

EUREKA STREET

Vol. 5 No. 7 September 1995

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Facing change

Alan Nichols on the future of democracy in Burma

Rowan Callick, James Griffin and Michael Zahara
on twenty years of independence in Papua New Guinea

Fred Chaney on leaving the WA Liberals

Big books for Spring with **Gerard Windsor, Margaret Coffey, Max Teichmann, Keith Campbell, Paul Collins, Ian Bell and Paul Tankard**

The Change

*In younger, idler days he used to wonder
What had become of all that he had learned.
Sane as the next man, he'd been prompt to forget
Most of it out of hand. To polish and marshal
Minutiae, like an idiot savant,
Was never his gift, his calling. The craquelure
Close to the door-jamb, the mirror-flash as a meat-van
Hugged a roundabout, the solitaire
Aubade of a sparrow trying out the day —
They were dismissed to the nothing from which they came.*

*It was the same with those other invaders, the books.
Turning the pages as if unleaving a forest,
He gave them away, apart from oddments and offcuts:
The nickname of Albert the Great, Hobbes with his picture
Of laughter as martial, Cleopatra calling for billiards.
As he got older, his question displayed the answer
Knotted within it: all that he'd ever learned,
Favoured or exiled, was turning into fear —
Not of the kind that insight can bring to heel,
But the shear of the ice-wall meeting the unplumbed ocean.*

Peter Steele



EUREKA STREET

Volume 5 Number 7
September 1995

A magazine of public affairs, the arts and theology

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throughout Spring
with the season's
big books.
See pp30-44*

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A different boat

O

N A SINGLE DAY IN JULY, two stories about asylum seekers made headlines. They showed the good and the bad faces of Australian attitudes to refugees.

The first story described how the Department of Immigration had freed from detention 18 East Timorese asylum seekers. The second story reported a speech by Alastair Nicholson of the Family Court, who trenchantly criticised the Australian policy of detaining the children of asylum seekers. He reportedly compared the remote detention centres in Western Australia to concentration camps.

The freeing of the East Timorese reflected Australian policy towards refugees, the Department of Immigration and the Government in the most favourable light. After they had arrived in Australia by boat, their representatives claimed they had been tortured, and asked that they be released from detention because of the risk to their mental health.

The claims and request were investigated by the Department of Immigration, which judged that the welfare of the asylum seekers would be best served by their release into the community while their claim for refugee status was being heard.

The decision to release the East Timorese was strongly attacked by the Indonesian Government, because it seemed to support the claim of torture. The Indonesians also argued that they should not be given refugee status. In response the Department of Foreign Affairs made it clear that the decision to free the East Timorese from detention had been made on humanitarian grounds without reference to the Department. Furthermore, Senator Evans insisted that the decision on refugee status would be made independently of the Department.

Thus, the treatment of the East Timorese asylum seekers was governed by the conviction that their human dignity could be respected adequately only by release from detention. The priority of their dignity over more abstract Australian interests was maintained unequivocally in the procedures which led to their release, and in the face of the opposition of a powerful neighbour. This was Australian refugee policy and its administration at their most heartening.

The criticism by Alastair Nicholson, on the other hand, drew attention yet again to an Australian practice which demeans human dignity. Although the government has remained obdurate in maintaining detention, it is so damaging a practice that it will inevitably attract criticism from representatives of bodies like Amnesty, civil rights groups and family courts, which deal daily with other violations of human rights. Only those who administer it from a distance fail to recognise its evil.

While the nature and effects of detention were well represented in submissions to the Senate enquiry into Detention, the case against it is worth repeating. It is not

that Australian detention centres are run like concentration camps. Although the effects of detention are exacerbated by the remoteness of Western Australia, the régime and physical facilities of detention centres are generally reasonable. Moreover, within the limits of their primary responsibility to ensure that the inmates do not escape, the officers are mostly humane.

The real evil of detention lies in the fact that vulnerable and innocent people are deprived of their liberty. Some, like victims of recent torture, and children, suffer noticeably. All are diminished. The experience of detention is shared by most asylum seekers. They arrive in Australia, hoping that their journey's end has brought them to a nation where human dignity counts. Those without correct documentation are placed in detention.

Many become disillusioned with Australia.

THEIR EARLY WEEKS OF DETENTION, however, are not purposeless. They fill in forms, meet lawyers, and are interviewed by officials. But as they wait, sometimes months, for a response to their application for refugee status and then again for the result of their appeal, the lack of activity, initiative and mental stimulation work upon them. Without daily distraction, they easily fall victim to their memories and their fears, and become preoccupied with small illnesses and anxieties. Because in all societies, imprisonment is punishment for wrong-doers, they may be beset by irrational guilts or by anger against the community which imprisoned them without cause and without trial. This experience of detention diminishes asylum seekers, and makes them less able to live creatively in the Australian community if they are granted refugee status. Detention is the bad face of the Australian attitude to asylum seekers.

Finally, the response to Justice Nicholson's speech and to the freeing of the East Timorese shows that in Australia proper respect for human dignity remains precarious. Some of the judge's critics merely showed ignorance of the effects of detention, arguing that it did not infringe on human dignity. But others claimed in effect that it was a merited punishment for queue jumping, and that it needed to be made harsh in order to deter others. From such a perspective, the humanity of the asylum seekers is irrelevant.

The reaction to the freeing of the East Timorese was more complex. Most commentators drew attention to the effect that the decision would have on relations with Indonesia and on Australian interests in the region. But they recognised equally the widespread Australian antipathy to the Indonesian administration of East Timor.

The decision to free the asylum seekers was therefore seen implicitly to be in line with Australian opinion. In the evaluation of the decision, the condition and the needs of the East Timorese themselves were not seen to be of great relevance.

The easy assumption that the sole criteria governing the treatment of asylum seekers and other minority groups should be Australian interests and public opinion is of concern. For it means that groups which do not enjoy support or influence in the community can be deprived of proper protection. The treatment of the Cambodian boat people demonstrated that. More recently, the Government has decided to prevent Chinese women from seeking refugee status on the grounds that they were persecuted under the Chinese one-child policy. This decision which declares the dignity of the women to be irrelevant, is inspired solely by the fear that Australia might face a considerable number of applications for refugee status.

The belief that Australian interests and public opinion should solely control Australian policy, would undermine the virtues of Australian administration, displayed in the treatment of the East Timorese.

The decision to release them into the

community was taken after consultation and investigation into their physical and mental condition. Broader political considerations were not canvassed. Similarly, their application for refugee status will be judged by the criteria established in the international conventions, without decisive input by the Department of Foreign Affairs. Any appeal will be adjudicated by a tribunal independent of

the government. Together, these measures guarantee that the human dignity of the asylum seekers will be protected from the pressures of political or international expediency.

This régime, however, is threatened by the assumptions that decisions should respect only public opinion and Australian interests. If it shares this view, the executive will naturally believe that it has the right to legislate and regulate freely without regards to moral considerations or to previous law. And judges will come under pressure to endorse what is convenient to the executive. Moral considerations of human dignity and justice then become irrelevant.

The history, theory and practice of detaining asylum seekers endorses this pessimistic view of the political process. The freeing of the East Timorese, however, encourages a more liberal and consoling view of the health and of the future of Australian political institutions.

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'Who cares?' A blind eye to Bosnia

WHICH CARES?" ASKED A RECENT newspaper headline above a photograph of a busload of refugees fleeing the Bosnian town of Zepa. The question seemed to sum up the expressions on the faces beneath it. From behind the backrest of a seat, a boy of four or five peeks apprehensively at the photographer—another intruder in this boy's now thoroughly unfamiliar world. By the window is a youth either traumatised or terrorised into an eerie stillness. He is

to remain unmoved by the outcome. Serb militias may be guilty of 'aggression' or 'genocide' (these are the terms used by the United Nations and the International Court of Justice respectively). But this is language borrowed from an age when crimes against humanity were considered crimes against us all and appropriate action taken. It is used now in place of actual initiative. Innocent men, women and children have been wantonly murdered in Bosnia, rape has been used as an instrument of terror, and UN peacekeepers—who represent the international community and symbolise its accepted standards of human decency—have been taken hostage and humiliated. We in the outside world have known these things. But we have refused, not just failed to act. The distinction is important for it is the basis of our capability. We have adopted the notion that principle is no longer indivisible nor the pain of others contagious. Atrocities are to be lamented, recorded, condemned. But that is the extent of our stand against evil.

The rest we leave to crude utilitarianism. This can be seen in the UN's policy of denying Bosnia the means to defend itself (through an international arms embargo) while simultaneously refusing to provide it any credible UN-NATO protection. The logic here is that if only the Bosnians would give in to the demands of their tormentors there would be less of them to mourn and less for us to worry about. This demonstrates the corruptness of our moral universe. We no longer believe that there are values worth fighting for, outcomes worth dying for, and at times we must join the struggle or betray humanity's shared experience and common fate. Call it conviction: it has been relegated to an affliction suffered by the people of the Balkans in their 'intellectual primitiveness'. We prefer to keep our heads, to disdain passion, and to seek to accommodate all sides and every point of view. Patience has become the test of our moral maturity and 'dialogue'

the limit of our statesmanship. In the face of reality we persist with this approach because we believe that all judgments are relative and that there are no objective measures of right and wrong.

Here also is the crux of the failure of our policy. Last month Croatia entered the war against the Serb militias in dramatic and unequivocal fashion. Within a matter of days Croat forces had brought about a reversal of fortunes on the battlefield and arguably created the pre-conditions for a lasting settlement. No doubt, the Croats were motivated by their own narrow motives and ambitions. (Indeed, without them they would have dithered like European diplomats.)

THIS WAS THE SOURCE of their convictions. And with the strength of them, the Croats served to remind UN policy makers, NATO planners, and the rest of us, precisely what it means to exercise power and to use force effectively.

At the outbreak of the Second World War, the French writer and philosopher Albert Camus wrote in his notebook:

The world makes us feel sick, like this universal flood of cowardice, this mockery of courage, this parody of greatness and this withering away of honour.

That was September, 1939. But in September, 1995, those same words could be used to sum up the world's response to Bosnia. Idealism, courage, honour and principle—when these involve costs we choose to avoid them. We resile from viewing Bosnia as a human tragedy and not just some ethno-religious one. We refuse to accept that what men and women do to each other in these conflicts they do, by degrees, to each of us also.

We view this war in terms of lines on a map, blind to the scars it will leave on our conscience.

Chris McGillion is the opinion page editor of the *Sydney Morning Herald*.



old enough to appreciate the indignity of what is happening but too young yet to join the men fighting, killing, dying for dignity in the hills. A woman occupies an aisle seat. Her head-scarf suggests she is a Muslim but the despair on her face is the despair on the face of all victims of war. The woman cradles a baby wrapped in a knitted shawl: a mother's protection against the cold, highlighting the world's indifference to the chilling uncertainty of a child's future.

Who cares?

The answer is no-one cares.

The most curious, and disturbing, feature of the war in Bosnia is the world's indifference to what's been going on and its determination

Faction as usual

THE BOILING FROG may be as good a way as any to explain both my leaving of the Liberal Party of Western Australia in August 1995 and my staying a member of it since it started to slide twenty years ago—about half way through my period of membership.

You know the story. Put a frog into cold water and slowly heat it up. The gradualness of the process prevents the frog from being alarmed so it stays there until it cooks. In contrast, if you drop a frog into really hot water it will jump out.

What has been happening since the Crichton-Browne factionalisation of the party began in the mid 1970s has been a gradual eating away of essential elements of the Liberal Party—‘Menzies’ child’—in my state. It was meant by Menzies to be ‘in no way conservative,’ but rather an inclusive party for middle Australia. Tolerance, fair dealing and trust, based on a common purpose, were key characteristics of the party I joined in 1958. Since 1976 they have been in process of becoming a thing of the past. Branch stacking, ruthless number crunching and driving out of good community-minded members—even people who had held senior office in Liberal governments—became par for the course.

Like the frog, I allowed the gradualness of the process to disguise its fundamental danger. I even stayed aboard as I thought through the implications for good government of the gradual and inevitable translation of party dirty deeds into the processes of government itself.

The party’s failure to endorse Paul Filing, the sitting Liberal member for Moore, was the shock I needed to make me leap. Paul, the red-headed, conservative, pugnacious Liberal, is in many respects a quintessential western Liberal of the old stamp. There is no doubt about his honesty (Peter Walsh: ‘he was an honest cop’, said with surprise) or his direction. No doubt about his support for John

Howard or his electorate’s support for him. His refusal to bend the knee to the faction was the justification for the execution. How dare he put his obligation to the party or the electorate before factional interest!

Sometimes what is needed is a simple choice, and Paul gave me that. Would I assist his campaign as an independent Liberal? There was every reason to support him but one: my membership of the party



What has been happening since the Crichton-Browne factionalisation of the party began in the mid 1970s has been a gradual eating away of essential elements of the Liberal Party in my state.

precluded it.

Members of the party are constitutionally barred from supporting non-party candidates. That is a sensible enough rule for a political party and to escape that rule you must leave the party.

David Honey, the party’s State President, helped too. His demand for silence from all party members after his narrow win over Reg Withers at the State Conference was an impossible request, as I believed that in many areas the process of the party had been corrupted to factional advantage. Silence in such circumstances is complicity. Internal differences are a necessary feature of a democratic party. Keeping such differences out of view may be sensible, given a media desperate for signs of disagreement as a sign of disarray. But this goes beyond diversity of views to integrity of process and institution.

In any other state of Australia I would still be a member of the Liberal Party. In seats within Western Australia, like Pearce, Stirling and Tangney, I would vote for Liberal candidates and will support them. But I won’t by my presence add to the pretence, voiced by apologists for the Party, that there are no problems in the Party beyond crude language directed at a journalist. It is much more serious than that. Until the party shows that in substance it has changed beyond the panic reaction to get rid of Crichton-Browne in the face of unacceptable public opinion, I can’t go back. Until Crichton-Browne faction beneficiaries in the seats of Moore and Curtin are replaced by the MPs they displaced, and until the State Parliament’s independent Liberals are invited back, the public, like me, is entitled to believe that it is faction as usual in the Western Australian Liberal Party. ■

Fred Chaney is a former Leader of the Opposition in the Senate and Liberal Minister.

Peace with honour, unfortunately

THE NEW AUSTRALIAN prayer book, passed by the Anglican Church's General Synod when it met recently in Melbourne, erupted into the secular media over two seemingly minor issues.

The most controversial was the change to the bride's vow in one of the two forms of marriage provided in the new book, called *A Prayer Book for Australia*. Conservative Sydney members successfully moved an amendment requiring the bride to vow to 'love, cherish and honour' her husband. Her husband, however, will simply have to vow to 'love and to cherish' her.

It seemed such a simple matter, defended later as offering 'freedom of choice'. Conservative couples who wanted a conservative service could be accommodated, but others would remain entirely free to choose the more contemporary second form of marriage with its equal vows, the argument went.

What the Sydney fundamentalists really wanted the bride to vow was obedience—subjection—to her husband. But the proponents of the change knew they would get nowhere with the word 'obey', not in 1995. Not even in a compromise gesture to get the prayer book through the synod. So, the ambiguous and seemingly inoffensive word 'honour' was chosen, and the synod accepted it, for the sake of the whole book. (General Synods require three-quarter majorities in each of the three houses—bishops, clergy, laity—to pass important matters like prayer books and women priests.)

It was, however, a high price for the synod to pay. For what the conservatives from Sydney wanted to emphasise once more was the 'headship' of men. In this case, in the family, a woman must recognise headship by 'honouring' her husband in a way not required of him in return. So true mutuality in marriage is denied; the woman is subordinate.

It was the claims of the headship argument, which contends that there is a God-given absolute authority of men over women in the church as

well as in the family, that these same Sydney conservatives used for years in their attempts to stop the ordination of women. The same argument prevents their ordaining women as priests in Australia's largest diocese, and prevented their formal recognition of the episcopal orders of Penny Jamieson, Bishop of Dunedin, New Zealand, when she visited Sydney recently.

And yet, the synod passed the amendment by a comfortable majority. It seemed so small a matter, so unimportant. After all, there is the other, contemporary, marriage service which will be used in most parts of the country. Surely allowing this 'freedom of choice' could not hurt?

But it does hurt many of the women members of the General Synod, for a start. Just 37 of them, out of 225, and only six of them ordained women. (There were more bishops than women present at the synod.) The numbers, in a church where women make up at least 60 percent of local congregations, say it all. Women are still the 'oppressed majority' among Anglicans.

And it hurts because this is not merely permission for a more conservative form of liturgy. If this were no more than a nuance of style, designed for the bride who wants a wedding service like her mother's, then there would be no problem. But this differentiation in the marriage vow strikes at the heart of the Christian understanding of male/female relationships.

It means that, in an Anglican formulary, women are still depicted as subordinate to men. It is a backward move, and a painful one, even if it is only actually put into practice in marriage ceremonies in a minority of parishes.

The press made much of the controversy, though church leaders complained that the issue has been sensationalised and mis-reported. The press in fact understood that this 'minor' move compromised a prayer book designed to meet contemporary Australian spiritual needs.

The other 'minor' matter was the

brief skirmish over an Aboriginal 'Thanksgiving for Australia'. The prayer, hauntingly beautiful, and generous in its embrace of all Australians, was written by Lenore Parker, an Aboriginal woman from northern NSW who serves on the national Anglican Women's Commission. That commission submitted the prayer to the Liturgical Commission, only to see it turn up in the draft prayer book somewhat 'edited'. Specifically Aboriginal terms such as 'Great Creator Spirit' had disappeared in favour of 'Holy Spirit'. 'Mother earth' had been deleted in favour of 'this earth'. The prayer had lost its integrity, its authentic linking of Christian tradition and Aboriginal spirituality. Lenore and her Aboriginal brothers and sisters protested.

The Women's Commission, however, fought to have it restored in its original form, and the opposition was surprisingly muted. Such opposition as there was, seemed to centre around 'Mother Earth'. This is not part of Christian tradition, some maintained, and might even be 'new ageist'. 'Mother', in the religious context, has always been a difficult word for conservative Anglicans.

BUT THE ORIGINAL PRAYER was, in the end, warmly accepted, and Aboriginal bishop, Arthur Malcolm, declared the new prayer book now acceptable to 'blackfellas'. A small step, but an important one, that may come to be seen as the moment when the Anglican Church recognised Aboriginal spirituality at last.

So, one step forward, one step back. That was the story of the General Synod once more, a depressingly familiar pattern in Anglicanism. The church with the genius for compromise, often touted as a model for a future unified church, sometimes compromises once too often. ■

Muriel Porter, a Melbourne journalist and academic, is a member of the General Synod and its Standing Committee.



Going West

T

HE WORST THINGS HAPPEN when a party has been out of power for a long time. It is then in no position to distribute those spoils which are so essential to the Australian party system. It becomes difficult to attract new blood and new ideas, because people ration their energy and idealism for things that seem possible. The rumps that remain fight each other, whether over tiny points of ideology or over the blame for the past debacles, so that no sane person would want to join them. The cycle stops only when power seems attainable again, usually because of the incompetent administration of the party which is in power.

At the state level in Victoria, the Byzantine intrigues of the left factions of Labor, which played a major role in the collapse of Labor Government in that state, continue to render that party virtually unelectable—whatever other incentives the Premier, Jeff Kennett, might throw the electorate's way.

The other thing which can break the cycle, of course, is a session of good old-fashioned bloodletting, a catharsis which sets the basis for a rebirth. In Queensland, for example, electors are prepared to believe that the local Nationals have reformed themselves after the Dark Ages of Joh; in NSW a pragmatic Labor had noticeably learnt some lessons from its last spell in power.

In Western Australia, by contrast, politicians have rarely learned anything from their rejections by the electorate. But they seem to be able to get re-elected in due course because the other side, usually just as bad, forfeits the confidence of the voters. The ALP of Western Australia is still fundamentally the party of Brian Burke, and is still engaged in a process of punishing those (including Carmen Lawrence) who were 'disloyal' to him. The party's institutions are as corruptible as ever and it has never conducted any inquest into how its own structures debauched the state.

Which does not mean that one would cede much moral authority to the other side. The Liberals are in power there because the luck of the other side finally ran out. Until it did, the Liberal Party, deprived of the spoils, was preoccupied with bickering, turning off potential supporters, and being corrupted itself by the crumbs from the Burke table.

It would not be entirely fair to say that Noel Crichton-Browne and his faction were motivated primarily by right-wing politics. On most issues, in fact, they have been fairly pragmatic. The only policy principles that have united them have been abhorrence of Aboriginal aspirations and detestation of small 'l' liberals, such as Fred Chaney, or even conservatives, such as Ian Viner, who have preached doctrines of tolerance. One of the things which helped make the faction so strong was its organising, under the patronage of Sir Charles Court, to prevent any move by Fred Chaney to the House of Representatives in the 1980s.

Like Graham Richardson and others who have controlled the machines, Crichton-Browne has enjoyed his reputation as a puller of strings. And his strings have been pulled

so tight that even when those who have been beholden to him have realised what a liability he now is, they have found it very difficult to break loose.

Those pitched against him have played as dirty as ever he has. Disgusting as his wife-bashing was, those who leaked the files were almost as reprehensible and have certainly done battered wives a disservice. [Now, if being the subject of an order is to be a public matter, those to be made the subject of them have a right to have the facts determined before orders are made, something likely to increase, not reduce, any scope for compromise or changed behaviour.] The impact of the leak was really minimal in his faction but the damage to the wider party, particularly outside Western Australia, was obvious. The pressure on John Howard to act and to be seen to moderate the brawls was also a factor, though Howard's own realistic unwillingness to engage in acts of valour actually likely to bring him into contact with the enemy meant little had to be done.

At first the push failed, though the closeness of the numbers emboldened some who would once never have dared to stray. It was the arrogance of Crichton-Browne in victory—and his sexual coarseness (which shocked a puritan constituency untroubled by mere wife-beating)—which finally showed he had to go. Purging his influence will take a generation—even with a willingness on the part of those who have now seized the reins and who would frankly prefer to reopen for trading on the same terms as before. I would not bury him yet.

B

UT THE PROBLEM IS NOW, probably, sufficiently neutralised that it does not by itself stand in the way of a victory by Howard. But Howard must know by now that unless he can broaden the party in Western Australia, this lot will cause him even more trouble in government.

But if members of his own side are doing their best to keep him from the Lodge, he can at least be grateful that Carmen Lawrence, from the other, is breaking her neck for him. It takes a rare political talent to turn an inept and grubby exercise in smearing, in which one was not principally involved—a misdemeanour, but not a hanging offence—into high farce. First she spends hundreds of thousands of taxpayers' dollars defending, and yet still leaves herself open to having her word flatly contradicted by some of her own former colleagues and staffers. Throw in some of her psychologising about her tormentors, and not a few will ask whether questions about her behaviour and grasp of reality come into the balance too.

Her fate is not, as she would suggest, predestined by a media which lets women rise only to dash them. If ever there was conscious image-making inviting a second look, it was by her. Indeed, there have been few politicians of her rank who have endured less scrutiny—even now. ■

Jack Waterford is editor of the *Canberra Times*.

Dividing the goods

From Race Mathews

It is possible to take a less benign view of the role of Mr Santamaria in the marginalising of distributism and Catholic social doctrine in Australian political life than is expressed by Peter Hunt, [letter *Eureka Street* August '95] while at the same time agreeing with Mr Hunt that it is time to pick up the pieces. What seems clear is that the evolved distributism exemplified by the Mondragon Co-operative Corporation in Spain has a great deal to offer countries like Australia, not least as a corrective to our currently hegemonic economic rationalism. It is also likely that any serious consideration of a possible distributist revival could usefully draw on other streams of political thought such as those of the communitarian movement in the United States and the guild socialist phase of Fabian socialism. What all three of these traditions have in common far exceeds the differences between them which the world's more blinkered ideologues have so far massively over-inflated. The achievement of a synthesis between them would be a major step towards the just society which Chesterton so eloquently advocated.

What remains in doubt is whether there exists currently anywhere in Australian society—churches, political parties and the trade union movement included—the interest or energy to explore and articulate alternatives to the present social order, as opposed to endlessly protesting against its more blatant inequities and injustices. It may be that the gap between the rich and the poor which so grotesquely disfigures our society will need to get worse before people are sufficiently shocked out of their complacency to once again engage in hard thinking.

Race Mathews
South Yarra, VIC

Les's misérables

From John Allen

After viewing the Four Corners exposure of the rift occurring within the St Vincent de Paul Society (ABC TV July 24, '95), I feel driven to state that I am both angered and saddened.

As a former member of the Society (eight years as a volunteer, Treasurer and Vice-President of the Matthew Talbot Hostel in Sydney and three

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years as a volunteer and President of a youth crisis centre in Sydney's inner-west) I have first hand experience of the conflagration between progressive and conservative elements in the Society.

Having known personally the individual with whose funeral the program started, Les Lewis, I am deeply depressed by the comfort with which the conservative factions of the Society were able to 'band-aid' his situation and even pay for his funeral.

They refuse to pressure governments and the wider society to change the factors that placed him, and thousands like him, in the circumstances that he confronted throughout his life.

Les was a humble man, who always placed others before himself. I hope the members of St Vincent de Paul who vote for the next National President do the same.

After first encountering Les as a wide-eyed twenty-year-old approximately ten years ago, I was moved to write the following verse:

*I saw a man in the corner staring at me
Not at my body, but at my soul.
Les Lewis loves me.*

*I approach him thinking I've all the answers.
Thinking he needs mine.
Les Lewis loves me.*

*I ask him about his background
And yet he reveals mine.
Les Lewis loves me.*

He refuses to let me judge him

*As I do with all the others.
'I don't care' he says.
'I'm an alcoholic—but I just don't care'.
Les Lewis loves me.
Upon reflection I realise
Les Lewis loves me.
Les Lewis is God.*

John Allen
Merewether Heights, NSW

The right note

From Maslyn Williams

I enjoyed Anne O'Brien's *Lifting the lid* (*Eureka Street*, August '95) not only for its quality but because it reminded me of life as it was in my early years which go back to the days when it didn't seem necessary to analyse and explain the wheresoress and whys of what was regarded as normal human behaviour.

It is perhaps true that piano playing for young ladies was seen by many parents as a necessary step in the status game, but it should not be forgotten that until well into the 1930s community cultural life, especially in rural areas, was based mainly on music making and its concomitants: dancing, home and community 'socials',



choral societies, town bands and church choirs.

As a station-hand in New England in the '20s, I rode into town with two mates every week with my trombone for band practice. On Saturday evenings I shared the piano playing for the silent moving picture show with a convent-trained girl who worked in the General Store and was good at the twiddly bits and the Hearts and Flowers episodes. At home or community 'socials' anyone who could play an instrument, sing or do conjuring tricks was automatically roped in.

Moving south to a town where the variety of musical tradition was wider, musical life revolved around the



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undertaker who played the C. of E. organ, taught piano and ran both the Choral Society and a travelling concert party that visited outlying villages to perform in all sorts of church halls. In this district one family had six siblings who between them played nine instruments. In another, mother played piano, father sang and their three offspring played violin, viola and flute. It was with them, during various evenings, that I sang my way through the complete canon of Schubert's lieder.

It is probably true, as Anne O'Brien suggests, that there was an element of status-rating and convent money-making in the area of music-making in those days, but putting nostalgia aside for a while, I believe that it is beyond dispute that the contribution made by knuckle-rapping nuns and other grassroots music teachers to the social and cultural life of those times far outweighs any such idiosyncrasies of behaviour as are underlined in *Lifting the lid*. I also believe it to be true, even allowing for a decrepit memory, that one seldom heard of young people of those days slouching around the house complaining of being bored because they had nothing to do.

Maslyn Williams
Bowral, NSW

Correction

In the August edition, the last sentence of Margaret Simons' article Pick a card, any card, stated that the NSW Labor Government has cut the arts budget by more than half. The sentence originally said that the cuts were to the Arts Ministry, i.e. the staff. The error was made in production.

If the cap fits

From Jim Griffin

I agree with Peter Hunt (*Eureka Street*, August '95) that a discussion of the relevance or irrelevance of distributism today would be very useful, but it was not the concern of my article 'Darkening the Church Door' (April '95). What I wished to demonstrate there was the illiberalism of the Melbourne Catholic ethos of the fifties and to refute the untruths regarding the *Catholic Worker's* alleged attacks on the Movement prior to 1955.

In view of Arthur Calwell's record as a Labor minister (e.g his denunciation of the miner's strike in 1949) and statements such as: 'Everyone knows my views on Communism. I regard it as a vile philosophy and a diabolical way of life.' (quoted, C. Kiernan, *Calwell*, 1978:181), it is unfair to see him as 'naïve about Communism', at least until late in his life, when he was embittered by the scurvy treatment given to him by pro-Movement fellow Catholics, the folly of the Vietnam War and his own defeats. Even then I think his so-called 'naïveté' must be judged by statements such as 'Russian Communism or Marxism-Leninism is a political system established for the protection of Russian nationalism [not for world domination]' (*Be Just and Fear Not*, 1973:169). However, within the Australian political context, or if called on to defend Australia's vital interests, Calwell was as 'anti-communist' as he needed to be.

Jim Griffin
Spence, ACT

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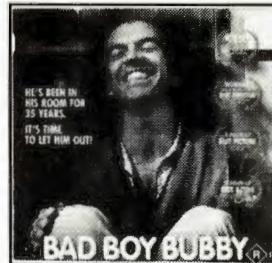
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Free for one, not for all



BURMA-WATCHERS HAVE BEEN STUMBLING over one another to explain why the military junta suddenly released democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi after six years of house arrest, and what might be the consequences.

US PROFESSOR JOSEF SILVERSTEIN thought that perhaps foreign investment was not coming in fast enough, and that trade with Thailand was in trouble. The currency (kyat) is almost worthless, so the black market and corruption thrive.

He also wondered if cracks were appearing in the military government, which calls itself the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC). Maybe Prime Minister Than Shwe, who ordered the release, had a different opinion from that of the military leader, Khin Nyunt. Students in exile on the Thai border wondered the same. Human Rights Watch director Sidney Jones, visiting Australia, said that the military were showing they have nothing to fear by releasing her.

One event, which occurred the week before Suu Kyi's release and which received virtually no media coverage in the West, was a new peace agreement with the ethnic Mon people. Cease-fire talks have also started with the Karen people (see *Eureka Street* April '95). There are existing 'peace treaties' with the Kachin, Shan and Wa peoples. Maybe the military government felt that the ethnic problem is nearly solved, and they could now turn their attention to Rangoon.

The military must realise that they can't build a model nation while everyone is a prisoner. One commentator said: 'She has won. SLORC has given in.' There is no doubt about her popularity. In the 1990 elections her party, the National League for Democracy, won 81 per cent of the vote. Burma-born Oxford academic Dr Peter Carey said: 'Her picture is behind every Buddha; she has become a sort of saint.'

It is obvious that international pressure, including from Australia, had some bearing on her release, but it is hard to judge to what extent it was due to ASEAN's 'constructive engagement' policy.

Our own Senator Evans should take some credit. He has remained firm on Burma throughout.

What is happening now?

In her first week of freedom she called a press conference, met leaders of her own political party, themselves out of prison only a month earlier, and walked around town without causing any riots. So far, so good. She called for release of all political prisoners. Maybe she intends to make her demands one by one, so as not to frighten the military too much.

There are severe limitations on her freedom: current law prohibits assembly of more than five people at a time; the draft Constitution Convention prohibits her entry into politics. But in an interview with US Congressman Richardson some months ago, Aung San Suu Kyi had already rejected the Constitution as invalid. Her courage is already obvious: she appeared at a Martyrs' Day Rally, celebrating Burma's liberator, her father, General Aung San, with several prominent SLORC members.

In the first weeks after her release it seemed as though international pressure was easing, as though all the problems of Burma were over. Japan offered immediate aid. Burma's entry into ASEAN at the Foreign Ministers' meeting in Brunei was assured.

Simultaneously, but unconnected, a change of government in Thailand occurred, with a new coalition of seven parties. It promised no apparent benefit for students in Bangkok: they are still being jailed as 'illegals'. The organised movement of students in exile, the All Burma Students Democratic Front, moved to Chiang Mai for safety.

Meanwhile, unnoticed by the world, 20,000 refugees from the fall of Karen headquarters in Manerplaw in January are being re-located to new camps near Mae Sod in Thailand. The consequences

of that disaster will last for months. And no-one is going home yet. As well, SLORC broke its own cease-fire early August by attacking Karen villages opposite the Thai border near Chiang Mai, sending several thousand new refugees across.

What happens next?

Aung San Suu Kyi will be closely watched. Professor Silverstein said the military will be looking to 'trip her up.' The draft Constitution prohibits anyone married to a foreigner (as Suu Kyi is) from participating in politics, but NLD sources within the country have said in the last month they would accept a transitional government where the military retained some power.

The nations of the world will review their policy on Burma now she is free. The US have been maintaining a 'two track' policy of opposing human rights abuse, but cooperating with SLORC on reducing the drug trade. But journalist Bertil Lintner's recent book exposes SLORC as beneficiaries of the drug trade.

Burma-watchers have different scenarios for the future. My own preferred stages are these: first, all political prisoners should be released—this has to be the next step towards democracy. Then a genuine cease-fire with all ethnic armies and their political leadership which would include a commitment to maintaining ethnic culture, language, and identity for the Mon, Karen, Kachin, Shan, etc.

Sai Wonna, student from the Shan nationality in Burma, who was brought up in Karen State, said to me: 'This is really important. The current cease-fire is really the winners in the conflict not firing any more. It is not a political peace which affirms the nationalities. There is still a lot of distrust of SLORC because they have broken their word many times.'

Sai E That Naing, a student at a Melbourne university, said: 'SLORC has no right to decide who should lead the country. People will decide and choose who will become their leader. Burma can only survive as a federal union because of the indigenous nationalities who make up half the population.'

ANOTHER ISSUE WHICH NEEDS addressing is forced labour on government works, such as road-building, which have happened mostly in the ethnic areas. The artificial value of the currency must also be addressed, to reduce the black market, corruption and forgery (recently, 500 kyat notes have been circulating in markets, but the highest official currency is 100 kyats). The West should demand international monitoring of the reduction of the drug trade, so that any connections with the military can be explored. In particular, the infamous drug dealer Law Si Han



should be dealt with. It is said SLORC have given him free rein in the Wa area.

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees should be free to carry out its mandate to oversee returning refugees, to ensure their protection. This applies to over 100,000 Muslim Rohingyas in Bangladesh as well as 90,000 refugees in Thailand.

I should like to see an amnesty for dissidents, so that the democratic leadership in exile can return home. Otherwise the 'brain drain' would be tragic. Nations like Lebanon have never recovered from the massive migration during their long civil war. It is a great pity that so far the nations which have welcomed Suu Kyi's release have not challenged SLORC about their continuing refusal to allow Dr Sein Win, and other pro-democracy leaders at present in the US, to return to Burma or Thailand.

The Burmese students in exile, and those studying abroad (including AusAID scholars in Australia) should be welcomed home and given amnesty, so they can freely participate in Burma's future. Since 1942, Burmese students in every generation, have provided democratic leadership, often at the cost of their lives.

Burmese student Mya Aye, a student at La Trobe University, said: 'Students inside Burma are still very influential. They should have a say in the future. The students in exile in Thailand cannot play this role. They will be seen as another democratic organisation outside the country. This is what happened even to U Nu (former

The West should demand international monitoring of the reduction of the drug trade, so that any connections with the military can be explored.

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Prime Minister) when he was in exile.'

Political commentators such as Professor Allan Patience of the Victoria University of Technology, are working on new definitions of 'constructive engagement' which take into account Aung San Suu Kyi's release, and which spell out the next steps required to move Burma towards humane governance.

Trade and tourism will be increasingly important. If there is genuine peace with the ethnic groups, the gas pipeline to Thailand and other developments would proceed smoothly. But of course the whole population would want to see benefits spread evenly, or the rich will simply get richer.

The ultimate goal must be to restore democracy, but of what kind? If a Lower House of Parliament is elected by universal adult suffrage, where would the military fit?

One possibility is an Upper House on the Thai or Lebanese model, where various groups in the community have proportional representation. Thailand has an Upper House of representatives of military, universities and other community groups, all appointed. Lebanon has a Parliament made up of its 16 different communities on a proportional basis. The Palestinians are exploring this kind of model at the moment. Another model is South Africa's Government of National Unity, where large minorities and tribes have a place.

SUCH SCHEMES WOULD ALLOW minorities within ethnic areas (such as the Pao people in Karen State) to have some direct representation, which they would never get by standard township electorates.

I had reached this conclusion before researching the 1947 Constitution of Burma, and found to my amazement that it made such provision, although in the period of conflict after independence from Britain and the assassination of Aung San, it was never put into practice. The 1947 agreement provided for a representative of the 'United Hills Council' of Shan, Kachin and Chin on the Governor's Executive Council. The intention of the Constitution was to create a federal union, with right of secession of Kachin and Karenni after ten years, and in an interim period 22 seats for the Karen in the Chamber of Deputies, with a Karen Minister for Karen affairs. The Constitution envisaged a bicameral legislature, with a 125 seat Chamber of Nationalities and a 250 seat Chamber of Deputies. So perhaps the 1947 plan simply needs reinventing.

Ultimately, only the Burmese will be able to make these choices. The freeing of Aung San Suu Kyi is the first in what may be a thousand steps towards democracy.

Alan Nichols is an Anglican priest working with World Vision Australia. He was assisted in preparing this article by Sai Wonna, a student from Burma studying in Melbourne.

A fragile independence



'In spite of the mounting political pressures and numerous crises we are faced with from time to time I am still optimistic about the country's future. Papua New Guinea is a country of very rich and abundant resources. There is no shortage of firms and investors eager to develop those resources.'

—Michael Somare, 1975

'Papua New Guineans are worse off now than they were at the time of our independence. This nation is in ruins right now. The only people who can rebuild it are the people, not the government, not politicians and bureaucrats, not multi-national corporations; not the World Bank and the IMF. But right now our people do not have the capacity in its required amount, lack confidence, and are suspicious about government policies and initiatives.'

—Sir Michael Somare, 1995

DENNIS O'ROURKE HAS made many films on the pilgrimage to the heart of darkness. But his first major documentary was suffused with smiles and bathed in bright tropical light: *Yumi Yet* (Just Us), in which Papua New Guinea gained independence, on September 16, 1975.

People and country, both heart-stoppingly beautiful, co-star and speak for themselves. The only commentary comes from the National Broadcasting Commission's radio news.

What does independence mean? a teacher asks a primary school class in blue gingham. 'We will look after ourselves, not the foreigners, not like before.'

A *kiap*—Australian patrol officer—drives down a Highlands track to trumpet the Last Post as the

evening rains set in and the Australian flag is lowered for the last time.

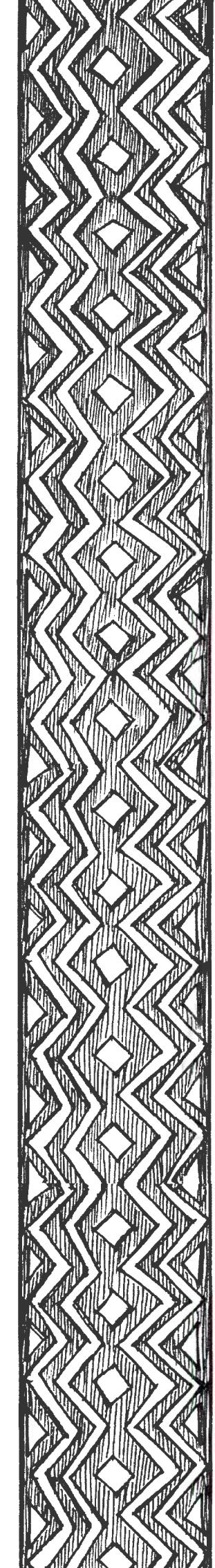
At the Sir Hubert Murray Stadium in Port Moresby, the first PNG Governor-General, Sir John Guise, hands the flag over to Sir John Kerr. The police commissioner, Pius Kerepia, and the army commander, Ted Diro, proudly lead their men on parade. A young American priest presides over a special Independence Mass on a beach in New Ireland, accompanied by spine-tingling singing. Prince Charles flies to the Highlands, flowers in his hair.

Today's audit comes all the harder for the contrast. And not just for Charles, only grey streaks in his thinning hair. Kerepia, for instance, was stabbed at his home a few years back; Diro, after climbing the greasy pole to the Deputy Prime Minister-

ship, was barred from public life on 83 counts of corruption.

Independence Days since 1975 have degenerated, like sacred festivals in Australia, principally into private occasions, merely another day off work. Most Papua New Guineans alive today have been born since independence. The experience of independence means little to them now, and will mean less as the country's dependence on the savings of foreigners grows, as it must before PNG emerges from its current cycle of decrepit or collapsed government services, poor infrastructure and lack of jobs.

When I arrived in Port Moresby to live, just after independence, the constant talk was of building a new way between the Marxist command economies and heartless laissez-



faire, of PNG as a state forged of 800 societies, which could learn from the mistakes of the earlier generation of decolonised nations, some of which were already imploding in Africa.

There were real opportunities to be seized. PNG enjoyed a secure environment; it was not threatened externally (the Indonesian Peril was a furphy). Its people maintained ownership of 97 per cent of their traditional land—and still do—giving them genuine security, so that welfare programs were largely unnecessary, and providing an opportunity for economic growth through exporting tree crops. It had no dominant tribe, so co-operation was necessary. The Westminster system, as adapted in PNG, approximated traditional Melanesian democratic structures. Most churches were effectively indigenised and provided an underpinning of universal ethics. The best of the rest of the world was busily being adapted for PNG—such as the barefoot doctors of China, transformed into PNG's aid post orderlies.

In the years leading up to independence, many of Australia's best writers had featured PNG—though as Nigel Krauth has written: 'Overall, the experience was as much a process of Australians' coming to terms with the nature of their own cultural outlook as it was a process of their discovering and understanding the PNG cultural outlook. In fiction and verse Australians found that their image of PNG reflected themselves.'

This image ranged from vulnerable Eden to infectious Hell. James McAuley's 1950s notion that PNG provided for Australians a splendid opportunity to create a worthwhile moral monument contrasted with the pre-Independence visions of writers who, like Barry Oakley, forecast bloody political mayhem.'

Marcus Clarke, Ion Idriess, George Johnston, Maslyn Williams, Judith Wright, Kath Walker, Eric Rolls, even Errol Flynn, perhaps best of all Randolph Stow's *Visitants* and Trevor Shearston's *Something in the Blood*, pursued PNG themes. Since independence that stream has dried up—not only in Australia but more disturbingly within PNG too, where

a number of highly promising writers found powerful voices in the push for self-rule, including Kumalau Tawali, John Kasaipwalova, Russell Soaba, Rabbie Namaliu, Nora Vagi, but have largely since been sidetracked by other preoccupations

without being succeeded by a new generation of writers.

AND AT INDEPENDENCE a generation of artists—including Kauage, Akis, Jakupa, Cecil King Wungi, Ruki Fame—was producing a stream of extraordinary interpretations of their worlds, incorporating helicopters and politicians within traditional scenes.

Perhaps in part because of the very lack of Australian investment, and the inaccessibility of much of the country, PNG's cultures remained largely vibrant. Michael O'Hanlon, a British anthropologist who curated a stunning recent exhibition of contemporary Highlands life for the British Museum, writes: 'Tradition and change are not always the mutually exclusive things we sometimes take them to be. It was, for example, the Australian-imposed peace which provided the conditions in which could flourish the elaborate ceremonies which have often made the Wahgi (the people of the great central valley of the Highlands) look very "traditional".'

The exhibition re-created a typical Highlands trade store. Its contents are instructive: Trukai ('real food') Rice (from Australia), various tins of fish—but all mackerel, Ramu sugar, Big Sister tinned puddings, Muruk (cassowary) tobacco, Cambridge cigarettes, Liklik Wopa ('little whopper') and Paradise biscuits, Globe dripping, Twisties, Coca-Cola, Fanta, Kurumul tea, High Mountain Instant Coffee (Highlanders, despite growing and exporting high quality beans, drink coffee processed overseas and then imported), meri (women's) blouses, laplaps (lengths of material worn in myriad ways), blankets, caps, sandals, axes, bushknives, Chinese-made pots, pans and lanterns, plastic bottles of face paint, Bigen and Mayflower hair dye, mirrors, beads, combs, highly colourful acrylic yarns from which bilums (string-bags) are today often made, torches, batteries, kerosene, cassette tapes, soap powder, matches.

Such is the material scope of most Papua New Guineans: far different from their aspirations. Three years ago, Parliament—confronted by a rising tide of violent, frustrated, angry crime—restored capital punishment, formerly a colonial barbarism. Irish judge Tracy Doherty condemned the first convicted murderer to death, in February this year. His appeal is pending.

What has caused such reversions and reverses, echoed in Somare's quotations above?

It was inevitable that at independence, expectations were heightened, though there was no lack at the time in PNG of realistic as well as of rosy assessments. Historian Hank Nelson wrote of self-government in 1972: 'In the long term it is the people of PNG who make one confident. They possess a courtesy, imagination and pragmatic strength to provide their own solutions. In the short term one can only be pessimistic.' So it remains today.

Ten years on, in 1985, Professor Elton Brash edited a 'national family album' of *Faces and Voices of PNG*, in which the evolution from that independence confidence was evident. Chief Nalubutau Beona of Trobriand Islands said: 'After PNG became independent, most young men and women left to seek a modern education and employment in cities. We, in the village, are left with only the old and the young children. But those who left home are not all successful...'

Some have struck it rich, though. Apere Goso, an Eastern Highlands coffee plantation owner without a day's schooling, has four wives and nine children, some at school in Australia. 'I like to travel', he says. He has visited the Philippines, Japan, China, Kenya, South Africa and Brazil. Last year I had afternoon tea in the monumental home of Western Highlands millionaire Simon Korua, in which the sauna, et cetera, were tiled by tradesmen he flew up from Sydney. His relatives live in traditional round-houses beyond the picket fence, and wait to petition him as he enters or leaves in his Range Rover.

It is in part the manner in which others have accumulated wealth that

continued p19

Put out more flags

In the years preceding Papua New Guinea's Independence on September 16, 1975, there was an enormous amount of controversy, debate, rancour and passion, most of it growing from high principles and some of it from personal ambition. The Constitutional Planning Committee led by Fr John Momis, which was charged with the task of drafting the constitution, and the Government, led by Michael Somare, fell out terminally and often. Nevertheless the Constitution which reflected the highest ideals of all parties was eventually produced and came into operation at the commencement of Independence Day.

It was Michael Somare's wish that Papua New Guinea have the Queen as Head of State, and that caused a flurry of late amendments to the draft.

To say that the strains of the recent past were forgotten in the euphoria of the day would be foolish, and indeed Papua Besena, a small Papuan rights party, engaged the services of a rainmaker in an attempt to spoil the celebrations. He achieved a light drizzle, not dissimilar from the achievements of Papua Besena itself.

The greatest strain fell on the Independence Celebration Organisation, who had to balance the competing requirements of the local and visiting dignitaries, not always with success. So Sir Sonny Ramphal, the Commonwealth Secretary General, attended the Heads of State dinner given by the Governor General, Sir John Guise, on the basis that his status was equivalent to that of a head of state, which may be true, but also it was a fact that he had not been invited.

The biscuit was taken, however, by Imelda Marcos, which if you think about it is unsurprising. The Philippines had not responded to Papua New Guinea's invitation, but two days before Independence Day a message was received that Mrs Marcos would be attending in her private

jet, with a retinue of 80.

This she duly did. I cannot now remember how either she or her gang were quartered. Perhaps it was well out of town because Mrs Marcos succeeded in being extremely late for the State Opening of Parliament presided over by the Prince of Wales, on the grounds that she was having her hair done. She came clattering in wearing one of the famous pairs of shoes, although, from the noise she was making, perhaps she was wearing several, comprehensively delaying proceedings. She succeeded in looking oddly mannish with her strong arms, shoulder pads and grim jawline.

Before that State opening the Organising Committee had issued a code which advised us among other things that 'special permission is being sought from her Majesty the Queen for the wearing of decorations and medals with tropical, formal or day wear'. Many had been concerned about this.

At eleven minutes past five on the afternoon of Monday September 15, the Australian Flag was lowered by members of the Papua New Guinea Defence Force and presented to Sir John Guise. Amongst those applauding were the Australian Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam and his eventual destroyer Sir John Kerr. It was a moving and exciting moment accompanied by an impressive *feu de joie*.

THE INSTANT AFTER midnight, Independence came through the clever technical device of an act of theoretical revolutions. This meant that the Constitution arose in Papua New Guinea, not simply by an act of the Australian Government. In the preamble it states 'we the people do now establish this sovereign nation and declare ourselves under the guiding hand of God to be the Independent State of Papua New Guinea'. The preparations for this moment were so good that only one arena of



legislation had to be adopted unaltered by the Constitution. That was the legislation concerning merchant shipping of both the England and Australian Parliaments. The Cabinet was very anxious not to adopt any foreign laws; I had to explain to them that the Merchant Shipping legislation seemed to work but that nobody could understand it.

The red, gold and black flag of the Independent State of Papua New Guinea was raised at half-past nine on the morning of September 16. This was a good thing because an earlier House of Assembly Select Committee on Constitutional Development had recommended a purple, green and gold flag of surprising hideousness and the name 'Pagini' for the new nation.

The visitor who received by far the warmest and most sustained applause curiously was Colonel Murray, the 85-year-old former Administrator. He had become famous during his time in Government House, between 1945 and 1952 as 'Kanaka Jack Murray' for inviting some Papuans to tea and coming up with the revolutionary sentiment that it was 'impossible to continue to use the word *native* if it meant less than man'.

In a way that welcome symbolised both the importance and the prevailing sensitivity of the day. ■

Michael Zahara worked as a government lawyer in Port Moresby. He was on the personal staff of John Kaputin when he was Minister for Justice and of the late Oscar Tammar when he was Minister for Provincial Government. He was one of the very few non-Tolais to have been initiated into the Tuban Society of East New Britain.

A world away from Imelda:
Michael Zahara, above,
who now lives and
works as a lawyer
in South Devon.

Changing of the old guard

IN 1968 UNIVERSITY budgets could still be expansive, at least in the instant model at Port Moresby which hired cattle stalls at the Showgrounds in 1966 to put 58 (six female) students through a preliminary (matriculation) year. The Vice-Chancellor had his office over Kriewaldt's garage. Eager to recruit staff to pioneering conditions, UPNG allowed us to travel from Melbourne by ship in lieu of first class air fares. To ease the transition for six children under the age of 12 to a different life, my wife and I had applied for the Changsha en route to Hong Kong and back.

At our table was Melbourne psychiatrist and identity, Guy Springthorpe, who had been in the same class at Wesley College with Bob Menzies. His anecdote frequently veneered the undertone of consternation that I, allegedly a 'professor', was going to Papua New Guinea to muck things up for the white settlers, perhaps even abet a revolution by jumped-up natives. From Adelaide Mrs Triskett, with her powdered and rouge-lit cheeks, pearls and diamanté hair brace at dinner, warned me about miscegenation. Dreadful Don Dunstan, it was well-known, was a 'quadroon' from Fiji: he was corrupting South Australia. Athletic, knock-about Charlene Freer, whose husband, Sam, clenched a healthy artisan fist at the thought of a Melanesian sporting the superiority of an academic degree, told us how to keep 'coons' from the verandah: get a good-sized dog, put in a sack, beat the livin' bejesus out of it and then get your 'hous boi' to let it loose. Stiff cheddar for the boi, but one bloody great watchhound!

They were our preliminary days. It was 1968, mark you, just seven years before independence. UPNG buildings did not open until 1969, although classes had moved in 1967 to the more comfortable Administrative College.

In Port Moresby there was only one business owned and operated by a 'native'—a garage. In the shops white women still acted as counter-

jumbers and whites were served first. Blokes were driving trucks, doing jobs the locals could easily do and would have to do on less than half the wages. To take students into the Boroko Hotel's beergarden still needed a little nerve although the DOGS AND NATIVES KEEP OFF sign had been taken down some years before at Ela Beach. However the second nation-wide elections had been held in 1968 on a common roll and 10 out of 94 MPs had organised themselves under young Michael Somare into a Papua New Guinea United Party (PANGU PATI). It was committed to early self-government, though not with a target date, and its members would refuse to be bought off with ministerial apprenticeships. They wanted to be a constitutional opposition.

But—can you believe it now?—before the elections the Minister for the Territories, Charles Barnes, admonished people to avoid parties. In the Highlands (40 per cent of the population and most in need of political education) his *kiaps* (officers) actively discouraged them and warned that early independence could threaten Australian aid and that it would mean Highlanders would end up as 'grasscutters' for the more advanced coasts. Special Branch police conspicuously, intimidatingly, took notes of people and proceedings at public party meetings. Somare and his men were derided, abused and discriminated against by the white-led majority in Parliament but by 1972 they had made their point.

Before coming to the full point of this reminiscence—whether Gough Whitlam acted correctly in pressing 'early' independence on PNG—it is necessary to look at the confusion and, in certain areas, negligence in Australian policy. When that energetic, humane but stuffy and arrogant statesman, Paul Hasluck became Minister for Territories (1951-63), he said that self-government could not come until Europeans and Papua New Guineans had 'solved the major problem of living together'

and 'a large majority' of Papua New Guineans could 'participate in management of the life, industry and politics of the country. That may be more than a century ahead'. This, at a time when the rest of the colonial world was moving to self-determination and an independent Indonesia had declared its intention to move the boundary of Asia to the 141 degree meridian, half way across the island of New Guinea.

So PNG was to be placed under indefinite tutelage to Canberra and Australians who contained themselves behind a White Australia policy at home were going to have a permanent residential stake in PNG (In fact, Hasluck breached the White Australia Policy in 1957 by making special provision for Chinese in PNG to take up Australian citizenship, hoping they would all take a slow boat to Coolangatta and not blur his dream of a White Australian-PNG partnership). By the late 50s, Hasluck had, perforce, to modify his timetable but it was still hopelessly out of tune with the times. It needed events like the Congo catastrophe (1960) and the fall of West New Guinea to Indonesia (1961-63) to alert him to what Harold MacMillan famously called 'the winds of change', although Hasluck always refused to believe that Africa could provide any analogies for PNG.

Territories proceeded to tighten its grip on even the minutiae of administration in remote areas; Canberra ruled directly by telephone and telex. In 1968 the key PNC department of District Administration was put under the stetson-hatted trailblazer, Tom Ellis, who used to stand up in churches in his Western Highlands domain and say: 'God i makim mi Nambawan bilong yupela' ('God made me Number One over you' cf Romans 13:1).

THERE IS NO SPACE here to recite the provocations on the Gazelle Peninsula and in Bougainville in 1968-9 except to mention that that wise and learned Commissioner of Police, Ray Whitrod, found his re-

pressive tasks so distasteful that he resigned in early 1970 to go, of all places, to Bjelke's Queensland. What Australia was facing was the prospect of repressing nationalist movements and gaoling dissidents. Whitlam saw this clearly and, having satisfied himself in 1969 that he could defeat Gorton or whoever in 1972, he made his Barnes-storming visit to PNG just prior to New Year 1970 and promised self-government and independence within his first term of office. With Somare's unexpected but welcome accession to the Chief Ministership in 1972, that promise was kept.

FORGET THE CHATTERING TORIES who want to use PNG's current problems to berate Whitlam in its 20th anniversary year and bewail the passing of allegedly good times—especially for whites.

Whitlam was correct to declare that no matter what PNG might want—or fail to want as a result of colonial dependence—independence was non-negotiable, even, more or less, in its timing. Australia had international responsibilities, some of which could not be effectively discharged while it remained a middle imperial power.

Lack of development was not a reason for continued colonisation. And he might have added: neither was the prospect that PNG leaders might prove incompetent and corrupt, might even emulate Bjelke-Petersen or Brian Burke. Or their police act like Terry Lewis' wallops or those in New South Wales or Victoria in the late sixties, or their businessmen look to Bond and Skase.

Whitlam rightly said: the unique thing about PNG in 1970 was that 'alone among the significant populations of the world, its people make no final decisions on any matter affecting their welfare'.

Again, he might have added: there was much in Australia's well-intentioned post-war record to suggest that more Australian administrators like Hasluck and Barnes would not necessarily result in wiser decisions than Papua New Guineans could make. ■

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has provoked the cynicism about political leaders that is now widespread, and that caused 60 per cent of the 109 MPs to lose their seats at the last national election.

Young West Sepik politician Gabriel Ramoi wrote in a paper on *Ethics and Leadership* in 1987: 'When leaders become blind to the ethical concerns of the majority and involve themselves in corrupt practices with impunity, the people have every right to demand a change.' Ramoi has known a few. Recently released from two years' jail for theft of public money, he is now employed as a senior adviser to the Finance Minister, Chris Haiveta.

As careers and cargo were discovered by leaders, 'development', top of the agenda for a decade or so, got lost again.

In a recent report, the World Bank says: 'Despite a \$US5 billion economy and impressive growth this decade, PNG is virtually alone in the developing world—including Africa—in experiencing a significant deterioration of basic social services. The statistics suggest that investment in the people of PNG has stopped.' The human stories suggest the same. A doctor friend in PNG, who has played a vital role in aiding suffering Irian Jayan refugees and Bougainvilleans, recently described the disintegration of the aid post orderly network, a lack of medicines in clinics, a decline in vaccinating children, the systematic looting of a health centre—a cable stolen, disabling the generator, water pipes taken to convert into home-made gun barrels, hospitals forced to keep ratcheting up fees and beg corporations for aid, the average life expectancy diminishing.

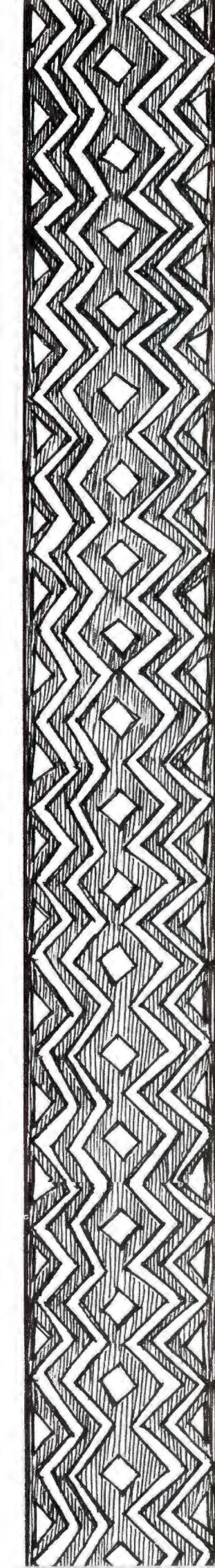
The kina, the nation's currency, with its unique hole in the centre so it can be worn on a string round the neck by people wearing traditional dress (no pockets), has for much of its life been the subject of pride by Papua New Guineans, not least in its early years when Australian public servants still working there were given the choice of payment in Aussie dollars or kina. Many chose the former; the latter soon soared in value, and was for years convertible at \$1.40 or so. On a visit to PNG last month, however, I heard the kina—

now down to par with the \$A—the subject of humour: what currency is worth so little you can see right through it? The kina, of course.

The popular PNG explanation: too much politics. And they're right. Through succeeding national elections the level of educational attainment of parliamentarians has risen—at first holding out the prospect of better informed and more enlightened decision-making. But so has the direction of day-to-day administration by politicians extended ever further down the levels of the bureaucracy. The politicisation of virtually every significant PNG institution, except arguably the courts, the media and the churches, combined with the manifest ease with which returns from the country's dominant foreign exchange earner—the resource industry—and from the other major injector of funds, the aid sector, have been captured by the Port Moresby based rent-seeking élite, have acted as a magnet to lure an entire educated generation into the political web.

What counts in politics everywhere, as to a lesser degree in business, is of course the deal, rather than the process. Under the PNG electoral system the group that votes for a winning candidate is the group that benefits from 'development'. Similarly, the Moresby-based political élite has, since the Bougainville rebellion began in late 1988, revised its own deal, re-cast its contract with the nation, to focus on splitting the revenue from resources with those landowners lucky enough to live on or near an ore-body, oil deposit or accessible rainforest, thereby creating—or recognising—a new power group.

LAST CHRISTMAS Prime Minister Sir Julius Chan claimed: 'PNG will be flush with cash this year.' And after eight months of virtually zero government spending except on salaries, he may at last be proved right. About \$US450 million is heading PNG's way via an 18-months' structural adjustment program in which the World Bank, the IMF, Australia and Japan are participating. Next month too, the Government will finish paying for the carry of its 22.5 per cent stake in the Kutubu oilfield. The Lihir gold mine is at last being



built, 13 years after its discovery, hugely boosting the construction and transport sectors. And the Mineral Resources Development Corporation is being fattened up ready for market—if its debt and other encumbrances can be disentangled. With ever bigger areas being logged—in preparation, of course, the largely Malaysian loggers hasten to add, for ‘palm oil’ ventures or the like—yes,

Chan’s Santa-style forecast may prove right.

BUT WHO IN PNG will be flush with cash? The schizophrenic constitutional New Deal approved by Parliament in late June, that Sir Julius sees as the high water mark of his 26-year political career, severs the 18-year contract with salaried provincial politicians and rewrites it with a much bigger, more diverse group of local government leaders whose expectations may be no less but who are more easily divided and ruled. It both returns power to the capital and decentralises further. And it creates a new political cadre between the two: provincial governors, who will be the key distributors of government largesse. The raison d’être of both traditional and modern leadership in PNG has been distribution rather than wealth creation—the latter typically being the role of women in Melanesian societies. There are no women among PNG’s 109 MPs, and decreasing numbers among senior bureaucrats.

PNG leaders have been increasingly visiting New Zealand to see if they can learn from the recent transformation of that similarly sized country. The ‘Look North’ push into Asia by Paias Wingti derived from hopes of a similar transformation of PNG. The chief Asian investments in PNG in the ‘90s have consisted of logging leases, trade stores—now being rapidly delocalised—and fully protected packaging operations, such as the crushing of Korean clinker for cement (not the most auspicious source, in the light of recent tragic events in Korea) and the canning of mackerel caught in Chilean waters. Meanwhile PNG’s own small to medium sized businesses are having a rotten time at present—they can’t borrow because the government has

grabbed the banks’ liquidity, they can only with difficulty obtain the foreign exchange to meet suppliers’ bills, and the government is only paying its own bills sporadically. Until they are in a happier frame of mind, employment growth will remain marginal, and foreign investors—who always seek out the views of local businesspeople—will be discouraged.

Yet in PNG, not only are the rewards of getting policy right considered marginal, the sanctions for getting it wrong are non-existent. Thus failed and discredited leaders, and policies, are constantly recycled.

In Port Moresby and elsewhere, the paradoxes of modern PNG will persist: the sounds of city nights in which gunfire alternates with gospel choirs.

The penalties apply to a failure to cut deals, not to policy inadequacy. Proven corruption and incompetence are no bar to office. On such defences the PNG media hurls itself bravely but mostly without impact. Recent events, when the government backed down at its very first, modest reforming step, of facilitating a voluntary registration of land—in the face of violent demonstrations from various alienated social groups—appear to rule out a programme of substantial reform.

The structural adjustment deal cut by the government with the Bank, the Fund, and their funding partners including Australia, cannot be fully implemented. But no matter. In the short term, the problem of a disastrous lack of foreign exchange will have been overcome, thanks to the savings of foreigners via the structural adjustment funds and Lihir. In the medium term, such foreigners—and most Papua New Guineans too—will look for a government-led transfusion of funds from recurrent to capital spending, a rapid improvement in the provision of schools, health and infrastructure, and a focus on attracting investment in job-providing export industries. Then in the longer term, if all goes well, the

international element again proves vital as PNG is enmeshed with the fast expanding neighbouring Asia-Pacific economies, providing continuous momentum.

Taking over the reins from the colonial administration, establishing an independent nation, grappling with the opportunities and challenges of hosting vast mines, were relatively glamorous issues for PNG’s élite to focus on. Ensuring efficient delivery of services, stripping government of non-essentials, shifting from owning equity and operating businesses to facilitating them within fair markets are less obviously attractive tasks. But there is broad consensus that the country’s very viability will be assessed according to its capacity and willingness to implement such aims. Success in rebuilding institutions and in being more inclusive, drawing back into the decision-making orbit talented and experienced Papua New Guineans discarded through the politicisation process, may help encourage those who have effectively withdrawn from the nation back to a retribalised hinterland, to participate in the broader economy beyond a passive reception of domestic remittances. Tax commissioner Nagora Bogan said last month his ‘client base’ stood at just 61,386 individual taxpayers in a nation of 4 million.

The task of establishing a modern nation from a tribal society with no tradition of an over-arching state remains monumental (though it is not helped by the reckless discarding of the very monuments that have marked its progress; the country’s first parliament building, a former isolation hospital, is now a vandalised, pitiful shell). But while such a history makes governance at best tough, at worst impossible, it also means that Papua New Guineans, 20 years on, have not been bullied or cowed by their governments, merely disappointed and deserted by them.

And in Port Moresby and elsewhere, the paradoxes of modern PNG will persist: the sounds of city nights in which gunfire alternates with gospel choirs. ■

Rowan Callick is Victorian bureau chief of the *Australian Financial Review* and its Pacific specialist.

Footbrawl

ON 12 APRIL, 1993, Canterbury-Bankstown Rugby League club held a special multicultural day at their Belmore Sports Ground home in Sydney's south-west. A crowd of 27,804 turned up to see the Bulldogs thrash Parramatta 42-6, with thousands more turned away. This season, the corresponding game attracted a meagre 8,079 to Parramatta Stadium, the new home of the now-renamed Sydney Bulldogs.

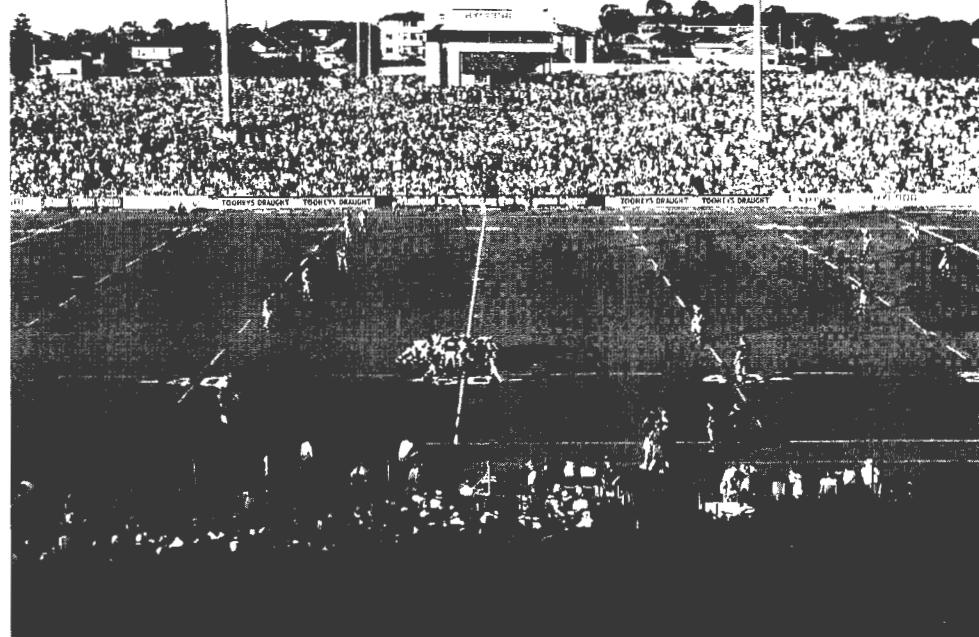
Strange things have been happening to Rugby League in the intervening period. New clubs have been added to the competition. Old ones have changed their names, their home grounds and their jumpers. And, of course, Super League has arrived. News Ltd's drive to create a new competition, which seems set to take off next year, has thrown league into a state of turmoil unparalleled since rugby split into professional and amateur codes in 1908.

Whatever the outcome of News Ltd's intervention, it is already clear that every aspect of the game will be up for re-evaluation in its aftermath, including the structure of football clubs and their social role.

'Football clubs and their social role' is a phrase which doesn't appear too often on the back pages, where sport is still presented largely as a self-contained domain. But there is more to Super League than the newspaper depiction of a straightforward power-struggle between Rupert Murdoch and Kerry Packer.

Professional sport is, and always has been, a business. However, it has never been only that. One difference is that, unlike competitors in other markets, sports clubs attract passionate and seemingly irrational loyalties which cannot easily be changed or, once destroyed, recreated. Such loyalties arise because football clubs (of any code) are more than just a random collection of players—they stand for something.

Once, clubs represented real communities—the people who actually lived in Carlton, for example, or Balmain. Now that those small-scale suburban communities have been scattered, or absorbed into a much larger entity (such as the inner-city) the associations of any given club have become more complex. They may include confessional elements—Collingwood's once close relationship with Catholicism is the best-known example in Australia. Or clubs may come to denote social class, as the rivalry between Western Suburbs ('Fibros') and Manly ('Silvertails') showed in Sydney Rugby League in the 1970s and early '80s. A club may itself act as a social glue and source of identity in areas where a sense of community is weak, as the Raiders undoubtedly have done in Canberra.



The arrival of Super League has served to highlight the drastic, possibly fatal, erosion of such bonds in Rugby League's heartland.

Canterbury's experience this season is symptomatic of the crisis which has overtaken the code, above all in Sydney, where radio and TV ratings have plummeted, and prospective sponsors fight shy of the Super League impasse. The reaction to Super League by supporters has been characterised above all by apathy, disillusion with the game as a whole and a 'plague on both your houses' mentality. Once renowned for their close-knit, family character, the Bulldogs have been split down the middle by Super League, with the players divided between the two camps. Crowds have slumped to pitiful levels as the 1994 grand finalists have played out much of the season in an atmosphere of suspicion and rancour.

It is clear that the malaise in Sydney Rugby League predates Murdoch's assault. Its roots lie in the attempt to expand the code from a suburban to a national level. The introduction of teams from Canberra and Wollongong in 1982, followed by Newcastle, Brisbane and the Gold Coast in 1988, meant that the old inner-city clubs, restricted to smaller catchment areas for players, sponsors and spectators, struggled to compete on an equal basis. With the addition of a further four teams in 1995—based in Auckland, Townsville, Brisbane and Perth—the pressure on some

of the competition's oldest members to merge or face extinction became intense.

IT WAS A SITUATION FRAUGHT with difficulties for the Australian Rugby League. The attractions of a national competition were clear. Clubs in new cities sparked interest in the code and meant that league could offer substantially bigger markets to TV and sponsors. At the same time, however, there was a reluctance to force the demise of famous clubs such as South Sydney, Balmain and St George, which had been the backbone of the league for almost a century. The failure of the ARL and the clubs themselves to resolve this dilemma led to the current desperate situation.

The inner-city clubs certainly had problems—small crowds, above all—but they also had assets.

The Shadows lengthen: Canterbury-Bankstown played Parramatta at Belmore in 1993. Now they're the 'Sydney Bulldogs' and play at Parramatta Stadium.

photo: Dallas Kilponen

Under the Super League model, football clubs become little more than franchises, with no more deep-rooted attachment to their surrounding community than the local branch of a supermarket chain.

These were their history, their famous club colours, and their associations with the local area. They were assets not simply in a sentimental, romantic sense. Balmain's famous gold jumper with a black 'V' for example, was, in hard-nosed marketing terms, a priceless brand mark, which ensured almost universal 'product recognition'. Canterbury's hugely successful multicultural days were the perfect example of how such traditions and symbols could be linked to the changing nature of the club's surrounding suburbs in order to attract a whole new audience.

However, such imaginative initiatives proved to be the exception as the Sydney clubs jockeyed for survival. Instead, they chose to abandon their suburban identities. Balmain were also drawn to the better facilities of Parramatta Stadium and recreated themselves as the Sydney Tigers, simultaneously discarding their old home at Leichhardt Oval and the old club jumper. Once the epitome of working-class Sydney, Balmain's appeal had steadily declined as the suburb underwent rapid gentrification. Eastern Suburbs, struggling with similarly low attendances, were reborn as the ungainly Sydney City Roosters.

Such radical changes in the Sydney Rugby League landscape have not only been accepted, but encouraged by the ARL. Rather than introduce regional divisions below the national league, they insist that clubs which cannot compete at the top should merge. The manoeuvres of Canterbury, Balmain and Easts were clearly designed to position them as favourably as possible for such mergers. The results, as Canterbury shows most graphically, have been catastrophic.

The fundamental reason for their rapid disintegration seems clear—the 'Sydney Bulldogs' means nothing to anyone. The club has sloughed off its very identity, which was bound up with the name Canterbury-Bankstown and its home ground at Belmore. A vital sense of belonging and continuity has been lost.

It's this disconnection of clubs from any community ties which is the most disastrous legacy of the past few years. This is most obvious in cases where clubs have physically removed themselves to new stadiums, but it is also reflected in the ARL's rigidly authoritarian structure, which effectively prevents individual clubs from actively marketing themselves to the local community, even at the level of producing their own club merchandise or a matchday program.

The reliance on poker-machine revenue from their Leagues clubs made the football operations complacent about the numbers coming through the turnstiles. And although all Rugby League clubs (except the privately-owned Brisbane Broncos) are theoretically answerable to their members, this avenue of input from the grassroots has also been largely ignored, even in deciding such fundamental questions as a

club's name, or where it plays its matches.

It's partly because these channels of communications were allowed to calcify that the ARL has been so conspicuously incapable of mobilising mass public opposition to Super League. ARL chairman Ken Arthurson has based his appeals for support on 'tradition', 'loyalty' and such emotive, but essentially meaningless phrases as 'the people's game'. Yet it was under the ARL's auspices that Rugby League first began to cast off all that was most valuable in its traditions and arrogantly disregarded the views of the 'people' about the significance of their clubs.

The arrival of Super League has thrown the ARL's missed opportunities into sharp relief. Super League envisages 10 licensed, privately-owned teams, later to be expanded to 12.

News Ltd, being in the entertainment business, has no interest in such intangibles as tradition or identity. Indeed, the idea of Super League was created before the clubs even existed to play in it. They have to be called into being to fulfil the aims of the Super League. Under the Super League model, football clubs become little more than franchises, with no more deep-rooted attachment to their surrounding community than the local branch of a supermarket chain.

By seeking to create teams where previously there were none, or by amalgamating two or three old ones, Super League is looking for a new kind of football follower—one who enjoys top level football per se, either in the flesh or, more likely, on television. Yet for many supporters, the interest lies in following the fortunes of their own club, however hopeless it may be, not in seeing élite sport between two essentially meaningless teams. While clubs manifestly failed to nurture this kind of loyalty under the ARL, Super League seeks to destroy it totally. There should be nothing surprising about the ruthlessness with which News Ltd has pursued its 'vision'. The truly depressing aspect of the Super League saga has been the inability of the ARL, and Rugby League supporters in general, to turn the crisis into a community issue—to argue that football clubs can and should function as organic social institutions, not just vehicles for profit.

Instead, when Super League came along, the ARL and the older clubs got swamped, unable to find solid ground on which to rally support. They did so, not because they clung too firmly to their old traditions, but because they had thrown them away as useless baggage, incapable of seeing how they could be updated and expanded to place the club at the centre of a community.

Next season, the Bulldogs are going back to Belmore—too late, probably, to repair fully the damage done by this season. ■

Mike Ticher is a freelance writer who patiently awaits the South Sydney renaissance.

Kick to kick

AFEW YEARS AGO GMH tried to sell cars with the jingle 'football, meat pies, kangaroos and Holden cars'. In the intervening years, sales of meat pies and Holdens have dropped, but football has remained a major part of Australian identity.

Australian Football has been central to the culture of two-thirds of Australia for over a century. Football matches attract large crowds, particularly in Melbourne. Television broadcasts of AFL matches are amongst the highest rated programs, and football sells more newspapers than politics and crime combined. In Melbourne almost everyone follows a team, at least nominally. In sharp contrast to the other football codes, AFL support is not restricted to men; women comprise a third of football crowds.

Considering the importance of football in Australian society, there have been remarkably few serious studies of the subject. While there are popular biographies and club histories, it was not until the early eighties that three books were published offering serious scholarship on football. *Up Where Cazaly*, by Ian Turner and Leonie Sandercock, was part social history and part economic survey; Bob Stewart's *The Australian Football Business*, was an analysis of the football industry and *Kill for Collingwood*, by Richard Stremski, was the first club history to go beyond simple narrative.

Robert Pascoe's *The Winter Game* develops and pays tribute to Turner's work. It is broader than *Up Where Cazaly*. Pascoe has attempted to write a complete history of the game, covering all states and all levels, from its origins as Victorian Rules, to the foundation of the *Fremantle Dockers*. Unlike Turner, Pascoe discusses the history of changes to the game, as a game, as well as surveying its social context.

Pascoe attempts to explain the 'deep cultural rift' dividing Australia between Rules and Rugby. He describes these codes as reflecting the different origins and cultures of Australia's two major cities. Rugby (both codes) represents Sydney's past

The Winter Game: The Complete History of Australian Football, Robert Pascoe, The Text Publishing Company, Melbourne, 1995. ISBN 0 85561 644 X RRP \$29.95
Football Ltd: The Inside Story of the AFL, Garry Linnell, Ironbark, Sydney, 1995. ISBN 0 330 35665 8 RRP \$17.95

as a brutal military colony and its present as an international entrepreneurial centre. Rugby is an international game where territory (property) is contested by brute force. Australian Football represents Melbourne's past as the site of Australian manufacturing and the base of liberal democratic capitalism and its present as a socially conservative, inward-looking society. Australian Football is seen as a national game which is freer, more egalitarian and inclusive, in which skilled individuals battle for success rather than territory.

Other explanations can be offered. Australian Football requires much larger grounds than Rugby and public land was more accessible in the newer free colonies of Victoria and South Australia than it was in Sydney during the nineteenth century. As well, there was the problem of selling a game in New South Wales that was called Victorian Football in its early years.

Chapter 13 of *The Winter Game* opens with the observation that 'The years 1981 to 1991 witnessed a deepening of the corporate culture in football, coinciding with the dominance of economic rationalism in national politics'. *Football Ltd: The Inside Story of the AFL* by Garry Linnell describes this process of change.

DURING THE LAST FIFTEEN YEARS the VFL (Victorian Football League) has transformed from a twelve-team suburban competition, playing all its games on Saturdays, to a national competition, renamed the Australian Football League, with sixteen teams playing in all mainland states. Games are played across the weekend from Friday to Sunday night. Its

ten surviving Melbourne clubs play on five grounds, and if the AFL had its way the number of grounds would be reduced to three.

For *Football Ltd*, Linnell, a leading sports journalist, has interviewed the major participants in the development of corporate football. He has covered machinations behind the attempts of the corporate sector to confine the national game to a series of business propositions. We see the late Commissioner, Jack Hamilton, caught between the two beer monopolies, both of whom have bought sponsorship rights to different aspects of the same match; Doctor Geoffrey Edelsten, on the night he has been awarded the right to buy the Sydney Swans, drawing his partner Bob Pritchard aside at the celebrations and telling him that he has no money; Ranald Macdonald losing his way and arriving late to John Elliott's Mt Macedon meeting of presidents of powerful clubs to consider a breakaway National League in 1984.

While he reports the reactions of the majority of the key players, Linnell's is more than the story of individuals. He has also recorded most of the major moves in the corporate development and reorganisation of the AFL. *Football Ltd* does not explain the factors behind the transformation of Australian football but it is an entertaining description of the process. ■

David Nadel is writing a PhD on the commercialisation of Australian Rules Football at the National Centre for Australian Studies, Monash University.





Leunig draws a curly one

I am not a Chairperson: I am a human being.

Michael Leunig's 'thoughts of a child lying in a child care centre' cartoon, published in both *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Age* in late July, struck a very raw nerve. His unexpected and powerful image of the 'cruel, ignorant, selfish' mother of a heartbroken baby launched an avalanche of angry letters from working mothers, child care experts, women's groups and anti-feminists upon *The Age*. Nothing of the kind hit *The Herald*. That may say something significant, not just about the culture of the two cities, but about the state of 'political correctness' as a standard of public criticism in this country.

When I became Victoria's last Commissioner for Equal Opportunity in 1990 I became responsible for the laws which, some would say, have created or fuelled 'PC'. One of the first pleasures of my new office was to receive an rude letter from one Babette Francis, accusing me of being a feminist ideologue, before I'd done anything.

In the years which followed, whenever I spoke on public issues, there was always someone ready to accuse me of driving a 'vast engine of bureaucratic oppression'. Yet I had no power at all but to speak for those intimidated into silence and encourage them, where I could, to use my office as a haven for a private remedy.

The charge was—is—deeply ironic. I had come to the Office as a civil libertarian lawyer, not through the women's movement. In my time I had willingly allowed myself to be the 'Chairman' of two commissions or tribunals, not because I think gender-specific titles don't matter, but because I detest fabricated language—'chairperson' is a clunker—and laboured jokes.

I had even experienced punishment for being out of sync with my sisters when, in the early 1980s, I resisted the establishment of a women lawyers' association and was accordingly campaigned against by its members when I stood as a candidate for the Council of the Law Society on which, I argued, women lawyers finally had the numbers to take over and transform. The split vote helped to ensure that did not happen. I learned something about politics there.

With such a history I had to find a way to accommodate my lifelong commitment to free speech and civil liberties, on the one hand, and the need for laws regulating public behaviour on the other; between individual human rights and freedoms, and social obligations. I found my resolution on the premise that to assert an individual human right creates a relative

duty to respect it in everyone else, without exception.

Political correctness has never been an effective political tool in this country. Fear of criticism might, according to David Williamson in an *Age* interview on 23 April, have encouraged self-censorship. Certainly I am not aware that Williamson or any other playwright has been successfully 'complained' about. He believed men were afraid to write about perceptions which might affect women and minorities, even if they sincerely believed they were truthful. On the other hand, he acknowledged that the threat of criticism acted as a brake on making unwarrantable generalisations and a 'spur to thinking more deeply'. If so, a good has been achieved.

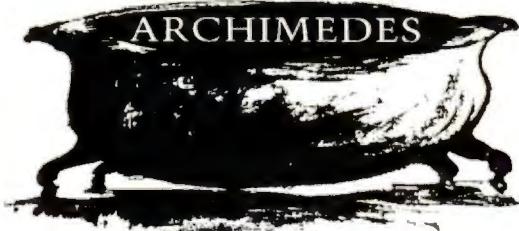
'Political correctness' has been used as a defensive epithet so loosely that it is now thoughtlessly applied to acts or statements from anyone who wants a better or a different world. It is meant to imply that the critic is a humourless ideologue with inflexible standards and perceptions: a bully and a bigot, rather than a champion of the oppressed. The term is ready to drop, rotten, from the tree now. It was always a joke, and it's a tired one now. All that 'politically correct' language was a hoax. Nobody uses terms like 'kindness impaired' (cruel); 'ethically disoriented' (criminal), 'vertically challenged' (short) or 'aurally inconvenienced' (deaf). The flirtation with alternative spelling by some women 15 years ago died then, too,

though it stuck in the memory of anti-'wimminist' columnist, P.P. McGuinness.

IT'S ALL OVER, FOLKS. I would not accept a 'PC' defence from some people, anyway. I find no difficulty whatever in vigorously criticising and refusing to peddle or publicise the views of hate propagandists, such as Rush Limbaugh, or Australian right-wing or racist or redneck radio commentators, or 'historians' who feed conspiracy theories that are veiled anti-Semitism ('our traditional enemies'). However, how to do this is a question of tactics: I would have let David Irving in, but spent as much money as was necessary to counteract his dishonest 'scholarship'. These people incite race hatred, and it is evil, and it is their purpose to act politically.

I also believe that members of privileged castes, such as bosses who harass or reject vulnerable workers, and corporate heads who oppress minorities, deserve to be ousted and shamed, as should public figures who tell 'things that batter' or 'pearly gates' jokes.

Those who create—writers, poets and artists—are in a special category. They should not claim to be



above or beyond responsibility when their creation hurts or destroys lives and happiness.

Their audience has the right and duty to respond to art vehemently and passionately and the creators know how vulnerable they have made themselves. However, morality and decency and political responsibility do not have a role in literature or music, or art (of any kind). It is not the business of art to conform or make us feel comfortable. Nor is it 'political correctness' if a critic reacts with rage, grief or disappointment. It is the sign that our culture is alive if its artists and writers and painters and poets, and satirists and actors and playwrights and dancers, challenge it.

LEUNIG'S CARTOON DID THAT. It upset me for days. Then I realised that Leunig is not a politician, but a satirist. We looked into his mirror, and we saw—a little distorted, but recognisably ours—our own mean world and, as Swift said, every man's face but our own: malice through the looking glass, Leunig's existential pain, our own existential guilt. Only laughter keeps hope alive.

It would take a great deal to persuade me that a book should be suppressed, or a cartoonist hanged (some architects of public buildings, maybe). Literature in particular offers itself as a privileged arena for the great debates of society to be conducted in the secrecy of our own heads.

They must be heard in what Salman Rushdie described, in his 1989 Herbert Read Memorial Lecture, as 'the voice rooms' in the great house we live in, in which one day you may find an empty and unimportant looking room where

there are voices ... voices that seem to be whispering just to you ... talking about the house, about everyone in it, about everything that is happening and has happened and should happen. Some of them speak exclusively in obscenities, some are bitchy, some are loving, some are funny, some are sad. The most interesting voices are all of these at once ... literature is the one place in any society where within the secrecy of our own heads, we can hear voices talking about everything in every possible way. The reasons we ensure that the privileged arena is preserved is not that writers want the absolute freedom to say and do whatever they please, it is that all of us need that little, unimportant looking room. We do not need to call it sacred, but we do need to remember that it is necessary ... Wherever in the world the little room of literature has been closed, sooner or later the walls have come tumbling down.

It is hard to find words plain enough to write such a truth. ■

Moira Rayner is a lawyer and freelance journalist.

Spot on

AFEW WEEKS AGO, on a cold snowy night, Archimedes found himself on a mountain peak in the middle of the Namadgi National Park, about 45 kilometres south of Canberra, sitting at the most precisely defined point in space and time in Australia, the Orroral Geodetic Observatory.

The physicists at the observatory can calculate their position to the nearest centimetre. They also maintain four atomic clocks, one of which is Australia's national primary standard of time, accurate to one ten millionth of a second.

The Australian Government spends about \$1.5 million dollars a year on the observatory, as part of the Australian Surveying and Land Information Group (AUSLIG) in the Department of Administrative Services. This money allows scientists to fire laser beams at passing satellites for up to 16 hours a day, six days a week, through the country's fourth biggest optical telescope. While this may sound like the ultimate game of space invaders—using real beams and UFOs—it is actually one of the many unheralded scientific tasks that underpins a modern society.

Today's satellites are equipped with special reflectors. These reflectors return light from any angle back in the direction it came. When a laser beam strikes a satellite in orbit, the light is reflected back to the beam's origin. Because the speed of light never varies, the time taken for light to travel to the satellite and back—about a quarter of a second for the Optus satellites—provides an exact measure of the distance the beam has covered.

Such measurements are an important means of keeping track of the positions of satellites. It's easy to calculate where orbiting satellites should be, but the unforeseen forces in space can move them off track. Knowing precisely where satellites are is important for their management and for interpreting the information they gather.

But with a worldwide network of 40 satellite laser ranging stations—there is another one in Western Australia financed by the American space agency, NASA—much more can be achieved. By comparing measurements between stations, latitudes, longitudes, and altitudes on earth can be determined with great accuracy—to within a centimetre at present and to within a millimetre in the near future. These measurements now form one of the bases of determination of datum points for mapping.

Being able to pinpoint when a measurement was taken is an important component of the ability to compare measurements between stations and match different measurements at the same station. Accurate measurement of time, and the synchronising time measurement between stations, is a primary concern. So Orroral has the important role of maintaining and distributing in Australia the world time standard, known as co-ordinated universal time.

Position measurements using satellite laser ranging are now so accurate, it's possible to detect tiny changes in average land and sea surface levels over time periods of less than a year. The technology is already being used to help determine the influence of the Greenhouse effect on raising ocean levels. It can also be used to detect the earth's wobble, as it spins on its axis, and the minute continental movements along fault lines which presage earthquakes. The Japanese, in particular, are interested in setting up a network of ranging stations to monitor such seismic movements.

The Orroral Observatory is typical of the unobtrusive scientific operations that keep a modern country functioning. ■

Tim Thwaites is a freelance science writer.

Fed up Éireann

T

HANKS TO SINEAD O'CONNOR, a new generation around the world is aware that 150 years ago Ireland suffered a famine. Ironically, her song '*Famine*' makes the point that there really was no famine, because there was plenty of food.

It's just that the food was not on the tables of those who needed it, and the United Kingdom Government could not bring itself to a determined intervention that might have effectively alleviated the hunger. The Act of Union in 1801 made Ireland and England one country, and the Irish, through the early part of the famine, felt confident that England would not let them starve.

But the free-market ideology, which dominated British thinking—along with an accumulated irritation with, and contempt for, the Irish—ultimately determined that market forces and the Irish themselves would have to solve the problem. Charles Trevelyan, Head of the British Treasury, was administratively in charge of famine relief. He was a man of probity and was deeply religious, but was a true believer in the economic rationalism of his times. He worried that helping Ireland would raise prices in the English market. 'We must do all we can and leave the rest to God,' he said. 'It is hard upon the poor people that they are suffering from an affliction of God's Providence.'

During the famine, Trevelyan defended the export of food from Ireland, intimating, according to historian R.F. Foster (*Modern Ireland, 1600-1972*, Penguin 1988) 'that the famine was the design of a benign Malthusian God who sought to relieve over-population by natural disaster.'

'Within the Government and the Treasury, humanitarian impulses came up against a violent

disapproval of subsidised improvement schemes; there was also an attitude, often concealed, that Irish fecklessness and lack of economy were bringing a retribution that would work out best in the end,' Foster writes.

So Irish landholders with contracts to send their agricultural produce to England continued to do so. Irish peasant farmers who relied on their small plantings of potatoes for their daily survival were largely left to have faith in Providence and the free market when their potato crops all over the country were destroyed by the dreaded blight (*Phytophthora infestans*) which turned crops into a black, smelling rot.

The Irish really depended on the potato, perhaps even more than peasant Asian communities depend on rice. As R.F. Foster says:

The potato enabled subsistence on a tiny holding, providing food for nine months of the year; it sustained early and fecund marriages. It was also miraculously prolific and nutritious. However even good potatoes are deficient in vitamin A, and the supplements of milk and fish (necessary for a fully balanced diet) were becoming rare among the very poor by the 1830s.

More recently, Foster has stated (*Irish Times* 12/10/94) that, rather than apportioning blame, historians should try to understand the mentality of the time, such as the limitations of 'present conceptions of social responsibility.'

'The idea that food produced in the country should not be exported would have required the assumption of powers that no contemporary government possessed and would have caused violent resistance



among the farmer classes,' he says.

Right now, around the world people of Irish background are trying to find ways to commemorate the famine—not just as a reminder of their own repressed sense of what happened in Ireland long ago, but of the reality of famine in the world today and how politics, racism and ideology constantly sabotage its relief.

The famine drew a line through Irish history. At the outset, Ireland was possibly the most densely populated country in Europe, with up to 8.5 million people at a time when mainland Britain's population was about 20 million. Four years later more than a million had died and 10 years later up to 2 million (the estimates vary) had left Ireland forever—for America, Australia, New Zealand, England, Scotland—wherever they saw hope. According to historian Mary Daly, Associate Professor of History at University College, Dublin, nine million people left Ireland between 1800 and 1920—mostly for America, and not including those who went to England and Scotland. No other country in Europe lost anything approaching that proportion of its people.

Today about 70 million people around the world—mainly in the United States—can attribute their displacement either directly to the great famine of 1845-49 or to the sense of despair and futility that overshadowed Ireland for generations

I want to see a public man come forward and say what the Irish question is. One says it is a physical question, another a spiritual. Now it is the absence of the aristocracy; now the absence of railways. It is the Pope one day and potatoes the next.

—Disraeli



before and after the famine. In the years immediately after the famine, the pace of migration doubled.

The descendants of the original Irish diaspora in Australia have little awareness of the famine—even older Australians whose grandparents had some experience—if not of the famine—of its grim aftermath, rarely spoke of it. In Melbourne, the Famine Commemoration Group has been formed to mark the occasion with a series of events which link the Irish experience with famine today. They feel that in the blotting of the memory, something of value has been lost. An exhibition of famine memorabilia called *Gorta* (Irish for famine or hunger) has been held in Adelaide at the Migration Museum and is moving on to Canberra and Sydney.

Convenor of the Melbourne group is humanities academic Val Noone, whose Irish forebears came to Australia just after the famine, as did the forebears of his wife Mary Doyle. Yet they inherited very little knowledge of the famine and its significance from relatives or from their (Catholic) education. Another participant Louis de Paor, an Irish academic now living in Melbourne, referred to ethno-psychological research indicating that the Irish are the only ethnic group in the United States who do not know their history.

Is the situation so different in Australia? The late Vincent Buckley, as Irish as he was Australian, recalled the words of his Irish grandfather to

Louis de Paor: 'The only thing you need to know about Ireland is that I left it.' Most Australians of Irish background now have few or no links with Ireland, nor any memory of family talk of the 'home' country. It is as if their forebears, having left Ireland, left its memories too. They wanted to start afresh. Perhaps, as one participant in the Melbourne commemoration group commented, that was a good thing. It made them Australians unambiguously.

The idea that the Irish wanted to forget the famine—and other painful memories of Irish life—is reinforced in David Fitzpatrick's moving study *Oceans of Consolation* (Melbourne University Press 1995), based on 111 letters exchanged between Irish emigrants to Australia in the 19th century and those who stayed in Ireland. The famine is mentioned only in passing.

Thinking about the famine—and researching what happened—has helped participants to better understand themselves as Australians of Irish background—why most Irish in Australia started life at the bottom of the social pile, and even now, having clawed their way to respectability in what was until relatively recently a predominantly Anglo-Saxon culture, are still under-represented in the social and financial power structures of the nation.

It was mainly the Catholic Irish who suffered in the famine. They were the laborers and the peasants because the British made them so. A series of repressive measures in the preceding centuries ensured Protestant hegemony in an overwhelmingly Catholic land.

The English first established themselves in Ireland in the 12th century under Henry II. It was a Catholic England that did it—and Rome was not entirely unhappy that the Troublesomely independent Irish church might be brought under better control.

IN 1541, HENRY VIII—no longer in communion with Rome—declared himself King of Ireland, thus confirming what had been a developing de facto occupation of the land for three centuries. In 1649, Oliver Cromwell, fresh from overthrowing the English monarchy after

the execution of Charles I, arrived in Dublin as civil and military Governor of Ireland.

So Ireland, still in royalist hands, was conquered yet again, with cruelties, particularly at the battles of Drogheda and Wexford, which seem to remain in Irish memory even more strongly and bitterly than the famine. Cromwell set in train the dispossession of Irish Catholics of their holdings and of power in their own land. He set the scene for an executive authority based in London, and the establishment of Protestant and English landlordism.

Over the next 50 years Penal Laws were enforced restricting the access of Catholics to education, land ownership and public office, ensuring that in time they would be reduced to serfdom. On the death of any Catholic landowner, the land automatically went to any son who would embrace Protestantism. In 1600, Protestants owned 10 per cent of the land; by 1788 they owned 95 per cent, according to a recent TV documentary on the famine *When Ireland Starved* produced for Radio Telefís Éireann. The Church of Ireland, which can be traced back to the pre-Reformation Church, was the established church, gaining most of its tithes from resentful Catholic peasants and tenant farmers.

By 1840, Benjamin Disraeli, later to become Prime Minister but then a 36-year-old reforming Tory, was able to declare in the House of Commons:

I want to see a public man come forward and say what the Irish question is. One says it is a physical question, another a spiritual. Now it is the absence of the aristocracy; now the absence of railways. It is the Pope one day and potatoes the next. A dense population inhabit the island where there is an established Church which is not their church; a territorial aristocracy, the richest of whom live in a distant capital. Thus they have a starving population, an alien Church and the weakest executive in the world. Well, what would gentlemen say if they were reading of a country in that position? They would say at

'A terrible record', cartoon, left, from Weekly Freeman, 16th April, 1881. Photography came in too late to record the famine.

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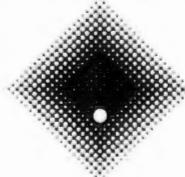
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once: 'The remedy is revolution.' But the Irish could not have a revolution—why? Because Ireland is connected with another more powerful country. Then what is the consequence? The connection with England became the cause of the present state of Ireland. If the connection with England prevented a revolution and a revolution was the only remedy, England logically is in the odious position of being the cause of all the misery of Ireland. What then is the duty of an English Minister? To effect by his policy all those changes which a revolution would effect by force. That is the Irish question in its integrity.

As Disraeli acknowledged, famine was not new to Ireland. It was almost an annual event between the completed consumption of one year's crop and the harvest of the new year's crop, varying according to whether the previous season's crop had been good or bad.

Thus, when the blight first came in 1845, there was no panic in London. A rudimentary relief system was already in place. It was not until 1847 that famine set in on a significant scale. The government of Sir Robert Peel, among other initiatives, brought in corn from North America, and set up public works schemes to provide employment. Both schemes were disastrously short of the real needs and, in execution, were fiascos.

The extent of British responsibility for failure to effectively relieve the Irish famine is a matter of ongoing debate. Among modern historians, there is a revisionist school which takes a more generous view of the British position than the view traditionally proposed by Irish writers: 'God brought the blight but the British brought the famine.'

That the British made some effort to relieve the famine is not questioned. That many English landlords behaved generously and honorably during the famine to ease the distress of their tenants is well recorded. That many Irish landlords behaved badly is also well acknowledged.

Whether the Irish, in control of their own affairs, could have, or would have dealt with the famine any more effectively than the English can only be a matter of speculation.

What is sure is the legacy. The Irish left Ireland as they never had before. The youngest and fittest tended to be the emigrants, because the weaker and poorer had neither the means nor the will to make the break.

CECIL WOODHAM-SMITH, in her masterly book *The Great Hunger—Ireland 1845-1849*, Hamish Hamilton 1962, writes:

The famine left hatred behind. Between Ireland and England the memory of what was done and endured has lain like a sword. Other famines followed as other famines had gone before, but it is the terrible years of the Great Hunger which are remembered and only just beginning to be forgiven.

Time brought retribution. By the outbreak of the second world war, Ireland was independent, and she would not fight on England's side. Liberty and England did not appear to the Irish to be synonymous, and Eire remained neutral.

The famine was an intensely political issue in its time, and commemorating it 150 years later remains a political issue. The Irish Government, in the midst of precariously delicate talks with Britain about the future of Northern Ireland, will be officially marking the event in 1997—150 years after the famine became truly catastrophic.

But it may also be politically useful to put on hold for two more years any official reminder to the Irish people of how, for 300 years up to the end of the 19th century, they were a dispossessed people, they had lost their land, all but lost their language, and had held on to their religion only through a tenacity which their overlords could not break.

Paul Ormonde is a Melbourne writer and member of the Famine Commemoration Group.



The Devil's era

EAMON DE VALERA died twenty years ago this month at the age of ninety-three.

In his day, Eamon de Valera was a world figure. De Gaulle paid him the supreme and exceptionally rare tribute of speaking with him in English. John F. Kennedy seemed genuinely honoured to meet him during his Irish visit, turning back after the formal goodbyes to hug Dev's petite wife Sinead.

Two comments by British Secretary for the Dominions, Malcolm MacDonald, illustrate the kind of reactions to him by a politician of his time. After one meeting, MacDonald wrote, 'He began somewhere about the birth of Christ and wants a commission of four picked solely to give ... a judgment as from God himself as to how the world, and more particularly Ireland, should have been ruled...' Notwithstanding this annoying return to first causes, MacDonald judged de Valera to be 'the most consistent and honest statesman in his adherence to policies and principles whom I have known in any part of the world.'

However, it is the fate of heroes and villains to be judged by the standards of the times in which the judgments are made rather than by those of their own times. By modern light, Dev's methods and actions were at best inconsistent and devious, at worst dishonest and motivated by a lust for power. But he had some notable successes. He kept his country together. One only has to look at any of a number of post-colonial examples in this century —Algeria, Libya, Vietnam, Cambodia, the central American states, the former Soviet empire, Portuguese colonies everywhere—to realise the importance of that achievement. Likewise, his determined defence of neutrality was praised by his latest and by no means most flattering biographer, Tim Pat Coogan, as 'a diplomatic feat of high order and a remarkable display of

sustained, obdurate courage.'

He may have regarded partition as his greatest failure. The 1948 declaration of a republic caught him unawares (he had just returned from a triumphant world tour which included a visit to his old friend Daniel Mannix of Melbourne and an honorary seat in Federal Parliament in Canberra while it was in session) and may have destroyed any initiatives he could have taken on the border. He called on the British Foreign Secretary, Lord Home, in 1958 with a proposal that in return for unity, Ireland could rejoin the Commonwealth. It is known that Cardinal Dalton, his old school friend, had made such a proposal the previous year.

He was a poor orator, with the bad teacher's habit of trying to explain things too much. He eschewed plain speaking and loved anything which savoured of wordiness and potential loopholes. To an outsider, this may appear to be an almost endearing trait; for someone looking for action—someone like Sinn Féin leader, Michael Collins, say, it would have been infuriating. He had an obtuse, semi-theological mind, forever looking for exceptions and extreme cases; a lay cardinal, some called him, 'a sacerdotal heron', was Professor (later Senator) John A. Murphy's description. His ascetic mien and ungainly walk led Gogarty to refer to him as 'a cross between a corpse and a cormorant.'

WHEN HE WANTED, he could be eloquent, as in his famous speech delivered as a radio address on St Patrick's Day in 1943:

That Ireland which we have dreamed of would be the home for a people who valued material wealth only as the basis for right living, of a people who were satisfied with frugal comfort and devoted their leisure to the things of the spirit—a land whose countryside would be bright with cosy homesteads, whose fields and villages would be joyous with sounds of industry, with the romping of sturdy children, the

contests of athletic youths and the laughter of comely maidens, whose firesides would be forums for the wisdom of serene old age. It would, in a word, be the home of a people living the life that God desires that men should live.

Rarely have words left their speaker open to so much ridicule and mocking abuse. But they were delivered at a time when Hitler had Europe by the throat and there were signs that Fascism and its attendant evils might triumph. And while they might have given poor consolation to the thousands who trekked out of Ireland in the middle years of the century, at the time they were delivered they appealed to the all-pervading Catholic conservatism of Irish society.

In contrast, what kind of vision has been given to Ireland by de Valera's successors? The recent report of the Beef Tribunal shows us a country in which official corruption is at uncomfortable levels. Drug abuse, crime and unwanted pregnancy are unsolved problems. The cosy firesides have been replaced by television and talkback radio.

With a mixture of ascetic remoteness, unflinching self-belief and obdurate ruthlessness, de Valera led Ireland through most of its first forty years of independence. He founded a nationalist party which defied all conventional wisdom and precedent by never splitting during his lifetime. Not only did it not split but it became the archetype of disciplined political success whose latter-day collapse is all the more stark for that fact.

Although it had its interlude of internal savagery, everything that happened in Ireland after the founding of Fianna Fáil in 1926 had the imprint of democratic process. Dev must be given much of the credit for that.

For sure, the country he handed over was backward, impoverished, theocratic, a dreary Arcadia, but it was stable and democratic and ready for the reforms of his successor Sean Lemass and those who followed. ■

Frank O'Shea is a teacher at Marist College Canberra.

Born-again tribesman

Heathcliff and the Great Hunger: Studies in Irish Culture,
Terry Eagleton, Verso, 1995. ISBN 1 85984 932 6 RRP \$55.00

IN THE 1960s, THE DECADE of Sheed & Ward Stagbooks, I read Terry Eagleton. Then I lapsed for thirty years. But Eagleton has now decided to have his say about Ireland, and I am a reader again.

Heathcliff and the Great Hunger was signalled last year by Eagleton's attack on fellow Oxford don, R. F. Foster, the Carroll Professor of Irish History. Eagleton is a born-again Irishman. This rebirth may have taken place some time ago; he says in his Preface that he has long been a patron of Irish musical sessions, and, I am told, he came close to having recorded a ballad of his own about the infamous airport at Knock, Co. Mayo.

But only now has he come to addressing at length the Irish question, and his rebirth has been in the only form that he can conceive of as possible—as a nationalist, tribe of the Gael—although an opponent in the late controversy rather sneered that he was one of the gentry Eagletons of Galway, a failed branch of the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy.

Apart from proclaiming four, unnamed, Irish grandparents, the one germane source that Eagleton himself chooses to claim is his mother's birth in the same Lancashire mill-town of Bacup that had 'produced the great Irish radical Michael Davitt'.

The book is both exhilarating in its analytical ripples, and at the same time oddly narrow, even naïve, in its emotional sympathies. The chapter, for example, 'Form and Ideology in the Anglo-Irish Novel' is a gem of

the Eagleton mind at work—eighty pages of peristaltic stringencies rolling out this new, immensely stimulating organic reading of its subject.

In illuminating the Irish cultural imagination it works for me on the same charged level as Oliver MacDonagh's *States of Mind*. But whereas MacDonagh's work is history illuminated by wide and pointed literary reference, Eagleton's history is scrupulously a matter of secondary sources. For a literary scholar his knowledge of Irish historiography is strikingly broad and up to date—but it is strictly that; he boasts no original research, so that his preferences among the scholars and the arguments are just that much more subject to the pressures of tribal loyalty and political persuasion.

But there is no question that he is steeped in the literature of Ireland (certainly from the 19th century and at least up to those coeval events, the publication of *Ulysses* and the foundation of the Irish Free State), and the real strength of his historical reading is the weight it brings to his discussion of the literature.

HEATHCLIFF AND THE Great Famine would be worth it alone for the treatment of realism or its absence in Irish fiction. If the nineteenth century novel is a phenomenon of the stable, bourgeois society, then, argues Eagleton, you don't look for it—not in its normal form—in Ireland. 'How is one to produce realist narratives for a history which is itself



so crisis-racked, hyperbolic, improbable?' And:

even if reality is not disowned in Irish writing, then in a venerable tradition from Sterne to Beckett it is calculatedly banal, opening an ironic rift between its own meagreness and the self-consciously elaborate languages used to record it. This bathetic gap between form and content, of which *Ulysses* is the supreme modern example ...

The suggestiveness of such analysis just keeps rippling.

Yet for all Eagleton's familiarity with the body of Irish writing and the acuteness of his observations on it, I get no sense that he actually enjoys, let alone loves, literature. Bodies of literary work are solely loci for realising a host of social, political, psychological problematics. Novels exist to exemplify (rather more than to confront) various national dilemmas. So total an absence of expressions of admiration or pleasure I find unnerving.

The approval or disapproval that Eagleton gives off is premised on a writer's political perspicience or tribal identity. The heat or cold become predictable. Joyce, in Eagleton's



scaling, does well, Yeats badly.

Whatever of the private or plat-form man, the Eagleton of these pages has little time for the light touch. On the couple of occasions when it does show it tends to a coarseness—the heavy hand rather than the light touch. William Carleton's complaint, says Eagleton, about the absence in Maria Edgeworth of "heart-stirring lovemaking" is rather like regretting the absence of sodomy in Jane Austen'.

THERE IS A DISCORDANCY here, a not quite appropriate crudity, a lack of sympathetic control, that recurs throughout the book. The Anglo-Irish, and their perceived fellow-travellers consistently provoke it. For example, Eagleton has an extended joke in his Preface, which begins:

My major debt in writing this work has been to Seamus Byrne's magisterial study, *The Myth of Irish Infanticide, 1592-1634*, which has provided both myself and many others with a model of impartial, judicious inquiry. Writing in response to Devlin and O'Hara's *Irish Infanticide 1592-1634* Byrne makes a number of vital points in relation to their discovering

that the killing of Irish children under the age of five was an unacknowledged but widely executed English strategy in early modern Ireland.

There follow a number of qualifications and extenuations of this grim picture, and the tribute ends: 'In his painstaking examination of the historical archives, Professor Byrne has unearthed two cases of English infants being put to the sword by Irish soldiers in 1629. The wrong, it would seem, was not all one way.'

But the Swift of *A Modest Proposal* Eagleton is not, and he has doubts about his tone and strategy, and so on the same page he footnotes this long passage with the words: 'Apologies to the non-cognoscenti: the above is a parody of Irish historical revisionism.'

In fact, if revisionism is seen as fine-tuning, this 'parody' reads as reasonable rather than as outrageous. Yet revisionism can debase itself into an argumentative reflex, and even in as fresh and urbane a work as Roy Foster's *Paddy and Mr Punch* there recurs a rhetorical tic where a nationalist point is conceded, then the concession is qualified at some length, and then finally the concession is again allowed. For Eagleton this is pettifogging:

Though there is a good deal of evidence that the landlords' overall conduct was indeed less than creditable, there is an important sense in which such evidence is finally beside the point. 'There are no good or bad settlers,' Sartre once remarked, 'only settlers'.

Coming before judge Eagleton the settlers cannot 'scape whipping. It has to be said that for him the identificatory label 'the Anglo-Irish' is a term of opprobrium. For Yeats it might designate 'no petty people, the people of Burke, the people of Swift ...', but for Eagleton it is the people responsible for the Original Sin, and, in this case, probably irredeemable. Every mention of them is a slur. A logically wobbly remark about Swift gives the idea:

To hold that Reason itself is always true and just, though the reason of individuals is weak and wavering, is to suggest among other things that the upper-class Anglican Establishment in Ireland was in principle eminently rational, though one would have a hard time adducing evidence for this doctrine from the behaviour of its individual members.

And elsewhere Eagleton again applies Swift:

The Yahoos may be among other things a nightmarish version of the subhuman condition of the Irish people, but the Houyhnhnms are hardly an image of their rulers, even if as horses they are the Ascendancy's favourite creatures. The last thing the Anglo-Irish could be accused of is an excess of enlightenment.

Eagleton footnotes this: 'One recalls Brendan Behan's celebrated definition of the Anglo-Irish, "A Protestant on a horse".'

Even apart from the flawed contract implicit in their original usurpation, the Anglo-Irish, Eagleton argues, never succeeded in creating an hegemony in Ireland. The ethnic, class, religious and, often, geograph-

Members of the Eagleton pantheon: Maud Gonne, left, 'an Englishwoman known to the Irish as Maud Gone Mad', and Constance Markiewicz, right, 'the only Anglo-Irish person ever known to have been redeemed'.

Photographs from the National Library, Dublin.



ical rift between landlords and peasantry proved insuperable. (Eagleton claims that the great motif of the fiction of Maria Edgeworth and Lady Morgan is leadership.)

The Celtic and then Literary Revivals of the 19th century were a substitute for this radical shortcoming: 'An aesthetic hegemony replaces the failed search for political leadership.' Eagleton is not inclined to be generous to the enterprise. A tradition, not so much of leadership as of summoning one's tribe to leadership, was doomed. Yeats was:

the last great inheritor of that lineage. Viewed subjectively, that tradition was full of sublime good will, generous intentions, dedicated self-sacrifice. Viewed objectively, it represented one of the most devious pieces of political opportunism in modern Irish history. But it was an opportunism to no avail. The Ascendancy stopped their ears to the earnest invocations of Ferguson, O'Grady and Yeats. Instead, they pulled up stumps and headed for the Home Countries.

Inevitably then, the major literary representatives of this people are treated without enthusiasm. Synge makes 'befuddled comments on the west of Ireland', his 'poetics [are] marvellously well-suited to Anglo-Irish populism'. References to Yeats tend to be put-downs: ' "I naturally dislike print and paper," remarks the logocentric Yeats ... somewhat surprisingly for one who landed a

Nobel Prize by them.' Or 'Among her other achievements [Charlotte Despard] was deeply disliked by W.B. Yeats'.

AS FOR LADY GREGORY, 'before she came to collect Gaelic folk tales, her future husband William had framed the infamous Gregory clause in the depths of the Famine, a means test which ... no doubt despatched some unnecessary extra thousands to their graves'.

As far as all three were concerned, the Gaelic League was 'the most precious achievement of the so-called Celtic Revival, with an influence far beyond the charmed circle of the Abbey Theatre'.

Apart from his prefatory familial bow to Michael Davitt, only once in the book does Eagleton unequivocally salute anyone. For five curious pages the muscle of his writing collapses and he gives us three panegyrics that read as entries for the frustratingly non-existent Irish Dictionary of Biography. Three republican activists, Constance Markiewicz (the only Anglo-Irish person ever known to have been redeemed), Maude Gonne and Charlotte Despard (both Englishwomen and known to the Irish, as Eagleton concedes, as Maud Gonne Mad and Charlotte Desperate).

There is something a little too correct and critically abeyant in Eagleton's choice of these women as the cornerstones of his new Irish pantheon. Of course he does not proclaim them as such, but the tone of reverent rehabilitation leaves no doubt whom he would like as the true begetters of his ideal Ireland.

The pity of it is that Eagleton has let loose in his book a bitter, butting polemic, which is ultimately a distraction from his marvellously rich, new landscape. The chance of a jibe turns up in the most unexpected places and Eagleton won't let it go. The 19th century novel is:

involved in a ceaseless self-censorship, a silent slanting and regulating of itself which seeks to negotiate between the demands of truth and the requirements of political diplomacy. The Nineteenth Century Irish novelists are thus among the first historical revisionists ...

Heathcliff and the Great Hunger is emotional partisanship of a high order. Eagleton has no truck with what he sees as the illusion of political neutrality, but Roy Foster, the man seen as the arch-enemy, even something of the Anti-Christ in the matter of Ireland, is hardly open to the same charge of denunciatory fury.

No doubt a revisionist cannot afford such righteousness, but if Foster is actually campaigning for a particular tribe, he is doing it with infinitely more subtlety. The strategy must lie somewhere in the concessionary three-step of his arguments and the choice of his non-mainstream (as viewed by a nationalist) subjects. There is nothing so urbane about Eagleton.

I rather like a remark of his about that traditional nexus between Ireland and the short story, a remark full of all sorts of implications about Eagleton's own sympathies and identification with Ireland, the newfoundland of tribal memory as opposed to England, the land of his birth, career and fame: 'If the realist novel revolves on settlement, the short story turns on a moment of revolt or revelation which it is hard to totalize or sustain.'

Not much comfort there for those artists currently grappling with the narrative of Ireland. And to call their project the Anglo-Irish Accord would hardly endear it to Terry Eagleton. ■

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Gerard Windsor is a contributing editor to *Eureka Street*.

Home and aweigh

Oceans of Consolation: Personal Accounts of Irish Migration to Australia, David Fitzpatrick, Melbourne University Press, ISBN 0 522 845800 RRP \$69.95

Sailing to Australia: Shipboard Diaries by Nineteenth Century British Emigrants, Andrew Hassam, Melbourne University Press, ISBN 0 522 846726 RRP \$24.95

IN JULY, 1858, FANNY DAVIS whiled away the journey to Australia by noting in her shipboard diary that of her fellow steerage passengers some two dozen would be 'over in a corner singing, ...in another place will be a lot of Scotch girls dancing ... then the Irish will be squatting down under the boats talking over everybody's business but their own and vowed eternal hatred to the English.'

At least the talking part of Fanny's animadversions on the Irish rings true. It's an observation echoed by historian David Fitzpatrick in his *Oceans of Consolation* when he writes that 'the Ireland of many emigrant imaginations was a place of relentless conversation. Letters, words, and the memory of words drew separated kinsfolk together, even as their divergent interests dragged them apart.' It is into the centre of that pull and push that David Fitzpatrick draws us via a collection of 111 letters, of which 55 were sent to Australia and 56 to Ireland between the years 1843 and 1906. They represent exchanges between 14 different groups of people, for the most part between family members separated by emigration, and virtually all of whom are people of humble origin and minimal education—emigrants of the steerage classes. They are people therefore who hold much in common with the great majority of nineteenth century Irish emigration to Australia, even when they are Protestant, not Catholic.

Our images of Irish emigration to Australia post-Famine are so often of mute figures, sometimes solitary figures, but more frequently great crowds of figures, and we attach to them archetypal stories. Very often, of course, they are borrowed images, disguising the fact that Irish emigration to Australia had a different character from Irish emigration to America. David Fitzpatrick makes the point that during the Great Famine there was rather little movement to Australia, that Irish people settled here against a background of gradual recovery and social reorganization. To realize this makes those emigrants' stories no less moving—recovery was relative and reorganisation meant rupture. The individual voices David Fitzpatrick lets us hear tell us these things and at the same time they tell of us of the complexity of Irish social, economic and religious life and association. So, with this in mind, one very good way of observing the 150th anniversary this year of the start of the Great Famine is to read *Oceans of Consolation*.

It is a big book, over 600 pages, and even though many of the letters are surprisingly long, most of the text is Fitzpatrick's accounting, interpretation and reflection. Neither the footnotes, the preface nor the piece on sources at the end are to be missed but it is the letters that compel. For all the distances, real and experiential, between the correspondents, and for all the formalities of letter-writing, they are profoundly present to one another. Sometimes family affection is spoken of as if it were only a contemporary possibility, now that we are all properly reconstructed. The letters of *Oceans of Consolation* tell us otherwise—they are suffused with yearning, for people mostly, and for place. There are laments

and strictures and warnings but the resounding note is one of kindness. So many of the writers have a capacity to draw aside veils, between here and there, now and hereafter. They dream of each other. Fathers and mothers say good-bye to sons and daughters, commend them to God and urge them to 'Strive to meet me in Heaven'. The reader knows there will be no other opportunity and understands, I think, that fundamentally they knew that too. Knew it increasingly as time went by.

His book, David Fitzpatrick says in his preface, 'invokes the memory of two historians who bequeathed me something of their passion—but, alas, only shadows of their conviction'. He is referring to Manning Clark and to Brian Fitzpatrick. The passion is certainly there, in the extraordinary, meticulous research through which each correspondent is placed in a many-faceted milieu and each set of family fortunes is traced. (He arrives at some wonderful connections: the most lyrically eloquent writer has an intimate relationship with Donald Bradman. You must read to find out.) If his remark about conviction implies scepticism, then that is there too, usefully questioning received ideas—and notably alert to ideas about class loyalty, sectarianism and the nature of religious identity. There are moments when it intersects too crudely the letter writers' expressions of religious belief and our reading of them. Is language never the unconstructed expression of something at the centre, just sheer testimony, one feels like asking.

FNNY DAVIS, WHO MADE THOSE INITIAL REMARKS about her shipboard companions, features in Andrew Hassam's *Sailing to Australia*, an analysis of shipboard diaries kept by nineteenth century British emigrants. It's not the sort of thing you would present to the relative doing the family history, unless they were well into discourse analysis. Andrew Hassam's preoccupation is with division of time and space and social organisation, the way diary accounts organise and explain the journey. A shipboard diary insisted on a beginning, a middle and an end (I can understand that!), it described zones demarcated from one end of the ship to another (zones proper to sailors, single men, married couples and single women), and it conveyed the vertical social stratification on board that mimicked class rules in Britain. *Sailing to Australia* reads like a thesis, with all the footnotes embedded in the text. The extracts from letters are ecked out in a way that makes one think of tissue donation—oh for the whole live body once more. Perhaps the observations being made are not banal, but by the time one gets to the end, the most vivid impressions have been made by the diary extracts themselves and by the fact that so few are extant despite the departure from Britain between 1788 and 1880 of 1.3 million free immigrants, eight times the number of people who were transported from Britain to Australia.

Margaret Coffey is an ABC broadcaster and producer.



Modernism prefiguring madness: a still from the film, Hitler, A Film from Germany, by Hans Jürgen Syberberg.

ERIC HOBSBAWM, one of Britain's great Marxist historians, has just told us the story of our short century—1914-1991. We are despatched on our journey with quotes from 12 eminent people, looking at the 20th century. Isaiah Berlin remembers it only as the most terrible century in Western history, René Dumont as a century of massacres and wars; William Golding thinks this the most violent century in human history. Only two of the other nine really think much of it. Thus Spanish Nobel Laureate Severo Ochoa lauds the march of science, while Italian science Nobel Laureate, Rita Montaleini, thinks the emergence of women after centuries of repression, plus the rise of the fourth estate, to have made it all worth while.

But at best it's one, or two cheers for the 20th century, and those of us who haven't been enjoying ourselves nearly as much as we'd expected, now know the reason why.

And yet Hobsbawm finds among all this a Golden Age, between 1945

BOOKS: 3
MAX TEICHMANN

Mustard gas to silicon chip

Age Of Extremes, The Short Twentieth Century, 1914-1991.

Eric Hobsbawm, Michael Joseph, London, 1995. ISBN 07181

3307 2 RRP \$45.00

and 1974, preceded by the Age of Catastrophe. The Golden Age contains the Cold War, the Korean War, the Gulags' winding down, Mao's Great Leap and his

Cultural Revolution, Vietnam, the bloody partition of India, Arab-Israeli wars, and Biafra. Yet Hobsbawm calls it Golden. What *are* the other ages like? And what was so golden about the Golden?

It's easy to identify the Age of Catastrophe, beginning with the First World War, which smashed the old order and set the tone for the rest of this century. It smashed not simply the political orders and the system of states—that was bad enough—but just about everything else besides.

This first Great War was a bayonet driven into the heart of liberalism, of humanism, of belief in humankind's intrinsic reasonableness and sociability, our desire for freedom, of inevitable progress, even of democracy itself. People thenceforth could be treated as things, as means to whatever society required, and not as ends in themselves, as Kant put it.

No more the sanctity, or even the value of human life. The Somme, Verdun, Tannenberg fixed all that nonsense. Hadn't Nietzsche already

announced the death of God? He must surely have died in Flanders or the Ukraine; failing that surely he was fated to perish in Siberia, at Auschwitz, or Hiroshima?

That thousands, then millions of people, many from democracies, with their belief in human rights, in the worth of the individual, in the right to choose, submitted themselves to the Moloch of total war never-ending; marched out obediently to their deaths or mutilation, on the order of some politician, and this for four years, and 10 million dead, made me feel, as an adolescent hearing of this, that I was living in a society of lunatics, or somnambulists.

AUSTRALIA WAS STILL living the lie that the First War had been a famous victory, and worth all the death and the trouble into the 1930s. I could hardly stand it. Did no one read Wilfred Owen, or Remarque?

Hobsbawm is or was a Marxist, and a polymath, and examines many different things in this book—science, culture, economics, politics, war, but he doesn't, I think, realise how propaganda was born and grew up so fast during WW I.

This has been the century of propaganda, of people mobilisation, and the exposure of Man's total

suggestibility, and the strength of his desire to belong to the group, the crowd, the nation; far, far stronger than his desire to be free, and independent-minded. Erich Fromm wrote a book *The Fear of Freedom* to explain the attraction of Nazism for the German *petit bourgeoisie* of the 30's, but the phenomenon pre-dates that time, and extended far beyond the Germans.

And long before WWI, the Austrian, Grillparzer, wrote prophetically, 'Humanity; Nationality; Bestiality' (though bestiality has many roots, not one). Hitler and Mussolini, Lenin and Stalin, Lloyd George and all the succeeding generations of populist politicians and charismatic leaders saw through the Enlightenment and liberal myths of individualism and reason and Christian compassion, and behaved accordingly.

The Churches, the Liberals, the Social Democrats, and the Conservatives had failed their adherents, and always would, and this, along with Depression and its humiliations for capitalists and economists, destroyed just about all rational hope.

Apparently people cannot live without hope, so Fascism, Communism and Nazism took over the ideological agenda. They were delusional systems—manic defences against anxiety, and given the insights of the leaders into the weakness of their masses, totalitarian social and political forms followed naturally.

The technology for full psychological and economic mobilisation was now available, the media willing and able, so ruling élites have used this mode of governance ever since. Advertising and P.R. blossomed correlatively.

As has been noted elsewhere, Hobsbawm is determinedly one-dimensional when examining Fascism, Nazism and Stalinism. He is sparing on how the Fascist and Nazi societies worked, what were their appeals, and what their members thought they were seeing; and on what living next door to Stalin, and Beria, or the Great Helmsman and his 40 million dead Chinese was really like. Eastern Europe, under Communism for 45 or 50 years, gets little mention.

Hobsbawm is masterly in his analysis of Western capitalism, its crises, its recuperations and its enormous wealth creation, and the social goods which this wealth made possible—the great medical leap forward, the enormous strides in food production, and the resulting population/pollution crisis we are now living through. Welfarism, and the interventionist big-spending State, rode on the backs of the never-ending boom which ended in 1974.

Then the landslide started.

THE GLOBAL MARKET in goods and services, labour, ideas, life-styles, capital and technology, has produced a world where everyone lives or wants to live in cities, and take on the life-styles which the existing inhabitants are believed to possess.

Whether the six billion global inhabitants now, or the 10 billion who will be here in 2030, will achieve the promised affluence and desired status advancement, is a gigantic problem for a future which Hobsbawm comprehensively refuses to predict. We cannot prophesy—having tried so often and having failed. But the weather looks terrible, he thinks.

He notes the emergence since the '70s of enormous transnational corporations and mega-banks, which are rapidly shepherding the world's trade, finance, production and communications into a few pens, running over political borders and into national cultures and political systems as they go.

He neither criticises nor prognosticates, as is perhaps proper for an ex-Marxist internationalist and admirer of economic growth. But others can.

He also notes the workings of some other Marxist predictions besides centralisation; *Finanz Kapital*, machines replacing workers; a burgeoning army of unemployed, widening gaps between rich and poor people, and countries; the actual immiseration of the poor. But he won't predict the possible outcomes.

Similarly with the socio-

economic consequences of the decline of family; the sexual revolution, feminism or the youth culture. We must wait and see what turns up.

There are long chapters on the cultural history of the West. Hobsbawm is no great admirer of art etc. between the wars, or after. Nor of cultural relativism and humans having a right to everything, a right to do their own thing. Hobbes' Man in the State of Nature was like that. Eventually he had to call up a State and some laws.

But the real worries for Hobsbawm as we approach the Millennium are the population explosion and environmental mayhem. Not war—although war and social chaos could easily follow, surely?

This is a deeply satisfying book by a man who has brought distinction to everything he has attempted in a long life of struggling to make sense of our collective lives, and, latterly, by his remembrance of things past.

He does this with erudition, wit, and completely without rancour or dogmatism. To review it with justice, without yawning omissions, is like trying to play a piece of Paganini on a school orchestra violin. ■

Max Teichmann is a freelance writer and reviewer.

Stalin's last ride: bust removed from Prague after the fall of European Communism.



Disraeli's Revenge



The State We're In, Will Hutton,
Jonathan Cape, London 1995.
ISBN 0 224 03688 2 RRP \$39.95

in this influence, for the British economy has not only been through continued relative decline, but in recent years, decline accelerated by public policy. Indeed, according to Will Hutton, economics editor of *The Guardian* in the mid-1990s, there is the end of a sense of belonging to a successful national project.

Hutton's prime focus is a key problem in Anglo-American political economies: low investment. He suggests, provocatively, that the problem is not 'the burden of government', but the financially-oriented character of British capitalism. Invoking an influential strand of historical scholarship, Hutton contends that the financial sector centred on 'the City' has been disengaged from, and uncommitted to, long-term British industrial development virtually from the start of the industrial revolution.

Its focus has been on maximising short-term gains globally. As a result, British industry has had to pay premium prices for capital, and focus excessively on short-term dividends and the fear of take-over, at the expense of investment in research and development (R&D), and its workforce. This, in turn, has meant a largely adversarial relationship with unions, aimed at limiting wage costs and, latterly, union power.

Hutton contends that Thatcherism directly exacerbated these problems through financial liberalisation, tax cuts, soaring consumption and 'internationalisation' of the economy. Indeed, the Thatcher-Major years have seen the deepest recessions of the post-war period and no overall upsurge in productivity. Manufacturing barely grew in the period. For Hutton, both the structures of the British politico-economy and recent policy have militated against adoption of the more successful strategies identified with Germany and Japan; namely, co-operative and inclusive patterns of politico-economic development centred on productivity growth through innovation.

Hutton's reform agenda is major. It includes curbs on transitional finance and the creation of new arrangements to promote industrial innovation such as public investment banks and equity links between finance and industry. He also argues for the 'republicanisation' of the central bank to make it more federal, accountable to society's diverse interests and focused on the goal of an inclusive and cohesive society. Hutton is also keen to defend and 'democratise' the welfare state to give the middle-class a strong stake while constructing a politically sustainable set of cross-class and inter-generational bargains.

A CRITIQUE OF THE BRITISH state is a second key concern of Hutton's book. He deems it only 'semi-modern' because the power of the majority in parliament is virtually unrestrained, a kind of 'elective dictatorship'. It was this structural feature which enabled the

IN THE MID 19TH CENTURY the British state élite sponsored the creation of the first liberal, international economic order. The arrangements it built lasted until at least 1914, and represented the apogee of British power and laissez-faire capitalism. Thereafter, the post-1945 efforts of Labour Governments notwithstanding, there was a tendency in Britain to treat the nineteenth century experience as 'foundational' and to institutionalise the terms of its past success.

In this light, the Thatcherite effort to revive aspects of Victorian liberalism seems less surprising. It is also unsurprising that the forces promoting this course represent a partial reassertion of the dominant coalition of the pre-World War I era associated with the defence forces—the financial complex known as 'the City' and the Conservative Party.

The British case casts a long shadow over those societies, like Australia, in the Anglo-American mould, especially in economic policy. There is, however, a paradox

Thatcherites to prosecute their agenda so vigorously. Hutton is also scathing about the lack of a more elaborated division of powers within the state, which has impaired, *inter alia*, the supervisory capacities of the judiciary. More generally, the lack of a written constitution undermines the ability of the state élite to set social limits to the economy.

The latter proposition ties in with a third key concern: a critique of ideology. Hutton protests that the financial ethos of maximum short-term gain associated with the rentier class has diffused throughout British society. The maximisation of shareholder returns, for example, has become the test of good public policy. In the process notions of fairness and inclusion have been lost.

In the media, myths of exaggerated individualism have degenerated into right-wing populism, and a careless exercise of the power to form opinion. Hutton's response to this decay of community is to propose a 'moral economy' approach. According to this view, the economy must be re-embedded in broad social purposes. The latter would reflect a notion of 'citizenship' resting on rights to education, health, skills, welfare, equity and the accountability of business to society. The task of a written constitution and the state is to set limits to marketisation consistent with democratically formulated notions of citizenship.

The State We're In is a thoughtful distillation of liberal reformism informed by a subtle feel for the state of global capitalism. The moral economy approach Hutton employs is enjoying increasing influence as a major non-Marxist critique of capitalism and deserves critical attention. His reform agenda also seems relatively coherent. But is it politically feasible?

Hutton himself has severe doubts about the programmatic coherence of the 'new' British Labour Party. And even if Labour wins power with something like an appropriate program, won't the same forces which successfully frustrated the efforts of post-war British Labour governments succeed again? Will not the formidable veto-power of transnational finance, for example, continue to buttress the financially-oriented pat-

tern of growth centred on 'the City'? The core of Hutton's program is to balance the financial form of British capitalism with mechanisms for 'republicanisation'—defined as broad access to social processes to all sections of business and all classes.

In an era of intensified neo-liberalism this seems radical, but actually it is a quite conservative agenda aimed at creating a more stable if inclusive society. Hutton, in other words, seems rather Disraeliesque in character. In the weakest part of the book, he summarily dismisses all socialist discourses as meaningless and terminally associated with the collapse of Soviet-style collectivism. As a result, he fails to explore adequately what a program for democratisation of the economy might look like at the end of the 20th century even as his critique opens up the possibility of such an inquiry. The important implications of political ecology and other 'new' social movements also get little attention.

Hutton's tract is relevant to several debates in Australia. Perhaps the most important is whether the changed role of the financial sector since the 1980s has impaired efforts to enhance long-term industrial development, increase R & D, and reduce the cost of capital. The Keating Government's decision to sell off what could be a prime instrument for long-term industrial development, the Commonwealth Bank, raises serious questions about the Australian state's ability to focus on the requirements of a political economy concerned with productivity through innovation and cross-class co-operation.

Arguably, the nascent processes of co-operation between finance, industry and labor which might have emerged out of the early Hawke-era summitry have not been built upon to secure the country's social purposes and relative economic power. This failure of statecraft may well open the door to a phase of intensified neo-liberalism in the Thatcher mould. ■

Ian Bell teaches political economy in the Government Department, University of Sydney.

A version of this review was broadcast on ABC Radio National's 'Book Talk' program.

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Had we but world enough, and time

THIS IS A REFRESHINGLY, even breathtakingly, bold book. Tipler is a mathematical physicist, whose expertise is in cosmology, the exploration of the implications of general relativity and quantum mechanics for the nature and destiny of the universe. That is rare enough. Tipler is a member of an even more uncommon species, the cosmologist able to write for the layperson.

It is the work of a prodigious reader, with many appeals to philosophy, and many digressions into the arcana of scriptural interpretation—in several religions. It is replete with citations from holy books, and the disquisitions of the heroes of the foundation of the United States. This makes for more enjoyment, but less focus in the argument.

The author begins splendidly, insisting that until the current divorce of theology from mainstream physical science ends, theology will labour under a faint air of irrelevance, or worse, discredit. Every attempt to exempt theology from engaging with the best contemporary cosmological theories is, he holds, both untrue to the main tradition of all serious religions, and a way to give theology a reputation for a kind of bad faith. Religions must face the cosmological issue fair and square; a religion without a cosmology is not worth having, for it can give no coherent vision to a life. A religion without a modern, scientific cosmology is not worth having, for it represents an intellectual evasion which will, in the long run, subvert that religion.

Tipler further insists, to applause from this reviewer, that science, if it is taken seriously, is replete with

The Physics of Immortality, Modern Cosmology, God and the Resurrection of the Dead. Frank J. Tipler London, Macmillan, 1995. (first published by Doubleday 1994). ISBN 0 333 618 648 RRP \$39.95

metaphysical implications, and that any attempt to place positivistic restrictions on the scope and depth of scientific enquiry is a fatal self-mutilation.

He adopts, again to applause from this reviewer, a straight-forward and uncompromising naturalism. This is a book exploring the being of God and the hope for eternal life; yet it rests on no appeals to realities, forces, or happenings beyond the range recognised in contemporary physical theory.

There are no ghosts in Tipler's machines. And he has no qualms in identifying humans as machines, quantum engines of a complexity of less than 10^{15} bits of information. Life and mind emerged in accordance with physical principles, requiring no divine, or other external intervention.

The naturalism is bolstered with an explicit reductionism. Physics is the base of everything. Physical reality is the whole of reality. There are not even any minds, as distinct spiritual substances, in the Tipler scheme of things. So one might expect a straight-forward naturalistic hostility to the claims of traditional religions. But not a bit of it. Tipler argues that cosmology actually supports what he takes to be the two most important components of any religion—belief in God, and the expectation of life after death.

How can this be? As many appreciate, the equations in general relativity which describe the structure and evolution of the universe as a whole do not, of themselves, specify a unique world. They must be supplemented by additional assumptions—about the total mass of the universe, for example—before an unambiguous history can be told. The equations leave open the possibilities of the world reaching a maximum volume, then collapsing to the Big Crunch (a closed world), or continuing to expand forever (various open worlds). To get a model, the cosmologist must supply an extra, ambiguity-dispelling assumption. The theorist has some liberty of choice in this respect. Tipler proposes the Eternal Life Postulate: The Universe is such that Life can continue in it without end.

He then works out the implications of the assumption. The world cannot be open, since the energy concentrations required for life to persist eventually disappear, and there is no way to overcome this. So the world is closed, and will collapse. But it will not collapse, only



to 'bounce', giving rise to another expansion cycle. For this is but a new variant of the old nightmare of the Eternal Return, which Tipler rejects. Accordingly, the world will collapse to a singularity, of infinite temperature and density, at a finite time hence. This is the Omega Point (the name comes from Teilhard de Chardin, but the science owes nothing to that mystical palaeontologist).

How does this make possible any version of eternal life? Well, there will certainly be no flesh surviving the far from halcyon conditions to be encountered as the Last Days approach. But life is possible, for life is, by Tipler's definition, an information-processing phenomenon. Life requires no specific embodiment. It consists in the collection, retention, and use of information, subject to development by processes of natural selection. Information can be coded in any number of different structures, of ever increasing resistance to extremes of temperature and pressure. It is life so understood that endures to the end.

BUT HOW CAN there be *eternal* life if the whole of Reality culminates and time ends at the Omega Point? Experience is what matters for immortality. An infinity of new experiences is, subjectively, unending life. Experiences are transformations of the information state of the person. These transformations accelerate; on the time scale of the collapsing world, they change at rates which approach infinity as the collapse towards the Omega Point tends to zero. Minds implemented in the plasmas or force fields at the End of the World will experience life as unending, as infinite in subjective time. That, surely, would be immortality enough.

Very well, but what has all that to do with us? We will be there. We can look forward to being resurrected, and even improved, in the far future. Tipler lives in a world with a forward horizon of a few trillion years; paradoxically, the information processing prodigies which general resurrection requires become *easier* as the world approaches the Omega Point, so the exact timing of the Last Trumpet's sound is not critical. We may even hope, towards the end, for (experience of) more than an im-

proved version of familiar human life; his scheme has a place for beatific vision, for being taken up into the Infinite Mind that is the Omega Point.

How can these things be? The argument depends on the assumption that Life is driven by an imperative to survival, and will do whatever it can to ensure its continuation. Human civilization on Earth is doomed. We already know that long before we exhaust the potential resources of this planet, it will become uninhabitably hot for Intelligent Machines implemented in DNA bodies. So to survive we will have to decamp.



Humanity will in fact spread into deep space, not as DNA devices, but as cybernetically indistinguishable emulations in computers made of tougher, more compact materials. Indeed, our more sapient descendants are slated to occupy *all* of deep space, according to Tipler, achieving a total colonization of the Universe. Then, as the gravitational collapse gathers momentum, as conditions get more and more demanding, and as alternative ways to survive get harder and harder to find, the vastly superior intelligences of the far future will be driven to seek total information, and this imperative will lead them to uncover all possible information on the history of the Universe. They will see this as essential to maximise their chances of survival.

As we humans are a part of that history, and indeed if he is right, the originals of the then-extant intelligences, we will be among those re-created in computer emulation, to yield whatever we have that is unique among the secrets of the universe's unfolding.

Tipler's solution to the ultimate survival problem is that the intelligences at the End of the World will be able to harness the energy of the

collapse and use it to ensure their survival and benefit to the very last.

Especially as time draws to its close, the whole Universe can be considered as a unity acting as a single being. Tipler calls this the Omega Point in its Immanence. It is this complex which is making the (successful) attempt to mobilise total information by reproducing, in perfect emulation (computer simulation), all the human beings that have ever lived. Including us. That, indeed, is a bare minimum. Tipler endorses the 'Many Worlds' interpretation of Quantum Theory. So all possible human lives—which did not get a run in this particular world, but did in some other—join the multitude. This 'resurrection' as computer programs running on high power machines will be experienced by us as renewed life. It will admit of indefinite melioration. As the work of the Omega Point, it can be fairly described as God's resurrecting us to everlasting life.

HOW DO WE GET LAUNCHED on this fabulous interstellar career? Tipler has a fascinating discussion of the technical problems and possibilities. The current human frame is too inefficient and too fragile to get far in space travel. We need to develop computing machines which work at the molecular level. (This is not an absurd idea. It is a topic for actual current research.) When we have mastered the technique, we go on to work out—with the help of ever better conventional computers, no doubt—how to set up, at the molecular level, a self-reproducing machine. We include in its memory stores the full information profile specifying some people and a variety of other life forms. The whole payload weighs about 100 grams. With such a small payload, we can get some pretty effective accelerations. Especially if the fuel is left behind. That is accomplished by using an enormously powerful laser to create a photon wind to drive the spacecraft to nearby stars. The payload has a large 'sail' attached to receive the laser beam. The laser, together with its power source, a solar panel 40 kilometres square, will be placed in orbit around the Sun. To focus the laser on such a

There are no ghosts in Tipler's machines. And he has no qualms in identifying humans as machines, quantum engines of a complexity of less than 10^{45} bits of information. Life and mind emerged in accordance with physical principles, requiring no divine, or other external intervention.

Although he uses the language of the Bible, and of classical theological formulations, in presenting a physics which can underwrite the consolations of religion, it is important always to bear in mind the sea-change that the concepts are undergoing.

small object at a distance of several light years, we will need a metal lens a billion kilometres across, but of very light construction (2 trillion tons!), orbiting in our own solar system. This lens can be manufactured in space by making use of convenient iron-nickel asteroids. Tipler, a true American, even costs the project, to the nearest few billion dollars.

The spacecraft quite quickly reaches and then travels at 90 per cent of the speed of light. On encounter with its target star system, it sets about replicating itself, together with its launch and guidance mechanisms, and sending space persons ever further into deep space. Life of human origin will reach every part of the visible universe relatively soon after the universe reaches its maximum volume. That is, of course, provided we leave Earth in time—but there are many thousands of years before it'll be too late.

UNLESS HUMANS SET OUT to colonise space, the End of the World will not be a living, saving Omega Point. Tipler claims he can prove that there are no Aliens out there to take up the burden of spreading life through the world. (If there were, they would already be here in the solar system.) So unless we humans succeed in perpetuating life, in ever superior forms, across an ever more significant slice of Space-Time, the outcome will be incompatible with the Eternal Life Postulate. Thus we are entitled to conclude that Life will indeed leave Earth and flourish among the galaxies.

The mechanisms to be exploited for survival in the Last Days are rather exotic: we would need to make use of the energy available from a shear effect provided by manipulating the gravitational collapse of the Universe so that it occurs preferentially along one dimension, rather than chaotically, as would otherwise be the case. That strikes me as definitely speculative, even by Tipler's standards, but I am not equipped to take issue with him on any matter of physical theory or scientific likelihood.

What are we to make of this sequence of theses, so dramatic in themselves, and presented with such typically American hyperbole? There are minor internal inconsistencies, and what are acknowledged to be speculations resting on assumptions

are too often presented as certitudes. But the author's sweep and scope is too generous for such quibbling.

First, a matter of attitude: If something is good, more of it must be better, and unlimited amounts of it better still. (Another American foible?) Tipler never raises, or lets appear he has ever for an instant contemplated, the thought that immortality is anything other than boundlessly desirable. He holds all people everywhere hope and long for it, and that this promise is the core of the appeal of all religions. This holds for immortality even as an experienced continuation of current life; it does not call for its transfiguration into any closer walk with God. The alternative, that life is best as a finite, bounded thing, with its spring and its summer, its prologue and its last act, its dramatic form and rounded completion, is nowhere given the slightest notice.

Second, a matter of interpretation: As an engagingly candid final chapter makes plain, Tipler's 'God' is not yet, but is in process of becoming. Until the Omega Point, there is no being with the unlimited capacities that make for divinity.

So the religion Tipler's work endorses is far from orthodox. He actually calls himself an atheist, and acknowledges that his views are incompatible with Christianity, as they cannot give to Christ's life and death the metaphysical significance that Christianity must. So although he uses the language of the Bible, and of classical theological formulations, in presenting a physics which can underwrite the consolations of

religion, it is important always to bear in mind the sea-change that the concepts are undergoing.

For example, the love of God, which is to sustain our resurrected selves to immortality, turns out to be the calculated 'altruism' of a system maximizing its own survival chances. Indeed all the 'activities' of God need careful interpretation.

There is a structural difficulty in the argument. Tipler does not properly

distinguish, but on the contrary wilfully confuses, two vastly different types of explanation. There are genuinely causal explanations which explain the mechanisms by which a phenomenon is produced, created, or brought about. And there are explanations which merely point to a fact from which the phenomenon can be inferred, without giving any hint as to the forces at work.

Compare, for (fictive) example:

1. None of Cook's children reached 70 years of age, because they were all born with a debilitating hereditary disease.

2. None of Cook's children reached 70 years of age, because by 1860 Cook had no living descendants.

The first is the beginning of a real explanation. The second provides only a premise from which the fact can be inferred.

Now *all* appeals to the Eternal Life Postulate are, and must be, of this second kind. Likewise for appeals to the consequences of the Eternal Life Postulate, such as the concentration of computer-style intelligence as the Omega Point approaches. So there is a real limit on the propriety of describing what

happens as in any way the outcome of divine activity.

THIS CONFUSION BETWEEN genuinely causal and merely inferential explanation lies at the heart of all the spurious teleological reasoning that appeals to the 'Anthropic Principle'—that the world is as it is 'because' otherwise we would not be here to note the fact. That 'Principle' is not a force governing the world's evolution, and so bears no witness to preternatural purpose or planning. (Tipler is co-author of the most elaborate of the physical expositions of the 'Anthropic Principle'.) In this

present book, we are told that the unexpected near-isotropy of the background radiation, as we now find it, is not to be explained by some peculiarity of the original expansion, but ‘in my solution, the temperatures are the same because otherwise the universe in the far future would be inhospitable for life.’ (p152) He goes on to recommend this ‘solution’ by equivocating on ‘determine’. The future ‘determines’ the present only in the second, inferential sense, of the two distinguished above. We are left without a mechanism, any array of forces producing the situation, and so left without a real explanation.

The difficulties in Tipler’s position can be seen in this implication of his views:

1. Suicide is a possibility for all humans, before space colonisation takes place,
2. There are currently no living forms outside the Earth,
3. The Earth will be consumed in the fiery end of the Sun.

If these conditions were all satisfied, the Eternal Life Postulate would ‘require’ Life to be created somewhere else in the Universe. To require is one thing. To perform is quite another. Postulates are not forces.

The author shows himself to be aware that at present it is only ‘beauty’ (and consolation) which recommends the Eternal Life Postulate. He concedes that other, specific, physical evidence is required. Here the omens are not especially good—we are indeed given some specific physical predictions, but several of them concern the Universe’s closure to a single end-point, which we are in no position to test, and consequences about the world’s energy density which are currently highly contestable.

Other predictions fix limits for the mass of the top quark and the Higgs boson. This is much better. We can expect figures for these in the not-too-distant future. Even if they match Tipler’s projections, however, this will by no means settle the issue, as alternatives to the Eternal Life Postulate will be available. So that Postulate’s status is not particularly compelling.

In other ways Tipler’s grasp of

philosophy could well be firmer. One winces at naïve, unnecessary, and actually self-damaging appeals to Leibniz’s Identity of Indiscernibles and Berkeley’s Idealism. And on the Eternal Return, this is scarcely a caricature of his discussion:

The Eternal Return is an obnoxious doctrine, since it renders all life ultimately futile, undercutting any idea of genuine progress and real culmination. It is thus a philosophy of despair. Furthermore, Nietzsche held to the view, and this gave intellectual aid and comfort to the Nazis. So the Eternal Return cannot occur.

This is disappointing in a work elsewhere insisting so properly on physical evidence for (and against) physical hypotheses.

AGAIN, THE PHILOSOPHY OF MIND used as a support for his account is a good deal too sanguine. Tipler is a crash-through or crash reductionist. He just takes it as given, without need for discussion or defence, that there is no essential difference between cognition and other states of mind.

Computers have intelligence. At the moment it is a cold, detached, calculating intelligence. To move to a warm, feeling, caring, purposeful, ambitious, or despairing, intelligence, replete with sensation and pain, of the kind current flesh-and-blood humans have, just requires more of the same, more information processing. But whether this is so, is one of the central and most agonised debates in current philosophy of mind. The issue, to put it mildly, has not been settled in favour of Tipler’s affirmative. Yet without that, the whole project of sending human mentality into deep space in computer form, and resurrecting it by running a simulation program in a supercomputer, fails. It would not be humanity, but something less, that travelled and rose again.

Further, we need a fuller discussion of the distinction between the knower and the known. A mind, for Tipler, is a machine capable of processing information. It uses programmes which are in turn expressible in digitalised information-content form. It is this

information which saturates the End of the World, providing the infinite mind of God and the finite minds of creatures. But the argument does not do enough to show that apart from the resurrected programmes, there will be the integration, and purpose, and will, necessary for a real Person. The Omega Point is said to wish for some outcomes, and to decide against others, but the requisite unity for this is not established.

Opinions will differ on whether resurrection as a mere emulation running on a computer is resurrection enough. I myself find other difficulties more pressing.

- There is the question, already broached, of whether computer-based intelligent ‘Life’ will actually share our survival drive.
- There is the question of whether the information necessary to reconstruct the quantum states of currently living bodies will still exist to be exploited in the last days.
- There is the question of whether the intelligences of that time will be up to the task of locating and using the residual information (in the light rays still travelling, for example).
- There is the question of whether there will be adequate motivation to use computer resources to keep us running indefinitely, once our usefulness in providing ‘total information’ is over. And even more severely, difficulties over any motivation to proceed with improving us—fitting us for Heaven—which is supposed to occur in our resurrected condition.

Perhaps the most immediate doubt is the most severe: what reason to expect that the human race, survival drive or not, will be capable of the long-range planning, and the large-scale co-operative endeavour, required to get the first space probes aloft?

None of these objections should be seen as sufficient reason for setting the book aside. It is a notable contribution to an excellent cause, that of resurrecting the dialogue between the theologians and the physical scientists. ■

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BOOKS: 6

PAUL COLLINS

God and country



A Church without Walls. Being Anglican in Australia,
Bruce Kaye, Harper Collins Religious, Melbourne, 1995.
ISBN 1 86371 557 6. RRP \$19.95.

ONE OF THE MOST serious gaps in Australian historiography is a general history of the role of the Anglican Church. Given the key function of Anglicanism in Australian culture and history, this is a real lacuna.

There are some significant studies, such as George Shaw's important *Patriarch and Prophet* (1978), a biography of William Grant Broughton, the church's first bishop, Judd and Cable's *Sydney Anglicans* (1987), Ross Border's *Church and State in Australia* (1962) which looks at the question of the establishment of the Church of England in early New South Wales, and Davis' *Australian Anglicans and their Constitution* (1993).

By contrast, we are almost overwhelmed with historical writings on the Catholic Church in Australia, including several important general histories, the most significant of which is that of Patrick O'Farrell.

The problem that arises from the absence of a general Anglican history is that an institution like the Anglican Church can, as a result, lack a sense of itself as a continuing historical reality. People are less able to place themselves in a context. In a multi-cultured situation like Australia's this can lead to the problem of the membership's failing to maintain a strong sense of identity. It appears to me that the Uniting Church faces a similar difficulty—it too has seemingly left behind the histories of its constituent traditions.

This situation is compounded in the case of the Anglican Church because of its considerable tolerance of doctrinal variation, and the sheer breadth of its ecclesiological embrace, which ranges from the Evangelical Protestantism of Sydney to the Anglo-Catholicism typified by Melbourne's St Peter's Eastern Hill

(where, it is claimed, they used the reformed Roman Easter liturgy of 1951 a year before St Patrick's Cathedral across the road!) and by Christ Church St Laurence near Central Station in Sydney.

Another element in the problem is that, because Anglicanism has been the religion of the establishment (even if it never was actually established), it has never been challenged to define itself. People at the top of a power structure do not need to define themselves, as do other groups struggling to reach established status and recognition. But now that Anglicanism is no longer necessarily part of the establishment, this works against the church. Today, like other long-term institutions, it is challenged to confront the question: what does it mean to be Anglican in contemporary Australia?

All of this is part of the background of a book launched at the recent Anglican General Synod in Melbourne by the Primate, Archbishop Keith Rayner. The author, Bruce Kaye, is the General Secretary of the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Australia and one of the church's most distinguished scholars. His book, *A Church without Walls*, goes much further than any book previously written in the process of articulating a sense of identity for Anglicans and answering some of the questions posed above.

If Protestantism and Anglo-Catholicism are the two poles of the spectrum, Bruce Kaye sits squarely in the middle ground of Anglicanism. He sees Richard Hooker (1554-1600) as the church's theologian *par excellence*. Hooker argued that neither the imperialism of the Roman papacy, nor the imperialism of the Calvinistic bible, were intrinsic to the Christian tradition. Hooker was a realist who took the

Elizabethan Settlement of ecclesiastical affairs as 'the providence of God in society and history' and the ground upon which the church worked.

At the heart of Hooker's theology is the incarnation, and a consequent emphasis on God's relationship to the world. Thus the role of the church is to relate specifically to the culture in which it finds itself. Kaye argues that Hooker's approach to theological principles was flexible and that today he 'would seek to develop a paradigm more appropriate to our circumstances'.

This sense of historical flexibility in relationship to a given society is close to the essence of Anglicanism, and Kaye is anxious that Anglicans do not forget this: 'The greatest challenge facing Anglicanism worldwide is to delineate its own identity in a way which is true to its theological traditions yet has an awareness of the diverse social and political contexts in which Anglicans work out their faith'.

IN SOME WAYS this is exactly the problem facing those Roman Catholics who take enculturation and local church seriously, and who do not look to Rome for a solution for every issue that arises, but are prepared to try to work it out themselves.

While he provides an outline of the history of the Anglican tradition and the story of the church in this country, much of the core of Kaye's

book is taken up with the theological issues that face the church in its search for identity. A couple of key theological questions confront Anglicanism.

- From what sources does it draw its belief?
- What is its notion of authority (that is, how does it decide on what it believes), and in what way is Anglican Christianity 'socially enmeshed' with Australian society?

All of these questions are interconnected. Kaye argues that scripture, reason and tradition are, in the words of Hooker, 'the three-fold cord not easily broken', which is the hallmark of classical Anglicanism. He says that Anglicanism 'did not resort to the principle of Scripture alone' but it holds for 'a conjunct authority given to this combination of sources'.

But this leads directly to the question of who interprets these sources? What replaces the Pope in Anglicanism? This is not easy to answer, for Kaye points out that Anglican authority is dispersed through the church community rather than invested in a centralised authority.

For those of us trained in the *Führerprinzip* of papal authority this is all rather vague. Kaye quotes English theologian, Stephen Sykes, saying 'The means of judging matters concerning the faith are in the hands of the whole people of God by reason of their access to the Scriptures ... it is distinctively Anglican that this means is given to them in the liturgy of the church backed by Canon law'.

However, Kaye thinks that this is too limited an approach. He argues that it is only when Christians relate to the real world, when they develop, 'a Church without walls', that the community can evolve a genuine ecclesiology. 'The litmus test for a modern ecclesiology in Anglicanism is the role of the laity and the account that is given in that ecclesiology of the broader social and political framework within which the Christian community is located'.

There is much more in this book and Bruce Kaye is a sure guide for those seeking to understand the role of this pivotal institution in our society. ■

Paul Collins is a Catholic priest, writer and broadcaster.

Lucky Dips

T

To read essays we need to relearn old ways, and learn new ways, of reading. Ideally, essays need to be read in an 18th Century coffee house, or else when commuting by train.

We have here three new collections by Australian writers, heralding (one can only hope) a new preparedness on the part of readers to engage in the kind of cultural conversation that only essays can manifest. (The fact that I've recently found similar volumes by Barry Oakley, Chris Wallace-

Text and Sex, Don Anderson, Vintage, Sydney, 1995. ISBN 0 09 183073 7 RRP \$14.95
480 Words On Anything: wild theories, idle thoughts and essential explanations, David Dale, illus. by Matthew Martin, Hodder and Stoughton, Sydney, 1995. ISBN 0 7336 0126 X RRP \$16.95
The Floral Mother, and other essays, Kate Llewellyn, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1995. ISBN 0 207 18702 9 RRP \$17.95

Crabbe and Les Murray in the remainder catalogues may count for nothing.) Together, these three exhibit much of the flexibility, the utility, the seductiveness of the essay form. They each show an awareness of the ambiguous, delicately poised role and status of the essayist. Their styles could hardly be more contrasting, beginning with the original circumstances of publication—which in my research experience seem to dictate most of an essay's formal features and which may be periodical (Dale), occasional (Anderson) or sporadic (Llewellyn). So much for taxonomy.

Both Anderson's and Dale's respective blurbists have chosen to emphasise the tradition of the Essayist as Rambler (the title, of course, of one of the greatest-ever essay series, by Samuel Johnson). Readers want to know what a book is 'about', and for a miscellany it's best to promise variety.

David Dale's 60 short essays are in the venerable tradition of witty asides, which by seeming to undermine the project of the host publication (in Dale's case the *Financial Review*), actually underscores its

broadmindedness. Dale asks uncomfortable questions, such as what's really in toothpaste, why we buy/watch/say/eat what we do, and generally how the recent past became the present. As his title indicates, his speculations bounce nicely between two opposite gravitational pulls of having complete freedom with regard to subject matter, and the strict demands of word length and regular publication.

He hasn't the room to explain anything new, so he concentrates on the familiar or the topical. Mastery of this form consists of establishing amusing and hitherto unsuspected relationships, without having to defend seriously his suspicions in any detail. Little truths frequently emerge, usually as asides: 'the drug of the '90s (the Decade of Sincerity) seems to be Ecstasy and its clones. ...Ecstasy makes you reveal your deepest feelings, even when you don't have any'; or 'Not wanting to be left out, I had a cholesterol test. My score was 6.5. I don't remember what the units were (kilojoules? angstroms? megahertz?) but it was pretty bad.' He aims to divert and amuse, and he does. I suggest *480 Words On Anything* as the almost perfect loo volume if your family don't mind you laughing in there.

On the other hand, Don Anderson is a Sydney academic in English. His subjects according to the list on the back are Nouns, both Proper (Abish, Walter to Wilding, Michael) and abstract (biography to unnatural acts). And true to this promise, his 31 essays about literature, 26 of which are articles from the *Sydney Morning Herald* and 24 Hours are

cluttered, clotted, with names. There are the names of the writers he's writing about, and the names of other writers about whom (he'd like to remind us) he could as easily write. Anderson uses proper nouns as talismans, a sort of shorthand, a code, to do the work we expect of prose: to explain. That he uses more than he needs is presumably the manifestation of a conviction that everything about which he knows is connected to everything else. 'Milan Kundera or was it Joseph Brodsky?' he asks us, irrelevantly. In fact, he asks the same question in two different articles. One would think that in the 17 months between them, or prior to book publication, he could have sorted out the matter. But of course, it's not actually confusion compounded by sloppiness, but a rhetorical strategy by which he shows that he wears his learning lightly.

The parenthetical 'or was it?' is Anderson's characteristic locution. In the mass of a collection, his prose quickly becomes irritating in its smugness, a sort of inverted patronism, its dogmatic figuring of litera-

ture as the scriptures of a cult of non-meaning, and in its playing with confrontation; witness the unkept promise of his supposedly provocative and political title, and the learned but elaborately meaningless essay of the same name.

These characteristics, and various repetitions of phrase and instance, give a sense of the essays as fragments of a continuous text, which could start anywhere, but would eventually cover the same ground.

READ LIKE A NOVEL, *Text and Sex* would quickly become tedious, but as a 'dipping into' book it is equally unsatisfactory, because any given page tends to sound a lot like any other: an allusion to Joyce, puns, rhetorical questions, incidental mentions of a half-dozen writers and titles. The ostensible subjects of his reviews are seldom pursued vigorously enough to make it particularly valuable as literary criticism. It suggests that any texts, of which certain proper names are—to initiates—the keys, may be combined to produce more text, which virtually writes

itself. Unfortunately, it will not also read itself.

There are a far more leisurely 18 essays in the Kate Llewellyn collection, *The Floral Mother*. They appeared originally in a variety of places, mostly up-market women's magazines; and there are no doubt some who would regard them all as 'women's writing'. But I think, on the whole, this collection is the most successful of the three, certainly the least limited in its usefulness.

Her work emphasises important aspects of the essay form—its openness to the personal, the everyday, the adventitious. Her subjects, such as Figs, Brothers, Weather, are grouped together under Nature, Food and Family. She adopts a meditative style: each of her essays is a series of observations and anecdotes on the chosen subject, filled out occasionally by some casual research, or a poem, letter or recipe.

Like many essays, these sound like instalments of a conversation, although it's not as disciplined a conversation as some readers of essays may appreciate. The individual essays do not pursue themes or arguments, or even elaborate analogies. Sometimes the links are too arbitrary, like school essays on (virtually) Everything I Can Think Of About (Whatever).

But Llewellyn so obviously has the right sort of eye and personality for a miscellaneous essayist, that we are prepared to forgive occasional grammatical inelegancies, and by a frank autobiographical thread, she avoids the risk of generalisation to which her topics would expose her. Her pieces are rich, rural, relationship-centred, full of wonder. The reader ends up assembling much of her story: where she lives and has lived, who her family were and are; and where she is in life: making the transition from having and being a mother, to the next stages. The collection has themes, and in the explicitly personal, more narrative pieces—almost a plot. If Llewellyn has less wit than the other essayists, she has more feeling.

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Balkanising the boards

T

HE DAY BEFORE I ARRIVED in Brisbane the *Courier-Mail* ran a beat-up story suggesting that the nearby Gold Coast Arts Centre's inaugural subscription season of touring productions from 'down south' was 'a harbinger of trouble' for the 'fragile' Queensland theatre scene.

The next day was State election day—an election that was to smack incumbent premier Wayne Goss rather severely, and which took more than a week to get a result, while the local arts community waited nervously.

The week before, Aubrey Mellor's successor as Artistic Director of the Queensland Theatre Company, Chris Johnson, had 'resigned' her position half-way through a three-year contract, under considerable pressure (it would appear) from an increasingly dissatisfied Board. In the same week, five new Board appointments were announced and Janis Balodis was appointed as an 'artistic consultant', to guide the company through the remainder of 1995. Evidently, Johnson's programming, management style and company restructuring had lost the confidence of the Board (and, it was widely alleged, of the broader Brisbane theatre community).

More damning was the perceived decline in artistic standards, especially in her own occasional productions. A *Peter Pan* last November and a production of the Brecht/Weill *Threepenny Opera* this May were mercilessly flayed by the critics, the latter, being variously described as 'heavy-handed', 'seriously lacking in stylistic coherence' and 'a production in search of direction'.

What turned out to be Johnson's final production for the QTC opened in the same eventful week, adding poignancy to the whole saga. The production programme, incidentally, still listed Johnson as Artistic Director and Balodis blandly as Dramaturg in Residence, even though it

went to press late enough to list the new Board members—none of whom was present on opening night in the Cremorne Theatre.

The play in question was a late Arthur Miller piece, *The Last Yankee*, a very slight 'chamber play' about two middle-aged, middle-American couples, both of whose wives are in a state mental institution suffering from clinical depression.

In 1993, there was apparently a morale-boosting beauty pageant in Sarajevo, the winner of which got to ride out of town to safety on a U.N. truck. In Louis Nowra's hands, this becomes a fabulous travesty of show business in general and beauty pageant protocol in particular.

In 70 minutes, Miller makes a couple of useful points about the tragically debilitating symptoms of depression and advances the interesting hypothesis that depression in American women is a result of their husbands' lack of material achievement. Otherwise, nothing much happens on an overlit, inappropriate set cluttered with extraneous furniture and set dressing (some of which apparently belonged to another production which was to occupy the same space later on as an early show).

Afterwards, opening night drinks were punctuated by a speech from the QTC Board chairman (in which no mention was made of the upheavals of the past week) and by a curious little seminar paper on the dramas of Arthur Miller by the hapless director. Whatever the facts concerning the company's troubles might be, I couldn't help feeling rather sorry for Chris Johnson as she read out her

prepared paper to a bemused and curiously muted audience. It was a depressing night, and I suspect that the company has got the job in front of it to rebuild community confidence. I also suspect that Aubrey Mellor is much missed in Brisbane at this moment ...

If things were depressing at QTC headquarters, things were genuinely tragic in Bosnia in the same week. However, Louis Nowra and the increasingly buoyant La Boite Theatre (which is now Brisbane's principal and highly credible alternative company) made light of it all with their world première production of *Miss Bosnia* two nights later.

Like so much of Nowra's remarkable stage writing, this is based on actual events. In 1993, there was apparently a morale-boosting beauty pageant in Sarajevo, the winner of which got to ride out of town to safety on a U.N. truck. In Nowra's hands, this becomes a fabulous travesty of show business in general and beauty pageant protocol in particular.

Each of the six contestants (including the darkly handsome Lidiya, who turns out to be none other than Boris, a soldier in the regiment of General Jez, who is the contest's sole judge) has a very real incentive to win and they compete very fiercely indeed, especially for the General's sexual approval.

NOWRA RESERVES HIS best wit for the talent section, in which one Muslim girl sings 'These Boots Were Made for Walking' in Bosnian, another does a lengthy (and brilliantly apposite) passage from *Waiting for Godot*, while Lidiya does a seductive *adagio* act oblivious of the bombs dropping and snipers' bullets flying around outside the underground night-club.

Company director Sue Rider gives the play a splendid production with a fine cast drawn from the show's

Sydney co-producer, Teatar di Migma, and from what is obviously a strong pool of local talent. It is at once a deliciously funny and achingly poignant piece of theatre. Rider has run the now fully professional company since 1993, and her programme, of world premières and re-runs of recent Australian writing, blended with successful productions of classics, looks very promising indeed.

A SENSE OF BUOYANCY was also evident at the Metro Arts Theatre, an experimental/fringe venue in the city, where another Australian première (*Bait*, a play by Vogel award-winning novelist, Andrew McGahan) was deservedly playing to good audiences. This is a very witty (if slightly long) satire about a group of public servants who seem doomed for life to dispatch dole cheques – until the arrival of a department directive to close down the mailroom and contract the work out

to Australia Post. However, one of the workers figures out that contracting the work out will cost the department money rather than saving it. Confusion and some good absurd farce ensue. There are shades of Alex Buzo's *The Front Room Boys* in all this, of course, but on the strength of this lively production McGahan clearly seems to have what it takes as a playwright.

Renegade Theatre (the young company presenting *Bait*) is made up mainly of students and graduates of the University of Southern Queensland at Toowoomba; elsewhere in the state, graduates of other Queensland Universities are making their presence felt in a burgeoning and vigorous fringe theatre. Despite the recent demise of Fractal Theatre Association (one of the most genuinely adventurous groups in town in recent years, with an extraordinary repertoire ranging from classical Greek tragedy to Steven Berkoff!), I gained the impression that there is a

lot of energy and vitality at the grassroots of Brisbane theatre. There are also exciting developments up north, with genuinely local professional groups at Cairns (Just Us Theatre Ensemble) and Townsville (Theatre Up North) springing up to fill the void left by the failure of the externally imposed, touring New Moon Theatre of the 1980s.

Still in the same heady week (on election night, in fact) I caught the final, packed-out performance of *I Yitha (The She-goat)* by another born-again Brisbane theatre company, Street Arts Community Theatre (in association with the Queensland Ethnic Communities Council). This

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the underground night-club.*

bi-lingual Greek-Australian play (co-written by Effie Detsimas and Queensland playwright Therese Collic) was the result of a long community writing project which had begun life in 1993 to document the lives of a number of Brisbane's Greek immigrant women.

The resultant play is set at a traditional wedding and bed-making ceremony, at which a number of skeletons emerge (albeit tentatively) from the cupboards of four generations of a West End family, with the usual cultural clashes between the older and the younger generations. In particular, the clash between the two immigrant daughters (one of whom is grandmother to the girl getting married) is highlighted; Zoe is characterised as the she-goat—naturally rough, perhaps, but a survivor and a nurturer—while her sister Katerini is the more sophisticated but fragile butterfly.

In the end, *I Yitha* is a celebration piece and, as such, it works well

enough for the community who created it. I found the play itself a bit tame (like an early Tes Lyssiotis in a good mood), although the production used the cavernous Princess Theatre at Woolloongabba very well and there were some marvellous moments.

One of them was a traditional Island goat dance dreamed by the great-grandmother, played with much passion by Tereza Loizu, one of only two professionally trained actors in the large cast. However, I suspect that the group that came together for this project will go on (in classic Street Arts fashion!) to forge more bi-cultural drama and I suspect, too, that it won't all be quite as soft and comfortable as this show.

Street Arts has had an enviable reputation as a nurturer of new work and as an incubator for the emergence of new groups, such as the gifted Rock 'n' Roll Circus and the enterprising Icy Tea, a women's community theatre company out at suburban Inala.

Street Arts' new Artistic Director Brent McGregor appears to have stirred the company from some recent doldrums and to have set it very much on its optimum course again.

TAKIN AS A WHOLE, the theatre in Queensland doesn't look too 'fragile' to me and it seems well capable of withstanding (and indeed of profiting from) the onslaught of the kinds of interstate touring productions that have been coming to the Gold Coast and elsewhere in the vast Northern Australian Regional Performing Arts Centres Association network. Why should Queenslanders (like their compatriots elsewhere in Australia) not have the chance to enjoy the best of 'down south' theatre alongside the excellent productions provided by their own companies? ■

Geoffrey Milne teaches theatre and drama in the School of Arts and Media at La Trobe University



FLASH IN THE PAN

Vanya's return

Vanya on 42nd Street, dir. Louis Malle (Independent cinemas). If you start with something as finely wrought as Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya* and add the weighty talents of both Louis Malle and scriptwriter, David Mamet, you may well fear for the results. I had visions of the play disappearing under too much embroidery. The opposite is true. *Vanya on 42nd Street* is lean. It sits beautifully alongside an Australian adaptation of the same play, *Country Life* (dir. Michael Blakemore), which appeared briefly on our screens last year. Blakemore set the play elaborately: house, garden and table furnishings were all used to detail the kind of lifestyle Chekhov characteristically sees in threat.

If Blakemore's film took its name from one half of Chekhov's subtitle ('scenes from country life'), Malle's film could just as well be called 'scenes'. It originates in a New York stage production directed by André Gregory and is set in a cavernous, decaying theatre on 42nd Street. There are nets above the actors to catch falling plaster. The film deftly alerts us to where a particular performance of *Uncle Vanya* is taking place, a venue as decrepit as Chekhov could long for, but does not lose its way in self-consciously weaving Chekhov's material in and out of a modern context. Instead, the film focuses on a group of actors, in ordinary clothes, being put to extraordi-

nary efforts of both emotion and restraint by a script that asks the world. They come to the party. Which is what Chekhov is all about.

—Michael McGirr SJ

Lift off

Apollo 13, dir. Ron Howard (Hoyts). If you're into films with expensive looking gizmos, life-and-death struggles in the void of space, and actors looking like untethered zeppelins as they bounce off the walls in big white suits, then *Apollo 13* is your film.

It's the story of the third mission to the moon—eight months after the first landing—that didn't go according to plan. An explosion in an oxygen tank puts the three astronauts' lives in danger. Their spacecraft loses power and breathable air, so that any hope of a landing is quickly lost and the goal of the voyage becomes the safe return of the three men from the dark side of the moon. The drama that unfolds is intended to be compelling viewing and largely is.

One of the difficulties directors have with films based on actual events is to balance fact with story telling. Howard is fortunate in that there was no need to play with the truth to establish the drama. It's a gripping tale. But it's the manic activity of the technicians on the ground, trying to work out ways to get the astronauts home, that provides the best watching, and the pick of them is Ed Harris, as flight director Gene Kranz. The helpless three (played by Tom Cruise, Fred Haise and Kevin Bacon) can't provide much suspense off their own bat.

It would have been fun if the film explored the psychology of three men crammed in an object no larger than a walk-in-closet, hurtling through space towards an uncertain end. But this is Hollywood, and the heroes must be stoic in the face of adversity.

—Jon Greenaway

Odd couple

Mina Tannenbaum, dir. Martine Dugowson (Greater Union and independents). This is a funny, quirky story of a twenty-five year friendship between two girls of very different

Jewish backgrounds, who stumble upon each other after a ballet class.

Ethel, a plump air-head, smothered by her rich, grossly tasteless mamma, meets Mina, an artistic rebel living in the shadow of the Holocaust. They have little in common, but childhood friendship grows, nurtured by the intimate agonies of growing up in Paris in the early seventies. Embarrassing moments at groovy parties, trying to remain upright on four-inch cork platforms and the first breathless encounters with men are all better shared. Mina and Ethel are inseparable until the demands of conservative adult life and conflicts over love take their toll.

Mina Tannenbaum is described by the director as a comedy-drama-western, where the cowboy buddies are girls. But the film is too sensitive to the atmosphere and complexities of Parisian culture to fit easily the familiar American models of the western and 'buddy' movie. Its affectionately comic documentary feel and some chokingly sad moments bring it closer to Robert Altman's *Nashville* than to *Thelma and Louise*.

Despite a weak ending, if you want to see a gentle, sad and funny film, this is worth a look. Even if you don't fall for Mina and Ethel (and it's

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Name the film star pictured above and we'll send you \$30.00—enough for movie tickets and a choc-top for two. A hint—she worked as an actor, writer and director, and she died recently. Send entries to: *Eureka Street Film Competition*, PO Box 553, Richmond 3121. The winner of the June/July competition was Mary Campion of Maitland NSW, who correctly identified Bette Davis and Joan Crawford in the dark tale of self-deception, *Whatever Happened to Baby Jane?*



hard not to), you'll fall in love with Paris. The evocative recreation of Paris in the '70s makes the city almost as much a player in this film as the two girls.

—Jane Buckingham

Ballet Russe

Window to Paris, dir. Yuri Mamin (independent cinemas). C. S. Lewis' *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe* told the story of four children staying in an old English country home, who discover the fantasy world of Narnia on the other side of a wardrobe. In *Window to Paris* Nikolay (Sergej Dontsov), an unconventional music teacher in St Petersburg, moves into a vacant apartment, only to discover a window magically leading onto the roof-tops of Paris.

Nikolay is accompanied through

the window by his next-door neighbours, led by Gorogkhov (Viktor Mikhailov), who revel in the material excess of Paris and take back to St Petersburg everything they can get their hands on.

In a studio apartment outside the window Nikolay meets Nicole (Agnes Sorai), a young artist. Frustrated with the constant stream of Russians marching through her apartment, Nicole follows them back through the window to modern-day St Petersburg.

Here we see the squalor and deprivation of a contemporary St Petersburg trying to come to terms with a developing market economy, contrasted with the beauty and affluence of Paris.

The climax comes when Nikolay takes his students—metaphorically the future of Russia—on an excursion through the window to visit the world they've heard so much about.

This 'magical realist' style is normally associated with the Latin American tales of Gabriel Garcia Marquez, or Isabelle Allende. In *Window to Paris*, a joint Russian/French production, Mamin demonstrates an elegant sensitivity to the form, with a distinctly European flavour. It is a gentle, quirky and wonderfully funny film, light-heartedly exploring the changes confronting many Eastern European countries.

—Tim Stoney

By crikey

On Our Selection, dir George Whaley (Village Roadshow) Cripes! The critics have got a flamin' bee in their bonnet about this particular film. But Dad declares that in all the times he's had to sit through Mr Rudd's effrontery to the family name, he's never yet got tired of seeing himself.

He reckons that George Whaley's a bit of a bludger the way he kept poaching all his ideas off that bloke, Ray Longford, that made the silent movie years ago. Dad's like that. He won't listen to Dave jnr's film theory.

He gives it as a rule that if you keep a clear head, and don't forget that it's John Williamson singing the songs this time, and Joan Sutherland turning her hand to just about



everything else, then you won't go wrong.

You'll pick up a few good tips about retrieving dead bodies, finding work for the intellectually challenged, keeping ahead of the banks, running for Parliament when you've got nothing to stand on but a case of whisky and getting through a wedding where the flies outnumber the guests. The kind of lessons about life that never grow old and always get you through.

But once he had a few drinks, Dad declared that if Joan Sutherland had come out with him twenty years ago when we settled on the creek, then we wouldn't have got so much as the first acre cleared. Good job we had Mother.

—Michael McGirr SJ

Out of hiding

Anne Frank Remembered, dir. John Blair (independent cinemas). As a young girl Anne Frank confided to her friends that, more than anything, she wanted to be famous. Her wish was fulfilled, only after her death in Bergen-Belsen Nazi concentration camp in 1945, with the publication of her diaries—a record of her time in hiding from the Nazi in an attic from 1942 to 1944. Since then she has become Hitler's most famous victim, and a symbol for the suffering of millions of Jews during the

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Second World War.

The best thing about *Anne Frank Remembered* is that it's not just about Anne Frank. The film provides a moving account of her life before, during and after her period in hiding, through the recollections of the people who knew her best: her family, friends, relatives, classmates and those who suffered in the Nazi concentration camps with her. We get a sense of the tremendous courage and dedication of people like Miep Gies and others—who daily risked their lives to take supplies to the hidden families.

Blair manages to avoid over-sentimentalising Frank. Instead, we see her, not as a defiant hero, but as young teenage girl, with all the attendant anxieties—one person, among many, who suffered during the Nazi regime.

In this year of commemoration the film is poignant reminder that the victims of war are seldom its heroes. In this respect, Anne Frank stands as a stark exception to the rule.

—Tim Stoney

Recasting Russia

Burnt by the Sun, dir. Nikita Milkalkov (independent cinemas), resurrects the ghosts from Stalin's era of repression in the 1930s—in particular the reign of terror of his secret police. It does so with a

sensitivity that avoids the easy course of recrimination and instead looks to the tragic.

On a long summer day in 1936 Sergueï Kotov (Nikita Milkalkov), an idolised revolutionary hero who fought the Tsar's white armies for the Bolsheviks, is relaxing with his young and beguiling wife Maroussia (Ingeborga Dapkounaitė) and six-year-old daughter Nadia (Nadia Milkalkov). They live in a rambling country house with a collection of eccentric relatives and friends.

Their life seems perfect until it is disrupted by the return of Dimitri, an old love of Maroussia's. Though initially there is a sexual tension between them, it becomes clear Dimitri is not there to rekindle old passions but to arrest Sergueï. Dimitri's disappearance ten years ago, which so devastated Maroussia, was because of his recruitment into Stalin's secret police. The film hinges on the—mostly silent—battle of wills between Sergueï and Dimitri.

Burnt by the Sun is a subtle work but it fairly sparkles. It is understated, especially when you consider the period of history it deals with. But the political acts as the context—a giant backdrop to a story of integrity and betrayal that unfurls and closes like a fan. The final scenes, in which Sergueï leaves the house decked out in his military finery—the others unaware that he has been arrested by the secret police—gathers together the sentiment and creeping evil underscoring the film.

—Jon Greenaway

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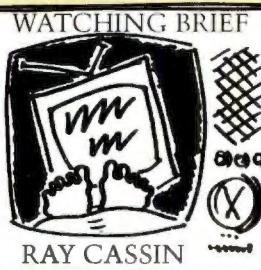
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Rocko's modern horror show

DO YOU REMEMBER WHEN *The Simpsons* was considered to be a children's show, appropriately screened before 6pm? Eventually, of course, those quasi-omnipotent but hardly omniscient television deities, the network programmers, realised that not only did adults watch *The Simpsons* but that its humour was actually pitched at viewers old enough to recognise Homer's middle-aged anxieties (if not always old enough to share them), and to snigger knowingly at most of the movie allusions. So now we are privileged to watch it at what a commercial network like Ten considers to be the very adult time of 7pm, in competition with the news on Two. And since the ABC now sugarcoats its news bulletins with the same juvenile inanities as its competitors, there's not much chance that a significant portion of over-18ish viewers will abandon the real world of Homer & Co. for the fantasy world of Keating, Howard & Co.

But the ABC's programming chiefs, as well as its news producers, evidently take their cue from their counterparts on Seven, Nine and Ten. (Have you ever wondered why there's no Eight? Be honest.) For they have committed the same solecism as the commercials did with the earliest episodes of *The Simpsons*, and doubtless for the same reason. *Rocko's Modern Life* is presumably scheduled at 5.30pm, Monday to Thursday, because it is an animated series. But, unless the average five-year-old can now be expected to understand jokes about oral sex, its target audience is decidedly post-pubescent. (I trust that five-year-olds are not yet so experienced. After all, a lot of the *doubles entendres* on *Rocko*—and even some of the sight gags—clearly went over the heads of the ABC programmers, and they must be older than five. Mustn't they?)

Rocko, like *The Simpsons*, is set in a lower-middle class America that, with very few changes, could be just about lower-middle class anywhere in Western countries these days. Unlike *The Simpsons*, however, it is a fable: the characters are animals, and for the most part exemplify the qualities of character attributed to various animals by every fabulist since Aesop. Wolves are voracious, pigs are coarse and greedy, reptiles of any kind are repellent and treacherous. And the eponymous Rocko? He is a wallaby and speaks with something vaguely resembling an Australian accent, which neatly emphasises his otherness in an American suburban wilderness. (*Rocko*'s scheming, malevolent next-door neighbours, the Bigmouths, are cane toads. The species is native to Hawaii and so to the US, but the history of the cane-toad plague in this country makes the Bigmouths an unintended double joke for Australian viewers.)

So *Rocko's Modern Life* is off to a bad start if you are an animal liberationist. And the series' creator, Joe Murray, is not worried about offending other progressive

orthodoxies, either. Female characters are mostly presented as predators or pigs, though the streak of misogyny in *Rocko* has so far managed to fascinate rather than deter the resolutely feminist partner with whom I usually watch the show. Indeed, the only significant female character I can recall who has not been either a wolf, a crocodile or a stupid farm animal is Mrs Bigmouth. (Her attempt to seduce Rocko provided the basis for the sexual sight gag alluded to above. Try to imagine the mechanics of congress between a wallaby and a toad and you'll pretty much get the picture.)

ROCKO IS ABOUT LONELINESS and male sexual dysfunction, which in the world according to Joe Murray appear to be more or less the same thing. So what saves *Rocko's Modern Life* from being simply offensive? Not much, sometimes. But even at their worst the products of Murray's imagination have a quality shared by the best Gothic creations for the large and the small screen, whether animated or photographed.

Rocko looks as though it has been drawn by the set designer for a Tim Burton film—this is *Edward Scissorhands* country, with elements of *Beetlejuice*, the first two *Batman* movies and *Nightmare Before Christmas* all thrown in. The architecture, domestic and public, is all Bauhaus gone wrong, with straight walls curving into threatening overhangs that reflect the neuroses of Rocko and his friend Heffer. (Heffer is a bull, not a heifer. Adopted as a calf by a family of wolves, he has never quite worked out what makes him different. Nor have they. But they're worried.)

Rocko follows *The Simpsons'* lead in frequently alluding to movies, popular music and folklore motifs, but it manages to do all of this in its own bleak, black fashion. When Rocko is invited to Heffer's house for dinner, he finds a bevy of bound and gagged Red Riding Hood clones in the bathroom. The Three Little Pigs, similarly trussed, are in a closet. And when Rocko and Heffer go to a cinema, they sit through an interminable series of previews for Hollywood trash that not only spoofs the movies, *Simpsons*-style, but debunks tiresome movie buffery as well. A sample: Dracula as You've Never Seen Him Before: Dead. An Entire Genre Has Been Done to Death At Last.

If you're home by 5.30, or if you're the kind of computer nerd who actually knows how to preset the timer on your VCR, have a look at *Rocko's Modern Life*. You may never think of your kids in the same way again.

PS: If you are the aforementioned kind of computer nerd, do also you know what happened to Channel Eight? ■

Ray Cassin is a freelance writer.



Eureka Street Cryptic Crossword no. 36, September 1995

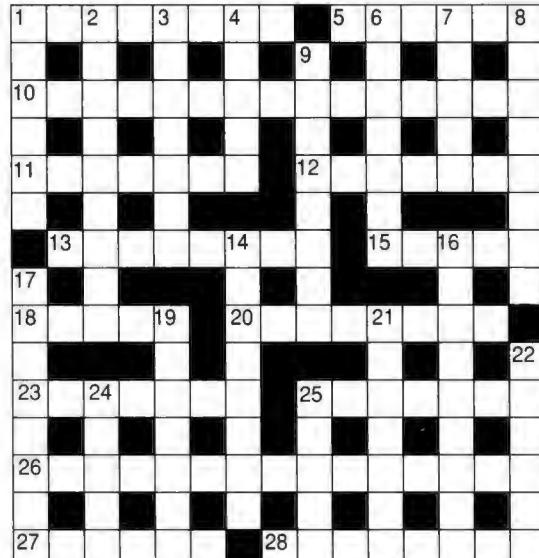
Devised by Joan Nowotny IBVM

ACROSS

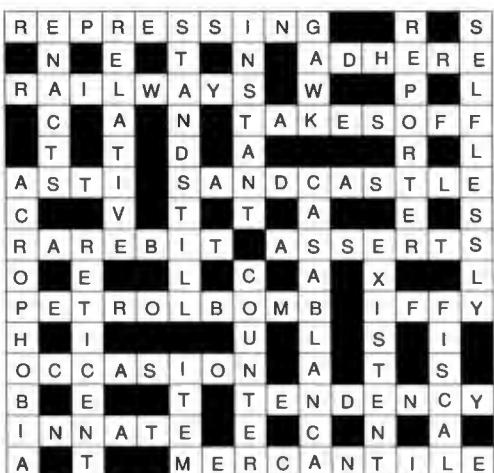
- 1 & 5 End of leg dance concluding series which takes place in September. (8,6)
- 10 Untrue, alas! Liar's fabrication would equate this code with Rugby, for example. (10,5)
- 11 It's heart-stopping to be without card I acquired under arrest. (7)
- 12 Mute ape shocked at losing limb. (7)
- 13 Bazaar drama, hopefully exhibited on the occasion of 1 & 5-across. (4,4)
- 15 Symbol I seemed to hear on the Mount in the desert. (5)
- 18 They say that some add up! (5)
- 20 I react curiously on VE day, as if I were artistically talented. (8)
- 23 Everyone, for example, at the beginning of Easter Day said what they saw. (7)
- 25 Adjusted the courtyard with straight settlement. (7)
- 26 What a pity her pathos is misplaced! What is needed is someone to massage bodies not feelings! (15)
- 27 The vessel in the study may dim the light. (6)
- 28 Little dog from old Beijing? (8)

DOWN

- 1 Dilapidated Royal Navy café in this country? Unclear at the moment. (6)
- 2 Former pupil and maid are attentive and obedient. (9)
- 3 I find badly cooked rare rib steak an obstacle to enjoyment. (7)
- 4 Sadly, I call such a bloomer unpleasing. (5)
- 6 The cat breaks in with a yowl! If only it could possibly sit and purr unobtrusively! (7)
- 7 Assign the student the whole Hebrew Bible to study. (5)
- 8 Eastern mystics, perhaps, are not known for being so methodical. (8)
- 9 Numb with fright, pa relays frantic message. (8)
- 14 Clarity with which girl comprehends the heart of Ovidian poetry. (8)
- 16 Don't get weary in the long journey to this NSW town. (9)
- 17 Badly in need of cash, raced round the ambush in order to meet the emergency. (8)
- 19 Let the beginner light the coal fire. (7)
- 21 In the hot sun a mighty wave swept all before it. (7)
- 22 Girl from 1-down, perhaps, who awkwardly toted equipment to begin with. (6)
- 24 Egg producer from 9-down, without a second thought? (5)
- 25 Viewed, it seems, the place of action. (5)



Solution to Crossword no. 35, August 1995



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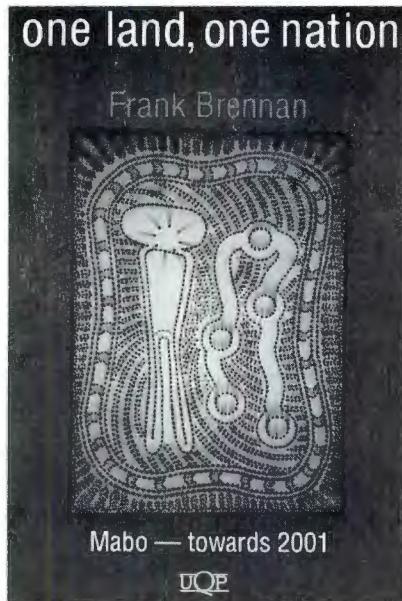
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