed material (even including the Australian collection) has fallen to about $5 million a year, or only 9 per cent of the Library's budget'. Almost all Australian printed material is of course acquired free under far-sighted legal deposit laws. When this, overseas free material and Taxation Incentive acquisitions are notionally costed in, our collections budget is the largest in Australia. And we are a totally self-contained organisation, with a range of responsibilities far wider than any other Australian library.

This is 9 per cent of a 1995/96 budget including $24m for 500 staff, $2m on running

our building, about $6m for asbestos removal from the building, $8m paid by other libraries for ABN, and funding for many other activities such as the National Portrait Gallery, publications and so on.

Your readers may find it useful to have a breakdown of our collections expenditure from 1991/92 to 1995/96. This shows a 47.6 per cent cut in overseas expenditure (excluding Asian), a 9.65 per cent increase in Asian expenditure, a 17.1 per cent increase in Australian printed material (most coming free through legal deposit), and a 42.1 per cent increase in Australian special materials (manuscripts, oral history, pictorial, maps etc.) expenditure.

There is little point in comparisons over who spends what on library collections, unless the libraries and their responsibilities are broadly similar. The Library of Congress spends less than 9 per cent of its budget on collections, while the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek (the Bavarian State Library) has little resemblance to us. It does not for example run any service like ABN, and it counts its collections intake differently.

Barnes in his article and elsewhere has complained about our consultative process in 1992 for the Strategic Plan, saying we ignored criticism then and hid our true intentions about the collection policies. It is impossible to refute this beyond saying I do not believe either allegation to be true. We can always do better in consulting, but it should be noted that the December 1993 issue of our *National Library of Australia News*, 7,000 copies of which were distributed around Australia, focused on the Strategic Plan including reprinting the strategic priorities.

We are not able for legal reasons to comment on the WORLD 1 project, including possible funding outcomes, during the present termination negotiations. But we did not divert collection funds to it. We are committed to full support of the Australian Bibliographical Network (ABN) which supports over 2,000 Australian libraries, until the replacement Networked Services Project, which has been strongly supported by the library community, is implemented. This went to tender in March.

The Council is responsible for Library policies, and has not 'been almost totally silent', since I am its executive member and speak publicly on its behalf. Recent members have included people of the calibre of Sir Ninian Stephen, Sir Anthony Mason, Professor Stuart Macintyre, Rodney Cavalier, Julia King and Geraldine Paton, with a member elected from each house of the Parliament. They hardly match the comment 'one wonders whether the Council is anything more than a rubber-stamp for decisions made by the Library's administration'.

The Library is very publicly accountable, including to the Parliament. Most of the relevant material can be found on our home page at http://www.nla.gov.au and is also readily available in print form.

What is depressing in this particular article is the denigration by Barnes of the professionalism of the many Library staff involved in developing the collection, access and electronic materials policies of the last decade. Most have lengthy professional experience in the National Library or other large Australian research libraries, and all bring integrity to their work. The Library has categorically denied the assertion that they shaped the collection policies to reflect the previous Government's Asian strategies, but Barnes still says 'this disclaimer is disingenuous'. He also says that 'The Library's collection and electronic policies have a superficial plausibility, but they are the decisions of bureaucrats, not scholars and researchers.' Our staff are proud to be part of the Commonwealth bureaucracy, while also driven by professional values. They develop policy recommendations for the Council in an environment demanding constant change, difficult decisions in hard economic times, intellectual rigour and the courage to take significant risks with technology.

The world has changed dramatically in the last decade. Our values and culture are built on print, but we recognise that technology, including the extraordinary rise of the Internet, gives us undreamt of opportunities for access to the world's information.

We must now concentrate on our primary tasks set out in our Strategic Plan, including the heavy responsibility of building the Australian collections of both print and electronic materials.

The reason that Barnes may have attracted little support is that those interested in Australian libraries understand this turbulent and changing environment. They may not any more than us have all the answers, but they see little profit in just looking back to the vanished world of a generation ago.

Warren Horton
Canberra, ACT

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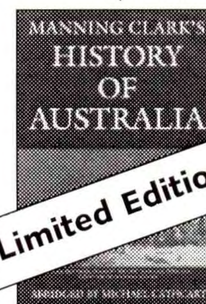

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No confidence

From Don Linforth

In the article by Margaret Simons on Senator Cheryl Kernot (*Eureka Street*, March 1997) the Senator is reported as saying that a joint sitting of the Senate and House of Representatives following a double dissolution 'would have the numbers to push through everything that has been on the table and hasn't been passed by the Senate beforehand'.

In my reading of Section 57 of the Constitution, the only measures that a joint sitting can discuss are those which have been passed twice by the House of Representatives and twice rejected (or unacceptably amended or not passed) by the Senate, with three months' interval between the two presentations to the Senate. I think these measures have to be enumerated in the documentation for the double dissolution.

Furthermore, a double dissolution cannot take place less than six months before the expiry of a House of Representatives, that means Mr. Howard cannot call one later than October 1998.

Don Linforth
Hampton, VIC

No standing

From H.J. Grant

Successive Federal Governments from the '80s including the present cannot escape the odium attached to the alleged rorting of parliamentary travel allowances especially by Senator Mal Colston. This is compounded by the difficulty that the Labor Party is experiencing in regaining its social soul and the Coalition in trying to find it.

The language used on the subject by the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Labor party and their colleagues was aptly described by George Orwell (1903-1950), English satirical novelist, essayist and critic in these words: 'Political language—and with variations this is true of all political parties from Conservatives to Anarchists—is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give appearance of solidity to pure wind.'

Equally the late US President Harry Truman who knew and respected what the public expected of politicians was wont to quote Horace Greeley (1811-1872), founder editor of the New York Times: 'fame is a vapor, popularity an accident, riches take wings, those who cheer today may curse tomorrow, only one thing endures: character.'

Belatedly the Prime Minister has now announced that Government would introduce reforms to the system for vetting parliamentary travel allowances.

Reforms to be effective, however, should be complete and wide ranging and include arrangements outside the Parliament or Government that allow an independent committee or tribunal to initiate, investigate and decide on instances of malpractice relating to all parliamentary allowances and privileges.

Action of this nature would be a means of re-affirming the high principles and practices which politicians, commonly profess to subscribe on election to office as well as helping to restore Parliament's standing and the Government's credibility.

The latter is under siege given the 'pain with gain' measures in place and in prospect for the thousands of aged and deprived, unemployed, under-employed and low wage earners without allowances or superannuation.

H.J. Grant
Campbell, ACT

No illusions

From John Kersch

Just prior to the collapse of the former, corruption-riddled National Party Government of Queensland, legislation was enacted to grant holders of Pastoral Leases automatic 20-year extensions.

Several people, including myself, strongly resisted its application to leases deemed to be 'multi-living area' in size. On expiry these were the heritage of many young rural Australians to have the opportunity to draw a one living-area ballot block. The enthusiasm for this process was demonstrated by the 3,000 applicants for the best of such blocks, in the Injune area.

We were assured by the Party heavies that the extension would apply only to aggregations under three living-areas. In the finish, aggregations of up to even seven living-areas secured the extension (for example Chatsworth Sth in the Cloncurry region, Far North Queensland).

The major beneficiary of this golden-handshake was the McDonald family with aggregations possibly in

excess of 40 living-areas. It is likely that the next major beneficiary was the A. A. Company.

Can I therefore ask the following questions?

As the then Vice-President of the Queensland National Party, Director on the board of A. A. Company and principal of the McDonald family company, did Don McDonald in fact draft the extension legislation?

Now the Federal President of the National Party, is he using the current Wik confusion to secure freehold over this country, as I heard him suggest on an ABC radio interview on April 8?

Thus completing the rape of the aspirations of many potential young landholders.

John Kersh
Maxwelton, QLD

No can do

From Fr JM George

Fr J Honner (ES, March, 97) recommended Michael Winter's article, 'A New Twist to the Celibacy Debate'. Winter reduces early church motivation for celibacy to 'morbid attitudes to sex' and 'primitive taboo'. His views are not 'new' but are found in old celibacy studies by J.& A. Theiner (1828), H. Lea (1867), F.X. Funk (1897), etc.

French Jesuit historian, Christian Cochini and others, today, would reject Winter's reduction in the light of mainstream celibacy—doctrine and praxis within the early church.

Many early church married laity as well as married clerics abstained from marital acts in penitential preparation for Eucharist. Moreover, just as abstinence from food did not imply that eating was morbidly dishonourable or primitive taboo, neither did pre-Eucharistic marital abstinence imply negativity towards the conjugal act.

Indeed the wider church had rejected Manichean, Gnostic, Montanist and Encratite heresies for denigrating marriage. True! among the 85 eastern and western Church Fathers were some with negative attitudes to marriage. However those limited views did not impact upon the above-mentioned motivations for abstinence.

The early church regarded married lay and clerical pre-eucharistic abstinence from food, wine and conjugal acts (totally good in themselves) as increasing the efficacy of liturgical prayer ('by penance'). Unlike strict rules of fasting, conjugal pre-eucharistic abstinence was merely a 'counsel' for married laity—a matter of personal decision.

'Efficacy-motivation' stood behind permanent clerical celibacy. The early church understood priests as in continual mediation for the people. This 'mediation' was seen as more efficacious with permanent celibacy. Later, other motives were underlined, for example, sacerdotal configuration to the celibate Christ, 'Apostolic origins', etc.

Cochini in his *Origines Apostoliques du Célibat Sacerdotal*, discusses wider issues, such as the controversial Trillion Canon 13 mentioned by Fr Honner. Cochini exposes the fictitious 'Paphnutius intervention' at Nicaea (uncritically accepted by Winter). He distinguishes two categories of early celibate priests. He also clarifies 'Ritual-purity' terminology in its use for old Levitical priesthood and New Testament presbyterate.

The former professor at Institut Catholique de Paris, the late Jean Cardinal Danielou described Cochini['s initial research as 'a true service to the church'. Henri Cardinal de Lubac, another outstanding scholar, described this 'serious and extensive research ... as of the first importance'. (Winter's views—popular today in scholarly circles—need to be challenged!).

John M George
Waverley, NSW

No *Wik*

From Michael Polya

Frank Brennan's article on *Wik* (*Eureka Street*, April 1997) is misleading. Even if Aborigines could claim the value of the land in compensation in the event of Native Title being extinguished, the value of the land would not be too great, partly because it would be generally unsaleable, or only to other Aborigines and therefore could not be used as security for a loan and in any case the value would be diminished by the value of compensation that would be payable to lessees for improvements, which in many instances would greatly exceed the value of the land itself.

Native title does create a system of land tenure akin to that of entailed estates in Europe, which only benefits the most parasitic and useless strata of society, to wit the hereditary nobility.

Michael Polya
Watson, ACT

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Anglican Viscount Charles Halifax (1839-1934) was involved in most questions facing the Anglican Church of his day. Abbé Etienne Portal (1855-1926), a French Vincentian, met the Viscount in 1889. Their friendship led to dialogue about Church reunion. The Malines Conversations (1921-1926) between Catholics and Anglicans hosted by Cardinal Mercier was their most notable success. These two men express the spirit that these current lectures seek to foster.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: SR PATRICIA MADIGAN OP, LIAISON OFFICER FOR ECUMENISM, POLDING HOUSE (02) 9390 5100

THE MONTH'S TRAFFIC

Chicago hope

In early April Pope John Paul II appointed the relatively unknown Archbishop of Portland, Oregon as the new Archbishop of Chicago.

The Most Rev. Francis E. George is a member of the religious order of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, the same religious order to which the recently excommunicated Sri Lankan priest, Father Tissa Balasuriya, belongs. George had only been in Portland eight months; prior to that he had been Bishop of Yakima, Washington for six years, where he learned Spanish and was popular in the diocese. He succeeds the much loved Cardinal Joseph Bernardin who died in November from pancreatic cancer.

Unlike Bernardin, who inherited a diocese in revolt and financial disarray after the tenure of the autocratic and widely unpopular Cardinal John Cody, Archbishop George inherits a diocese in healthy financial condition. But he has to face the daunting challenge of following the popular, consensus-building Bernardin.

With 2.5 million Catholics and a long tradition of leadership in the American church, Chicago is arguably the most important archdiocese in North America. Archbishop George, who was born in the city, is a former philosophy professor (with a specialisation in American philosophy) who has spent most of his career in Rome in the administration of his religious order. He is seen as an intellectual conservative, but as socially progressive. In other words, he is very much in the John Paul II mould.

The Jesuit, Thomas J. Reese of Georgetown University and author of *Inside the Vatican*, says that 'this papacy is looking for bishops who are prominent as teachers, perhaps more than as pastors, who will proclaim and teach the doctrine of the church as the Pope sees it'. George fits perfectly into this profile.

However, at his first press conference the new Archbishop said that while he was firmly loyal to Catholic orthodoxy he was pastorally sensitive to those who questioned church teaching, such as the ordination of women. After the press conference, sociologist and outspoken Chicago priest Father Andrew Greeley, said George was 'obviously an articulate, intelligent, well-educated and charming conservative ... We'll have to see how flexible and open he really is, but it was an impressive performance'.

In fact, one of the first challenges that George will face is to win the respect of the notoriously independent presbyterate of Chicago. Father Daniel Whiteside, Chairman of the Association of Chicago Priests, said that he expected George's views 'to be right in line with Cardinal Bernardin's'. Time will tell whether this is true.

American Catholics to whom I have spoken have adopted a wait-and-see attitude to the new Archbishop. No doubt this reflects a widespread attitude in the Archdiocese of Chicago itself.

—Paul Collins

Mock battle

The aircraft carrier USS Independence sat in Sydney Harbour like a ten-storey car-park, but bore its cargo with more flourish than one would muster for a fleet of Datsun 120Ys. The fighter planes assembled on deck looked menacing, and there were so many it was hard to imagine how they would find the room to take off—a Bangkok traffic jam being more commodious.

For sheer size and spectacle it had a touch of gun-boat diplomacy in reverse—the locals were titillated rather than terrified. Many stood around Lady Macquarie's Chair for hours, gawking. Others filed on board to take a look around one of the superpower's big toys. Their shouts and laughter could be heard across Woolloomoolloo Bay.

Its presence was broadcast by the 5,000 American sailors who dispersed through Sydney, determined to enjoy their Easter holiday so far from home. They were easily identified, even without the bell-bottoms and pie-shaped hats, though why that was so is hard to say. Sydney, as a cosmopolitan city which plays host to thousands of tourists at any one time, should have granted them anonymity. A friend suggested they were conspicuous for a strange walk that had something to do with tight pants, a life at sea and too much bacon-fat.

Perhaps it was because groups of young black and hispanic Americans are a rare sight overseas. Yanks are not well represented amongst the world's backpacking population—even those who have the money and opportunity to travel are thin on the ground. Or maybe it was that they were so noticeably self-conscious, fully aware that they stood out of the crowd.

It reminded me of the last time a significant contingent of American sailors were in Sydney: 10,000 of them came in 1992 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Battle of the Coral Sea. At the time I was working in an American-style barbecue restaurant and bar in Kings Cross. We knew we would be inundated and thought there might be trouble. For the week they were in town we were packed with American serviceman from 8 am until 3 am the next morning. Yet nearly all were polite and well-mannered. The story from other places on the main strip suggested this was not an isolated experience.

What made this all the

more remarkable was that during their stay the verdict acquitting the police officers charged with the bashing of Rodney King sparked the LA riots. Naturally the restaurant was packed when the evening news broadcast came on the TV. The hum gave way to an uncomfortable silence as footage was shown of people wandering the streets, randomly firing guns, and of the near-fatal assault of a truck driver pulled from his rig. It was hard, then, not to notice that the groups of sailors were split into racial groups more often than not. Half an hour later the unease was gone and joviality returned. But the ghost of something past was there.

The American military make it clear to their charges that when at rest in a foreign port they are being watched and therefore must be on their best behaviour. At least this is what Michael told me, a 20-year-old from Milwaukee with whom a mate and I played pool in a Bondi bar. His friends drinking in the corner joined in and we talked about Vegemite and topless bathing and the difficulties of speaking English in Japan.

Michael was a terrible player, but that's understandable when you consider that pool is not the ideal hobby for a sailor. He spent most of the time inspecting the pockets for an invisible plastic coating. Somehow the conversation turned to poverty and crime in American cities. He shrugged at some well-intended but naive remark of mine and said that a young black man in the inner city feels taunted by the constant and visible police presence. 'They think you've done somethin' ', he said, 'so you may as well go ahead and do it'.

On the Tuesday after Easter the USS Independence pulled out of port. At the time, Prime Minister Howard was in Beijing meeting with Li Peng and other dignitaries. Newsreports that evening of the concerns the Chinese leadership has over our defence ties with the US were married with images of the aircraft carrier leaving Sydney Harbour.

There is a black American rap group called Public Enemy and they have an album entitled 'It takes a nation of millions to hold us back'. **—Jon Greenaway**

Mock work

Is there anyone among you who would hand his child a stone when he asked for bread? Who would hand his child a scorpion when she asked for fish?

Since the Prime Minister's announcement in February of compulsory work for the dole, few details have emerged that tell us what the scheme will entail for job seekers. Lack of detail on the program's design and funding has resulted in delay of the proposed legislation in the Senate and its referral to a committee for review.

What does this kind of make-work have to offer unemployed and young unemployed Australians? Similar schemes have been proposed and knocked back since the mid '80s when the Hawke Government put up its 'Community Volunteers Program' for unemployed youth. As political diversions or vote winners, these schemes promise the low-cost political quick fix. As a solution to the problem of unemployment in disadvantaged regions of Australia they are little more than popularist strategies feigning a lasting commitment to the most vulnerable members of the community.

In its most positive light, work for the dole could provide some minimal benefits to 'clients' and their local communities. Voluntary work undertaken freely and willingly by individuals can serve to relieve work tests for short periods in regions where jobs are just not available. It can address motivational needs and help people participate more fully in local life. It could even secure a small number of jobs over the medium term. Typically, however, this kind of scheme has an extremely low capacity to generate employment. Worse, it risks damaging the employment prospects of individuals by failing to provide the necessary level of training and support to win secure and gainful employment at the same time as exacerbating an image of the long-term unemployed as being work-shy.

Talking Points

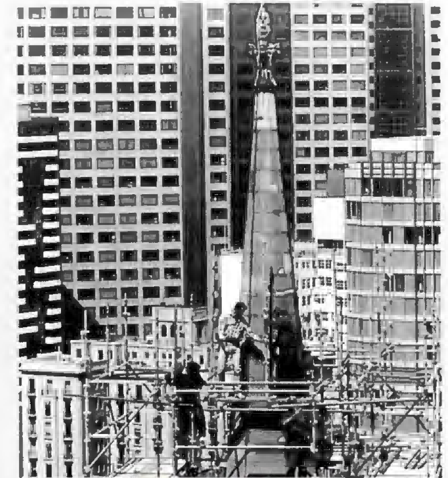
Star trek theology

The June 1997 edition of *Pacifica*, entitled *Feminist theology: the next stage,* is being guest edited by Dorothy Lee and Muriel Porter, and features the works of a number of prominent international theologians—some of them men.

Here is the list: Elaine Wainwright, Patricia Moss, Dorothy A. Lee, Denis Edwards, Graeme Garrett, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza and Maryanne Confoy.

Between them they tackle subjects ranging from the origins of women's asceticism through evolution to a study of 'the Procrustean bed of women's spirituality'.

You can order the June volume by writing to The Manager, *Pacifica*, PO Box 271, Brunswick East, VIC 3057. The cost is $20.



Aspiring

St Patrick's Cathedral in Melbourne is currently the focus for centenary celebrations that include a number of splendidly curated exhibitions and a series of lectures. Professor Margaret Manion will be giving one of the Centenary lectures on Tuesday May 20 at 8pm. On June 17 it will be the turn of Gerard O'Collins SJ.

Michael McGirr SJ describes the William Wardell exhibition this month (see p5). Wardell, architect of the Cathedral, is also part of the focus of a new *Life of the Cathedral*, written by biographer Thomas Boland.

Fr Boland maintains that the great neo-Gothic building does indeed have enough life in its stones to justify the title. The photograph from the book, reproduced above, gives you some idea of the extent, and daring, of the restoration enterprise.

If you are in Melbourne do drop into the Cathedral and see the restorations and exhibitions for yourself. They are spectacular.

The Cambridge Companion to the Bible

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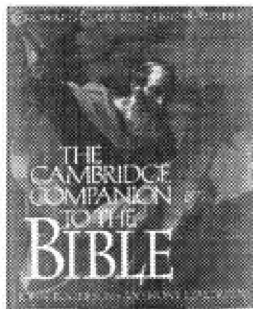


10 Stamford Road, Oakleigh, Victoria 3166

In the most likely of circumstances, this proposal will breach the Government's commitment to place job seekers in real jobs. The looming perils of work for the dole make a sizeable litany for the disadvantaged job-seekers and for the depressed regions towards which this scheme is targeted. The compulsion of a significant number of people into the scheme would undermine any positive features of true voluntary work by deploying unemployed people as cheap labour, by reducing income support entitlements to earned 'handouts', and by destroying any notion of a mutual obligation which underpins our society's compensation for unemployment through the income support system.

In addition, the scheme could easily be used to exclude people from active support in the form of employment assistance and accredited education and training which are essential for accessing real jobs. It risks undercutting and replacing volunteers (that is *voluntary* volunteers) and low skilled workers in local communities and could easily spark industrial unrest and act to further vilify the unemployed. And the scheme will do absolutely nothing to enhance the skills base of depressed regional economies if it is not supplemented by substantial, accredited, competency-based training and integrated with robust industry and regional development strategies.

Finally, the enforced involvement of socially marginalised and possibly disgruntled unemployed young people on 'tourist welcoming committees', meals on wheels services, or in military training could cause damage to the young person, the industry concerned and to the recipients of services. The destructive potential of such programs should be obvious.

The work for the dole proposal may indicate the Government's difficulty in delivering on its promise of *real* jobs. There is still no sign that large corporations will stop retrenching or that small business will employ greater numbers.

Is the Government now sending the message that it is short of an innovative strategy to tackle 'the greatest single issue facing Australia'?

It is a real concern that the divisive message, inadvertently communicated through this proposal as a policy position on youth unemployment, is that this Government is getting tough on 'dole cheats' on behalf of the 'honest tax paying citizens' of Australia. This at a time when secure jobs providing adequate pay and conditions are most needed. —**John Ferguson**

Timorous on Timor

Portugal cannot pretend that the events of 1975 did not occur and that it is in effect in the position of seeking to protect rights over resources to which it has a legitimate claim. It clearly is not: it is a displaced colonial power. Nothing more

—Oral submissions to the International Court of Justice by the Australian Government representative 1995.

Timorese people have Portuguese citizenship so they have no refugee status: we can't have a phoney campaign about refugee status from people who enjoy the citizenship of Portugal

—Paul Keating, 10 October 1995.

I believe the position of the current (Labor) Government in claiming that some East Timorese asylum seekers are Portuguese is simply absurd and hypocritical.

—Alexander Downer, March 1996.

THE EAST TIMORESE, like Banquo's ghost, manage to return at inconvenient moments in Australian Foreign Affairs. To the lay observer there may be little to question in stating that someone from East Timor can be a refugee. What about the Dili massacre, human rights reports and other evidence? Of course they can be refugees. However, for the Government, the question poses some difficult issues of refugee law. There is a case before the Federal Court now working through this complex matter.

To qualify as a refugee, you must establish certain criteria. The definition is from the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and it states that a refugee is a person who:

> Owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country.

So why is there a problem for the Timorese? The issue is one of nationality. The Refugee Convention is about protecting those people who are not protected by their own country. The theory is that a country has the duty of protecting its own citizens, so if it fails to do so, then other countries inherit that duty. If a person has more than one citizenship, then they ought to seek the

protection of each country for which they have citizenship before seeking protection from elsewhere. This is where the Timorese are caught, as the Australian Government has formed the view that the Timorese are entitled to citizenship from the former colonial power Portugal.

Indonesia invaded the Portuguese colony in November 1975 and Australia was one of the first countries to recognise *de facto* Indonesian sovereignty over East Timor on 20 January 1978. Australia then recognised *de jure* sovereignty by Indonesia in February 1979. However, the UN has not officially recognised Indonesian sovereignty and Portugal remains the responsible authority in the UN. Portugal claims it is still the *de jure* authority and that Indonesian rule is illegal. This claim may be legally interesting but in reality, there is no doubt who is in charge in East Timor: there are many Indonesian troops asserting who rules.

Portuguese law on citizenship is quite complex, just to add a further confusion. In 1974, the left-wing government in Portugal effectively abandoned the colonies in Africa and Asia. After a brief civil war in East Timor, the invasion by Indonesian troops settled who was in charge on the island. Depending on the interpretation of Portuguese citizenship law, some Timorese born during the time of colonial rule may be eligible for a Portuguese passport. Some have taken this option and gone to live in Portugal. Until recently, Australia had a humanitarian resettlement program which helped resettle in Australia Timorese who had fled to Portugal. This year sees the end of that humanitarian program.

The matter is further muddied by a case in the International Court of Justice. Australia and Indonesia signed a treaty to distribute rights for exploration in the potentially oil-rich Timor Gulf. Portugal sued Australia in the International Court on the grounds that Australia should have included Portugal in the treaty discussions. The Court is a means for nations to resolve issues without resorting to the military, however countries can decide not to accept the jurisdiction of the court and also ignore its rulings. Australia accepted the jurisdiction of the Court but Indonesia did not, so the case which affected the Timorese was between Australia and Portugal.

In the case, Australia argued that Portugal had no legal or other right to claim sovereignty or rule over the territory as Indonesia had been in charge since late 1975. Portugal had no authority to claim to represent the people of the Island. The Australian position was clear: Indonesia is in charge in every test of sovereignty. However when it came to determining whether East Timorese were refugees, the Australian Government said that the people were entitled to Portuguese citizenship, so they should seek asylum in Portugal, not Australia. Obviously we are interested in protecting rights of mining companies rather than rights of people.

An interesting factor is that Australia is seeking to rely on a former colonial power in an era when European colonialism is nearly finished. After Hong Kong returns to China in July, Macau remains as the last place of European Colonialism in Asia. It is curious that in this post-colonial era, Australia is arguing that a former colonial power should be allowed to extend citizenship to its former subjects, without consulting the people. The Timorese have never had the chance of self-determination, and given the choice, one wonders if they would elect to be a Portuguese colony. Nevertheless, Australia, itself a former colony and colonial power, is prepared to rely on the outdated concept of colonial rule to avoid a difficult diplomatic incident.

Currently around 1800 East Timorese are awaiting the ruling of the Federal Court on this vexed issue. Whatever the decision, it is likely that the loser will appeal to the High Court for a final ruling. Such a decision could be at least a year or more away, if the High Court agrees to hear the case. Already the people have been waiting for a decision since late 1995, in legal limbo. The Timorese community is not a large or rich community. More than 7000 Timorese have settled in Australia.

Since 1975 it is estimated that 200,000 Timorese, a third of the population, have died because of Indonesian rule. The remainder have been heavily traumatised by a long war and numerous incidents of human rights abuses. Torture of suspected independence movement supporters is common practice, as are instances of extra-judicial killings. Psychologists who have examined Timorese people report high instances of trauma. We are now adding to this trauma by forcing them to wait longer.

If the Timorese are excluded on the basis of nationality, then we will not even need to consider their claims of torture and persecution by the Indonesian authorities. This will be convenient for Australia's diplomatic links with Indonesia, but a tragedy for these people.

There are also historical links between Australians and East Timorese. During the Second World War, East Timorese people valiantly hid Australian service personnel from the Japanese. Many Timorese died rather than give up the Australian soldiers.

Fifty years later, when the Timorese are in desperate need of our help, we have abandoned them to their former colonial power and their new colonial rulers.

If Australia wanted to find a compromise solution here, one is possible that preserves our diplomatic position, albeit an immoral position. Australia could grant humanitarian status to the Timorese without actually saying they are refugees. This avoids saying that Indonesia has been persecuting the Timorese and the messy diplomacy of getting the Portuguese to agree to issue all the passports. The Timorese would then be able to reside in Australia and move forward with their lives, free from further persecution uncertainty. —**Kerry Murphy**

This month's contributors:
Paul Collins MSC is a priest, broadcaster and writer. His latest book is *Papal Power*; **Jon Greenaway** is *Eureka Street's* assistant editor. **John Ferguson** is Senior Research Officer with the Australian Catholic Social Welfare Commission; **Kerry Murphy** is a lawyer with experience in refugee policy.

W.J. Uren

Life and death matters

On March 25, 1997 the members of the Commonwealth Senate voted, 38 to 33, to confirm the resolution of their colleagues in the House of Representatives that the Private Member's Euthanasia Bill should become law.

The Bill, introduced into the Lower House six months previously by Liberal back-bencher Kevin Andrews, had been approved by 88 votes to 35 in the House of Representatives.

The effect of the Senate vote was to overturn the Northern Territory voluntary euthanasia legislation, *The Rights of the Terminally Ill Act 1995*, which had been approved with a narrow majority by the Territory's parliamentarians on May 25th, 1995.

The debate which attended the passing of the Andrews' Bill, in both the Lower and Upper Houses was complicated by the following factors:

•the support given to the Bill by both the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition;

•the whole question of States' and Territories' rights,

•the inadequacies of the Northern Territory legislative drafting;

•the wider implications that the Territory Act might have for the continuing access of the Aboriginal community to health care;

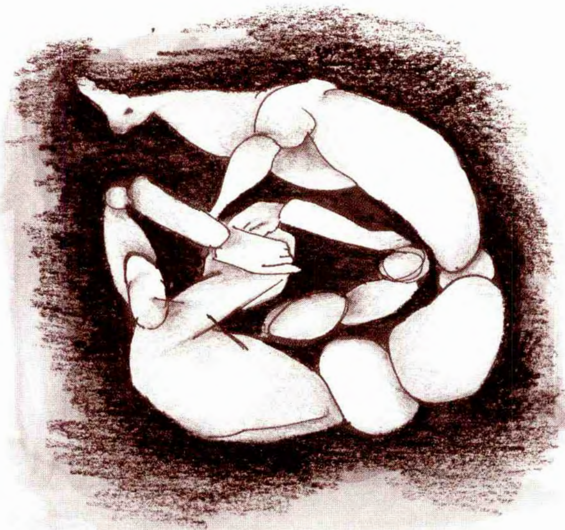
•the distinction between private morality and public legislation;

•the posturings of some of the proponents on both sides.

The way in which various responses were represented in the media confused the issue even further. But those who listened to the parliamentary hearings and the discussion in both Houses were on the whole impressed by the quality of the debate. The manner of our dying, especially in this age of medico-scientific technology, is obviously a matter that concerns us greatly. The fact that there were over 12,000 submissions to the Senate Committee is abundant evidence of this.

At the height of the debate on February 17th, 1997, three of the most outspoken supporters of the Northern Territory legislation and of active voluntary euthanasia published a research study on 'End-of-life Decisions in Australian Medical Practice' in the *Medical Journal of Australia*. They were Dr Helga Kuhse and Professor Peter Singer, from the Monash University Centre of Human Bioethics, and Professor Peter Baume, from the School of Community Medicine at the University of New South Wales.

They based their study on the 24 items of a questionnaire which replicated one circulated originally to medical practitioners in the Netherlands by the Remmelink Commission in 1990 and 1995.



Questionnaires were mailed to 3000 Australian doctors who might possibly be involved in making end-of-life medical decisions. There were 1918 responses (64 per cent) of whom 1361 had attended a non-acute death within the last 12 months. This field was further narrowed 'by excluding doctors who in respect of that death had no contact with the patient until after that death or where the death had been sudden and totally unexpected'. Of the remaining 1112 doctors, 800 doctors reported making a decision either intended to shorten life or foreseen as probably or certainly shortening life. The other 312 doctors did not make such a decision.

In analysing the responses from these 1112 doctors the authors of the research drew as a 'main finding' that 30 per cent (±3.3 per cent) of all Australian deaths were preceded by a medical decision explicitly intended to hasten the patient's death: doctors prescribed, supplied or administered drugs with the explicit intention of ending the patient's life in 5.3 per cent (±1per cent) of these deaths, and withdrew or withheld life-prolonging treatment with the explicit intention of not prolonging life or of hastening death in 24.7 per cent (±3.1per cent) of these deaths.

Further, 'in 22.5 per cent (±3.1per cent) of all Australian deaths, doctors withheld or withdrew treatment from patients *without the patient's explicit request*, with the explicit intention of ending life' (*MJA*, 17 February 1997, p195). These Australian figures, it was further maintained, are in the range of 50 per cent higher than the figures for corresponding categories in the Netherlands.

The conclusion drawn by the authors of the study from their analysis of the survey was that one of the reasons why some Australian doctors may be choosing intentionally to end the lives of their patients without consulting the patients themselves, was that existing Australian laws prohibiting euthanasia may make doctors 'reluctant to discuss medical end-of-life decisions with their patients lest these decisions be construed as collaboration in euthanasia or in the intentional termination of life'.

The authors are then, in effect, arguing for a relaxation of the existing laws to permit active voluntary euthanasia. This, they say, will ensure that patients would be consulted by their doctors, where possible (i.e. if they are competent) both before life-prolonging treatment is withdrawn or withheld with a lethal intention, and before analgesic drugs were administered in such quantities that the hastening of death was not only intended but virtually inevitable.

This line of argument may well seem to be more than a little paradoxical. One is inclined to subsume: if this is what is happening when there is no legislation condoning active voluntary euthanasia, will not the practice of all forms of euthanasia become even more prevalent if it is legalised?

The authors of the study argue to the contrary. Not only will such legislation, they say, promote the autonomy of those

patients who spontaneously and explicitly request euthanasia (active voluntary euthanasia), but it will also reduce the incidence of non-voluntary and involuntary euthanasia, that is, euthanasia without, or against, the explicit wishes of the patient. For doctors will then not fear to bring up the subject of euthanasia with their patients, the authors claim, and so patients will be consulted rather than bypassed when these death-dealing decisions are taken. Non-voluntary and involuntary euthanasia will thus either be eliminated or become voluntary and full autonomy will be maintained.

Which of these two arguments should we accept?

If we look to the study, we find that there were 234 doctors who decided not to treat their patients either by withholding or by withdrawing treatment and in each case *with the explicit intention of hastening death.* When asked in item 15 of the questionnaire, 'Why was the (possible) hastening of the end of the patient's life by the last mentioned act or omission not discussed with the patient?', two replied that the patient was too young, 55 said that the patient was unconscious, and 28 said that the patient was demented, mentally handicapped, or suffering from a psychiatric disorders (i.e. 85 or 36 per cent were in effect non-competent). In 29 of the remaining 149 cases the doctors replied that *'the action was clearly the best for the patient or the discussion would have done more harm than good'.* Even more significantly, in 109 cases (47 per cent) the doctors *'did not answer the question'.*

HOW FROM THESE FIGURES did the authors of the study conclude that, if euthanasia had been legal, the doctors who did not as a matter of fact discuss their lethal intentions with their patients, would then have discussed the matter with their patients?

It is, to say the least, a very moot point. It seems to assume that the 47 per cent who did not provide an answer to the foregoing question were unwilling to disclose to the Monash Centre for Human Bioethics, a known supporter of the active voluntary euthanasia legislation, the real reason for not discussing with their patients their lethal intentions in withdrawing or withholding treatment, and that the real reason was the fear of their decisions being construed as 'collaboration in euthanasia or in the intentional termination of life.'

This seems very coy on the part of these doctors, and especially so when apparently they had no hesitation in admitting quite openly to the explicit intention to hasten death. This coyness can only cast grave doubts on the conclusion drawn by the authors from the survey.

Nor is the conclusion any more cogently validated when the survey addresses the cohort of 99 doctors who admitted to administering large doses of opioids with at least a partial intention of hastening death. In 22 of these cases the doctors reported that the patient was non-competent (young/unconscious/demented). In 20 cases the action was said (by the doctor) to be clearly the best for the patient, or discussion would have done more harm than good. But once again the *'did not answer the question'* cohort constitutes about half the responses (51:52 per cent). If euthanasia had been legal, the authors conclude, then these doctors who did not, as a matter of fact, discuss their intentions withtheir patients *would* then have discussed their intentions with their patients. How they feel authorised to conclude this is a mystery

What the survey does show, however, (and I leave to one side here the criticisms that have been made of both the original Remmelink and more recent Monash questionnaire that they conflate 'intending to kill' with 'foresight of death' and 'hastening death' with 'not prolonging life') is that active voluntary euthanasia and physician assisted suicide (that is with the explicit request from the patient) in Australia as in the Netherlands, is accompanied by at least eight times the incidence of non-voluntary or involuntary euthanasia.

Perhaps, this is because we do not have a law clearly legalising active voluntary euthanasia to the exclusion of all other forms.

Perhaps, the reason why the incidence of non-voluntary and involuntary euthanasia in the Netherlands is significantly less than it is in Australia is because they do have some form of legal condonation while we have none.

But the survey, at least as published in the *Medical Journal of Australia*, does not support the authors' stated conclusion that if euthanasia were legalised in its active voluntary form, the incidence of non-voluntary and involuntary euthanasia would be reduced.

All the figures seem to show is that granting autonomy to some in active voluntary euthanasia is accompanied by a large denial of autonomy to others in non-voluntary and involuntary euthanasia. ■

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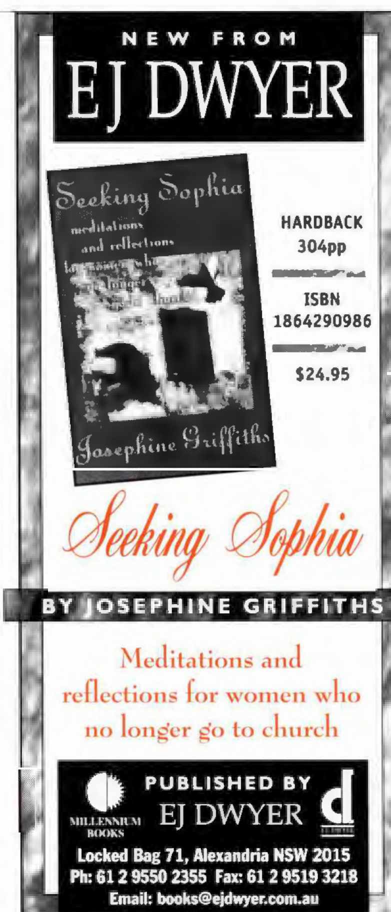
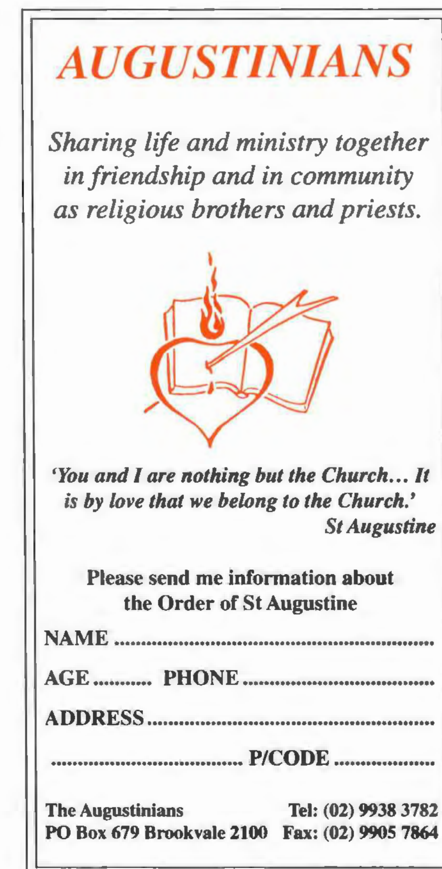




School daze

*Changes in education philosophy and public school funding affect the whole community, not just the children who attend public schools. But how much do we know about the changes? **Ann Morrow**, former Chair of the Schools Council, talks to **Morag Fraser.***

AFTER YEARS AS A SLEEPER in political consideration, Australian schooling is now an almost daily concern. And it is changing, particularly in the public sector, where 70 per cent of Australian children are still educated.

The rhetoric that accompanies the changes is revealing. On the one side the watchword is 'choice'. The Federal Minister for Schools, Dr David Kemp, is a proponent of choice, as are many of the State Ministers. The other view of the state and future of Australian schooling is less positive. In late April, Opposition leader Kim Beazley warned against 'the Americanisation of our schools'. And he wasn't referring to a preference for Nikes or hamburgers.

The irony is that both politicians are talking about essentially the same phenomenon: deregulation of the system, an acceleration in the number of private schools being established in Australia, and a shift away from a thorough-going commitment to a state-funded and nurtured public system.

Ann Morrow was Chair of the Schools Council for the National Board of Education and Training between 1991 and 1996. 'Choice' is not the word to put a smile on her face. Morrow is deeply concerned about the future of Australian education, and public education in particular. Under the rubric of increased choice, education philosophy is changing, she argues, and we have not yet grasped how much.

'Basically, for the first time in our educational history, people are seriously doubting the commitment of their governments in Australia, federal and state level, to the maintenance of a strong public education system.'

It is the lack of public debate that concerns Morrow most.

'My view is that if indeed it is the policy intention of governments to diminish greatly either the quality or the scale of the public education system, and if, because it is being done by stealth, that is what they succeed in doing, the impact on our society will be immense.

'It will be social, and we can see the outcomes of similar sorts of policies in the United Kingdom, under Thatcher. You see the exacerbation of the gulfs that exist in every society between those who have and those who have not. I passionately believe that while education can't solve all the social ills, it is the best vehicle that we have available to us to deal with inter-generational disadvantage.'

Morrow is Catholic-educated. Some of the passion she caught from the Brigidine nuns who taught her and who did little to discourage the activist they were raising. She understands what 'choice' meant to Catholics during the state aid debates. She also understands what contribution government money made to Catholic parish schools after the Karmel Report had investigated funding and conditions in the early '70s. Peter Karmel [subsequently Vice-Chancellor of the Australian National University and a long-time education policy shaper] said that Catholic parish schools were the slum schools of the Australian system and something had to be done. Morrow explains:

'Earlier, Menzies had provided science laboratories to schools that needed them, including independent schools, so there was a precedent that had been set in terms of the federal government providing funding for non-government schools. As a result of the Karmel investigations, funds were made available on the basis of need across the system, and the Disadvantaged Schools Program, established as a result of the Karmel work, provided funds for schols with concentrations of need.'

The Schools Commission was set up as a result of the Karmel Report. It subsequently became the Schools Council. Morrow chaired it for five years. Under the ministry of John Dawkins, the Council lost its funding role. But Morrow argues that its important function was as a watchdog, not as the body that 'doled out the dough'.

'People wanted to mourn the loss of the funding function of the Schools Commission (which then became the Schools Council). I didn't think it was a bad thing that we didn't have that function. I'm a bit old-fashioned about accountability: I think that the allocation of public resources is best carried out by the department/public

servants that are accountable to the elected representative who is elected to make just those sorts of decisions. So that didn't worry me.

'But the Council had an important role in providing advice to the Federal Government on medium and long-term policy directions in relation to schools. Our demise was not unexpected because we were targeted for abolition by Fightback! One, and although other things in Fightback! One were changed, that never was. So it was not unexpected that, when Dr David Kemp became Minister for Education, the Schools Council went. What I think is disappointing is that he's not seen fit to replace it with some sort of similar mechanism.'

Morrow describes herself as a political realist. She has been around education politics long enough to understand that new brooms will want room to sweep. The Howard government planned to make radical changes to schools policies, as new governments will. What Morrow is worried about are the social implications of the new deregulation of the system and the way in which deregulation was effected.

'When the legislation was presented in the Parliament it was omnibus legislation, that cleverly wrapped up in the same Act things as disparate as ongoing Commonwealth/public financial support for independent and Catholic schools, and these new ideas like the abolition of the New Schools Policy.

'The New Schools Policy was introduced in 1986 as a way of ensuring that funds from the public purse would be allocated on the basis of a number of planning requirements. After 1986, if you were planning to set up a new non-government school, you weren't allowed to put it next door to the existing government school or the existing parish school. You had to demonstrate that you were needed, you had to demonstrate that you were viable, you had to have a certain number of students.'

THAT PROCESS AND THE administrative scrutiny that went with it has, as Morrow puts it, 'all gone out the window now'. What the government did before Christmas was to deregulate, totally, the environment for the establishment of new non-government schools.

Morrow is precise about the terms of this new environment and exactly where the burgeoning new independent sector fits:

'We should call them publicly supported non-government schools because many of them get up to 80 per cent of their recurrent expenditure paid from government sources. That is not always known. They are being provided with more generous levels of funding than at any time in our previous education history, and thereby providing inducements for people to leave the public system and go to the non-government system.'

MORROW CERTAINLY HAS NO in-principle objection to funding for independent schools. But priorities concern her. And to keep scrutiny of the priorities an issue in the public forum, she is now gearing up for a campaign, through the establishment of the Australian Schools Lobby.

'Our Australian Schools Lobby, which we set up to draw public attention to these policies, is not opposed to public funds going to non-government schools. We are not a part of the old DOGS [Defence of Government Schools] movement. We have no problem with the accommodation that was reached. We had no problems with that as long as the funding system remained fair and as long as governments continued to believe that, whatever assistance was given to non-government schools, their major responsibility and priority in a democratic society where education was mandatory, (and where even to this day 70 per cent of all families are still using government schools) was to ensure that the public school system remained free (in the sense of tuition being free), remained accessible, so that kids could actually get to the schools, and remained secular. Which is not to say that we oppose government schools attending to the spiritual needs of their students. But we believe that for the schools to be really accessible they have to be accessible without religious test.'

'The collaborative arrangements in manufacturing, in factories, in industry and business, are what generate productivity. Give people the problem, give them ownership of the problem and support them to sort it out.
Why won't we do this in schools?'

Morrow has some personal experience of accessibility 'without religious test'. She was one of very few girls educated at the Brigidines' Kilbreda College in Melbourne in the 1950s who was not a Catholic. (The number of non-Catholic students in Catholic schools has increased exponentially since the 1950s). She tells a story about her father's reaction when, as the one non-Catholic in her Matriculation class, she won the Christian Doctrine prize.

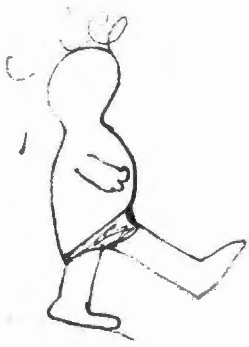
'The traditional prize was a Catholic missal, and my father, who was a butcher, says he was up to his elbows in pickle when the phone rang, and the person who answered said that it was Mother someone. He took his hands out of the pickle and went to the phone. The Principal, Mother Margaret Mary, said, in her perfect Irish-Australian voice, "Mr *Woodwaarrd*, your *daauughter* has, on her merit, *woonn* the Christian doctrine prize in Year 12. Now this is an unusual situation because she's the only non-Catholic in the class, so the traditional prize is a Catholic missal, and since Ann is a non-Catholic we don't think that she will have any use for a Catholic missal. Would you prefer that we bought her a King James version of the Bible?"

'Dad said no, he would not.

'The next question was, "Will you allow her to accept the prize?" "If she's won the prize on her merit, of course she can accept it!" Then came the discussion about the King James version. Dad said, "If the prize is always a Catholic missal then that's what she should get."

'So I went up on speech night and got a Catholic missal, which I've still got. And there was much rejoicing!'

Such accommodation is not always the case in newly established religious or independent schools, however good or broad the intentions of their founders. And it is the bulk of students—the ones whose



parents choose the public system for them, and the ones who have no choice at all because of financial constraint—that are Morrow's concern.

She argues that Australia already has more 'choice' than most countries: 'If you look at the OECD countries we are certainly up there amongst the most generous public supporters of non-government school systems in the world. We have the biggest variety of publicly supported non-government schools of almost anywhere in the world.'

She talks of the 'settlement' that has kept parallel systems running successfully in Australia, a settlement which left independent schools free to 'paddle their own canoes', but which guaranteed also that the quality of public education, for which government was responsible, remained high and reasonable. But now, she sees fundamental change taking place.

For Morrow there are equity and democratic considerations underpinning her commitment to strong public education, that cut right across all sectors—public and private.

'Leaving aside the state aid debate, there were reasons why, in the 1860s, the governments of the Australian states introduced public education systems. A very strong motive was to free kids from limitations, to open up life opportunities to kids whose means were limited.

'Another one was the strong belief that democracies were actually quite complex governmental systems and needed to be worked at. The citizenry of democracies needs to be educated. We know this to be true. Not all of us have studied political science but we are being asked now to judge, to assess different constitutional forms. We're being asked to take an intelligent interest, perhaps as voters in a referendum about alternative forms of government—should we become a republic and so on.

'And whether we're being asked to or not, we have a moral responsibility to review our relationship with our indigenous population.These are not issues for the uneducated. There are people in our society who believe, that this is what you educate politicians and élites for. But we know from political history that when élites do make decisions which the people don't understand then the democratic process breaks down.

'So we need to have an educated citizenry to preserve our democracy. None of the economic forces that we are facing in the future are going to be able to be dealt with intelligently by Australian society unless we have a highly educated community.

'But the whole citizenry, the whole workforce, will not become highly educated if the lion's share of resources is given to an élite in schools.'

One of Morrow's principal concerns is that radical changes to the way our schools are funded and organised will be implemented without sufficient public awareness and without sufficient public discussion. The crunch comes with funding: in funding policy you can discern the shifts in philosophy. In other words, follow the money. But the trail can be thorny and the jargon confusing. 'Enrolment share' rather than absolute numbers of students in government and independent schools is a key factor. Morrow argues her way through the jungle in these terms:

'How does the federal government intend to fund a new deregulated system? Is it going to put more money in the budget, in the schools education budget? No, it's going to withdraw funds from the government school system every time the share of total enrolments in the non-government sector increases. Note that it is the *share* of total enrolments, not absolute numbers of students that is crucial.

'There are more students coming into school and staying at school now than has been the case in the past, despite a temporary blip in retention rates in states like Victoria. So the situation that we could be facing in the year 2000 is that government schools will have about the same absolute numbers of students. In other words, the scale of their task remains the same.

'But their enrolment share will have decreased with the positive inducements that are being offered to the non-government sector. Independent enrolment share increases, and for every additional student, whether she's a new five-year-old or a student who's come from the government sector, the federal school funds for *four* government school students are to be withdrawn.

'The reason for the 4:1 ratio is that the federal government is the major source of funds for non-government schools, while state governments are the major source of funds for government schools. And the federal government, as the major source of funds for non-government schools, spends about four times per capita what it spends on non-government schools because that was the agreement that was reached. They were going to do it for non-government schools and the states were going to do it for government schools. That's why, every time a student boosts the enrolment share of the non-government sector, the Commonwealth schools funds for four students will be diverted from the government sector.'

'If Dr Kemp succeeds in encouraging all government school students, or even half of the remaining ones, to move from the government school sector to the non-government school sector, will he consider that his policy has been successful? What are the limits of freedom of choice?'

The argument that supports the shift of resources from the public to the private sector is conducted in terms of increased choice. But what are the limits, Morrow asks.

'What is the ultimate? If Dr Kemp succeeds in encouraging all government school students, or even half of the remaining ones, to move from the government school sector to the non-government school sector, will he consider that his policy has been successful? What are the limits of freedom of choice? When I've asked him what his policy motives are, he said, "We're on about providing freedom of choice." What are the limits of publicly supported freedom of choice though?

It is in the application of policy about criteria for school closure that some of the strains in the new system show up. 'Benchmarks' for viability that apply to public schools are not enforced for new independent schools.

'If you close a school', Morrow argues, '—say it's the East Meadows Primary School in Victoria for example—because it hasn't reached the government's benchmark of viability, that is, 175 students, but then you allow it to reopen as a non-government school with 25 students, what are people to make of this?

'The Victorian Government's benchmark of viability for a Commonwealth school is 20 students. Their benchmark of viability for a government school is 175 students. For that reason government schools are being closed down and reopened as Commonwealth-funded religious schools.They might be fundamentalist Christian schools, they might be Muslim schools—there are a whole range—that is not my worry. The worry is that they are schools with religious test.'

There is an associated issue of teaching standards. Morrow sees problems ahead for some of the new religious schools being opened because they are being staffed by new teacher education graduates who are struggling. 'This I know,' she says.

The subject of teachers brings a glint to her eye. Morrow taught for some years before she moved into education administration. And she reverts to type without undue provocation. Teachers, particularly teachers in cash-strapped public schools, have her sympathy and understanding.

'I think that they are thoroughly demoralised. And why wouldn't you be? You are not allowed to make a reasonable move in favour of a pay claim; they are still paid abysmally for the sort of responsibility that we put on them'.

But you won't get any union speeches from her. Morrow is no enemy to change in teaching structures, but she does think that changes should occur in collaboration.

'If there's one thing coming out of the management literature,' she claims, '*global* management literature, it's that the collaborative arrangements in manufacturing, in factories, in industry and business, are what generate productivity. Give people the problem, give them ownership of the problem and support them to sort it out. *Why won't we do this in schools?*'

Why indeed. ■

Morag Fraser is the editor of *Eureka Street.*

SUMMA theologiae

John Honner culls the theological crop

PETER MALONE, APART FROM WATCHING the occasional film, has been the faithful and creative editor of *Compass*, an Australian Review of topical theology, since 1972. *Compass* has just celebrated its 30th year in print, and Peter's expansive editorial for the summer 1996 edition sensitively surveys not just the history of *Compass*, but also Australian theology over the last three decades.

•The same issue of *Compass* includes John Ayers' 'Burnout as a spiritual ideal'. A veteran missionary, Ayers makes a case for burning the candle at both ends. He concludes that 'only hungry, humiliated and passionate people can survive or, better, help others survive in desperate times.' His thoughtful article, against the tide of some contemporary spiritual direction, calls for a careful reply.

•Some burnout leads to departure from 'religious' (as those in vows call it) life. Edward van Merrienboer, in the January-February 1997 *Review for Religious*, offers a reflection on those who leave religious orders. An assistant to the general of the Dominicans from 1983-1992, van Merrienboer notes, among the several typologies of those who move on, one group marked by a loss of heart and hope. Unlike other types, members of this group, he suggests, might have been ill-served by their communities. And if that upsets you, in the same issue you can read 'Inner Work with Your Anger'. Hmmm.

•Veronica Brady's 'Towards an Australian Spirituality' appears in the 1996 volume of *Studies in Spirituality*, an annual from the Titus Brandsma Institute in Nijmegen. She explores our experience of exile through the writings of Patrick White and Judith Wright. At footnote 2, however, the type-setting gremlins have, with their usual inexplicable exactitude, changed Eberhard Jüngel's name to 'Jungle'. Those who have attempted dear Eberhard's dense writings will know why we smile at that one. Australian writing also features in the Baltimore-based *Catholic International.* The February 1997 edition focuses on the Australian Catholic Bishops' 1996 letter, 'A new beginning: eradicating poverty in our world', a document which might have made more impact in Australia than it did.

•Congratulations to Neil Ormerod on the publication of his critique of correlation in the December 1996 *Theological Studies.* The method of correlation, prevalent among theologians, could be defined as resting on the fusion of original revelation and present-day human experience. Ormerod argues, however, that it is impossible to grasp the present situation without the higher-level control of meaning that comes from theology. In the same issue of *Theological Studies* there is a very important piece by David N. Power entitled 'Roman Catholic Theologies of Eucharistic Communion: A Contribution to Ecumenical Conversation'. Power, one of the outstanding eucharistic theologians of our time, adds weight to the great, posthumous work of Edward Kilmartin, published in *Theological Studies* in 1994, on 'The Catholic Tradition of Eucharistic Theology'. With intercommunion so strongly desired by so many both within and without the Roman Catholic Church, one hopes and prays that the writings of Power and Kilmartin might soon bear fruit. Their arguments for a broader practice are sensible, thorough, and compelling.

•Those who already intercommunicate globally might consult John J. O'Keefe, 'The Virtual Classroom: using an electronic discussion group to teach theology' in *Horizons*, Fall 1996; and Stephen D. O'Leary, 'Cyberspace as Sacred Space: communicating religion on computer networks' in *AAR: Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Winter 1996. O'Keefe reports on the success of his class on Godtalk, at Creighton University in Omaha, developed around an electronic discussion page. O'Leary notes at length the variety of religious activities that now occur on the web. In the light of recent events in California, what he has to report is particularly apt. Developing Walter J. Ong's outlook on imagination and the transcendent, O'Leary argues that computer networks will play an increasing role in the religions of the future.

•Finally, I note that Fr John Honner has been writing letters to *AD2000* on the 'monstrous regiment of women' that he fears may take over the Archdiocese of Adelaide. The author is the venerable patriarch of the Australasian Honners. I suspect, however, he would not read Melanie May's 'Going to Hell and Rising Up: reflections on being in the Church and being feminist', *Quarterly Review*, Spring 1997; nor the January 1997 issue of *Biblical Interpretation*, edited by J. Cheryl Exum, devoted to 'Reading Gender and Gendering Reading'; nor, indeed, the June 1997 issue of *Pacifica*, on 'Feminist Theology: The Next Stage'. ■

John Honner SJ is editor-in-chief of *Pacifica: Journal of the Melbourne College of Divinity*, chaplain at Newman College, and a lecturer at the United Faculty of Theology in Melbourne.

Brave new world

There is no cause to be complacent about cherished notions of academic freedom, autonomy and integrity: they are up for grabs, argues ***Spencer Zifcak***

UNIVERSITIES, IF THEY ARE ANYTHING, are about dialogue. They are, or should be, the institutional embodiment of open, diverse, plural and critical discussion.

They rest, or should rest, upon the conviction that knowledge will advance best where facts, interests, beliefs and values are tested, exchanged and brought into conflict. Only in this way will scholars engender novel appreciations and generate informed judgments. Of course, free speech and uncoerced communication are essential to this process. It is for that reason that academic freedom and institutional independence have been regarded so highly. They are the core values in university life.

Academic independence means that, as far as possible, a university avoids external orthodoxy or ownership. Academic freedom means that new and different ideas are encouraged and that intolerance should have no place. I think it true to say that free speech remains active and alive in the university. I have worked in many contexts in both public and private sectors. But I have never felt freer to express my views, which are often critical of governments of all persuasions, than I do working in this environment.

We are moving to a system that rewards intellectual conformity, with academics as willing participants in goals that have been set not principally by philosophy or science but by government. In so doing, the space available for asking questions and challenging conventional wisdoms has begun to shrink. Instead, we tend to favour inquiry devoted to getting and keeping market share.

Nevertheless, having said that, there are, I think, storms on the horizon for uncoerced dialogue in the Australian university. Indeed, some of the bad weather has already arrived.

Three examples illustrate the point: the relationship between education and economic development; alterations in the style of university management; and recent changes in university funding.

In 1987, John Dawkins introduced his Green Paper on Higher Education which presaged major changes to the conception and funding of universities.The aim of government policy was to 'promote further growth in higher education in a manner consistent with the nation's economic, social and cultural objectives.' However, it was clearly the economic focus that was uppermost in the Labor government's mind.

The higher education system was to play a critical role in restructuring the Australian economy. As far as possible, economic and educational objectives would be synthesised. The universities' primary task would be to produce a highly skilled and competent workforce. To achieve these objectives, a new, competitive environment was created. Universities which best met the government's priorities would be rewarded with increased funding. Those that did not would be left behind. This policy was vigorously pursued. It has produced a number of important educational consequences.

The first is that professional courses have expanded at the expense of the humanities and social sciences. Business-related courses, for instance, have expanded at a rate that is three times higher than the average for all other courses combined. Law schools have grown exponentially. Professional schools are, of course, significantly more dependent on the fields they serve than are liberal arts schools.

So, university-based professional schools find it difficult to challenge conventional practice without leaving their students at a disadvantage in the job market. Further, because they are dependent on the good opinion of the field, occupational schools have become less willing to make sharp criticisms of professionals or their work.

In a time of drastic fiscal cutbacks, growth in the professional sphere comes at the cost of decline in the non-professional arena. In recent years, it has become far more difficult, therefore, to insist upon providing a general, liberal education to inform and temper narrower professional specialities. In hard times, students will not pay for a liberal education and businesses and professions rarely appreciate its value. With declining enrolments, arts faculties everywhere are losing their role as cultural and critical centres, as the prodders of the professional and mercantile conscience.

A similar picture emerges with research. Before Dawkins, universities had significant amounts of money to distribute for research at their discretion. Their diversity, autonomy and culture, guaranteed that a substantial proportion of this money would be allocated for basic research, that is for research whose immediate practical application is uncertain but which, because it is rooted in curiosity, critique and a love of discovery, may produce major breakthroughs in the longer term.

The new Dawkins regime, however, reduced universities' discretionary research funds and centralised the allocation of research money in the Australian Research Council. The Council's priorities are clearly for applied rather than basic research, for research with measurable, economic and social benefits rather than for research that is speculative and conjectural in nature.

The overall effect of this, as seen in other countries, was summarised in a 1987 OECD report: 'Greater reliance on project funding has increased the pressures on the scientific community to obtain more rapid pay-offs, to augment the visibility of its research efforts and to avoid the risks inherent in the exploration of underlying principles and phenomena.'

In other words, we are moving to a system that rewards intellectual conformity, with academics as willing participants in goals that have been set not principally by philosophy or science but by government. In so doing, the space available for asking questions and challenging conventional wisdoms has begun to shrink. Instead, we tend to favour inquiry devoted to getting and keeping market share.

In response to the new, competitive pressures, universities everywhere have sought to streamline their administrations. University governance has traditionally been collegial and quasi-parliamentary in nature. It has become increasingly corporate and managerial. Flat management structures characterised by numerous faculties and schools, and by academic and administrative leadership from within those faculties and schools, have been replaced by streamlined hierarchies with narrow spans and tight methods of control.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION, IN PURSUIT of competitive advantage, comes from the centre with the Vice Chancellor at the apex of the new managerial system. Professors have become middle managers, ceding administrative and academic leadership progressively to a proliferation of Pro-Vice Chancellors and Deans.

Influence over senior appointments and promotions has been reposed in fewer and fewer academic and administrative personnel. Criteria for appointment and promotion have been wedded ever more closely to Dawkins-type criteria. The dollar amount of research and consultancy funds acquired has assumed increasing importance as budgets are cut and pruned.

With all this, comes the risk that if one is not 'onside' or 'relevant', or 'financially productive', one's career opportunities may be retarded. There is now less reward, less encouragement and less time for thinking, criticising and contributing to public and political discussion.

Similarly, contract has replaced tenure as the foundation of academic appointment. This is no doubt an employment practice that is flexible, economic and efficient. But its potential cost to academic freedom should not lightly be dismissed.

Just recently, the Victorian Government announced an inquiry into University Governance. In introducing it the Minister, after tipping his forelock to academic independence, made one of his agendas plain:

'The relationship of business and industry to universities is closer than every before. Because they have a role in developing a highly skilled workforce and research infrastructure, so essential to our State's requirements, it follows that business and industry should have a formal and direct involvement in university governance and management.'.

In short, to meet economic need and to respond to competitive pressure, universities have moved quickly from representative, collegial forms of governance to more corporate, managerial and industry-driven styles. Given the external pressures to which they must respond, this has been inevitable. But something of the spirit of social inquiry and collaborative deliberation has died in the process.

I mentioned previously that all this had been bad weather. The recent changes to university funding, Vanstoniana as they have come to be known, represent the storm.

The Senate recently passed the Government's changes to the Higher Education Contribution Scheme HECS). These raised the level of student contributions by 30 per cent to 100 per cent, to between $3000 and $5000 per annum. The changes also reserve 25 per cent of university places for students who can pay full fees in advance.

These reforms will, I think, have three immediate effects.

(i) Students from disadvantaged backgrounds will be deterred from pursuing tertiary study or, if not that, will be deterred from pursuing more

Universities are, therefore, under very heavy pressure to become 'customer-driven business organisations' to use the vapid words and impoverished vision of the current federal Minister for Education.

expensive programmes of study.

(ii) Students from privileged backgrounds will be able to purchase their place in the courses of their choice.

(iii) Universities themselves will now be pressed into competition with each other, not only in a market for governmental funds but also in a new market for fee-paying students. Universities are, therefore, under very heavy pressure to become 'customer-driven business organisations' to use the vapid words and impoverished vision of the current federal Minister for Education.

As we travel down this market-driven road, a number of worrying consequences will, I think, ensue.

First, these reforms will exacerbate the already existing trend in universities to respond to economic dictates. In difficult economic conditions, the demand for business and professional courses will continue to increase. Degrees will be pursued as tickets to jobs. Universities, in order to preserve their competitive position, will respond accordingly. It is for this reason that managers from within and without are now slashing and burning the humanities and the classics. Many feel regretful, but money talks.

Secondly, the 10-15 per cent decrease in university operating grants—the 4 per cent cut in operating grants compounded by an 8-12 per cent pay rise—will force universities and academics to seek ever wider sources of external, private sector funding. Professors have already become middle managers, soon they will also be entrepreneurs. Taken to its logical conclusion, this will lead us to Professor Mal Logan's (until recently Vice Chancellor of Monash) heretical vision reported last year in the *Weekend Australian* (December 7, p5) . If he was cited correctly, his solution to the problems of under-funded faculties and research units appears to be partial privatisation. Instead of just getting rid of these faculties, he said:

'Say OK, you have 12 or 18 months to generate enough revenue yourselves in a strategic, sensible way that does not affect the quality of what you do and that money can be used to increase your salaries.'

Greater reliance on private sector generosity may well produce more financial institutions but it takes only a moment's reflection to discern its potential impact on academic autonomy and intellectual freedom. Virtuous benefactors exist, but they are few and far between.

Thirdly, the inequity upon which this new system is borne will, in my view, tear imperceptibly and insidiously at the fabric of Australian democracy. As we rob the weaker in society of their entitlement to good education at secondary level and to higher education at tertiary level, we deprive them of one essential means of taking part in public debate and deliberation and of equal opportunity in contributing to the formulation of the economic, social and cultural policies that affect them. We shall have free speech, but it will be exclusive not inclusive.

It was Professor Mal Logan who cast himself as a heretic. In fact what he proposed fell comfortably within the main currents of modern economic orthodoxy. But there is another vision, nowhere better expressed than by Professor Peter Karmel thirty years ago. Far sighted then, and genuinely heretical now, Karmel said:

'I do not hold that the main virtue of education reposes in its economic consequences. Quite the reverse. I should tonight advocate a greater educational effort in Australia, even if its sole economic consequences were to reduce national production ... I should do this since I believe that democracy implies nothing less than making educational opportunities as equal as possible and that the working of democracy depends on increasing the number of citizens with the capacity for clear and informed thought on political and social issues. Moreover I hold that the areas of expanded activity which education opens should be made as wide as possible.' *Some economic aspects of education*, The Buntine Oration, Australian College of Education, Canberra, 18 May, 1962. (Published by Cheshire)

We are presently in the grip of a powerful, fashionable fetish for economic solutions in education and elsewhere. In my view, these need urgently to be balanced by a more democratic position. In this, we need to make a clear and firm restatement of the value that should attach to intellectual independence, academic freedom, institutional plurality and critical thought.

For the university to claim the name, we need to step beyond economic objectives and professional routine into something more lively, radical and participatory. To quote Edward Said in the 1993 BBC Reith Lectures:

'I would go so far as saying that the intellectual must be involved in a lifelong dispute with all the guardians of sacred vision or text, whose depredations are legion and whose heavy hand brooks no disagreement and certainly no diversity.

Uncompromising freedom of opinion and expression is the secular intellectual's main bastion. To abandon its defence or to tolerate tamperings with any of its foundations is in effect to betray the intellectual's calling.'

We should, by all means, advance economically. But in the process we should remember always that the autonomous university is not principally a means but an end—that the intellectual's calling is not principally to conformity but to critique. ■

Spencer Zifcak is Associate Professor of Law and Legal Studies at La Trobe University.

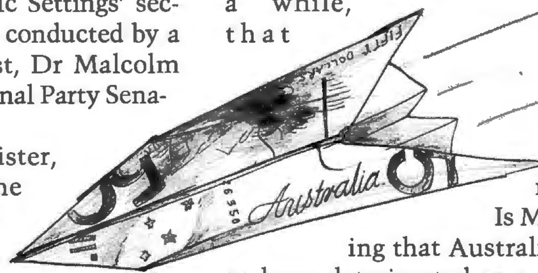
This is an edited version of a talk given to the Victorian Council of Civil Liberties/Communications Law Centre/Free Speech Committee Forum on Free Speech in Australia, held in Melbourne, 8 December 1996.

BRIAN TOOHEY

Indefensible spending

THE HOWARD GOVERNMENT HAS discovered a new threat to national security in order to justify spending billions on high-tech weaponry. Not only is the threat far worse than anything imagined at the height of the Cold War, it is so insidious that it is no use trying to look for potential enemies in the guise of individual countries.

The new threat is growing prosperity in our neighbourhood—something only the naive see as a good thing for all concerned. Not only is economic growth a bad thing for Australia's security, it now turns out the Cold War was really a good thing. Although these views may seem rather eccentric, they are presented as self-evident truths in the 'Strategic Settings' section of the Defence Efficiency Review conducted by a former Defence Department scientist, Dr Malcolm McIntosh, assisted by the former National Party Senator for Queensland, John Stone.



Nevertheless, the Defence Minister, Ian McLachlan, strongly endorsed the McIntosh Report when it was released in mid-April, especially its recommendation for increases in military spending which could soon consume an extra $600 million a year, or considerably more than the entire budget for the ABC. McLachlan says he has a shopping list of over 40 new weapons systems, headed by new early warning and control aircraft. Buying four of these planes would undoubtedly be of use if the RAAF needed to choreograph a dogfight over Darwin, but it would also leave no change out of $2 billion. McLachlan also wants to modernise the F1-11 bombers which a former deputy head of the Defence Department, Alan Wrigley, has recommended be scrapped on the grounds of cost. An F1-11 boring a hole in the sky burns more than $30,000 worth of fuel per hour—more than many people earn in a year in a 'real job'.

Australia has by far the most capable blue water navy and airforce in the immediate region. Invading Australia would be a staggering task. Only the US could do so at present, and then only with great difficulty. Even assuming the desire, no one in the region would be remotely capable of doing so for decades to come. Nor is there any plausible evidence that the dangers posed by lower levels of military conflict has increased.

Yet the McIntosh Report asserts that 'the risk of a conflict threatening Australia's vital interests ... has grown in recent years'. The main support for this claim is the bald assertion that the 'end of the Cold War has made our regional strategic circumstances more complex, uncertain and demanding'. Even if this were true—and there is no evidence that it is—McIntosh does not bother to explain why it follows that the region has become more dangerous for Australia. For a start, the prospect of global nuclear war has receded, to our benefit as well as that of the rest of the globe.

Oblivious to the irony, many of the same people who once saw the Cold War as a rationale for more military spending today claim that it was really a stabilising influence now sorely missed. This is nostalgic nonsense. The supposedly benign balance imposed by the Cold War did not stop the terrible losses suffered in the Korean or Vietnam wars, nor in various wars on the Indian sub-continent. Indonesia still invaded East Timor. China attacked Vietnam. For a while, there was some prospect that communist regimes might have emerged in Indonesia, Malaysia, The Philippines and elsewhere. Now there is none.

Is McIntosh seriously suggesting that Australia's strategic circumstances have deteriorated as a result? The answer is yes and the culprit is economic growth in the region. According to McIntosh, 'As our relative economic position declines, it will become harder for Australia to retain the relative military advantage on which our security from armed attack has ultimately depended'. As a result, much more spending on weaponry is needed 'if we are to remain confident that we could defeat any credible attack'.

WHILE IT IS TRUE THAT CAPABILITIES of our neighbours are growing, a good case can be made—in the absence of arms control agreements—that this actually improves our overall strategic circumstances. McIntosh, however, takes us back to the days in which Asia was seen as a 'dead frontier', to borrow the title of a book by Graeme Cheeseman and Robert Bruce in which all our neighbours were lumped together as a threat.

Few would argue that Australia has become less secure because the US has bought a new version of the Stealth bomber. Yet McIntosh assumes that our strategic situation has deteriorated because Singapore is getting a new air-to-air missile, or Malaysia is buying much better submarines in order to counter the threat obviously created by the far superior submarine capability being acquired by Australia.

For a Government supposedly committed to 'fiscal consolidation', rarely has a proposal for such profligate spending being presented on such flimsy grounds. ■

Brian Toohey is a freelance journalist.

PAUL CHADWICK

All a bit on the nose

MEDIA POLICY-MAKING SEEMS again to be paralysed by the problem of fusing the general with the particular. General policy needs to balance the pressures of technological convergence and globalisation with the aims of diversity and localism. But the particular is simple: who gets Fairfax?

The public interest will not be served if new policy is built around answering that question. Nor will debate about the genuinely difficult issues created by technological and market developments be assisted by pretending that the fate of Fairfax is not a prime consideration.

The better approach would be to acknowledge, openly, the Fairfax issue, and deal with it separately. Let me suggest that the major print sector of the media be declared 'mature', and cross-media rules be tightened to preserve the diversity that is left. Then the generic rules governing concentration and foreign ownership might be able to be eased with good effects. But the proposal would require that the Federal Government first overcome its aversion to regulation in order to do other deregulation.

In last month's *Eureka Street* I tried to show some of the potential complexities of changing the cross-media rules. I suggested that at least one guiding principle for Parliament's forthcoming revision should be to improve the variety of sources of independent content in the media. This would result in genuine diversity instead of the crude multipication of channels that technology spawns.

Dealing with the Fairfax problem is central to Australia's variety of media sources. The three major Fairfax papers—the *Sydney Morning Herald*, *Age* and *Financial Review*—comprise one quarter of the remaining metropolitan dailies of Australia.

In 1992, a parliamentary inquiry concluded that that market was mature and not contestable. The major publishers have behaved as if aware that the barriers to fresh competitors are insurmountable. Since 1987, 14 metropolitan daily and Sunday papers have been closed, leaving monopoly dailies in Brisbane, Adelaide, Hobart and Perth. Over a similar period, cover prices of papers and magazines increased well in excess of the consumer price index.

The following table gives a sense of the extent of concentration in the print media by showing the proportion of total circulation controlled by the leading publisher in each category of publication and the share of its nearest rival.

In the non-daily country print media, Rural Press, controlled by John B. Fairfax, has grown to dominance in recent years with 98 regional papers and 23 other agricultural magazines. It holds the third largest share of regional daily newspaper circulation, 15.6 per cent.

Category	Leading Publisher	Nearest Rival
Metro dailies	News Ltd 66.9%	Fairfax 21.6%
Sundays	News Ltd 76.4%	Fairfax 22.5%
Suburbans	News Ltd 47.9%	Fairfax 15.4%
Regional dailies	APN (O'Reilly) 30.9%	News Ltd 22.2 %
Magazines (top 30)	Packer 45.8%	News Ltd 26.1%

Source: *Communications Update*, Communications Law Centre, February 1997.

The variety of sources of content *within* the large ownership groups shrinks as they pursue economies of scale. Newsrooms are trimmed or closed; journalists are 'let go', and with them go their contacts and stores of local knowledge; the output of those who remain is networked throughout the group's titles, breeding formulas and diminishing localism; the cost of columnists is spread by publishing the same person's opinion in many outlets, thus displacing alternative opinions in each. (This trend is evident in other media: see *Commercial radio since the cross-media revolution* Communications Law Centre research paper, March 1997.)

Fairfax comprises one of the very few substantial news and opinion gathering operations in Australia. (Another, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, is being reduced in size and scope.)

Circulation of newspapers is in long-term decline, but their role as agenda-setters and as basic sources of information on which other media feed remains central. Think of how many radio talkback sessions originate from a newspaper article.

Diversity is fundamental to the public interest dimension of media policy. On diversity grounds alone control of Fairfax should be kept separate from control of other existing media operations, whether print or electronic media. Concern for diversity at a local level requires that monopoly regional papers not be controlled by those who also control media in the same market.

Parliament should amend the cross-media rules in the Broadcasting Services Act to incorporate a new category of 'mature newspapers' in which those who own or control radio, free TV, pay TV or a telecommunications carrier may not hold more than two per cent or exercise control.

Mature newspapers could simply be listed in a schedule to the act, which should include at least the remaining capital-city, national and regional dailies. Alternatively, the act could define a 'mature newspaper' as: *any newspaper published in English more than once a week with (a) an average circulation—whether paid or free—of at least 100,000; or (b) no competing newspaper produced for the same market.*

At least 20 per cent of the circulation of the newspapers and of its competitor if a competitor exists, must be within the licence area of the relevant electronic media outlet in order for their common ownership to be prevented.

This is a tighter rule than the existing cross-media scheme. The tolerance

is two per cent because experience shows that when it is 15 per cent the owners move to 14.9 per cent and push hard for change.

The rule would operate in addition to competition law, just as the current cross-media rules do.

The aim of the proposed rule is to quarantine the surviving daily press of Australia from the pressure for ever more intense concentration. The justification is that the surviving papers, under separate independent control, are vital to 'diversity' in the sense that daily newspapers are key contributors to the variety of sources of information and opinion circulating in communities.

The proposal would not prevent an easing of rules governing electronic media if Parliament were to be convinced that technology really will end technical scarcity—the traditional justification for regulation of broadcasting and telecommunications.

Existing cross-media holdings involving mature newspapers could be grandfathered (i.e. preserved under the previous arrangements) conditional on the holders of those interests not moving to a position in which they could exercise control if they cannot now do so.

PROTESTS THAT THE PROPOSAL would be 'mogul-specific' should be met head on. The motive is not to target anyone because of *who* they are, but because of *what* they already hold. It is a consequence of the intensity of concentration. The pond is so small and the few fish so big that any change in the conditions affects them.

Yes, the effect would be to prevent Kerry Packer's PBL from moving to control Fairfax unless it sold its television interests. Equally, Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation could not control the Seven Network while it retained its newspapers. Kerry Stokes could not keep Seven and acquire the *Herald-Sun* or *Daily Telegraph*. APN and Rural Press would be unable to increase their concentration in the bush by crossing into other media there. Optus or a privatised Telstra could not control Fairfax.

These results can be justified on sound public interest grounds.

Let Kerry bellow.

This time, the representatives of the public need not, must not, give way. Too few have had too much for too long. ■

Paul Chadwick was Victorian co-ordinator of the Communications Law Centre from 1989 to March 1997.

Unblinded by Science

LAST MONTH ARCHIMEDES BRAVED THE BUTTERFLIES at the Melbourne Zoo to hear the Minister for Science and Technology, Mr Peter McGauran announce that Australia's first annual National Science Week will be held from 9 to 17 May, 1998.

The idea, modelled on the Edinburgh Science Festival in the UK, is a joint initiative of the Australian Science Festival, the Australian Science Teachers Association and the ABC. Essentially it is a broadening of the science festival, held yearly in Canberra, to encompass the whole nation. The aim is to have businesses, industry, museums, science centres, schools and universities throughout the country open their doors and hold events which celebrate science all in the same week.

The ABC will incorporate science-based events and broadcasts into its programs so that networks from Radio National to Triple J, and shows as varied as *Late Night Live* and *Club Buggery* will have science content. For those who were alert, the ABC staged a dry-run this year. 'Science Week' was run in conjunction with the 5th Australian Science Festival in the middle of last month. Unfortunately, the promotion of the event appeared to extend little further than the ABC itself—certainly not, for instance, to any TV guide Archimedes saw.

Already the concept of a National Science Week has set some powerful creative juices flowing and has actually loosened the Federal Government's purse strings. Australian Science Communicators (ASC), the organisation of the nation's science writers, broadcasters and presenters, has suggested that the week should become the flagship for promotion of science and technology in Australia.

And the Australian and New Zealand Association for the Advancement of Science (ANZAAS), says ASC, should be encouraged to turn its increasingly moribund congress into a multidisciplinary meeting at which a selected group of bright young scientists can strut their stuff before the nation. The ANZAAS Congress, once a showcase of antipodean science, has slowly degenerated into an irrelevant talkfest, because it cannot compete with specialist conferences in attracting significant speakers. Whether ANZAAS decides to support national science week or not, Archimedes understands that such a science forum is likely to go ahead.

In part to boost the advent of Science Week, McGauran has allocated $1.8 million to the ABC to be spent on science and technology awareness. How badly the nation needs to develop such awareness has become painfully obvious over the past month in the reports stimulated by the Sydney court battle over creation science, the birth of Dolly the sheep, and some of the hysteria attending the fly-by of the Hale-Bopp comet.

It still amazes Archimedes, who is a practising Christian, that anyone living in the age of genetic engineering can argue that evolution is 'only a theory'. The whole of science is 'only a theory', but it happens to provide explanations that work. On the other hand, the science side of Archimedes is having trouble coping with reports of an American experiment to try to measure whether prayer has any beneficial healing power. It amounts to the old conundrum of trying to prove scientifically that God exists. Scientifically, it cannot be done, for science depends on experiments that can clearly distinguish between at least two alternative results. If God exists, then by definition he cannot be excluded from any experiment to prove his existence. So there would be no alternative without God, hence his presence cannot be proven in this way.

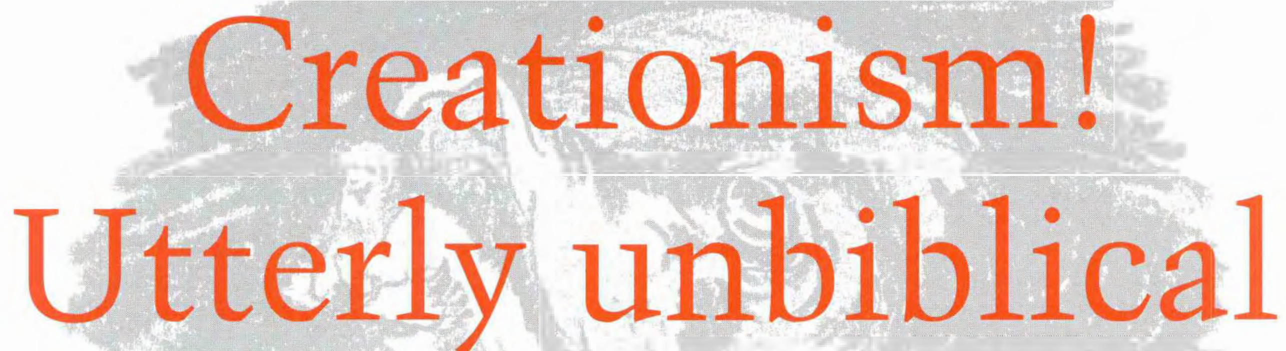
We are, however, blessed with a Minister for Employment, Education and Training whose presence is undeniable. Senator Vanstone, you will remember, doubled the HECS contributions of science and engineering students at the beginning of the year on the basis of how much it costs to educate them. Now, she argues, HECS-paying students are getting a bargain, because the Government is subsidising them to the tune of a luxury car or two. She's quite right, of course. It does cost a lot to educate scientists, engineers, doctors and dentists. But taxpayers in most other nation regard that expense as money well spent, a necessary investment in the future wellbeing of their society.

In Australia, Vanstone seems to suggest, things are different: we are simply lining the pockets of students. Archimedes, for one, would rather live in a society that supports training people to understand, develop and cope with technology instead of treating a university education as a luxury. At least Peter McGauran seems to be on side. ■

Tim Thwaites is a freelance science writer.

ANTONY F. CAMPBELL

Creationism! Utterly unbiblical



As a Bible person, it maddens me to read claims that creationism takes the Bible literally. It does not. There are numerous portrayals of creation in the Bible and there are radical differences between them. Three of the combat variety are noted by way of allusion and reference. They portray a picture of creation by combat between the God of Israel and the forces of chaos. They portray a picture of creation that should send shivers down a creationist's spine. No wonder these portrayals do not get a mention. Two others are lengthier, more direct, and better known to us. In fact we are so familiar with them, in Genesis 1 and 2, that we often do not notice how widely they differ from each other.

We may look at three images of God's role in creation within the biblical texts. There are others, for example Psalm 104:5-9 or Psalm 136:4-9, or with a more lateral approach as in Proverbs 8:22-31. The nature of the creative process often may not be addressed. The big three images of the creator God, however, are:

1. The mighty fighter
2. The co-operative artist
3. The majestic proclaimer

Of these three, the mighty fighter is present in two psalms, in several places in Job, and twice in Isaiah; a God who is portrayed as mightily victorious against the awesome forces of chaos. The co-operative artist is the God of Genesis 2: as artist, labouring to shape all the beasts and birds out of the (friable) ground; as co-operative, bringing them to the man and talking about their names—and perhaps their suitability as partners. The majestic proclaimer is, of course, the God of Genesis 1 who has only to speak for it to be done and who has a strong liturgical sense, leaving the seventh day empty so that it might be hallowed for the sabbath.

What comes out of this clearly is that Israel believed in a creator God—that should be beyond doubt. Secondly, Israel used its belief in creation in a variety of ways for maximum theological effect. Belief in God as creator was a resource for life and prayer—not for freezing into the formulations of dogma.

I do not begrudge scientists their complaint that creationists distort, misunderstand, and misapply science in the presentation of their creationist views. It is the right of scientists to defend their bailiwick.

What I object to intensely is any claim by creationists or on behalf of creationists that their view emerges from a literal understanding of the Bible. That is my bailiwick and I will defend it. Creationism as a literal understanding of the Bible is bunk.

Literalism can be a bit of a red herring. I take the Bible as literally as it wants to be taken—but it is not always easy to determine how literally it wants to be taken. For example, it could be a savage distortion of meaning for a passage of lyrical poetry to be taken literally. (Quotations and verse numbering are from the *New Revised Standard Version*.)

> How beautiful you are, my love ...
> Your eyes are doves ...
> Your hair is like a flock of goats ...
> Your teeth are like a flock of shorn ewes ...
> Your lips are like a crimson thread ...
> Your cheeks are like halves of a pomegranate ...
> Your neck is like the tower of David,
> built in courses;
> on it hang a thousand bucklers,
> all of them shields of warriors.
> Your two breasts are like two fawns ...
> Song of Songs 4:1-5

Pity help the lover if this description of his beloved were to be taken literally. It disclaims any literal interpretation; it is entirely metaphor and simile.

Literalism can be a red herring in creation issues. In Genesis 1, for example, the days of creation are almost certainly to be understood literally as twenty-four hour days, with evening and morning. The account culminates in sabbath, and sabbath was a twenty-four hour day. The issue for Genesis 1 is not the nature of the day, but whether the text is best understood as an inspired description of what actually happened. Decisions about literal meaning can be difficult, but when the biblical text gives us multiple and clearly conflicting images about a topic such as creation, we know for certain that we are not being told what happened. That will surprise no one seriously familiar with biblical texts.

If creationists are one day proved to be right in their views, I will be surprised but I would submit to the evidence. The only thing that I am certain of is this: creationism is not supported by the biblical text. The biblical text itself is the best evidence for that.

I do not begrudge scientists their complaint that creationists distort, misunderstand, and misapply science in the presentation of their creationist views. It is the right of scientists to defend their bailiwick. What I object to intensely is any claim by creationists or on behalf of creationists that their view emerges from a literal understanding of the Bible. That is my bailiwick and I will defend it. Creationism as a literal understanding of the Bible is bunk.

Creation in Psalms 74 and 89

Psalm 74 is a community lament, with an appeal to God's creative power in the middle of it. God is a mighty fighter who deals summarily with the opposition forces:

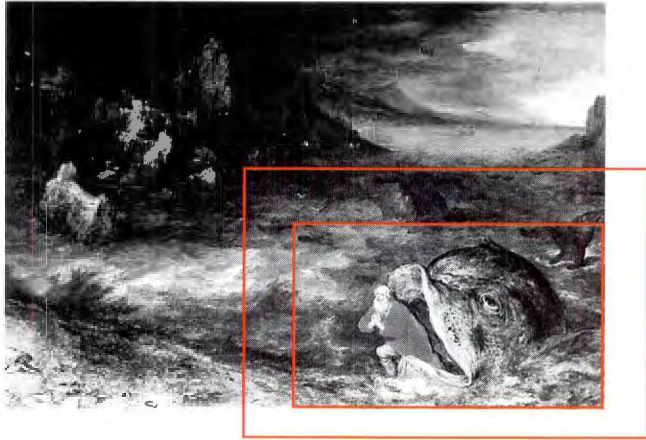
> You divided the sea by your might;
> you broke the heads of the dragons in the waters.
> You crushed the heads of Leviathan;
> you gave him as food for the creatures of the wilderness. (vv. 13-14)

Leviathan and the sea and the dragons are all figures of chaos in the mythology known to us from the ancient Near East. Under different guises or names, they will recur in the texts of Job and Isaiah. There should be no doubt of the power and universality of the creator God in Psalm 74:

> Yours is the day, yours also the night;
> you established the luminaries and the sun.
> You have fixed all the bounds of the earth;
> you made summer and winter. (vv. 16-17)

Why does Israel appeal to a God of raw power in this psalm? Because 'the enemy has destroyed everything in the sanctuary' (v. 3). 'How long, O God, is the foe to scoff? Is the enemy to revile your name forever?' (v. 10). Under such circumstances, what the singer of psalms wants from God is power, raw power, the sort of power that can shatter God's foes and encourage God's friends, the power displayed in shattering the forces of chaos at creation.

Psalm 89 is in essence another community lament. It begins with a portrayal of God, 'feared in the council of the holy ones, great and awesome above all that are around him' (v. 7). So it hymns God's power in creation:



You rule the raging of the sea;
when its waves rise, you still them.
You crushed Rahab like a carcass;
you scattered your enemies with your mighty arm.
The heavens are yours, the earth also is yours;
the world and all that is in it—you have founded them.
The north and the south—you created them;
Tabor and Hermon joyously praise your name. (vv. 9-12)

Here we meet the sea again and the new figure of Rahab, along with the enemies of God. At this point, the evocation of divine power does not emerge out of the powerlessness of Israel; that finds expression toward the end of the psalm. It emerges out of the psalmist's desire to find words and images to express the unique supremacy of Israel's God. Yet it is not divorced from Israel's need of God's supremacy and power.

Creation in Job 7, 9, and 26

Several times in the book, Job appeals to the image of the creator God. The image is that of the raw irresistible power of the mighty fighter.

Decisions about literal meaning can be difficult, but when the biblical text gives us multiple and clearly conflicting images about a topic such as creation, we know for certain that we are not being told what happened. That will surprise no one seriously familiar with biblical texts.

Am I the Sea, or the Dragon
that you set a guard over me? (7:12)
God will not turn back his anger;
the helpers of Rahab bowed beneath him.
How then can I answer him,
choosing my words with him? (9:13-14)
By his power he stilled the Sea;
by his understanding he struck down Rahab.
By his wind the heavens were made fair;
his hand pierced the fleeing serpent.
These are indeed by the outskirts of his ways;
and how small a whisper do we hear of him!
But the thunder of his power who can understand? (26:12-14)

In these passages, we meet Sea, the dragon (in Hebrew, Tannin), Rahab, and 'the fleeing serpent'—all figures in the combat myths of creation.

Job is no stranger to the most sublime literary language of creation. See, for example, either the immediately preceding verses here (26:6-11) or the magnificent imagery of Job 38–41, in God's discourse from the whirlwind.

Why then does Job use this combat-creation language and imagery? Because, in his conflict with his friends, Job paints an image of a God of irresistible and aggressive power. Job is livid with anger against this God:

What are human beings, that you make so much of them,
that you set your mind on them,
visit them every morning,
test them every moment?
Will you not look away from me for a while,
let me alone until I swallow my spittle?
If I sin, what do I do to you, you watcher of humanity?
Why have you made me your target?
Why have I become a burden to you?
Why do you not pardon my transgression
and take away my iniquity? (7:17-21)

At this point in his journey, Job feels attacked by God; and he resents it. The helpless state of the creature confronting the creator God is what Job feels and what Job would like to be freed from: 'How then can I answer him, choosing my words with him?' (9:14). Job's plea to God: 'Withdraw

your hand far from me, and do not let dread of you terrify me' (13:21).

The book of Job draws on the language of creation by combat and the image of God as mighty fighter in order to convey Job's frustration at his inability to meet God on even terms, as one prince to another (cf. 31:37).

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Creation in Isaiah 27 and 51

Isaiah 51 reflects the agony of exiles who long to return home. The agony finds words in poetry that is both plea and promise.

> Awake, awake, put on strength,
> O arm of the Lord!
> Awake, as in days of old,
> the generations of long ago!
> Was it not you who cut Rahab in pieces,
> who pierced the dragon?
> Was it not you who dried up the sea,
> the waters of the great deep;
> who made the depths of the sea a way
> for the redeemed to cross over?
> So the ransomed of the Lord shall return,
> and come to Zion with singing ... . (51:9-11)

Here again, we meet Rahab, the dragon (Tannin), and the sea (and the deep that was covered by darkness in Gen 1:2). Almost like a modern film-maker, Isaiah blends the image of the sea, dried up in creation, into the image of the sea divided at the exodus. So creation blends into salvation. The power of the God who subdued Rahab and the dragon is the power at God's disposal for the salvation and return of those in exile—the return to Zion with singing.

Isaiah draws on this imagery of awesome power because of the exiles' need to have faith in a God who has the capacity to bring them home.

Elsewhere in the book of Isaiah, the prophecy points to a future time when God will restore order to creation. The passage, Isaiah 24:20–27:1, begins by pointing to the future when God 'will punish the host of heaven' (24:20) and 'the moon will be abashed, and the sun ashamed' (24:23). The passage ends with imagery that is by now familiar:

> On that day the Lord with his cruel and great and strong sword will punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent, Leviathan the twisting serpent, and he will kill the dragon that is in the sea. (27:1)

Before we moderns are too easily dismissive of primitive mythology, we need to be aware that these combat images occur in some of the most sophisticated literature of our Bible: Isaiah, Job, and Psalms. The power of God is celebrated as creator, magnificently superior to the forces of chaos: the dragon, the serpent, the sea; Leviathan, Rahab, Tannin—the enemies of God. This is creation faith used for maximum theological effect.

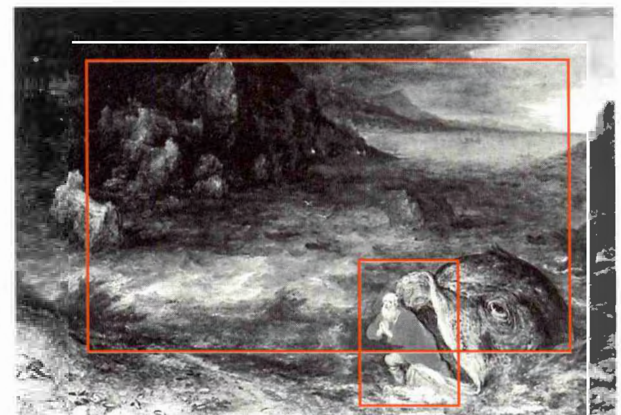
Creation in Genesis 2

Actually, the text we are looking at is Gen 2:4b-25. 'Genesis 2' is a comfortable shorthand; and 'Genesis 1' will be a similar shorthand for Gen 1:1–2:4a. Genesis 2 is the text of the co-operative artist, we might almost say 'artisan'. The God of Genesis 2 is a working God:

> Then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground ... . (2:7)

Similarly, in pursuit of a partner for the man:

> Out of the ground the Lord God formed every animal of the field
> and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what
> he would call them; and whatever the man called every living creature,
> that was its name. (2:19)



'Every animal' and 'every bird' would have used up a lot of 'ground' and surely left a weary God. Yet it is the God of Genesis 1 who will rest on the seventh day from all the work that he had done—who hardly 'worked' at all (cf. Gen 2:2).

A lot of people forget the major differences between this account of creation and the account in Genesis 1. In Genesis 1, of course, everything is created, including the earth and its vegetation, birds and beasts, man and woman. Yet in

It is a sad day when we allow ourselves to be persuaded to abandon all this theological wealth and believe that when we take the Bible literally we find so insipid a message as creationism.

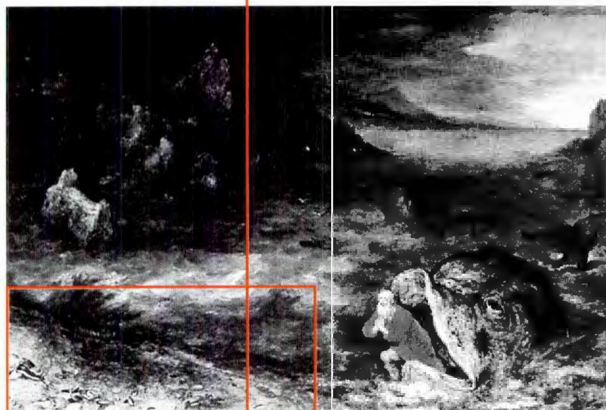
Genesis 2, these are created again—vegetation, birds and beasts, the man and the woman. The order is strikingly different. In Genesis 1, man and woman are created together and are created last (1:26-27). In Genesis 2, man and woman are created separately, with the man created at the beginning of the account and his incompleteness brought to partnered completion in the creation of the woman at the end of the account (cf. 2:7 and 22). Not only is the order different, but the images of the beginning are as different as night and day. Genesis 1 begins in the dark and the wet: 'darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters' (1:2). Genesis 2 begins in barren dryness, with no plant and no herb and no water, 'for the LORD God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no one to till the ground' (2:5). Notice the assumption that we humans would till the ground, long before there is any talk of sin. The initial situation is barren and dry; it is evocative of the searing light of the desert sun.

What do we make of a text like this? The co-operative labouring God is not one of the staple figures of Israelite theology. It may be that the biblical narrative is portraying Israel's (and our) distancing from intimacy with God. This is the God whose nearness allowed the first humans to hear 'the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze' (3:8). A story of increasing distance between creature and Creator needs to start with a creation story of intimacy and co-operation.

Creation in Genesis 1

AND SO WE COME TO THE TEXT SO BELOVED of those who talk about creationism. Into the darkness of the formless void and the windswept deep, God by the sheer power of proclamation launches brilliantly symbolic light (1:3). There are many activities of God in the chapter: God sees, God separates, God calls, God makes, God commands the waters and the earth, God creates, and God blesses. Above all, God says.

This is the account of the majestic proclaimer. At every stage, there is the basic proclamation, 'And God said'. No matter how many activities God performs—separating, making, commanding, creating, blessing—the overarching statement is always: 'And God said'. There is no question here of God forming anything from the ground. The earth is commanded to bring forth vegetation (v. 11) and living creatures of every kind (v. 24—although in v. 25 God makes the animals). There is no question of God bringing his creation to the man and talking with him about it and its names. God created humankind in God's image and likeness. That is the closest we come in this account to intimacy. The God of Genesis 1 is a majestic and distant proclaimer.



What can never be overlooked is that all the activity of creation is fitted into six days, thanks to a couple of activities on the third and sixth days. So the seventh day is empty and God is able to hallow it as the sabbath day. It is a great pity that we have no English word to convey the identity of 'resting' and 'sabbath'. Twice our English translations note that 'God rested' on the seventh day (2:2 and 3). The Hebrew word that is translated 'rested' is from the verb *shabat* and can be heard to say: 'And God sabbathed'.

Here Israel's scriptures open with a statement that the God of all creation, the Lord of heaven and earth, the God responsible for all that we can see and touch, this God is a God who sabbathed on the seventh day. And only Israel in all the earth observed sabbath. Israel might be defeated and overwhelmed by the mightier political powers of its day, but Israel encountered its God in its sabbath. Everything that Israel saw—from the light and sky to the earth and sea, the plants and trees, the sun and moon and stars, the birds and beasts—everything reminded Israel of the God who created by majestic proclamation and then sabbathed, rested on the seventh day. And only Israel in all the earth observed sabbath. It is a faith statement of the highest order. Deuteronomy says: 'What other great nation has a god so near to it as the LORD our God is whenever we call to him?' (Deut 4:7). Genesis 1 says: what other great nation has a God who has created the heavens and the earth and who sabbaths as we alone do? In an unstable and insecure world of exile, Genesis 1 stood as a faith statement affirming stability and security in the power of God.

It is a sad day when we allow ourselves to be persuaded to abandon all this theological wealth and believe that when we take the Bible literally we find so insipid a message as creationism. ■

Antony F. Campbell SJ is professor of Old Testament at the Jesuit Theological College within the United Faculty of Theology, Melbourne. His publications cover Pentateuch and Deuteronomistic history. The images are derived from Jan Breughel's *Jonas rising out of the mouth of the whale.*

Late Division

I am in East Melbourne again,
born next door at the cocktail hour,
twelve hours' nemesis then
a leaky lung. All of us were born
in some vicinity—two names
suffice for this struggle. When
they flung those Catholic bells
for my brother our mother
thought she was in heaven.
Merely a king had died.
Long we keep on going back:
infant, chorister, lover,
now the duteous friend.
But it feels late tonight,
too chill for martinis' shock
and brio. Hunched in scarves
we tack through terraced streets,
almost afraid of the wind,
meet the poet who will read to us,
complaining of laryngitis.
Beyond the park, the bells of state
summon late representatives
and the brilliant Princess tolls
for smokers in cummerbunds.
Bolting like truants,
cashmered staffers quit Parliament
via the royal entrance,
though the bells go on ringing.
It's late, very late now
in the galvanic Writer's Centre
where four of us have gathered—
more casks than aesthetes.
Upstairs has been rented out
for a Self-esteem Workshop.
During breaks in the urban arias
we hear them moving about
like confident roof-rats.
They leave before us, looking bullish.

Peter Rose

Upper East

Something could have shattered in that hour,
annunciations of an epoch
in its glamorous cloister,
Sander's bewildered Prussians,
too lined for all these happenings.
Perhaps it was the mirror of the floor,
mercurial décor, the way
a gallery appropriates air,
sends it back rarefied,
more expensive. At your approach,
so rhythmic only avatars heard,
half Manhattan purred through a door,
keen to attest to mandatory black.
The oils, sensing something
more transgressive than catalogue prose,
thickened, intensified,
two strangers were tantalized
in that temple of exposure,
impatient for the licence of lobby,
approbation of a red dot—
the way an elevator guru,
launching his rocket of Art Deco,
overlooks the importunate real.

Peter Rose

MARGARET SIMONS

England, her England

IN MARGARET DRABBLE'S latest novel, *The Witch of Exmoor*, a character with the telling name of Will Paine escapes life in Britain, and emigrates to Australia. He is one of the people Drabble sees as having been dealt a particularly poor hand in life. He is black. He has been to jail—for selling marijuana to the middle classes. He is a perpetual victim.

But Drabble saves him, and she saves him by sending him here. In the self-conscious, ironic style that Drabble confesses she now finds unavoidable, her disembodied narrator reflects on what should happen to Paine. 'If we send him far away, out of sight and out of mind, as we sent our convicts of old, may he survive and know the good life? We dispatch him now not to hard labour but to the fantasy of a good life with a decent wage. Will they let him in? Will they turn him away at Immigration? He is not very black. Fly bird. Fly, cryptic bird. Take thy flight, thy Qantas flight.'

The book does not examine or criticise this image of Australia as land of hope and opportunity (albeit apparently still with White Australia policy), nor did Drabble want to question it when she was in Australia recently .

During a brief stay in the Blue Mountains west of Sydney, she took a walk into the bush, and was thrilled to see a fox sitting in the middle of the path. But then Drabble, as she admitted, knows best about Britain, and her perspective remains intensely English, even when she is most furious with her home country. In an interview with *Eureka Street* she referred without irony to Australia as a 'new country'.

She talked of how nostalgia is ruining England, and was surprised and depressed to hear that nostalgia exists here too—nostalgia for the picket fence and the heritage colours.

Looking backwards, she says, is England's disease, and we should not copy it. It is the function of Australia to be forward looking, and hopeful. 'You have no need to look back for images of what to be. You can make your own and do what you want with them. You have now world-class film, world-class literature. You can go your own way.'

She is furious with her home country for failing to seize the future. 'Amongst the literary world all this backward looking nostalgia has resulted in a kind of irony that is almost like a poison. There is an ironic attitude to everything you do and say that undermines and undercuts. Irony is fine if you write as well as Martin Amis. It's not fine if you are just spewing out literary journalism saying how dreadful Martin Amis is.'

Drabble says *The Witch of Exmoor*, (or of Eastwick, as one veyr over-excited commentator dubbed it) is an irresponsible novel. She plays with the characters' lives, allowing them to sin, and to die. These are liberties she has never felt very comfortable allowing her characters before.

The irresponsibility, she says, is largely a reaction to her long foray into biography. When she wrote *The Witch* she had just emerged from five years' work on a biography of her mentor, Angus Wilson, a writer she admired, who died of poverty in his 70s.

The sadness of this work, plus the chore of having to be exact with dates and facts, meant she let herself loose on *The Witch* with a sort of savage anger.

It is part of what she describes as a shift in her fiction from an exploration of the internal life, to an engagement with the external and the political.

'As I get older, I find I see people less as individuals, and more as examples of sociology,' she says. 'I am in the uncomfortable position of having solved a lot of my own therapy problems and now I am trying to solve the therapy problems of the nation, and you just can't do it. They won't come to sessions.'

In *The Witch*, her main characters come from a self-satisfied, morally bereft middle-class family, plagued by their misfit and now ageing mother, Frieda, who after a lifetime as a social historian has 'dropped out'.

AS BEFITS PARODY AND MORALITY TALE, surnames like Palmer, Paine, and D'Anger, signal the characters' functions in the narrative, and Drabble's remorselessly bleak vision of an England that has lost all ambition for a just society.

A lot of this focuses around how people eat. Drabble, like a true witch, begins with a spell 'Let them have everything that is pleasant'. Her characters are gathered around a table in a kitchen with that ultimate symbol of wealthy nostalgia, an Aga, having eaten home-baked bread, and meats, fruits and cheeses gathered from throughout the world.

But this is the England of the homeless, and the hungry. It is a country mired in its own history, and in its own waste. Earlier, Frieda has shocked her offspring by inviting them to a family dinner, and offering them a fast food company's beefburgers, which she tells them, have been made from 'gristle, fat, chicken scraps and water from cows' heads'.

Drabble's anger with England runs deep, but she claims not to know why she ends up writing novels about it. The political novel is virtually dead, she believes.

'You might as well whistle in the wind. I don't know why one feels compelled to go on doing it, although perhaps if one can write something that makes people say "ouch" if they recognise themselves, perhaps that is worth doing.'

'There is an enormous amount of journalism in print and on television now that has taken over some of the role of the novelist. It has taken over the role of Dickens for example. If you wanted to talk about prison reform these days you would do a documentary, not write a novel. The downside of that is that you get soundbites from politicians who don't want to be truly concerned, and the whole debate tends to get reduced to that.'

Drabble resents being regularly described as a Hampstead novelist, with all its implications of chardonnay socialism. She is, she claims, a Yorkshire woman from the working class. Her father's family used to run a sweet factory. Drabble's sweets used to be quite famous. Her mother left school early and was a 'very poor' dressmaker.

Yet to a reader from the 'new world' Drabble seems to come very much from the middle-class, intensely English environment she critiques. Self-consciously, she talks about her use of the Aga as a symbol. 'It's not that I am against Agas. I love Aga cooking. Some of my best friends have Agas....' But the Aga is part of the unwillingness to leap forward into the future.

She says England doesn't want to give up 'playing in the ruins, or reconstructing them for television serials'. England won't embrace Europe. The English media are outraged when Europe won't buy British beef because of mad cow disease. 'There is this quite unexamined belief that British beef simply must be the best.'

Her disappointment is born of a realisation that the hopes and dreams of the 60s, when she was a young woman, are not to be realised. 'I kept thinking the setbacks were temporary—the oil shock, Thatcher—and that we would get back on track again, but we are not. Things are just getting worse.

'Instead of feeling we are moving into something new we feel we are at the end. It may be something to do with all this talk about the millennium ... there was actually a headline in *The Evening Standard* recently saying "Labour Party Ruins The Millennium". It was a wonderful headline but all it meant was that Labour were not going to commit themselves to building some huge fun park if they got in at the next election.'

Almost in spite of herself, Drabble isn't without hope. Her novel is full of magical and mythic symbols: a deer jumps through a window. In dreams, the animals talk. The landscape has strange myths attached to it, and the myths are of moral renewal and hope.

Asked about this, Drabble initially says 'Oh well, I was just having fun. It doesn't mean anything,' but pressed, she continues: 'Maybe the novel is almost on the edge of what happens when, as you get older, you give up being completely sure that all religion is nonsense, and all mysticism is nonsense. Maybe there is another layer of meaning ...This seems to have more relevance as I get older and it links back to my childhood dream that animals could talk.

'There is something going on beneath the surface. We do our best to cement it down and shame it and build it over, but maybe it will leap forth and save us. I don't like to say that because it sounds, well, it sounds mad, but I know when I am writing there are images that remind me ... You feel that Mr Major and Mr Howard can't be all there is, that there must be something beyond, some better future.'

Since the publication of *The Witch*, Drabble has struck up an improbable correspondence with a journalist called Horatio on a small local paper in Devon.

It all began when her fax machine spewed out an article headlined 'Drabble, your Novel is Drivel'. 'I thought, why is my agent sending me this. I don't need this.'

But it turned out not to be the feared review, but an article from the *Devon Post*, objecting to five lines in the book where she describes a local town as ugly. Horatio stirred up a campaign on the issue, in which local luminaries spoke out on the beauties of their town.

Drabble is rather pleased. 'We've got to know each other quite well, Horatio and me,' she says. 'But it is a hole, that town, nevertheless.' ■

Margaret Simons most recent novel is *The Truth Teller* (Reed). Photograph of Margaret Drabble, below, courtesy Penguin.

BOOKS

ANDREW HAMILTON

The thousand year itch

Reformation, Christianity and the World 1500-2000, Felipe Fernandez-Armesto & Derek Wilson, Bantam, London, ISBN 0593 027493, RRP $39.95
Millennium, A history of the last thousand years, Felipe Fernandez-Armesto, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1995. ISBN 0 684 82536 8 RRP $32.95

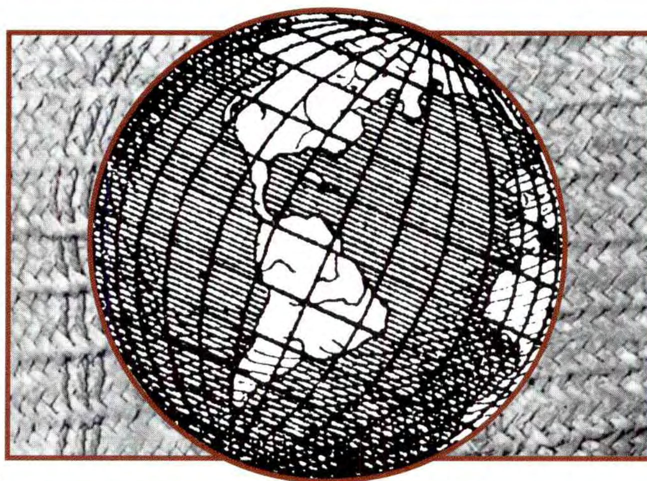
THE STYLES IN WHICH HISTORY is written are legion. For Herodotus, to write history was to tell the stories which created the tribe. For Thucydides it was to sit in judgment: speeches, narratives and commentary showed how nations could rise or fall according to their fundamental moral gravity of their leaders. For Manning Clark, it was to uncover the myths which made events worth remembering.

For Fernandez-Armesto who wrote the very successful *Millenium* and co-authored *Reformation* with Derek Wilson, the style of history is televisual. He uses documentary technique familiar in sports commentary: the shot of ground and city seen from the air-balloon, the dental technician's close-up of Shane Warne's face as an appeal is turned down, and the voice of Tony Grieg naming the cash value of what we have seen.

The movement from the panoramic shot to the closeup sets local events into a broader context, encourages a feeling of superiority over the protagonists who know only their immediate surroundings, and builds trust in the commentator who possesses both distant and close perspective. It establishes the dramatic irony by which we know better than the actors in the drama the nature of the events which they compose.

Both *Reformation* and *Millenium* switch from the intimate particular event to a universal perspective, accompanied by the confident authorial voice. *Millenium* introduces the conceit of a galactic museum-keeper to whom a thousand years and a single world are a trifle, and who must select carefully for preservation a few monuments from this tiny space. *Reformation* invites the reader to look at the events of the Protestant Reformation and the response to it from a perspective that goes back to the medieval church and extends to a present where the differences between catholic and protestant are marginal.

As in television documentaries, the larger view presupposes a debating partner who has a more restricted view. In the case of *Millennium*, this correspondent is one whose view is centred in Europe or the Atlantic ocean.



The early chapters of the book deal with Islam, Chinese, Cambodian and African kingdoms, arriving only later in Europe, suggestively described as a small promontory of Asia. The book argues that the Atlantic centre of civilisation which has developed only relatively recently with the dominance, first of Europe and later of the United States, is a temporary phenomenon which will be replaced by the more typical configurations of centres of power around the Pacific.

The conversation partner within *Reformation* is the Christian who still looks at the Reformation from within the perspective of a church shaped by earlier polemic. The authors argue that such a perspective ignores the similarities between the impulses that drove both Reformers and Catholics and between what the kinds of church that each tried to establish. Both strains of Christendom gave expression to the powerful desire for reform and for personal conversion that animated late medieval christendom. Both adapted to the pressures of a changing world in similar ways: in power, neither side tolerated the other; when out of power, each demanded toleration.

Scientific and commercial revolutions, too, were hindered and helped by both sides in equal and indistinguishable measure. The authors argue that theories that attribute decisive influence on the shaping of the desirable or undesirable features of modernity of either protestant or catholic ideas owe more to residual religious prejudice than to dispassionate reflection. From the authors' perspective, too, the plight that each group of churches faces in the contemporary world is the same: to retain christian identity and commend christian allegiance in the face of a changed cultural world.

It is characteristic of such a perspective to believe that the differences which divide protestant or catholic from their fellow members and unite them with members of the other tradition, will be more important than those which divide churches from one another. Approaches to worship, discipline, doctrine and relations with society mark divisions within churches, but create enemies and allies across church boundaries.

IN *REFORMATION* AND *MILLENNIUM*, the broad vision is complemented by the personal and particular anecdote. Each chapter begins with the observation of a single person or a localised event. These anecdotes introduce the broader argument of the chapter and give it weight. It is perhaps significant that many of these narratives introduce travellers between cultural worlds: they support the presumption that the localised can be appreciated accurately only from a distance.

In television, the movement from the universal to the particular case encourages appalling arrogance on the part of the commentators. In *Reformation*, this tendency is modified by joint-authorship and the self-knowledge of the writers, and also by their resistance to any determinist account of history. The tone of the writing displays the assured firmness of the *Daily Telegraph* or the *Spectator*, but with an additional touch of modesty.

The limitations inherent in moving

easily from the broad to the narrow perspective, however, become evident in the authors' prejudices. Telling anecdotes are found to illustrate the dangers of down-market worship or of compromise with the secular, and they seem to make a conclusive case. But anecdotes can equally be found to illustrate the disadvantages of formalist liturgy and a clerical construction of religious identity. In assessing work of this kind, then, the reader trusts the good sense of the authors' general historical judgment and not the epiphanic value of the particular example.

The large question, however, which this method raises is whether it can do justice to the Reformation and to the churches that have come out of the Reformation tradition. Those involved on both sides of the Reformation conflict were passionately involved in issues that have shaped the life and faith of their successors. To adopt a broader perspective, then, could be seen as removing oneself from the tradition of which one is part.

The point can be illustrated by a literary conceit in the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius Loyola, devised in the early 16th century. It involves a movement from large to small focus typical of television technique.

Ignatius begins with the broadest view he can imagine: the persons of the Holy Trinity look down on the whole earth, seeing human beings sinning and going to hell, and decide to rescue them. The focus is then narrowed: to Galilee, to Nazareth, and to a small house and finally to a small room within where the angel speaks with Mary. The meditation is designed to lead those who pray it to feel and respond out of gratitude to Jesus Christ.

Ignatius is convinced that both the large and the small picture matter. The scene with Mary and the angel is not only an example of the larger truth of God's care, but expresses it and even makes its effectiveness hang in the balance. In the meditation, too, the viewer of the scene is also a participant, whose response of recognition and involvement also matter. As commentator, Ignatius is concerned not to give information but to allow response.

This movement was characteristic of both sides of the Reformation. It involved the appropriation of a large story, its embodiment in the smaller human stories, and a personal response leading to commitment. The link between large story, individual case and the reader's response ensured that there is no space for dramatic irony.

The characteristic Reformation style was weakened, however, by subsequent intellectual habits and traditions. Even in Isaac Watts' great hymn, *When I survey the wondrous cross*, influenced as it was by the imagery of Newtonian physics, the focus has switched to the larger picture and the response is of a more contemplative kind. The world is conceived on a cosmic scale as the *realm of nature* or the *orb*. A faithful response is necessarily contemplative.

The flowering of the detached intellectual style can be found in Paley's style of apologetic, parodied in Dostoyevsky's *Brothers Karamazov*. By now the large perspective can obliterate embarrassing aspects of the smaller picture. Seen from far enough away, this is the best of all possible worlds, against which the individual story of injustice or suffering does not count or is a beneficial part. The proper human response is to recognise the justice and propriety of it all and appreciate the ideological commentary upon it. Its secular form is economic rationalism.

This change of intellectual style is reflected in television documentaries and also perhaps in these two books. The way in which the small picture is seen in relationship to the large, and the proper response of the reader or viewer, are points at issue, and make the large scale treatment of the Reformation problematic for those whose tradition includes it.

If this is a problem, it will be felt only by those who live consciously on either side of the Reformation tradition. For them, there will be two ways of handling it. The first is the ecclesiastical way: to identify the large story of God's love with the church or with reformation doctrine and to identify the correct response as one of acceptance of the reformation principle or the church in all its structures. In this case the smaller picture of human experience and the ways in which it has changed culturally will be unimportant and even ideologically suspect.

The second way is to return to something like the Ignatian image: a large picture of God's love, total commitment to the small picture of human dignity, and a response that takes the large and small pictures seriously within a modest church.

Those who take this latter view will find much to stimulate them in *Reformation and Millennium*. ■

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BOOKS: 2

MAX TEICHMANN

Jigsawing the world

The Clash of Civilisations and the Remaking of World Order, Samuel P. Huntington, Simon and Schuster, 1996. ISBN 0 684 811642 RRP $39.95

A DESIRE TO CREATE ORDER out of a mass of undifferentiated and, in many cases, apparently conflicting elements, such as social forces, institutional aggregations, value systems, is a recurring aspiration for man.

We don't like chaos, unexplained changes, rogue elephants. We like predictability, crave explanations, and the conversion of the unfamiliar to the familiar.

In international politics, one way of doing this is to construct a model of the global system, (which is changing as you go); identifying what we think are its core elements, and examining them in some detail, then charting the often volatile interactions between these elements. And finally, one hopes, predicting the outcomes of these interactions, and describing what the most likely shape, composition and condition the overall system will be in, say, 50 years hence.

Sam Huntington has just given us a new political model of the world with which to play, and has provided much subsidiary material on particular issues, at least as illuminating as the unpacking of his main themes. These include immigration (pp198-206); human rights and democracy (pp192-8) and faultline wars (chapters 10 and 11).

Other systemic analyses have concentrated upon the states system, with nation states as the main actors. Or economic/technological forces as the

engines of change, with nations just falling into line, adapting, even disappearing in the face of these almost abstract, value-free determinants. Then there is the battle of the ideologies model, which until recently helped many people to structure their worlds.

Huntington chooses another tack. His main actors are civilisations, each with its unique cultural core, based on language, history, consanguinity, religion, artistic insights and traditions. He suggests, that, as now, there are nine main actors: Western, Latin, American, African, Islamic, Sinic, Hindu, Orthodox, Buddhist, Japanese. There *have* been others—Toynbee listed 23—most of whom have now disappeared. Some of the current nine may go the same way.

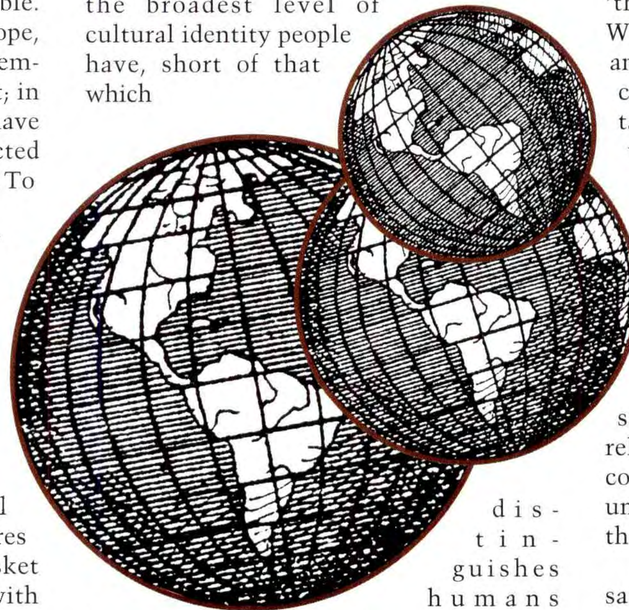
Thus the African, partly inchoate, but unmistakably different, despite its taking on Christianity, Islam, Western artefacts and culture, is in every kind of trouble. North Africans seek to escape to Europe, the Centre seem intent on destroying themselves, with a little help from the West; in the South, Mandela's countrymen now have an HIV positive rate of 12 per cent, expected to reach the Zambian rate of 30 per cent. To where might *they* wish to escape?

Latin America is increasingly entwined with the US, and may finish as an exotic extension, especially with the spread of Protestantism (American version). But the merger may not work.

The Sinic and Islamic societies he regards as the great movers and shakers, as we go into the next millennium. The Orthodox Christian world is under all kinds of external and internal pressures and could come to include many basket case countries. The Hindu civilisation with its extensive diaspora, has great potential, for growth, and for self-destruction. Its population is now almost a billion, and could double in another thirty years if Indian women maintain their present fertility rate of 3.8 children per mother. And the prospects of the take-over—sudden or creeping—of Hindu fundamentalism, and nationalism, seems substantial.

The West he sees as in decline—indeed its decline from, say, 1914 has been a steady one, accelerated by two utterly disastrous fratricidal wars; but decline masked by the post-war boom, the prodigies of American new technology, and the worldwide export trade in American mass culture. Huntington thinks the technology can be acquired, adapted and transformed—as it has been—without causing the recipient countries to roll over and become democrats, human rights advocates, Americans manqué, or derivatives of the US economy. Far from it. Nor is American culture dissolving other cultural systems—only reactivating them to reassert their own cultural origins. On the other hand, the only hope for the West to continue to cohere, and to exert its present considerable influence upon the world, is for America to remain powerful, proactive, and to preserve its own Western culture and heritage. If America falls down, declines or becomes entrapped in its own social/political problems, the future of the West, as anything other than a backwater in the great contest of civilisations, seems bleak.

As to these civilisations: for Huntington, a civilisation is the highest cultural groupings of people and the broadest level of cultural identity people have, short of that which distinguishes humans from other species. It is defined both by common objective elements, such as language, history, religion, customs, institutions ... and by the subjective identification of people. People have levels of identity: a resident of Rome may define himself with varying degrees of intensity as a Roman, an Italian, a Catholic, a Christian, a European, a Westerner. Civilisations are 'the biggest "we" in which we feel culturally at home as distinguished from all the other "thems" out there'. He quotes Bozeman: 'Political systems are transient expedients on the surface of civilisation, and, the destiny of each linguistically and morally unified community depends ultimately upon the survival of certain primary structuring ideas around which successive generations have coalesced and which thus symbolise the society's continuity'. Virtually all the major civilisations in the world in the Twentieth Century either have existed for a millennium or, 'as with Latin America, are the immediate offspring of another long-lived civilisation'. As are we—except that elements in Australia wish to deny that, and propose that we become, or already are, part of Asia.



In Huntington's terms, there is no such thing—no such thing as Asian civilisation—rather a number. No such thing as the Asian culture, or come to think of it, the Asian economy. Whereas one *can* speak of Europe in this way.

The author sees Universalism as a Western disease, that is, our insistence that these is or should be a universal morality, religion, political ideology, culture or economy. Few others have believed this—whereas we have never stopped. So, he says, 'the image of an emerging universally Western world is misguided, arrogant, false, and dangerous'. Partly because such a world could only be created by force, and maintained by force and fraud. The Christians would have done this—had they the power—as would have the communists. We may have started a fashion. Huntington quotes Mahathir addressing an assembled European heads of government last year. 'European values are European values; Asian values are universal values'. Huntington comments: as Asian and Muslim civilisations begin to assert the universal relevance of their cultures, Westerners will come to appreciate the connection between universalism and imperialism, and to see the virtues of a pluralist world.

The nearest thing to a universal civilisation he allows is the Davos Culture. 'Each year about a thousand businessmen, intellectuals, and journalists from scores of countries meet in the World Economic Forum in Davos Switzerland, [they] ... are employed by governments, corporations, and academic institutions with extensive international involvements, and travel frequently outside their own countries. They generally share beliefs in individualism, market economics, and political democracy. Davos people control virtually all international institutions, many of the world's governments, and the bulk of the world's economic and military capabilities.'

But Hedley Bull pointed out 'this common intellectual culture exists only at the elite level: its roots are shallow in many societies. It is doubtful even at the

diplomatic level if it embraces what was called a common moral culture or set of common values.' Not needed, surely! Greed, power, and delicious inequality are what it's all about, isn't it?

The latest Western essay in economic force and fraud—the global market, Free Trade Crusade—is in essence another arrogant Imperialist project out of an old Western—in fact Anglo-American stable. Intentionally disruptive, like all crusades.

Huntington pours cold water on multiculturalism as social engineering, as against an attitude. Most countries aren't adopting it—rather the contrary—and those who have, mainly Western, appear divided and if anything weakened by it. In a peaceful, tolerant world such experiments would perhaps be okay—but such is not our good fortune. Just ask Israel.

The author singles out two types of perhaps aberrant states: 'torn' nations and 'cleft' nations. Torn nations have an identity, hence a policy direction, problem. Is Turkey part of Europe? Or a member, even the leader of a revived Turkic block? Uniquely Turkey; or an actor in the new Fundamentalist movement? Different Turks give different answers. And Australia, he says, could become another. The élites are pulling us one way, the rest want us to stay put.

CLEFT NATIONS CONTAIN a number of separate communities—unable or unwilling to cohere for many common purposes. France is starting to become one such, with the Muslims and their supporters on one side, other Frenchmen on the other. The Russian republics since the fall are treading the same path. (I suspect Australia has always been a cleft nation, heavily disguised).

Huntington is not a relativist. He believes Western values *are* superior to others, certainly worth defending and maintaining, but only likely to become ubiquitously acceptable—if they ever are—over time. So the stand and deliver tactics on human rights some of us are advocating, can only motivate our neighbours to dig in, become more modern but less Western.

So, it is the West versus the Rest. They are many, but further from one another than they are from us—despite Mahathir. We can play the balance, 'the honest broker' like Britain did in Europe. But we have to know who *we* are, and stop apologising. For *no-one* else is listening. ■

Max Teichmann is a Melbourne writer and reviewer.

ANDREW HAMILTON

Jesus Christ, media star

The Jesus question: The historical search, Robert Crotty, HarperCollins, Blackburn 1996. ISBN 1 863716815 RRP $24.95

THE PROBLEM WITH WHICH Robert Crotty deals is that of Christmas and Easter. Not the events which the feasts commemorate, but the holiday time they provide for the media they occasion. At those times when the flow of news slows, the atavistic voice of religion calls faintly from the thickets, and the latest and most shocking unmasking of christian origins proves irresistible.

Crotty explains to an interested but uninitiated reader the genesis of these radical reconstructions of Jesus, and provides the background needed to evaluate them.

He recounts the change in attitudes to the Bible as a historical document, the resultant attempts to fix the historical face of Jesus, and the methods of analysis that have been used. Then he turns to the historical and cultural contexts within which Jesus lived and the new documents that bear on the origins of Christianity: the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Nag Hammadi texts. He outlines some new accounts of Jesus, that illustrate how this background is brought into play, and concludes by arguing for a literary reading of the Gospels. He concludes that the search for a historically accurate account of Jesus is fruitless, not least because it distorts the purpose of the documents themselves. This purpose he identifies as the transmission of the myth of Jesus—the belief that his story reveals the meaning of human life.

Crotty describes clearly and attractively the attempt to reconstruct the historical life of Jesus. He writes succinctly, develops his argument in a leisurely and logical way, and illustrates his account with helpful diagrams. This is a model of popular teaching.

He is also scrupulously fair in narrating controversial events and in expounding the arguments of writers who develop the most threadbare of theses. His courtesy challenges a less charitable critic: I was distracted by the fantasy of Neville Cardus condescending with his habitual port and stilton hospitality of mind to an episode of *Gladiators*.

I enjoyed particularly his account of the discovery and publication of the Dead Sea scrolls, in which critics have often detected a conspiracy to hide the shocking conclusions which flow from the discoveries. The intersections of politics, economics, scholarly territoriality, individual possessiveness, and the meeting of faiths make fascinating reading. It supports the more common view of academics as muddlers imbued with a richly human mixture of motivations and energies, rather than as devious conspirators.

My reservations with the book lay with the last chapter in which Crotty depicts as a gaping chasm the gap in sensibility created by the Enlightenment. According to his account, before the Enlightenment, people had no difficulty in thinking mythically and so in appreciating the documents of the New Testament as religious documents. After the Enlightennent, they studied them as historical documents whose main interest was their access to the real, historical and authoritative face of Jesus.

Crotty argues that the proper way to read the document is as myth and not as history. Only a literary reading can bring out the power of the underlying myth.

This account has much to recommend it. It emphasises the primarily religious character of the documents of the New Testament and the passing significance of any reconstruction of Jesus. But the way in which the Scriptures function in a christian community on their own terms seems to presuppose a reading that transcends the literary, and one that sees the story of Jesus Christ as invested with actuality.

Actuality implies, and has always implied, more than verisimilitude and the belief that a text illuminates the meaning of life. It assumes that there is some correspondence between the events of Scripture—both those that are historical and those that transcend history in our definitions of history—and what has happened in our world.

This rudimentary historicity may be difficult to define and has certainly often been overstated in the recent past. But it is implied in christian reading of the New Testament, and precludes any divorce between the historical and literary imagination. ■

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BRIAN TOOHEY

The superannuation highway

Ageing and Money, Diana Olsberg, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1997 ISBN 1 86448 047 5 RRP $24.95

Ageing and Money has the great virtue that its author is an 'insider' in the superannuation business who doesn't insist that the Labor Government's decision to privatise the age pension is an unqualified success.

As a former Executive Director of the Australian Institute of Superannuation Trustees, Diana Olsberg is optimistic about the new system. If all goes well, it should, she believes, deliver greater financial freedom for retirees as well as fund the sort of investment needed to make all Australians better off. Over time, it could even lead to a new era of economic democracy in which ordinary employees have a much larger say in the business decisions which help shape our society.

But Olsberg is also well placed to see some of the shortcomings that look like becoming entrenched under the Howard Government. From her perspective, trustees surrender too much control over investment decisions to professional funds managers who concentrate excessively on short-term speculative share trading.

Olsberg also recognises that privatisation shifts the burden of funding retirement incomes onto people who can least afford it. Unless there is a continuing top-up from the social security system, she warns that many people will face a rough time in their old age. She also sees a large gap between the reality facing most people and the message conveyed by an advertising campaign from one funds manager which 'shows a greying, but still youthful looking, 60-year-old man walking along a sun-drenched beach,arm-in-arm and looking adoringly at a glamorous young woman in her mid-thirties'.

The more likely outcome is that an older woman will be stuck at home struggling to get a fair share of her partner's superannuation. As Olsberg points out, spouses with no income of their own have no legal entitlement to their partner's super whereas they would have had access to the joint pension. She quotes a 67-year-old woman who says:

> I can't get the pension because Jim has got very good superannuation. But he begrudges giving me any money nowadays. He says it's his super and he's going to spend it himself. He goes out a lot, plays golf and has lunch with his friends. He's cut my housekeeping money right back, and I don't even have money to buy myself lipstick any more.

One intriguing aspect of the new super scheme is that—despite being so regressive—it was introduced at the behest of the union movement. Low income earners who could previously expect to get an age pension funded from a moderately progressive tax system are now expected to provide for their own pension via super. As a result, money which could have gone into take-home pay now goes into super contributions. Not only are the contributions equivalent to a flat rate tax, the tax concessions overwhelmingly benefit the well-off even after the Howard Government's surcharge.

One super scheme reportedly hired several funds managers only to discover that they had been selling the same parcel of BHP shares to each other ... members had paid out brokerage and management fees for the privilege of owning the same number of BHP shares. No new productive investment eventuated but the funds managers and the brokers went away happy.

For traditional equity considerations to prevail, the system needs to be turned on its head so that any tax subsidies go only to those at the bottom of the scale. The level of contributions also need to be capped below the proposed 12 per cent of income so that ordinary employees don't find it even harder to make ends meet during their working lives. (Olsberg focuses on the difficulties for part-time employees, but six per cent should be more than ample to replace the age pension for someone in continuous full-time employment.)

Although the poor do badly, the new system has created a bonanza for the funds managers who handle the contributions on behalf of the members of various super schemes and their trustees. Compulsory contributions mean that the funds managers now have access to a guaranteed flood of money from people who would not normally go anywhere near the share or bond markets.

Olsberg argues that leaving investment allocation entirely in the hands of the major funds managers can lead to contributors' 'assets being sold backwards and forwards, inflating the market and transaction costs without the benefits of productive investment. These powerful institutions have an adverse effect on our national economy, pressuring the government to slow down the economy at the slightest hint of higher inflation'.

Although Olsberg did not give specific examples, one super scheme reportedly hired several funds managers only to discover that they had been selling the same parcel of BHP shares to each other. At the end of the day, members had paid out brokerage and management fees for the privilege of owning the same number of BHP shares. No new productive investment eventuated but the funds managers and the brokers went away happy.

Olsberg's other complaint is typified by the intense pressure exerted by the financial markets a couple of years ago for a three percentage point rise in interest rates in order to throttle a non-existent threat of inflation. Fortunately, the then Reserve Bank Governor, Bernie Fraser, refused to bow to this pressure. Otherwise the economy would almost certainly have been plunged back into recession and hundreds of thousands of contributors would have lost their jobs.

Olsberg looks forward to the day when contributors take a much keener interest in how the super money is invested. As she writes, 'What happens to the money in our super funds may well be the key to our successful ageing in the 21st century and the health of our nation as a whole'.

The hope is for far more attention to be paid to ensuring that the money is invested in a manner which takes account on ethical and environmental considerations as well as the nation's long-term prosperity. But

she also recognises that trustees are constantly reminded that the easiest way to discharge their fiduciary duties is to hand the investment decisions over to professional funds managers who prefer to dismiss any namby pamby stuff about 'socially responsible investment' and focus instead on short-term performance.

Little wonder the financial markets still have trouble believing the riches the union movement have delivered on a plate! ■

Brian Toohey is a columnist with the *Financial Review*.

POETRY

ALAN WEARNE

Murray and other rivers

The Wild Reply, Emma Lew, Black Pepper, 1997. ISBN 1 876 04413 6 RRP $15.95
Accidental Grace, Judith Beveridge, University of Queensland Press, 1996. ISBN 0 7022 2872 9 RRP $18.95
Subhuman Redneck Poems, Les Murray, Duffy & Snellgrove, 1996. ISBN 1 875 989 08 0 RRP $16.95
Dogstown, Lee Fuhler, Eaglemont Press, 1996. ISBN 0 646303279 RRP $20.00

I AM ONLY INTERESTED in promoting those volumes of verse that seem an adventure for the reader. All of these four volumes have adventure (though the adventure may not be the one the poet had in mind). None plays safe. Take this, for example, from Emma Lew's 'How Like You'?

> How like you, cholera,
> to worry over the health of strangers.
> And you have let your sweetheart go hungry,
> while your legend crossed the country,
> a surprise visitor playing Cupid,
> keeping the happy happy
> from guest wing to portrait gallery,
> prickly wilderness to deepest city.

Like many a Lew poem it smoulders and blazes; it stares straight at you, ready to seduce, ready (even better —or worse) to spook. 'Oh my God!' you ask, 'Where's the woman taking us this time?' Disarming stuff. Most poets can juxtapose at times, but few can do it like her.

With Ramona Barry and Cassie Lewis (who have yet to appear in volumes) Lew is as formidable a new Australian poet as any in the nineties. Were she a writer of prose fiction (damn refuge of the contemporary over-rated) she would be in line for a call from *Vogue* or *The Good Weekend*, pleased to announce her appointment as the latest fad goddess. Luckily good verse requires more brain power: though that doesn't mean you can't just soak mind and imagination in Lew's sombre lyrics. There's a chilling portrait of Hitler and henchmen, at home in Berchtesgaden, a reminiscence of weirdly black humour from (I think) a Chinese woman politician, love poems, landscapes, evocations of the European past. The tone might be consistantly intense (though never bleak) but the subject matter covers considerable imaginative territory.

> I need to know
> the truth about
> the elevator crash,
> I can't wait or
> the pain will go
> back into its house.
> Listen, I am
> the doctor of this
> theatre. Emotions,
> reactions—they're
> my business.

I'll say they are.

Judith Beveridge must believe there is an audience beyond her pages, one to court and respect: so much of her poetry is so careful, though never cautious or paranoid. Indeed the poems often seem so neat that you almost expect each line to start in upper case, and her stanzas of three or four lines to launch into a formal rhyme scheme. Too careful? Well they never exactly wobble, and just sometimes a poem has to wobble; a reader has to think 'Oh no, he/she's going to fall off the tight rope this time!' Still, who needs wobbling when you have these lines from 'The Elephant Odes':

> You have never fostered
> the fractious, uppity jaunt of the camel,
> or the lubricious saunter of the horse.
> You haven't become solitary
> and depraved like the rhino,
> that crazed commando, stalking out the shadows,
> plotting its aristocracy from a tooth.
> You have never become mean like the mule;
> you have never given in to buffoonery like the hippo,
> or to melancholia like the moose,
> or to asceticism like the yak,
> or to hubris like the lion
> or to anorexia nervosa like the giraffe,
> or to peccancy like the pig.
> Not even to obsequiousness
> like the jackal howling bwana bwana
> at death for a corpse.

Now Beveridge may *look* as though she's playing safe. But no, she's showing off. Nothing wrong with that: all the best poets do it. It's not the total of what they do but it sure plays an important part. 'Yes,' the reader is advised, 'I am doing something different with words that you can't do. By the way, hope you like the result.' And we do: it helps to create literature.

Much of this volume concerns itself with travel and much with the animal kingdom. Journey poems needn't be journeyman poems and Beveridge's pieces set in India are not some verse equivalent to *National Geographic*. The animal-based poems, though, demand many re-readings. 'The Elephant Odes' is the best poem in English featuring that beast since Thomas Hood's 'Remonstratory Ode', a piece of crazed tragi-comic weirdness—a fine example of showing-off. Hood shouldn't be seriously invoked when assessing Beveridge. But Elizabeth Bishop can be, not just because both Bishop and Beveridge focus so much of their work on travel and animals but because both treat their work and audience with respect, 'showing off' without anyone thinking they do.

Les Murray is our foremost lightning rod: the poet who should have the craft's spruikers crying 'Here, non-poetry world, is one about whom it is impossible to be neutral. Is he our Dante or merely a kind of arty John Laws? Buy now and see what the fuss is!'

Of course the poet doesn't help and nor should he: preacher and hectorer, celebrator and despiser, Murray's *œuvre* is as erratic

as any poet's in contemporary Australia. Me, I'd rather read Adamson, Lehmann, Pi O, Beaver and a battalion of et ceteras ... and yet, when he cultivates that most delicate bloom, a fine poem ('Burning Want' or a number of 'The Sand Coast Sonnets) I am willing to forgive him his 'controversial' verse—almost.

For his much discussed 'The Beneficiaries', 'A Stage of Gentrification', and 'For Helen Darville' are, like Murray's responses to the AIDS epidemic of a decade back, mean little squibs, devoid of charity, possessed of a kind of perverse hubris that demands God's total backing. They challenge as John Manifold at his most Stalinist challenged (though Manifold had more art) proclaiming: 'I am right: God/history/ name your poison is with *me* the bard!'

With their pompous, I-told-you-so finger wagging they out-do any school-ma'am femocrat.

Those poems and the man's endless pronouncements on anything that is going had an intriguing effect on my reading: I trod very carefully. When progressing through the poems I enjoyed (e.g. 'Water Gardening in an Old Farm Dam' and 'Below Bronte House') I kept fearing— 'The man's not going to spoil this one with an injection of slop-ideology, is he?' And, guess what? Often he didn't. An interesting experience, almost as interesting as the poems. Oh, he's a small dose poet, though. Bailed-up with too much, I felt like someone caught in the company of a babbling, paranoid yet smug, village crank. The babbling I can understand (it's a common enough verse fault of mine) and the paranoia I must accept and forgive. But the smugness? It perfumes too much of *Subhuman Redneck Poems* from the title and dedication through to the blurb.

Still, the Murray kind of erraticism is a decided adventure. He often reminds me of that fine American Poet James Schuyler.

A creator of large scale extravagant celebrations of life and living in the arty/gay communities of '60s through to '80s New York City, Schuyler also concocted hideously twee, lovey-dovey pieces, little better than greeting-card kitsch. How could he? Because he did, because like Kipling, like Murray, the bad and the good propped each other. They had to: it was the full package.

Lee Fuhler is probably the first Romani-Australian poet and although this might be a substantial 'hook' for his career he has enough passion and potential to transcend 'hooks'. Sure, Fuhler could do with some editing, an amount of workshopping and a substantial reading list, but here at bedrock is how a passionate man can write verse: few gimmicks, no preaching, above all devoid of the smug. The background to much of the poetry is simple, though *not* simplistic: a young man of a non-Anglo-Celtic working class background comes out of outer suburbia (Doveton, Dogstown, a Battlerville that even the most well-meaning coalition MP could only imagine). Heading towards the bigger smoke he gets a rough time and gives a rough time (most often to himself). Yet he is capable of celebrating the natural world and the human world, love, family, and all those crutches to get you through life. Which is what poets have done since the beginning.

Fuhler's pieces are lean, plainspeaking, and at times risk being wooden, but they are devoid of cliché and, best of all, they don't con.

At the centre of the volume, is a suite of poems in Romani, with accompanying translations; here the book truly comes into its own, for we are in the realm of that most 'ethnic' of 'ethnics', the stateless, almost invisible 'ethnic', and we are looking at these wonderful feeling/sounding words: *bango* and *mandi*, *wavva* and *lavs*. Now *that* is an adventure. Would it be possible, I wonder, for Fuhler and perhaps another poet, to be commissioned, one day, to compile an anthology of Gypsy verse?

Of course behind such feel-goodery lies something much darker: creeping up on the reader are Fuhler's meditations on the half a million dead in the Romani holocaust. It might help in her education for a copy of 'Dogstown' to be sent Helen Darville's way. On second thoughts, no. Some of the poems might start appearing under her name. ■

Alan Wearne is a poet and author of the verse novel *The Night Markets*.

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BOOKS: 5

TIM THWAITES

Peak science

Climbing Mount Improbable, Richard Dawkins, Viking (Penguin Science), 1996. ISBN 0 14 02.6302 0 RRP $19.95

IN SECONDARY SCHOOL, when I first came across Charles Darwin and his ideas about evolution by natural selection, it all seemed pretty trite. I really couldn't understand what all the fuss was about, or why my teachers seemed to regard Darwin as such a seminal thinker, someone who shaped the modern world. Now, after more than 25 years' exposure to the biological sciences, I'm beginning to get the idea.

Perhaps I could have shortened my apprenticeship if I had had access to Richard Dawkins' recent book, *Climbing Mount Improbable* at an earlier time. For those who have read previous works—*The Selfish Gene*, *The Blind Watchmaker*—this book may have a flavour of more-of-the-same, but it, better than any of them, details the power and subtlety of natural selection as an agent of biological change.

The book attempts, successfully, to answer one of the central questions any theory of evolution has to face: how organs as complex and finely-tuned as an eagle's eye or a bird's wing can arise, other than by the design of some Superior Being. The answer turns out to be not only that eyes and flight can arise through natural

selection, but that they have both done so already several times during Earth's history.

In the course of giving his answer, Dawkins provides a wonderful illustration of the aesthetics in science—that important ingredient that non-scientists so often miss. For science, like art, is all about responding to pattern, be it in frogs' legs or musical notes. Scientists react to patterns by trying to explain why they exist, and this often leads non-scientists to assume (wrongly) that the beauty of the pattern is lost in the process or has been overlooked. Nothing could be further from the truth. For the scientist, the knowledge of what lies behind the pattern only enhances its impact.

The point of this book is to show how our natural world could have arisen through natural selection alone. Part of the explanation lies in asking the right question. That's where the metaphor of the title comes in. As a pinnacle of evolution, an eagle's eye seems an improbable (if not impossible) point for an animal without eyes to reach. But, Dawkins argues, this is like looking from a valley floor straight up a cliff face to a jagged peak and concluding you are faced with an impossible climb when, around the back of the mountain, there is in fact an easier route up gentle slopes to reach the same point.

What most people fail to comprehend, when talking of evolution, is the vastness of the time scales involved—thousands of millions of years, even more in terms of generations for most organisms. Over that span of time, even a one in ten thousand chance can be quite a good bet. And those are the sorts of odds with which natural selection works.

If a gene or collection of genes for longer legs confers on an organism a one-per-cent better chance of leaving offspring because it is better at escaping predators, then those genes have a one- per cent better chance of being passed on to future generations. Over surprisingly few generations, Dawkins shows, longer legs will occur in perceptibly more and more of the population—and evolution by natural selection has occurred.

But from that point, things rapidly become much more complicated because the capacity to leave offspring depends not solely on the ability to escape predators, but on a constellation of other heritable factors as well. Things also become much simpler because all those factors taken together simply resolve into whether an organism's children will live long enough to leave children of their own, and pass on the family genes.

Using computer models, the biology of spider webs, the uses and development of wings and eyes, the design of computer viruses, the shape of snail shells, and the evolution of symmetry, Dawkins proceeds to tackle a series of misconceptions about natural selection, such as the assumption that because natural selection acts upon a random assortment of genetic change, it must itself be a random process and could never produce an organ as beautifully 'designed' as an eye. Nothing could be further from the truth. The last chapter, on the interaction between figs and the wasps which pollinate them, is as beautiful and complicated an example of the subtlety of evolution by natural selection as you could ever wish to explore.

Hakea seed pod. Photograph: Greg Scullin

But while the journey up Mount Improbable may be a fascinating ramble, it is not all easy going, and the climb is not assisted by some curious and irritating editorial decisions. Given the standard general perception that science-based books are going to be 'hard' to read, why print such a volume in such a small point size with larger than normal spacing between the lines. Not only does this make the book physically more difficult to read (however clear the imprint), but also it makes it appear stark and clinical, rather than inviting.

For some reason, measurements in the book have not been standardised, and switch between imperial (feet and miles) and metric units (metres and cubic centimetres), hardly guaranteed to put the many people who are uncomfortable with numbers at their ease. In fact, the general lack of feel for audience caused me to wonder whom the author had in mind while writing the book. There is an air of preaching to the converted, which is odd in a book published under the name of someone who holds the foundation chair in public understanding of science at Oxford University. Some explanations, for instance, are overly detailed and long-winded—particularly in the section on the spider webs, where Dawkins tells us that the editor actually made him cut back his explanation. That comment, along with several others of similar ilk, only serve to irritate the reader.

The above annoyances can be laid at the feet of the editor, but he or she is not entirely to blame for Dawkins' unfettered and unabashed polemicism. At times it would be pleasant to be treated more like an adult, and have alternative arguments presented not simply as straw men to knock over.

But these irritations are small compared with the general worth of a book which effectively cuts the ground from under the feet of creationists and so-called 'creation scientists'. *Climbing Mount Improbable* gives good, clear, logical arguments as to why evolution by natural selection is a sufficient explanation for the diversity of life we see around us. It also provides a picture of complexity, beauty and 'rightness' worthy of a Creator. As Dawkins demonstrates, fundamentalist explanations are generally simplistic both in science and theology. ■

Tim Thwaites is a freelance science writer.

THEATRE

GEOFFREY MILNE

Fools rush in

NOW THAT GEOFFREY RUSH has won his Academy Award as best actor in the film *Shine*, it is timely to look at the media response to his richly deserved Oscar and at his career as an actor on the Australian stage.

The Australian media have been justly proud of his success (although one hapless commercial television reporter managed to confuse him with the Oscar-winning Australian cinematographer John Seale in her breathless report!) and they rushed into print and onto the air on March 26 with countless interviews and background pieces about his success, his reaction to his success and his career in general—many of them no doubt pre-prepared, given the confident book-makers' predictions that he would win.

Most media commentators focused on the growing maturity of the Australian film industry and many used the extraordinary box-office success of *Shine* in general and Rush's award in particular as vindication for this assertion. Aussie nationalists had a field day, including those who felt that the actor playing the younger Helfgott—Noah Taylor—was also worthy of an award.

The good old Melbourne *Herald-Sun*—never able to resist a bit of parish pump-priming—managed to trivialise the achievement in an editorial, claiming Rush as 'our [that is, Melbourne's] Geoffrey' on the grounds that he and his family presently live in leafy Hawthorn. Acting for the stage nowadays is very much a national business in this country; touring, the availability of work and the demand for actors of high calibre in the subsidised theatre guarantee that. But the *Herald-Sun* doesn't seem to worry itself unduly with events taking place beyond state borders.

The *Age*'s editorial saw the Oscar as 'recognition of an outstanding Australian talent after a *solid but unspectacular 25-year career* on stage and screen ...' (my emphasis). Perhaps the *Age* is also unaware of Rush's considerable achievements across Australia—achievements which have won him a trip to Russia for his electrifying performance in Company B's production of *Diary of a Madman*, along with Sydney Theatre Critics Circle and Variety Club awards, and even a Melbourne Green Room award!

Many articles, however, have led with headlines or themes like 'overnight sensation', the assumption being that Rush has suddenly shone just because he has starred in an international hit film. At least one piece went so far as to support its 'overnight sensation' claim with the odd idea that *Shine* was his first screen role. It wasn't, by any means. Although he hasn't done as much screen work as some of his peers, Rush appeared in Peter Duncan's *Children of the Revolution* last year and two years before that he was in George Whaley's adaptation of Steele Rudd's *On Our Selection*. His role in the recent ABC TV drama series, *Mercury*, should also not have been forgotten so soon, I would have thought.

True, there were some media pieces that put Rush's 'Rush of Gold' in a wider context. Sometime theatre critic, Rosemary Neill, painted the bigger picture in a full-page piece in *The Australian* (making the nicely ironic point that this is a *'25-year* overnight sensation; again, my emphasis) while that paper's current Sydney theatre critic John MacCallum contributed a thoughtful piece dwelling, rightly enough, on the man's extraordinary physicality and clowning ability. MacCallum's little article (set amid the paper's general coverage of the Oscars as Hollywood social event) featured a photograph of Rush with fellow Australian thespian Mel Gibson in a legendary 1980 production in Sydney of Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*.

PERHAPS THE MOST COMPREHENSIVE piece of all was the page-two biography headed 'Rush of glory for born actor' that appeared in the Melbourne *Herald-Sun*. Staff journalists Terry Brown and Vicky Roach had really

done their homework on his c.v.—even dredging up memories of a 1981 film by Gillian Armstrong called *Starstruck*—and theirs also featured the *Godot* photograph, along with pictures of Rush as a little boy in Toowoomba and Rush as Helfgott, captioned 'Flying high: a winning act in *Shine*'.

CONTEXTUALISING A CAREER in three pics was also the approach largely taken by ABC TV's Jenny Brockie, in a widely-ranging discursive interview that went to air before the Academy Awards (on 23/3/97). The only three visual records of Rush's performances that the ABC seemed to know about (or could get pictures of) were of *Shine*, *Diary of a Madman* and the now seemingly mandatory *Waiting for Godot*. It is not hard to imagine, by the way, that the main reason for that engaging snapshot's survival for posterity is that it also features the hitherto better-known Mel Gibson!

The problem even with the articles that contextualised Rush's wider career on the Australian stage was that (notwithstanding the *Herald-Sun* editorial's parochiality) he was portrayed mainly as a Sydney actor. Only Neill and Brown and Roach bothered to mention his work outside Sydney (getting as far as Brisbane) but none has talked about his wider stage work.

Rush, like many an Australian actor, cut his teeth in University theatre. Founding director of the Queensland Theatre Company, Alan Edwards, tells the story that he first saw Rush baring his bony shanks in a University revue in Brisbane in the early 1970s; Edwards evidently saw sufficient potential in this act to engage him in his acting ensemble and Rush was certainly a regular member of the QTC for some years. However, he had certainly acted before 1971 with Bryan Nason's College Players, which was a collective company touring Gilbert & Sullivan, contemporary experimental drama and the classics around Queensland's backblocks. This might have been Rush's first experience of being an ensemble player; it was not to be his last.

After his first stint with the QTC, playing mostly in British and European classics, Rush travelled abroad to study with the noted physical theatre and mime teacher Jacques Lecoq. Many commentators have attributed his highly physical but very vulnerable acting style to this experience, and much of his later career has certainly exemplified these facets of the actor's craft.

Returning to the QTC in 1978, Rush played the Fool to Warren Mitchell's *King Lear* in a memorable production which subsequently toured to Sydney. Since then, Rush has often been cast (and praised) as one the great clowns of the Australian stage—especially in the classical repertoire.

More recent events partly bear this out and partly gainsay this typecasting formula.

My first encounter with Geoffrey Rush was at the State Theatre Company of South Australia, during the remarkable ensemble experiment of Jim Sharman and Neil Armfield in 1982 and 1983 which characterised this company as the Lighthouse. Rush played more than a dozen distinctly differentiated roles in a highly eclectic repertoire over that heady period, ranging from Shakespeare, Beaumarchais and Brecht to brand-new plays by Nowra and Sewell.

The clownish, physical Rush was certainly present when he played a skinny, safari-suit-clad Sir Andrew Ague-cheek in Neil Armfield's gifted modernised production of *Twelfth Night* in 1983. His performance with the likes of John Wood (as Sir Toby), Robynne Bourne (as Maria) and others was full of playfulness and improvisation within a rock-solid contemporary clown format. He was a dead-set loser, but his indignation was carefully disciplined so as not to occlude that of the splendid Malvolio of Peter Cummins, who is the ultimate loser in that play.

Geoffrey Rush, above, with Merridy Eastman, in the Melbourne Theatre Company's 1993 production of The Dutch Courtesan. *On p46 with Helen Thomson in the same play. Photographs by Jeff Busby.*

In stark contrast was his obdurate Theseus/Oberon double in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in the same season, playing opposite Gillian Jones's adamantine Hippolyta/Titania in a Jim Sharman production that played for dark psychological depth in a way that the current RSC production couldn't dream of. Their battle over 'that Indian boy' was extremely willing and it helped to reveal much of the psycho-sexual undercurrent of the play that was as much a part of Sharman's production vision as it was a part of Rush's craft as an actor.

Yet another string to this versatile bow was seen in the première of Stephen Sewell's epic drama of Australian oppositional politics, *The Blind Giant is Dancing*. Rush, ever the ensemble player at Lighthouse, copped the rather bland but leading role of Allen Fitzgerald (the privately vulnerable but publicly dominant Labor movement leader) in another Armfield production. The aggressive way he chopped up carrots in his first domestic scene stood in severe contrast with his almost wimpish behaviour at the family barbecue with his benighted parents; his scenes of self-doubt mixed with arrogance at the end (when Labor Party Headquarters are besieged by demonstrators led by his kid brother) were incredibly moving and they prefigured uncannily Paul Keating's election-defeat speech more than a decade later.

Probably Geoffrey Rush's finest and best-known stage performance was in Armfield's production of the David Holman adaptation of Gogol's *Diary of a Madman* for Company B at Belvoir St in 1990 (and subsequently on tour throughout Australia and into the then USSR). Here the clown, the vulnerable intellectual and the indignant misfit all coalesced in one incandescent star role. I have not seen better on the Australian stage since.

BUT I HAVE SEEN ELEMENTS—many of them—reappear regularly and often in Rush's subsequent stage performances. His playful clownishness in the MTC's national tour of *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1991-1992), his brash arrogance and skinny vulnerability as Cocledemoy in the same company's *Dutch Courtesan* (1993) and in 1994, his utter stillness but centrality to Armfield's vision of *Hamlet* for Company B (as an Horatio who couldn't have cared more for his fellow!) are all testimony to the career of an actor who has had a truly major (rather than merely solid) impact on the Australian stage.

I only hope the silver screen hasn't totally hijacked him and that we get to see more of him on the stage. ■

Geoffrey Milne is head of theatre and drama at La Trobe University.

FLASH IN THE PAN

The greatest

When We Were Kings, dir. Leon Gast (independent). Ali says 'I'm so fast, last night I killed the lights and got into bed before the room went dark', the room full of media erupts with laughter, and his eyes gleam as he looks at the list of black musicians who will perform in a three-day concert before the fight. Don King is standing next to him, wearing a grin that looks bolted on. The charismatic man of principle is next to the charlatan and master manipulator and the watching world is in the middle.

All through this documentary the viewer is presented with conflicting images: the defiant celebration of African-American culture in Kinshasa hosted by Zaire's tyrant Mobuto Sese Seko; the glitz of the whole pageant juxtaposed with the simple lifestyle of local blacks; the brash confidence of Ali in the face of the widely-held belief that he would be annihilated by the enormous George Foreman as Ken Norton and Joe Frazier had been before him.

It is the story telling of George Plimpton and Norman Mailer, pulled along by their open affection for the man, that gives this film a glow. Spike Lee is included to tell us how important Ali's politics were to the generation, particularly his refusal to go to Vietnam, but Lee wasn't there and he has to like Ali—George Plimpton and Norman Mailer don't. (It was a relief to hear Norman Mailer describe the brilliance of Ali's tactics in the ring with verve, something he didn't achieve in his book on the fight.)

Ali's spirit is so intoxicating that it would be hard for even those most fervently opposed to boxing not to be uplifted by this film. It is such a classic tale set in bizarre circumstances played out by the most extraordinary of men. He was scared but he forced himself to win.

It's sad to contemplate Ali as he is today compared to what he was. That fight was his pyrrhic victory—if he had lost, he most probably would have retired but instead he continued to fight. By contrast it helped turn George Foreman from a vicious thug into a most disarming and affable gentleman.

—Jon Greenaway

Hard place

Blackrock, dir. Steve Vidler (Hoyts). Blackrock is the kind of place that Amanda Vanstone might describe as an ingrained stain on the Australian economy. It is an industrial city, on the beach, the kind of place where you expect to find kids with problems. And you do. Ricko (Simon Lyndon) comes back to town in his Sandman panel van from an extended surfing furlough 'up north.' He catches up with Jared (Laurence Breuls) who is five years his junior: Jared, from a broken family, has grown up in Ricko's thrall. Jared gets a tattoo to match Ricko's and puts on a party to welcome him home. Leaving the party, Jared witnesses a rape. He decides to tell nobody. The following morning he learns that the rape victim has also been murdered. His girlfriend, Rachel (Jessica Napier) discovered the body while she was looking for Jared.

There is much to ponder as this finely crafted film gradually unfolds. The script, by Nick Enright, is arresting. It avoids the trap of offering saccharine pity to teenagers who find themselves out of their depth. Indeed, for most of the film Jared is portrayed as a moral coward, easily swayed and insensitive to his mother, Diane (Linda Cropper), who is unable to pin him down long enough to tell him the news that she has breast cancer. Enright does not celebrate teenage anger. He expects more from his characters and exposes their weaknesses with unfashionable candour. At the same time, his attention to detail is such that no character, however brief their appearance, is merely sketched. Even two lines from Mikey Robbins, leaning on a poker machine, count for something. The result is that the film has an extraordinary range of sympathies. But no amount of chaos inhibits Enright from extracting resolutions from the mess with a keen sense of justice. This film is one to see soon, before it finds its way into high school curricula. It is one to see on Budget night.

—Michael McGirr SJ

Full-bodied vintage

Blood and Wine, dir. Bob Rafelson (independent). This film has a heavyweight cast—Jack Nicholson, Michael Caine, Judy Davies for starters. The plot is a sort of Hitchcockian, film-noir thriller; it creates a Chandleresque world (it *is* set in Florida) without a Philip Marlowe. It has some very dark moments, largely courtesy of Nicholson's mephistophelian presence as Alex Gates; a failed wine salesman. Rafelson makes the most of him: juicy closeups of his trademark leer, and that intimidating stillness presaging violence.

Gates' character is a study in untrustworthiness—imagine a much grander, more dangerous Willy Loman. Sometimes Nicholson seems too big for the part; it is a surprise at first to learn that he is a salesman, a servant of sorts. He seems more the tycoon than the tycoon he robs. Until Michael Caine enters the plot, Nicholson overshadows the other characters, even Judy Davies, who seems small and grey beside

***Eureka Street* Film Competition**

Woody Allen's latest film *Everyone Says I Love You* is about as eccentric as a musical comedy can get, but for this month's film competition we're going back to his classic *Annie Hall.* It won the Oscar for best picture, but for which year? Send your entries to: *Eureka Street* Film Competition, PO Box 553, Richmond 3121, and you could pocket the $30 trip to the movies.

The winner of the March competition was J. Price of Research, VIC, who correctly named the Flash in the Pan picture as *Carry on up the Khyber.*

him. Caine plays Victor Spansky, a Cockney ex-con, whom Gates needs for his underworld knowledge.

The two veterans act the younger ones (Stephen Dorff, Jennifer Lopez) right off the screen, and look as though they're thoroughly enjoying doing so. Sometimes Caine's hamminess is obvious but Nicholson's slickness is believable: he is an epicurean monster, after all.

To reveal too much of the plot would spoil it, but there are echoes of other things, better things, that go beyond the Hitchcock-Chandler span, to hint at Hamlet-ish things like a stepson who hates his stepfather, who in turn has a guilty secret. But Jason is not exactly indecisive, and Alex didn't kill Suzanne's late husband.

In the end of course, you look mainly at Jack Nicholson when he's on screen because he's magnetic. And that's a good enough reason to see a not-too-bad sort of thriller.

—Juliette Hughes

Shot in the dark

Trigger Happy dir. Larry Bishop (independent). Directed by the godson of Frank Sinatra (which means Sinatra is the Godfather), this is a consistently funny black comedy about gangsterism. Bishop must have had his tongue firmly in his cheek when he claimed that the film is a religious allegory, as it is basically a spoof of films of the Tarantino genre, violent but played for laughs.

Vic (Richard Dreyfuss) has been put away because he went crazy after his girlfriend Grace, (Diane Lane) left him. During his enforced absence, in a mental institution, his criminal activities have been supervised by his first lieutenants, Ben (Gabriel Byrne), Jake (Kyle McLaughlin), and his number one fast gun Micky (Jeff Goldblum). In his absence Micky has been providing Vic's girlfriend Grace with extraordinarily warm support while two-timing her sister, Rita (Ellen Barkin). No one is really looking forward to Vic's return and one way or another Vic has some scores to settle.

The film was shot in 30 days and has been described as being 'made on a shoestring', although the US film industry seems to feature longer and thicker shoe laces than our own industry. The cast is a Who's Who of Hollywood, with stars appearing in minor roles for free, presumably in homage to the director's Godfather. The result is a 13 dead-body movie that in the context of a total cast list of 22 (including bit players) really threatens to make demands on the interchange bench.

Although littered with dead bodies, this wry movie never dwells on the violence, and its attitude to death is best summed up when a hit-man says to his victim, 'We've all got to die sometime, but you're going to beat the rest of us to the finish line'. Filmed in garish colour, with over-the-top sets, the film has a feel of a stage play. The cast seems to have fun and things improve after a particularly grotesque performance by Burt Reynolds is sensibly terminated.

—Gordon Lewis

Pay homage

The Castle, dir. The Frontline Team (Village). This film has been dismissed as a slap-dash affair, put together in a rush in order to capitalise on the creative roll the *Frontline* crew are on at the moment. Since it was filmed in 11 days the seams were always going to show. And for the first half it appears the criticisms are accurate. But then it gets funny—very funny.

The Kerrigan family are happily ensconced in their quarter-acre block surrounded by all of suburbia's icons. Darryl (Michael Caton) Sal (Anne Tenney) and their four kids have all the special qualities of fleecy-lined moccasins at a bowling alley. Darryl reckons their life under the powerlines and by the airport is as good as it gets, and they love each other in a strange sort of way: even the eldest son Wayne, in jail for armed robbery, is not out of their affections. So when they receive a notice from the council that their land is to be compulsorily acquired so the airport can expand, the Kerrigans and their eccentric neighbours decide to put up a fight that goes all the way to the High Court.

The Castle is ambivalent about its subject—*Homo Ugbootus.* It satirises its simple and tasteless life yet applauds its resilience. It is a bit patronising, but utter twits have that ability to be far more noble than those of us restrained by the inhibitions of mainstream life.

The court scenes are great fun with the input of Tiriel Mora playing the hapless Kerrigan family solicitor Dennis Denuto and Charles 'Bud' Tingwell as Lawrence Hamill, the retired constitutional lawyer who rallies to their cause. *The Castle* will catch those of you with sympathies for people who are perfectly content with their little slice of bugger-all.

—Jon Greenaway

Far from Holy

Relic dir. Peter Hyams (Hoyts, Greater Union, Village). What elements go towards placing a movie into 'the absolutely nothing to recommend it' category? Let's see: gruesome murders investigated by a divorced lieutenant (Tom Sizemore) fighting for custody of a dog; a bright young bike-riding evolutionary-biologist (Penelope Ann Miller) occupying high moral ground over

scheming, mean-spirited Asian scientist. Or I could mention the mildly corrupt mayor with his busty wife, or the voodoo ceremony to create the animatronic beast, but why spoil your clear view by smudging it with silliness I suggest you don't see.

I would love a film that allowed the female lead to have a higher degree in science, the savvy to save the world (or at least a small part of it) and be on the cooler side of the science v. superstition debate. But why is it that this film's woman has to allow the beast to lick her breast gratuitously before she shoves the explosive thing in his gob? I mean pleeeese.

I, for one, am looking forward to the interactive animatronics features where the audience can knock off the offensive boneheads with whom they are supposed to sympathise. A joy stick with every movie ticket, rah, rah. No wonder people are flooding to the video arcades.

—Siobhan Jackson

Mayday! Mayday!

WITH INSPIRED TIMING, SBS programmed the final episode of *The Wilderness Years* for May 1. Marginalised leftwingers may find some poignancy in this. *The Wilderness Years* is a 4-part series on Britain's Labour Party that should be required viewing for anyone who wants to know what's been happening in the old Dart in the last 18 years. The program is already two years old and it's a pity we haven't all seen it sooner. The ABC also came up trumps with *Outnumbered,* a one-hour documentary on the brief, unsuccessful 1996 election campaign of John Brumby, Victoria's Opposition Leader.

At any rate, while commercial channels were giving priceless publicity to Pauline Hanson's new party, the public channels were devoting prime time to the question of what on earth we are to do without a strong voice for the weak. The two programs evoke many questions: what is a *labour* party now? Are 'real' labour parties unelectable, and if so, why? And why are leftwingers blamed for splits when it seems to be the right-wingers who actually rat on the party itself? (Australia had the DLP and various dreadful post-election 'independents', Britain had the SDP.)

In *Outnumbered*, the camera follows John Brumby around the 1996 state election campaign that Jeff Kennett called in the afterglow of the Howard victory. Interesting really, because Brumby's style is far more like Howard's—not an inspired orator, a little stilted in delivery, but seeming (as one must always say of politicians) honest and decent and very much loved by his family. It was to be with his family, and for his health, Brumby tells us, that he had left Canberra for the less stressful life of a state backbencher. Instead he found himself staring into the poisoned chalice, an image that recurs in the *The Wilderness Years.* His task, after the devastation of 1992, was to attempt an electoral swing that had never been heard of in Victorian history, with a budget of less than a quarter of a million dollars, and with a party that included some who had their reasons for wanting another spell in Opposition. 'There wasn't anyone else,' says Brumby candidly, if a little hesitantly, talking of his rather sudden rise to party leadership. Then he adds with some warmth, 'It's—excuse my French—it's a pretty shit thing to do to someone, stick them in the front bench against a pretty heavy headkicker.' Later in the program we see Jeff Kennett kicking a head at a doorstop: 'Did you not read my lips?', he asks, intimidatory, confident. None of the journalists takes him on. And he never deigns to debate Brumby: he sends the second-in-command, Alan Stockdale. We do see one journalist taking on Jeff Kennett—Paul Barber of 3AW. Barber's style matches the Premier's own. But the imbalance is soon restored: Barber is sacked by his station, for criticising Channel 9.

Outnumbered shows how the opposition's chances were being discussed in the offices of the *Melbourne Age.* The editorial discussion looked stagey and artificial; the conclusions long foregone. There is an apologist and a devil's advocate; the many sins of the Kennett government are adverted to but nothing avails Brumby's labour: 'unelectable' is the verdict. Jeff hadn't done *enough* naughty things yet. A small swing is declared to be desirable, to let Jeff know he's gone too far.

The question is often raised in *The Wilderness Years*, too, of just what a conservative government has to *do* to be kicked out when the progressive party is tearing out its own intestines with the help of hostile media. The strong implication is that Margaret Thatcher's government was never properly opposed in Parliament because the Labour Party was too busy opposing itself.

Wilderness is compulsive viewing: we are taken to the start of British Labour's 18-year season in Purgatory as James Callaghan leaves Number 10 in May 1979 to make way for the most radical conservative regime his country had ever known. And there is the conundrum, says the program—how electable are the policies of social justice, high public spending and high taxes? What does a modern party of the people do? The answer, according to Tony Benn, long the leader of the British Labour left, has been to compound the error—increasingly to accommodate the Right, to ditch the very people you're supposed to be representing: 'I've seen so many failures based on the idea "give up everything you believe and you'll win." And then people say you didn't give up *enough* so you have to give up even more. The tragedy of the Labour Party since 1974 is that it hasn't appeared to stand for anything, so the people said "better the devil we know".'

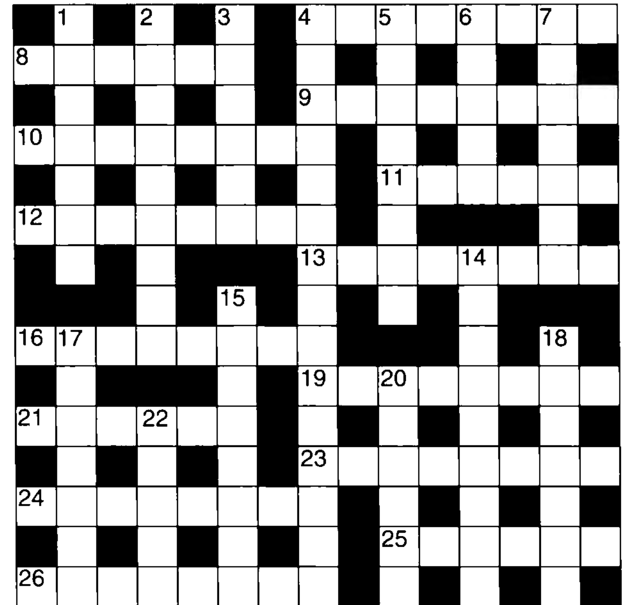
TONY BENN IS THE MOST CHARISMATIC of the talking heads that give their widely divergent views on what happened. He seems passionate about social justice, yet vividly intelligent. He seems full of principle and compassion, and yet the pragmatists in his own party accuse him of sacrificing the people of Britain to the long Tory rule because of his refusal to compromise: Lord This and Baroness That flash across the screen saying how wrong Benn was.

So the overwhelming sense that comes across is one of tragedy. The musical track is brilliant: at various times we hear the anthems of socialism played in elegaic fashion. There was a marvellous, celebratory sense to the old party, even as we see it dying the death of a thousand soundbites. Kinnock for all his turncoatery was a fine orator and a terrific singer, and had led conferences' renditions of 'We'll Keep The Red Flag Flying'. Yet it was under his leadership that the party's symbol of the red flag was hung out to dry in favour of a red rose: much more soothing to the Hyacinth Buckets whose votes they were now chasing. And Hyacinth wouldn't want to sing 'The Internationale'. But, as Benn said, it wasn't enough merely to have given up what you believed in—the new men were on the march: Peter Mandelson, Tony Blair, very smooth, very yuppie, very worrying. John Smith's brief leadership was only a hiccup in their rise to power. The sight of his coffin being carried out makes you think that the last of the old Labour Party is being buried too. There wasn't much of a squabble over the carcase; the winners had been looking mighty sleek for some time. The king is dead. Long live the king. And you'd better believe it. Truly. ■

Juliette Hughes is a freelance writer and reviewer.

Eureka Street Cryptic Crossword no. 53, May 1997

Devised by Joan Nowotny IBVM



ACROSS

4. One's to appear in the procession! Bliss! (8)
8. Dog goes back round everyone, conducting a poll, perhaps. (6)
9. I quit Hanoi, moving in the direction of an island in the English Channel, in a vessel whose passengers are exclusively couples. (5,3)
10. Vehicle in need of repair follows another in the control of a dictator. (8)
11. The University of Sydney initially enters the 'Return of Latin' debate, and is prepared to set it up. (6)
12. Not being synthetic, the investigation into Latin literacy could be called 'latinacy', to coin a term! (8)
13. Is intemperate about quantity of medicine in the mixture. (8)
16. Ghost coming back, as the French would say. (8)
19. Main issue Capone saw as occuring regularly—like the Spring! (8)
21. Sailor on land route would rather go overseas. (6)
23. In New York the 'Moral Hundred' made the claim for ordinariness—as representative of the majority. (8)
24. Draw back from the gale, as the boat moves in that direction. (8)
25. He counts sheep, perhaps, as he seeks 'fresh fields and pastures new'! (6)
26. Often people keep the score in their heads. (8)

DOWN

1. Appreciating the view, perhaps, vain gull lost left wing? (7)
2. From noble idol it is possible to trace pedigree. (9)
3. It made the disciples drunk, it seemed, on 4-down. (6)
4. Writer with note on price for Sabbath celebration. (9,6)
5. Made concrete—got it? (8)
6. Does Sally start on her medicines? (5)
7. Somehow rate its performance though scratched! (7)
14. One could blow up and rubbish a distinguished come-back! (9)
15. The sailor, when 21-across, may look forward to this arrival. (8)
17. The current recession. (3-4)
18. Maybe he likes his birds to be more decorative. (7)
20. A beard can create friction. (6)
22. Somehow I don't understand, the rumour came from France. (2,3)

Solution to Crossword no. 52, April 1997

P	O	S	T	M	E	R	I	D	I	E	M		D	
L		A		A		U			D		Y	E	A	R
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G		I		D		E		A			A	C	I	D
I	S	S	U	E		D	U	T	C	H		A		O
A		F		N				I		O		R		W
R	O	A	M		P	R	E	C	A	U	T	I	O	N
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S	A	T	I	R	I	S	I	N	G		F	A	I	R
I		I		I		T				A		T		A
N		O		S	H	O	O	K		P	O	U	N	D
G	O	N	E			R		E		L		R		I
	V		R	E	G	E	N	E	R	A	T	I	O	N
B	A	L	I		U			N		M		S		G
	L		C	O	M	P	O	S	M	E	N	T	I	S

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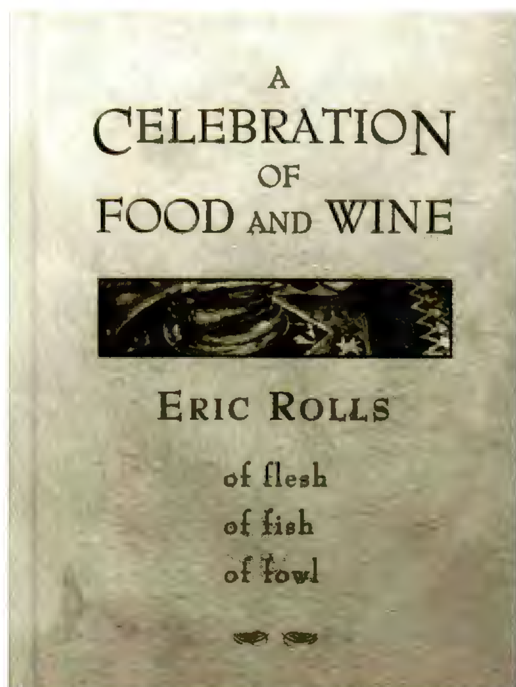

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