

EUREKA STREET

Vol. 3 No. 8 October 1993

\$5.00



Travelling band

Damien Simonis in Sudan, **Kerryn Goldsworthy** in Scotland, **Chris McGillion** in Vietnam, **Peter Pierce** and **Emmanuel Santos** in Japan, **Quixote** in France, and **Gerard Windsor** on business



Undermining Mabou
Frank Brennan

The shaming of Manning Clark
Rosamund Dalziell

On your way, sister
Pamela Foulkes

Trading in union futures
Paul Rodan

**Australian
books**

In Memoriam D.J.O'H

*One thirty. This is the time I saw you last
Braving death with a grin in the stilled ward.
Invaded and insulted, you stood fast,
Ready to fight, or ford*

*The cold black stream that rings us all about
Like Ocean. Some of it got into your eyes
That afternoon, smarting you not to doubt
But to a new surprise*

*At what sheer living brings—as once Yeats
Braced in a question bewilderment, love and dying.
As the flesh declines, the soul interrogates,
Failing and still trying.*

*On a field of green, bright water in their shade,
Wattles, fused and diffused by a molten star,
Are pledging spring to Melbourne. Grief, allayed
A little, asks how you are.*

*'Green is life's golden tree', said Goethe, and
I hope that once again you're in a green
Country, gold-fired now, taking your stand,
A seer amidst the seen.*

Peter Steele

In Memory of Dinny O'Hearn

I

*Outcome, upshot, lifelong input,
All roads leading to a dark Rome,
We stumble forward, foot after foot:
You have taken your bat and gone home.
Though you had your life up to pussy's bow,
The innings wound up far too quick
But the nature of knowledge, you came to know,
Is itself the flowering of rhetoric.*

*Your bullshit-counter hardly ever failed you,
Ticking its way through academic crap.
At Stewart's and at Percy's chums regaled you
With meshing yarns that constitute a map
Of oral, Celt, republican Australia,
Each face as rosy as a full blown dahlia.*

II

*He disappeared in the full brilliance of winter,
yellow sun unfailing, the voice of Kennett
utterly itself away on Shaftesbury Avenue,
Keating unveiling a sort of cardboard republic
and politics full of passive verbs.
But only one strainful night
after his minussing
the first kookaburra in yonks began
guffawing above elm-tufted Drummond Street,
recalling his miraculous ear for falsehood,
his jocund whiskeycoloured soul,
now on early retirement.*

*His absence was a black mechanical shadow
creasing the macadam,
the fetch of a small car whirring in the night.*

Chris Wallace-Crabbe



UN Peace Award

Andrew Hamilton SJ has received a citation in the United Nations Peace Awards, print media category, for his 'Three Years Hard', articles on the experience of Cambodian refugees in Australia, published in *Eureka Street*, February and March 1993.

Cover: Straw sandals on the walls of a Shinto temple in Chichibu, Japan. Messages attached to the sandals bear good wishes from friends and relatives of people who have gone on long journeys. Photo by Emmanuel Santos.

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October 1993

A magazine of public affairs, the arts and theology

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PETER STEELE
AND DAMIEN SIMONIS

ES travels

MY FAVOURITE BUSINESS ADDRESS is the one in Chicago which puts 'Leona's Beautician' next to 'Leona's Mortician'—they get you coming and going. My next favourite is the travel agency called 'Please Go Away'. I don't know whether it does well, but our restless race has been taking its advice for as long as records have been kept. Loving it or hating it, we have kept on the move.

The paradigmatic books for this in the West are *The Odyssey* and *The Book of Exodus*. The first is mainly concerned with the adventures of an individual, the second with those of a people. In both cases, the span of emotions from desperation to exhilaration is on display; what is at issue is not only the seascape or the landscape but the geography of the psyche.

And so it has gone ever since. Whether it is Lucian dreaming in AD200 of a voyage to the moon, or various astronauts telling the story of their trip to that unpromising spot, the unannounced agenda is a charting of the human. Hakluyt's motley array of voyagers may be linguistic geniuses, like Raleigh, or lumpish enough reporters, but when they unfold their tale they expose the heart. Johnson and Boswell, stumping round Scotland together, write the expedition up in predictably convergent and fascinatingly divergent terms. Henry James, off on *A Little Tour in France*, gives you detailed enough instructions to suit, say, Frommer's Guides, but every paragraph tells you that you are really in Jamestown. 'I've been to Paradise, but I've never been to me,' says the song; travel writers do not give up so easily.

We often read with pleasure things that were written out of pain. After all, much travel is largely or entirely unwelcome. In the Middle Ages, if you were both sufficiently immoral and sufficiently repentant, you might be sent on pilgrimage for the term of your natural life. Military expeditionaries might one day be immortalised for their cry of 'The Sea! the Sea!', but would still be deeply conscious of their mortality most of the time. And try as he might to transfigure exile in the *Commedia*, Dante was an exile still, bitten into by nostalgia. The starkest instance of all, as our own century continues to show with such vividness, is the refugee story, in which we may discern both the pangs of others and a powerful sketching of something universal. Ortega y Gasset wrote once, 'We are locked outside ourselves,' and so we are.

The traveller, so the dictionaries remind us, is the one who travails—who is panged. That is not the reason 'Please Go Away' is in business, of course: their intent is not ascetical. In

fact, all that is necessary to pain most people is to preclude freedom of movement: liberty and mobility are intimately related. True of our bodies, this is at least as true of our minds. The latest book by one of the best living poets, W.S. Merwin, is called *Travels*. Its jacket shows migrating caribou filing across the tundra—something prompted, no doubt, by Merwin’s sense that we are prone both to lay waste to the world and to waste our own lives. The poems themselves are all exhibitions of mobility of mind and heart—attempts to replenish diminished resources. This is being a ‘mental traveller’, something more than an anecdotalist or an entertainer or even a savant. It is an attempt to replace appropriate pain with appropriate pleasure.

The October and November issues of *Eureka Street* touch base with some of these matters, spanning different parts of our globe, and addressing them in different tones. As usual, the writings are in part as good as their readers. *Bon Voyage!* ■

Peter Steele SJ is a reader in English in the University of Melbourne.

Peace, maybe

EVEN THE PALESTINIANS who back the peace settlement hammered out between Israel and the PLO, or more precisely between Yitzhak Rabin’s Labour Party-led government and Yasser Arafat’s Fatah section of the PLO, must wonder whether it has all been worth it.

Autonomy under Israeli supervision in the patchwork enclaves of Gaza and Jericho, and even the vague prospect of full statehood to include the West Bank at some unspecified later point, looks a poor deal compared with the United Nations partition plan of 1947. Then, the Jews and Arabs of what was the British mandate in Palestine were assigned six interlocking chunks of land—three each—to be considered two states in an economic confederation. The Jews said yes, the Arabs no.

No one will ever know if the two states could have lived in harmony. What we do know is that thousands of lives have since been lost.

It would be churlish in the extreme not to welcome the agreements reached, but equally it would be naive to ignore their fragility.

Yasser Arafat and the PLO have never been weaker. Supporting Saddam Hussein in the Gulf War cost them financial backing from the Gulf states, and much of their political support.

Rabin’s negotiators will have pointed out that a deal was only possible with Labour, and Likud’s strident denunciation of it seems confirmation enough. Rabin, however, was also under pressure. As much as terrorism has failed to bring Israel to its knees, violent occupation of predominantly Arab land has proved equally

fruitless, and the growing popularity of extremist and fundamentalist groups like Hamas and Islamic Jihad made the PLO an increasingly attractive bargaining partner—while it still had some power.

In spite of the vociferous minority opposition on the Israeli right, the Jewish state can hardly lose. At the best, Palestinians will overcome their differences, use foreign aid to build a functioning and peaceable administration, and convince Israel to abandon the West Bank and allow the creation of a fully independent state—much smaller than the 1947 UN plan envisaged.

Should Palestinian groups opposed to what they call Arafat’s betrayal continue a campaign of violence, Israel will be able to sit back and let the PLO do its dirty work. And so a campaign of violent opposition to Israeli occupation will become an ordeal of fratricide among the Palestinians. At the worst, Jews will continue to be attacked and the Israeli army will march in again, offering a moral justification for doing so. The wild cards in the pack are the Jewish fundamentalists and extremists—how far will they go to oppose peace?

Syria and Jordan complained at not having been notified of the deal arrived at in secret between Israel and the PLO, but they too have everything to gain. For all the noise about Arab unity and the sanctity of the Palestinian cause over the years, the Arab states have always pursued their own agendas.

At the end of the 1948-49 war, Jordan incorporated the West Bank into its territory. King Hussein only renounced his claim to it (occupied by Israel after the 1967 war) in 1988. He has often been accused of collusion with Israel at the expense of the Palestinians. More than half of Jordan’s population is Palestinian, and they form the bulk of the educated and business classes. A strong Palestinian state could cause an exodus of Palestinians and their money from Jordan. It has often been suggested that Palestinians and Jordanians should create a new state, a scenario that could leave Hussein’s throne in danger—the Hashemite monarchy appeals little to Palestinians. A Palestinian statelet is the kind of compromise that must appeal to Hussein—his throne is safe and he won’t lose the Palestinians his country needs.

Syria, first and foremost, wants the Golan Heights back. For this, Israel wants recognition, open borders, trade and normal relations. Both sides would prosper, but is there not more to it? No one knows what kind of deal the two sides struck to end the Israeli bombardment of Lebanon in August. Now that the PLO have made their bed, the Syrians no longer feel obliged to sleep in it. This is pure speculation, but would not a convenient *quid pro quo* leave Syria a free hand in Lebanon (part of a notional Greater Syria) and Israel similar latitude in dealing with the Palestinians? Such a covenant with former enemies would hardly be new to Syria’s wily Hafez al-Assad. ■

Damien Simonis is *Eureka Street*’s Middle East correspondent.

Undermining Mabo

THE MINERS ALWAYS KNEW they would get one more bite of the cherry when the Prime Minister's Mabo package was released for public comment in September. Keating's Mabo Mark II offer differed significantly from the Mark I model that he took to the Premier's conference in June. The anti-Mabo premiers were vindicated because the new model conceded fewer rights to Aborigines than the original. It underwent three major policy changes.

The time is overdue for the premiers to view Aborigines in their states as citizens with rights rather than as enemies of the state. Government is for the good of all citizens, including Aborigines. State and Commonwealth tribunals should enjoy the confidence of all parties whose rights are being determined by them.

The Commonwealth dropped any suggestion of traditional owners exercising a veto over development on their land. A Northern Territory-style veto was not saleable even to the one remaining long-term Labor Premier, Wayne Goss. Announcing his own 'modest, blanched and responsible' land-rights package back in 1991, Goss had said: 'We rejected out of hand the Northern Territory approach as being too radical both in the way it affects the community generally and the specific impact on agriculture and mining.'

Second, in view of the Wik claim in Cape York, and in response to pressure from Comalco, foreign banks and Goss, the Commonwealth agreed to validate all non-Aboriginal titles back to 1788, rather than just from 1975 when the Commonwealth Parliament passed the Racial Discrimination Act. Validation legislation will suspend the operation of the Racial Discrimination Act, confirming the validity of any crown grant made over land and extinguishing retrospectively a native title that otherwise may have survived if the grant had been invalid.

The Commonwealth also agreed to extinguish any remaining native title on pastoral leases and to guarantee continued public access to beaches, river banks and waterways.

The miners were happy with these three policy shifts. But they were not quite as happy as the pastoralists, who were guaranteed immunity from any effects of native title. Although the Commonwealth was prepared to spare pastoralists the inconvenience of ever having to deal with native titleholders again, it remained insistent that native titleholders should be treated like any other landowners whose land is subject to a mining lease. Once the mine had closed and the last

earthmover had disappeared into the dusty horizon, the native titleholders would resume their rights to their land.

The miners, already assured support from Premiers Court and Kennett, convinced Premier John Fahey that such an arrangement could create uncertainty for potential investors—elevating potential uncertainty to a new level of abstraction, even for the Mabo debate. The miners ran a very effective one-year campaign agitating about the supposed uncertainty of their titles granted since 1975. Once Aborigines commenced the Wik claim for breach of fiduciary duty against Comalco, the miners expressed concern about the validity of all their titles. Armed with letters from overseas investors demanding certainty, the miners convinced the Commonwealth to act. But Keating was minded only to suspend native title on validated leases for the life of any mine, rather than extinguishing it for all time. The miners and Fahey objected that such a renewal was 'inconsistent with the Mabo ruling'. They did not bother to state that universal statutory validation of mining titles since 1788 was contrary to the whole spirit of the Mabo decision.

NOW THAT VALIDATED MINING LEASES will revive native title when they expire, we can expect a new round of QCs' opinions and newsletters from major corporate solicitors' firms confirming that few if any mining leases were invalid and in need of validation, thereby reviving native title at the end of such leases. A year ago, the silks were asked if there was any conceivable doubt about the validity of the mining leases. Having entertained the doubt, they will now be asked to give their opinion on validity. Despite the merest doubt, they will confirm the validity of the leases and the permanent extinction of native title. The Commonwealth has already signalled that 'it is likely that there are very few titles which are invalid, and which therefore will be validated by this exercise'.

The Australian Mining Industry Council, the mining industry's public face of reason, has published full-page advertisements about the need for validation, also stating their acceptance of the High Court's decision in the wake of Chief Justice Mason's extraordinary reference at a Cambridge conference to 'the concerted campaign run by the mining interests supported by the pastoral interest to discredit our decision.' In August, the Association of Mining and Exploration Companies circulated a 66-page tract to every barrister in the country, containing attacks on the High Court that two silks

had made at a meeting of John Stone's Samuel Griffith Society. One silk attacked the judges for 'their inventiveness and emotionalism' in making the 'pitiful' decision. The other claimed that the court had decided issues 'in the absence of the interested persons'.

Obviously, the industry is pulling out all stops for the last round with the Keating cabinet.

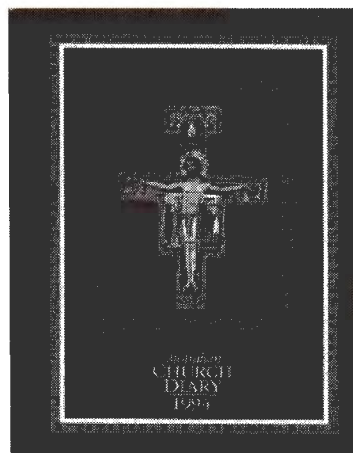
ATTENTION IS NOW DIRECTED to the premiers being urged to water down even further the revised Keating package. The Aboriginal 'right to be asked' about developments on their land is to be further curtailed. This right is modelled on Queensland's Mineral Resources Act, passed by the previous National Party government. Aborigines can say no to development, in which case the matter is referred to a tribunal (which in Queensland is simply the Mining Warden's court). If the tribunal also says no, the government can overrule the decision in the state interest.

Keating's advisers thought they should at least add time limits for each step of the process in the interests of fairness and certainty for all parties. John Fahey, convinced again by the miners, claims that these procedures could add another seven months to processing new mining leases. Governments, having decided to deny Aborigines a say over development on their land and having vested themselves with that power after a tribunal process giving Aborigines a chance only to be heard, would have to expect and tolerate some time delays for Aborigines to consider the application and put their case, and for the tribunal to make a decision. Or are Aborigines to have a right to be consulted provided the government can make a final decision overnight, as in the good old pre-Mabo days when native titleholders had no rights and land was simply classified as vacant crown land?

Given that the states have the power to set up their own tribunals under the Keating model, the time is overdue for the premiers to view Aborigines in their states as citizens with rights rather than as enemies of the state. Government is for the good of all citizens, including Aborigines. State and Commonwealth tribunals should enjoy the confidence of all parties whose rights are being determined by them.

The premiers have a duty to design a system that will be as attractive to Aborigines as it is to miners. It would be a relief if, before the end of the Mabo process, the miners could graciously and publicly concede some points to the Aborigines and the premiers could confidently espouse their commitment to Aboriginal native titleholders as well as to other citizens and corporations committed to the state interest. There can never be any return to the certainty of native titleholders having no rights and no say at all. Even the overseas investors will have to get used to that idea. ■

Frank Brennan SJ is a visiting fellow in the law program of the Research School of Social Sciences at the Australian National University.



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Tone of regret was missing

From Joseph Sutherland
‘The Christian Brothers’ Story’ (Letters, *Eureka Street*, August 1993) would make a worthy historical narrative of the brothers’ notable achievements, were it not for the absence of compassion for the story’s victims. Instead, the story never rises above the complacency of a spirited defence of the congregation. Dr Barry Coldrey CFC fails to show regret for the particular sufferings of the six men.

Br Coldrey projects these six men, who were former orphans, and their allegations of ‘sexual and physical abuse’ made against ‘individual brothers’, as his focal point. From that focus, he introduces subjective comment which sows doubt in our minds, about the truth of what is being alleged. The intention to create doubt becomes unambiguously evident in his later and only question ‘But how do we know what abuse took place when so many key people are dead?’ It seems



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that the story wants to avoid making a sincere admission of some wrongdoing.

Of its nature, sexual abuse is deception, and whether it is ‘recent’ or not recent, it is never ‘easy to check’. How often do we hear a witness ‘corroborate’ the sexual abuse of a child? Nevertheless, that inherent difficulty doesn’t absolve society of responsibility to seek the truth. I believe it is not the certainty of proof that society requires. Rather is it a commitment to respond to adult survivors with sensitivity and healing. So, blessed may Br Coldrey be in his embrace of our Father which art in heaven. For how can a sexually abused child do this, when it conceptualises fatherhood as evil? Hence, by debasing the credibility of those allegedly abused as children, Br Coldrey does not seriously address the problem upon which he first focused.

For their particular sufferings, we owe the six victims at least compassion for having the courage to step out of the closet. And, in my view, we ought to listen to those men with humility and open-mindedness, to discover the despair of wounded childhood. Indeed, the abuse of children is a matter causing the deepest sorrow in the Australian community presently, including Catholics, and especially in the Christian Brothers and among their respected leaders. And in all sorts of ways, we are constructively responding to it by a greater recognition of this

human frailty. Thus, I think that the absence, in the story, of a genuine apology to those orphans who were wronged, is a most obdurate omission. There is not even an acknowledgment to the victims, that the Christian Brothers empathise with them in their struggle to rebuild their lives. And that is anathema to ‘the missionary spirit’ of the congregation which, in the past 30 years, is noted for its work with ‘some of the most underprivileged of God’s people’ (Constitution of the Christian Brothers).

Certainly, it is laudable to defend the congregation against an intemperate, sensationalist, and trivialising media. But, primarily, *Eureka Street* readers want to see it reinforced that the abused suffer from a stolen childhood. An unwitnessed struggle to escape the physical intensity of rape on uninitiated innocence is so spiritually confusing, and so emotionally bizarre, that the victim feels forever marked with an indelible scar. Surely, this is part of ‘the full story’ that ‘still needs to be told’.

J.F.A. Sutherland
Blackburn South, VIC

What is owed to the brothers

From Brian Cosgriff

The big theme in the main stories in papers, films, TV and videos is revenge. Take any five videos out of a shop and three will be about getting even. It’s the underlying idea in the principal stories in the papers most days. It’s so unhelpful.

On the other hand, there is a way in which it’s good to recognise past help and to think about ways of paying back. At the very best it’s an acknowledgement of that debt of gratitude. All that is a quite convoluted way of saying how much so many people owe to the Catholic teaching orders, or, more specifically in my case, the Christian Brothers. They were my teachers for 11 years and had an effect on my life, and on that of hundreds of other boys, that is immeasurable.

There isn’t any field of public life that I can think of where you won’t find brothers’ boys who have reached the highest level. You can mention anything: politics, business, law, edu-

cation or any sporting endeavour and there they are. Always they are able to show the same values that were learnt; commitment, dedication, faith and a great sense of social justice. And I am convinced that even a moving away from the church leaves those values intact in whatever lifestyle choice these schools' graduates make.

For 10 years I did a morning paper delivery round so I was around earlier than most people for a long time. That also gave me a chance to see the beginning of the brothers' day, a start with worship and prayer. Then they spent a whole day dealing with lots of boys and their problems and afterwards went off to the university to improve their qualifications. And all of it done out of an ideal of Christian love. I've seen men take over the responsibility of most demanding positions at an age when most are planning retirement. They practise an equality not often seen so that each house's budget was the same per brother, irrespective of the socio-economic level of the school's clientele. So many great things, so many great men, so many great results. Lots more say the same thing about the other teaching orders. We were very blessed.

Brian Cosgriff
North Balwyn, VIC

Authority in question

From Br Christian Moe FSC

In response to the article by Pamela Foulkes in the August issue, I should like to make a few points:

1. Her case seems to be presented almost exclusively from the point of view of *sola scriptura*; even more, from scripture read exclusively from the perspective of the advance which is said to have been made in the past 30 years or so (cf. par. 3). The fact that there are reputable Scripture scholars who do not uncritically accept the whole package of contemporary 'politically correct' views does not seem to occur to the writer; in fact, some of her statements (par. 3, p18 and the final par., p19) are examples of the kind of generalisation she claims to find in the document she is criticising.

Catholic faith accepts what the church, following unbroken tradition, has always taught. The church today, as at Trent and earlier, teaches that it is of faith that Christ instituted the sacrament of order at the Last Supper. If some Catholic Scripture scholars do not see it that way the problem is theirs. Surely Pamela Foulkes would agree that the present Pope, like his predecessors, holds that Christ, knowingly and intentionally, instituted the sacrament of order; his is the authentic magisterium. Indeed, what seems to be at issue in the debate about the possibility of admission of women to the sacrament of order, is the place of tradition and the teaching authority of the Roman Pontiff.

2. The Christology implicit in this article is strange: there seems to be a dichotomy presumed between Jesus and Christ. But the Jesus of history is the Christ of faith; and Christ certainly knew what he intended when he founded the church and instituted the sacraments. One has only to read the relevant sections of the Vatican documents and the corresponding exposition of the sacrament of order in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* to see what the faith of the church is.

3. A lesser point: it is surely disingenuous on the part of Pamela Foulkes to claim without any reservation that the Junias of Roms 16:7 was a woman. The discussion of the name Junias in *A Greek-English Lexicon of New Testament and Early Christian Literature* (ed. Bauer et al.) is much less absolute than Pamela Foulkes: while noting that 'ancient commentators took A. and J. as a married couple', these authors go on to say: 'the possibility, from a purely lexical point of view, that this (sc. Junias) is a woman's name, is probably ruled out by the context.'

There would not seem to be much hope of satisfying the proponents of woman's ordination: when, like the author of the article in question, they

call for the use of 'all the theological and exegetical resources the church (sic) can command', they seem automatically and on principle to exclude papal magisterium and those scholars who would support it as qualifying to be considered part of such resources.

Christian Moe FSC
Kingsford NSW



Thank you

From Fr Paul Francis CP

I would like to thank Quixote for his cheque for 500 francs and also for his 'The Comfort of Strangers' article (*Eureka Street*, August 1993), which was well-written and most enjoyable to read. It was kind of him to refer to me as 'young'. I hope his next visit to Paris will be less memorable.

Paul Francis CP
Paris 8eme, France

How the Pope sees it

From George Ringer

On pages 18 and 19, vol. 3 no. 6, of your lovely magazine, a Pamela Foulkes has written about women priests. She may be interested to know that our Pope wrote on this subject 10 years ago. The following is taken from the *Servants of Mary Help of Christians Newsletter* March/April 1992.

No Women Priests
The Pope Speaks

'The bishop must give proof of his pastoral ability and leadership by withdrawing all support from individuals or groups who in the name of progress, justice or compassion or for any other alleged reason, promote the ordination of women to the priesthood. In doing so, such individuals or groups are in effect damaging the very dignity of women that they profess to promote and advance. All efforts made against the truth are destined to produce not only failure but also acute frustration. Whatever the bishop can

would be quite happy to share a chocolate cake, a fag and swap a few old school jokes—all this well behind the sight screen. But if old chums can't meet I would be quite happy to send him his chocolate cake.

70 Not Out
Parkville VIC

Putting the Queen in context

From John G. Denton, general secretary of the general synod of the Anglican Church of Australia.

I think Margaret Coffey has also gone out on a limb (*Eureka Street*, August 1993, p48).

Coffey gives her understanding of the Archbishop of Melbourne's June statement on the church and the monarchy saying: 'They [Australian Anglicans] were not obliged by their confession to acknowledge the British monarch as their temporal as well as spiritual leader.'

'Eureka Street' readers may care to know what the archbishop said about popular misunderstandings of the relationship between the church and the monarchy: I quote:

'One such misunderstanding is that the Queen is the head of the Anglican Church of Australia. Strictly speaking, she is not even the 'head' of the church in England itself. Her formal title there is 'supreme governor'. The Queen does not have a position of direct authority in the church. She does not determine its doctrine nor control its ministry of word and sacrament. Because the Church of England is the established church in England, however, the Queen as head of state has certain responsibilities in the temporal affairs of the church.

Even that limited responsibility does not apply in Australia. The Anglican Church in Australia is an autonomous church of the Anglican Communion. We are not an established church and have no formal rela-

tionship with the state. We pray for the Queen as our head of state, and we honour her for the office she holds as well as for herself as a person who has shown remarkable and consistent dedication to her vocation and to her people. But the Queen has no formal responsibility, either in the spiritual or the temporal realm, for the Anglican Church of Australia.'

John G. Denton
Sydney NSW

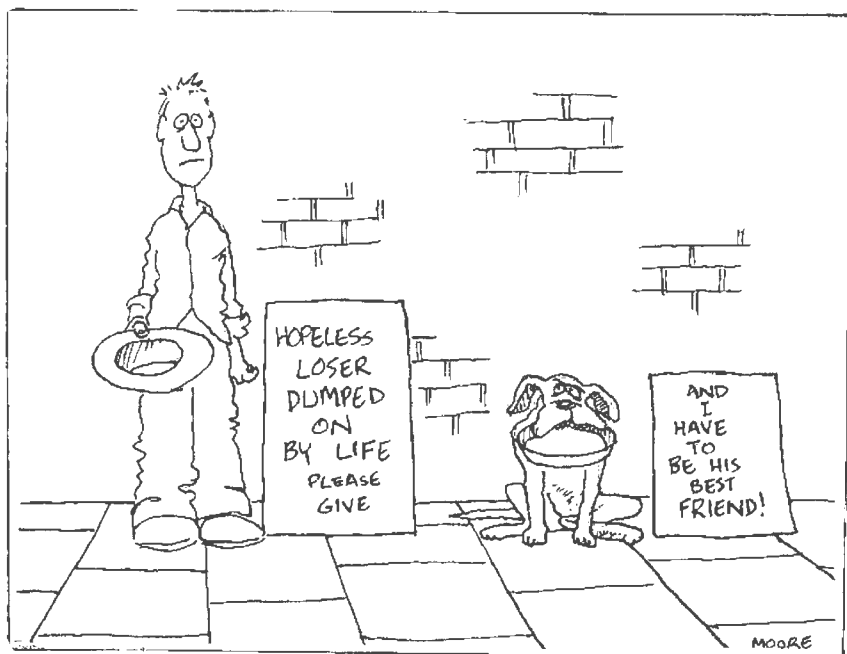
And thank you for reading

From Brigid Venables

I must take issue with Ray Cassin's turgid and frighteningly unimaginative review of *Reservoir Dogs* ('Beware of the Dogs', *Eureka Street*, vol 3, no.7 1993). Quentin Tarantino and Harvey Keitel (not just Quentin Tarantino) don't 'rework a familiar vein of American crime fiction' any more than Stanley Kubrick reworks a familiar vein of war imagination in *Full Metal Jacket*—'young men lose their innocence to the army'—or Jane Campion injects Janet Frame's life into the familiar vein of British literary imagination in *An Angel at my Table*—young creative woman is classified mad—or Peter Greenaway secretes a film from the gilded veins of American capitalist fantasy in his film *The Cook, The Thief, His Wife and Her Lover*—'woman repressed by abusive, criminal husband rises up and overcomes'.

Cassin has completely missed the intellectual, deconstructive side to *Reservoir Dogs*. I will admit it is odd to see an American film that overcomes America's puritanical obsession with morality and character study. These men are opaque creatures, ipso facto, the decision to leave their names out. Not an original idea, however. I believe the idea was invented by Samuel Beckett—and anyone who didn't make that anatomical connection obviously fell asleep during the song *Stuck in the Middle with You*.

What cretin compared Quentin Tarantino to the original bourgeois bore, the armchair socialist of American films, the well-dressed rebel himself, Martin Scorsese? Scorsese may gaze up women's skirts through peep-



do to prevent this failure and frustration by explaining the truth is an act not only of pastoral charity but of prophetic leadership. In a word the bishop as a sign of compassion as at the same time a sign of fidelity to the doctrine of the church.'

I also have some fine words on the subject written by Fr Kenneth Baker, a Jesuit theologian. If you want them I can send them to you.

George Ringer
Pooraka, SA

Take the cake

From 70 Not Out

As an old teacher I thought Mike Ticher should be given 10 out of 10 for his composition 'Passing the Test of Time' in September's *Eureka Street*. I

holes and call it art, but Tarantino sinks to no such depths—he puts a bullet through a women’s head and calls it light relief. Yet the actors in this film rise above their dependence on the director—this is a film held together by the best acting I’ve seen in my life! The director is well out of the way—perhaps acting as a safety net should the wonderful amalgamation of talent collapse for a minute.

Reservoir Dogs has powerful metaphor after powerful metaphor, punctuated by hilarity, crudity, monstrosity, lubricated with an outrageous amount of blood, an ugly display of guns and macho clichés, fear, confusion and sex, tied up with ‘punch lines’. (The last scene is a joke, Ray. The film is a comedy.)

I would not call it the best film I’ve ever seen—far from it. But I’ve rarely enjoyed a film so much. No film has assaulted my senses quite so violently—no pun intended—since *Withnail and I* (who made that film? Certainly not Martin Scorsese.) And yes, the violence in *Reservoir Dogs* is obtrusive and frequently unjustifiable. In short, this film is not subtle. I cannot morally vouch for this film. I am reminded of *Salo*—somewhere, deep in the bowels of these directors, are dreadfully sick men.

Yet I would hate for readers of *Eureka Street* to be put off this film because the champion of *Goodfellas* and *Mean Streets* (for the best in ‘moral violence’—the Waltons move to *Elm Street*, perhaps?) couldn’t understand it.

Brigid Venables
Athelstone, SA

Underneath the arches

David Holdcroft

It was undoubtedly with great wisdom that the elder statesmen of the AFL last week imparted to our beloved national game a foreign owned corporate identity, for all the world to see. Messrs McOakley and Company have, in placing the McDonald’s logo on our footballs, picked up handy cash which they will quickly pour back into the development of the game, to the cultural betterment of us all.

But why stop there? Surely a bit of

genuine Aussie homegrown ingenuity can earn the AFL a little more pocket money by designing some suitably golden inward arching goal-posts mirrored on the ground by a nicely curved golden goal square.

And what about language? For a few extra millions, the Sherrin could be dubbed officially the Mcball, and I see no reason not to institute, for a bit more corporate cash, the McMark, McKick, McGoal, McPoint, McUmpires and so on. Perhaps as a concession to competing corporate interests, someone could put boot to the occasional gut-turning whopper (read torpedo).

Thanks to the wise men of Brunton Avenue, we mere unincorporated mortals now have the opportunity to appreciate fully the vision of our forbears who, over a century ago, incorporated a truly ‘90s way of thinking when they named our home of football. It’s just a pity that it’s taken us all this time to correctly read their handwriting and to begin to call the hallowed turf by its true name, the McG.

David Holdcroft
Fitzroy, VIC

Teachers’ plight

*From Gabriella Pretto
and Alida Sijmons*

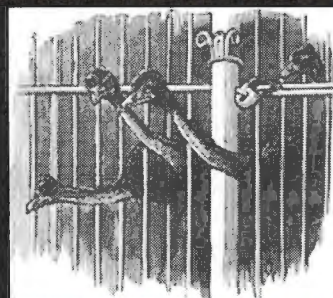
Like employees in so many organisations in Victoria, Catholic teachers are now facing the possibility of redundancy. The prospect of losing a job is always hard for people to come to grips with. They rely on a redundancy package to help them re-organise their life and to ease the pressure financially.

We found that the most a teacher in a Catholic school could expect is eight weeks pay for four years of service and over. For example, the redundancy package for a teacher with nine years of service in a Ministry school is \$20,474.80 while a teacher from a Catholic school receives \$5,627.20.

The difference is even more startling when one considers that no distinction is made between people with four or twenty-five years of service. More attractive redundancy packages are also offered by other organisations.

**Gabriella Pretto and
Alida Sijmons, VIC**

Bail out the chattering classes



... and pass on

EUREKA STREET

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W The John, Paul and Ralph show

WHAT A STRANGE BUDGET! If budgets were wine vintages, 1993 is one you definitely would not be cellaring. Best pour the lot into the Home Brand flagons and flog it off to the remaining true believers to replenish party coffers.

The chemistry is off. This is a case of the whole being less than the sum of the parts. The driving force was the commitment of Keating and Dawkins to income-tax cuts, promised in *One Nation* (February 1992) and legislated prospectively in September 1992. The opportunity for significant spending cuts seemed slim, facing continued unemployment and following five years (1986-90) of the conscientious pruning of programs. Add the continuing pressure to wind back the recession-induced deficit ('one per cent of GDP by 1996-97'), and without the option of an open-ended general sales tax.

The feared Expenditure Review Committee has plodded on, but its activities appear to have been sufficiently well negotiated for there to have been little post-budget controversy (save from finance media hardliners). For example, introduction of the home child-care allowance will cost upwards of \$1.2 billion a year; another \$250 million has been allocated to various training and labour-market programs and administration; and almost \$100 million has been granted to boost export programs, especially for small businesses.

Programs within the Department of Employment, Education and Training attracted concern. DEET's administration of the CES and of Austudy has not won it any brownie points, and the tighter administration of presumed fraud remains a priority. Derek Volker, previously Social Security secretary and no bureaucratic wallflower, has been sent in to bring DEET to heel.

The controversial decisions were generated by the little-publicised Revenue Committee. As a consequence, we get an ill-conceived 10c-a-litre tax on leaded petrol. And the eccentric selectivity of optometry services being withdrawn from Medicare coverage, simultaneously with some dental services being included. Add the tobacco tax and the wholesale tax imposts, and it's back to the rinky-dink budgets of the Menzies years. Dawkins's office must be held responsible for the petrol-tax decision. The normally austere Treasury gremlins pointed out the regressive character of the leaded petrol tax option, only to have the professed champions of the poor opt pragmatically for its adoption.

The funding crisis goes beyond an electoral bidding war with the Opposition. It goes beyond the supposed tiredness of a party long in office. Foremost is the fact that the economy has not produced the goods, in the sense of generating healthy employment levels, a healthy current account, and a healthy exchequer that would

give the government the luxury of discretion in funding quality-of-life programs.

If I were Paul Keating, I would be a very unhappy chap, constantly having to go out on a limb in promising a 'turn around tomorrow'. He has taken the rap for a failure attributable to his economic advisers, yet the general economic policy direction remains unquestioned. The ego-stroking label of 'Treasurer of the year' has cost Keating dearly.

The 'econ-speak' litany that Keating learnt from his intellectual masters now carries less conviction. He has also been confronted by the fact that some crazy heretics (the Green and Democrat senators) refuse to sprinkle *The Australian Financial Review* on their muesli every morning, and that they have real power and have to be mollified. What is inexplicable is why Keating is so pathologically committed to flattening the income-tax scale. Why does Dawkins boast of being in the same low-tax league as Turkey? It smacks of attachment to the thoroughly discredited perennial that high marginal tax rates lower work incentive; or of the equally dubious notion that usable national savings will result.

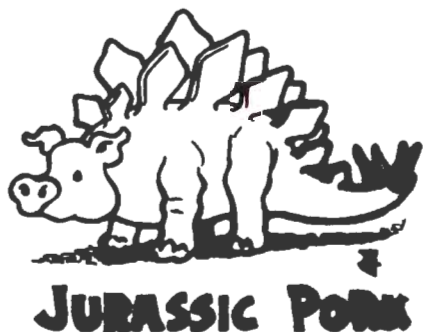
Why be so passionate about one aspect (income-tax cuts) of previous policy statements? What is the status of contemporaneous decisions, especially those contained in the major documents of March 1991, November 1991 and February 1992? Have they been abandoned? What is needed to bring them to fruition? What does one learn from their success or failure? More fundamentally, an evaluation is needed of the quite hasty, un-strategic manner in which strategic decisions are made—the budgetary process takes more than seven months, *One Nation* was thrown together in a month.

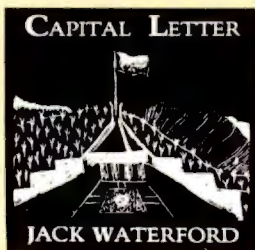
Another industry policy statement is expected from the industry department, DITARD, with promises of program streamlining. DITARD has been restructured for the umpteenth time, and any remaining specialist knowledge has been utterly destroyed. The prospect of visionary output from this turmoil is slim.

Finally, a Committee of Employment Opportunities has been set up with great fanfare. What the committee needs is not necessarily more funds, but more lateral thinking. This might begin with consideration of how to slow the haemorrhaging of the existing workforce.

In both the public sector and the private sector, job slashing has become a fetish, and the cost of labour too convenient a whipping horse. This has resulted in the entrenchment of an anti-social mentality which demands an economic flexibility whose promises of automatic trickledown are illusory. ■

Evan Jones teaches economics at the University of Sydney.





Shaping up for a DURDy fight

THE SCENE IS BEING SET for one of the most engaging political and bureaucratic brawls of 1994: what is at issue is control of policy on urban and regional development.

At the moment, it is primarily the bureaucrats and the fringe players who are making the running. But the political stakes are high as well. They involve Paul Keating; his deputy, Brian Howe, a weak minister desperately trying to regain some clout; and the Minister for Industry, Technology and Regional Development, Alan Griffiths, who is keen to make a mark after a lacklustre six months.

The game is about how the Commonwealth uses its power, whether in its own right or as a source of funds for other governments, to achieve social and economic goals. These might be the stimulation of employment in particular places, specific types of microeconomic reform, quality-of-life issues such as protection of the physical and social environment, better planning of public facilities and a more economic use of resources.

The Commonwealth's awareness of its role and power goes back 50 years, to the Department of Post-war Reconstruction, but, more or less in tandem with the advent of Labor governments, the Commonwealth has gone through periodic fits of conscious action and planning. In between, it reverts to letting things work out without much co-ordination. The heyday of federal activity was Tom Uren's Department of Urban and Regional Development ('DURD') in the early 1970s, most of the functions of which were retained through the Fraser years, though in an increasingly uncoordinated fashion. DURD was not restored by Hawke, but DURDish philosophies still percolate through politics and the bureaucracy, and with the government keen to be seen to be doing something about unemployment, the *idea* of coordinated action is again taking hold.

Brian Howe bid heavily for control of regional development, and lost, but through responsibility for the Better Cities program he retains enough influence on local government and urban issues to continue to be able to push for control. He has set up a heavyweight taskforce to survey his estates, and it is looking ambitiously over the boundary fences.

Alan Griffiths has established a task force on regional development, chaired by Bill Kelty. Its brief is to advise on policies that would stimulate industry and employment in regional Australia, and on the restructuring of communities that are in decay.

Ostensibly, the two committees differ in scope and emphasis. 'Regional' apparently does not embrace 'urban', and the Kelty committee has focused on economic and employment issues while the other has focused on 'quality-of-life' questions. But all of the actors are aware of the ample scope for the two committees to

overlap with one another, and most of them want no man's-land at the very least.

Next, Paul Keating has appointed John Mant, a lawyer and planner—and a member of the old DURDite Labor network—to chair an urban design committee in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. All of the other departments are working to ensure that this new committee merely focuses on indulging the Prime Minister's tastes for Georgian architecture, but if Mant, an empire-builder from way back, can be restrained in this way it would be a first worth noting in a world yearbook.

The Prime Minister's department is headed by Dr Mike Keating, who is not only an old DURDite but the author, 15 years ago, of the classic bureaucratic report on why and how the Commonwealth should take a conscious role in urban and regional development issues. Traditionally, the Prime Minister's department has strongly resisted such creations, and has worked to restrain the ambitions of ministers who want to build on the blocks they have been given. The department wants the Commonwealth to focus on funding the states to do the work, rather than on stepping past them to deal with local government and community organisations. The signs are that Mike Keating now buys the department line.

There are two other factors at work. The Industry Commission has prepared a draft report on obstacles to regional development, which attempts to rein in simplistic assumptions about what the Commonwealth can do, but also implicitly calling for more coordination within the government and bureaucracy. The report points out, for example, that not a few Commonwealth programs and decisions tend to cancel each other out.

The other factor is a white paper on unemployment, that is being drawn up by a committee headed by Meredith Edwards, a new deputy secretary in the Prime Minister's department. Edwards used to be an adviser to Brian Howe, and she headed the national housing strategy. It seems likely that the white paper will emphasise regionally-focused employment initiatives and better coordination of employment, training and welfare schemes—which bring two other departments into the action.

Even leaving aside the politicians involved, the bureaucrats concerned are among the toughest fighters in the Australian Public Service. Plenty of blood should have been spilled by, say, January, when preliminary reports from all of these bodies will be in, and when they will all have to meet in one room to work out what to do next. I would not be putting any money on Brian Howe. ■

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

Trading in union futures

IF THE UBIQUITY OF MOBILE PHONES is an indicator of modernity, then the Australian union movement, as displayed at the 1993 ACTU Congress, is a very modern species indeed. Unfortunately, more than modern technology may be needed to save Australian unionism.

Three main issues have consumed the trade union movement in recent times, and these inevitably dominated proceedings at the congress in Sydney. The first is the Accord and wages policy generally, and enterprise bargaining specifically; the second is the question of union rationalisation and industry unionism, and the third is the decline in union membership in Australia. All three issues, and their handling at congress, provide insights into the troubled state of Australian unionism.

On the Accord, there was a widespread conviction that unions have kept their side of the agreement more than the government has kept its side, with the latter's support for non-union bargaining being seen as the latest evidence of this. Although Laurie Brereton endured a good measure of jeering from angry delegates, Paul Keating escaped relatively unscathed, helped in large part by the fact that he limited his speech to mind-numbing economic statistics and tribalistic Liberal-bashing.

Ultimately, refuge was taken in that time-honoured remedy, the government/ACTU working party to investigate enterprise bargaining in the non-unionised sector. A resolution of this issue continues to be elusive. Moreover, the matter is complicated by the uncertainty, given the numbers in the Senate, of the fate of any amendments that may then be proposed to the industrial-relations legislation.

Given the growth of profits, it was made clear that for some sections of the private sector favourable enterprise deals can be done, as indeed they always have been done, albeit by some different name. For workers in the

public sector and poorly organised areas of the private sector, however, the prospect of gain from enterprise bargaining remains minimal. For them, it will probably be a matter of trading away terms and conditions, or, worse, 'agreeing' to job losses, in return for modest pay

rises. The creation of a distinct underclass of unionists is a likely outcome. No one has ever satisfactorily answered the question of how, for example, a child-care worker demonstrates increased 'productivity'.

The Australian union movement has gone through an extensive exercise of mergers and rationalisations, and the ACTU estimates that by the end of the year 17 large, federally registered unions will contain 98 per cent of 'federal' union members. Although a small number of union members will still be in train, the basic message at congress was that the rationalisation exercise is effectively over, and that it will not always provide one union for each industry. Cynics are not surprised by this latter non-achievement, given that several ACTU leaders have their origins in unions whose coverage in certain industries could not, by any stretch of the imagination, be described as 'rational'.

It remains an irony that union rationalisation is nearing fruition at a time when industrial bargaining is to be conducted at the enterprise level, making the case for industry unions less obvious than in the days of a centralised system. Granted, larger unions have access to greater resources, but these will be spread far more thinly than is necessary under the award system. If there were any congress delegates who wondered whether enterprise bargaining might not constitute a *prima facie* case for enterprise unions, they (wisely) kept such thoughts to themselves.

ON THE QUESTION OF RECRUITMENT, the congress was confronted by the sobering statistic that of every 10 new members of the workforce, only one joins a union. The ACTU recently sent a fact-finding mission to the United States to examine union recruitment and organisation. On the surface, this seems a curious move, given the low levels of union density in that country and the relative impotence of unions in the US political process. The rationale lies in the fact that enterprise bargaining (by whatever name) is the way things are done in America, and in the claim that US unions are making something of a comeback. Moreover, the American unionisation levels vary enormously from state to state, with some boasting rates comparable to Australia, that is, about 40 per cent.

Without doubt, the US television and radio recruitment material was impressive, but the difficulties faced

History tells us that the union movement has survived decades of conservative government; it is far from clear that it can survive Labor governments.

by our American counterparts served to drive home the paradox of the ACTU's enthusiasm for enterprise bargaining: it will almost certainly make recruitment more difficult and, in areas where bargaining produces little or nothing, will leave potential members with no material reason to join—and it is too late in the day to expect workers to join unions for philosophical reasons.

Unions are at their most credible and effective when defending democratic values: it is more difficult to justify the exclusion of non-unionised areas from bargaining when they constitute the majority of the work force. With unionists now in a minority, there is a danger that the union movement will be marginalised, becoming just one more interest group.

Much of the discussion on recruitment took place in one of five syndicate groups into which the congress was divided, a refreshing innovation that enabled a larger proportion of those attending to take part more actively. (Shop assistants' leader Jim Maher, attending his last ACTU Congress, observed that as an old Grouper he was pleased to see congress using groups).

THE CONGRESS ALSO APPROVED the creation of an 81-member council, which will meet four times a year to determine policy issues between congresses. Representation is based on the new large union structure. Of more importance were the affirmative-action initiatives: the council must include three female affirmative-action delegates, three of the six vice-presidents must be women and 25 per cent of the (34-person) executive must be women, this fraction rising to 30 per cent in 1995, 40 per cent in 1997 and 50 per cent in 1999. These are welcome initiatives, given the consensus that unionism needs to make major advances with women and the young. It is overdue for unrepresentative unions, especially those with leaderships dominated by middle-aged men, to follow suit.

Although Laurie Brereton received a hostile reception, he made one observation that should not be lost on his audience: 'Let's not kid ourselves, our best insurance policy is not total reliance on federal Labor governments—that can't go on forever.' Unfortunately, it seems that for the better part of a decade the ACTU has been trapped in total reliance on the Labor government, and in an inability to grasp the pluralist nature of democracy and the place of unions and other interest groups in that system. By defining the government's interest and its own as synonymous, the ACTU has denied its members the benefits of vigorous partisan advocacy. Meanwhile, business has shown no such selflessness, aided as it is by a propensity to equate the national interest with its own.

The corporatist approach has not served union members well. Unless all relevant elements join the 'corporation', the deal remains one-sided, with unions showing restraint and agreeing to painful change, while business stays outside, showing no restraint and displaying more interest in indecent rises in executive salaries

than in productive investment of profits. And, whatever concessions unions make, they are never enough. The business agenda is clear: a total free market for labour, unfettered by union influence.

The ACTU needs to rediscover the virtues of pluralism. Rather than acting as an adjunct of Labor governments, it needs to acknowledge the reality of labour/capital conflict and to advance its interests as it sees them, without fear or favour, and regardless of who is in power. At least when conservatives govern, the union movement has no qualms about a robust defence of its interests, and it is probable that some Labor 'reforms', if advanced by a conservative government, would have been vigorously resisted. Granted, organised labour will probably lose more than it wins, but that would be an improvement on the present lose/lose situation. Grass-roots union members are sick of being wheeled out to vote for Labor governments because of the alleged horrors of opposition industrial relations policy, only to find that elements of that policy are embraced by the government as soon as it is re-elected. History tells us that the union movement has survived decades of conservative government; it is far from clear that it can survive Labor governments. ■

Paul Rodan is an administrator at Monash University. He is a vice-president of the National Tertiary Education Union and was a delegate at the ACTU Congress.

Economics and the Dreamtime

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On your way, sister

THE 2ND CENTURY CHURCH FATHER, Clement of Alexandria, stressed the complete equality of women and men, as human beings and as Christian believers. In his *Paidogogus*, he wrote that 'one life, one hope, one knowledge and one love' are available to both women and men, who also share in the 'one church', where grace and salvation are possessed in common [*Paid.* 1.4:1-2].

An ideal picture of the church. But is it the way in which women experience church life today? For many, the answer is no. What they do experience is a patriarchal, over-clericalised and legalistic institution in which they are patronised and powerless. With more than half of its membership female, the church uses both the labour and money of women to preserve a status quo which gives them no voice in its organisation. As the Irish Catholic writer, Anne Thurston, said recently: 'If the church were a club, I would hand in my membership.' (*The Tablet*, 1 May 1993) Lip service is paid to the 'dignity' and 'piety' of womanhood, using as its icon a distorted, asexual image of the Virgin Mary that stresses the virtues of passivity and obedience.

But Catholic women are on the move. No longer content to support the status quo, they are coming together to share their experience and to work for change. Women's groups such as the Catholic Women's League and The Grail have long been part of Australian Catholic history. But the new groups are demanding more. They seek a church community that, in the spirit of Clement's vision, is truly inclusive, supportive and liberating for all its members, not just the male minority.

Their critics accuse them of having been influenced by the secular feminist movement, with feminism being seen as antithetical to Christianity. This argument assumes both that it is necessary to make a clear distinction between the secular and the religious, and that the church is somehow immune from secular influence. However, the Christian faith teaches that the divine is incarnated within the world. And the church's history has always been influenced by movements for social change. Feminism argues for a belief in the value of women's experience, together with a recognition of their dignity and their needs. Christianity preaches the good news that we are all set free, equal in Christ, to enter into a fully human relationship with God and the crea-

tion. The two would seem to go hand in hand, as a fulfilment of the biblical imperative to recognise that both male and female were created in the image and likeness of God.

Through the women's movement, Christian women discovered that they, too, were persons, not just handmaidens or appendages. The most valuable lessons they learned were twofold: the need for education and the value of shared experience. The result of the former is beginning to have a profound effect on church life. Women are becoming the best theologically educated group in the Catholic Church. Theological schools are filled with them. Teaching faculties are no longer able to ignore either the women or their fresh approaches to scripture and theology. The recently published *Australian Directory of Women Scholars in Religion and Theology* exposes only the tip of the iceberg. Women are leading retreats, adult education groups and spiritual renewal seminars for the clergy. To tell them when they return to their parishes on Sunday that they are banned from the pulpit and are unfit to stand beside the altar and hand the cruets to the priest is to deform the life of the Christian community.

Such was not always the case. Somewhere over the centuries we have lost the truth of a Jesus who treated women as equals whose gifts were to be taken seriously; the truth of a group of believers whose baptism into Christ had instituted a new era of human existence in which there was 'no longer male and female' (Gal.3:28).

It was women's recognition of the value of sharing their experience that led to the establishment of many of the new Catholic women's groups. Increasingly alienated by patriarchal structures, together they could find support and energy to articulate their new visions of the church. One such group is the Melbourne-based *A New Vision for Woman*, which grew out of the 1986 centenary conference of the Brigidine Sisters. Its original charter affirmed the belief that 'all baptised persons have equal rights and responsibilities within the church', and supported 'styles of leadership that demonstrate collaboration, inclusion, flexibility, mutuality, and interdependence'.

Less strictly Catholic in its membership is *Women-Church*, which began in Sydney in 1985. Its aim, in the words of one of the founders, Kate Scholl, was to 'breathe new life into existing structures by empowering and gathering the energies of the women who have been cast aside, ignored or undervalued. With this a new church can be brought to birth, one in which all people's expe-



Children of God
or How hierarchy works.

Cartoons by
Graham English
(p16) and Prue
Borthwick (p17)
courtesy of
Women-Church.

rience is honoured, and a person's gifts, not gender, determines how they will participate.' (*Women-Church* 2, 1988). From the beginning they have endeavoured to include women across the whole spectrum of religious beliefs. Their rituals fuse both Christian and non-Christian symbols in celebration of feminine experience and spirituality.

The strength of these groups lies in their freedom from the official organisation. They are able to provide environments of trust in which Christian women can explore and communicate their own experience and provide support for each other. They are free to follow the Spirit wherever she leads, exploring new forms of liturgy, of prayer, and of spirituality. If fed back into the institution, particularly within the parish context, this creative energy is capable of reshaping the Church into a religious community truly inclusive of all the baptised, both women and men.

In contrast, the Women and the Australian Church project (WATAC) was established to operate from within the institution. Initiated and sponsored by the major superiors of women and men religious and approved by the Australian Episcopal Conference, it sought 'a change in the understanding of the role of women in their participation in the Australian church and in the broader society'. Through research and the establishment of small groups, WATAC set itself the task within the church of 'consciousness raising of women on Christian feminist issues'.

With such official support at its inception, it was hoped by many that WATAC would develop into a strong pressure group for women's voices in the church. Sadly, that has not happened. It continues to provide valuable opportunities for discussion and education in a small group context in many states. However, the bishops, while prepared to sponsor its establishment, appear so far to have been unwilling to pay serious attention to its findings.

UNLIKE THEIR ANGLICAN SISTERS, women in the Catholic feminist movement have not, on the whole, been single-issue oriented. Though the question of the admittance of women to the ordained ministry is certainly on the agenda, it is not the sole item. The vision has been of change across a wider front, calling for a church that is totally inclusive in its language, worship and organisational structures. Women of the New Covenant, however, has focused specifically on the church's stance on ordination, declaring its intention to 'promote the leadership role for all in liturgical celebration and in collaborative decision making for the building up of our eucharistic communities'. In touch with similar groups in the USA and Europe, it plans to petition the Pope to remove the barriers to priestly ordination.

The majority of women in these groups are still struggling to find life in the Christian message (though Women-Church has sought to include goddess and post-Christian strands). But for some the patriarchal structure in which the church has embodied that message

now appears utterly irredeemable. Bombarded with images of a male God, marginalised by patriarchal power structures, sometimes sexually abused by its ministers, they are no longer able to find either love or life within it. In agony and despair they walk away. This is not, as some would have it, because they have been seduced by secular values. Their departure is most often marked by the depth of their belief in the divine, and their pain at its distortion by the institution which claims to own it. The damage done to the body of Christ by such departures is incalculable.

What then of the future? Imbued with the vision of Clement of Alexandria, I asked 20-year-old Julia, daughter of a friend, how she felt she fitted in the church. 'Why do you and mum keep trying to hang on to it?', she said. 'How long are you going to go on being the flower arrangers? I can't cope any more with those priests ego-tripping from the pulpit. They say nothing of relevance to my life.' Will the voices of the flower arrangers be heard in the church, as a source of life for all its peo-



ple, or will it, in the name of patriarchal conservatism, continue to bear the loss of its daughters? ■

Pamela A. Foulkes is a Catholic biblical scholar.

A New Vision for Woman

Kilbride Centre, 52 Beaconsfield Parade,
Albert Park VIC 3206.

Women-Church

GPO Box 2134, Sydney NSW 2001.

WATAC

36 Collins Street, Annandale NSW 2038,
or c/- 2 Darlington Parade, Richmond Vic 3121.

Women of the New Covenant

c/- 18 Second Avenue, Brunswick VIC 3056.

Women Scholars of Religion and Theology

c/- 15/8 Wylde Street, Potts Point NSW 2011.

The Nile's other country

HAWKS AND THE OCCASIONAL VULTURE circle over many towns in the Sudan, and even the bright blinding sky above the capital, Khartoum, is not exempt. It is said God did not know whether to laugh or cry when he created the Sudan. Life and death seem to keep each other much closer company here.

In the late 1980s drought almost broke the back of Kordofan and Darfur, two great western provinces of the Sudan, once home to ancient and largely mysterious sultanates such as those of the Fur and the Funj. But death still stalks that wild and parched land. An aid worker in the town of Nyala tells the story of a woman who walked maybe hundreds of miles with her children to get to what she hoped would be the safety of Nyala. She started off with four children, one a baby. To keep her youngest alive, she sold her two eldest. The baby she was clutching in her arms when she arrived with her other child was dead. She would not let go.

There are perhaps two million people on the move in the Sudan, about a twelfth of the population at last count. The government of General Omar al-Bashir, which came to power in a bloodless coup in July 1989 and has taken the country down the path of Islamic fundamentalism, doesn't like attention to be drawn to the country's problems, but there are so many it is hard not to notice.

In late March, the government and the principal leader of rebellion that re-erupted in the south of the country in 1983, John Garang, declared a unilateral ceasefire in preparation for peace talks in Abuja, Nigeria. In Khartoum, the papers rejoiced at 'victory and peace'. A dry season offensive in 1992 had seen the government recover about 90 per cent of the territory (according to its own claims) in rebel hands, largely because the rebels were busy slaughtering each other. The day after, reports of more fighting between the various rebel factions took the shine off Khartoum's 'victory'.

About the same time, the BBC reported that 1.5 million people in the south of the country were facing starvation. Aid on the odd flight from Khartoum or Kenya, and from the end of March aboard an occasional barge down the White Nile, is barely a fraction of what is needed. In March, the US State Department started making known its ideas for creating 'safe havens' for the victims of fighting and famine. Khartoum, which initially roundly condemned the US presence in Somalia, regard-

ing it as an unwelcome precedent, smouldered and remained mute.

Al-Bashir's policy is 'no internationalisation' of the war or other crises in the country, and the presence of Western aid groups is not entirely appreciated. Various groups have come and gone and come again, and all have run up against a wall of non-cooperation at one time or another. One method for making movement difficult has been the imposition of permits for travel anywhere in the country, traditionally a time-consuming and uncertain exercise, although they have been much eased for certain parts of the country now.

Apart from the south, which has long been off limits, the Nuba mountains in the centre of the country have been sealed off. Wild stories abound, but a few facts are available. The Nuba, a collection of black tribes whose ancient culture had lived on virtually undisturbed for centuries until Leni Riefenstahl and others started doing documentaries on them, appear now to be the victims of a campaign of forced removal and extermination.

'Genocide is the word that springs to mind,' commented one Western diplomat drily. The government is said to be arming the traditional Arab tribal enemies of the Nuba and sending them in, backed by the odd helicopter gunship, with the aim of making over the comparatively good land to Arabs and eliminating what some see as a black enclave too far to the north for the government's liking. One aid worker suggested Khartoum was worried lest any agreement on autonomy for the south include this prize area—and has decided not only to lance this potential boil, but simply remove it altogether.

NONE OF THIS is enhancing the country's image abroad, and most Western countries have pulled out all government economic aid. The US, for instance, has shut down its once-extensive USAID projects. But Khartoum seems to be expert at attracting international opprobrium. Having introduced *sharia* law in 1983 to please Saudi Arabia and attract some financial reward, and so unleashing the civil war in the south, it has since





As-Salam camp for the 'internally displaced', Sudan.

Photo: Damien Simonis

shifted its allegiance to Iran and Iraq.

Backing Iraq in the Gulf War has cost the Sudan dearly. Not only was it the last straw for Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states, which expelled 300,000 Sudanese and cut all aid links, but it worsened relations with neighbours like Egypt. In the early months of this year, Egypt moved troops into the disputed border region of Halaib, partly in response to reported plans by the Sudan to allow Iran to establish a naval base in Port Sudan. The Iranians are also supposed to have sent volunteers to join in, or to help direct, the fighting in the south.

Egypt is convinced the fundamentalist *Gama'at al-Islamiyya*, which has stepped up its campaign of terror in Egypt in the past months, gets support from the Sudan. Sudan denies this, but is losing friends throughout North Africa. Algeria recalled its ambassador from Khartoum in March, and even erstwhile friends such as Libya have gone cool towards al-Bashir—Colonel Gaddafi is no lover of Islamic fundamentalism.

Despite claims to the contrary, the Sudan's economy is also suffering, not the least from its isolation. The International Monetary Fund has put a stop to all loans for the Sudan because it cannot even pay interest, in spite of attempts made to meet some IMF requirements on reform. In 1992 it floated the currency, which immediately dived, and started lifting subsidies on essential items, which created an inflationary wave (it stands

at around 200 per cent) that is crushing poorer Sudanese, whose average monthly wage of US\$40 is worth increasingly little. Khartoum hoped to get some free petrol from Iran, but Teheran's friendship has limits.

In April, the 4.5 litres-a-week ration for private vehicles was cut to nothing.

WHEN YOU WALK UP TO A STRANGER in the Sudan to ask for help or directions, you can't just launch into your question after a quick 'excuse me'. *Kayf al-hal? Tamam?* (How are you? Well?) *Tamam, al-hamdu lillah* (Well, God be praised). *Kullu tamam? Kul al-hayat tamam?* (Is everything well? Is all your life well?). The exchange of greetings takes a little time and is accompanied by warm smiles.

The outsider can only ask how people living so close to the edge, with so little, find 'all their lives well'. A kind of slow ease seems to reign over most of them, allowing them to cope with difficulties that would leave Westerners desperate. And one wonders how a fundamentalist state, however much more lax than the Iranian version, can sit well with Muslims whose experience of Islam owes far more to the mystic traditions of the Sufis.

The answer is that, for most, it doesn't. Support for the National Islamic Front that lies behind General al-Bashir's government is thought to be about 25 per cent

in the Muslim north, and is probably falling as economic crisis bites deeper into people's lives. 'When the next coup comes,' said one aid worker in Khartoum, 'it will be bloody. Too many people have been hurt under this regime.' Previous coups, contrary to much of the reporting at the time, have been pretty much bloodless.

He was only surprised that it hadn't happened already.

THE FURTHER SOUTH you travel the Nile from Egypt to Khartoum, the more you notice the presence of non-Arab southerners. They have moved north to escape the misery of the war, but many have exchanged it only for the squalor of the camps. Central Khartoum is full of outsiders, not just southerners but refugees from famine in the west and a long-standing population of refugees from Ethiopia and Eritrea. Few have any work. Some beg, many try to scratch out a living as street vendors, still others just sit waiting.

Khartoum is a magnet for the dispossessed and the desperate. Jennifer Johnson, of the UN Emergency Unit, stresses the impossibility of getting accurate figures on the number of displaced people in the Sudan, but says two million is about right. Of those, up to a million have encircled Khartoum. In 1990, the government embarked on a program of relocating displaced people and what it calls squatters. Johnson said in late March that, despite the opposition of the UN and aid groups, the government had succeeded in shifting as many as 700,000 people from the precarious homes they had established on the periphery of the capital to camps far enough away to make getting to Khartoum in the search for work difficult or impossible. The government policy also involves relocating people to 'their areas of origin' or to 'agricultural areas'.

The relocation was usually accompanied, or preceded, by the demolition of displaced settlements. A UN summary of the relocations catalogues the incidents. In 1991, 'two days before Christmas Eve, the Squatter Settlement Abolishment Committee (sic) demolishes hundreds of homes in the Kurmuta suburb of Khartoum South, killing about 25 people and injuring 100 ... Government announces that relocation of 60,000 displaced people in Kusha (Khartoum North) will commence on

January 12. The group is indeed taken to a site long considered ... to be inconsistent with human existence ...'

Jennifer Johnson admitted that the government had succeeded in its aims. The UN and aid agencies had been caught between a rock and a hard place. Had they refused to try to bring aid to the displaced in the new camps as a sign of disapproval of government policy, the main losers would have been the displaced, so the agencies helped the newly relocated displaced people and in so doing gave the government a hand too.

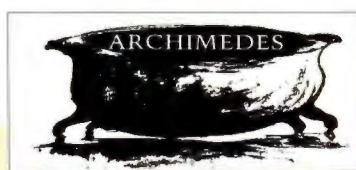
The camps have improved a little, according to Johnson, which is not saying much. The government considered the As-Salam camp for the 'internally displaced', west of Omdurman, good enough to show two British MPs in the Sudan on a fact-finding mission in the first week of April. The dirt track passes one of the

An aid worker in the town of Nyala tells the story of a woman who walked maybe hundreds of miles with her children to get to what she hoped would be the safety of Nyala. She started off with four children, one a baby. To keep her youngest alive, she sold her two eldest. The baby she clutched in her arms when she arrived with her other child was dead. She would not let go.

old demolished settlements near Souq Libya, a market on the western edge of Omdurman, on the way. A collection of huts with a more or less permanent air about them stand in the middle of a dust bowl. The 11,000 inhabitants have water now, which they must queue for. There are five small clinics, three of them run by the Sudan Council of Churches. A tuberculosis treatment and prevention program is in place. Occasionally trucks transport men into Omdur-

man, where they can set about looking for work. There is no vegetation, nor even a sign of domestic animals—the most common sight in any true village or town community.

SOME OF THE DISPLACED PEOPLE have chosen to head further north to the small towns along the Nile. Luke, from Torit in Equatoria State, which lies to the south, has lived in Shendi, 193km north of Khartoum, for three years. His family lives in one of the camps around the capital. 'The people here are good, I have no problems,' he says of the local Arab population, but asserts that blacks are constantly discriminated against. 'They arrest us and put us into jail for maybe six months with no reason. Or they simply stop us from doing things. Blacks are stopped from studying abroad for instance. The north is afraid of the south, because most of the country's resources are in the south. They want to con-



Theos and theory

THE UNIVERSITY OF OTAGO, located in Dunedin, is New Zealand's oldest. The Otago Theological Foundation, by comparison, is a recently established ecumenical venture that, in association with the university extension office, organises international symposiums and brings outstanding scholars to New Zealand and Australia. Two years ago the Moltmanns, Gustavo Gutiérrez and Janet Martin Soskice were among the contributors to a symposium on *Christ and Context*. This year, in August, the topic of the symposium was *Science and Theology: Questions at the Interface*. Archimedes attended. So did Jack Dodd, emeritus professor of physics at the University of Otago, a professed agnostic whose interventions added a delightful touch of realism.

Among the invited speakers were: John Polkinghorne (formerly professor of mathematical physics at Cambridge, an Anglican priest and the only current member of the Royal Society in holy orders); Nancey Murphy (chair of the board of the Centre for Theology and Natural Science at Berkeley and co-editor of the papers from the recent Vatican Observatory meeting of scientists); and Owen Gingerich (professor of astronomy and the history of science at the Harvard-Smithsonian Centre for Astrophysics, who has an asteroid named in his honour).

The focus was chiefly on theology's relationship to physics, although genetic engineering was discussed and some biological and evolutionary issues were aired. Several themes emerged. First, the new physics makes the argument from design more persuasive, though no more conclusive. Secondly, the history of the relationships between theology and science shows that the two have been partners as much as antagonists, and that when each is ignorant of the other misunderstandings have occurred. Thirdly, recent philosophy of science suggests that science can never explain itself and that a higher-order explanation of reality is necessary. Further, theological method is not all that different from scientific method, given the nature of research programs and the web of beliefs that makes up our world view. Fourthly, there is much in modern physics that offers models for understanding how God can act in the world (both chaos theory and quantum mechanics show that causal determinism is not on), and for understanding some aspects of the problem of evil (the ragged edges of a universe that God has arranged to be self-creating).

The God of Jesus Christ hovered at the edges and sometimes erupted at the centre of these conversations. None of the invited speakers offered a wholly integrated metaphysics of science and theology that would reconcile grace and nature, faith and reason, the divine and the human. This remains a task to be completed. Either science and theology are only moderately complementary, or they have a unity in their origins and goals. Most of the speakers at this conference were for the former position. I'm for the latter. ■

—John Honner SJ

trol and exploit it, but it is our land and we want equal justice.'

Military service is compulsory for 18 months to three years, and Luke claims that many southerners ended up killing their own brothers. It should be noted, however, that the southerners are divided among themselves and that the human rights record of John Garang, the main rebel leader, is not much better than that of the government. 'We all want to go back,' Luke says, 'but only when there is peace.'

Michael, a Dinka boy from Juba, lives further up river, in Karima, where he has only lived for 'two moons'. He too would like to go back south. He speaks English and Arabic. 'But I don't like it. People in Juba prefer to speak English (as a second tongue)'. Michael and Luke have both lost family in the fighting and famine, and yet neither seems to boil with hatred or rancour. Like their Muslim Arab neighbours, they seem to have a quiet dignity that allows them to absorb great blows.

That the blacks do have problems is confirmed by Western diplomats, who see some of them in their embassies requesting political asylum. Among those who have constantly voiced concern is the Pope, who was allowed to make a brief nine-hour stop in Khartoum as part of his African tour in February—enough time for him to boost morale among Christians in the Sudan and for the government to extract mileage from it in the following months. The country's English-language monthly declared in March that the Pontiff had left the Sudan 'convinced that Christians in the Sudan enjoy fuller rights than ever witnessed in other countries'—nine hours seems a short time to form any conclusions either way.

Long gone from the headlines are the 300,000 or so refugees from Ethiopia and Eritrea still living in the Sudan. The UN hopes to begin repatriating some this year, provided Eritrea and Ethiopia peacefully resolve their differences over Eritrea's moves for independence. The long years of war that ended in 1991 may have doomed many. One quiet, young Ethiopian man, 22, who works in a hotel in the eastern city of Kassala, would like to migrate to the West. His qualifications? Ten years as a guerrilla, from the age of 10. 'The *khawajas* (Arabic term for white foreigners, especially common usage in the Sudan) are clever, they work hard. In Africa,' he puts a finger to his temple, 'people are no good, nothing works.'

'It's going to take a long time to put this country on its feet,' said a senior UN official with 30 years' experience in Africa, and few people think the present government will do it. One Khartoum hotel owner feeling the pinch described them as 'a band of desert pirates'. The Pope, on leaving the Sudan back in February, called God's blessing on the country. It needs all the help it can get: *Baraka Allah as-Sudan* (God bless the Sudan). ■

Damien Simonis, *Eureka Street's* European correspondent, has recently completed on book on Egypt and Sudan.

Being in Scotland

MTARTAN MACALPINE is my father's middle name, but this is the first time I have ever been to Scotland. I buy him a fine woollen MacAlpine tartan tie, navy, black and dark green with a white thread running through it and a fine butter-yellow stripe, the fabric cut on the diagonal. He hates wearing ties but feels obliged to own a few, for he is offended by their absence from other men's necks at funerals, and these days there are often funerals to which he feels compelled to go. When I get home he loves the tie and says he'll wear it to all of them.

Fathers

On the vast lawn in front of the Gallery of Modern Art in Edinburgh, there is a man playing with a little girl of garden-gnome aspect: she's about two and she's wearing a red jacket and green rubber boots and a pointy yellow hat. He swings and slings the kid round and round in a circle and then tosses her up over his head. They are both whooping and shrieking. There's a lot of it about; I see young fathers with children everywhere I look, and wonder if this is because they're out of work.

On the train there's a couple who look about 18. The shine hasn't worn off their wedding rings yet, but they have three little daughters, aged maybe two-and-a-half, one-and-a-bit, and a new baby. I can tell they're girls because their mother (frizzy perm, jeans and a delicate, sulky face) snaps at all of them by name. The whole family is angelically fair-haired, with broad Border accents. The baby drapes itself with abandon along its father's forearm, its nappied, bunny-rugged bottom in the palm of his hand. He looks like a sweet-faced high-school fullback. He is endlessly patient with everybody.

London's not like this. You see plenty of children, but you hardly ever see them with men.

What line?

After Newcastle, more or less, you can see the coast from the train. I don't know where Scotland starts, and this is unsettling for a woman whose heart rises every time she drives across the border out of Victoria into South Australia and, this is true, the sun comes out. There is a little bump. But on the train not even the Scots-to-his-boots man sitting across from me, who has told me at length and in detail how he feels about his

sister, whom he has not seen for many years, can say definitively: *Now we are in Scotland*. Phrases rise. *Border country*. *Debatable ground*.

Staying with Angela

At the station in Stirling, Angela is waiting on the platform. I have never seen her with her hair down before. She ushers me into a stately, portly Rover like a travelling living room, over whose steering wheel she can barely see. We drive through the sort of countryside that has visible, unconcerned rabbits in it. (We might even see a deer, says Angela. A *deer*? On the *road*?) When we get to the house in the village, her husband, whom I have never met, is standing with a glass of wine in each hand, one for her and one for me. His is nearby, on the sink.

History

In the 13th century the Earl of Menteith built the priory of Inchmahome on the Isle of Menteith in the middle of the lake, a hiding-place 300 years afterwards for the infant Queen of Scots. In the remains of one ruined chamber lie three effigies, two of solitary knights and one of the earl and his countess as they lie facing each other, warming their stone feet upon a faithful hound. He is the taller and his knees are a little bent so that both his face and his feet are level with hers. They look into each other's eyes and her head rests in the curve of his outstretched arm; at the back of her neck you can see his fingers curling lightly round, their tips caressing the place where her plait begins. He has been doing this for 700 years.

Later, in another country, I look at the colours in one of the photographs I took at Inchmahome: through a grey stone archway and down to the shore, out across the Lake of Menteith to the Lowland hills round Stirling.

*Lavender's blue, dilly dilly
Lavender's green
When I am King, dilly dilly
You shall be Queen*

The difference

The man behind the counter in the cafe, who finds me a table and brings me an extremely Scottish scone, explains to me as he gives me change that everyone in

Scotland will accept either sterling or Scottish pounds but I won't be able to spend the Scottish pounds in England. I opine that this is ridiculous and he just laughs and says that's the English for you, but we are in the country of Macbeth, and of Flodden and Culloden and Solway Moss, and whatever it is at the back of his smile reminds me of something I read once about the Scots playing football with English heads, all through the streets of Edinburgh.

Making things

In the coffee queue in an Edinburgh department store, the woman behind me is talking to her friend. 'Geoffrey said I should use the special flour,' she says, 'so I got some o' that, an' I thocht, well, I'll get enough for two loaves an' I'll see how the fairst one tairns oot.' I turn around, pretending to be looking at something else. She's about 17. Later in the High Street I hear a dear old man in front of me, also talking to a friend, say 'My wife's verra interested in lacemaking, she makes lace.'

In a shop near the Castle at the top of the High Street, a shop which like so many others is also a workshop, a man is making lamps of opaque glass. The panels and pieces are milky, or a matt candy-pink, outlined in thick black curves to form the disquieting tendril and petal shapes and lines of Art Nouveau. He also makes heavy silver jewellery, and tourist-attracting novelty things of staghorn and heather that are, against overwhelming odds, quite beautiful.

In the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art there's a big sculpture on the floor that I don't understand. It's made of thousands of little bits of trash: a bent red plastic spoon, a broken yellow piece of Lego, an orange bottle cap, a shard of blue crockery. Without taking my eyes off it I step back three paces, as in a fairy tale, and it turns into an eight-by-ten-foot rainbow.

In the kiltmaker's shop above the silversmith's, I abandon my kilt-buying mission for my Adelaide friend Stuart, a Gilmore on his mother's side, and get a catalogue and an order form instead. There is, I have discovered, no Gilmore tartan: they're a sub-branch or 'sept' of Clan Morrison. Clan Morrison, it seems, has four, perhaps five, or possibly even six different tartans: Dress or Hunting? Ancient or Modern? Red or Green? Are any of these the same as any of the others? And how will Stuart feel about mortgaging his house? Besides, the man I speak to is a little shocked that Stuart would settle for a ready-made kilt, or trust someone else to buy it. I stand there breathing in the smell of wool, while sharp-looking blokes with brogues and bifocals sling their tape-measures round their necks and dodge purposefully round the piles of tartan cloth. On the counter there's a pair of dressmaking scissors they must have paid a ransom for, with lines of light sliding down the blades.

How to make my sisters laugh

My two sisters and I can always make each other laugh by invoking our grandmother MacAlpine without warning. Given suitable provocation (an unconsidered ques-

tion, a wrong tea-towel, a silly move in a board game), one will snap at another 'You *stchoopit* geddle'—the long 'o' is pronounced as in 'whoops'; 'geddle' is the word that Muriel Spark spells 'gairl' in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, but I like mine better—and the other two will fall about shrieking.

We love Scottish accents. We listen to Billy Connolly in a trance.

Finding Jessie

In a ruined church in the middle of the cemetery in the village of Aberfoyle near Stirling, Angela's son Dan finds the grave of Great-Aunt Jessie, my grandmother's sister, my grandfather's first fiancée, romantically dead at 21 of influenza and pneumonia at the bitter end of winter. My great-grandparents are there too.

The ruined church gets a mention in a local guidebook for its 'rather macabre mort-safes' but I don't know what these are, and only find out later that a mort-safe is 'a heavy grating used to guard a corpse against resurrectionists'. Resurrectionists sound to me like some particularly literal-minded breakaway Scottish sect, but I look them up too, and discover—it isn't so surprising, nearby Edinburgh was leading the world in medical research—that they are diggers-up of bodies for dissection.

None of us knows any of this the day we come to Aberfoyle, or perhaps we might associate the church more directly with the graves right at the beginning, and look inside the ruins first of all. But after a methodical search through all of the wrong places, I have pretty much given up—I only find out later that my parents were here on the same mission 12 years ago and they couldn't find her either—when Angela appears around a corner, calling 'Dan's found her!'

Dan, reading the gravestones nearest the church, has caught a passing glimpse of more inside the ruined walls. So he has disregarded the signs saying DANGER—KEEP OUT, negotiated the barriers of rubble and fallen gratings, climbed over the collapsing picket-and-wire fences, bush-bashed the waist-high nettles and head-high shrubbery, climbed in what used to be a window, and found the MacAlpine headstone almost at once. 'I thought it'd be a shame,' he says, 'for you to come all this way and not find her.'

Being in Scotland

Everything is made of wool and everyone is funny. Nobody whinges. The bookshops are better than the ones in London. Two weeks before Midsummer Night, it doesn't get completely dark till quarter to eleven. The colours are lavender blue, lavender green, silver and slate and granite and black rock. *Close* and *wynd* are the words for the steep dark lanes and alleys of Edinburgh Old Town: words naming the curving lines, the hidden things. ■

Kerryn Goldsworthy is a Melbourne writer and teacher.

On the trail of Ho Chi Minh

*Freed, the prisoner can build the country.
Misfortunes are tests of a man's loyalty.
To worry about the common good is a great merit no doubt.
Let the prison door open and the real dragon will fly out.*

—Ho Chi Minh, *Prison Diaries*, 1942-1943.

POSTCARDS ARE A TERRIBLE CHORE, as much for those who eventually have to decipher them as for those who feel compelled to scrawl them in the first place. After saying the same thing five times to five different people I stopped for the day. There were coffee stains on the first two cards and cigarette ash all over the last one. The face of Ho Chi Minh stared up at me from grimy bank notes on the table and I thought about how much had changed since that night in 1920 when Ho, then a young nationalist agitator, slipped out of Saigon aboard a freighter bound for France.

The city that now bears Ho Chi Minh's name, officially if not colloquially, has changed considerably. Turn-of-the-century sepia photographs show the familiar bustle of an

Oriental port, the emaculated faces of the opium smokers, the bewildered look of children wondering at the photographer's intentions, the shanties breeding rats and plague and misery.

Black-and-white shots of the 1930s and 1940s show a centre of colonial commerce and administration—first for the French, then briefly for the Imperial Japanese, and after for the French again. Men in white suits and pith helmets can be seen dedicating monuments to obscure achievements, or, much more diligently, checking cargo. Women with parasols lean and wave from balconies. Here and there the police break up some demonstration or another—a hint, hindsight reveals, of much worse to come.

Colour photography arrived in Saigon in time to catch the red of the Vietcong flags, the yellow of the flames around the Buddhist monks immolating themselves for peace, and the blue-and-green floral shirts of off-duty American soldiers lying dead in some bombed-out downtown cafe.

These days one is more likely to be

run down by a new Honda Accord in Saigon than to be gunned down by a terrorist. The war is a distant echo, like the sound of a storm trailing off out to sea. The war still claims its victims—men and women who have lost legs to the land mines littering the countryside; children who have lost hands and faces to curiosity and booby-trapped metal canisters. But these people are despatched to the shadow world in which life's hideous and grotesque creatures roam about, softly, silently, and almost transparently.

I left the Continental Hotel and walked down what was once the Rue Catinat to my more modest lodgings. Again change can be seen everywhere and it is happening more rapidly and more profoundly as Vietnam opens to the outside world.

The rising middle-class clutter Saigon's streets with motorbikes, constantly using their squeaky little horns like charms to ward off swarms of less fortunate push-bike riders. Western-style jeans are replacing the elegant *ao dai* dress of the women, and American-style baseball caps the old cane mollusc hats of the paddy fields. Stores are crammed with new television sets and cassette recorders. Billboards advertise other consumer desirables, other lifestyles, other ways of doing things, and invariably the advertiser's idea of the satisfied customer is a Westerner or a distinctly Westernised Asian.

Saigon has embraced the free market like a mother embraces a lost son. When shopkeepers are not buying or selling or counting the profits from some exchange, they are busy re-tiling the facades on their stores, raising new signs in bright gold lettering, and

re-cementing the pavement around showrooms along otherwise neglected and congested sidewalks.

The Vietnamese are an especially playful people, and along the street one is constantly dodging men playing cards or draughts, children playing a form of shuttlecock but using their feet as bats, improvised soccer matches and test flights of new kites. Near the entrance to my hotel some children were playing marbles. One little girl saw the foreigner approaching, broke off from her game, and, rubbing her stomach to indicate hunger, thrust out a tiny, beautiful hand in the way of a beggar. Getting only a smile in return she went back to her play as if nothing has been ventured, lost or gained. In Saigon these days there is more room for opportunity, more reason to dream, and less cause for disappointment or despair.

The day was very hot and very humid. The clouds were building up for the afternoon shower and it would be raining before my head hit the pillow. In the lobby of the hotel I passed French and American tourists, Japanese and Australian businessmen, and overseas Vietnamese who have come back with mixed motives. One can always tell the new arrivals by their energy and excitement.

I WENT UP TO MY ROOM where the air-conditioning was too strong and the water pressure too weak. A gecko trekked across the white-washed wall like some Arctic explorer; it stopped, put its head into an electrical socket, thought better of it and moved on.

I might send the postcards tomorrow.

Billboards advertise other consumer desirables, other lifestyles, other ways of doing things, and invariably the advertiser's idea of the satisfied customer is a Westerner or a distinctly Westernised Asian. Saigon has embraced the free market like a mother embraces a lost son.

row or throw them out with yesterday's news from home. The weather in Vietnam makes you listless. Travelling does as well.

The train journey from Saigon to Hanoi takes about 50 hours, depending on the temperament of the old Chinese rolling stock and the state of the tracks. And there are nearly always unexpected delays. Six hours into the countryside the train comes to a sudden, stumbling stop in the night. There is feverish activity and concern for a while—a peasant, I am told, has been killed on the track—but soon the passengers are no longer amused by merely another death and they settle back into the solitude of waiting. Much of what we call travelling is actually waiting: waiting to depart, waiting to arrive, waiting for a body to be scraped off the rails, pieced back together and left in the charge of some hapless local farmer.

It is said that one can never really know a country from its cities alone because cities are functional rather than cultural creations and are too prone to outside influences. But if that is true, then what one finds outside of Vietnam's cities is not one but several countries inhabited by many different peoples. This is not surprising. Until relatively recently, Vietnam was three states—Tonkin, Annam, Cochin. Its history is one of intervention and meddling by outsiders—Chinese, French, Japanese, Russians, Americans—all of whom have left different marks on different people at different times. Today ethnic (aboriginal) minorities account for nearly a fifth of the population. And among the ethnic-Vietnamese themselves are distinct communities based on Buddhism, Catholicism and unfathomable syncretist religions like Cao Dai.

Cao Dai was established by Ngo Minh Chieu in the 1920s. Chieu must have had a particularly fertile imagination for he managed to take the poetry of Victor Hugo, the beliefs of Buddhism and Taoism, the rituals of Catholicism, and the organisational principles of French colonial bureaucracy and fashion them into his own version of the 'third alliance between God and man'.

The Cao Dai once boasted more than a million followers and a sizeable private army camped around the Cao

Dai 'Vatican' at Tay Ninh, near the Vietnamese-Cambodian border northwest of Saigon. Now at Tay Ninh the Cao Dai are disarmed and the clergy of 'bishops', 'priests', and 'nuns' number only a few hundred. When they take their places for daily prayers in their gaudy stucco cathedral—the blue, yellow and white robes indicating rank—the Cao Dai hierarchy look less like an army deployed for battle than like the pieces laid out on a Chinese checkerboard.

On the eastern coastal flats where the train snakes north, the differences are more subtle but no less real. The city of Hue was sufficiently divided in 1968 to allow the Vietcong to hold it for 25 days during the Tet Offensive. It is still sufficiently divided—among pro-communists, anti-communists of various stripes, and Buddhists—to attract particular attention from the security police.

Hue is the only place in Vietnam where I was pointedly reminded of the war, and that seemed to say something about this city and its inhabitants as well. On the southern approach to the city, the train passed a cemetery; 'American', said a passenger from Hue, by which he meant victims of US troops, since no Americans lie buried in Vietnam now except in the imagination of the MIA/POW lobby. As he spoke he made an action as though he were firing a machine gun levelled at my stomach.

At Hue I visited Notre Dame Cathedral, one of the very few Catholic churches in Vietnam with Vietnamese motifs incorporated into its architecture. (Sadly, the same principle has been neglected in developing the liturgy, choosing strains of theological reflection, and training religious in Vietnam). My guide was Fr Michael Marie Nguyen Dinh Lanh—a tiny old man who looked as though he would leave nothing but a shadow behind in a strong wind. But he was a charming man with a strong personality nonetheless.

Fr Lanh described his cathedral so eloquently and with such affection that the inadequacies of my high-school French weren't a barrier to understanding him. When we approached the altar, he spoke in hushed tones; out of reverence no doubt, but in a way that could have been construed as an

exchange of secrets in some plot against the government. In a one-party state, how much suspicion does a man attract simply because he chooses to whisper in the places he regards as holy and mysterious?

Back on the train and across the old Demilitarised Zone that once separated North and South Vietnam, further local differences adding to the patchwork of Vietnam are easily detectable. Here the old green canvas helmets of the Vietminh nationalist army—not baseball caps—are the fashion, and the everyday dress of the peasants is the old familiar black pyjama suit.

Poverty is more apparent in the north. It is not unusual for whole villages in isolated regions to be malnourished, their inhabitants illiterate, their children suffering from any number of debilitating diseases. And travelling on the coastal plains by train at night, one is less likely to see the steely blue flicker of a television set in a peasant's hut off in the rice fields.

The struggle to survive also seems more poignant. Waifs, dressed in straw hats and ragged clothes as though they'd just come off the set of *Huckleberry Finn*, walk through the train begging on behalf of blind 'entertainers'. The entertainers themselves play electric guitars wired up to old car batteries and sing atrociously. Women try to sell what they can at train stops, but their produce, like their contraband, is less enticing than it is in the south. Fewer people beg in the north but those who do seem to be in greater need of the hand-out.

The first night in Hanoi I stayed in a hotel that was either built by Soviets or else was built to Soviet tastes. The floors were divided by long, gloomy

Hue was sufficiently divided in 1968 to allow the Vietcong to hold it for 25 days during the Tet Offensive. It is still sufficiently divided—among pro-communists, anti-communists of various stripes, and Buddhists—to attract particular attention from the security police. Hue is the only place in Vietnam where I was pointedly reminded of the war.

corridors off which ran rooms that looked like prison cells. The whole building had the ambience of a place in which one might commit a major crime—most likely suicide. I was woken in the morning by rats, and little dried pellets of gecko shit fell from the rafters onto the butter at breakfast in a dining room that had all the charm of an old railway cafeteria.

I quickly moved into a guest house at half the price but more than double the value. This was a family-run, not a government, concern—and it showed. There were 'fresh' plastic flowers in my room each day, and, after I made an obscure inquiry about the Catholic cathedral, a picture of the Virgin and Child was found, dusted off and placed against my bed lamp. Such is the traditional hospitality of the Vietnamese that 200 years of French colonialism, 50 years of communism and nearly a decade of US bombing raids have not destroyed it.

Hanoi is a shabbier but also a quaintier city than Saigon. It is less congested with traffic, more welcoming in its tree-lined streets, and more elegant in its ubiquitous French colonial architecture. There are other endearing touches: each day at noon an air raid siren wails to mark the occasion, and US Air Force parachutes now grace many a courtyard as shading against the sun. In the south, old GI helmets can be seen being used by kerbside mechanics to collect the oil drained from motorbikes; in the poorer north, the wreckage of B-52s has been turned into thermos flasks and hair combs that are still in use.

Hanoi must also be one of the world's few cities where statues of Lenin remain erect and intact. There is one overlooking Dien Bien Phu Street—every city in Vietnam has its Dien Bien Phu Street, celebrating the great military victory over the French—and there is a cruel irony about this statue. Lenin stands, tight hand on lapel, looking approvingly not towards a worker's paradise but across the street to the headquarters of Vietnam's military command. A genuine socialist revolution has not occurred in Vietnam. Nowhere is there the effort devoted to literacy, nutrition, health or social equality that one finds in Cuba or found in Nicaragua under the Sandinistas. Ho Chi Minh's

victory was a nationalist one that left new mandarins atop an essentially unaltered Confucian social structure.

The irony continues 300 metres away at Ho Chi Minh's tomb. Ho was a genuinely popular leader, and one reason for his popularity was that he lived simply and frugally, like his people. As the leader of North Vietnam, he lived, worked, and received guests in a two-roomed wooden house beside the carp pond in the grounds of the old French governor-general's palace. In keeping with his style, it was Ho's wish that after his death his remains should be cremated and buried without fuss. But under the influence of the Soviets, the North Vietnamese authorities had him embalmed and Ho now lies in state like a dried-up salami within an ugly grey mausoleum made of concrete and marble.

Looking down on the mummified body of Ho and the soldiers frozen to attention around his pyre, I was reminded of a night I had spent in Saigon in the home of a retired language teacher. My host kept a picture of 'Uncle Ho' above the washtubs out the back of his house 'just in case'. But in his lounge room these days he preferred to be surrounded by pictures of the Sacred Heart, a copy of Da Vinci's *The Last Supper*, and the most popular objects of devotion among Vietnamese Catholics, Our Lady of Lourdes and Our Lady of Fatima. Perhaps because of this devotion, the old man was convinced that the days of communism were numbered and I asked whether he thought the end would be a peaceful one. 'When the sun rises, the fog disappears', he told me. 'And then watch the colours: red fades peacefully to orange; orange fades peacefully to yellow; yellow fades peacefully to white.'

Massive change is occurring in Vietnam and, given the country's old and new divisions, there is an ever-present danger associated with it. Whether the logic of political transition there will ultimately conform to the promises of the Virgin or to the chemistry of cheap dyes, no one can say. But for the sake of the Vietnamese, and for our sake, I hope the old teacher is right.

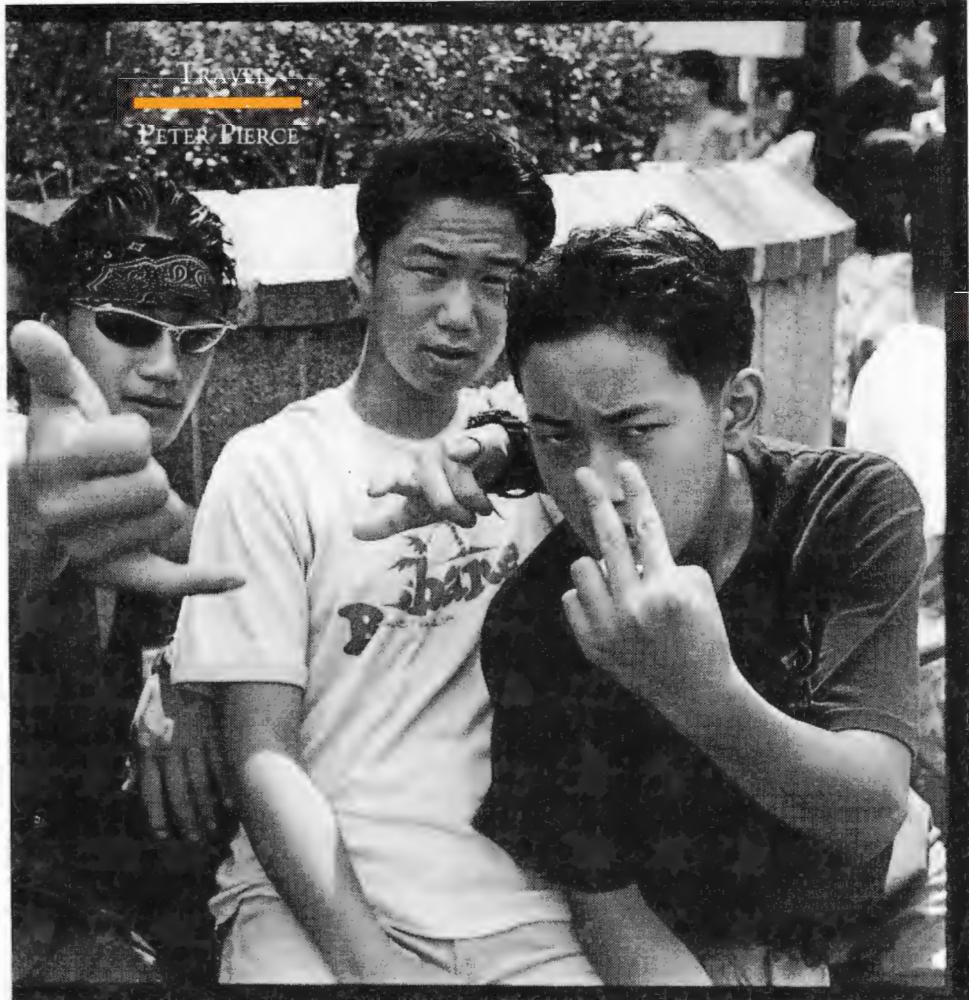
Chris McGillion writes for *The Sydney Morning Herald*.



Imag

ON 16 JULY, the *Straits Times* of Singapore reprinted an article from the Japanese monthly *Chuo Koron*, by the former diplomat Kazuo Ogura. In its best minatory fashion, the paper captioned this piece 'Re-examining spirit of Asia and spreading its universal values'. Confused or disingenuous, Ogura's argument rehearses Edward Said's notion of the Western construction of Orientalism, before—in a very Japanese move—adopting it to suit other purposes.

'Asia', Ogura wrote, 'is escaping from the hollow concept created by the West ... Asia itself is finally developing slowly into something that is real'. One of his key measures of this remarkably unhistorical process is that Japanese, Koreans, 'as well as the Vietnamese and Chinese', are now 'active internationally in artistic fields such



ining Japan

as Western music and architecture'. The gauge of Asian reality, by this reckoning, is emulation of the West. As a former diplomat, Ogura lodges a covert and clearer subtext within his article. By implication, Japan is truly Asian, and a brother to its neighbours—not an overbearing, rapacious enemy.

The need for such assurances is the subject of Friedemann Bartu's study of 'Nippon's Economic Empire in Asia', *The Ugly Japanese* (Longman). Bartu highlights 'a centuries old fundamental Japanese problem: How to approach the people of Asia?' and wonders whether 'Japan is really an Asian orphan in search of an adequate place among its neighbours'.

Much of the book, deftly assembled from newspaper cuttings, charts the ruthless, eventually resented, if not effectively resisted Japanese pene-

tration of Asian economies. What looked like Japanese generosity—large aid programs, specific instances of cooperation, as with Malaysia over the development of the Proton Saga car—often turned into reinforcements, by backdoor means, of Japanese economic control.

There are signs of Japanese sensitivity about the way they are perceived in Asia, signs such as Ogura's article or the recent apology for the use of thousands of Korean and Chinese women for the 'comfort' of Japanese soldiers in World War II. At the same time its people seem, resignedly or scornfully, to expect American envy and hostility.

IN *Caught in a Mirror* (Macmillan), her excellent memoir of three years as

Tokyo correspondent for *The Guardian*, Lisa Martineau observes that many young Japanese expect to fight a second war with America. Popular fiction has seconded these apprehensions. In *The Two Ten Conspiracy* (Fontana) in 1986, Leon Le Grand prophesied the invasion of Australia by the Japanese. In this addled admonition to his Australian countrymen to work harder, native survivors have been granted citizenship and have never been more prosperous.

Economic hegemony over America—sought by foul and fair means—is the subject of Peter Tasker's *Silent Thunder* (Orion) and, notoriously, of *Rising Sun* (Random Century), the book with which Michael Crichton followed *Jurassic Park*. Sean Connery will soon bring to the big screen the warnings of Crichton's hero about Japan, no doubt occasioning even more intense Japanese protests than those that greeted the novel.

RECOLLECTION OF THE Great War ought to remind us of the danger that bellicose prophecies fulfil themselves—that wars happen in large part because people want them. In the three decades before 1914, the coming European conflict was imagined in scores of novels and plays; it was one of the ways in which the world was psychologically conditioned for war.

In Australia, there are yet pockets of rancour against the Japanese among those who suffered in consequence of the Second World War. These were revived, in order to be interred, in the memorial service at the end of July for the victims of the Sandakan death march. The time for such revivals of anger and pain is passing. The Japanese (as far as they are likely to be concerned) will benefit from the circumstance that forgetfulness is stronger than forgiveness in Australian culture. Indeed, what Australians know of Japan will soon be out of the control of most of them and will become the province of a specialist few.

Not long ago, Australian tourists came to Japan in considerable numbers. At Nara they fed the deer, on fine days glimpsed Mt Fuji from the bullet train as guards stood to attention. In Tokyo they marvelled at the pace of life, without desiring it for themselves.

Takenoko Zuku—*'bamboo shoot children'*. A new youth culture flourishing among country teenagers who flee to big cities such as Osaka and Tokyo. Emmanuel Santos composed this photo essay in Harajuku, Tokyo.



If their travel agents were aesthetically attuned, they saw the cherry blossom. My parents came to Japan in that remote time, the 1970s, my mother taking her schoolgirl impressions of the Tokyo earthquake of 1923. Many decades before, her teacher had explained to the class that the consequent fire was so devastating because 'all their houses are made of paper'.

Nowadays, with an exchange rate that is a source of shock and shame, few Australians can afford a holiday in a country which, in any case, is unready to receive them. As a result, our opinions of Japan will increasingly be second-hand; or will revive old mystifications; or will be formed from the impressions of the Japanese in Australia: tour groups carefully herded by Japanese guides through our cities, past selected natural wonders. Albeit unwittingly, the Japanese will control Australian's views of them. It is not an arrangement that it is in their interests to disturb.

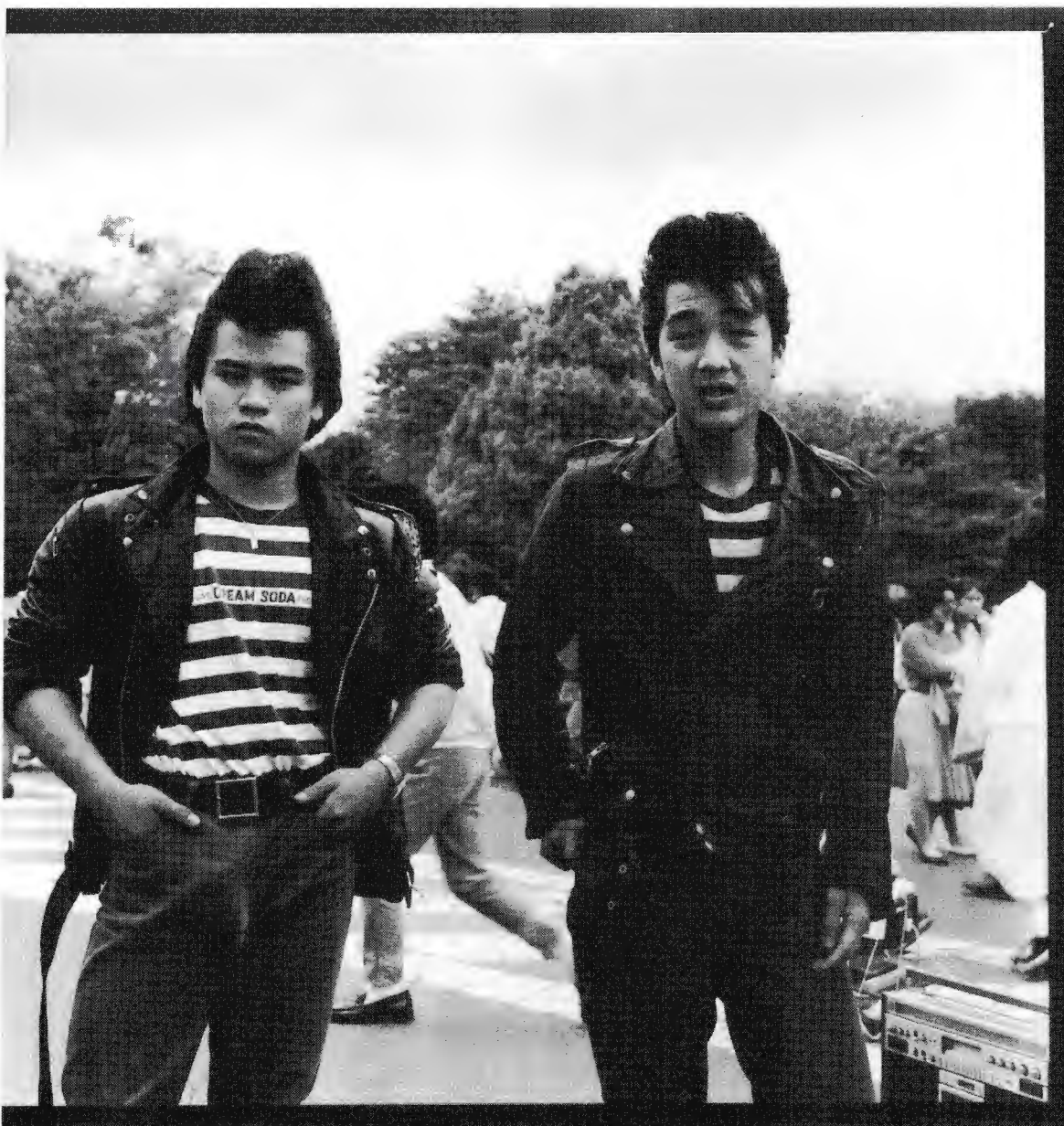
The short-term, first-time visitor

to Japan is more than usually exposed to the risks of solecisms of behaviour and absurdities of judgment. What to make of the strange world of signs at which Roland Barthes marvelled? How to reckon with the relentless Japanese determination not only to remake urban landscapes, but to eradicate most of the evidence of the old? How to cope with the psychological pressure of a cost of living that is palpably higher than in any other city on earth? And by what means can one combat the subtly encouraged impression that efforts by the West to contest Japanese power are obsolete and unavailing?

IT'S AN HOUR-AND-A-HALF bus trip from Narita to Tokyo or, notoriously, \$300 by cab. There were plenty of riot police with batons and shields in evidence—this was a few days before the G-7 summit—but none of the protesters who struggled so long against the building of the airport. On the right a race track, to the left the familiar towers of Disneyland: a vast conurbation unfolded, all in the process of becoming larger and busier still. Near the road an unfinished structure, no doubt with an arcane industrial function, loomed like a giant ski jump. Prudently, few tall buildings rose in the soupy air of early summer. Residents of Osaka are said to be impatiently waiting their city's turn to be national capital once the next big earthquake demolishes Tokyo.

In search of rare traces of what the first settlement here had been like, we were taken to the new Edo Tokyo Museum, which is next door to the sumo stadium. Inside, tricks of scale were everywhere. A replica of the *Nihonbashi* (Japanese bridge) led to the diorama of old Edo, whose first feature was that bridge in miniature. A kabuki show, appropriately performed by puppet-sized robots, was backed by the full-size frontage of a kabuki theatre. A towering but scaled-down model of a 12-storey tower was flanked by a photograph of its remains after US bombing, and by real bricks from the ruins.

This was the past sardonically packaged. The point of the enterprise seemed to be to highlight the cleverness of modern museum craft, rather



than to conjure poignant remembrance.

Much more Japanese energy is devoted to social control in the present than to seeking lessons from the past. We'd travelled first to Kyoto by bullet train, hearing along the way an apology that the French TGV is faster, and a promise that it would not be for long. Just before we boarded the train, a manacled man was led along the platform of Tokyo Station. His head was shaven, his uniform khaki drab, his shoulders pulled forward by the bag containing his possessions. Three detectives accompanied him for a fast ride to trial, or to gaol. His public humiliation was less a warning to onlookers, perhaps, than a means of reassurance to them of how few and solitary are prisoners in Japan.

On the bus to Nara we passed pachinko parlours, luridly coloured, unbearably noisy, run by the *yakuza*, and packed with people concentrating with the intensity of Zen Buddhists on the fall of tiny steel balls. We were travelling into humid, wooded country to see the largest statue of Buddha inside the largest wooden building in the world.

The tour guide informed us that pachinko was not the only generator of social problems in Japan. He complained of being an eldest son, hence responsible for his parents. On the plight of Japanese husbands retired from employment, he related how wives spoke of them mockingly as 'wet leaves', 'big garbage' as they sat disconsolately around, deprived of the male society of work, of the solace of absence from home. (Japanese men who do housework are known as 'Australian husbands'.) We were being given a carefully scripted instance of Japanese openness, but were told nothing of the kinds of resistance that some Japanese women must mount against the institutionalised lack of regard for them.

The tour driver also reminded us of one of the successful instances of Japanese cultural imperialism by foisting a *karaoke* concert onto his passengers. First he coerced his female assistant into singing, sang himself, then persuaded an Indonesian man into a rendition of what sounded like 'By the old Sulu Sea'. As the concert closed, we passed a pile of *karaoke* 'practice



capsules', which can be rented by the hour for those who are shy or incompetent at singing in public. Suspicion of the need and uses for privacy outweighs concern for the torments that some individuals suffer through *karaoke*. Back in Tokyo a plethora of signs lay ready for interpretation. Election posters sprouted. Politicians toured the streets in vans with blaring loudspeakers. Thirty-six thousand police had been mustered to guard the G-7 summiteers, especially perhaps those Americans who jogged by the moat of the Imperial Palace (whose 128 acres of land are rumoured to be worth all the real estate in Canada).

EARLY ONE MORNING, the most famous natural wonder of Japan made a cameo appearance. Draped in banners of unmelted snow, Mt Fuji was visible 100km in the distance. In late afternoon it was visible again. Cut off at the base by haze, it seemed to have

detached itself from the ground, become a cloud, and then, gently, vanished.

On street level, at 10 each morning, we were treated to the sight of three young women in lemon uniforms and white gloves emerging to chant a welcome as their department store opened. Here were Gilbert and Sullivan's 'Three Little Maids from School', but was this mockery of Western images of the Japanese, or a validation of them? What was indubitably signified was the extent of redundant employment in Japan, the assumed social benefits willingly paid for in higher prices.

Conversely the costs to the vaunted racial homogeneity of Japan of the increasing, if rarely remarked use of foreign, illegal labour, are presumably endured as a curb on prices. The square near Tokyo's Harajuku Station used to crowd on Sundays with Iranians, of whom 4000 are believed to be working without proper visas. The area was

'The coats they borrowed from James Dean': bamboo-shoot fashions are recognisable borrowings from the West, but the final look is anything but American Pie. It's all their own work.

closed on 28 April because of damage to 2200 azaleas. The Iranians now congregate a few blocks away.

A larger community of illegal Filipino workers can be found in Yokohama, as described in Ray Ventura's droll reminiscence, *Underground in Japan* (Jonathan Cape). Exploited by their Japanese employers, yet convinced of how much richer they can become than at home, the Filipinos live a fugitive existence that is unnecessary. Their whereabouts are well known to the police, who have no regular directive to act against them.

The two TV sports of summer in Japan are baseball and sumo. Imported American players are well-established in the former: one secured the game for the Swallows against the Giants with a home run off the last pitch of the day, and spectators rose in drenching rain to wave thousands of aqua umbrellas and plastic baseball bats. The road to fame in sumo has been much harder for foreigners. The giant Hawaiian Konishiki was not promoted to the highest rank of *yokozuna*, purportedly because he did not comprehend the mysteries of the sport.

His response was to parody sumo by becoming the biggest wrestler ever, at 270kg.

The very big ones can't reach their own backsides to wipe them. Apprentices have the honour. In 1988 young Chad Rowan came from Hawaii to be a sumo. As Akebono, he was installed as the 64th *yokozuna* (after organisers reacted to adverse publicity over Konishiki) and does earnest ads for the sumo way. Turning its competitors if not into eunuchs, then asexual monstrosities, sumo suggests the Japanese ambivalence about their bodies.

Everywhere in Tokyo, hoardings and TV advertisements, glossy magazines and cinema billboards, as well as bronze statues with pretensions to art, seem to proclaim a preference for European body types. Does Japanese culture suffer from a Caliban complex, a desire to overthrow, by becoming like the master who brought magic in 'black ships' from over the seas?

THE CONVERSE OF Japanese chauvinism is a visceral distrust of the figure that this people cuts in the world. Having forsworn military conquest, the Japanese exert enormous economic power, but the task of escaping peacefully from their islands to establish a confident cultural presence in the world, an ease with their appearances as much as with their financial and management clout, is one of terrible difficulty.

The orchestras of the West may fill with Japanese string players, but the prospect of becoming a people in the image of the West (so strongly desired and resented) will, and should, remain a chimera. ■

Peter Pierce teaches in the Centre for Australian Studies at Monash University.

Takenoko chorus line: somewhere between West Side Story, a Coca-Cola ad and a martial art.



NOEL RYAN, WHO DIED ON 2 SEPTEMBER, spent much of his life educating Jesuit students. But his life had a broader significance than that bald summary may indicate.

Born in Kalgoorlie in 1916, Noel studied English after entering the Society of Jesus. After ordination he taught humanities to young Jesuits and helped them choose their university courses.

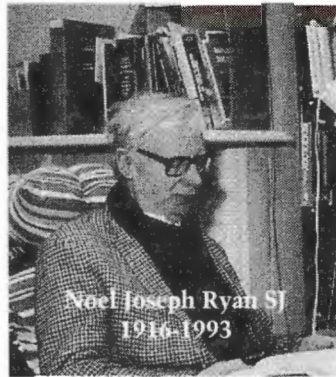
Although he was a superb teacher, his influence upon Jesuit university studies during the 1950s was even more important. The Society had grown rapidly, and was under pressure to supply Jesuit teachers to its many schools. As a result, university courses were tailored to secondary teaching. Noel, however, who saw the future challenges to the church to lie in the engagement with culture within the universities, encouraged young Jesuits to prepare themselves for research and tertiary teaching. Although he could not have anticipated the caesura of the 1960s in the life of the Society and the Catholic Church, he helped prepare for a difficult period of transition.

In the late 1950s, a claim that Catholic school students were good at passing examinations, but were not well prepared for university study, was widely publicised. Noel examined it in detail. He gained his doctorate in education by showing the claim to be largely unfounded. But this became incidental to a characteristically ambitious inquiry about the religious effects of Catholic schooling. The task, which involved a long questionnaire and hours of dedicated work to process it by the Knights of the Southern Cross and others, proved too ambitious and complex for the available technology. But again he raised central questions about the relationship of faith and culture.

Afterwards Noel pursued postdoctoral studies at Harvard under Talcott Parsons, and returned to teach sociology. In his courses he introduced his students to the classic texts of social philosophy that lay behind the formation of the modern mind. The Melbourne College of Divinity had now been formed, and Noel was the inaugural principal of Jesuit Theological College in those early days of ecumenical cooperation in theological teaching.

Subsequently, disturbed by the summary judgment and discrimination shown to unpopular religious groups, he involved himself in issues concerned with religious freedom in Australia. This led him to give evidence for the Scientologists. He also contributed substantially to a Victorian Government inquiry on gambling.

That, in summary, was Noel Ryan's life. Its progression from country to city, from seminary teaching to research on the adequacy of Catholic schooling, from classical texts to the key texts of modernity, and from church to public issues, reflected the directions of change in the Catholic Church in Australia. It has been a move-



ment to breadth, but also one of some fragmentation.

The nature of that fragmentation is illuminated by Noel's habits of mind. He was an immensely learned man and a voracious reader, whose gift was to see the complexity of the world and to appreciate the interplay of its causes. He found it less easy to frame issues briefly, still less to bring them neatly to closure, for he was always more interested in theory than in the demands of practice.

Once when he was taken to casualty in considerable pain after a fall, he disregarded the pain, preoccupied by the question of whether Hegel or Durkheim better explained the assumption governing modern health care. As for the modern church, theory and practice could become dissociated.

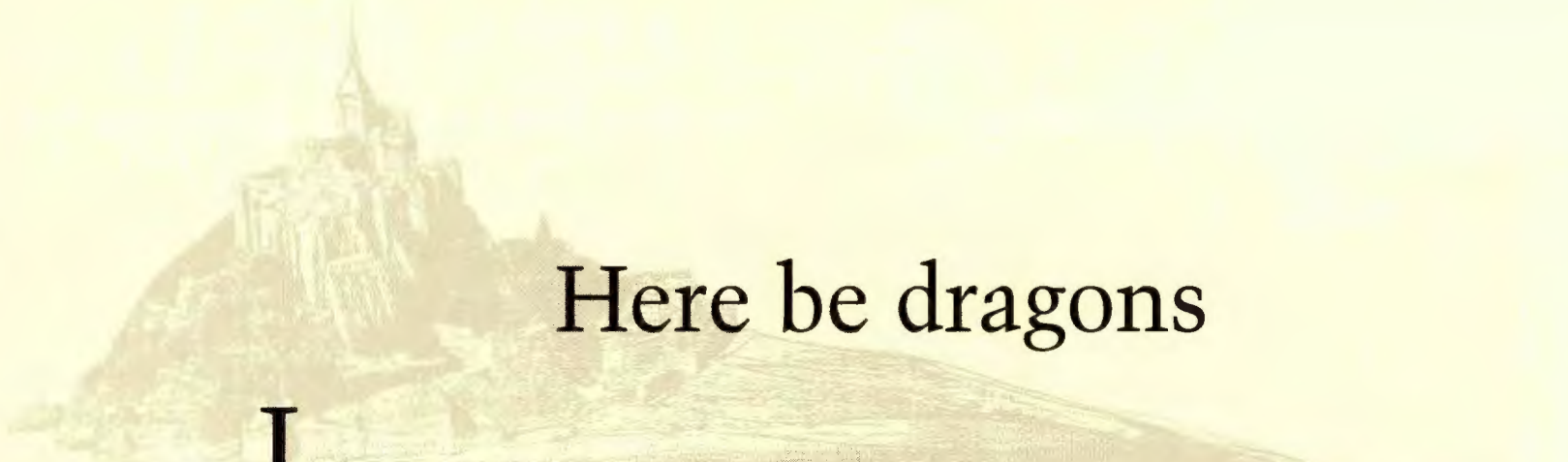
Noel's life of mind was also given coherence by his catholicity. He instinctively dismissed sectarian versions of faith, which seek certainty by denying the complexity of reality. For Noel even those aspects of the world which did not fit his preconceptions, were of God and made a claim on us. He did not believe it proper to defend the truth of Catholicism by attacking those outside or inside the church who differed from him. Faith had to wrestle with the awkwardness of the given, and hence with modernity in all its forms.

But Noel's life spoke also of emerging patterns of coherence. Although in his set lectures the effort to order complexity often proved too hard, on those occasions when he had to speak without preparation or notes a simple image would place an aspect of contemporary Australia within the currents of the western intellectual tradition. The illumination which he brought was almost awe-inspiring. At these times he spoke as a poet, drawing together intuitively his faith and his learning.

Finally, although Noel was almost Plotinian in his passion for theory, his engagement with the tangible world was given consistency by his compassion for people who were broken spiritually or intellectually. His distaste for a public order and a public philosophy spawned by accountants came partly out of a scorn for computer-designed ideas bought off the hook, but more out of his pastoral friendship for those who had been crushed by that order. He is mourned as a passionate man and not simply as a mind.

In this fragmentation and these budding forms of coherence, Noel was a Jesuit. Call these principles which integrated his life the search for God in all things, the service of the church, the struggle to commend faith, and the option for the poor, and you have the shorthand phrases which summarise Jesuit mission, old and new. But in Noel, these catch phrases took an attractively and idiosyncratically human form. ■

—Andrew Hamilton SJ



Here be dragons

I DECIDED IT WAS TIME to go looking for the angel on his island. Not Ariel, and certainly not Caliban, but Michael, the dragon-slaying one. He has watched over his island off the coast of Normandy for at least as long as there has been a church dedicated to him there, a thousand years or more.

The angel and the island have always had visitors. Once they came as pilgrims, trusting to the angel's guidance to pass safely through the quicksands dividing Mont St Michel from the mainland. Some still do come as pilgrims, but most are tourists, and all now cross to the Mont over an elevated, black-topped causeway. The causeway builders have not quite succeeded in beating the tides that used to keep the angel secure on his rock. Instead of a daily inundation, now the road is only swamped by tides for part of the year, in March or April.

I want to see the Mont as the early pilgrims saw it, rising from the morning mist. So I will not take a package tour, or a local bus or taxi from the railway station at Pontorson. I shall walk. It is not a long walk, about nine or 10 kilometres.

It is not a pretty walk, either. Not because the flat Norman countryside offers little relief to the eye, but because the advertising hoardings that hug the road offer too much confusion to the eye. One in particular seems ominous. It entreats passersby to visit something called the Mont St Michel Crocodile Farm. Dalliance with dragons in the realm of the dragonslayer? I suppress antipodean anger at the thought of having travelled across the world only to end up on the road to the Daintree again.

But there is nothing in Port Douglas or Cooktown to compare with the sight that now rises before me. Suspended in the air, its base mist-wrapped as I had hoped, is the angel's Mount in Peril of the Sea. It looks like a kind of Disneyland for adults, and I shall be disappointed to learn that, with a little help from the French tourist authorities, the image has overtaken the reality. Mont St Michel largely *is* a kind of Disneyland for adults.

Angels have some stake in wonders, even of the tacky, glitzy kind. And no doubt any concentration of medieval pilgrims, in Mont St Michel or Compostella or Rome or anywhere, attracted more than a few touts and charlatans in its wake. So perhaps Michael does not mind. But I am no angel.

Inside the gates at the foot of the mount, adorning the façade of Mère Poulard's hotel, I am greeted by a poster announcing that after dinner there will be a *ka-raoke* competition. No doubt this is meant to spur tepid

pilgrims on up the mount, away from the hotel. I press on.

The horror begins halfway up the road to the abbey church at the summit. It is the first *spectacle son et lumière*, one of two on the mount conducted by the Musée Grevin. In each of them you can hear, 'delivered by seven of France's greatest actors', a potted history of 'this special place that preserves better than any other pilgrimage site a sense of the holly (sic)'. It is, as side-show audiences used to assure each other, all done with wires.

The angel and his abbey are actually only bit players in the sound-and-light story, which is largely about one Tiphaine de Ragueneil. Tiphaine was the wife of Bertrand du Guesclin, who was Constable of France during the early phase of the Hundred Years War, when the English won all the battles. Bertrand, a kind of French Robin Hood, kept up French morale between all those lost battles by winning a skirmish or six. And, to protect his wife from the marauding English, he moved her out of the family chateau and into the Abbey of Mont St Michel.

Tiphaine stayed on the Mont for the rest of her life, a life that is now the subject of every conceivable item of Mont St Michel merchandise, from tea-towels to T-shirts. But the highpoint of Tiphainemania is a visit to her house, where surviving members of the Du Guesclin family invite you to inspect various supposed medieval objects, including three chastity belts.

Bertrand du Guesclin was a man of his time, but he was also a good man for any time. I do not believe that he would have forced, or even asked, his wife to wear such a harness. Nor do I believe that the three metal-and-leather belts on display are of medieval provenance. One even looks as though it was stitched by machine. Perhaps the latter-day Du Guesclins are just kinky.

THE BEST THING about a visit *chez Tiphaine* is that the back door of her house opens onto the front door of the abbey. The writ of the Musée Grevin does not run there, but sound-and-light silliness unfortunately does. One of the most sublimely beautiful early Gothic structures in Europe, the three-storey *merveille* ('the wonder') adjoining the abbey church, has been turned into a kind of obstacle course of contemporary glass and wooden sculptures, which are illuminated at night to the accompaniment of taped music by Kodaly and other hardly-medieval composers.

The top level of the *merveille* is the old monastic cloister, open on one side to give a glorious view of the bay and its shifting sands. In the centre of the cloister has been placed, as part of the sound-and-light show, a large glass book sculpture, apparently to explain to the uninitiated what the monks used to do as they perambulated round their cloister. This, even more than the crocodile farm, makes me think I am back in Australia. The Big Book is a product of the same sort of imagination as that which has given the world the Big Banana, the Big Pineapple and the Big Merino.

Mont St Michel was secularised at the time of the Revolution, but a notice on the door of the abbey church announces that Mass is celebrated each day at noon. I ask the guide in whose company one must visit the abbey whether the monks have been allowed to return. They are not monks, he says, but a small community with a special character. The guide frowns, trying to find English words to explain this special character, and then smiles triumphantly: 'They are a bisexual community.'

I attend Mass, and afterwards talk to one of the 'bisexuals'. She is one of a community of seven—four men living in the abbey and three women in a separate house in the village. One of the men is a priest, but his ordination gives him no precedence outside the liturgy. The woman is unperturbed by the fact that the Mont has fallen into the hands of the Philistines. 'People come here from many places,' she tells me. 'If they just enjoy themselves, that is good. If they also find time to pray, that is better.'

Not everyone who prays on the Mont does so as the bisexual and her confreres might wish. As I walk out into the forecourt of the church, I behold two women swaying in some pattern that is evident to them but not to the small crowd of tourists gathered around them. Flashbulbs pop in appreciation of the dance, if such it is, and a blue-rinsed American matron in front of me whispers to her husband, 'Should we be here? It looks like some special Roman Catholic ceremony or something.'

Or something. As the flashbulb brigade disperses, I linger to ask the dancers the meaning of the dance. They too are American, a mother and daughter from Arizona. The daughter does most of the talking, while mum continues to sway, and to cackle out of context occasionally. The daughter eyes me gravely. 'Did you know that we are standing on one of the great nodes at which telluric forces intersect?' 'Er, no, I didn't know that. I didn't even know there were any telluric forces.' She tilts her head and extends her arms. 'I can feel the power in me now. When we leave here, we will go to St Michael's Mount in Cornwall. All of the great Michael churches are aligned on the same pattern of telluric forces.'

'Let me guess,' I reply. 'After Cornwall you'll be going on to Stonehenge? And then maybe up to Scotland, to chomp on a few mystical vegies at Findhorn?' The daughter's eyebrows edge up a fraction. 'How did

you know?' 'Oh, I dunno. I suppose it's the telluric forces making me prophesy.'

I suggest that it is lunch time, and she concurs, hooking one arm around mum to prevent her swaying too close to the wall of the forecourt and its 20-metre drop to the rocks below. We find a café in the village, and mum and daughter grimace as I order a *choucroute* (sausages, potatoes and sauerkraut) with beer to wash it down. They choose a salad and bottled water, and proceed to explain how eating pure foods is necessary to cultivate sensitivity to telluric forces. Everything, it seems, is connected: Navajo spirituality back home in Arizona, telluric forces, Mont St Michel on its node, swilling Evian water and eating only vegies, and the spiritual renewal that will come from a restoration of matriarchy. In the time it takes to eat my *choucroute*, I get the entire gospel according to the witchy-poo school of feminism.

Inevitably, I ask a silly question. 'How does Michael fit into all of this? Isn't he, well, rather masculine for your tastes?' The daughter looks around to see if she is being overheard, and moves closer. 'He wasn't always a Christian archangel, you know. There is an older religion.' 'I know,' I start, to say, 'The cult of angels was originally Hebraic, with maybe a few Persian connections. But I don't see how that eases the masculine tone.' Mum and

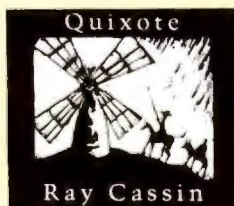
daughter stiffen in the presence of the infidel. I have got the wrong older religion in mind.

To keep the peace, I change tack. 'Have you told Mlle Du Guesclin about the node and the telluric forces?' 'Mlle Du Guesclin?' 'She's the young woman at Tiphaine's house, where they show chastity belts to tourists.' Warming to the theme, I add: 'And perhaps Mlle Du Guesclin could tell you about her famous ancestor Tiphaine, who may have been not an ordinary human being at all, but a local manifestation of the Great Mother.'

I excuse myself and escape into the abbey garden. Later, as I head down the hill to catch the bus for Pontorson, I see mum and daughter again, haranguing Mlle Du Guesclin at the entrance to chez Tiphaine. Mlle Du Guesclin looks as though she could cheerfully throttle the pair of them with the nearest available chastity belt, and I feel a pang of guilt at her discomfort. I also notice for the first time that Mlle Du Guesclin, a tall, willowy blonde, does in fact closely resemble 14th century descriptions of Tiphaine de Ragueneil.

Perhaps everything on Mont St Michel really is connected. But as to the cause and effect thereof, I'd put my money on the angel anyday rather than on nodes and mystical vegies. I wonder what they're chomping at the crocodile farm these days? ■

Ray Cassin is the production editor of *Eureka Street*. He also met the witchy-poo feminists dancing round the labyrinth in Chartres Cathedral, but that is another story.





The business trip

BLRNADETIH, THE DEALER'S WIFE, picked me up from Heathrow, and I went to stay with them in Hertfordshire. After a suitable interval I asked, 'Do you have anything nice for me?'

'A few little things,' said Peter, the dealer. 'Nothing spectacular.' He reached into his cabinet and handed me a small buff volume, in the thick rough cloth that was peculiar to the Edwardian years. 'A fair enough copy,' he said. 'Nothing more.'

But *My Brilliant Career* doesn't come better than this. The black and blue of Sybylla's side-saddle gallop at the sheep is as fresh as the day it left the painter's brush. Her whip slithers, sharp and supple, across the front cover. Independent of her grasp it curls its mature way up the spine.

'I think we'll have to have it,' I said. 'Put your price on it. As long as we can turn a profit.'

The son, Eliot, came into the room and slumped on the couch. He wore a rose-coloured T shirt, and above his stomach there was a bulge. It heaved and palpitated irregularly, and Eliot cupped his hand beneath it gingerly and adjusted his lower torso.

'This one too,' said Peter. 'A bit of a curiosity'. He passed across a 1964 publication, now in a protective plastic wrapper. A young woman with ochreous ginger hair and burning coals for eyes, was cradling a skull against her face.

'Oh, very desirable,' I said, taking it delicately. '*The Place at Whitton*, author's first book.'

'Not so rare,' said Peter. 'I've handled a few.'

'But sought after all the same,' I said. 'Keneally repudiates it. So they say. At any rate, he won't allow it to be reprinted.' I revolved the book in my hands. There was a little bit of shelf wear. Nothing worse. 'Another remarkable novel from Australia,' said the rear of the jacket. '*Weave a Circle* by John Patrick.' 'Now there's a rare book,' I said.

The lump on Eliot's stomach moved rapidly across his body and came to rest below his shoulder. It created an instant, slightly off-centre steroid effect.

'Owner signature,' said Peter. 'Signatures. Blemishes. Maybe capable of being turned into an asset.'

The growth traversed Eliot's rib cage. He raised his hand to his neck and lifted the rim of his T shirt free from his skin. A shuddering pink nose appeared below his throat. It was a rat.

Eliot twisted his head from side to side as though avoiding the tongue of an affectionate dog. His face was impassive.

Peter paid no attention. He flicked his forefinger at the book. I opened it. On the front free endpaper were two signatures. On top, written with a thick nib, in purple ink, was the name Joyce Foot. The J was minimal, a simple curve with no cross top. Below it, in black ink, and with a long bold upward stroke to the head of the M, and a parallel, diagonal line beneath the surname, was a second signature, Michael Foot.

'How curious,' I said. 'A novelty item altogether. What do the two signatures mean? Co-ownership?'

'Oh yes,' said Peter flatly, bouncing a cigarette from his packet.

'Or a proprietorial war?'

Peter shrugged, not interested in this line of gloss.

Eliot used his chin to nudge the rat back down his shirt.

'Is that a scary story?' he asked suddenly.

'Revolting, by the look of it,' I said. 'Thoroughly objectionable.'

The rat clawed its way back to Eliot's armpit. His body tightened and he gave a slight grimace. 'Will you read it to me?'

'Would your Mum and Dad approve?'

Peter tilted his head back as he drew hard on his cigarette, and again shrugged.

'Why,' I asked, 'would Michael Foot read an unknown Australian's tale of gothic mayhem in a New South Wales seminary?'

'Why would he buy it,' said Peter.

'Why would he own it,' I said, playing the game. The book was clearly unread, the spine still at sharp right angles to both its boards.

'A decent yarn is it?' Peter asked.

'I've never read it. A scarce book after all.'

'Now's your chance. Sounds like your sort of book.'

'Ah, you don't downgrade such a copy.'

The rat leaped from Eliot's shoulder to the floor. Its body froze. Its head jerked through precise angles, only the endpoints of its movements visible. Eliot, still impassive, rolled over and watched it. The rat took in all the possibilities, but its feet stayed locked. Eliot stretched out his hand and plucked it from the floor. He rolled and opened his fist and the rat teetered up along his arm and nosed its way in beneath his sleeve.

I WENT OUT WALKING in the countryside of south Hertfordshire. I ambled down the rutted road from Rose Hall Farm and swung over the stile into the horse field and across the pasture until I entered a wood. There I met an elderly woman with an old border collie. She liked to talk. She pointed to the dog. 'I'm teaching him Welsh,' she said.

I looked at him nosing around. 'Clever boy,' I said.

He barked twice, perfunctorily.

'He's coming on,' I said. 'Will he be singing next?'

Then she told me about her son and her daughters and how they had all made a career, and about the terrible problems that all the immigrants had brought to Britain.

'I'll only be here a week,' I said.

I passed through the village of Sarratt and down a long slope of lush grass ready for the cutter, crossed over Plough Lane in the hollow, and ascended the bright yellow slope of Hillmeads Farm where the tight round bales lay scattered. I stopped to watch the farmer swathing them in black plastic. He manoeuvred his tractor into position and lifted the bale onto his trailer, leaped from his seat and clamped the end of the plastic to the great golden spool. He bounced himself back into his cabin, and the bale spun in its saddle. The plastic wound itself on prodigally, edging up millimetres at each revolution. I stood on the faint green track across the flattened yellow field and watched the plastic race from its confines, and then I noticed that something stubborn in the bale had shied against the black covering and stalled the climb halfway. The sheeting unwound fruitlessly. The dark waist of the bale thickened. The top remained exposed. I saw the saddle jerk, and the half-dressed bale roll from the trailer. The farmer drove on and repositioned and loaded, and the other bales spun unprotestingly into their sleek jackets.

I walked on elated to Chipperfield Common.

I WAS BEING DRIVEN ALONG MARYLEBONE ROAD by a friend. He pulled in to use a phone. He wanted to ring in to account—or, more accurately, misaccount—for his absence from home. When he returned to the car he dropped into my lap a shower of business cards.

'Any use to you?' he asked.

The cards were all for the same enterprise and gave the same telephone number, but they flashed with a variety of pinks and oranges and scarlets. Their sales strategy was simplified and direct. 'The best nipples in London,' the motto read.

'Best?' I said. 'What *are* best nipples? Someone's not afraid of absolutes of quality.'

My friend paused with his hand on the ignition. 'Give me a look again,' he said.

I passed across a pink card.

His finger stabbed at fine print. ' "Firm 42D" it claims.'

'God,' I said, 'I thought that was the name of the company.'

He accelerated out at a sharp angle and shot away.

I hung on to one of the cards.

BEFORE I WENT ACROSS, Peter, the dealer, warned me about Phelans. 'They've got the game tied up in the south of Ireland,' he said. 'It isn't patriotic to deal with Christies or Sothebys.'

He'd had a bad experience. They'd listed two letters of Dickens. Mounted, complete with photos of the writer and *cartes de visite*. One was to Ellen Ternan, enclosing a ticket for the opera and telling her he'd be along later. The estimates were £300-£400. Cheap. Both lots came in to Peter, each at £400. Still cheap. He wondered. He did some research. The Ellen Ternan had come up at Christies in the 1970s. He was able to learn that the buyer had been Eton College. The letter had reappeared in a Sothebys catalogue in 1989. It had been withdrawn just prior to sale. He rang Eton. Yes, they still had their letter. Peter cancelled his cheque to Phelans, and wrote that he was returning the items forthwith. 'You get sussed out at Sothebys,' he said. 'Lie low for a couple of years, then you slip them over to Ireland, and bung them into Phelans.'

'I know,' I said, 'they operate out of a village. No one ever gets there. Everything's sight unseen.'

I went across to Ireland. 'Well yes,' said a friend there and laughed. 'We had a bit to do socially with the father. Met some very nice people through him. There was a Swiss couple they employed for a few years. They were furniture restorers.'

'What!' I exclaimed.

'Well, it could be quite kosher,' she said, and gave a high playful laugh. 'Let's say you've got to have the legless Pleyel grand ready for auction. If there's a billiard table lying around unwanted you saw off the legs...' Her eyes widened and then she shook her head to strangle the chortle. 'If you deal with them you know about it. Just stay on the watch. If they're listing paintings, say, they'll give the artist as N. McGuinness, but it's not Norah, or E. Hone, but it's not Evie. You're just careful.'

Phelans just happened to have an item of Australian interest in their catalogue. It was described as a sketchbook/notebook belonging to the wife of Governor Richard Bourke, Elizabeth. She had died at Parramatta after only five months in the colony. Not that Phelans said that. But the provenance was plausible. The last Bourke descendant was a bachelor, and I knew the estate was being broken up. 'Botanical notes,' said Phelans' catalogue, 'and sketches of Australian and Irish scenes.' The estimate was £300-£400. I phoned through a bid for £600. I got it for £400. The item reached me, professionally wrapped. There was no ownership signature, no clue to age. Five pages were filled with transcription from an unidentified botanical primer. An ancient leaf fell out. There were nine faint pencil sketches on duodecimo pages. Several appeared abandoned, or, at best, works in progress. Those completed, and recognisably of a scene, all shared one feature. Ruins. Former Norman or Tudor castles, now ruins.

ON THE QANTAS FLIGHT OVER I had been seated beside a man whose reading was a volume of miscellaneous essays of Lytton Strachey. A food technologist, he had flown over that morning from New Zealand. But he was an Irishman and he was on his way to Ireland.

'Holiday or business?' I asked him.

'Actually,' he said quietly, 'I'm flying over for my mother's funeral.'

I offered my sympathy, and asked was the death expected, and he said she had been ailing for some time. I asked if his father were still alive and he said he was. I wondered, to myself, if he would prefer conversation or silence. I said that I too was on my way to Ireland, eventually. I explained my connection and my interest and we talked of things Irish. He himself had a Gaelic name, and was the son of a Wexford farmer and a farmer himself, but he had been sent across to England to school, to the monks at Ampleforth. I found this curious. I knew there was an old tradition; Oliver St John Gogarty had been sent over to Stonyhurst, but that was how many generations ago. What sort of Irish Catholic finds England and its clergy more congenial than Ireland and its own? He said his mother's people had been to Clongowes, but his father had been at Ampleforth and was happy there. It was a good education, but not an Irish one. I asked if he felt gaps because of it. I asked what Irish writing he read. Banville, Aidan Higgins, William Trevor, he said.

'McGahern?' I asked.

'Not yet. Should I?'

'Yes, you must.'

'Why?'

I tailored my recommendation. The last act of the great Irish rural fictions: the land, and the father, spurned; the comfortless melancholy of the parting; the black beauty of the words; McGahern's mother lost to him when he was very young, and this absence haunting his work.

My neighbour gave thoughtful attentive nods. I enjoyed the conversation with him.

During the Bangkok stopover I strode briskly off on my own along the length of the unencumbered terminal. When we took off again my neighbour was not beside me. About half an hour into the sector the attendant came and started to gather his belongings. I managed to catch her with the query in my eye.

'We've moved the gentleman forward,' she said. 'He's been having a very trying time of it.'

Gerard Windsor is a fiction writer. ■

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Law and peace



'I did not even write a press release. I just wanted the Governor-General's signature': Michael Tate, architect of the conscientious-objection provisions of the Defence Legislation Act, 1992.

Photo: courtesy of The Age.

IN 1971, 20-YEAR-OLD Matthew Burfitt hoped against hope that he would lose the lottery. Transfixed, he sat listening to his radio as a man drew marbles out of a barrel. If his birthdate were engraved on one of the marbles he would be conscripted into the Australian army and could be sent to fight in Vietnam. 'I believed we shouldn't even be in Vietnam. It wasn't like when dad went to New Guinea. Australia was under attack then.'

For a conscientious objector like Matthew Burfitt, to be told to fight in a war he did not believe was right was to be forced to commit murder. But because Burfitt was not a pacifist, he could not apply for exemption from military service. In March 1992 Federal Parliament passed legislation that gave Australians a choice that Matthew Burfitt never had. Although men and women can be conscripted in Australia, the amended Defence Legislation Act recognises for the first time that selective conscientious objection—that is, conscientious opposition to a particular war—is valid. The Act is

the first of its kind in the world, yet it is one of Australia's best kept secrets.

In 1969, while studying theology at Oxford, Michael Tate was struck by the power and simplicity of the gospel: 'As I read the words of Jesus, "Be perfect as your heavenly father is perfect," I realised that God's care for humanity doesn't depend on whether a person is good or evil.

'With a 1950s Christian Brothers schooling I was well-versed in catechism but had not touched the scriptures at all. So delving into the gospels lead to a very profound conversion. I

the society into something not worth preserving or saving.'

After Oxford, Tate returned to lecture in law at the University of Tasmania. There he witnessed the lottery scene that caused him to change his life radically, and consequently all our lives. 'I still recall the blood draining from the face of one of my students when his marble was drawn. At that moment I felt compelled to go into politics.'

Michael Tate joined the Labor Party and in 1977 was elected a senator for Tasmania. In 1983, when Labor

won government, he introduced a private member's bill into the Senate. The bill was referred to a bipartisan committee that Tate chaired. During its hearings, the proposed legislation attracted criticism from the Australian Defence Force and the Returned Services

The amended Defence Legislation Act (1992) makes provision for the conscription of men and women who are 18 years or over. It limits conscription to times of war when Australia is directly threatened. Conscription can occur only through an Act of Parliament, not simply by the decision of the Prime Minister or Cabinet. The Act allows for conscientious objection to particular wars as well as wars generally. It defines conscientious belief as one that involves a fundamental conviction of what is right or wrong, and is of long standing and is so compelling in character that the person is bound to espouse it.

League. They argued that allowing for conscientious objection would open the floodgates for many dubious exemptions and leave Australia inadequately defended.

THAT VIEW WAS UNANIMOUSLY rejected by the Senate committee, which argued that the fear was groundless because 'even if the number of conscientious objectors was of "floodgates" proportion, this phenomenon would be a highly significant moral barometer of community regard for the government's action in committing a nation's forces into a war.'

The committee's view that Aus-

realised that Jesus' call to perfection meant relating to other people in the way the creator does. And that is why we shouldn't engage in violence and warfare, even against an unjust aggressor, even against an evil person.'

What Tate calls his *metanoia*, or change of heart, in embracing pacifism became the spiritual core of a profound rethinking of his convictions about society.

'I came to realise more deeply that the hallmark of a just society was its regard for a person's conscience,' Tate says. 'For a society to submerge the individual personality and the claims of conscience would be to transform

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Off to parley with the Pope

SCANDAL HAS SURROUNDED some of Australia's past diplomatic appointments to the Vatican. By contrast, Michael Tate's appointment as Australia's new ambassador to the Holy See has been greeted with welcome acceptance.

In 1974, Prime Minister Gough Whitlam, hoping to break a political deadlock, offered the position to Queensland DLP Senator Vince Gair. The move backfired badly. Queensland Premier Joh Bjelke Petersen replaced Gair in Canberra with the ALP renegade Patrick Field, whose vote for the coalition ensured a double dissolution of the Parliament. The so-called 'Gair affair' was not the end of unholy rows. In 1990, former WA Premier Brian Burke was called back from the post to appear at the WA Inc Royal Commission, to answer allegations about improper relations between his government and large business interests.

Michael Tate's appointment, therefore, is not only crisis-free but appropriate. He is the first Catholic layman since the Reformation to be awarded a degree in theology by Oxford University, and he has had prior dealings with the Vatican. In September 1991, while visiting Italy as Minister for Justice, Tate had an audience with Pope John Paul. Prompted by Tate, they discussed two famous centenaries, that of the encyclical of Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*, and of that of the ALP.

As a former politician, Tate is well placed to enhance the relationship between church and state in his new role. 'My appointment means that there is someone aware of the pluralist, tolerant and ecumenical aspects of Australian society, who is versed in the practical application of social justice principles which appear in church documents but have to find their place in the structures of society, and someone who understands the ways the church operates in society.'

Tate is already diplomatically silent on particular Vatican policies, but sees extensive value in the post for all Australians. 'While people might think it means going down to the Easter ceremonies, the role is diplomatic, not just ceremonial,' he says. 'The Holy See is the centre of a worldwide organisation which will be able to inform Australia of its concerns in some countries where we may not have accreditation ourselves.' And, Tate says, given the Vatican's more extensive network of embassies, it may be able to provide Australia with information and influence, especially on issues of human rights and in those areas requiring humanitarian aid.

Tate is also the new Australian ambassador to The Hague, a role that will allow him to further Australia's trade and economic interests in Europe and to report first-hand on the development of the European community in the post-Cold War era. And with the International Court of Justice situated in The Hague, Tate hopes to become involved in issues of international humanitarian law, particularly if, as expected, a war crimes tribunal is set up at the end of the conflict in the former Yugoslavia.

—Peter Collins SJ ■

tralia would still be properly defended if it allowed for selective conscientious objection is one that finds substantial support in history. Australia has always fulfilled the necessary numbers for defence by relying on voluntary forces—even in World War I, when Australia suffered the highest casualty rate of any combatant nation and had the only all-volunteer army engaged in the war.

In 1985 a delighted Tate reported back to his colleagues that the bipartisan senate committee unanimously approved the legislation. The Labor caucus, afraid of the possibility of a 'RSL fear campaign', refused to support the proposed legislation.

For the next seven years, Tate worked to persuade the Labor Party to accept what he claimed was a basic principle of human dignity. Last year his doggedness finally paid off. The Act was passed, nonetheless quietly. 'I did not even write a press release,' says Tate. 'I just wanted the Governor-General's signature.'

In including the term *political* as a legitimate grounds for conscientious objection, the Act recognises in an unprecedented way the legitimacy of the political conscientious objector. It does so while preserving a clear distinction between them and political dissenters.

This novel recognition of the legitimacy of political conscientious objectors gives legal sanction to those who evaluate the rightness of a war by the just war theory. The Act also vindicates the actions of Australia's World War II Prime Minister, John Curtin. As a young man, Curtin was jailed in 1916 for failing to register himself as eligible for conscription. Curtin regarded the First World War as an unjust war because, in his view, it was fought by large imperial powers to gain more prestige and territory.

Paradoxically, when he became Prime Minister Curtin introduced conscription, though with limits on where conscripts were to be deployed—not further than a 200-mile radius from Australia's shores. Curtin regarded World War II as a just war because it was anti-imperialist. He believed that Australian military involvement was necessary in order to protect the integrity of nations and the freedom and liberty of people who

could not defend themselves. In both wars, Curtin acted in a manner consistent with his political conscientious beliefs about war.

Australians did not accept the home defence theory in the Vietnam War. In 1972, they elected the Whitlam government, and its first act was to abolish conscription. Even ending conscription was not enough for Michael Tate. He wanted to ensure—conscription or not—that individuals had the legal right to say 'no' to their involvement in war, according to their individual conscience.

While Tate was still pushing for the bill to be introduced to Parliament, he was faced with further complexity. The outbreak of the Gulf War in 1991 raised the question of whether Australia should be involved in wars that had nothing to do with immediate threats to Australian territory.

It also forced Tate to examine his own pacifism: 'We were confronted by aggression against a small neighbour, with horrific crimes being committed against innocent civilians. We knew through Amnesty International and defence papers presented to Cabinet how Saddam Hussein was treating the Kuwaitis and the Kurds.'

Tate voted in Cabinet to support Australia's military involvement. 'I felt I was in a warfare situation between good and evil. I'm still not convinced I made the right decision. I feel I betrayed the gospel.'

Tate's own judgment may be unnecessarily harsh. It is a Christian option to use due force to defend those who are suffering at the hands of oppression and evil. That is a conscientious choice which Tate has directly defended and enshrined in the Act. A selective conscientious objector is one prepared to fight for what they believe is good, and against what is evil.

What is clear, even amid his own troubled re-examination of his conscientious attitude to war, is the extraordinary value of what Tate has achieved. 'I believe the embodiment in legislation of the principles I argued for in the Senate inquiry represents the crowning point of my parliamentary career and justifies my going into politics at all.' ■

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The shaming of Manning Clark

ACADEMICS, JOURNALISTS and the Australian public have been astonished by the bitterness of Peter Ryan's attack on Manning Clark as an Australian icon (*Quadrant*, September 1993). This controversy has shown with remarkable clarity the extent to which Australians cherish concepts of honour and shame. Ryan has been condemned for betraying the trust of friendship and hospitality, for playing the man as well as the ball, for speaking ill of the recently dead.

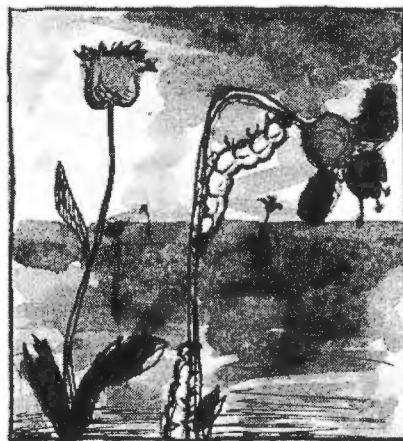
It is unusual, to say the least, for a man to repudiate a major part of his life's work, something that was, in his own words, 'a daily preoccupation of my life'. For in shaming Manning Clark, Peter Ryan has shamed himself. Indeed, the *Quadrant* article is a confession of shame: 'Of the many things in life upon which I must now look back with shame, the chiefest is that of having been the publisher of Manning Clark's *A History of Australia*.'

The controversy is more than a storm in an academic teacup. Professor Paul Bourke, writing in *The Canberra Times* (28 August 1993), suspects that it raises larger issues about Australian culture: 'Australian culture all too often lapses into an awful ferocity as its players seem driven by a will too inflict personal damage on others.'

Bourke cannot explain why this should be so, but alludes to our public fascination with 'visceral display' and in particular to Patrick White's 'truly awful' autobiography in which he took fierce and unseemly revenge on former friends (*Flaws in the Glass*). Autobiographies can be dangerous weapons, and Bourke does not mention that Manning Clark himself did more than simply search out the tragic flaws in historical figures but also took pot shots at friends and associates in *The Quest for Grace*.

From our Western perspective we often talk about Asian, Melanesian or

southern European cultures as 'shame cultures' while characterising our own as 'guilt cultures'. But I suggest that Australian culture is deeply shame-bound and that it is no mere coincidence that two of our icons, Manning Clark and Patrick White, were profoundly shame-bound in their life and their work. The trouble with shame is that another person's shame can trigger our own. Shamed ourselves, we proceed to shame others, unless checked by unusual self-awareness.



In the words of *The Book of Common Prayer*, the phrases of which permeate Manning Clark's writings, we need to be preserved from our secret faults.

Shame is the most crippling of emotions. Guilt tells us that we have done wrong. Shame tells us that we are wrong, that our entire being is defective, that *there is no health in us*.

The autobiographical writings of Manning Clark show a painfully shamed individual, emerging from what contemporary psychologists would call a dysfunctional family, one that appears to have been incapable of taking the gifted and sensitive child seriously.

That Manning Clark achieved what he did academically, battled his shame and his drinking problem, and retained the unswerving loyalty of his large family—a loyalty that has been

conspicuous in their dignified response to Ryan's article and its media aftermath—is impressive.

Ryan describes his early friendship with Manning Clark as based on 'roistering' together. Alcohol is a leitmotif in the *Quadrant* article. Ryan criticises Manning Clark for not holding his liquor well, resulting in public drunkenness, but is bored by Clark's subsequent abstinence. Alcoholism is a pervasive element in Australian culture, and shame is one of its dominant side effects. Clark's autobiography, *The Puzzles of Childhood*, certainly bears the shaming traces of a family in which alcohol was a problem, with its frequent allusions to his father's enjoyment of 'cold tea' (neat whisky) and his mother's fear and disapproval of drinking, which he relates to alcoholism in previous generations of her family. Clark condemns the prudes, the 'straiteners', the wowsers, but cherishes drunks.

Recent studies of children in families where alcohol or another addiction is a problem show recurrent family patterns and roles. One of the roles taken up by a child to overcome shame in an 'addictive' family is that of the clown. Manning Clark in *The Quest for Grace* frequently describes himself as a buffoon: 'One cannot be a clown in the classroom forever, or a jester in the drawing-rooms of Yarraside.' (p143)

As Clark matured, he wished to be taken seriously, and to make a contribution worthy of his gifts, but the old role was hard to set aside. He became aware of the complexity of his personality: 'There were many voices inside me. There was a clown who put on a show for the misfits of Melbourne suburbia; there was a young man driven by ambition to rise out of the society of the genteel poor; there was a pilgrim for the means of grace; there was a young man who had already decided the measures, the social scientists and the spiritual bullies were

disastrously wrong, but who did not know what was right, or what he had to offer.' (p145)

Another response to shame is grandiosity. Clark had an intense belief in his own destiny, assuming the role and the ponderous oratory of a secular prophet. He entitled a chapter of *The Quest for Grace* not 'My Discovery of Australia' but 'The Discovery of Australia'. He frequently wrote of looking on others with 'the eye of pity', but was not comfortable when others looked upon him in the same way. Grandiosity provokes antagonism among those who see it as evidence of a colossal ego rather than the masking of a fragile self. Grandiosity impinges on our own vulnerability.

One of the rules of the addictive family is 'Don't tell'. Clark was troubled throughout his life by his mother's refrain, 'There are things in my life, Mann dear, I hope you will never know anything about.'

When he writes of his mother's death, he says: 'No one must know how great my grief, how great my loss.' Clark frequently wrote that the expression of feelings was dangerous. This is undoubtedly true for a child in a dysfunctional family, but is problematic in adult life. Unresolved grief and the repression of powerful feelings can create a sense of being in a great void, 'the kingdom of nothingness'.

MANNING CLARK WAS SHAMED in his family of origin by many of the things that have shamed Australians. He saw himself as a representative Australian and said: 'I happened to have had the good fortune to experience in childhood all the conflicts which were central to the human experience in Australia.' (Boyer Lectures, 1976)

The extreme Calvinism of Sydney Anglicanism alienated him from all forms of Protestantism. Like so many Australian intellectuals of his and earlier generations, he challenged but nevertheless internalised the myth of British superiority. He was no cultural cringer, but he was one of the wounded. So many Australians were exposed to and hurt by the myth by virtue of their intellectual promise, which earned them a passage to Oxford or Cambridge. Patrick White was mor-

tally wounded in his spirit at an earlier point in his 'privileged' education, by his experience at an English boarding school.

In his autobiography Clark also presents a self wounded early by family troubles that he appears never to have fully understood. His father's drinking and his mother's response to it may have been the cause. But private troubles can lead to prophetic insights, and an understanding of possible sources of shame in the life of Manning Clark does not diminish his achievement.

Clark confesses his sense of shame often in his writings, but nowhere more clearly than in *The Quest for Grace*, when he describes his mockery of boys in his class at Geelong Grammar. He depicts himself as succumbing to the schoolteacher's temptation to play to the gallery, getting the students to laugh at one of their own number, a strategy that distracts them from directing their mockery at their teacher. He appears to select as his victims boys who are like himself, 'Tom Potts, who talked like a buffoon ... from an engaging uncertainty about how to behave'; Robin, a shy boy who blushed easily: 'I called him "Rhubarb Robin"'. To my shame, I enjoyed the laughter of the class, not foreseeing then the suffering he endured for this quirk of nature until drink desensitised him and painted a permanent red on his face.' (*The Quest for Grace*, pp124-125)

Clark then describes the shame he feels about his shaming of others, taking on excessive responsibility for the impact of his thoughtless behaviour on 'Rhubarb' Robin's future: 'The news of his death added another item to my long list of self-lacerations in those nights when dreams project onto the private picture screen of my mind the shameful moments of the past.' (p124-125)

People have been hurt by Clark's sharp disparagement of their friends, their relatives, perhaps themselves. It is right, I believe, to set the record straight, but it is worth trying to do so without bitterness, to break the cycle of shame. Peter Ryan has failed to do this. Manning's shame has triggered his own. Curious about Ryan, I sought out his war memoir, *Fear Drive My Feet*. On the last page I found some-

thing to think about. Ryan records an incident in which he gazes into the face of a dying Japanese soldier who is being pressed for information by Australian intelligence officers. Ryan writes: 'As I looked into his face, wasted with fever and suffering, I suddenly felt more akin to him than to the Australians who would not let him die in peace.' (p251)

Ryan, himself afflicted with fever and soon to be sent home, concludes that war is futile and that all his war efforts have been a waste of time. Ryan's allusion to the 'lush and suffocating jungle', where Clark the tall poppy grew, may be an indication that the psychological roots of his action are to be found in his war experience in New Guinea. Ryan alludes to the fact that Manning Clark could not enlist for health reasons, and wrongly alleges that Clark did not inquire into the war experience of others. What the significance of this might be to Ryan, one can only surmise.

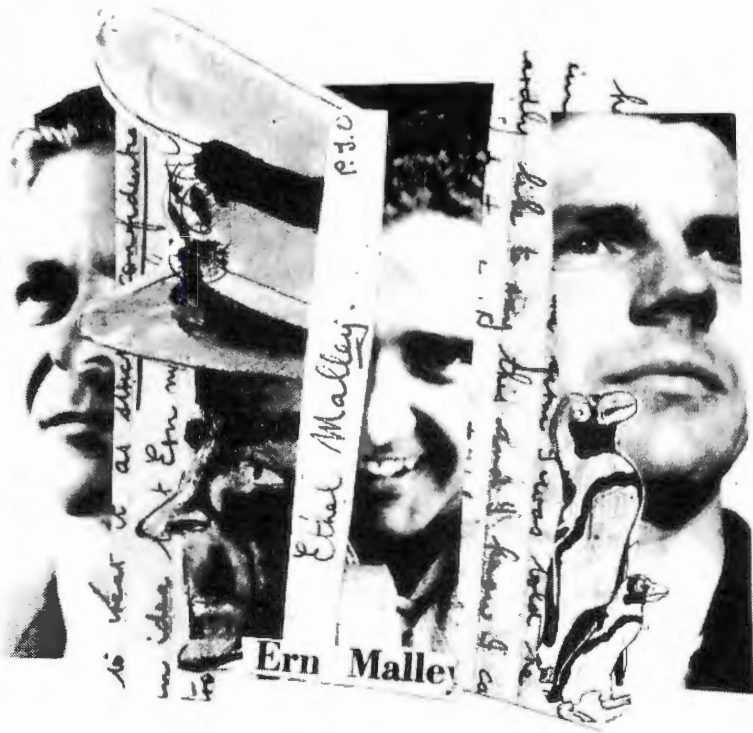
The Book of Ecclesiastes was written by an old man who felt that all was vanity. But Peter Ryan, at the end of his war memoir, has this experience in his early 20s: 'I realised that war accomplishes nothing but the degradation of all engaged in it. I knew that Les Howlett's death had been in vain, that the loneliness of spirit and suffering of body I had forced myself to endure had been to no end, and that the selfless devotion of my native companions had been, in the final analysis, useless' (p251). The same man, many years later, looks back on a major achievement of his life as a profound mistake and is ashamed. Yet he fails to recognise his own face in that of the suffering, shame-bound, courageous Manning Clark, and will not let his old friend die in peace.

Australia is an addictive, shame-bound society and it is fitting that one of our national icons should bear the evidence of shame. This does not diminish his achievement: A country whose heroes are without flaw becomes dangerous. Manning Clark's shame touches our own. We must own it. ■

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The end of Ern Malley

The Ern Malley Affair, Michael Heyward, University of Queensland Press, 1993. ISBN 0 7022 2562 2 RRP \$32.95



FEW EDUCATED AUSTRALIAN READERS, possessing a modicum of curiosity, could fail to have heard of the Ern Malley hoax by now, if only because of the recent publicity surrounding the publication of Michael Heyward's book on the 'affair'. Ern Malley, as we all know, was a fictional poet whose complete works were concocted in a single day in 1943 by two unknown poets, James McAuley and Harold Stewart, and subsequently published by the unwitting Max Harris in his *avant garde* journal, *Angry Penguins*.

The eventual disclosure of the hoax and its sensational aftermath, which included a trial for 'indecent advertisements', is generally thought to have dampened, if not drowned, all enthusiasm for 'modernist' literary experiment in Australia for 20 years. Ern Malley was the most important Australian poet who never lived.

And yet—so goes the refrain—'Ern Malley Lives!', and there is no lack of editions of the poems (entitled *The Darkening Ecliptic*) to prove it. Aside from original publication in *Angry Penguins* in 1944, the poems have been republished as a book five times, in 1961, 1970, 1974, 1988 (a deluxe edition) and 1993. In addition, all the poems were included in *The Penguin Book of Modern Australian Poetry* and they have been reprinted once again as an appendix to Michael Heyward's book.

If one tallies up other references to Ern Malley in books, critical articles

and anthologies (not to mention the well-known portrait by Sidney Nolan in 1973), then it seems fair to say that in the past 30 years there has been a growing wave of interest in the hoax. That wave has now crested and, indeed, seems to have crashed upon the shores of our awareness. Heyward's exhaustive study of the hoax undoubtedly marks the high-water point of this recent interest—or, to shift the metaphor: insofar as this book is a well-chiseled monument to the Ern Malley affair, we may suppose that Ern Malley is now finally dead. Michael Heyward has re-interred him.

This is not to deny that Ern Malley will continue to be of interest to some, but Heyward's book answers so thoroughly so many of the questions surrounding the hoax that the affair loses some of its generative mystery and mystique. The cataloguing data on the copyright page lists this book under a heading of 'Literary forgeries and mystifications' (the latter term surely embracing an impressive array of texts), but perhaps it would be better to list the book under 'demystifications'.

Everything you ever wanted to know about the hoax (and then some) is presented in almost microscopic detail, complete with footnotes and scrupulous endnotes. After almost 250 pages of narrative and analysis, is there anything more to be said on the matter? The answer, of course, is yes, but the kinds of questions that will hitherto be asked will be different as a result of this book. What, then, does this book actually accomplish, and what does it not do?

To begin with, Robert Hughes' introduction sets out one of the problematics created by the hoax: what is the nature of this particular hoax and how does it compare with other famous literary deceptions? The obvious comparisons are with Thomas

Chatterton's forgeries and the putative epic of Ossian constructed by James Macpherson, both occurring in the 18th century and both having important repercussions. Hughes makes the point that historically Ern Malley does not carry the same cultural weight as those earlier hoaxes, nor was it perpetrated for the same reasons. They were really testimonials to nationalist ideals and identities, whereas Ern Malley was conceived solely to 'debunk the present'.

This critical and speculative approach to the affair is not, however, one that Heyward himself pursues. With the exception of an afterword and some brief analyses of the poems, the bulk of the book is taken up with a narrative of the events of the hoax. Heyward is content to tell the story, which he does in three parts comprising nine chapters. As might be expected from a book so carefully researched, there are new details and some surprises; most interesting is the bringing to light of the Ern Malley collages put together by Harold Stewart (and reproduced for the first time in this book). These collages are witty and delightful surrealist works and suggest just how strongly Ern Malley exercised the creative impulses of Stewart and McAuley.

IN THIS DISCOVERY and elsewhere one comes to admire the doggedness of Heyward's search for facts, though it needs to be said that in writing history or biography excision is as important as precision. One senses behind this book an even larger book painfully (no doubt) cut down to publishable size, and still the amount of detail can often seem extraneous and numbing. All in all, in his meticulous articulation of the events and the background to them, Heyward can be said to have done for Ern Malley what J. Living-

ston Lowes did for Coleridge in *The Road to Xanadu*.

Heyward's narrative approach in this book is not a conventional one. He opens with an imaginative recreation of Ern Malley's death and the attendance paid by the sister, Ethel. Curiously, the first chapter proceeds as if we knew nothing about the hoax and might think the Malleys were real enough; indeed, the entire first section, in introducing all the major characters, is coy about the hoax.

It is only with the beginning of the second part that Ern Malley is suddenly exposed to us as 'the biggest literary hoax of the century'. This strategy allows Heyward to spend a good deal of time establishing the immediate and larger contexts and to have some postmodern fun, but the coyness makes the procedure seem oddly lame. Perhaps some overseas readers might be taken in by the joke and delightfully surprised, but then one would have to scrap Hughes's plain-speaking introduction and tone down the publisher's publicity. That can't be what Heyward has in mind.

As it turns out, the coyness here isn't just proleptic or confined to the first section; it runs through the whole of the book and points to a larger question. Throughout, Heyward slides back and forth between representing Ern Malley as a hoax and speaking of him as if he actually existed (which mirrors a slippage between third-person and first-person narrative technique). This is not a confusion on Heyward's part (though it is easy enough to fall prey to such a conflation), but is instead a deliberate attempt to blur—playfully, one assumes—the distinction between real and unreal. In itself, it makes a kind of point: Ern Malley is more real than the hoaxers imagined and has a genuine literary identity. This is fair enough, and for most of the book Heyward is quite good about wending his way through the thickets of confused thought about the hoax and the poems, especially with regards to claims and counter-claims about their merit and mode of composition.

As a level-headed commentator Heyward is an excellent guide. But when we get towards the end of the book, in the final chapter, it is clear that Heyward has other ambitions: he

wants to interpret Ern Malley for us, going beyond the confines of mere discursive criticism. Again, fair enough, but the coyness sensed before comes forward now triumphantly as a mode of enthusiasm: Ern Malley is given not one but several characters and all but apotheosised, to the point that the penultimate paragraph begins, 'We are nearly certain Ern Malley never lived ...'

How we get to that risible point of 'uncertainty' is through a series of increasingly fuzzy assertions about art, imagination, the so-called *Zeitgeist*, the intentionalist [*sic*] fallacy, and the very nature of parody. This is unfortunate stuff and it mars the real accomplishment of the book, especially as the prose itself begins to break down and loses its edge in mixed metaphors and solecisms. The last 14 pages of the book should simply have been cut out. What insight, for instance, are we meant to gain by the following statement?

'Malley flips between being the Australian Jules Laforgue, the futile disconsolate mind that haunts the future while forgoing all the glory, and the Australian Groucho Marx, the mercurial wit who observes how the living stand upright by habitual insouciance and then wants to mourn at his own funeral.' (237)

In comparison with the careful prose of the preceding chapters, this seems as if it were written by someone else. Two paragraphs before that, Heyward has a genuinely good critical thought:

'Perhaps a more useful way to speculate about the value of Malley is to ask whether anything in his poetry can stand comparison with the strongest examples of the kind of work he satirizes, George Barker's *Calamiterior*, say, or Dylan Thomas's "Fern Hill"?' (236)

Yes, this would be useful, but he drops the idea immediately and lapses back into jejune speculation. The end result is that Heyward has set before us as complete a record as we are likely ever to get of the events of the Ern Malley hoax (certainly no mean achievement), but he has not furthered our understanding of the meaning or implications of the event as much as one would have hoped—and it is certainly not the 'first complete and de-

tached word on Ern Malley' as Hughes claims.

In all fairness, it would hardly do to fault Heyward for something he never set out to accomplish: the book is not meant to be a magisterial critical study but a more popular (though still definitive) rendition of the Ern Malley affair as an historic and cultural event. This Heyward does well. It is only when he ventures into ill-considered interpretations that one feels he falls short of his own best capacities.

Clearly, to sustain a discussion about Ern Malley as cultural icon, it does not help to collapse repeatedly the simple ontological distinction between Ern Malley as a fiction and Ern Malley as a real person. It may seem clever at first but it has the opposite effect intended since we gradually lose the sense of artistic verisimilitude and thereby miss the full dimensions of what Stewart and McAuley created. What the last pages do convey is Heyward's passion and enthusiasm for his project, and one senses an infectious

clan overtaking the author as he nears the end.

THE END OF ERN MALLEY (as mystique) opens up new possibilities. The entire incident and aftermath is rich in implication. It calls out for a comparative study of hoaxes, along the lines begun by Robert Hughes; it is ripe for investigations of literary identity and literary property; it suggests a point of departure for an analysis of the dynamics of collaborative work; it points to cultural studies of how groups of poets or critics appropriate cultural icons for purposes of literary politics; and so forth. Future studies may well take up some of these points and others.

What such studies should not do is take up the old canard about the Ern Malley hoax setting back the cause of modernism and experiment in Australian literature by 20 years. That is simply bad literary history; it betrays an insularity about the larger currents of literary movements worldwide, and it doesn't stand up to either fact or logic. One need only examine cursorily what was going on in Britain and America to realize that the late '40s and the '50s were periods of conservative retrenchment, and that Australia was no different in this regard. The

Penguin flap at first hand

THE TUMULT OF THE WAR YEARS produced a lurid variety of extravagances in crime and morals, and what Barry Humphries so felicitously called 'the yarts' suffered similar onslaughts.

Observing these antics as an undergraduate at Melbourne University I was reminded of Eric Gill's dictum, that prior to the industrial revolution every man was a special kind of artist, whereas after the industrial age had swept the craftsmen into the new factories, every artist—so called—became a special kind of Man. Encouraged by the new form of artistic gnosticism, John Reed and Max Harris embarked on a quarterly magazine which they called *Angry Penguins*. It was opulent, expensive, and spoke with the brazen authority of the confidence man.

At the time I was editor of *Melbourne University Magazine*. My associates and I smelled a rat, and when it fell to my lot to review a volume of Harris' poems, published by Reed and Harris, I described it as meaningless and worthless.

Our voice, however, was a small one. Keith Murdoch, father of Rupert, was at that time Melbourne's most influential media mogul, and his infatuation with 'modern art' had cushioned Melbourne's artistic community against what Robert Hughes was later to call 'The Shock of the New'. In any case, some of us were known to be Catholics, and therefore priest-ridden, conservative and pretty ignorant to begin with. In the face of all this the arrival of Ern Malley on the scene was an occasion of joy and delight. We had long believed that the Angry Penguins menagerie were intellectual frauds, but it was grand to have it proved by themselves so completely.

I should add that there were those in the art world who rose to attack the Angry Penguins on their own ground. George Bell, great painter and teacher, Harold Herbert, beautiful water colourist and critic, would have none of them. The one I admired most, however, was the dedicated Communist Noel Counihan, who believed that his artistic talents should be used for the expression of his political message. Paradoxically, this put him on the same track as the small group of Catholic artists at the time. Noel insisted that there should be a firm intellectual basis for all art. I met him only once in those days and we spat hostility at one another, he being a red-hot Commo and me being a Catholic Action cryptofascist. Time smoothed our differences, and when he died a few years ago, leaving behind a treasure store of vigorous and brilliant works of art, I think we had forgiven one another for the follies of our youth.

Max Harris found his proper level as newspaper columnist and bookseller (Mary Martin Bookshops). Hearing recently that he was in poor health I called at his Adelaide shop and left my card with best wishes for his health. As a critic for *The Australian* he had been kinder to me, I have to confess, than I had ever been to him. ■

—Niall Brennan

hoax was not the 'great catastrophe' or 'catastrophic blow' to Australian culture it has been described as. It was certainly traumatic as an experience for Max Harris, but one penguin does not a renaissance make.

Ern Malley can no longer be enlisted in the cause of cultural radicalism (whatever one thinks of such a program), not least because of Heyward's book: the hoax is now so thoroughly historicised it loses much of its force as an *avant garde* icon. In so demythologising Ern Malley, Heyward has in effect demystified him. But, if no longer an object of mystification, is there a sense in which Ern Malley remains within the realm of the mysterious, or perhaps the mystical? Is this yet another area for further exploration? And can it be approached without instigating yet another mystification?

CONSIDER THE following excerpt from Ern Malley's 'Preface and Statement', which Stewart and McAuley sent Harris:

'There is, at this moment, no such thing as a simple poem if what is meant by that is a point-to-point straight line relation of images. If I said that this was so because on the level where the world is mental occurrence a point-to-point relation is no longer genuine I should be accused of mysticism. Yet it is so.'

This invocation of the mystic is meant to be obfuscation, but remember that both Stewart and McAuley had some rather arcane interests of their own, as borne out by their reading in René Guénon, Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, Carl Jung, Taoism and gnosticism. Stewart later moved permanently to Japan and became a member of the Shinshu Buddhist sect, while McAuley converted to Catholicism, largely through contact with European missionaries in New Guinea, where he developed a deep interest in the 'mystical experience' of Sister Marie-Thérèse Noblet. Of this period, McAuley writes:

'In the late 1930s and late 1940s I felt within myself the attraction of what one might call a revolutionary poetic—vitalist, lawless, a thing of passion, impulse and wild humour.'

It does not take much ingenuity to see that the imaginative figure of Ern

Malley answers to some of these impulses, that he is, among other things, an incarnation of the archetypal romantic poet who seems to stand in direct proximity to the wellsprings of inspiration, whose experience is represented hyperbolically in spiritual terms, and who seeks an unmediated experience of poetic transport. Insofar as Ern Malley partakes of that figure of the romantic poet, he is truly a revenant, a ghost come back from prior Australian poetry: we confront him in the work of Charles Harpur, Christopher Brennan, Kenneth Slessor and others.

Of course, there is something not quite mysterious about the way this icon reappears, since we are familiar with the way romanticism continues to function as the founding moment of our own epoch. What is more mysterious, however, is the recursive aspect of what might be broadly termed 'mystic' elements (both negative and positive) in Australian poetry, a feature present in contemporary poetry as well (a list would include, among others, Francis Webb, Gwen Harwood, Judith Wright, Randolph Stow, Les Murray, John Foulcher, and Kevin Hart). Ern Malley is always best seen as a symptom rather than a cause, and here again he points to something in Australian literature that appears to run deeper than literary politics and literary fashion.

The nature of that more original and originating cause would take a book to pursue adequately, so perhaps it is better to end with that simple gesture towards another aspect of the Ern Malley affair. Having resisted quoting from the poems thus far, it seems permissible to close with an evocative passage, from Malley's *Egyptian Register*:

*It may be for nothing that we are:
But what we are continues
In larger patterns than the frontal
stone*

That taunts the living life.

From taunting to haunting, the Ern Malley affair has lived on as a cultural event. The hoax and the poems themselves are indeed indicative of—in Robert Hughes's telling phrase—'the well-wrought Ern'. ■

Paul Kane, from Vassar College, NY, is visiting Monash University.

SAM WATSON

The era of Evelyn

Over My Tracks, Chris Walsh, Penguin, 1993.

ISBN 0 1402331939 RRP \$16.95

THERE IS A COMMON MISCONCEPTION that Aboriginal society is a male-dominated world, where 'men's business' reigns supreme. That is a shallow and erroneous perception, often put forward in the service of a more subtle agenda. Every Aboriginal, male or female, knows from the earliest point of memory that our entire society is nothing but a transient platform that rolls forward upon the awesome strengths of our women elders.

This a pure truth and a universal fact. It is beyond dispute that the very hub of Aboriginal experience is the family unit: but the crucible within which that hub was tempered and forged, was the heart and soul of the black woman. The country, landscape or people are not that important; the most abiding constant within the Aboriginal world is the Earth Mother.

Evelyn Crawford, and the women who raised her, make for compelling subject matter. Chris Walsh has presented us with a most human and moving account of this remarkable woman's life. In *Over My Tracks* Walsh writes of Evelyn Crawford, her childhood in the dusty outback, her teenage years as an accomplished drover and the rich tapestry of her marriage to a man who really was her 'best mate'.

Yet this book is written so well, that Evelyn Crawford's unassuming earthiness dominates every page. In anyone's terms, this humble young tomboy really did rise to be a person of high degree. Evelyn's elders and even her peers were constantly aware that here was a special person, someone who had been 'touched by the old people'. Her father relied most heavily upon her, especially during that period when he separated from Evelyn's mother. Other people in her life, white and black, sought her out for advice, and such was that deep force that resided within her that this tribal woman from the wrong side of the nation's most dusty tracks made a

significant personal impact upon the Queen of the British Commonwealth.

Within the Aboriginal community, education is a long process. We are constantly reminded by our 'old aunties' that the day that we stop learning is the day that we die. Evelyn Crawford used her life in the camps, missions and stations of the 'back of Bourke' to hone her own deep understanding of the human condition. She did not need diplomas or pieces of sheepskin from fashionable institutions of learning; rather she borrowed from her own experience and applied those lessons of life to the classrooms of western New South Wales.

She spent her life around the most lowly of beasts, droving cattle and sheep across vast distances for very little pay. But she most certainly did profit from those long and often lonely hours in the saddle. The very same flash floods, droughts and heart-wrenching tragedies that would have broken most of us, merely served to fine tune Evelyn's mettle for her later healings with government ministers and senior public servants. And in her later years when she was a leading educationalist, working at the coal-face of state education, she still used a refreshing, homespun philosophy to launch exciting new initiatives and found TAFE colleges.

Born of the Baarkanji tribe, Evelyn only received the most basic education. Indeed her first classroom was a rough-hewn shed thrown together from spare parts. It was so daunting that it almost broke the spirit of the young, white teacher. Yet this episode again was used to illustrate the absolute unflappability of black women. Evelyn's grandmother stepped into the breach and made everything all right, with a minimum of fuss.

Evelyn's parents, indeed most of her immediate family, were station workers. So it was inevitable that she would gravitate to that harsh and male-dominated world. Again we see the

steel within, as Evelyn spends most of her young life pushing sheep and cattle through this land's most unforgiving corners. At a time when some of her white counterparts would have been content to sit on a shady verandah, sip tea with little fingers crooked appropriately, and talk about the latest dress designs, Evelyn Crawford was out the back o' Bourke with a herd of windblown and thirsty bullocks.

She and her man raised a large family—13 children plus one grandchild—and apparently they were never too far from actual poverty. But material wealth was never really a driving force within Evelyn's life. Throughout the book she seems to be content with the bare necessities of life and never seems to be unhappy with her lot. Even when she is earning a reasonable wage as a public servant within the Education Department, she does not race into town and spend up on the latest luxury items. Evelyn appears to measure wealth in the depth of the love that binds her to her family: not in jewels, fast cars or fancy mansions, but in the well-being of her own blood and the smile of a friend.

This book should be mounted and preserved within the Stockman's Hall of Fame. Perhaps then future generations may know the truth about who really tamed the most savage frontier of all. ■

Sam Watson grew up in Brisbane. His most recent work is *The Kadaitcha Sung*.

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Peter Cartwright



BOOKS: 2

MICHAEL MCGIRR

A word in the right place

Journeyings: the Biography of a Middle-Class Generation, 1920-1990, Janet McCalman, Melbourne University Press, 1993.
ISBN 0 522 84569 X RRP \$39.95

TOWARDS THE END of last year, Sir Frank Woods died. Woods had been Anglican Archbishop of Melbourne between 1957 and 1977 before retiring to middle-class Camberwell. He left office with a fund of stories. One of these concerned a rare sortie into politics. In 1958 he was rung on a Friday afternoon by a member of his dining club, Sir Edmund Herring, at that time chief justice and lieutenant-governor. He told Sir Frank that the Victorian Parliament was about to pass legislation which would establish Monash University. The bill would include the same 'secular clause' which prohibited the teaching of theology on the campus of Melbourne University. What was His Grace intending to do?

Woods was caught unawares but nonetheless informed other church leaders and made a personal appointment to see the premier, Henry Bolte. Woods explained the situation, man to man. Bolte produced a draft of the legislation, due to be enacted the following day, and put a line through the offending clause. 'Let's just cut it out,' said Bolte, 'nobody will notice.' So the way was left open for the religious centre at Monash to be built. In the years when other groups were clamouring for state aid for private and church schools, a campaign that led, for example, to the 'Goulburn schools strike' of 1962 where Catholics threatened that their entire student body would suddenly march down and enroll in the government system, Sir Frank Woods had a different way of doing business. It was, shall we say, more discreet.

Janet McCalman's *Journeyings* is

the story of a middle-class generation, the generation that began their private schooling in Melbourne's eastern suburbs on the first day of class in 1934. The lives McCalman follows are first glimpsed as they set out on the 69 tram for Scotch College, Methodist Ladies College, Trinity Grammar School and Genazzano Convent. This is a marvellous point of departure, all the more so because the 69 tram route has not changed in the intervening 60 years. You could create the same opportunity for storytelling by looking at the kaleidoscope of school uniforms that pass every day through Pymble or Chatswood railway stations in Sydney and trailing some of their wearers into adulthood, parenting and old age.

Yet the 69 tram is one of the few glimpses we get of the street life of this generation. There's no denying that they have accomplished great things in their lifetime. But they did so discreetly. Even in its account of the manner in which an entire sub-culture has weathered major historical shifts, *Journeyings* is above all else an exploration of the mores of instinctively private people.

Journeyings ASKS TO BE READ alongside McCalman's earlier *Struggletown*, her spell-binding gathering of some of the stories which made up working-class Richmond between 1900 & 1965. There is a sense in *Struggletown* that houses opened off streets like rooms off a corridor. We hear that the streets of Richmond were alleged to be the worst in Melbourne because of the amount of stuff that seemed to fall off

the backs of trucks. We observe details such as the fact that the last street sealed in metropolitan Melbourne was one in Richmond that had somehow been overlooked until the 1980s. Such particulars add up to a different sense of place. There is nothing in *Journeyings* about the quality of road surfaces. There is rather more about gardens. 'My mother worked very hard,' says one interviewee. 'She loved her garden and we always improved the house we lived in—we felt that was proper.' Indeed, the street was the place towards which the middle-class turned its back.

At one point, McCalman remarks shrewdly that whereas the kids in *Struggletown* got up to all kinds of devilment in the street, middle-class kids 'often had the room to play at home'. Their most intense relationships formed in the backyard, often between siblings. In public, these kids were apparently very conscious of always 'being good'. The standards of public behaviour were high.

Once these expectations were reinforced in Christian schools, the foundations of a kind of 'morality as duty' had been firmly laid. The so-called Protestant work ethic, the requirement to be unassuming and diligent, was equally part of Catholic middle-class upbringing. It amounted to the cultivation of a poker public face. A quiet word in the right ear, inevitably someone from church or school, created openings but, in turn, implied responsibilities. Looking back across the backstabbing opportunism of the '80s, mind you, it doesn't seem half such a bad way of going about things.

Journeyings does manage to creep into some private territory. It looks at the personal pressures created by the public examination system of the thirties. It gives religious experience, as distinct from church culture, an uncommonly thorough hearing. But time and again there are stories such as those of 'Neil Ewart' who was demobbed in 1946 at the Melbourne Cricket Ground. A corporal looked at him in civvies. 'So long, sarge,' he said. That was it. 'Ewart' was left to his own resources to readjust after four years of war. Similarly, Sadie Copeland tells her moving story of becoming a war widow and then disappears entirely from the book. The rest of her history,

presumably, can be got at only in fiction.

Apart from one teacher at MLC who, in 1936, took 23 girls away to explore central Australia and brought a gun with her so she could shoot beer bottles on the Ghan, there is a notable lack of eccentricity in *Journeyings*. Perhaps eccentricity is the calling card

of the aristocracy. It is privacy elevated to an art form. The middle-class has been more workmanlike than that. There was only one house in Camberwell that gave birth to Barry Humphries. This is the tale of all the rest. ■

Michael McGirr SJ is a regular contributor to *Eureka Street*.

BOOKS: 3

MARGARET COFFEY

The measure of friends

From *All Corners*, Anne Henderson, Allen and Unwin, 1993
ISBN 1 863735100 RRP \$17.95

ANNE HENDERSON HAS a gift for friendship, judging by her book *From All Corners*. The six women who are her subjects have been her friends for up to 25 years. They come from Italy, China, Hungary, Britain and Vietnam and their lives are testimony to the rich seam of story that lies in the settlement of Australia.

Rita had the foresight to leave northern Italy four years before war broke out. She and her sister paid their way to Melbourne on the P&O ship *Orion*, and once here joined their brother in his fruit and vegetable shop. Anne Henderson encountered Rita 27 years later, as the mother of her schoolfriend Anna. By then, the years as an enemy alien, of economic hardship and sheer physical exhaustion were on their way to vindication. Now Rita, an Australian citizen, lives in 'an architect-designed home in Kew' and two of her daughters run *Alta Vita*, 'renovating Australian homes around fine imported Italian homewares and Schiffini-designed kitchens—the first in Australia'. A third daughter is a pharmacist.

Lilah has an upper-class British background but her manner of arrival in Australia was entirely proletarian: she came by assisted passage in 1964. Lilah was fortunate to have connections such as Dr Eric D'Arcy, then a lecturer in philosophy at the University of Melbourne, which allowed her

to find a niche in the life of the suburbs surrounding the university. It was a niche shared by Anne Henderson as Lilah's student lodger under a regime of punctilious frugality broken by the visits of Fr D'Arcy: 'Days before, Lilah worked out her menu and starched her voluminous linen table napkins ...' Six years after her arrival in Australia Lilah entered the contemplative Order of Mt Carmel, where for 22 years she has lived out one of the rarer life experiences on offer in Australia. She is an Australian citizen.

Judy came from Hungary. Now she is engaged with cosmology from the distance of a pre-Vatican II enthusiastic conversion to Catholicism and a spell as a Dominican. Lily was born in China; she could never have anticipated the quality of her present circumstances. The most recent arrivals among Anne Henderson's gallery of friends are Nhung and Phi, refugees from Vietnam. When they arrived in Melbourne in 1979 they were taken in by Henderson's mother. Subsequently, their own mother and two other sisters joined them. Through application and ambition they and their extended family have become securely placed in the professional classes. They are all Australian citizens.

Australia has always been multicultural, Anne Henderson says, and she proffers her own family background and the stories of these six

women as evidence. In her introduction she explains her purpose: the women's stories are part of 'a national drama taking place between the 30s and the present day' and they are 'a reminder of the value and richness of diversity and difference in national cohesion'. We can only be grateful for stories which illuminate Australia's truly extraordinary history of settlement and the dailiness of multiculturalism. Since the early '80s there has been an efflorescence of such tale-telling, although Henderson seems not to have come across much of it. It is not true that 'the stories of ordinary women migrants have rarely been heard'. There has, thank goodness, been an enormous amount of publishing, broadcasting, social and economic research, theatrical and other artistic representation.

As for the 'national drama' with which these stories intersect, it is rendered with such idiosyncratic intention and interpretation that it almost overwhelms them. I began to believe it was invoked as a licence to deliver broadsides: neither Geoffrey Blainey nor the contemporary Catholic Church come out well and nary a politician, of any hue. Very few people, it seems get things right. (Indeed, Blainey's views are treated with a vulgarity that can only harm the debate about the character of migrant intake. An example: '... Judy was confronting for the first time a Jewish inheritance in a Catholic convent in Sydney in the language of the ancient Romans. It was a multicultural experience fit to shock Geoffrey Blainey.')

It must therefore be all the more disappointing that *From All Corners* has not been well-served by an editor: it is a fractious text, with parts of speech disputing one another, and story sequence struggling with context. The friendships described are not like that—there is a strange convergence of values at work which made me reflect that being truly multicultural might also be about accepting that sometimes immigration doesn't work; not everyone wants to assimilate, and people aren't always 'successful' or even 'right-thinking'. But that's OK too, isn't it? ■

Margaret Coffey is a producer and presenter for ABC Radio National.

Flying the flag

Forty years of the Melbourne Theatre Company

THE MELBOURNE THEATRE Company has emerged from a five-month spell in which it did not mount a single new production of its own. Between *I Hate Hamlet*, which opened at the Victorian Arts Centre in early November last year, and *M. Butterfly*, which opened there at the beginning of April this year, MTC workers did not sew a single sequin, rehearse a single new line, craft a stick of furniture or scenery, or fashion any of the lighting, wigs and stagecraft wonders that have made the company famous for four decades.

It should be added that, unlike some of its recession-stricken overseas counterparts, the company never closed its doors. It simply sent its army of employees on leave and 'co-produced'—i.e., bought in—a succes-

Valentine (a production which originated at Perth's Hole in the Wall Theatre back in 1989).

Cynics might have concluded that the company had lost its way, that the recession had forced it off the rails. Nothing could be further from the truth: by the middle of this year, the MTC was back in vintage form. Having safely opened its 40th anniversary season in May, with the Australian premiere of the New Zealand playwright Renée's *Wednesday to Come*, by July the company was in full swing, with a production of the seldom-seen Marston Jacobean comedy, *The Dutch Courtesan*, and the long-awaited buy-in of Black Swan's *Bran Nue Dae* from Perth.

At the same time, it was in rehearsal for what turned out to be an elegant production of the rarely-produced *Much Ado About Nothing* and for a distinctly 'over the top' adaptation of Goethe's *Faust*, which had not been seen before in Melbourne. During that period, 64 performers were on the payroll, along with substantial backstage personnel and the hordes of staff in the South Melbourne workshops.

Although July and August saw a heavy emphasis on the 'classics', the anniversary season as a whole reveals something of the company's

broad programming policy. As well as the five productions already mentioned, the season includes the Queensland Theatre Company's production of David Williamson's *Brilliant Lies*, a new production of William Nicholson's *Shadowlands*, from London's West End, and two recent American dramas, Tony Kushner's *Angels in America: Part I* and Herb Gardner's *I'm Not Rappaport*. A tenth

play, the premiere of Mary Morris's adaptation of *Blabbermouth*, must be added to the list. Although not part of the MTC subscription season, this co-production with Arena Theatre Company was a special youth event for the Melbourne International Festival.

The season thus comprises three 'classics', three Australian works (including a world premiere) and four contemporary plays from abroad. The balance here is close to the company's 40-year pattern, which John Sumner always reckoned at 'one-third classical writing, loosely referred to as works written prior to the present century, and revivals of 20th-century works; one-third Australian new writing and one-third new writing from overseas.'

SINCE ROGER HODGMAN took over the helm from Sumner in 1987, the trend has been for a decrease in the number of classics and an increase in Australian content. From 1988 to 1992, the classics amounted to barely 22 per cent of the repertoire, contemporary plays from abroad held their own at 34 per cent and Australian plays (including revivals and adaptations by Australians of other works) occupied 44 per cent. Ten of the Australian plays were world premieres. During that period, a dozen productions (roughly one in seven of the total) were co-productions or buy-ins.

The MTC statistics compare favourably with those of the company's interstate counterparts in the same period. The Sydney Theatre Company's Australian content represented 29 per cent of its total output (again with ten world premieres), the classics 32 per cent and contemporary works from abroad 39 per cent. The STC co-produced or bought in nine productions, at the same ratio as the MTC: roughly, one play in seven. The State Theatre Company of South Australia's repertoire was led by the classics, which occupied 41 per cent of the total. To some extent, this could be



Much Ado About Nothing, MTC-style.

From left: Frances O'Connor, Alison White and Pamela Rabe.

Photo: MTC.

sion of productions from interstate companies.

Thus Melbourne audiences saw the likes of the Sydney Theatre Company's brooding production of Ariel Dorfman's *Death and the Maiden*, the State Theatre Company of South Australia's stage adaptation of the 1930s film, *High Society*, and yet another return season of Willy Russell's Liverpool monodrama, *Shirley*

John Truscott, 1936-1993

attributed to the personal taste of artistic directors John Gaden and Simon Phillips; in any event, it is a high figure in Australian terms.

The MTC, like other state theatre companies, has always tended to be seen as a writers' theatre, in the sense that playwrights and the titles of their plays are always the focus of the company's work and the principal feature in its advertising. (I am not ignoring here the tendency on the part of all companies to combine this feature, when the occasion warrants, with 'name' actors like Hugo Weaving, Robyn Nevin, Bruce Spence, Jacki Weaver and Pamela Rabe).

Thus it was that during the 1960s, the MTC developed a lengthy exploration of the works of Edward Albee and Harold Pinter, for example, alongside those of the company's own actor and writer Alan Hopgood. During the '70s, David Williamson and Alex Buzo's works were seen as frequently as those of Tom Stoppard or Alan Ayckbourn, and in the '80s and '90s the company developed long-term relationships with Australian writers like Ron Elisha and Janis Balodis, while continuing its 21-year relationship with Williamson.

Of the overseas playwrights who have regularly appeared in the MTC's seasons, Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams have remained prominent among the Americans, as have Caryl Churchill and Ayckbourn from Britain. Shaw was once a firm favourite, and Ibsen and Chekhov still pop up from time to time, as does Noel Coward. Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* is the company's most frequently produced play, but the most frequently produced playwright, in Melbourne and anywhere else in Australia, is still Shakespeare.

Another welcome feature of recent MTC programming policy has been the revival of some fine Australian plays. A production of Alan Hopgood's *And the Big Men Fly* stood up pretty well in 1988, while Dorothy Hewett's *This Old Man Comes Rolling Home* and Jack Hibberd's *A Stretch of the Imagination* gave audiences in 1990 a chance to reassess the impact of both of those important influences on playwrights who came after them.

In many ways, then, the present MTC repertoire is typical of the com-

pany's work over a long period of time. Apart from the recent increase in Australian content, the only other factor that stands out is the increasing level of co-productions and buy-ins of other companies' work. Born of economic necessity as it is, production-sharing is looked down upon in some quarters. It certainly leads to less work for production staff, although a touring production extends the work opportunities for actors. Production-sharing also certainly helps keep open the doors of theatres that otherwise might close.

But there is another side to this. In a country which finds it hard to think nationally (except, perhaps, in relation to the economy and sport) touring enables theatregoers to see the best of what goes on in other states. One of this country's finest directors, Neil Armfield, has only directed one production that I can remember in Melbourne, but—thanks to the MTC—at least two of his Sydney productions have been seen in Melbourne. Again, thanks partly to the MTC, Melbourne theatregoers have had a chance to see some of the remarkable Aboriginal drama emanating from Western Australia—not only *Bran Nue Dae* but also Jack Davis's *The First Born Trilogy*, which remains one of my theatrical highlights of all time.

I believe that the only way Australia can pretend to have a 'national theatre' is through touring, and that—apart from the Bell Shakespeare Company—the only way that can happen is through co-operation between companies. Perhaps the best development in this respect has been the federal government's Playing Australia program, which provides funds to enable selected Australian drama to reach a wider audience. *Bran Nue Dae* was Melbourne's first glimpse of that program in action.

This indicates the wider function of a company like the MTC. It is no longer merely a provider of entertainment to Melbourne (remember the days when it billed itself as Melbourne's Fifth [TV] Channel?); it is a vital participant in the development of a genuinely national theatre. ■

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

ON THURSDAY 9 SEPTEMBER I sat in the Melbourne Concert Hall and realised that it was haunted. The ghost was that of John Truscott, film and theatre designer extraordinaire, and designer of the interiors of the Victorian Arts Centre. We had buried the man on the previous day, but his powerful presence was everywhere I looked. I kept thinking that, if only I turned in the right direction he would appear, white scarf draped elegantly around his neck, tweaking a flower back in position, moving a lamp.

As stage supervisor of the Arts Centre, I worked with John on the completion and furnishing of the venues. It was an experience both exhilarating and terrifying. I respected and admired his vision and creative energy, and faced his rages when both were thwarted by the constraints of budgets or the necessary compromises of pragmatism. But when the storm was over, John would reappear at my door and cry: 'Then let's make it wonderful in spite of the restrictions!' He demanded of others his own devotion to the search for perfection. (Oh the hours spent tramping round Melbourne to find the right piece of carpet for the conductor's podium!) but their successes were acknowledged with delight and generous praise.

I worked again with John on his first two Melbourne International Festivals. I watched him take it out of the elite arts circles into the streets so that it would be a celebration for the whole city. (And had to hide in the pub for an afternoon after breaking the news that we couldn't hang a chandelier from the Assembly Hall ceiling to give the chamber music series the right period atmosphere.)

I shall remember John always for his passion for beauty and style. He believed that everyone had the right to a little magic, to have their spirits lifted by the richness and colour of life. He saw visions and dreamed dreams, and inspired all of us with them. Mediocrity and meanness were for him the ultimate enemies. Everything should be done at the highest possible level, or it was not worth the energy.

At John's funeral they sang songs from *Camelot* and 'Somewhere' from *West Side Story*. 'Not a hymn in sight,' I whispered to my companion. I was wrong. They were John's hymns, because they told of a magical world where beauty and perfection and love reigned. They sang of paradise. I hope that the paradise in which John now finds himself has come up to his standards—though I cannot resist the suspicion that the angels are busily employed with a grand refurbishing of the heavenly mansions. ■

—Pamela A. Foulkes

'A deep sonorous thing'

TWO FINE PORTRAITS by Clifton Pugh, a madonna by Godfrey Miller and a Justin O'Brien triptych were just some of outstanding works from the Newman College art collection exhibited in the Melbourne University art gallery from July to September. The paintings, sculptures, photos and furniture gave a graphic account of the troubled relationship between modern art and religious tradition (or, for that matter, any tradition).

It is a relationship characterised by 'dramatic tensions', according to the art historian Bernard Smith in his introduction to Christopher Marshall's outstanding catalogue. A familiar enough story you might think, but what the collection and the catalogue reveal is that these tensions were at their most intense in the choice of the design for the college in 1915, and in the planned redesign of the college chapel in the early 1960s—when modern art and the Australian Catholic tradition established some sort of rapprochement.

The second thing that struck me was that for works of art in the exhibition, context is everything. Furniture, portraits of college rectors and designs for stained glass windows were all conceived as parts of a whole, a 'complete, orchestrated, aesthetic and spiritual experience'. In a sense this was the presiding spirit of the place and a key to understanding what the college architect, Walter Burley Griffin, was on about.

IN GRIFFIN'S CASE this spirit was informed by his theosophical beliefs, and in particular, his belief in a democratic spirituality which emphasized that the spirit could as well be experienced in the students' rooms as in the chapel. (This is why Jamie Carolan's recreation of a typical student's room in 1918 adds another dimension to the

exhibition). This is why Griffin and his wife, Mary Mahoney Griffin, designed all the furniture and fittings and why each student had a separate study and bedroom, which Griffin felt

to this, and in due course a dais was put in place in the dining room.

This was indicative of the shift that occurred after the construction of the first stage of the college. Thereafter the works of art added to the college collection tended to be of local interest only—illustrations of the college and commemorations of the founding fathers—so that 20 years later, when submissions were called for the design of the chapel, Griffin was invited to resubmit his original design though there was no intention of accepting it. This time the college committee was clear about what it wanted, and it decided on Thomas Payne's traditional Gothic design. Not a bad choice as it turned out, because Payne was sympathetic to Griffin's design. He produced a chapel which took, as Griffin had done, Catalan Gothic as its model, then stripped it back till there was a suggestion of the modern in it.

Twenty years later, the chapel was once again the site of tension. In 1961 Michael Scott became the fifth rector of Newman College. At this point, in the chronology of the exhibition, the quality of the work improved dramatically. Some of the most interesting works—by Eric Smith, Roger Kemp and Leonard French—were given to Michael Scott in recognition of his support for their work. During the 1950s Scott, as one of the founders of the Blake Prize for Religious Art, was a key player in the development of a modern, devotional art. The Blake Prize was, in a sense, an Australian response to the European sacred art movement, the most striking creation of which was the Church of Notre Dame de Toute Grace, at Assy in France.

This is part of the background to Michael Scott's grand plan to redesign



*Photo of Michael Scott
by Mark Strizic.*

the Newman College Chapel. Among other things the high altar and its surrounds were to be relocated and in their place was to be a huge stained glass window. Both Leonard French and Eric Smith did designs for it and many years later French described his vision of the window as 'a deep sonorous thing'. For all sorts of reasons the chapel plans weren't realised—they were too ambitious, too expensive and too late—though what did come of them was the small chapel, or oratory, near the dining room. Clifton Pugh designed it with Michael Scott's help, and together they achieved Scott's aim of 'a simple, uncluttered truth in decoration.'

PUGH WAS A CLOSE FRIEND OF Scott, and this friendship encouraged his increasing sympathy for abstract art. But it was a sympathy that didn't come easily to a man, who had for some time, maintained a public commitment to figurative, devotional art. Consequently, as Bernard Smith has pointed out, Scott internalised the tensions between modernism and tradition because he couldn't simply walk away from it like others in the church and so resolve the tensions by denying the existence of modern art and its 'own preferred syncretic spiritualities'. Increasingly there was the question of how far could Scott go along this way of a 'highly individual and universal spirituality'?

The exhibition catalogue leaves off at 1968, the year that Michael Scott departed from Newman College and the year in which the National Gallery of Victoria opened in its new premises on St Kilda Road. Its inaugural exhibition was called 'The Field', a survey of colour field abstraction. It was obvious from that exhibition that a younger generation of artists didn't share the interests of Scott and his artist friends. Times had changed, as was apparent in the late 1970s when a 'deeply, deeply religious' work by Leonard French was hung above the tellers in the new headquarters of the then State Bank of Victoria.

The bank officials certainly wanted to build a splendid complex housing the bank and a Galleria lined with high quality shops—in that sense it was a forerunner of the contemporary quest for a total shopping space—but

French wasn't involved in this, as he had been in the proposed redesign of the Newman College Chapel. Presumably what the bank wanted from Leonard French was a Leonard French, a good, big Leonard French. I suspect that any mention of 'a deep sonorous thing' is inappropriate here.

These days, it is more than likely that if this impulse were to be realised it would occur through private patrons purchasing a number of works by an artist like Roger Kemp and installing them in a special viewing space. This was a suggestion of Christopher Marshall. The model for it was not the Church of Notre Dame de Toute Grace in Assy, but the Rothko Chapel in Houston, Texas. In 1964 Mr and Mrs John de Menil conceived the idea of hanging the sombre, last pictures of the American abstract painter Mark Rothko in a specially built chapel, 'a refuge of peaceable meditation'.

In the light of the Newman College collection, it is interesting to reflect that the Rothko Chapel, opened in 1972, makes real a dream that originated with the Romantics—with someone like the 19th century German painter Runge, who planned a series of new religious icons, to be housed in a specially designed chapel, with specially designed music. A century later, in the early 1960s, the American critic Dore Ashton asked the question 'where is the symbolic

centre, the birthplace of myth, the shelter ritually consecrated?' She suggested it was a question being asked in American painting of the 1950s and 1960s, but I also think of it as a question being asked, in quite different ways, by the work in the Newman College exhibition.

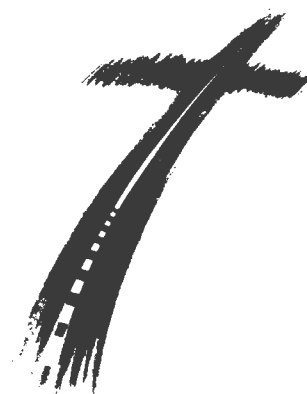
The exhibition and its catalogue look to a past, but also, they are a first step towards Newman College acquiring contemporary works to add to a collection which has been on hold since Michael Scott's departure in 1968. Since then, of course, the project that was modern art has passed into history; but no doubt the postmodern will make for all sorts of uncanny, dramatic tensions, particularly at a moment when there is an interesting lot of artists about who are looking to 'modern art's own preferred syncretic spiritualities'.

Who knows, perhaps Newman College is in for another intense time? Certainly it might be interesting to renew the conversation, long broken off, between contemporary art and religious tradition. Of course it will be more a dialogue of equals now, but I couldn't think of a better place for it than in the Newman College of Walter Burley Griffin and Michael Scott.

Damian Coleridge is an ABC presenter and producer.

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Arnie's banana peel

The Last Action Hero (Hoyts) dir. John McTiernan, stems from Arnold Schwarzenegger's desire to be more than a death-dispensing hunk of beefcake. Sadly, it is a bloated, failed attempt at capturing the spirit of Warner Bros' *Roadrunner* cartoons, in which the indefatigable Wyle E. Coyote kept coming back for more.

In a plot line suspiciously similar to that of Woody Allen's *Purple Rose of Cairo*, the film tells how a young boy (Austin O'Brien) enters the movie world of his hero, Jack Slater (Schwarzenegger). This allows Arnie and McTiernan (director of *Die Hard* and *The Hunt for Red October*) to throw in amazing stunts and a massive body count during the fantasy sequences, and to show their caring side when the characters are back in the 'real' world. They have a fine time sending up the action genre, including a spoof of *Hamlet* in which Arnie, in *Terminator*-mode, gives Claudius what for.

Movie jokes abound. The boy warns his hero not to trust a character played by F. Murray Abraham because 'he killed Mozart'; the theme music from *The Twilight Zone* is played on television at a spooky moment; there are snippets from Ingmar Bergman's *The Seventh Seal*; a cartoon cat plays a sleazy cop; and Bogie's image makes an appearance. As well as Abraham, the supporting cast includes Mercedes Ruehl, Charles Dance, Art Carney, Anthony Quinn, and Ian McKellen, plus cameos by Tina Turner, Chevy Chase, Sharon Stone and Jean-Claude Van Damme.

The film cost about \$100 million to make and has been a flop in the US,

although Bill Clinton has sheepishly confessed that he liked it. Kids may not know much about intertextuality of the nudge-nudge variety, but they can smell a phoney. They will stay away from this film in droves, and Arnie will have to start oiling his pectorals again.

—Mark Skulley

Elusive quest

The Story of Qiu Ju, dir. Zhang Yimou (independent cinemas), tells the story of its eponymous heroine's dogged campaign for justice on behalf of her husband, who during a dispute with his village chief is injured where it still matters, even given China's one-child policy. The kind of justice sought by Qiu Ju is not the sort the law dispenses. The problem is universal: institutional justice is about institutional redress, not about the balance between

tem. (An odd thing about the film is the way in which officialdom is always benign and dutiful, even avuncular. No doubt that is a touch of *realpolitik*.)

There are only four professional actors in the film, which was shot in a village in northern China, not far from where its director spent his childhood. A strong sense of individual character permeates most of the film, testifying to the rapport that the director and the professional actors were able to establish with the villagers. Qiu Ju is beautifully played by Gong Li, who has appeared in previous films by Zhang (*Ju Dou*, *Raise the Red Lantern*). With few means at her disposal—simply because of the conventions of the character she is playing—she creates a robust, humorous, strongly feeling woman.

—Margaret Coffey

Soggy tales

Waterland, dir. Stephen Gyllenhaal (independent cinemas). Graham Swift's first (and best) novel did something remarkable. It sprawled languorously yet grippingly, telling a tightly knit story from many perspectives while taking time to tell its readers almost all they would want to know about the biology of the Atlantic eel, or the history of brewing in the fens.

In Stephen Gyllenhaal's cinematic adaptation the eels are relegated to a cameo appearance, but that sense of purposive sprawl is retained—and this in a film that is, like the novel, of fairly modest length.

Tom Crick (Jeremy Irons), is a history teacher whose idea of teaching history has become telling his charges tales from his childhood in the fens of East Anglia. The stories gradually tell us what's wrong with him and his wife Mary (Sinead Cusack), as well as locking us into a fascinating drama in their own right.

The devices used to remind us that the flashbacks we see are stories being told to children are at times a little self-conscious—a scene in which Pittsburgh schoolchildren of the 1990s are bussed through an East Anglian town in 1911 could at any moment have degenerated into a remake of *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* with a bus instead

Eureka Street Film Competition

Who could forget that pair of intrepid travellers, Bogart and Hepburn, in *The African Queen*? Tell us what they're saying to each other and we'll award two tickets, to the film of your choice, for the answer we like best. The winner of August's film competition was Tric Skinner, of Kambah, ACT, who thought that W.C. Fields was thinking: 'Hmm, looking good with five kings. But has the dealer got five aces?'



personal dignity on the one hand and the freedom of authority on the other.

When Qiu Ju's overtures to the village chief fail, she travels up the rungs of legal appeal. And literally travel it is. As she trudges from village to district to city, it's hard not to be impressed by the size of the business of governing China and by the steadfastness needed to deal with the sys-

of a car—but on the whole the film works very well indeed. The stories are worked and reworked, just as are the canals of the fen country, and a splendid cast and taut direction show us how both story and landscape can divert the flow of people's lives.

—David Braddon-Mitchell

Hot chocolate

Like Water for Chocolate, dir Alfonso Arau (independent cinemas) is a wonderful magical realist story, a tale of forbidden love set in Mexico during the 1910 revolution. It has been compared to the best work of Gabriel Garcia Marquez, and like the recent Spanish film *Jamon, Jamon*, it celebrates the relationship between food, sex and social mores. The title *Like Water For Chocolate* refers to the Mexican method of making hot chocolate by boiling and re-boiling water with cocoa; but the phrase is also used to describe someone who becomes agitated or sexually aroused.

Tita (Lumi Cavazos) is the youngest daughter of Mama Elena (Regina Torne), a tough widow who runs a successful ranch. According to tradition, Tita may never marry, but must care for her mother till her death. The trouble begins when the handsome Pedro (Marco Leonardi, of *Cinema Paradiso* fame), asks for Tita's hand. Mama Elena refuses and offers her eldest daughter, Rosaura (Yareli Arizmendi), instead. Pedro accepts, but only so he can stay near Tita.

Tita is sent to the kitchen, where she literally channels her grief and passion into her cooking. As she bakes Pedro and Rosaura's wedding cake her tears fall into the mix and cause everyone who eats the cake to grieve for their lost loves. When Pedro gives Tita a dozen roses, she uses them to make quail-in-rose-petal sauce and everyone who eats it is aroused by Tita's passion and desire for Pedro.

In fact Gertrudis (Claudette Maille), another sister, is so aroused by the dish that she runs out to have a cold shower—and the heat of her body ignites the wooden shower stall. For Arau, the human spirit is like a box of matches waiting to be ignited.

—Tim Stoney

The road home

Olivier. Olivier, dir. Agnieszka Holland (independent cinemas). This film from the director of *Europa. Europa* is a beguiling and disturbing story of disappearance and return, woven from folklore motifs and from themes of sibling rivalry, sexual jealousy and diabolical suggestion.

Nine-year-old Olivier, the spoilt younger child of Serge, a country vet, and his wife Elisabeth, wanders off into the idyllic French countryside one day to take lunch to his grandmother. But, unlike Little Red Riding Hood, he fails to come back.

A boy who seems to be Olivier turns up six years later in Paris, working as a homosexual prostitute. Inspector Druot, the lonely, chivalric detective who had vowed to find Elisabeth's son for her is delighted, but the boy's return resolves nothing. The mother's desperate desire for a return to 'normal' family life with Olivier at its centre is threatened by the equally desperate desire of the boy's sister, Nadine, to learn the 'truth' about his disappearance.

The characters' need and capacity for love allows *Olivier. Olivier* a curiously optimistic ending: in a terrible situation everyone, except perhaps Serge, gets what he or she wants. Even so, the sweet notes of the horn playing over the closing scene caused me to shudder. Living with the truth, even painful truth, may be better than happiness of this kind.

—Jane Buckingham

Role reversals

Mad Dog and Glory, dir. John McNaughton (independent cinemas). McNaughton received critical acclaim in many quarters for his debut film as a director, *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer*. His considerable skills are on show again in *Mad Dog and Glory*, a film that provides a fascinating opportunity for Robert De Niro, Bill Murray and Uma Thurman to strut their stuff.

And strut they do. In contrast to *Henry*, with its bleak, chilling exposé of evil, *Mad Dog and Glory* incorporates light and darkness, love and hate,

humour and violence, reality and fantasy.

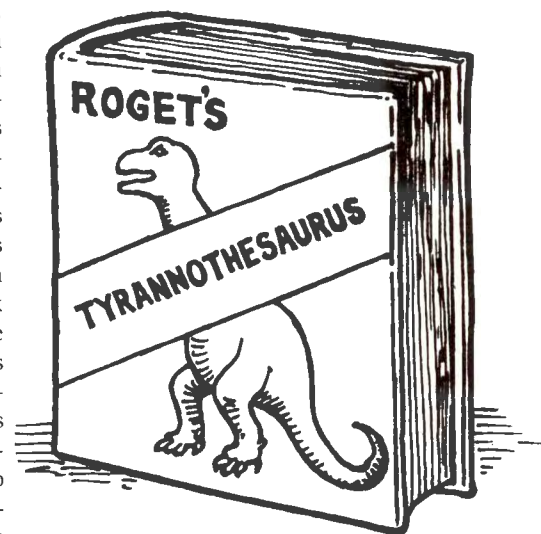
The film opens with a scene of shocking violence that visually defines the world of police photographer Wayne Dobie (De Niro) and Chicago crime figure Frank Milo (Murray). Much of the film's appeal comes from the fact that these two fine actors are playing against type: Wayne is timid and cautious, forever doubting his own courage (hence the ironic nickname 'Mad Dog' given to him by his colleagues), whereas Frank is ruthless and amoral.

The third party in an intriguing threesome is Glory (Thurman), a savvy but fragile bartender in Frank's nightclub, with whom Wayne falls in love. The romance grows from most unusual soil: Wayne accidentally saves Frank's life, and is presented with Glory for a week as his reward. The 'gift' highlights Frank's contradictory nature; this gregarious gangster who wants to be a stand-up comedian is quite capable of 'owning' people.

Although Frank's ruthlessness simmers throughout, his tentative friendship with Wayne introduces the possibility of compassion and generosity. On Wayne's side, the quest is for courage. The film's climactic scene should resolve the issue on both sides; inexplicably, however, this pivotal moment is the film's weakest.

That aside, with intelligent dialogue scripted by Richard Price (*The Color of Money* and *Sea of Love*), and Martin Scorsese and Barbara Da Fina as co-producers, *Mad Dog and Glory* has an impressive pedigree. That the film did not succeed in the USA is puzzling but irrelevant. Reward yourself with a moment or two of glory.

—Brad Halse



PETER GALE



Abroadly speaking

CANADIAN PRIME MINISTER Kim ('Kimbo The Bimbo') Campbell has been flirting with her Mountie bodyguards; one of the departments in a Beijing university is running a lingerie shop as a sideline to its academic activities; inflation in Serbia is one per cent per hour (no doubt more by the time you read this); all 1069 public schools in New York are currently closed for asbestos removal.

I added all this (and much more) to my store of fascinating but not necessarily essential information in just two days of fairly casual listening recently, and it's hard to imagine making a similarly quirky collection from either newspapers or television. What makes foreign coverage on the radio so entertaining and impressive (and I guess we're just talking about the ABC here) is the sheer number and variety of formats that it exploits: straight news bulletins; shows dedicated exclusively to overseas reports, like *The Europeans* and *Correspondents' Report*; and extended interviews on *Background Briefing* and *Late Night Live*.

With the Fairfax press relying increasingly on reprints from *The Spectator* for its in-depth foreign news analysis, the ABC can take some pride in its large stable of overseas radio correspondents and other incidental sources. It is not only that each program does a particular job; radio's flexibility also allows it to switch quickly within programs, from the formal to the informal, the earth-shattering to the trivial. And it is often in the more relaxed and idiosyncratic formats that the most intriguing nuggets of information are to be found. (Assuming, of course, that you find the latest developments in the Chinese lingerie industry intriguing.)

I have only recently discovered Peter Benesh's Friday spot on Terry Lane's show, although apparently it has been there, off and on, for six years. It is hard to imagine how the original planning meeting must have gone: 'Let's get some guy on every fortnight to discuss the latest news from Canada.' Doesn't really have that air of crusading, innovative broadcasting about it, does it? But it works.

One reason why it does is that Canada, although not the most obviously fascinating place to talk about, is actually ideal. It is remote enough for us to have little or no idea of what normally goes on there, but similar enough to be readily comprehensible. And it lends itself well to the dry, understated send-up that is Benesh's stock in trade. (My favourite recent story was about the man who sent \$100 to the Treasury to help pay off Canada's \$458.6 billion federal debt—but only on condition the government didn't borrow any more.)

Not that Benesh plays it just for laughs. He's quite happy to tell a 'Kimbo' story for its own sake, but also to point out that by deliberately cultivating a familiar, even cheeky style, Campbell scores well against the aloof, 'presidential' image of her predecessor, Brian Mulroney.

Like most Canadians, Benesh often has cause to resent the influence of his country's neighbour south of the border (or 'the longest undefended cliché in the world,' as he has been known to refer to it). But it is hard to tell how serious his anti-Americanism is at times—not as serious as Terry Lane's, that's for sure. 'I don't watch *Beverly Hills, 90210*' Benesh claims, 'it's too American.'

I'd be prepared to bet a sizeable sum of money that Alistair Cooke doesn't watch *Beverly Hills, 90210* either, although not for the same reason. Cooke's weekly *Letter From America* is a much more difficult act than Benesh's, because he doesn't have a sparring partner like Lane. But his sardonic (though never sarcastic) outlook and an eye for revealing detail are not completely dissimilar.

Cooke must be about 130 by now. I cannot remember a time when he didn't sound like an old man. If Cooke maintains that Woodrow Wilson played golf in a genteel manner, then I am prepared to believe him because he was probably carrying the clubs for him at the time. Cooke refers to figures from 40 years ago as if they are as clear in our memory as they obviously are in his: 'the bristly, moustachioed Acheson' [Dean Acheson, US Secre-

tary of State 1949-53.] But for all his digressions into the past, and his languid delivery, Cooke doesn't waste a word. His achievement, apart from producing 15 minutes of taut copy every week for goodness knows how many years, is to have created his own personal institution. He did make a TV series on American history about 15 years ago, but to most people he is simply 'the man who does *Letter From America*'.

He doesn't pop up on TV chat shows or in the papers (not outside America, anyway), or indeed anywhere except on Radio National at 7.10 on a Sunday evening. Which means that he can set his own agenda within the broad framework of his own old-fashioned, slightly pompous, patrician, liberal, but dotting view of America. Cooke has done a superb job of inventing himself.

The point about both Benesh and Cooke is that, though apparently inconsequential, they would never have the same freedom in any other medium. Not even the Queen on Christmas Day gets 15 minutes on TV, straight to camera, with no 'actuality' and the freedom to talk about whatever she likes—which is more or less Cooke's privilege every week. And even at his measured pace, he still gets in about 2000 words. There aren't many newspaper foreign correspondents considered important enough to get that much space for a weekly opinion piece.

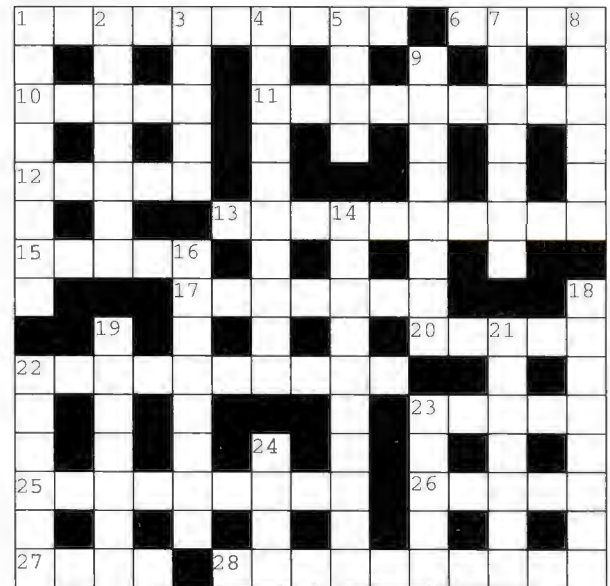
As for Benesh, TV just doesn't have the time to indulge in trivial interplay between two protagonists that lasts any longer than the banalities exchanged between presenters on the nightly news. Certainly the feed to anywhere foreign is too expensive for that kind of diletantism. So if you really want to know why the last-but-one version of Wordperfect is considered futuristic in Nova Scotia, or why Calvin Coolidge went fishing, don't think you're going to find it on CNN. Or anywhere else but on the radio. ■

Mike Ticher is a Sydney freelance journalist. He doesn't watch *Beverly Hills, 90210* either.



Devised by Joan Nowotny IBVM

Eureka Street Cryptic Crossword no.17, October 1993



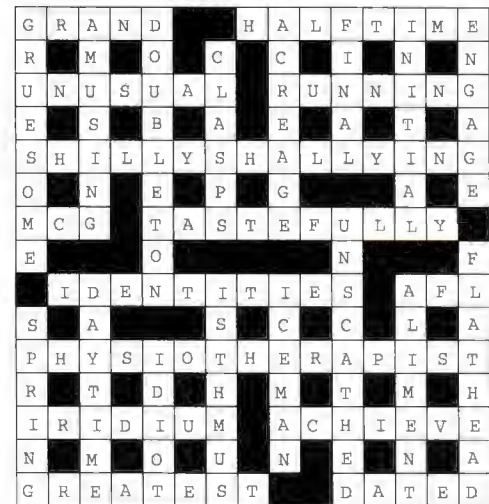
ACROSS

- 1 Argument brings about change in the situation. (10)
- 6 Consider me returning with the journalist. (4)
- 10 To contain the risk implement strict economies. (5)
- 11 Provide fuel and charge round it to produce political grouping. (9)
- 12 Prepared to study the question? (5)
- 13 Love between boy and girl shows their view of life. You might call it metaphysical! (10)
- 15 A foundation for graduates is essential. (5)
- 17 In gathering snow like an eskimo, Di cumulates a small portion inside. (7)
- 20 Bird on course pleases golfer. (5)
- 22 A male with some skills, in time, is able to be handled. (10)
- 23 Girl with a hundred others in the same social group. (5)
- 25 There has been no let-up ever since ants created confusion non-stop. (9)
- 26 Caught leg, or arm perhaps, on the way up. (5)
- 27 United Nations' act can cause downfall. (4)
- 28 To make a change, Healy re-let the apartment, somewhat airily, I'd say! (10).

DOWN

- 1 Give an account of French writer. (8)
- 2 Whose child is 'loving and giving'? (7)
- 3 Vacant seat? No! Member is in yet again! (5)
- 4 Speaks in former unfinished basilica with authority from Rome. (2, 8)
- 5 A hundred reclined to see Cassius in the ring. (4)
- 7 Tip up in a heap, ruining the inscription. (7)
- 8 Sort of business that made a fool of the Primate. (6)
- 9 In the tournament, perhaps more ties would be annoying. (8)
- 14 Dull talks! Cruel destruction of interest in this arrangement! (10)
- 16 The sight of eucalypts rising over the headland produces complacency. (8)
- 18 Making some changes, Sybil sent detailed order, thus acting reasonably. (8)
- 19 Tempted to arrange ten dice games. (7)
- 21 Secular note going up produces a reaction that's icy! (7)
- 22 Does Mimi lie unguarded in part of the play? What an environment! (6)
- 23 Suffered many a pain in finding the hidden store. (5)
- 24 Could be tense, but it's over! (4)

Solution to Crossword no.16, September 1993



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