

EUREKA STREET

Vol. 6 No. 10 December 1996

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a centre for study and renewal

Calendar of Events 1997/98

PASTORAL MINISTRY

A renewal program for people in ministry

14 September - 11 December, 1997

1 March - 28 May, 1998

13 September - 10 December, 1998

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Michael Drumm

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and unity of
the Christmas
season.*

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Westward Ho-hum

KIM BEAZLEY SCRAPED HOME as member for Brand in this year's federal election: it seemed to symbolise the ALP's disarray. How can a new party leader appear confident when he has been returned with the slenderest of majorities in his own seat? But Beazley's plight also had local resonances. The large number of marginal seats is characteristic of WA polls, state and federal, and on that fact rests what forlorn hope Labor may have of wresting power away from Richard Court in the pre-Christmas state election.

Since Court presides over a state with Australia's lowest unemployment rate and fastest rate of economic growth, and since he has adroitly fed the anxieties of a conservative electorate by making belligerent noises to successive federal governments on native title and related issues, he can reasonably expect that he will still be Premier after December 14. But Court also has reason to recall Kim Beazley's precarious ascension to the Labor leadership. The woman who became a national figure by almost toppling Beazley in Brand, Penny Hearne, is contesting a suburban Perth seat as an independent in the state election, and several other respected Liberals, including the former royal commissioner Peter Kyle, are doing likewise.

They are all opponents of their party's rabid right wing and its grey eminence in the Senate, Noel Crichton-Browne, and allies of Allan Rocher and Paul Filing, the independent Liberals who in March cast the faintest of shadows over John Howard's glory by capturing the blue-ribbon seats of Curtin and Moore. Several of the independents, including Hearne, are considered to have a good chance of being elected, and if successful they can be expected to vote with the coalition on most issues, as Rocher and Filing do in Canberra.

But, although WA's growing breed of independent Liberals do not pose a threat to the coalition's parliamentary majorities, they are nonetheless a phenomenon that neither Richard Court nor John Howard can safely ignore for long. The cause of their discontent, the egregious Crichton-Browne, remains in the Senate as proof—were any needed—that it is not only the ALP that has a murky past in WA. If that discontent is not resolved, its consequences, like the consequences of WA Inc. for Labor, will reach all the way to Canberra.

Perhaps because they are the chief uncertainty in an otherwise humdrum campaign, speculation about the independents' prospects has overshadowed interest in Labor's performance under its new leader, Geoff Gallop. Like his federal counterpart, Kim Beazley, Gallop is a Rhodes scholar; like Beazley, he is genial but unexciting; like Beazley, he is a

member of the party's pragmatic right; like Beazley, he has mastered the difficult rhetoric of making cautious utterance sound like authoritative pronouncement; and, like Beazley, few people expect him to lead Labor to victory this side of the millenium.

Whether he can confound those expectations depends mainly on when the resources boom that is

keeping WA's economy buoyant fizzles out; in the meantime, Gallop will be watching the progress of Penny Hearne and her colleagues, too, no doubt hoping that the scandals that are never far from the surface of WA politics can be confined to the Liberals next time. ■

Ray Cassin is a freelance writer and West Australian.

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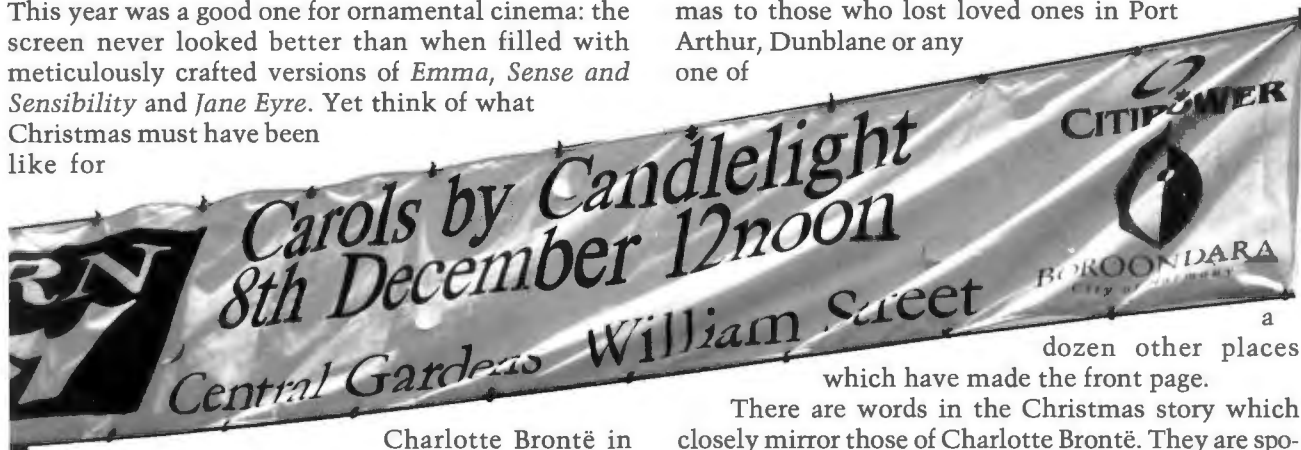
MICHAEL MCGIRR

Christmas yet to come

WE'VE ALL HAD BAD CHRISTMASSES. In fact, common lore says that the best way to avert a family feud on Christmas Day is to get people talking about previous festive disasters. There's a certain relish in exorcising the Ghost of Christmas Past. It keeps the Ghost of Christmas Present in its box.

But some Christmases are harder to cope with. This year was a good one for ornamental cinema: the screen never looked better than when filled with meticulously crafted versions of *Emma*, *Sense and Sensibility* and *Jane Eyre*. Yet think of what Christmas must have been like for

defiance of a will of iron or the tentativeness of an unlikely survivor? In a way, they appear to sit calmly on such a depth of experience that their nuances could only emerge in conversation. And given the gap between her world and mine, I'm not sure we could make ourselves understood to each other anyway. I wonder what those words might mean, this Christmas to those who lost loved ones in Port Arthur, Dunblane or any one of



Charlotte Brontë in 1848, the year *Jane Eyre* was published. Her brother, Branwell, had died in September. Her sister, Emily, caught the infection at Branwell's funeral that led to her own death shortly before Christmas.

It is difficult to fathom the relationship between Emily and Charlotte. Only two hours before she died, Emily terminated the kind of game she'd been playing and said to Charlotte 'if you will send for a doctor, I will see him now.' Anne already looked sick and would die the following year. They lived in a part of Yorkshire where the average life expectancy was 25; infant mortality was 41 per cent. It's no wonder that, when some negative reviews of *Jane Eyre* arrived in January, Charlotte's first biographer, Elizabeth Gaskell, comments that 'she was numbed to all petty annoyances by the grand severity of Death.' Capital D.

In the middle of this stormy passage, Charlotte wrote a letter on December 21 in which she said 'God has sustained me, in a way I marvel at, through such agony as I had not conceived.' I'd love to be able to talk about those words with her. Are they the stoic

dozen other places which have made the front page.

There are words in the Christmas story which closely mirror those of Charlotte Brontë. They are spoken by Mary, the Mother of Jesus. Words resembling 'marvel', 'agony' and 'sustained' rub up against each other in the prayer we know as the Magnificat. Mary, in the early days of her pregnancy, a lonely traveller, is affirmed by an older woman, her kinswoman Elizabeth. In the gospel account of this, a burden seems suddenly lifted from Mary. She recognises her experience as typical of the whole history of her people: *he has filled the starving with good things and sent the rich away*

God has a taste for small beer and a keen sense of irony. This is the Christmas at which *Cleo* magazine is offering giveaway copies of *Emma*, an irony to warm the heart of Miss Austen. It is the Christmas at which a few Australians will be sitting down to Yorkshire pudding, an irony to warm the heart of Miss Brontë. It is the Christmas at which few will have a clue what to do about refugees in Africa, an irony to chill the heart of God. It is precisely what we cannot do for ourselves which is the Ghost of Christmas yet to come. ■

Michael McGirr is *Eureka Street's* consulting editor.

Above: the privatisation of electricity subsidises many signs and wonders.

Once were theologians

AT MONASH UNIVERSITY, as elsewhere in Australia, religious studies have increasingly become part of the curriculum of an Arts Faculty. Theological studies have been shedding their confessional moulds to become part of the wider agenda of intellectual debate in our society.

The Melbourne College of Divinity, for example, embraces institutions with different theological traditions, while ensuring that the highest intellectual standards are maintained. The inclusion of theology among the offerings of the Australian Catholic University contributes further to a tradition of enlightened debate of theological issues within the context of the Humanities. It builds on the participation of ACU in a flourishing Science and Theology network in Melbourne, in which thinkers from diverse intellectual traditions work together to forge new directions for religious thought.

The recent proposal of the Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne that the seminary, Corpus Christi College, and the physically adjacent Catholic Theological College, should be transferred from their present location next to Monash University, Clayton, to sites close to St Patrick's Cathedral reflects a very different attitude to the meaning of Catholic tradition.

The principal concern seems to be not so much with the church as a whole, but with the development of a separate clerical caste in society. Whether the re-establishment such a culture, free from the influence of a University, will further awareness of the kingdom of God is open to debate: Christians *must* be concerned with the future of ministry. The choice, however, is between burying one's talent in the ground, and allowing that talent to multiply a hundredfold by sharing it with the wider community.

A Catholic university and a university committed to ideals of catholicity both have a contribution to make in furthering the cause of theological inquiry at a tertiary level. The great strength of a major university with close links to a theological college is that it provides an opportunity for the great dynamism of catholic tradition to free itself from stereotyped assumptions about its monolithic nature, still prevalent among the dying breed of old-fashioned secularists. If clergy and other ministers of the church are to have any credibility in our multicultural society they must conform to standards of intellectual rigour, developed and maintained by the academic community as a whole. The idea, still nurtured in some theological circles, that the secular world is not interested in religious studies is simply out of touch with current realities.

POWERFUL SPIN-OFFS HAVE ALREADY been gained for the church by continuing to develop relationships with a secular University which has strong connections to the Jewish world as well as to a range of other traditions, not least those of Asia. Professor Kevin Hart, who has laboured so strongly in making CTC an affiliated college of Monash University, has written eloquently on the profound continuities of concern which connect, for example, pseudo-Denis and Dante to the world of Derrida. A very successful course on hermeneutics, taught jointly by the two institutions, has demonstrated the powerful influence reflection on scripture can have on contemporary critical theory.

In particular, the library of Corpus Christi, rich in its holdings of the Latin Christian heritage, is being explored by students and researchers who find treasures there not available in a university library. If the library is moved out of immediate contact with a tertiary institution, a great opportunity will be lost. The only way for Latin studies—whether classical, medieval or renaissance—to develop is through a coming together of theological and university institutions, so that the intricate interplay of Latin, Greek and Hebrew traditions in our culture can be critically appreciated.

The great theological achievement of Aquinas was only possible when the monastic ideal of clerical formation was replaced by that of the mendicants, who realised that the Gospel needed to be spread by living in the world, rather than fleeing from it. The vain attempts of the bishop of Paris to outlaw the reading of Aristotle and other new authors' ideas could not impede the development of a rich new synthesis, based on harmony and reason.

A thousand years earlier Cyprian of Carthage was so scarred by the experience of persecution that he refused to accept the validity of baptism given by schismatics, heretics and apostates. The broader tradition of Rome prevailed against the passionate zeal of Cyprian. A similar vision of catholicity needs to prevail in our own time. ■

Constant Mews is Senior Lecturer in the Department of History and Director of the Centre for Studies in Religion and Theology at Monash University.

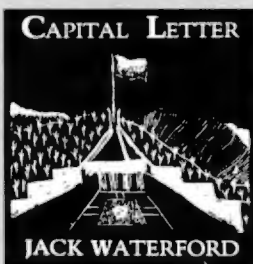
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The wish list

SHOULD THE HOWARD GOVERNMENT be seeking to turn Aborigines into petty capitalists, and can it help make them more economically independent of government?

Signs are of a reflex hostility by the Howard Government and its Minister, John Herron, and an increasing certainty that they do not quite understand what they are talking about. In recent days, however, Senator Herron has spelled out some of the government's aspirations. After the sillier ideas—sending in the army on latrine duties etcetera—are given their appropriate discounts, there is something significant about what is on offer. The government, however, has done so much to break up trust and goodwill that a real dialogue, particularly one not conducted by press conference, might be impossible.

But those who wonder whether confrontation might be preferable to any negotiation might do well to ponder whether the old order promised anything much in the way of deliverance.

Was health slowly and steadily improving? Were housing programs slowly but steadily improving living conditions, or just barely keeping up with expanding demand? Have land or economic development programs created any sort of economic base for most Aborigines? Will the average eight-year-old Aboriginal child get a better education than her parents (or her grandparents) did? Will more Aboriginal legal aid keep more Aboriginal people out of jail?

Those who are sceptical wonder whether government, or bodies such as the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, have ever had a plan for getting out of the disaster, let alone a program for achieving their plan. The most one hears is the claim that more of the same might do something.

There are some ideas which would not necessarily involve more expenditure, and which might reduce dependency if those involved in communities were prepared to contemplate radical alternatives.

For remote traditional communities living on their own land the following might be tried.

First, establish an Aboriginal form of leasehold under Aboriginal freehold, creating a mechanism whereby secure tenure, on conditions, can be granted, against which people can borrow money and on which some market economies can develop. And, within defined residential areas, put all housing and commercial activity on leases with defined restrictions. Permit some housing for outsiders, such as teachers and medical staff, while reserving some transfers to members of the community only. Encourage home ownership by low-interest mortgages on secure titles, with the proceeds ploughed back into more housing.

Second, corporatise all community-owned and operated stores properly, with the community service element charged as rent. And permit real competition. Most stores are ill-run (usually by contract outsiders), charge appalling prices for a poor range of goods, and operate on hours which do not suit the community. Permit ordinary commercial businesses (for example, sale of petrol, vehicle sales and maintenance, even health services) to operate on secure leaseholds within defined town areas in communities of, say, more than 150 people. Allow them to develop even in competition with existing Aboriginal-controlled services operated on co-operative lines. The benefits to members of the community from price and service competition, and from land rent might well outweigh any imagined loss to an artificial and very inefficient co-operative system.

Third, put as many community service activities, such as waste disposal, municipal services and house-building, out to tender, with enforceable contracts for quality of service delivery. Those

engaged in providing such services for good value are far more likely to provide them as part of an enforceable arrangement about the desired results than if they are mere hirelings filling in time-books. If need be, set up schemes to finance and guide local people in tendering such services, perhaps giving them an inside tender run.

Establish market-price systems for the purchase of services. Where subsidy is called for—either because of poverty or remoteness—subsidise it by payments to families (for example in rent relief schemes) rather than bulk grants to service providers. That way consumers can reasonably demand a strong say in the quality of services they get, appreciating at the same time their real costs.

Put the delivery of conventional health services on Medicare (perhaps with a remoteness loading) and, with bulk funding of community-based medical services, focus the money on the necessary extras: Aboriginal health workers, medical consumables, liaison, transport etc.

Draw up for each community a proper needs-based plan of basic services which citizens in the community would normally expect from local, state and territory governments. Publish annual checklists on progress. Have an Aboriginal Auditor-General, or Commonwealth Grants Commission. Prepare an annual survey of actual external service delivery, with a power, if there has been a failure of delivery, to contract out the work from funds allocated to the agencies for such purposes. Surveys have repeatedly shown that, despite, say, well-publicised grants to Aboriginal medical services, or identified grants which attract the Pauline Hansons because they appear to be special payments available to no-one else, Aboriginal people in rural communities consume public resources at only about half the rate of non-Aboriginal people in remote areas. Any program of this order would put pressure on state and local governments to provide services for which the Commonwealth has given them money. In major towns, and in the cities, continue to support the operation of community groups, but put some user-pays pressure on them, cross-matched with more direct payments to families.

ALL OF THESE POLICIES MIGHT BE CATEGORISED as right-wing ones, capable of causing considerable dislocation to the existing order of things, and therefore capable of producing their own domestic conservatisms against change. But they would put more power in the hands of individuals and families, to make their own choices. And they would dramatically increase the accountability of services provided from outside.

More importantly, they could improve the potential for the creation of some real economies inside communities. At the moment, a high proportion of the money that actually reaches communities leaves it after a single transaction, and has little multiplier effect.

The biggest drawback is, however, the oldest dilemma of all. Economically sustainable communities, beyond the dole, beyond mere access to the services all citizens have a right to expect, depend on income coming from outside. There are prospects, in arts, tourism, pastoral enterprises and perhaps in mining, which offer work and income from the wider world, but there are also, at the moment, limitations upon the capacity of any of these to take away dependence on welfare money.

If the horizons are to expand, some radical thinking might at least better equip people to take advantage of the opportunities available. ■

Jack Waterford is editor of the *Canberra Times*.

Legal nay-ed

From Russell Miles

Moira Rayner's article on legal access [*Eureka Street*, October 1996] reflects the current 'hue and cry' about cuts to legal aid funding. This, however, has little to do with denying low-income earners access to the law. It is more about inconvenience and loss of employment for the legal fraternity. The increase in demand for legal aid has been far beyond any per capita increase in criminal charges or civil disputes; it is more a reflection of 'supply-induced demand'.

Legal aid is essentially a service to the judiciary, and not the accused/plaintiff. This is because, if it is assumed that courts operate on the principle of procedural fairness, unrepresented persons should be granted every latitude in presenting their case. In most circumstances it would be unfair to find against them. In practice, the legal system only allows this defence for those accused of corporate crimes (often the well-to-do). By extension of this argument, legal aid merely allows courts to make convictions in fair manner, as the accused should not have been convicted otherwise.

Without legal aid, courts would have to ensure representation out of their own budgets. This would hopefully motivate judges not to indulge in excessive delays, trivial matters, or entertain idle argument and other wasteful practices.

Furthermore, if lawyers wish to retain the business of low-income earners they would have to be more innovative and competitive. This would help drive down legal cost for all consumers, including those who currently cannot afford the excessive fees of the legal profession, but are ineligible for legal aid.

There are limited circumstances where legal aid may be warranted: mostly civil or family law cases where one party can afford more representation than the other.

This typically affects women seeking maintenance and custody. This could be dealt with by requiring the higher-spending party to contribute an amount equal to half of their combined costs towards the other party's legal fees.

A reduction in legal aid expenditure is unlikely to reduce the

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quality of justice. If anything it might improve it and make it more accessible to all legal consumers, and improve the quality of legal service to all.

Russell Miles
Watsonia VIC

Mightier than le sword

From Sophie Masson

In his article on the *sans-papiers* in France, and the consequences for French democracy, Alastair Davidson makes many interesting and necessary points. But I must take issue with him on several points.

First of all, the French revolutionaries may well have had many laudable ideals but the 1793 Declaration of the Rights of Man was no protection for the people of Vendée in that same year. Recent, comprehensive research

conducted by French historians and quoted in Simon Schama's book, *Citizens* has shown that up to 300,000—or at least a third of Vendée's population, men, women and children—were slaughtered in 1793-94 in a deliberate campaign of 'cleansing'.

That was a real French gulag. Why? Not because they were 'monarchists' or 'peasant dependants in thrall' but because they dared to disagree with the tyrants in Paris—most of whom were aristocrats or middle-class, by the way. They were the 18th century *sans-papiers*—their very names and histories were to be wiped from the record.

That revolutionary heritage, which is very far from 'liberty, equality and fraternity' is not one that has ever been publicly admitted by the left wing, the right wing, the centre or anyone at all except the Vendéens themselves.

As to characterising people as 'peasant dependants' or 'petite noblesse', that is simply too easy. Besides, the peasants in France are an extraordinarily diverse lot. Many of the people who lived in the village where we used to live as children,

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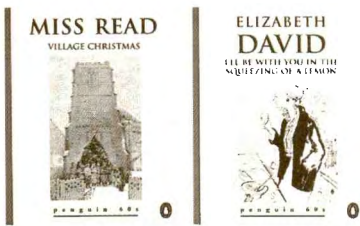
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This month, courtesy of Penguin Books, the writer of each letter we publish will receive two of the Penguin '60s Classics

voted for the Communists and the Socialists. Unfortunately, Le Pen's appeal cannot be explained away in terms of some 'ancien régime' image. In fact, it is mainly working-class people in the cities such as Marseille who vote for him; and also many earlier migrants, such as the Portuguese and the Italians, as well as 'BCBG' [*Bon chic, bon gens*] types.

It is interesting to note here that Le Pen's Front National has very little following in the most traditional French regions, such as Western France, which include Vendée and Brittany—despite the fact that Le Pen himself is Breton. (By the way, 'la France profonde' was not only Pétainist; a lot of it was in the Resistance—I know of at least one 'petit noble catholique' in the area where we lived who was a decorated Resistance war hero, and so were several peasants).

Le Pen has been able to build up the support he has because any discussion of issues in France is so ideological that you are immediately tagged 'left wing' or 'right wing' as soon as you open your mouth.

On a visit back to France this year, I found I had to buy several newspapers in order to actually get a picture of what was really happening in the country—the reporting was so skewed. I've often complained about Australian papers, but at least they do preserve a semblance of objectivity by asking different people to write opinion pieces and

clearly labelling them as such. That semblance is not even bothered with in France. I hope that will not happen in Australia.

A year or so ago, the British journalist, Martin Woolcott, wrote a very interesting article in *The Guardian* in which he analysed the rise of parties such as Le Pen's. He spoke of them as a reaction to authority; a kind of mirror image of it.

These are not 'conservatives', they are radicals. But they do not derive their power from medieval images of peasants and lords. No way. They are very modern; they adapt extraordinarily easily.

Their platform is a mixture of all kinds of inchoate yearnings allied with fury and resentment and a sophisticated machine of publicity. Jean Marie Le Pen is a thoroughly modern man—he holds no brief for the vanished monarchy (he knows that the greater part of his constituency would have no sympathy at all for the ancien régime). He has ecological credentials, a grasp of 'community politics', a mellifluous voice, a clever understanding of technology. He is the opportunist par excellence, who understands millennial anxieties.

Sophie Masson
Invergowrie NSW.

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The Churchill Trust invites applications from Australians, of 18 years and over from all walks of life who wish to be considered for a Churchill Fellowship to undertake, during 1998, an overseas study project that will enhance their usefulness to the Australian community.

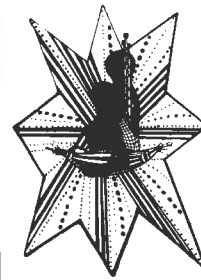
No prescribed qualifications are required, merit being the primary test, whether based on past achievements or demonstrated ability for future achievement.

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Details may be obtained by sending a self addressed stamped envelope (12x24cms) to:

The Winston Churchill Memorial Trust
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Applications close 10 January 1997, employment commencing by 10 February 1997.

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Room at the top

A VISIT TO ST PETER'S IS A COMPULSORY item on the itinerary of almost all travellers to Rome, and while passing through there last year I proved no exception. Waking early, I decided to walk to the Vatican City through that delightfully congested Roman streetscape of traffic chaos, enticing side-walk restaurants, the flocks of sightseers, runaway nuns, black-cassocked priests, old Italian women exercising dogs and young ones exercising the imagination of men.

The approaches to the basilica itself are lined with curio shops and tourist coaches—a reminder that commerce and pilgrimage have long intertwined here. I strolled clear of the vendors and the tour guides into the semi-circular colonnades around the Piazza San Pietro. It felt less like the warm embrace of a spiritual home than the cold engulf of an imperial ambition. On into the church itself, beneath Michelangelo's majestic dome, past the gilded bronze columns of Bernini's *baldachino*, down into the tombs of past popes, and out again onto the portico with its visual sweep down the Via della Conciliazione to the Tiber and the midday summer haze of the city beyond. It was my second visit to St Peter's and the experience was as soulless as the first.

Pope Julius II launched upon a complete reconstruction of St Peter's but it was Leo X (1513-1521) who relished it. Leo is said to have once remarked 'Since God has given us the papacy, let's enjoy it', and enjoy it he did—to almost complete distraction. When not making cardinals of his relatives, Leo was busy indulging his expensive tastes for artistic extravagance. The ruckus this was causing in remote corners of Christendom went unnoticed by Leo, and when news of the chief troublemaker, Martin Luther, finally did reach his ears in Rome, Leo condemned the complaints and then excommunicated the complainant for good measure. It was a medieval pope's solution to a medieval church problem.

But there are echoes of it again today. Earlier this year, the Apostolic Pro-Nuncio in Australia, Archbishop Franco Brambilla, required a Canberra meeting of the World Union of Catholic Women's Organisations to withdraw a resolution concerning the ordination of women to the priesthood. The union brings together organisations representing some 30 million Catholic women worldwide. Given this, the resolution in question seemed not only appropriate but also innocuous enough: it called for 'ongoing dialogue ... within the Church concerning the access of women to ordained ministries', and suggested that 'vocation not gender' should determine who entered the priesthood.

But the resolution flew in the face of Pope John Paul II's 1994 Apostolic Letter on ordination, in which he declared 'that the church has no authority whatsoever to confer priestly ordination on women'. What's more, the Pope insisted that 'this judgment is to be definitely held by all the Church's faithful'. According to newspaper reports, Archbishop Brambilla told the president-general of the union that the subject of the resolution was a 'matter of faith'. Precisely where it ranks with belief in the Resurrection and transubstantiation is anyone's guess. But Brambilla did not want the resolution debated. And so it wasn't.

This incident says much about the way authority (or more correctly, power) is being exercised in the contemporary Catholic Church. On the issue of women's ordination—as on other issues where there is genuine contention not only among the faithful but among bishops and church scholars as well—Rome has made a decision and that is that. Ordinary lay men and women, not to mention theologians, church historians, religious, even Episcopal conferences, have no right openly to express a contrary view.

As Augustine of Hippo put it: *Roma locuta est; causa finita est* (Rome has spoken; the case is concluded). The fact that both Catholics and their church have changed a good deal since the days of Augustine seems to be of no consequence. The maxim, at least as far as Rome is concerned, is as valid today as it was in the 5th century.

And so, of course, it must be upheld. Lest a 'Catholic' gathering be seen to disagree with the Pope (though upon whom this would reflect badly is open to argument) the women gathered in Canberra were stopped dead in their tracks. 'Vatican bullying', was how one participant described it. But this depiction misses a vital step in the process. Nuncios are diplomats who represent the Holy See. But they are also the linchpins between the Vatican and the various national churches—the Pope's enforcers. Brambilla was policing his beat—gagging debate, silencing even the possibility of dissent, preserving the façade of obedience in the absence of genuine acceptance in the ranks of the faithful.

THIS IS WHAT VATICAN OFFICIALS—not to mention other officious title holders in the Church—are doing a good deal of these days. It's called toeing the line but it is symptomatic of a pathology of control.

This, in more measured tones, was the subject of the much publicised address at Campion Hall, Oxford, by Archbishop John Quinn on June 29, 1996. The retired archbishop of San Francisco

responding to an invitation, issued by John Paul II in his 1995 encyclical on ecumenism, *Ut unum sint*, to join a dialogue on shaping the Petrine ministry in ways more conducive to Christian unity. The encyclical was addressed primarily to the members of the other Christian Churches (and to those of the Eastern Churches in particular). To that extent probably no-one imagined that the first person of note to bite would be a senior Catholic cleric. But bite Quinn did, and he left an indelible mark.

Quinn spoke about a growing concern with church governance among Catholics worldwide. This concern, he said, 'has to do with the appointment of bishops, the approval of documents such as the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the grave decline in the numbers of priests and the consequent decline in the availability of Mass for the people, the cognate issue of the celibacy of the clergy, the roles of Episcopal conferences and of women and the issue of the ordination of women'.

IT WAS NOT JUST Rome's actual decision on each of these issues which was causing concern, Quinn argued, but also 'the way in which these decisions are reached and implemented.' A political model of church is rapidly replacing an ecclesial one, he suggested. Order, and hence control, are taking precedence over the search for communion and the exercise of discernment. Bishops are being denied their role as vicars of Christ; teaching, judging, sanctifying in their own diocese and 'rightfully exercising authority *with* the pope rather than *under* the pope' in the wider church. National Episcopal conferences are being undermined and made subservient to Rome.

Even the synod of bishops, an institution which the Second Vatican Council imagined might evolve from an occasional consultative body into a permanent deliberative one, had been reduced to little more than a rubber stamp for pre-formed Vatican positions.

In place of genuine collegiality (the principle that local churches together in communion constitute the one, universal Church) and subsidiary (which holds that a larger social body should not routinely absorb the functions of smaller ones) a kind of corporatism has taken hold. Often bishops were reduced to mere managers expected to carry out in blind obedience decisions made further up the chain of command.

This was not the first time Quinn had cause to take issue with Vatican decision-making processes. At the 1980 Synod on the family he proposed the establishment of a group to re-investigate Paul VI's ruling on artificial contraception in the light of evidence that it had been rejected by a substantial majority of practising Catholics.

Quinn's point was that what Catholics actually felt about an issue at least had to be taken into account in deciding on it. 'This problem', he said of behaviour contradicting teaching, 'is not going to be solved or reduced through the simple repetition of past formulas or by ignoring dissent'. He got nowhere.

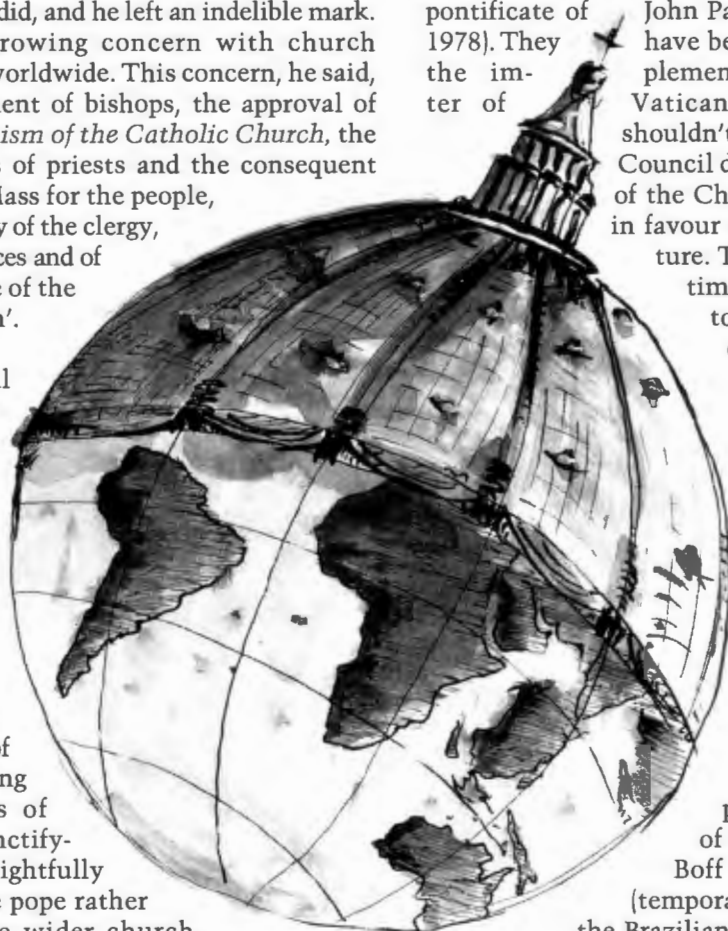
The years between these two attempts by Quinn to prod a more consensual approach from the Vatican roughly span the pontificate of John Paul II (who was elected at the end of 1978). They have been years of arrested development in the implementation of both the spirit and the letter of Vatican II. In hindsight, this probably shouldn't have surprised anyone. During the Council debate on the Dogmatic Constitution of the Church, the future John Paul II argued in favour of maintaining a hierarchical structure. This was the minority position at the time (and remains so) but he continued to expound it in one forum or another over the following 13 years. Over the last 18 years as pope he has made it a grim reality within the Church.

One result is disaffection and dissent. It started early—John Paul II's decision to expose the progressive Dutch episcopacy to the Orwellian-termed 'ministry of authority' in 1980, for instance, led to a cleavage with the Dutch Church (yet to close properly) and ugly demonstrations during his 1985 visit to Holland. It spread quickly—two million Brazilian Catholics signed letters of protest against the Vatican's silencing of the liberation theologian Leonardo Boff in 1985; the discipline was lifted (temporarily) after a crisis meeting between the Brazilian Bishops and the Pope the following year. And it remains endemic today—one half of Austria's practising Catholics and more than a million Germans signed petitions calling for fundamental church reform including the ordination of women priests, a married clergy, genuine consultation on Episcopal appointments, democratic decision-making; similar petitions are now circulating in the US and Canada.

Another result is division—even among those in high places. In August, the recently deceased Archbishop of Chicago, Cardinal Joseph Bernardin, launched an initiative aimed at ending the increasing polarisation among American Catholics. 'For three decades,' the explanatory statement launching his Catholic Common Ground Project read, 'the Church has been divided by different responses to the Second Vatican Council and to the tumultuous years that followed it ... A mood of suspicion and acrimony hangs over many of those active in the Church's life, at moments it even seems to have infiltrated the ranks of the bishops'.

The statement continued:

'One consequence is that many of us are refusing to acknowledge disquieting realities, perhaps fearing that they may reflect poorly on our past efforts or arm our critics within the



Church. Candid discussion is inhibited. Across the whole spectrum of views within the Church, proposals are subjected to ideological litmus tests. Ideas, journals and leaders are pressed to align themselves with pre-existing camps and are viewed warily when they depart from those expectations.'

Bernadin's initiative was supported by prominent members of the US hierarchy, including Bishop Anthony Pilla (President of the US National Conference of Catholic Bishops), Cardinal Roger Mahony (Los Angeles) and Archbishop Rembert Weakland (Milwaukee). The last two joined six other bishops—all of them significantly of a conservative to moderate disposition—on an advisory committee for the Catholic Common Ground Project.

But, as if to prove the point of the statement, Bernadin quickly found himself in the firing line from his more conservative colleagues. Boston's Cardinal Bernard Law—long considered to be something of the Pope's man in the US hierarchy—rejected the need for the initiative, on the argument that the Catholics already had a common ground 'in Scripture and tradition' mediated through the 'binding teaching of the magisterium'. Cardinals James Hickey (Washington DC), Anthony Bevilacqua (Philadelphia) and Adam Maida (Detroit) backed Law's criticism.

ON NOVEMBER 14, BERNADIN DIED of cancer. The US church, and Catholics more widely, lost a man of vision and imagination, a man whose public profile came to owe as much to the increasing number of mediocre church leaders around him as it did to his own talents for conciliation and gentle persuasion. How the Common Ground Project will fare now without him is uncertain, but the prospects are not bright. When Bernadin announced, two weeks after launching the project, that he'd been diagnosed with terminal cancer, his detractors were quick to express their preference for a more traditional replacement in Chicago. They may get their wish—their tactless, if not heartless, politicking passing for some kind of local consensus when the Vatican makes its decision.

And so we have bishops openly disagreeing amongst themselves, some preferring comfortable conformity to creative tension, others stifled in their attempts to introduce imaginative and energetic initiatives that respond to the laity's demand for a genuine role in the affairs of their church. What this suggests is that the pathology of control is producing a dysfunctional church at the local and national level.

This, not the issue of women priests or of a celibate clergy, is one of the great threats to church unity in the immediate future. Another is the growing chasm between the priorities and concerns of the First World Church and that of the Third World. Nowhere is that more evident, or more instructive, than in the Vatican's attempt to reimpose its hegemony over the Latin American church.

The decision by the Latin American bishops at Medellin in 1968 to embrace a 'preferential option for the poor' was significant for several reasons. It signalled an historic change in the church's social position from alliance with the interests of power and privilege to identification with the oppressed. This implied a whole new *raison d'être* for church.

The purpose was now not simply to dispense salvation in the next world but also to work for the social, political, and economic liberation of people in this world. This in turn

required a profound change in church structure. Collective responsibility and communal decision-making replaced a hierarchical model of church where remote and aloof rulers made decisions on everyone else's behalf.

The campaign by church conservatives (including some in Latin America itself) and the Curia to destroy this novelty and roll back the Latin American bishops' conference into a more wieldy body precedes John Paul II. But the effort has accelerated under him. The Vatican has assaulted the intellectual underpinnings of the Medellin vision with its attacks on liberation theology. It has weakened the sense of solidarity among Latin American bishops with conservative (often Opus Dei) appointments and a heavy oversight of regional episcopal meetings and initiatives. It has proposed a forthcoming Synod for America (encompassing North, Central and South Americans as well as an unspecified number of outsiders) which, if the preliminary documents produced by the Curia are any guide, looks set to further erode the autonomy of the Latin American bishops' conference and dilute the preferential option for the poor into a 'preferential love of the poor'. The result, if successful, will be one church under Rome and in Rome's image.

Such is the state of the Catholic Church as we approach the third millennium.

John Paul II will have about as much success at correcting this dysfunction by diktat as Leo X had of containing Luther and his discontents. For there are surprising similarities between the two situations. What popularised the break with Rome in the 16th century was the ease of communications, and greater access to information (including the Bible), that the printing press made possible. What propelled the break was the desire of kings and princes to break free of papal suffocation. But what sealed it was the shift in power in Europe from the Catholic south to the Protestant north—a shift that denied to either side the advantage to press their case with anything but the force of argument.

What has popularised the present Catholic protest is another revolution in the means of communication (consider how quickly and how widely Quinn's address or Bernadin's statement was circulated around the world) and the increasingly widespread church 'literacy' among Catholics. What will propel it is the immediate interests of bishops at their local and national level (for whom the real anxiety is not caused by the noise of those who stay in the church but by the silence of that vastly greater number who leave). And what will seal it is a church that, by the turn of the century, will number 70 per cent of its adherents not in Europe or North America but in the Third World.

WHILE IN ROME LAST YEAR, I also revisited the Colosseum. For my money, the simple cross erected to the early martyrs on one side of the arena is a more telling symbol of the ultimate ascendancy of gospel values than anything built on the other side of the Tiber. Importantly too, as the visitor can't fail to notice, the cross stands *beneath* the podium on which, for a brief historical moment, sat the emperor—wielding his absolute power of life and death. ■

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

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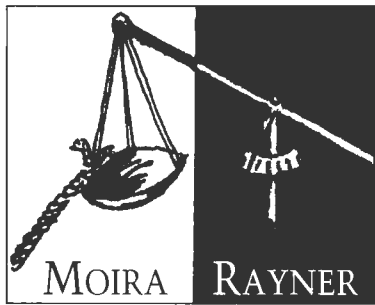
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Commissions and omissions

*Alone, alone, about the dreadful wood
Of conscious evil runs a lost mankind,
Dreading to find its Father.*

—W.H. Auden

I HAVE OFTEN SEEN SHAMED MEN CRY, often enough not to be surprised. In the last couple of years I have worked closely with two men who wanted to die of shame. Both were being investigated about their sexual conduct, and both faced exposure, humiliation and hugely embarrassing publicity for themselves and their families.

One was a senior bureaucrat accused of sexually harassing another man who, he thought, had been his close confidant. The other was a respectable businessman, a father, charged with sexual intercourse with a friend's under-aged daughter. One had been actively suicidal but after a year's psychotherapy told me that, though he wouldn't actively take the final step, he would be happy now if death 'just happened'. The other said he was taking the 'Yeldham option.'

Last month a retired NSW Supreme Court judge, David Yeldham, gassed himself in his car. A couple of days before he died, a self-righteous parliamentarian had named him as an identity-protected witness in the Woods Royal Commission: just hours before he connected the hose and started the engine the former judge had been served with a subpoena to give evidence to the Commission.

Shame is illogical, overwhelming and quite distinct from guilt, though just as destructive. Shame is the persistent subtext in the transcripts from those hundreds of Royal Commissions and public inquiries which have been such a feature of Australian public life this century. Royal Commissions have become, in Australian political consciousness, the modern equivalent to the medieval Morality Play. Let Everyman be judged, and publicly too.

We cannot be governed by Royal Commission nor should we assume Royal Commissions are as appropriate as their institutionalisation seems to suggest. They are often controversial and partisan, even trivial—High Court Chief Justice Griffith carried out an inquiry into the War in 1918, and finished it within a week. In principle they are unfair, set up by governments and parliaments, not independently of them, nor 'judicial' in character. They only seem that way—the Queensland Opposition actually objected to the Borbidge government's own Commission of Inquiry into the CJC's Carruthers Inquiry into the Mundingburra by-election as an interference with the judicial process—because retired or former judges tend

to supplement their pensions from doing them.

Such eminent and respectable men (and occasionally women) are the products of an adversarial system which 'finds' facts through lawyers working to obscure them, but Royal Commissioners are inquisitors. Royal Commissioners however, investigate rather than adjudicate. They gather evidence and with statutory authority can force revelations, even confessions, as courts cannot, because an inquisition presumes neither innocence nor guilt, just as it makes no determination, only recommendations.

The worth, and the integrity, of a Royal Commission depends on its terms of reference and the character of its Commissioner. The former must be discrete, well-defined and ought not take on a life, or expanded terms of reference, mid-course. The latter must possess an independence of spirit and great sensitivity to the harm an inquisition might do.

A Commission can become a 'people's court' if it identifies closely with the political aims of the executive, as in Nazi Germany, or it may become a choreographed show trial, as in Stalinist Russia or McCarthyite America if it succumbs to self-righteousness. There is no limit to a government's desire for political advantage and the public's appetite for scandal.

Royal Commissions are often called to deal with political and media controversy: the Inquiry into Black Deaths in Custody, for example, was a response to public disquiet about reports of Aboriginals dying violently in police and prison care. Some Royal Commissions are conscious of their political sensitivity and nourish their relationship with the media—the Woods Commission for one. Another was that of Kenneth Marks QC, whose inquiry into Carmen Lawrence's knowledge of a petition tabled in Parliament effectively crippled her political career from the moment reports were published of the evidence counsel assisting the Commission chose to lead on its first morning.

WHY ARE AUSTRALIANS SO PRONE TO Royal Commissions? The logical explanation, that ordinary investigative and adversarial mechanisms can't deal properly with systemic maladministration or corruption, are quite unconvincing. Royal Commissions are rare in Britain, which has plenty of scandals, and they are historically inadequate in effecting lasting change.

I suspect the answer to their popularity lies deep within the Australian character, its violent past and the forbidding landscape, its recent democratic traditions and threats to them, which make a volatile mixture of political and private needs, shimmering



like the hot air moments before a bush-fire begins. Earlier this year the Woods Commission experienced a kind of inverse 'Toronto blessing'. Humiliated and weeping witnesses 'rolled over,' one after another, confessing their sins to their own apparent relief and public fascination. The other side was that at least half a dozen witnesses and suspects have committed suicide, too. Human shame seems designed for dramatic expiation. Community standards demand a public sacrifice and commitment.

Should public hearings inquire into sexual conduct in this way? There are very few of us who would not be shamed, beyond all reason, if we had to remember and describe or explain our sexual acts and fantasies to strangers. Sexual energy is so personally powerful, and sexual fantasy so cerebral and private that I doubt that it can be explained or understood. Sexual feelings are essentially private and we are conditioned to conceal and defend, to make their expression furtive.

PRIVACY IS A FUNDAMENTAL human need and a basic human right. We publicly name people accused of crime, though their innocence is presumed and they might well be acquitted, to reinforce the communal value of stigma. We publish court proceedings, because there is a public interest in judges setting and enforcing norms of behaviour, but we don't publish Family Law proceedings because there is a competing, greater public interest in preserving family privacy. We protect the identities of those who make complaints of sex offences, to protect the public interest in their coming forward without the deterrent effect of fear, of being shamed, shunned, or shown up as persecutors.

But are we so committed to the dramatic performance of an Inquiry that we have lost sight of the public interest in inflicting shame only when it is justified? There is no place for trial by community opinion, and Commissions should be, in my view, rare creatures addressing gross, institutionalised misconduct and maladministration only when all other avenues have failed. ■

Maira Rayner is a lawyer and freelance journalist. Her e-mail address is: 100252.3247@compuserve.com

S Thank God for small Mercedes

SINGAPORE'S ECONOMY HAS GONE from standing still to high speed in about 30 years, changing gears furiously all the way. But, as it enters its second generation as an independent nation, the way it engages information technology may well be the key to its future. At the time of its independence from Malaysia in 1965, the outlook for the new city-state looked dim. Its economy was in poor shape, and it had few resources—apart from its people—upon which it could draw. Now, in Asia, it is second only to Japan in gross national product per capita, and among the world's top 10 countries.

Singapore has achieved such spectacular success in so short a time partly through heavy reliance on modern technology. Its container port is the most efficient and automated in the world. The subway system runs like (digital) clockwork. Even the public toilets automatically flush the moment you step away. And a high proportion of the populace is computer literate. It is not uncommon to see a little old lady, hunched over a walking stick, extracting information from a touchscreen. Singapore secondary students recently topped a survey of skill across 44 nations in both maths and science.

But this love affair with technology has not always been smooth. The paternalistic People's Action Party governments, headed first by Mr Lee Kwan Yew and now by Mr Goh Chok Tong, have insisted on accepting new technology on Singapore's terms—often rejecting the mainly Western values behind adopted technology in favour of 'Singapore family values'. That arch-shaper of society, the motor car, has been firmly put in its place: typically the Singapore government has put a limit on the number of cars it will allow onto its roads. Each month, would-be car owners bid for 'certificates of entitlement' to operate a vehicle in Singapore. Next, they are faced with import duties which take the price of medium-sized Toyota to more than \$80,000 and an average Mercedes Benz to something like \$250,000. (It says something about Singapore's affluence that Mercedes is outselling Toyota at present.) And then there are further restrictions on taking cars into the inner city area.

The result is manageable traffic—unlike their immediate neighbours to the north, Singaporeans keep impressing on you—and an efficient public transport system for those who have no car of their own.

But coping with cars is nowhere near as difficult as coping with information. Singapore has ambitions to become the information hub of Southeast Asia, if not the whole of Asia. Already it is jockeying to take over from Hong Kong as the ground station for Asia's extensive satellite television networks, and it also hopes to be the premier provider of Internet services in the region. But both these technologies are built upon Western-style freedom of access to information, which the Singapore government is unwilling to accept. So you have the prospect of Singapore as ground station for television services its own citizens are unable to watch. Private individuals cannot own satellite dishes. Even promotional videotapes for business must be checked for content before being allowed in. Whether satellite television networks feel they can thrive in that sort of environment is an interesting question.

The Net looms as an even bigger problem. Already Singapore's opposition parties have begun to exploit the opportunity by providing their viewpoints at their own websites. But the potential for access to everything from pornography to drug dealing is enormous. The government has moved quickly to legislate draconian penalties for those Internet providers who give access to proscribed websites. But how do you turn back the tides in the shifting seas of cyberspace? As soon as you close off one website in Singapore, another bobs up in the Bahamas—and connection is just as easy. After all, Singapore has one of the most modern telecommunications set-ups in the world.

Australia may have something to learn from observing Singapore in its efforts to tame the technology tiger. ■

Tim Thwaites is a freelance science writer.

Barbed contract

Setting the prisoners free may lose its currency as a seasonal gesture if the prisoners happen to be making a tidy profit for their masters.

Jon Greenaway reports on the new business of labour for profit in our private prisons.

AT ABOUT 1.30 PM ON MONDAY NOVEMBER 18, a prison guard produced his revolver in the crowded south gate area of Pentridge prison, spun it on his finger and ordered visitors and workmates to get out. He then reportedly put the gun to his head. For four hours he kept police at bay before he surrendered. His actions, it is alleged, were born of fears that he might be one of 600 out of 1150 prison officers who would be out of a job as a result of government reforms.

Peter Pertolus, an industrial officer representing prison officers for the State Public Services Federation, says members vented their anger and frustration at a stop-work meeting called the day following the siege. The reluctance of the private operators to re-employ them and the government's silence on redundancy demands were at the head of their concerns.

'Many of these guys have been in the system for 20 to 30 years', Pertolus points out, 'so they feel as if they've been kicked in the head.'

Pertolus is also disturbed by the conditions prison officers face, in both the public and private sectors of the changing system. He believes that staffing levels are too low at the one private prison currently in operation—the 125-bed women's facility at Deer Park (only one officer is on duty at night). And staff here are asked to supervise prisoners without having the training and experience necessary. According to Pertolus, the employment numbers in the private system are at a level to which the public system would not want to fall:

'Pentridge was designed before the days of "unit management" so it is not feasible that it operates with these sort of staffing levels ... The public system has to compete with one hand tied behind its back because of outdated infrastructure.'

In the context of reduced staff levels, the legal requirement that meaningful work be provided for at least six hours per day, 10 days per fortnight, will be more crucial than ever to the organisation of an inmate's daily routine.



In the near future, Australia will have the highest concentration of privately run gaols in the world. In Victoria alone, three private prisons will be operating by the end of 1997, housing 1325 inmates—over 45 per cent of the State's prisoners. Corrections Corporation of Australia runs the women's facility at Deer Park, Australasian Correctional Management will open one men's prison at Sale by mid-1997 and Group 4 at Laverton plans to be operational by the end of the year, with a men's metropolitan prison.

In addition, the Kennett Government will soon repeal the Victorian Prison Industries Commission Act and introduce amendments to the conduct and ministerial supervision of prison industry. The intention is to turn the employment of inmates into the principal means of their rehabilitation and reintegration into society. Its added attraction is the opportunity it offers for cost recovery.

The popular image of prison labour is that of emu parades picking up rubbish by roadsides or the production of car number plates. But with the expansion of prison industries to the point where most gaols in Australia have between 60 and 85 per cent of inmates employed in one activity or another, contact with the private sector has been made to fill demand. Proponents of the benefits that employment brings to inmates point to the alternative of having prisoners sitting around idle when they could be learning a trade, or picking up skills in the kind of work they might find in a job outside prison walls. Detractors see it as exploitative and of little real benefit to former inmates who are looking to get back on their feet.

THE SHADOW MINISTER FOR CORRECTIVE SERVICES in Victoria, Andre Haermeyer, believes, however, that accountability is being jeopardised by the Government's privatisation of Victoria's gaols, and that this applies particularly where prison industries are concerned. The Victorian Prison Industries Commission, which had the responsibility of administering prison



In the near future, Australia will have the highest concentration of privately run gaols in the world. In Victoria alone, three private prisons will be operating by the end of 1997, housing 1325 inmates—over 45 per cent of the State's prisoners ... In addition, the Kennett Government will soon repeal the Victorian Prison Industries Commission Act and introduce amendments to the conduct and ministerial supervision of prison industry. The intention is to turn the employment of inmates into the principal means of their rehabilitation and reintegration into society. Its added attraction is the opportunity it offers for cost recovery.

labour and ensuring that it stayed within the bounds of accepted protocol, will be disbanded and replaced with a 10-member advisory panel to be picked by the minister.

'Presently with the Victorian Prison Industries Commission (Vicpic), people appointed to that are required to satisfy certain criteria,' says Haermeyer. 'You have to have somebody from the finance sector, you have to have a representative of Trades Hall, you have to have a representative of manufacturing industry. So the people there have some sort of qualification ...

'So now he's got an advisory committee that's got no teeth. If some of those people on that committee don't respond in the way he wants them to respond, he can change them.

'But most importantly, he no longer has to comply with the requirement that it be a prison site or a Vicpic site. Any factory, any roadside, any piece of land anywhere could become a prison industry site.'

Haermeyer asserts that the private operators will push to overturn the kind of restrictions that have been customary for prison labour, for example, that prisoners work in industries which provide import replacement or for which there are no local competitors.

During the second reading of the Corrections Amendment Bill in October, he discussed the behaviour of Wackenhut Corrections, the American parent company of Australasian Correctional Management. He referred specifically to US Technologies, a company that manufactures electrical components for computers at a prison managed by Wackenhut at Lockhart in Texas. Representatives of the AFL-CIO—the American equivalent of the ACTU—complained that US Technologies were lured to the Lockhart site by cheap labour rates, and shut down a plant in Austin in order to do so. Haermeyer asked the house: 'Should Wackenhut be achieving such objectives in the prison system at the expense of free workers in the general community?'

In July a story appeared in the *Financial Review* detailing the controversy surrounding International Cable Manufacturers, a subsidiary of Kambrook Australia. The plant in Adelaide, which employed 150 people to make electrical cords and cables, was shut down and its operations relocated in the prison at Junee, NSW, operated by Wackenhut's Australian subsidiary, Australasian Correctional Management. A representative of the Australian Electrical and Electronic Manufacturers Association claimed that the maximum paid to prisoners is \$60 per week, as opposed to the award minimum of \$360, and that this drop in labour rates consequently gave ICM an unfair advantage over competitors.

The suggestion that the commercialisation of prison industries has in this case led to the abuse of prison labour is contested by Wayne Ruckley, the Director of Corrective Services Industries in NSW. He argues that the advantage of cheap labour rates is reduced because prison workforces are, by nature, inefficient. In the particular case of ICM (which has since been sold by Kambrook) he suggests that the Adelaide plant was scheduled to close before the Junee facility came up as a possible site for their workshop.

MORE GENERALLY, HE CONTENDS that industry has complained about competing with prison labour since the 1790s. Vocationally-oriented work, he argues, is crucial to the rehabilitation of inmates and commercial links are all the more effective for this:

'What we've sought to do, and I think been successful at doing over the last seven or eight years, is deliberately pursue a path where the work programs that we conduct within the New South Wales correctional system replicate a workplace in the community.

'If you walked into our correctional system (in the past) you found a lot of people just lying around in yards idle, but those who were engaged in work programs tended to be doing

it with a hobby mentality... It was anything but the sort of environment that would prepare inmates positively for the future.'

Ruckley is sensitive to the criticisms that cheap prison labour allows for the possibility of abuse by private industry and private prison operators. Prisoner remuneration varies from state to state (in Victoria it currently ranges between \$4.50 and \$6.50 per day—rates which are determined by the Correctional Services Commissioner).

RUCKLEY POINTS TO MOVES to establish a code of practice for prison industries in all jurisdictions. In October, he and his colleagues in other states and territories went to their ministers with a code of practice for business development in prison industries. He is hopeful that it will see ratification by the end of the year and be binding on both private and public sectors. If it is, Ruckley believes that there will be less likelihood of breaches in the protocol for prison industry development.

Ruckley is of the opinion that these new styles of work programs are more helpful to released inmates intent on getting some employment. In a paper he delivered at a correctional industries conference in April, he also made the point that the security of a prison depends on the success of work programs. Giving inmates a routine and obligations leads to self-management—all the more important if there are to be fewer staff.

The commercialisation program began in 1991 with the nation's first 'outside' contract for the manufacture of steel gates at St Helier's Correctional Centre in the Hunter Valley. Two studies on the success of these programs, for prisoners both before and after their release, were commissioned by the NSW Department of Corrective Services. The most recent of them, published in November 1995, studied the effectiveness of each type of program. In particular, the report concluded that prisoners on work release were the most successful in finding employment after leaving prison.

However, the report also found that only 58 per cent of parolees studied had commenced employment in the 12 months after release, compared with 72 per cent in the 1991 study. This difference was attributed to the collection of the earlier set of data prior to the 1989 recession. The report's author goes on to excuse the lack of a control study group made up of those inmates who did not work while in gaol: 'Such a study would be unlikely to produce results because inmates that refuse to work in the NSW correctional system would be likely to have different characteristics from the general population of inmates.'

Eureka Street travelled to Junee prison in October, to view their works programs (We chose Junee in NSW because the one private facility operating in Victoria opened in August and has only recently secured contracts.)

Even after having obtaining verbal permission from Junee's Governor and works program manager, *Eureka Street* was refused entry to the facility because of the concerns expressed

by ACM's management. Subsequent telephone calls to ACM's Director, Ross Milliken, went unanswered.

In Victoria, prison-issues pressure groups are frustrated by what they claim is obfuscation by the government as well as the private operators—why, they ask, do the Commercial Confidentiality Agreements still apply to all three contracts, even though the successful tenders have been decided? Commercial confidentiality can apply to any information that would expose the private operators to disadvantage—too broad a definition according to the opponents of privatisation.

Catherine Gow, from the People's Justice Alliance, is not satisfied with the the situation where the Commissioner is the only person to vet contracts with private operators. Some information from his reports will be available in annual reports, but for Gow this is not good enough:

'The contracts have to be made public. Why are they hiding those contracts in the first place? Why is it that it is only the monitor and a couple of members of parliament that have access to those contracts? Not even all parliamentarians have access.'

She challenges Wayne Ruckley's argument that work leads to a more secure prison. But she does concede that boredom can create violence. Gow observes that work itself is not enough—it has to be the kind of work that can lead to employment after release.

Most of the work done inside, she suggests, is low-skilled labour-intensive work, which has little or no equivalent in the community. It is taking advantage of the cheap labour rates in order to provide cost-recovery for the operators and the government.

'It really has to go back to the purpose of imprisonment', she says.

'The notion is that you lose your freedom but you don't lose any other human rights. It's meant to be about rehabilitation, about giving you the potential to develop-up your skills, to prevent you doing crime later on.

'If that's the fact then cutting back staff and keeping people occupied by doing menial jobs within prison isn't achieving any of those goals of imprisonment.'

GOW IS EXTREMELY CRITICAL of the operation of Deer Park by Corrections Corporation of Australia, who, she says, have been slow to get education, health and work programs up and running. She claims that in the four months since it opened there have been nine attempted suicides which have gone unreported. She also contends that there has been widespread misuse of prisoner medication.

Gary Emerson, the General Manager of Deer Park, disagrees. He says there has been one attempted suicide, which was duly reported, and he categorically denies there has been overuse of medication to pacify prisoners.

'I do have some concerns about their [People's Justice Alliance] agenda,' Emerson says, 'It certainly isn't in the best interests of the women in this centre.'

Emerson estimates that around 80 per cent of inmates are involved in industry at the moment and of these about 25



Adams' values

are employed full-time, making directors' chairs, as part of the first commercial contract recently secured by the facility.

Another initiative of the Victorian Government's Corrections Amendment Bill is the provision for compulsory savings. The Minister for Corrective Services said in parliament that this 'will ensure that when a prisoner is released from gaol, the prisoner is in a position to begin a new life in the community without requiring immediate community financial support'.

The concern is that despite the Government's provision that 20 per cent of inmate earnings is put into a trust to be collected upon release, the rates of pay are so low—plus prisoners are not to receive any interest which might accrue from their savings—that the moneys many receive won't last too long. A prisoner released after serving a 12-month sentence, for example, could walk away with as little as \$235 in the pocket.

The Government is clearly of the opinion that ex-prisoners are better off relying on their own mettle to get going in the community again, rather than the support of well-funded, post-release organisations.

Whether or not this is the case, the goal of any prison system must ultimately be the effective rehabilitation of inmates. Few would argue that imparting employable skills to inmates in preparation for their release is not a worthwhile goal. The question is whether private industry, managed by private prison operators, will deliver such skills to the inmate.

Or is it as the detractors say: that works programs in the current environment of Victoria's prison systems are less about prisoner reform and more about cost-effective management and prisoner control?

On Saturday, November 2 the Melbourne *Age* ran an advertisement for Australasian Correctional Management. The ad called for expressions of interest in establishing industries at its Sale site. Its emphasis was revealing: 'The type of industry should be labour-intensive in nature, and preferably low skilled assembly-type manufacturing.' ■

Jon Greenaway is the assistant editor of *Eureka Street*.

THE DECISION NOT TO GIVE GERRY ADAMS a visa to enter Australia because he is 'not of good character' is unfortunate. This is the man who, with John Hume, was responsible for bringing 18 months of peace to Northern Ireland.

There are those who regard his achievement as a failure, because the ceasefire lasted only 18 months. For the people of Ulster, it was a blessed time when some form of normal life returned. When the breakdown occurred, it must have been as devastating to Adams as to everyone else. To somehow implicate him, as Mr Major did in his disgraceful 'crocodile tears' speech at the Conservative Party Conference, was to abandon statesmanship in favour of rabble-rousing.

On the other hand, there is a strong body of opinion that the breakdown was at least partly caused by the miserly and pusillanimous actions of the British Government. Yet Adams, the man who masterminded that ceasefire and is still the best hope for peace in Ulster, is refused admission to Australia, because he is not of good character. And all he wants to do is flog a book!

British pressures on US authorities to refuse Adams a visa in 1994 are documented by Tim Pat Coogan in his book *The Troubles*. It is reasonable to assume that similar arm-twisting went on in this country. In the American case, it took some vigorous talking from the powerful Irish lobby in Washington and the personal intervention of Bill Clinton to overrule the pro-British State Department. Sadly, Ireland has no such friends in this country.

The Australian ban is an act of the greatest discourtesy to Irish people living here and indeed to the millions of ordinary Australians who wish Ireland well. So many people speak of the welcome they received when they visited Ireland—people stopping to talk, buying them a drink, giving crazy road directions, asking if they ever met their Uncle Mike who went to Australia 40 years ago. For the Irish, hospitality is a virtue, a Christian duty. That one of their own would not be allowed to enter this country because he is alleged to be 'not of good character' is an act of the greatest rudeness. Many will regard it as an unfriendly act.

In the past few years, Gerry Adams has been admitted to Britain, Canada, the United States and every country in Europe; he has been toasted in the White House; Bill Clinton has posed for photographs with him. What persuaded the Coalition cabinet that he was an unfit person to enter Australia?

One final thought: if you were a diplomat from, say, Morocco or Finland or Mauritius, you would be well satisfied with your vote for Sweden or Portugal in the recent election to the Security Council. At least you voted for countries which are genuinely independent and are not still clinging to the apron-strings of some former imperial mother. ■

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Once in Springtime

THE SPRING CARNIVAL BEGAN with a free packet of Quick-Eze. Once this would have been an apt, if mild medication at the end of the day, but sponsorship changes more than the names of races.

At least this year, at Caulfield, on Guineas Day, the Toorak Handicap was not degradingly renamed after the chewy indigestion lolly. That honour went to the race that used to be the Herbert Power. Going through the gate, I was pleased to see that Caulfield—most amenable and attractive of Melbourne courses—had for once been blessed with decent weather. After 31°C the day before, it was cool but dry. Neither I, nor the man in the Tintin T-shirt who pushed past, were looking for excuses because of the state of the track.

My reserved seat, virtually opposite the winning post, bore the well-omened insignia GG 1. I was able to look at the huge inboard television screen. Australian jockeys go to Hong Kong. The innovations of its Jockey Club find their way here. Behind me all was ignorance. Peering at a form guide, a novice punter gave himself away by asking 'is Oliver rubbed out?' No, he is in Hong Kong.

Young Australian males bayed at each other. Does any country do itself credit by valorising brutal hoons who drink Carlton Cold from the bottle and speak the dialect 'Fuckin' '? No doubt this mob reckon Pauline Hanson says what 'most of us really think'.

Eyes front: a real trumpeter, in livery, stationed beneath the clocktower, summoned the two-year-olds, most still aged one. This race saw the debut last year of the Freedman-trained Encosta de Lago, favourite today for the Caulfield Guineas. In the present event, the John Hawkes-trained colt Le Mans was last into the straight, racing greenly, but as Darren Gauci hunted it up, always looked likely to win, and did. In the second,

Mighty Way railed up to win from the promising Peter Hayes colt Nature. Jim Mason, who took over the training establishment of the disgraced Gerald Ryan last season, had charge of the winner. A week later, Mason would lead in the mare Arctic Scent, whose Caulfield Cup win was a fine and timely indication of his own abilities.

Another mare, How Now, won the Caulfield Cup two decades ago. Here she was honoured by a race run at 1200m—half the Cup distance. After jumping only fairly, Fabulous Friscoe settled third and won unextended. The Caulfield Guineas has often in recent years been won by ordinary horses at long odds. Encosta de Lago was 7/4 on.



He had brilliantly won the Stutt Stakes on the Sunday after the Grand Final. Controversy still attends the event. The colt was tested three times for highly elevated bicarbonate levels, but eventually stewards allowed it to start. Ordinary punters asked, with habitual cynicism and disgruntlement, what would have happened had a battler, rather than Lee Freedman, trained the horse?

In the Guineas, Encosta de Lago ran third, never threatening, just ahead of its handsome stablemate, Portland Player. The Tasmanian-bred Alfa, by El Moxie, shifted recently to the care of Bart Cummings, came from last to beat the brave Intergaze. Accepting the trophy, Alfa's owner Barry Larter proclaimed—to no dissent—a great day for Tassie'.

Freedman was back in the Toorak, winning with the honest, pony-sized Poetic King. In the Caulfield Stakes, the Gai Waterhouse horse, Juggler, pulled hard for half the journey but still won by nearly four lengths. Last season's champion, Octagonal, plodded in for fourth. Waterhouse was training under a stay of proceedings. She had been suspended for three months for not allowing Gossips to run on its merits (by having it act as a pacemaker for Juggler) in the Shannon Quality at Rosehill. Her appeal succeeded. Battling jockey Kevin Forrester took the two-month rap. Once again, ordinary punters asked ...

IN HOBART ON CAULFIELD CUP day, I was distracted enough to back Arctic Scent which won at nearly 30/1 and Mellow Chateau at better than 40/1 in the last.

The following Tuesday saw 'Breakfast with the Stars' at Moonee Valley. Here hopefuls for the Cox Plate went through their paces while tyros pretended to be clockers. If you queue, breakfast is free. In the Celebrity Room it is \$15 per head. For that price one consumes orange juice, croissants, coffee, champagne, anything fried. And one sees the barrier draw for the Cox Plate. With only eight runners, this was of little practical moment. One faced the intriguing prospect of a small, high quality, European-style field.

Come the day: the Hawkes/Gauci combination won the first with Sports, who was never comfortable on this small, amphitheatrical track. Watch for the Hayes runner-up, Aces Royale. In the Great Western, there was almost a triple dead-heat. Fairway Lass, ridden by big-noting Greg Childs, won by a short half head from dead-heaters, Simply Believe and Suria. A complicated set of multiple protests saw Fairway Lass relegated to fourth, the other two to equal first.

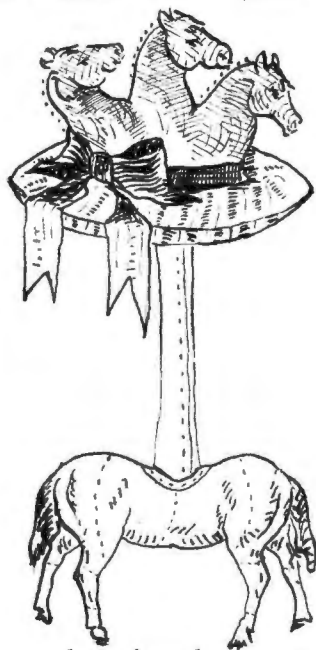
Franking the Guineas form, Alfa won the three-year-old race from Intergaze. Eastern Princess saluted at big odds in the next, but shrewd punters Shane Templeton and Shaun Cosgrove had included her in their Straight Six selections, made with part of the \$17000 Winners' Club pool.

Faxing my friend, Robin Gerster, in Tokyo, I had reminded him of how the Moir Stakes, a 1000 metre sprint, usually produces a winner from low in the weights. My tip, Spartacus, did the job at 12/1—a rare victory for one-time on-pace trainer Rick Hore-Lacy. The overhyped Cox Plate could no longer be delayed. To the theme music of *The Mission*, leukæmia-stricken former racecaller Bill Collins was driven up the straight in a limo, and must have feared he was Ted Whitten.

The race saw Cummings-trained Saintly win in the last stride from Filante. The former top colt Lochrae then put us out of the Straight Six. Course spruiker, the egregious Gary Gray (remembered as Colonel Emerson's brat in *Bellbird*), kicked winning jockey Greg Hall for remarking on Gray's weight. Only the Moonee Valley Cup—once the day's feature—was left. Peter Hayes's import Istidaad won cleverly, as they say in Britain, that is, with a bit in hand for the Melbourne Cup.

Kind friends Kate and Richard (their real names) had invited me to the Derby. In the Nursery Car-park, to my astonishment, thousands gathered under a hot sun and drank beer and champagne. Few saw a race.

I'd come from town, fresh from an attempt to be fitted with bifocals. Bets had been placed at the TAB in Young and Jackson's. The next move was harder. That majestic simile for inebriation, 'as full as two race trains', came true again. I squeezed aboard, crushing several preposterous hats. At Spencer Street, other seasoned punters pushed me further into the compartment,



complaining of the tourists who made their regular trip to the track a seasonal nightmare. At Flemington the roses wilted in the heat. A yellow dirigible advertising chocolates patrolled the skies. The big screen replayed Derbies past. John Pasquarelli, svengali of Ms Hanson, was heard to boast of his Cox Plate winnings. And before the first, a minor car accident on the way to the track cost Simon Marshall the winning ride on Cool Choice. Armidale gave me a good win in the second, then the regally-bred Rose of Portland, former Caulfield Cup favourite, just lasted in the third.

Cummings saddled up the short-priced Dashing Eagle in the Wakeful Stakes for fillies, only to see the stablemate, Danendri, home at 16/1. This was an astonishing twelfth Wakeful for Cummings. Running home hard for third, Calm Abiding looked an Oaks prospect. It was to have been one of British-based Frankie Dettori's carnival rides, until the sheiks told him to stay home. In the Derby, Portland Player scored by a half neck to the dead-heaters Alfa and Ebony Grosve (owners' spelling). Close finishes in classics often mean the colts aren't much good. Then again, Octagonal just beat Saintly, Filante and Nothin' Leica Dane in last season's AJC Derby.

NOTHIN' LEICA DANE LOOKED a treat in the Mackinnon Stakes, its final run before the cup. Shane Dye gave it a very easy run in last place most of the way before finishing strongly for seventh.

This traditional use of the Mackinnon lead-up did not impress stewards, who reprimanded Dye. Part-owner Tommy Smith staged some distracting theatre by demanding that daughter and trainer, the aforementioned Gai Waterhouse, sack the jockey. She refused. Next race was the 1200m Salinger, won in course record time by Freedman's Gold Ace. Stablemate Encosta de Lago (him again) kept to the slower, flatside rail and ran eighth. Once upon a time, when the race was named for a fag (Craven 'A') and not cheap bubbly, Vain won by twelve lengths. Finally, all reminiscence done,

it was the 'Ten News Handicap', called the Hotham Handicap when a triple dead-heat resulted in 1956. On this late afternoon, Gauci recorded his sixth win in the event on Waterhouse's Few Are Chosen and the composition of the Melbourne Cup field was settled.

The Melbourne Cup had enticed the giant Irish chestnut Oscar Schindler, 'a reincarnation of Phar Lap', as commentators chased each other to remark. But another chestnut triumphed. The *feng shui* experts who redesigned Bart Cummings's stables to change his luck were vindicated. Saintly came off the narrow Cox Plate win to score superbly.

This was a great victory, but a much more durable champion, the finest trainer in Australian turf history takes most credit. Astonishingly this was Cummings's tenth Melbourne Cup. The VRC gave him a perpetual, miniature trophy; the crowd three cheers. And Cummings had the last word. 'Nice horse', he said of Saintly. ■

Peter Pierce is Eureka Street's turf correspondent.

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The Jesus in question

IN THE UNITED STATES there has been widespread acknowledgement of the 2000th anniversary, the Second Millennium, of Jesus' birth. The celebration has galvanised scholars involved in the Third Quest for the Historical Jesus to gear up their research,

while in some quarters positions are firming either for or against the Jesus Seminar. HarperCollins, the publishers, even set up an internet address (Jesus 2000@inf.harpercollins.com) so that scholars could have their say in an orderly fashion.

The *Second Millennium* of Jesus' birth? Shouldn't it be in the year 2000? And the *Third Quest* for the Historical Jesus? Have there already been two others? And what is the *Jesus Seminar*?

Take the 2000th birthday celebration first. It is as certain as anything can be historically that there actually was a Jesus. Tacitus, a Roman historian writing about the year 100, had no need to falsify the facts when he wrote disparagingly about Christianity:

(Nero) substituted as culprits and punished with the utmost refinements of cruelty, a class of persons hated for their vices, whom the crowd called Christians. Christus, the founder of the name, had undergone the death penalty in the reign of Tiberius, by sentence of the procurator Pontius Pilate, and the pernicious superstition was checked for a moment, only to break out once more, not only in Judea, the home of the disease, but in the capital itself, where everything horrible or shameful in the world gathers and becomes fashionable.

Tacitus presumes there was a Jesus. But unfortunately no historical source gives us a date for Jesus' birth. Can we calculate a reliable birth date?

Since Luke 3:23 tells us that Jesus was about 30 years old when he began his public ministry and Luke 3:1 tells us that this took place in the 15th year of the emperor Tiberius, ancient Christian authors seemed to have one certain date. Tiberius' 15th year was 782 AUC (*ab urbe condita*—from the founding of the city) in the old Roman calendar. So 782 minus 30 years gave 752. This was made 1 *Anno Domini*, 'the first year of the Lord', in the new Christianised calendar devised by the scholarly monk, Dionysius Exiguus, in the sixth century.

Unfortunately this date has problems since Matthew's gospel relates Jesus' birth to the reign of Herod the Great—and we know Herod died in 4BC. On the other hand, Luke had given a worldwide census during the governorship of Quirinius as the reason for Joseph and Mary's travelling to Bethlehem. There is no evidence that the Roman emperors ever held such a census. When Quirinius was appointed governor he did hold a census but only in Judea, not Galilee, and that was in the

Above: Jesus depicted healing a woman with a chronic hæmorrhaging disorder. From a fresco of the late third century, the cemetery of Saints Peter and Marcellinus, Rome.

From Jesus: The Evidence by Ian Wilson, Weidenfeld & Nicolson

The Second Millennium of Jesus' birth, the Third Quest and the Jesus Seminar have raised tantalising responses to age-old questions. But the debate is not really for the untrained novice who has not kept up with the ongoing discussions. When I see airport bookshops throughout the world stocked with books by Thiering or Crossan, I wonder how adequately equipped 20th century travellers really are to evaluate what these writers have to say.



year 6-7AD. Neither Matthew nor Luke fits in with Dionysius Exiguus' date.

In short, any year assigned to the birth of Jesus is an educated and approximate guess. Since Jesus' birth and Herod the Great have long been associated in the popular imagination and the latest date that would make them coincide is 4BC, that has often been given as the birthyear of Jesus. Hence, 1996 has been accepted as the Second Millennium.

That brings us to the Third Quest.

To appreciate the Third Quest we need to go back to the First and Second Quests.

The First Quest took place during the 19th century. The Western world of the last century had been shaken to its roots by its realisation that science and history, not religion and tradition, were the real sources of knowledge. There was a concerted and well-intentioned effort to examine all areas of learning and to eliminate myth and superstition. A modern world had come into being, and only science and history were acceptable as true forms of knowledge.

SCIENTIFIC METHOD WAS APPLIED TO THE BIBLE in order to find out what was worthwhile and what should be discarded. Scholars re-read the Bible as if it were an historical text, unencumbered by any Church tradition. One of the major projects was to reconstruct an historical life of Jesus. In 1835 David Strauss, a renowned German scholar, produced his *Life of Jesus*. In it he rejected John's gospel outright as an historical source since it seemed that the long flowing speeches attributed to Jesus in that gospel were no more than the preaching of the early Church in print.

Strauss also rejected the supernatural stories in the other gospels and came up with an upright Jesus who went around doing good for his contemporaries. This became the exemplar for many 19th century historical Jesuses.

From that time a host of scholars tried their hand at a *Life of Jesus*. These ranged from naive fundamentalists who accepted the four gospels as reliable historical documents to sceptics who debated every detail. It has been estimated that during the nineteenth century some 60,000 Lives of Jesus were produced with a common sport being the airing of inconsistencies and contradictions in the gospels. Most of the scholars were of Protestant persuasion. The Roman Catholic church went into hiding, forbidding its biblical scholars to dabble in a new academic game. Those who dared to test the authorities were dealt with severely. Excommunication was often invoked. The Catholic Church even invented a heresy called Modernism as a catch-all for any progressive thinking in theology or biblical interpretation.

In 1906 Albert Schweitzer, who as an old man would receive the Nobel Peace Prize for his work as a medical missionary among lepers, reviewed these Lives and concluded that Jesus was a shadowy fanatic, preaching the coming end of the world and dying under the delusion that his death would actually bring about the collapse of the world order. Schweitzer's Jesus never intended to found a Church and never intended to leave behind any lasting program for future Christians—since he foresaw no future for the world beyond his death. For many scholars Schweitzer marked the end of any further search for an historical Jesus. Thus ended the First Quest.

Up to the 1950s, while most Christians in the pews, including all observant Roman Catholics, accepted the gospels as more or less factual eye-witness accounts, there were many Christian theologians who doubted that anything could be known about Jesus apart from the fact that he probably existed. They consoled themselves by rejecting the need for an historical Jesus. All that Christian faith required, they explained to each other, was the message of Jesus as told in the gospel story. Whether a factual Jesus ever existed and whether he factually delivered that message was immaterial.

HOWEVER, BY THE MID 1950s SCHOLARS BEGAN to murmur discontentedly with the results of the First Quest. They began a Second Quest (although at the time it was called the 'New Quest'). These Second Questers were sure that they were more in control of the gospel texts as literature and that much had been learned in the preceding 50 years about the background history and culture of the times in which Jesus had lived. They felt they could present a more fleshed-out *Life of Jesus*. While they could not expand much of his birth story, they could identify that a turning point had occurred in his life when he met with John the Baptist and was baptised by him. This would have led to his ministry in Galilee, his subsequent journey to the capital city of Jerusalem and his execution on the cross under Pontius Pilate. An historical Jesus could be identified behind these pivotal actions as a teacher, an exorcist and a healer who ministered primarily to the poor and marginalised.

But the Second Quest was to be quickly overtaken by new discoveries. Already in 1947 the Dead Sea Scrolls had been found in caves by Bedouin Arabs, and during the 1950s some of the

What of his final days? The Third Questers agreed that he came to Jerusalem and was executed by the Romans because he was seen, rightly or wrongly, as a revolutionary. Almost universally they exonerate the Jews from any significant role in his death. Crossan questions whether there ever was a judicial trial, whether people of the status of a Pilate or a Herod or the Jewish High Priest would have been involved in the condemnation of an insignificant Galilean troublemaker.

major scrolls (apart from the biblical texts) entered the public domain. They were generally accepted as having belonged to a Jewish sect, the Essenes, of which very little had been previously known, and were dated to the centuries prior to Christianity. Tantalisingly, they told of a great leader, known only as the Teacher of Righteousness, who had been confronted by a wicked Priest, subsequently done to death by his enemies. What was more remarkable was that the texts told of a rite of initiation into the sect by water baptism, of sacred means of bread and wine, of awaiting two messiahs, of the sect's esteem for celibacy and poverty and its disdain for wealth. The followers of the sect called themselves 'The Way' or the 'Sons of Light' and they exhorted each other to walk in the 'truth' as they awaited the coming of the 'holy spirit'.

SCHOLARS WERE CONVINCED THAT THE SCROLLS gave them new access to the background of Jesus and the gospels. While most went no further in their claim, a few maintained that they were the writings of those who would become the first Christians, that the scrolls spoke about Jesus and John the Baptist and the first disciples. People like Barbara Thiering (for whom the Teacher of Righteousness was John the Baptist and the wicked Priest was Jesus) and Robert Eisenman (for whom the Teacher of Righteousness was James, the brother of Jesus and the Wicked Priest was Paul) are modern descendants of these few.

A little earlier in 1946, at Nag Hammadi in Egypt, another cache of texts had been discovered by Egyptian peasants. They were probably from the library of fourth century Christian monks who had espoused Gnosticism, a form of Christianity that was to be savagely rejected by mainstream Christianity. A scholarly world now heard of texts such as the *Gospel of Thomas* and the *Gospel of Philip*, which gave details of a Gnostic Jesus, very different from that presented in the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. The Gnostic Jesus was a heavenly being who had taken on the appearance of a human being to save humanity from the evil morass of matter.

There were new archaeological finds too. After 1967 when modern Israel took over all the West Bank from Jordan, archaeology became a national pastime. For example in 1968 there was widespread excitement when the first skeletal remains of a crucified man were discovered in a Jewish grave, north-east of Jerusalem. For the first time the cruel Roman mode of execution imposed on slaves and colonial dissidents could be accurately described. As archaeological evidence mounted, the history of Galilee and Judea in the time of Jesus was rewritten.

Nor were the gospel texts neglected. New literary methods in vogue were being applied to them. During the 1980s the Jesus Seminar was established. Up to 200 scholars met twice a year to debate the historical sayings of Jesus. What had he actually said? Discussion would range over the number of separate attestations of a saying. If the same saying occurred in Matthew and Luke then usually that counted as only one attestation, since they both are presumed to have copied from Mark or from a hitherto undiscovered collection of Jesus sayings known as Q (for the German *Quelle* or 'source'). If, on the other hand, the saying occurred say in both Mark and John, that was counted as two attestations, and if it also occurred in Thomas, that was three and the likelihood of it being an historical saying rose accordingly.

THE SEMINAR ALSO CONSIDERED WHETHER JESUS, given his Jewish background and the times, would have been likely to have employed a particular saying. After long debate the Seminar members would solemnly vote on the particular saying of Jesus. A container would be passed around for a secret vote with coloured counters. A red counter indicated that the voter thought that Jesus had actually said what was recounted in the gospel text; a pink counter meant that he probably had said it; a grey counter that it was unlikely; a black counter that he definitely had not said it.

There were very few red votes. But there were enough for some scholars to find a new confidence in what Jesus had actually said. Scholars also were confident that they could identify the background against which he would have said such things. They made use of modern disciplines such as sociology and anthropology to understand the dynamics of life in his times. This rush of scholarly activity, involving sayings, archaeology and history marked the onset of the Third Quest for the Historical Jesus.

Some Third Questers have become well known: John Dominic Crossan is Professor of New Testament at DePaul, a Catholic university. He is one of the convenors of the Jesus Seminar. He would maintain that the *Gospel of Thomas* contains very ancient sayings of Jesus, some closer to the original than Matthew, Mark, Luke or John. For him, Jesus was a Mediterranean Jewish peasant who offered the people of his time a new-found freedom from the oppression of Rome. Marcus Borg is Professor of Religion and Culture at Oregon State University, a practising Christian married to an Episcopalian priest. His Jesus was a highly literate teacher of new but subversive wisdom. So

the list goes on. Not all might be practising Christians, but neither are they overtly intent on destroying Christianity. Borg tells us that as a result of his own research: 'I have not only returned to the church but become increasingly more involved in its worship and life, and more deeply committed to the Christian journey.'

What would typical Third Questers say about an historical Jesus?

First, a majority would agree that Jesus was not born of a virgin mother and he was not born in Bethlehem. That probably comes as a shock to today's unprepared Christian believer. The virginal conception of Jesus in the gospels is attributed by Third Questers to the early Christian need to fulfil a Jewish expectation of a virginally conceived Messiah. The expectation was based on a prophecy in Isaiah, usually dated to the eighth century BC, which spoke of a young woman conceiving a child to be called Immanuel:

Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel.' (Isaiah 7:14)

That particular prophecy had been translated around 200BC from Hebrew (which used 'young woman' as above) to Greek which, presumably in error, used 'virgin' thus giving: 'Look, the virgin is with child and shall bear a son'. Some Jews read 'virgin' in their Greek texts and claimed that the prophecy could only relate to the coming deliverer, the Messiah.

Another prophecy, found in Micah, was interpreted by some Jews as stating that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem.

By you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah,
who are one of the little clans of Judah,
from you shall come forth for me
one who is to rule in Israel. (Micah 5:2)

While both Matthew and Luke claimed that Jesus was born of a virgin in Bethlehem, as the current texts required, they provided different explanations as to why a mother who lived in Galilee would have given birth to a son in the southern town of Bethlehem, many days' travel away. Matthew recounts that Mary and Joseph lived in a house in Bethlehem and Jesus was born there, but they fled to Egypt to escape the evil Herod and then, returning to Judea, decided to go up to Galilee and live in Nazareth because Herod's son was not much better.

LUKE, HOWEVER, HAD A DIFFERENT ACCOUNT even if the outcome was the same. According to his version, Mary and Joseph originally lived in Nazareth and came south to be registered in their ancestral town of Bethlehem because of a world-wide Roman census. In fact, historians know nothing of such a census, which would have caused enormous ripples in the Roman world. Even granting it did take place, returning to ancestral homes would not have served any known Roman purpose. While in Bethlehem, according to Luke, Jesus was born. After the birth, the threesome returned to Nazareth.

Most Third Questers consider the birth stories of both Matthew and Luke to be contrived in order to fulfil Jewish expectations. The stories are read as theological statements about Jesus, not historical facts. They presume that, in actual fact, Jesus had been naturally conceived, born and brought up in Nazareth of Galilee. Nothing further can be said of him by the historian until he is a mature man undertaking a religious mission among the rural towns of Galilee. There is general agreement among the Third Questers that he underwent a baptism by John, a fact ascertained by the obvious embarrassment of later Christian gospel-writers who try to downplay the event. Possibly he became temporarily a follower of John, who abused the local rulers and announced that the day of judgment was nigh.

From this point the Third Questers divide widely in their assessment of the essential identification of the historical Jesus: he was a wandering preacher, a social activist, a magician, an exorcist, an illiterate peasant, a literate teacher, a revolutionary, a Pharisee, an Essene, a marginal Jew.

What of his final days? The Third Questers agreed that he came to Jerusalem and was executed by the Romans because he was seen, rightly or wrongly, as a revolutionary. Almost universally they exonerate the Jews from any significant role in his death. Crossan questions whether there ever was a judicial trial, whether people of the status of a Pilate or a Herod or the Jewish High Priest would have been involved in the condemnation of an insignificant Galilean troublemaker. He sees the crucifixion of Jesus as having been singularly unspectacular, unseen by any of those who later reported the death. Later Christians would have constructed a scenario of the scourging, the dividing up of his garments, the offering to him of vinegar, his last words from the cross and eventual death from the fruits of their meditation on past Jewish biblical texts.

*If Christianity is not
provable by solid
historical fact,
who can deny
that it is neither more
or less valid than
Hinduism or Islam or
even Humanism?*



And what of a resurrection, of Jesus coming out of his tomb? Invariably, the Third Questers shy away from any crass physical resurrection. Marcus Borg writes cryptically: 'I affirm that the resurrection of Jesus really happened, and that need not involve anything happening to his corpse.'

Crossan speculates that when the common people of Galilee, who had heard Jesus' preaching and felt the burden of colonial oppression lifted from them, subsequently heard that he had died (perhaps months earlier) they were convinced that he still lived in some way. The widespread conviction that Jesus lived was the 'resurrection'.

But most Third Questers go further than presenting an academic case for their historical reconstruction of Jesus. Many claim that Christians should accept *their* historical Jesus, otherwise Christian teaching is going to be warped and the faithful led astray by distorted Christian teaching. But which Jesus to accept?

That's the dilemma the Third Questers raise for the Second Millennium celebration. There are just too many Jesuses. If Christians, overwhelmed by the welter of historical reconstructions, choose to accept that history is not really important, then they are forced back to the early twentieth century position—that Christianity cannot be based on historical fact, that the believer does not rely on history. But then those same Christians must live with the consequence: if Christianity is not provable by solid historical fact, who can deny that it is neither more or less valid than Hinduism or Islam or even Humanism?

The Second Millennium of Jesus' birth, the Third Quest and the Jesus Seminar have raised tantalising responses to age-old questions. But the debate is not really for the untrained novice who has not kept up with the ongoing discussions. When I see airport bookshops throughout the world stocked with books by Thiering or Crossan, I wonder how adequately equipped 20th century travellers really are to evaluate what these writers have to say. Do they know what the Third Questers presume as regards biblical texts, history, new discoveries and past battles? Do they appreciate the struggles that have taken place over the interpretation of the gospels? From my own anecdotal research I fear that the answer is negative. I am pleased that the debate has come out into the open, but I want to see more informed participants. ■

Robert Crotty is the author of *The Jesus Question: The Modern Search for the Historical Jesus*, published by HarperCollins.



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INVENTIONS

OF THE

MARCH HARE

T.S. Eliot, *Inventions of the March Hare: Poems 1909-1917*, edited by Christopher Ricks, Faber, 1996.

ISBN 0 571 17895 2 RRP \$49.95.

KENNETH REXROTH, the American poet, once said, in a short poem that will bear prose paraphrase, that an art of impersonality like that of Eliot or Valéry, if taken to its logical conclusion, will lead to worse indiscretions than the analyst's couch.

It's a penetrating remark because it indicates, through epigram, how a *symboliste* poetry of effects in which mermaids do not sing for the particular conjured self who speaks the poem (and is never, God help us, the poet) finds its post-romantic cover in a theory of literature—always strategic but never recognised as such—which makes an absolute separation between the person who suffers and the artist who creates.

And T.S. Eliot had a field day with just such a subterfuge. *Prufrock* insinuates its profundity and its range of suggestion before any butterfly of meaning is caught, under the cover of a persona we still find difficult to imagine sharing a set of gaucheries and insecurities with the young Tom Eliot.

The Waste Land, that 'almost comic poem' as Hugh Kenner called it, with its drowned girls and its circus show of vividly heard, never coherently placed, voices was read for many years as a poem about the breakdown of civilisation rather than the breakdown of its perpetrator ('Tom went mad so they locked Viv up' is just the vengeful cartoon history writes, unfairly and after the event, as one of its revenges).

And so it goes with the agonies of *Ash Wednesday* rendered so successfully liturgical that they seemed beyond pity. Even the questing, wrestled-with, spirituality of *Four Quartets* was 'covered' by

the authority of the poet who had invented the face of modern Anglo-American literary criticism and had therefore, as William Empson suggested, invented more of our own minds than we cared to admit.

For a long time the *Quartets*, which adhere to the first principles of *symbolisme* only in the effort to transcend it, were discussed as if they were simply about poetry. Even though they spoke of a condition of complete simplicity costing not less than everything, of the fire becoming one with the rose. Even though they spoke of errors done, and done to others' harm, which once we took for exercise of virtue.

So the Eliot who had become Catholic in his theology and Anglo-Catholic in his adherence managed to cover even the articulation of his deepest, personal and impersonal credo in an aura of reverberating authority at once agnostic and unknowable. After such knowledge what forgiveness? is a famously Eliotic question which has come to rebound on its author for no better reason than the fact that he enshrouded his life in privacy but wrote his work out of nothing else.

So it has survived longer than the fashion it initiated, the modernism it so sedulously disseminated and had assimilated. It survived as an encoded enigma of interest primarily, it sometimes seems, as the jottings of an untrustworthy character who would never come clean.

In fact the life has come to fasci-

nate us as the work has receded. Much of that fascination is based on a somewhat irrational sense that Eliot was treacherous for protecting his privacy while allowing his poetry to parade it. Hence the reaction.

Who but Eliot could have been subjected to Peter Ackroyd's biography, which was published to acclaim despite the crippling prohibition that the poet's voice could not be quoted, except minimally. The privacies could be laid bare, but the voice of the man who made them interesting was withheld—a neat reversal of the former situation where the poetry seemed to issue out of biographical nothingness.

Part of the impulse which led to Ackroyd and to *Tom and Viv* and the current debate over Anthony Julius' charge of anti-Semitism, is that Eliot, who was treated like one of the mighty dead by those who grew up reading him, was never willing—for very good reasons—to allow the intimate details of his life to serve as sops to publicise his work.

And because he did come on, as Wyndham Lewis said, like Westminster Abbey, he had no need to; indeed, he had every reason, with a hospitalised and deranged wife, to do the opposite. But, in the eyes of posterity, impersonality leads to indiscretion.

THE REACTION HAS COME FROM FABER. In particular it has come from the poet's widow, Valerie Eliot, the wife of his late years. It would certainly have amused Eliot to reflect that the publishing house he served is kept solvent by the fact that *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats* became Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Cats* and

the royalties keep flooding in. At one point, Eliot is quoted, in a 1957 letter, saying, 'I sometimes think that Shaw is best at musical comedy for *The Chocolate Soldier* and *My Fair Lady* are the only two of

his works which I would like to see again and again'.

MOMENTS LIKE THIS are what make Christopher Ricks' arid looking, encyclopædically thorough annotations to these lost drafts and fragments of Eliot's early poems.

Their publication now is part of Valerie Eliot's rearguard, thoroughly human, attempt to give her ghost-that-walks husband a posthumously human face, in a world after *Tom and Viv* and Ackroyd and anti-Semitism.

For all its armoury of erudition and its immense value as a tool for the kinds of literary scholars who no longer exist in a world of appliqué deconstructionism and boutique cultural studies, the publication of *Inventions of the March Hare* is at one with the effort, a decade or so ago, to publish Eliot's early letters. In these the aged eagle could be read worrying about money and just worrying.

It works, if you are willing to make the effort, because the Eliot of these poems is all too human and all too obviously the progenitor of *Prufrock*, even if Ricks' introduction and rebarbatively anal annotations are done in a spirit of almost parodic mummification that might have pleased the slippery Possum who did his damndest to present himself as if embalmed while he was still alive.

The notebook which contains the poems was sold to the American literary patron, John Quinn, in 1922. He died three years later and they were eventually sold to the New York Public Library which did not announce this fact until after the poet's death.

Eliot himself seems to have had few regrets: 'I cannot feel altogether sorry that this [typescript] and the notebook have disappeared. The unpublished poems in the notebook were not worth publishing.'

This both is and isn't true. The poems from this newly unearthed notebook show us the Harvard Eliot

of the Laforgue period, the period of 'Prufrock' and 'Portrait of a Lady', at his moment of precocious first maturity. They do so with a kind of stuttering brilliance which is at once endearing and unnerving. The stuttering comes, of course, from the fact that the poems are unfinished or abandoned.

Or in the strangest case, where the reader seems, fallaciously, to experience a kind of retrospective clairvoyance—where they were transmuted, with all their instabilities of mood and sometimes clanging rhythms, into some of the most classic, deeply assimilated of early modernist poems.

In this respect the most interesting aspect of *Inventions of the March Hare* is not the variants which can be found to the famous poems or even (though they have their interest) the actual off-cuts, but the freestanding poems that have a strong associative, or experimental, link with what we know. The thrill is cheaper with something like the following because the premonitory echo of *Portrait of a Lady* is so clear.

Among the débris of the year
Of which the autumn takes its toll:—
Old letters, programmes, unpaid bills
Photographs, tennis shoes, and more,
Ties, postal cards, the mass that fills
The limbo of a bureau drawer—
Of which October takes its toll
Among the débris of the year
I find this headed "Barcarolle".

The tone is less assured even if our assurance of this fact is incorrigible because the famous poem is part of the inheritance by which we judge its anticipation. So too with this fuller glimpse into the private life of *Prufrock*, where we seem to hear in not quite synchronised duet the cool dude of *Portrait* and the hapless insecure prat of *Prufrock*:

On every sultry afternoon
Verandah customs have the call
White flannel ceremonial
With cakes and tea
And guesses at eternal truths
Sounding the depths with a silver
spoon
And dusty roses, crickets, sun-
light on the sea
And all.

Clearly this is one kind of time-travel, hunting round the false starts of great poems. Although there are times in the *March Hare* where the starts don't seem false and one gets a twinge of understanding of how Edmund Wilson, as an old man, could have been stupid enough to say that it was a pity Ezra Pound had edited *The Waste Land* as he had.

What we keep encountering are poems which are both mysteriously fresh and all too explicably familiar. This makes perfect sense but it is also a reminder of how brilliantly Eliot handled his career, how cleverly and strategically the man who wished to present himself as a phoenix of modernist-classicism—that weird oxymoron—rising from the ashes of late Romantic decadence (the Nineties, Symons version of French *symbolisme*) created the image of himself as a great poet by publishing only the very best of his poems, which happened, by and large, to be assured masterpieces.

In following such an aesthetic, Eliot was nowhere more modernist, adhering to the kind of scorched-earth policy of never repeating the same kind of poem. The principle would be anathema to most poetic careers, but it was instantiated in prose, and ultimately at a level of epic achievement, by Joyce, whom

Eliot considered the period's greatest literary master.

NO OTHER POET of the period would have resisted publishing *Fourth Caprice in Montparnasse*, which is no more like *Prufrock* or *Preludes* than one poem by John Forbes is like another. Yeats, after all, made a career out of publishing suites of poems in which the slight lyric grace of one piece would be counterpointed by the fuller orchestration or graphic demotic of another.

The logic of the earlier Eliot always cuts against monotony; it is only later in his work that monotony, as in *Ash Wednesday* or—monumentally—*Four Quartets*, is allowed its innings. But by then different, less markedly experimental, principles of parody have come into play, even though the effect in later Eliot is the opposite of

parodic. The Eliot on show, brilliant and exposed in *Fourth Caprice in Montparnasse*, is a parodist and a disciple of Laforgue. It is not simply that he is uncertain how much he wants to send himself up—that's true of the great poems of the period—but that the poem just misses definitive expression.

We turn the corner of the street
And again
Here is a landscape grey with rain
On black umbrellas, waterproofs,
And dashing from the slated roofs
Into a mass of mud and sand.
Behind a row of blackened trees
The dripping plastered houses stand
Like mendicants without regrets
For unpaid debts
Hand in pocket, undecided,
Indifferent if derided.

Among such scattered thoughts as these
We turn the corner of the street,
But why are we so hard to please?

Which is perhaps only to say that lines 11 and 12 are weak and their weakness is accentuated by the clatter of the regrets/debts rhyme which precedes them and does not open into the kind of resounding epiphany of incertitude, the 'overwhelming question' that *Prufrock*, we cannot fail to remember at this point, makes us want.

The Eliot of these poems is not the modernist master we grew up with and have learned to admire, having forsworn empathy, perhaps too coldly. But he is in the process of becoming that figure by a policy of excision and self-criticism.

Perhaps this boils down to that the Eliot of this notebook comes across as more of a young American experimentalist, bashing away at the same set of themes, formally as well as emotively, like any other poet. We should be grateful that Eliot didn't turn the moment of *Prufrock* or *Portrait of a Lady* into a manner, and wary too, I suppose, that the patina these poems derive from their family resemblance to famous poems and the effect of strangeness, or defamiliarisation—what the Russians call *ostranenie*—they get from their

swerves away from them are a consequence of both individual deliberation and historical accident.

Christopher Ricks is nothing if not deliberate in the wall of pedagogy he has built in the almost self-satisfyingly donnish introduction and the forbiddingly thorough



apparatus criticus he has erected. The scholarship is admittedly superb in a way one has ceased to dream of. Perhaps the most helpful thing that can be said about Ricks' notes is that they should inspire, as they will certainly reward, impulse browsing.

RICKS HAS TRACKED down every smidgen of an echo of Tennyson and Milton (perhaps especially those poets, on whom he is an authority) together with lashings of the French, of Dante, the *Bhagavad Gita* (in the version Eliot used), Meredith and Browning, and the whole gang.

He has, in fact, proceeded like a latter-day John Livingston Lowes, to find any lumber that might have weighed in the mind of a poet as retentive in his way as Livingstone Lowes' subject, Coleridge, was. The effect, as a guide to any perplexity

inhering in the poems, is maddening, though not less admirable for that. What makes the endeavour readable for the average literary punter intent on Tom Eliot, is that old Possum's *aperçus* on everything of any relevance are included for good measure.

IN PRACTICE THIS is fascinating and it works, in its way, to restate both the spectral presence who gave birth to the (old) new criticism (God bless it) as well as the human face of the bloke who liked music hall, *My Fair Lady* and Groucho Marx.

The bits of light verse, in the form of dirty poems, included here—some of which one fears are wrongly attributed to Eliot's creative verve (he was sometimes quoting)—should not, alas, detain anyone for very long because they are singularly feeble, the-boy-stood-on-the-burning-deck stuff. Again, however, they make their point about the frailty and silliness that was part of Eliot's make-up, as of anyone else's.

There was always a schizophrenia at work in this volume because Vivien Eliot wants to do justice to a great poet and dead husband, and Ricks has colluded with her sense of the dignity of his subject. He has also colluded, less surely, with the subject's own, which allows him the charade of presenting only factual, never interpretative, material in the notes.

Needless to say the Tom Eliot who would awe Princeton parties with the number of martinis he could put away and who adored the Marx Brothers, keeps shining through the *pronunciamenti*.

A scholarship of pure objectivity also leads to indiscretions that beat the analyst's couch hands down. ■

Peter Craven wrote the Australian chapter of the *Oxford Guide to Contemporary Writing*.

Suffering and vengeance

Timor: A People Betrayed (revised edition), James Dunn, ABC Books, Sydney, 1996. ISBN 0 7333 05377 RRP \$34.95.

Citizens, Eric Rolls, University of Queensland Press, St. Lucia, 1996. ISBN 0 7022 2554 1 RRP \$49.95

God's Heavenly Son, The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of Hong Ziuquan,

Jonathan Spence, London, Harper Collins, 1996. ISBN 0 00 255584 0 RRP \$45.00

RECENTLY, AUSTRALIA HAS BEEN looking for the mirror to see if she is still loveable. The entrails of the Pauline Hanson phenomenon have been examined for international significance. The award of the Nobel Peace Prize to Bishop Belo and Jose Ramos Horta, and the loss to Portugal of an anticipated seat on the United Nations Security Council have provoked self-reflection.

The response of better connected commentators has been obliquely sour. Australia's race relations, it was decided, would not disturb our neighbours; the Nobel Prize award was the triumph of Nordic political correctness and at the United Nations, Australia had been duded by the resentful French and the avaricious Africans. The seat, in any case, was no great loss, because it would only distract Australia from her proper self-interest.

The level of discussion suggests the subversive thought that at present Portugal might have more to contribute to the international community than Australia. Such treason is encouraged by these two books by James Dunn and Eric Rolls. Both deal with episodes in the Australian relationship to Asia, and allow Australia to be seen from a broad moral perspective.

Timor is a lightly revised version of James Dunn's 1983 work. The reissue is welcome because Dunn has given us the best available account of what happened in East Timor in 1975 and of Australia's role within it. The revision allows him to describe and reflect briefly on

important developments since 1983.

When Dunn concluded the first edition of the book, he feared that the international community would soon forget East Timor, and that his own work would therefore chronicle



the neglected past. He now acknowledges that he was wrong. The Nobel award to Belo and Ramos Horta simply underlines what was already evident—that the situation of East Timor remains publicly unresolved.

The history of the Indonesian occupation of East Timor is therefore alive, and Australia's role in it will be subject to increasingly critical examination. In Dunn's account, Australia shows itself pusillanimous and smarmy. Australian opposition to the Indonesian invasion could have been decisive, for initially invasion was supported only by sections of the military. After the invasion, Australia obstructed efforts to secure an effective United Nations condemnation, and was quick to recognise *de facto* Indonesian sovereignty. It supported Indonesia diplomatically and put pressure on smaller nations to do the same.

The Australian government

spokesmen continually minimised the brutality of the invasion and of the sufferings of the East Timorese people. Later, to facilitate Australian commercial interests in the Timor Sea, Australia became one of the few

countries to recognise *de jure* Indonesian sovereignty. It also concluded a treaty with the military which had planned and benefited from the invasion of East Timor.

Dunn's account is consistently critical. I believe that a case can be made out that the Australian relationship with Indonesia is potentially critical for the benefit of the region, and does not merely reflect selfish Australian interests. East

Timor therefore presents a genuine dilemma.

On the other hand, Australian apologists for silence about East Timor do not inspire confidence that Australian policy includes common decency among its aims. Dunn, moreover, supports his argument with documentary evidence. He writes as an insider who knows the Foreign Affairs Department, and describes plausibly how decisions were taken.

He tells a distressing, discouraging story of how the humanity of the East Timorese people was consistently regarded as expendable by timid and narrow Australian representatives. The persistence and moral passion of Dunn's account alleviate the sadness of the book. It is hard to imagine that the kind of governing of Australia that gave us East Timor would have brought more to the UN Security Council than high rhetoric,

narrow self-interest and a fervour for economic rationalism.

Eric Rolls continues the story of the relationships between China and Australia, begun in his splendid *Sojourners*. Although he gives space to events in China, he concentrates on the experience of Chinese settlers in Australia and the Australian reaction to them.

It is a very different work from Dunn's—the latter is focused, passionate and closely argued, while Rolls' book is expansive, discursive and humane. Like *War and Peace*, this is a baggy elephant of a book.

Rolls follows his characters behind the curtains after they have left the stage. Sir George Dibbs, for example, figures properly in the narrative as the spokesman for the Australasian Steam Navigation Company, under siege in 1878 for employing cheap Chinese labour. The debate between union and company presents in microcosm the forces which led to the White Australia policy. But Rolls does not leave Dibbs at the end of this affair. We learn that he was subsequently involved in family divorce proceedings, found guilty of inciting witnesses to perjure themselves against his sister-in-law, was made bankrupt and sentenced to gaol. When the sheriff came at night to arrest him, he stripped naked and invited the sheriff to roll him in a blanket and carry him to court. Since Dibbs weighed 108 kilograms, the sheriff agreed to return next morning. After his time in gaol, he disappears from Rolls' history with the terse information that he was later twice premier of the state.

Citizens is like a poet's scrap book—full of small facts that can bear great significance. Banana Alley, by the Yarra, commemorates the 19th century banana trade with Queensland which, from field to ship to agent, was once largely run by Chinese. The alley is now overlooked by the Casino, the contemporary forum for fleecing our Asian visitors.

Rolls' theme is expansive. He describes the rich human world which was composed by Chinese immigration to Australia, and also the great contribution which they made to the development of the

colonies. He describes the human panorama refracted in the concrete shape of Chinese education, building religious practices and vocabulary. Rolls describes the Australia they encounter as a narrow and censorious people, moving through childhood to adolescence and an unsure early maturity in its dealings with difference.

Certainly, there has been progress. Rolls quotes Alfred Deakin's defence in 1901 of the exclusion of Asians. While we may imagine a Member of Parliament today uttering such lines, we would be surprised to hear them from the Attorney-General.

We have power to deal with people of any and every race within our borders, except the aboriginal inhabitants of the continent who remain under the custody of the States... There is that single exception of a dying race, and if they be a dying race let us hope that in their last hours they will be able to recognise not simply the justice, but the generosity of the treatment which the white race, who are dispossessing them and entering into their heritage, are according them.

Deakin continues,

It is not the bad qualities, but the good qualities of these alien races that make them dangerous to us. It is their inexhaustible energy, their power of applying themselves to new tasks, their endurance, and low standard of living that make them such competitors.

Deakin is more blatant than most, but the sanctimonious-severe tone is recognisable in contemporary Australian political rhetoric. It is that of a small boy enjoying pulling the wings off a butterfly, not wanting to lose face among the wing-pulling brigade, but simultaneously looking to his elders for the added pleasure of their moral approbation.

Dunn and Rolls in their different ways point out gently that what might go with butterflies is really unacceptable with human beings.

THE TAIPING REBELLION of the 1850's, which occasioned the death

of about twenty million Chinese, has been praised by many Chinese historians as an anticipation of the Long March. Yet, for a patriotic and Marxist prototype it had unlikely antecedents in religious visions and foreign texts.

Hong Huoxiu, from Guangdong province, was close to death when he had a vivid dream, couched in popular religious imagery. He was taken into the heavens, where the highest God enlisted him in his son's battle against the demons. After studying the ways of demons and being given a son, he returned to earth to carry on the battle. After the dream he changed his name to Hong Xiuquan. The root 'quan' signified completeness.

SO FAR THE STORY OF Hong is confined to his own cultural world. But he found his mission only after coming on Chinese Christian tracts about judgment. There he found himself named in the repeated reference to Quan. For example, he read, 'the Judgments of Jehovah are true and wholly righteous' as 'the judgments of Jehovah are true, and Quan is righteous'.

In the Christian texts, Quan found himself the key player in an apocalyptic struggle, fighting alongside Jesus, the first son. He preached and gained followers, some of whom had gifts for prophecy. Jesus showed the early group how to defeat demons, and where to find them.

Demons were readily identified with the local authorities and landowners, who began to persecute Hong's movement. They fought back, and gained support from the local population.

Many of Hong's recruits showed themselves adept at military tactics. They studied and adapted the classical military manuals, and eventually captured Nanking. This became Taiping, the promised heavenly kingdom, and was ruled by rigorous religious principles, including the separation of men from women.

There, Hong came to terms with Western versions of Christianity, and simultaneously sent out armies to Peking, to Canton and to Shanghai. As these forays failed, his movement

was divided by internal faction, and Nanking was finally captured by the Qing forces. Hong himself died, and his prophecies died in 1864 with the death of his son.

HONG'S WAS AN EPIC STORY which begs a good storyteller. Jonathan Spence meets the challenge. An outstanding scholar, he also has an exceptional gift for narrative. He illuminates his story with detail taken from contemporary documents. While the reconstruction remains hypothetical, since it is difficult to know whether the documents represent Hong's world, it is always plausible and vivid.

Spence is not primarily concerned to describe the rise and fall of a revolutionary movement. Instead he emphasises the centrality and strangeness of Hong's religious vision. During the final crisis, for example, Hong annotated the Book of Revelation to prove that Nanking was the heavenly Jerusalem and that Western Christians who questioned his place in God's plan were wrong.

To a Western reader, the book is fascinating, for it refracts so many of the major themes of Western cultural history in an unfamiliar cultural matrix. The rigorous sexual morality, the violent treatment of people who deviated from the prescribed ideals and the increasingly driven search for traitors are reminiscent of the earthly paradise of Pol Pot. The conjunction of strict theology and innovative military strategy evoke memories of the Puritans.

The mutual incomprehension of Western observers, whose Christianity was conventional, and the Taiping, passionately convinced of the truth of their apocalyptic Gospel, recall the interaction between Islam and the West. And the relationship between the centre and the margins, the Manchurian ruling family and the Hakka centre of the Taiping, between government and pirates, officials and local landowners, are part of the experience of revolution.

For a church historian, the story is particularly fascinating because the Taiping faced, in a single decade, many of the challenges which

disturbed the first five hundred years of the church. For Hong, in the beginning there was the tradition built around the classical Confucian texts and popular religious narratives. But his dream and the reading of it through Christian texts broke that tradition open.

Like the early Christians who had come to believe in the risen Jesus Christ, he had to give another reading of his inherited tradition and to commend his vision in the terms of that tradition. Inevitably, he had also to state by what authority he claimed to speak authoritatively about the tradition.

Hong gave his dream the status which the Resurrection has for Christians. In the last analysis it was simply given. But people found it cogent because of its extraordinary effects on the lives of believers and the change which it wrought in the public world.

The dream, however, was incommunicable, and Hong's followers were naturally disputatious. Both the truth of the vision and its application to the lives of his followers were fortuitously grounded in the prophetic visions in which Jesus gave directions to Yang, one of his first followers.

Yang was identified with the Holy Spirit. The reliance on direct inspiration and prophecy is a recurrent theme in Christian history from Montanism to Medjugore. The danger has always been one of false prophets—those who identify themselves with kings and the powerful. Yang's visions were certainly supported by the use of power—in this case, by the military leaders, who dealt with any who were revealed to be deviant. This appeal to power and fear to buttress truth has been an endemic Christian temptation.

As the movement spread beyond its first Hakka group, its proponents had to commend it to those who canonised the classical Chinese texts. Like the early Christians, the Taiping had to define the place of the texts on which the prevailing culture was based. They showed the same hesitation that has always characterised Christian theology.

At first, Hong and Feng, his earliest follower, were sympathetic

with the Confucian criticism of Chinese idolatry. As they were persecuted, however, they came to see the Confucian books as full of errors. Jesus revealed that in heaven 'there were a few occasions when Confucius was bound and whipped by Heavenly Father'.

During the later crises, however, when the Taiping relied on the tacit support of the local inhabitants, Yang's visions rehabilitated Confucius as a defender of absolute moral standards. By this time the Taiping had lost the support of many people who were persuaded by the opposing generals' defence of Confucian authority.

The constant tension between revelation and culture found expression also in constant study of the texts. Like the early Christian theologians, Hong read and revised the translation of the Bible, and annotated it carefully to justify his interpretation. He excised narratives which described sexual immorality, shocking to his Chinese values, and also noted points where the text

supported his own materialist understanding of God.

FINALLY, HONG HAD TO work with an apocalyptic vision of a God's imminent judgment of the world through Hong's own ministry. Such immediate religious relevance demanded that devils be concretely named and that unmistakable signs of God's triumph be available.

As throughout Christian history, providence proved easier to discern in growth than in decline. Yang followed the path of many church leaders in ascribing evidence of decline to subversion by hidden enemies, and turned his attention to purifying his kingdom. The heavenly Jerusalem rapidly became an execution ground.

As in the church, so in Taiping, a mixture of anointed leadership, stern governance, and assured truth, could not guarantee a secure and prosperous society. But Hong, at least, could be excused: following Jesus to the cross was never part of his revelation. ■

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A capital virtue

AFTER HIS FIRST flamboyant book *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992), one wondered what the American political scientist, economic historian, and philosopher Francis Fukuyama could do for an encore.

The answer comes in his new book, *Trust: The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity*, which is concerned with the cultural assumptions underlying the global development of the large business corporations in the US, Europe, Japan, Taiwan, and Korea.

This development, according to Fukuyama, is part of an economic revolution which will in turn provide the basis for 'the spiritualisation of economic life' and the manifestation of a new form of liberal democracy.

'If the institutions of democracy and capitalism are to work properly' Fukuyama says, 'they must coexist with certain premodern cultural habits that ensure their proper functioning. Law, contract, and economic rationality provide a necessary but not sufficient basis for both the stability and prosperity of post-industrial societies; they must as well be leavened with reciprocity, moral obligation, duty towards community, and trust, which are based in habit rather than rational calculation. The latter are not anachronisms in a modern society but rather the *sine qua non* of the latter's success'. In other words, the 'rational economics' which dominates the advanced capitalist societies depends upon 'social virtues' which cannot be measured or justified in terms of rational economics and which cannot be formed by

Trust: The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity, Francis Fukuyama, Penguin Books 1996.
ISBN 1 357910 864 2 RRP \$16.95

the institutions of corporate capitalism.

Before the Second World War the great German sociologist, Max Weber, argued that early European capitalism came about because the new business classes were largely Protestants with a distinctive 'ethic'. This ethic was centred upon hard work, thrift and the postponement of immediate gratification, with wealth and material success being seen as signs of divine 'election' and approval. Clearly there is something in Weber's thesis in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, but as some sixty years of critical scrutiny of Weber's essay have shown, it is extraordinarily difficult to pin down the connection between religion and the rise of capitalism. It is, after all, implausible to suggest that Japan's astonishing success as a capitalist nation is due to some form of the Protestant ethic!

At all events, Fukuyama attempts

to show that the peculiar social virtues that have enabled people to escape the confines of family and tribal economies and to enter into association with other people around the world who are not related by blood or kin or ethnicity, depend upon non-economic and non-rational factors which promote sociability. Society depends upon a stock of social capital which can be augmented or diminished: thus particular societies and regions can be measured and compared on a high trust/low trust scale. The difficulty, however, which Fukuyama does not really face up to, is how modern societies will be able to replenish the stock of social trust on which they depend when the ethos of such societies is in so many ways inimical to the formation of social trust. (Telstra makes a record profit, its manager gets a huge bonus, and the company then, in pursuit of even greater profits, lays off thousands of its employees).

The main task of Fukuyama's long (420 pages) and dense and detailed analysis is to situate the economies of the US, European countries like Germany, Italy and France, and the 'Asian' economies of Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong on the high trust/low trust scale and to show the various ways in which they generate the sociability which is the *sine qua non* of those economies.

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Two paradoxical conclusions emerge from Fukuyama's analysis. The first is that the family, whether it be of the Western kind or Confucian or Japanese, which is the biological and cultural source of social virtue, is also at the same time the main obstacle to the higher form of sociability that alone makes capitalist corporations possible. What one might call *egoisme familial* prevents people from facing up to the demands of market capitalism. People have to learn to break with the narrow familial model if they are to enter the advanced capitalist race. For a (moderate) conservative thinker like Fukuyama the conservative politics of 'family values' gets short shrift.

Similarly, for Freud the family is a mixed blessing in that it is on the one hand indispensable in shaping the basic human relationships, and on the other hand it is the source of all the neurosis the child suffers throughout its life (as Philip Larkin notoriously puts it, in *This Be The Verse*: 'They fuck you up, your mum and dad'). The child must break with and transcend its family of origin in order to establish its own personal identity and maturity. In much the same way, for Fukuyama, societies have to break with and transcend the familial mode if they wish to enter the capitalist big league. Fukuyama would see the organisational nepotism and dynastic longings displayed by some of our own corporate captains—Murdoch, Packer, O'Reilly—and by some Japanese and Korean and Taiwan capitalists, as due to romantic (and dangerous) nostalgia.

In a recent essay Fukuyama has complained that liberal theorists have failed to show how the family fits into a social theory based upon individual autonomy. But his own theory faces similar difficulties with the family being seen as both the primitive source of sociability and as its major obstacle.

IN PASSING, THE COVER OF Fukuyama's book is taken from the sublime painting *The Oath of the Horatii* by the favoured artist of the French Revolution, Jacques-Louis David. David's contemporaries saw the painting as the crystallisation of the Republican spirit, but the original story was about a classical Roman family avenging itself on a rival family who had done it wrong. The cultural attitudes behind David's painting are precisely those which, according to Fukuyama, it is necessary to leave behind if the Horatii brothers are to found a successful corporate empire and become Horatii Inc. (It is, by the way, diverting to imagine

Rupert Murdoch or Kerry Packer in the place of the father of the Horatii handing the swords of power to his sons!)

The second paradoxical feature of Fukuyama's book is that at the end of its virtuoso display of comparative analysis about how social trust functions in the corporate worlds of the US, European

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countries like Germany, Italy and France, and 'Asian' countries like Japan, Taiwan, Korea and Hong Kong, one is forcibly struck by the heterogeneity of the contemporary global economic scene. That heterogeneity is in fact so marked that the reader ends up in some bewilderment, unable to see what general lessons can be learned from all the comparative detail or what predictive force the author's analysis has. Fukuyama shows how difficult—even impossible—it is to have a culture-independent policy of corporate management which might work equally well in Japan, Germany, the US or the various regions of 'Asia' (a term which we should do away with altogether). The complex cultural sources of social trust, some of them going back many centuries as, for example, in the apprenticeship system in Germany remain very persistent and powerful and the variability between work and managerial practices, and their cultural underpinnings, are immense. After reading

Fukuyama's book Australian corporate managers would be mad to adopt German, or Japanese, or US models, unless they are able to tap into the cultural attitudes that sustain those models.

Fukuyama is a latter-day Hegelian in that he believes, like the great 19th century thinker, that human history is moving towards a final goal or end and that we can now see what that end will be. Corporate capitalism will provide the economic basis for a new form of liberalism which will reconcile the values of individual autonomy and the values of the community.

Hegel thought that the Prussian State of his time exemplified all the virtues that human history had been gestating in its womb through the centuries, and he also thought that history's omelette could not be made without breaking eggs (viz., human beings).

MARX, OF COURSE, FAMOUSLY adopted Hegel's idea in his theory of the classless society which would also bring about the end of human history as we know it. No one now takes either Hegel or Marx seriously, at least in this, but Fukuyama (and other conservative thinkers) have revived the spirit of Hegel and argued that it is corporate capitalism and the liberalism it provides a base for, and not the Prussian state, which is the true end of human history.

The difficulty with this imaginative scenario is that, apart from the lack of any hard evidence for it, corporate capitalism doesn't really look capable of playing the heroic part it is supposed to play. If a new world regime dominated by figures and companies such as Rupert Murdoch and NewsCorp, or Chung Su Yung and the Hyundai Motor Company, or Bill Gates and Microsoft or Sony, is really what history has been labouring to produce all these centuries, then something must have gone desperately wrong! Again, just as Hegel optimistically glosses over the enormous amount of human oppression, injustice and misery that the development of human history is responsible for, so Fukuyama says almost nothing about the immense human cost of the development of corporate capitalism in the 19th and 20th centuries. Surely some expression of regret for that cost would have been in order. ■

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Illusory Innocence?

Living High and Letting Die: Our Illusion of Innocence. Peter Unger, Oxford University Press, Oxford and New York, 1996. ISBN 0 19 510859 0 RRP \$32.95

WHILE DRIVING ON A deserted road, far away in the bush, you come upon a stranger with a wounded leg. The leg is in a bad way. Unless the stranger reaches a hospital right away, amputation may be unavoidable. You have business of your own to attend to. Taking the stranger to hospital would cost you time and bother. Further, for reasons we need not stop to explain, it would cost you quite a lot of money. Also, you would have to commandeer resources that belong to someone else, knowing full well that the owner would not consent. Still, what else can you do?—you do what most of us would do, and take the stranger to hospital.

Another day, you find in your mailbox a printed letter from UNICEF. It tells you, credibly, that in some distant and poverty-stricken place, children are dying for lack of emergency medical assistance. It asks you for a contribution. The treatment required is cheap, and sending your contribution is easy. Saving a distant child's life would cost you far less time, less bother, less money than saving the wounded stranger's leg. And you know that your contribution would make a difference: UNICEF has not enough money to pay for all the lifesaving work it would do if it could, so the more contributions, the more saved lives.

Understanding all this, you do what most of us would do: nothing. You send no contribution, you discard the letter without further thought, you let more die instead of fewer. Most of us would think it seriously wrong to refuse to come to the aid of the wounded stranger. Yet we would think it not very seriously wrong, perhaps not wrong at all, to refuse to come to the aid of the distant child.

Sending the contribution that would save the child's life strikes us not as doing what one must, but as a commendable act of optional generosity. Very strange! Because, after all, the cases are much alike. Insofar as they differ, it would seem that you have more reason to aid the child than to aid the stranger: the benefit is more, a life instead of a leg, and the cost is less.

The remarkable contrast in what we think about the two cases poses an urgent question. Or rather, two questions:

1. Could our commonsensical ethical opinions possibly be right?
2. Whether right or whether wrong, what psychological mechanism causes us to respond so very differently to the two cases?

The two questions are well worth a book, and that is the book Peter Unger has given us. And a very fine book it is: carefully argued, imaginative, fearless. Whether also it is correct in its conclusions remains to be seen.

Unger's answer to the ethical question is uncompromising: our commonsensical opinions are *not* right. Failing to aid the distant child is seriously wrong. When we think otherwise, we are under an ethical illusion. He does not rest his argument



upon any contentious system of utilitarian ethics. Rather, the case of the wounded stranger is taken to reveal the basic values that we already accept. Then we have only to ask how those same values apply to the case of the distant child. Unger's conclusion may come as a surprise; yet it is meant to have the authority of established ethical common sense. Unlike some of the utilitarians with whom he is *de facto* allied, Unger is not trying to reform the foundations of ordinary morality. He is claiming instead that we are terribly, disastrously wrong about what ordinary morality requires of us. In the case of the distant child—and in very many similar cases—ordinary morality is far less lenient than we like to think.

If Unger were arguing that each of us ought to send UNICEF \$100 every year, or even \$1000, his argument would be hard to resist. But his conclusion is far more extreme than that. Willing contributors are few, distant children dying for lack of medical assistance are many, and so their need for lifesaving contributions is inexhaustible. An argument that is cogent once is cogent

twice over. If indeed it is seriously wrong not to save the life of one distant child—even more seriously wrong than it would be not to save the wounded stranger's leg—then why is it not equally wrong not to save the life of the next distant child? And the next, and the next...?

There is nothing to shut the argument off after you have saved one life. Or after you have sent your \$100 for the year—enough, Unger informs us, to save many lives or after you have sent \$1000. Or after you have sent whatever contribution would be your fair share if, somehow, the burden of paying for life-saving medical care were being fairly divided among all the world's affluent. When you have so little left that it becomes doubtful whether you can live to give again another day, then the argument shuts off. But only then. Talk about giving until it hurts!

If we follow unflinchingly where argument leads—and Unger does—the conclusions that await us are still more extreme.

If you give all you have and all you earn, keeping back only enough to provide for your own survival, that is not enough. If you could give more by devoting yourself single-mindedly to the pursuit of wealth, you should do that too. And you should give not only all that you can earn (beyond subsistence), but also all that you can beg, borrow or steal. For did we not agree that you might have to commandeer someone else's property in order to take the wounded stranger to hospital? And is it not more important to save a life than to save a leg?

What is required of you, if Unger's argument is right, turns out to be very much more than just a substantial annual contribution to UNICEF. It is a life devoted entirely to serving those endangered distant children.

IF IT WERE THE LIFE OF A SAINT, or of an outlaw robbing the rich to give to the poor, it might have its attractions. But if it is the life of an unscrupulous money-grubber, toiling away at dirty business so as to serve the distant children in the most efficient possible way, it is altogether repellent. You are not asked to give away your life so that

the distant children may live. But neither are you asked to give away just a few trivial luxuries. You may well be asked to give away most of what makes your life worth living. And this in the name of our ordinary morality, in the name of the basic values we already accept! Somewhere, we have crossed the line into a *reductio ad absurdum*. The conclusions that supposedly follow from our ordinary morality are so violently opposed to what we ordinarily think that, somehow, the argument must have gone astray. It is hard to see just what has gone wrong. But even if we cannot diagnose the flaw, it is more credible that the argument has a flaw we cannot diagnose than that its most extreme conclusion is true.

But if the argument for the extreme conclusion is flawed, that does not mean that we are left with a cogent argument for some less extreme and more credible conclusion. More likely we are left with nothing. However much we might welcome an argument that we are required to contribute, say, \$100 annually that is not what we have been offered. Flawed is flawed. Unless somehow the flaw resulted only because we pushed Unger's argument too far, it will not automatically go away just because we stop short.

WELL THEN, WHAT IS THE FLAW? The lesson of the *reductio ad absurdum* is just that something must have gone wrong somewhere. To arrive at an answer—an admittedly tentative answer—we do best to approach the question indirectly, by way of Unger's answer to the second, psychological question: what causes us to respond so differently to the case of the wounded stranger and the case of the distant child? Here is Unger's explanation:

Often we view the world as comprising just certain *situations*. Likewise we view a situation as including just *certain people*, all of them then well grouped together within it ... often we view a certain serious problem as being a problem for only those folks viewed as being [grouped together] in a particular situation; and, then, we'll view the bad trouble as *not* any problem for all the world's other people. (p.97)

It is easy to see how this phenomenon of 'separation' might apply to our pair of contrasting cases. When you decide that you must do what it takes to save the wounded stranger's leg, you and he have met face to face, far away from anyone else; no wonder you and he are grouped together

psychologically within a salient situation. Nothing like that happens in the case of the distant child. If you limit your aid to those who are grouped together with you in a psychologically salient situation, of course you will go to far greater lengths to save the stranger's leg than you will to save the child's life.

Unger illustrates the phenomenon of separation with a plethora of examples. But his examples are fantastic, and often comical as well, and so it is harder than it ought to be to appreciate their lessons. I substitute my own contrasting pair of examples.

The first is a true story. When London was under attack by German missiles, the British devised a trick. They could have deceived the Germans into thinking that the missiles were hitting too far north. The Germans would have adjusted their aim to make the missiles hit further south. Instead of killing more people in densely populated London, the missiles would have killed fewer people—but different people—in the less densely populated southern suburbs. The deception was not tried: the Home Secretary was averse to 'playing God'. Many of us would think he had no alternative to playing God: whether he intervened to stop the deception or whether he let it go forward (or whether he acted to bring about the deception or whether he prevented it by inaction), the allocation of danger depended in any case on him. His only choice was whether to play God in a more or a less lethal fashion. If we describe his choice that way, aversion to playing God is beside the point. The right choice seems clear: to try the deception.

Contrast that case with another, set this time in the near future. Transplant surgery has been perfected, but there are not nearly enough organs to go around. Shall we snatch some young and healthy victims and cut them up for pieces? For each one we kill, many will be saved. By snatching involuntary organ donors rather than letting them live, we would play God in a less rather than a more lethal fashion. Then should we do it?—of course not! The idea is monstrous.

Why the difference in our response to the two cases? Both times, what we have is a plan to sacrifice a few to save many. When the few are suburbanites and the many are Londoners, many of us (though not all) approve. When the few are the donors and the many are those who need transplants, all of us (near enough) disapprove.

Unger's psychological hypothesis provides an answer. The Londoners and the suburbanites, and the rest of the British as well, are all in it together. Wherever the missiles

may happen to be aimed, all of Britain is under attack. Those who would be sacrificed and those who would be saved are all involved together in the same salient situation. Not so in the other case. Those who need organs are united by a shared predicament. But those who could be butchered to provide the needed organs are most naturally viewed just as uninvolved bystanders. Why should others' need for spare organs be seen as *their* problem? (Just because their organs could solve it?) So separation explains why we approve (insofar as we do) of diverting the German missiles; and why we disapprove of snatching the lifesaving organs.

Unger casts separation as the villain of his story: the malign psychological force that generates 'distorted' moral responses and prevents us from seeing what our ordinary morality really requires of us. But here Unger is resorting to mere *obiter dicta*, very exceptional in what is otherwise a tightly argued book.

I am inclined to think that Unger is right, and importantly right, about the psychology of separation; but wrong when he treats this phenomenon he has uncovered as a distorting force that clouds our moral judgment. On the contrary, separation might be a central, if under-appreciated, feature of our ordinary morality.

Unger has made it his task to find out what is required of us by the basic values we actually accept. (To repeat: he is not trying to rebuild morality *a priori* on new foundations.) If he goes in search of our accepted values, and what he finds are judgments shaped by the phenomenon of separation, why doubt that he has found just what he was seeking? Why assume that he has instead found a veil of illusion that conceals our basic values from our view?

If indeed separation is a legitimate feature of our ordinary morality, and if separation breaks the parallel between the case of the wounded stranger and the case of the distant child, then we have diagnosed the flaw in Unger's argument. It has not been shown that failure to save the child's life is as seriously wrong as failure to save the stranger's leg. It has not even been shown that it is wrong at all. We can go on disagreeing about whether failing to respond to UNICEF's solicitations is seriously wrong or mildly wrong or not at all wrong. Doubtless we *will* go on disagreeing. Unger's argument, if flawed as I suggest that it is, is powerless to settle the matter. ■

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The full spectrum

THEA ASTLEY IS A celebrated and highly honoured Australian novelist, and her latest publication can only enhance her reputation. *the multiple effects of rainshadow* evinces a keen sensitivity to realistic human situations and the quietly throbbing drama to be found in every set of lives.

True, Astley sometimes handles her characters roughly, but always with care as valued possessions. You also sense a real care for the reader, inviting him or her right into the action, into sharing the experience of being 'trapped in the rainshadow' along with all the other players.

Viking have put out an elegant looking volume, its dust jacket suggesting a kind of genteel femininity. But right from page one that suggestion is lost in a storm of harsh realities.

Astley's 'multiple' plot, set in North Queensland, mostly between the two world wars, has its genesis on Doebin island (which is a thinly veiled representation of Palm Island Aboriginal Settlement, just north of Townsville).

Doebin, like Palm, is a tropical paradise, chosen early this century by State authorities to receive and hold Aboriginal and Islander people unwelcome in other places for various reasons. In the process, family ties, racial differences, aboriginal traditions and laws, as well as sacred bonds with homelands, were totally disregarded. As one *rainshadow* character declares:

This place has been called a penal colony, but really it's a rubbish tip for government guilt. Here there are men who have committed murder in payback ... station hands who have cheeked head stockmen ... girls who have served their sexual purpose, and are sent here with gonorrhoea and babies. There are runaways, alcoholics and the old...

Added to all this was the quaint expectation that an imported white staff could, by discipline, education and medical care—all rudimentary—produce an ordered, peaceful community.

This white staff, with their previous and subsequent experiences, claim a good deal of the narrative. Captain Brodie, the Superintendent, is dominant, especially as author of the tragic, explosive event that changed and scattered them.

the multiple effects of rainshadow,
Thea Astley, Viking/Penguin
Australia, 1996.
ISBN 0 670 87216 4 RRP \$24.95

The doctor, the mechanic, clergy and missionaries, the matron, teachers and others, find themselves thrown together by circumstance into a kind of make-the-best-of-it family, quite as unlikely and unmatched as the rest of the island population. 'We were cut off on Doebin and wed to each other.' After Brodie's night of horror, all of them return to the mainland and go their separate ways, but their paths begin to cross again, strangely, as if Doebin Island has joined them forever.

Astley shows respect for her characters



by trying not to speak about them too much. She allows nearly all to speak for themselves from their own points of view. In fact, much of the novel is a series of mini-autobiographies, as the players seek to explain their feelings and the often-unexpected ways in which they work out their salvation. This odd group of people continue to live odd kinds of lives, but keep tugging at your sleeve as if seeking recognition.

As a story, the whole work is engaging and hard to put down. However, having once been a lecturer, Astley often appears, through her flashbacks and the sudden re-entries of characters, to be testing whether the reader is paying attention.

I am an old man, and sometimes found that challenging!

On finally putting down the novel, I find there are two best memories—two main reasons for being glad I read it. The first is my appreciation of the author's superb craft as a writer of English. On page after page I found myself fascinated by her facility in breaking the narrative just long enough to

paint in the details with surprising colour skills. Try some samples:

... sat looking at Doebin three miles away and the airy ellipses cut by two eagles swinging between the islands.

Picture this building crouched under palm and strangler fig ... on a knoll a few hundred yards from that shattering ultramarine, with its endless white scrolls.

This island swims north like a platypus, beak and tail peninsulas clutching beaches, the island's back humped up to mountain size, while all the suckerfish islets cluster as if they had come up for air.

Surely I too know all those words. Why can't I weave them together like that?

And my second memory is of the people of Doebin Island who, despite hopeless beginnings, harsh treatment and official neglect, can still survive, build community and eventually call this island their home. Daily humiliations have not extinguished their love of family, nor their willingness to claim freedom and dignity.

Thea Astley reaches behind the façade to where real hearts of real people are still beating. And though she does follow her white characters as they scatter in many directions, the blacks of Doebin are never quite out of view, never forgotten.

In the final scene, as some of those unforgettable people suffer yet another cruel invasion, yet another wasteful, meaningless exile, we hear the sad song of Normie Cooktown:

We are leaving now
We do not understand
That island belongs to our people
We do not understand.

Almost in the first chapter, one character reports a conversation:

There is more forgiveness, Father Donellan told me in that hopeless, hopeful voice of his, than we can ever assess.

I can only hope, for all our sakes, that for once in his life that strange Irishman got it right. ■

Raymond Benjamin is the Bishop of Townsville.

Women still in waiting

Outrageous Women Outrageous God: Women in the First Two Generations of Christianity, Ross Saunders
E.J. Dwyer, Australia, 1996. ISBN 0 85574 278 X ISBN \$16.95

RECENT YEARS HAVE SEEN a considerable amount of research by biblical scholars and church historians into the social setting of the New Testament documents and the early Church. Particular attention has been paid to the evidence for women's roles. It has become clear that, for his time, Jesus was remarkably open in his relationships with women and certainly in his acceptance of them as disciples. There is considerable evidence that this inclusiveness continued to be an important element of the Christian movement in the century after Jesus' death, permitting women to carry out a range of leadership functions in the spreading network of churches throughout the Graeco-Roman world. It is noteworthy, for instance, that Paul uses the same leadership titles for the many Christian women to whom he sends greetings as he does for men. They also are co-workers, teachers, deacons and apostles.

This research has been slow to spread outwards to the parish level and there is a real need for non-academic publications that make it more easily accessible. It was with great hope, therefore, that I took up this new book by Ross Saunders, which sets out to examine the New Testament and early Church documents in order to demonstrate the non-traditional nature of the Jesus movement in relation to the social expectations of the women of the Graeco-Roman period. I was gravely disappointed. Saunders' aims are laudable, but his reading of the texts, particularly the Gospels, frequently owes more to his romantic imagination than to the rigours of scholarship.

Saunders begins worthily with an attempt to outline the honour-shame culture of the Graeco-Roman world, which provides the sociological context for Jesus and his followers. But his reading of it is overly simplistic, and fails to take proper account of the cultural and legal differences between Gentile and Jew in first-century Palestine or in the different parts of the Gentile Graeco-Roman world into which the movement spread. He also fails to recognise the impact of class and economic differences in assessing women's lives in the ancient world.

In his desire to read the Gospel narratives solely as social documents, Saunders consistently ignores their function as theological and literary texts. Take, for example, his failure to understand the theological and literary traditions behind Luke's annunciation narrative. His major concern with this story is that the angel, assumed to be male, has offended against propriety by communicating directly with Mary, a betrothed woman, and not passing the message on through Joseph.

This is one reason, no doubt, why Matthew, who is much more careful to show that his central characters kept the social niceties, omits the visit of Gabriel to Mary, but has the angel visit Joseph. (p.72).

Saunders' reading of the Gospels is simplistic and literalist, and demonstrates a fatal tendency to make assumptions about context and character motives unsupported by any textual evidence. A classic example of this is his fanciful interpretation of the Lukan story of Martha and Mary (Lk 10:38-42). He assumes that the two women are alone in the house, Lazarus being away on business (?) and that this visit by Jesus (also alone?) is a grave breach of social etiquette. It is to Martha's fear of scandal in the village that he imputes her request to Jesus that Mary be sent to help with the serving.

He is right to note the courage shown by many of the New Testament women in assuming a more public role than was often acceptable in their desire to reach out to Jesus. But he is far too ready to consign their menfolk to the grave in order to fit them into his patterns. There is no evidence that Joseph was dead when Jesus began his public life, though it did become part of later Christian mythology as a means of guaranteeing Mary's continued virginity. And the only reason to assume the death of Zebedee after his sons leave home to follow Jesus is Saunders' own literary need to cast their mother in the role of dishonoured widow as an explanation for her request that Jesus give places of honour to her sons in the coming kingdom (Mat 20:20-24; Mk 10:35-41). He is equally free with interesting

tit-bits about Jesus' family that appear to have their source in pious mythology rather than recent scholarship, for example, that Joseph wrapped the infant Jesus in swaddling clothes at birth because the family was short of money at the time.

It was only after the visit of the Magi with their costly gifts that there was any spare money available. (p.77)

And that Mary was obviously a close relative of the family of the groom at Cana because she was there to help with the catering (p.80)!

The sections of the book dealing with the epistolary literature and a smattering of later Church documents provide little more than a summary of the passages which either mention women by name or speak of their role in church life. There is little in the way of critical evaluation of the attitudes towards women shown in these texts, and no detailed examination of the evidence for women's ministry in at least the Pauline churches.

I FIND IT EXTRAORDINARY that Saunders could note the mention of Junia in the Letter to the Romans and not comment upon the significance of Paul's designation of her as 'apostle'. He refers briefly to evidence of the gradual exclusion of women from leadership and the public life of the Church, but does not attempt to explain it. One might have thought that his interest in the honour-shame social code might also have led him to the recent research into the influence of concepts of public and private space upon the development of Church life in the post-apostolic era as it affected women.

At a time when Vatican documents are using a simplistic, distorted view of the place of women in the Jesus movement and the early Church to limit their involvement in the life of the Church today, the need for good scholarship at the grass-roots level has become urgent.

Sadly, Ross Saunders' book is not the one for which leaders of parish study groups have been waiting. ■

Winging it

Angels: Their Mission and Message, Charles R. Jaekle, E.J. Dwyer, Australia, 1995. ISBN 0 85574 206 2 RRP \$14.95

*Late or early, an angel appears on time
(there may be thunder, or a sudden breeze).
However long the wait, you'll be surprised;
without delay, fall humbly to your knees.*

—from *Etiquette with Angels*, by Andrew Bullen SJ

THE CHURCHES SEEM TO BE SOMEWHAT EMBARRASSED by angels these days, and certainly by those who profess to have been visited by one. As the author of this book argues, the Western world's prevailing material/spiritual dualism and belief in the independent self have distanced us from the angelic heritage of our Judæo-Christian past. Certainly those who bear witness to angelic encounters today are more likely to be recommended for psychological counselling than welcomed and nurtured by their religious communities. We have fallen into the danger of which Karl Barth warned, of viewing angels as 'independent and autonomous subjects', disconnected from both pastoral ministry and our theological and historical roots. Thus, experiences which are felt by many individuals as life-transforming signs of God's love are rarely used as they could be to enrich the whole Christian community.

Charles Jaekle's purpose is to recall the richness of our angelic heritage, from the witness of the scriptures through the angelology of Thomas Aquinas to the theology of Karl Barth, and to plead for the reclamation of such experiences again within the church community. I found the book disappointingly thin, however. His brief explorations of past angelologies are an interesting reminder of the place of angels as messengers of God and witnesses to the divine presence in the Judæo-Christian tradition. But his proposals for the reclamation of this inheritance consist of little more than a series of accounts of angelic visitations as told to him by a range of individual Christians. If angels are to find a place once more within our tradition, then more is needed in terms of the development of both theology and practice.

*Angels never walk away, but vanish
in a golden sky. Never leave before them,
for angels have their special dignity,
and miracles have their own decorum.*

—from *Etiquette with Angels* by Andrew Bullen SJ

Pray, pay and obey

Redefining the Church: Vision & Practice, Richard Lennan, (ed.), E.J. Dwyer, Australia, 1995. ISBN 0 85574 230 5 RRP \$19.95

I GREW UP IN THE pre-Vatican II Church in which my place as a member of the laity was very clear. Pope Pius X described it thus: 'In the hierarchy alone reside the power and the authority necessary to move and direct all members of the society to its end. As for the many, they have no other right than to let themselves be guided and so follow their pastors in docility.' [*Vehementer Nos*] Or, as my good Irish Catholic mother put it: 'Anything you need to know, the priest will tell you!' But then came Vatican II, which proposed that I should view the Church and my role in it quite differently. The vision for the Church was no longer that of the perfect feudal

society, a retreat from the world, but as the sacrament of Christ, active in that world. Through its documents I was told that, 'the noble duty of working to extend the divine plan of salvation' (*Lumen Gentium*) rested upon me, as well as on the parish priest. It recognised the dignity of my baptism and affirmed me as an equal member of the People of God, with both the right and the duty to 'share in the priestly, prophetic and royal office of Christ' (*Apostolicam Actuositatem* 2). Both the institutional Church and I have been struggling to put this vision into practice ever since, with varying degrees of success.

It is with this vision and the continuing

struggle to embody it, that this collection of essays from the Catholic Institute of Sydney is concerned. It provides, to quote its editor, Richard Lennan, 'a series of complementary reflections on some of the implications of seeing the Church as a *communio* of graced believers'. The book is refreshing in taking as its starting point not the bureaucratic structures of the institution, or the role of its ordained leadership, but an attempt to discern the rights and responsibilities of the non-ordained, and to wrestle with some of the possibilities inherent in the acceptance by the hierarchy of the laity's full participation in Church life. A number of its contributors make

strongly the point that the energy for change needs to come from the empowerment of the 'grass-roots', renewal from below, not simply structural band-aids imposed from above. After all, as Camille Paul points out in her article, *What Happened to the Vision*, we constitute 99.992 per cent of the Church's membership. I find it difficult to go on accepting being alternately ignored and patronised by the clergy with that figure in my mind!

This is a stimulating, challenging collection. Particularly interesting in terms of possibilities for practical change are Greg Wilson's reflection on the development of liturgical ministries open to the non-ordained, (*Lay Liturgical Ministry—Thirty Years On*) and Patricia Egan's outline of the Maitland Diocesan Synod and its Pastoral Plan (*Empowering God's People at Grassroots Level*). Teresa Pirola (*Church Professionalism—When Does it Become 'Lay Elitism'?*) provides a salutary warning against replacing the present clerical leadership model with an equally hierarchical 'lay elitism', which does not encourage the full participation of the whole faith community but simply imposes on it a new bureaucracy of non-ordained professionals. Gerald Gleeson (*A Living Catholic Conscience*) and Neil Brown (*Christian Morality—a Communal Project*) explore the moral theological bases for an informed acceptance of our responsibilities as adult Christians. Marie Farrell, drawing upon the work of Yves Congar, explores what it means to live as a full member of Christ's faithful (*Christ's Faithful in the 'World'—Elected, Anointed and Spirit-Filled*), while Camille Paul outlines the basis for that full participation as evidenced in Church documents.

There are no easy answers here, but I came away from this collection re-energised. As we all struggle with the implications of the decline in numbers of ordained sacramental leaders and our subsequent need to rethink our role as baptised members of the Body of Christ, it provides stimulating ideas for future possibilities. ■

Pamela A. Foulkes is lay Catholic biblical scholar.

The I's have it

Artful Histories, Modern Australian Autobiography.
David McCoocy, Cambridge University Press, 1996.
ISBN 0521567904 RRP \$29.95 (paper)

THE WORLD OF AUTOBIOGRAPHY permits all sorts of pleasures. Readers will have their preferred mix of childhood, self-analysis, career, sexual exploits, personal revelation, name-dropping, inside-dope, scandal, story-telling, scene-setting, literary conjurings with place and setting

form of fiction? McCoocy is for history as well as art (but the emphasis here is history) and sees autobiography standing apart, for all its technical borrowings, as the form of a story that changes if ever we learn 'it wasn't true'. In a class of young writers recently we had a chance to



and sensual evocation, elegy, adventure and triumph, intellectual and social history. From J.B. Pontalis' *Love of Beginnings*, which is intellectual and interpretative, to Marcel Pagnol's highly textured *My Father's Glory* and *My Mother's Castle*; from Chris Wallace-Crabbe's *Falling Into Language* to Mary-Rose Liverani's *The Winter Sparrows*, one meditating about life and language, the other written in anger and dismay at their coming apart.

In an age lacking either faith or organised scepticism, the world of autobiography appears to be an expanding one. But is it a world of its own or just a colony of the imagination? McCoocy's book is in reply to a Pontius Pilate re-scripted to ask: what is a life if not a trope? What is an autobiography if not a

test this in a small way. We'd each written a beginning to an autobiography, but one was an imaginary autobiography, and it stood out clearly. It read like the story-of-my-life all right but as told by a character in a play; it was unmistakably a soliloquy, as somehow autobiographies are not. We thought an autobiographer would not know herself so well; or would slow her story down, rumple it, savouring what she still had to find out, and she'd put in too much just because it really happened. (Not a real test of course, because doubts and hesitations and omissions can be artful too.)

The enemies are the loony textualists who haven't realised that autobiography is about other people and society and history; that it's only

novelists who can get away with telling their own story, a story spun whole from their imaginations. Death is McCooley's dividing line. Death does not exist in the unconscious or in texts, whereas our autobiography is the only book we can be sure of never finishing. The other enemies are those extreme culturalists who build their work on the assumption that human communication is completely impossible. These are the people who believe that migrants (and women?) are safer if no one in the dominant culture can understand them, that the only safe world is a narcissistic one, an island of code. McCooley draws on Sacks and Luria to suggest what life without memory might be *really* like and on Primo Levi's testimony that, finally, survival can depend less on a crumb of bread than on a recognisable word. We can be human only if other humans reassure us we are.

The last chapter on endings, or death, might have come earlier (why start at the beginning?) and been a little less hurried. A powerful cameo in the book shows Vin Buckley searching, perhaps on the edge of despair, for the seeds of an historical life.

'My people were far more "Irish" than Yeats's, but they had none of these stories, because they had been removed from the places which the stories filled and defined; and often they wanted to forget these places.'

McCooley comments: 'Finding nothing, as he inevitably will, the adult Buckley claims a history which must become mythical in his attempt to allay fears of an ahistorical life'. The nice phrase 'fears of an ahistorical life' passes too quickly over the despair at failing to live longer than one's own span, the longing for a life before one's birth as well as after one's death. McCooley shows elsewhere in his book that he understands perfectly that the heart of autobiography is putting the tenses together, personally.

The painter Mirka Mora says she has an excellent memory but it might be too good to be true. She paints to get behind it because 'when it tells me all these things, what is it not telling me?' This is the 'artful' in McCooley's title, the reminder that while autobiographies are social,

historical, geographical, political and all the rest, they are also images, evocations, memorable tellings. They are also records of our attempts—the desires and the skills and the strategies—to get beneath or behind the repressions of social and personal life. The times may call for a polemic that emphasises autobiography as history, as more than, or other than, fiction. But I'd hate it to be forgotten that autobiography can be an exploration into the unknown just as fiction is, and that good history can have a lot of play in it. Imagination and memory are not natural or essential adversaries, indeed they often feed each other like a pair of comics or duelling banjo players.

McCooley's argument develops judiciously and persuasively, his style thoughtful and apparently fair. But his book is also testimony to the range of autobiography and achievements of Australian autobiography (only one or two get a serve). The list of titles and authors is long and wonderfully various: Hal Porter's pivotal *Watcher on the Cast Iron Balcony*, Martin Boyd, David Malouf in *12 Edmonston St*, Manning Clark, Graham McInnes, Sally Morgan, Patsy Adam-Smith, David Martin, Susan Varga's *Heddy and Me*, Clive James, Barry Humphries, Emery Barc's *Backyard of Mars: Memoirs of the 'Reffo Period' in Australia*, Patrick White's *Flaws in the Glass*, Jill Ker Conway's *The Road from Coorain*, Bernard Smith, Donald Horne, Paul Hasluck and many, many more.

I HADN'T UNDERSTOOD before how unpsychological autobiography can be and still be a story of a life. 'Psychological' is a tricky word and I don't really like it; I certainly prefer autobiographies that are stories rather than theories. But when Andrew Riemer, past the middle of *Artful Histories*, turns up with a piece of self-analysis he brings something I'd been missing—whether from McCooley or the autobiographies themselves, I am not sure. Riemer says that we who are migrants, because we joined the culture late, are condemned to mimic it, at least in part. And not only us,

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he goes on, but any other group that looks in on the taken-for-granted; moreover, it can depend on your personality. In his own case, he writes, any external pressure to mimic was 'exacerbated by the strong sense of make-believe that surrounds many aspects of my life'. By 'psychological', all I mean is this binocular view, now of the world now of myself, that turns case-studies and anecdotal sociology, as well as hagiography and victimology, into genuine life stories.

Social and individual. The British psychoanalyst/paediatrician Donald Winnicott used to say there is no baby, there is no mother, there is only mother-and-baby. This is where we begin and how we communicate and, paradoxically, it is also the ground from which we separate out, becoming individual and different and needing to be artful if we are to be in touch again. ■

Graham Little is a Melbourne academic and writer. His autobiographical *Letter to my daughter* was published by Text in 1995.

The view west

A View from the Ridge: The Testimony of a Pilgrim, Morris West, HarperCollins, Australia, 1996. ISBN 0 7322 5757 3 RRP \$17.95

MORRIS WEST'S MEMOIR is shaped by his careful choice of the image his title refers to. What he offers us is not an autobiography but 'an act of witness: the testimony of a pilgrim, a fellow with a cockleshell in his hat, a staff in his hand, with eighty years of living recorded in his brainbox and his aching joints'. This pilgrim now finds himself at 'the high ridge of the range and now pauses to draw breath and get his courage up for the last stage of the journey'.

If you are drawn to this picture, you will find this book enjoyable, admirably clear throughout, fast-moving, vivid in personal and circumstantial detail, pungent in presenting West's reflections. The image of the pilgrim on the ridge indicates not only the urgency underlying his timing, but more importantly the religious context in which he sees his life. This book is especially a memoir of West's complex relationship with the Roman Catholic Church. All has not been well for him, so the book expresses deep pain and struggle with bitterness, as well as a measure of peace achieved. The book is a record of a lover's quarrel with the Church, and as such he realises that he is not voicing solely his own plaint.

West, as his novels suggest again and again, is drawn to heroes in life as well. Pre-eminent among these is Good Pope John. He devotes a chapter to place this man who revived his hope in the Church alongside the present Pope. For his part Pope John Paul provokes West's readiness to acclaim a hero but frustrates it also. Like many of us, West is a Catholic romantic at heart, and now the heart is hurting. Although there is a touch of strain as he indicates his own fellowship with Pope John Paul (similar age, upbringing in the same Catholic culture, etc), his desire is to get close to a potential hero even



though 'many in the Church feel alienated today, by and from the man who is their Supreme Pastor'. If the Pope's utterances fail to 'give comfort or light on the darkling pilgrim road', West nevertheless meditates on the Pope's face as he saw it through a movie camera—the face is 'that of a suffering man, full of unexpressed anguish. For those moments, the Vicar of Christ seemed to wear the face of Christ himself, the Man of Sorrows acquainted with infirmity'.

West's novels indicate how seriously his imagination is fixed on the modern Papacy. Indeed he has a claim to be the inventor of the papal novel, which we are not done with yet, as novels by Malachy Martin and Andrew Greeley have recently shown. The phenomenon of fiction as programme of reform, as pamphlet of reform, illuminates the condition of being a modern Catholic. Such authors say, 'Imagine how it could be'. The fiction might make it seem concretely possible, or alternatively all the more unlikely. The importance of the personal 'connection' Catholics can feel for whoever is the Pope has been one of the distinctive

features of Catholic culture. The feeling for the Pope, whether positive or negative, is personal. The Papacy is dramatically involved in the imaginative lives of Catholics. There can be notable advantages in this, and a terrible cost when the relationship is placed in jeopardy. For better and worse, a Catholic's feeling for the Pope personalises the institution. West's life and work, as this memoir shows, is a notable embodiment of all this.

Maybe some will find the initial image of the pilgrim a note or two over-romantic. Belief, whatever else it does, dramatises, makes personal. This can make for over-statement and unrelieved earnestness. Undoubtedly, West takes his story and his pilgrim-self seriously, though there is joy here, if not much laughter. Even those actually making a pilgrimage nowadays do it by bus, car and plane. Nevertheless, West's pilgrim car has a right to stop upon the ridge, partly because the view he sees is recognisable to many others as well, and all the more precious because of that.

THE IMAGE OF WEST that seems more integral to the style and tone of his writing is that of a teacher, or a 'dominie' as he precisely puts it. He always expounds an issue with exemplary clarity. His readers always know where they are being led. Moreover, there are quick phrases in the book that repeatedly convey his school-masterly habits: 'I must remind you', 'what I have to tell you now', 'I would like to remind you...' This can be a story-teller's way too. West brings story-teller and teacher close together.

Quite explicitly in the chapter 'The Making of Prophecy' West states that he has 'the duty to speak out, to make prophecy in the assembly'. His charge is against the tendency he finds in contemporary Catholicism

Above centre: 1985 portrait of Morris West by Judy Cassab.

to the inquisitional, the dominance of legalism and its structures. His concern is that so many are being alienated from the Church because of this. What gives his prophecy strength is his acknowledgment that he only wants to speak as a member of the community, his call for a renewal within the Church that includes the magisterium, and his admission from the start that this is an old man speaking.

How much, I wonder, is this memoir best read as an old man's book? While it conveys some sense of settling accounts, more religious precedents spring to mind. The haunting title of one of the volumes of the great Welsh poet, R.S. Thomas, *Experimenting with an 'Amen'* certainly touches upon the sense of negotiating what has to be accepted before the farewells are fully made, as well as proclaiming the desire to

bring one's life to a formal and holy close. With this book we see West moving towards his *nunc dimittis*. This servant of the Lord is almost ready to go in peace; he has indeed seen an heroic figure who has stirred his deepest hopes, and while his expectations are presently shadowed, he affirms that hope is abiding. ■

Andrew Bullen SJ is Rector of Jesuit Theological College, Parkville.

BOOKS: 10

JAMES GRIFFIN

In the rank and file

A Veritable Dynamo: Lloyd Ross and Australian Labour 1901-1987, Stephen Holt, University of Queensland Press, 1996. ISBN 070222653 X RRP \$29.95

ABSORBING AND OF judicious length, Stephen Holt's biography of Lloyd Ross is an earnest, scholarly addition to the Labor Party library.

The son of Labor ideologue, Robert Ross (1873-1931), and brother of the voluble communist Edgar, Lloyd was a blend of an impeccable socialist pedigree with a middle-class and academic upbringing. Once Labor's most public literary figure, and a 'united front' Communist in the thirties, Lloyd had to endure the appellation, 'rat', for his later apostasy.

However, like Laurie Short, he remained a union organiser within the ALP, in spite of being on sympathetic terms with B.A. Santamaria and becoming a president of the CIA-funded Australian Association for Cultural Freedom (AACF). Obviously his biographer has some explaining to do.

Dr Holt seems in general to be dismayed by the divergence between theory and practice within the Labor movement but he does not attribute unworthy motives to Ross when he turns his coat. Had he wanted to do so, he would have started when Lloyd was head prefect at University High School at the end of World War I. He was expected to captain the school cadets and did, although his father

had been a notable opponent of compulsory military training and an anti-conscriptionist. As Lloyd said, 'I obeyed the law, registered, drilled at school and wore a uniform'. This was in spite of 'having already commenced his fiery socialist ordeal'.

At Melbourne University from 1920, he became first president of the Labor Club which included Brian Fitzpatrick, Ralph Gibson and Macmahon Ball, and drafted its first manifesto.

After several years as a Workers' Educational Association (WEA) tutor in Dunedin (NZ), Ross in 1929 accepted an 'ideologically suspect' Rockefeller Fellowship to study trades union development in Manchester. From there he went to the London School of Economics where he met G.D.H. Cole, R.H. Tawney and Harold Laski.

The Depression converted him to Soviet centralism, although the fanatical communist, Ralph Gibson, had already divined his 'liberal' weakness. Returning to New South Wales in 1932, he failed to change the WEA from a non-political organisation to one with a policy of achieving 'a socialist state of society by education'. Among other writings he completed a history of Labor in Australia for which Dunedin

awarded him a D. Litt. and a biography of the utopian, William Lane, who had ultimately apostatised.

Ross's final, if rather secretive, step into the Communist Party followed the Egon Kisch anti-war visit of 1934-5 when he became secretary of the New South Wales branch of the Australian Railways Union (ARU). Now Ross's theory and practice, 'brain and hand', were united in the Labor cause. This did not prevent him from supporting the ALP's anti-Lang unity conference in 1939 from which Communists were excluded, and which 'redeemed' the pragmatic ALP in New South Wales.

The 'united front' against war and fascism took a new turn with the Soviet-Nazi non-aggression pact of August 1939 and the division of Poland. 'Fascism', in Edgar's words, became 'not a German but a capitalist product'. Lloyd continued with this phoney line until the fall of France (June 1940) when, under the influence of Victor Gollancz's Left Book Club (LBC), his thinking changed 'from fear that the Allies might be diverted to attacking Russia, to fear that the Nazis might conquer Britain and Australia'.

Today it is difficult to believe that Lloyd had to 'comb through Lenin's collected works in an effort

to prove to his own satisfaction that the LBC's pro-war position was truly in accord with basic left-wing principles'. So much for both the bonds of 'theory' and the elasticity!

His 'little monograph', 'Is the War Imperialist—and What Then?', was not publicised because it was unpalatable to the communist supporters 'who comprised his power base in the ARU'. Lloyd still had to appear resolutely against 'fascism' on the home front and not collaborate with the introduction of conscription by

Menzies or any reduction in the standard of living for workers.

STILL, INEVITABLY, LLOYD was excommunicated. He was 'a middle-class intellectual'; his wife was said to consider herself 'connected with the aristocracy'. Lloyd 'was never really much more than a liberal', said Edgar bitterly. But Lloyd carried the confidence of the ARU executive—by 11 votes to 10. Even when the USSR entered the war and the Communists rediscovered the virtue

of worker unity, the apostate was unforgiven. However, the Communists now accepted conscription, excessive hours of work and poor conditions.

In September 1943 Ross became Director of Public Relations in the Department of Post-war Reconstruction under 'Nugget' Coombs. His doctrinaire socialism became democratic socialism. Central planning, not anarchic market forces, could still guarantee individual liberty and promote equality. In spite of the Socialist Objective of 1921, labour and capital could marry after all and 'wage slavery' be called something better.

While true-blue Liberals would still denounce him as a 'Commo' for supporting the 'Powers' referendum of 1944 and Bank Nationalisation, disruptive unionism driven by Communists was now Ross's main enemy. He joined the Industrial Groups. His anti-Francoism became irrelevant when he accepted B.A. Santamaria's invitation to speak at Catholic Action's Rural Movement convention in 1945. He found some links with Bellocian distributism in his father's having repudiated 'simple nationalisation'. Evidently his socialist conscience was still at work; he craved justification.

The Cold War did the rest. Dr Holt suggests that with Labor out of office, its right-wing was now the only place for Ross's activism. In 1952 he returned to the ARU as state secretary. After the 1955 Labor Split he refused to join Jack Kane's pro-grouper breakaway and, though a marked man in the ALP, survived, even when, as 'one of the symbols of anti-Communist unionism', the conspiratorial Richard Krygier anointed him as Sir John Latham's

successor as AACF president. He defeated John Kerr 9 votes to 7. For the far left this must have been an incoronation of a stereotypical 'rat'.

However, to bemuse observers even further, Ross counterpointed his Cold War warriorhood with industrial militancy. His ARU resolved against the Vietnam war and offered 'all possible aid to the Melbourne Tramways Union when Maoist Clarrie O'Shea was jailed in 1969'.

His career ended in 1969 on a subdued note, his favoured successor being defeated by the Right. In the same year Krygier 'ceased' him out of the AACF presidency and he was replaced by Sir Zelman Cowan. In 1972 the McMahon government gave him an OBE. In his retirement he completed his life of John Curtin (1977) but unfortunately, not his own memoirs.

In his final years, says Holt, 'he yearned to proclaim a vital left-of-centre social democratic message'—and was reconciled with Edgar.

Hawke and Keating would hardly have listened.

OLID STALINISTS AND OTHERS will find it easy to discern a supple opportunism in Ross's career from the day he appeared shamefacedly in front of his father in his cadet officer's uniform. Holt, however, is generous and cogent in tracing a consistent, if accommodating, intellectualism in Ross's pragmatic metamorphoses, even in the wasteland of the AACF. Ross's life provides one plausible paraphrase of Labor history in this century, confusing perhaps but not confounded. ■

James Griffin is an historian, writer and reviewer.

CHAPTERS

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Judging drama

QUESTION: THE FOLLOWING oddly assorted characters have in common: Ronald Ryan (the last man to be hanged in Victoria); an illustrious journalist alienated from his family when his career is about to be celebrated in a book of interviews with celebrities; and a pair of ex-prisoners of war being interviewed for a TV documentary celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the end of World War II?

Answer: They are all leading characters in plays which have won recent Premiers' Literary Awards for Drama in Victoria and NSW. Throw in some of the characters from the shortlisted plays of the past two years—including a group of Newcastle teenagers involved in a gang-rape and murder, a writer alienated from her illustrious publishing family, three generations of two Catholic families thrown into conflict by their interrelationships, and a Macedonian/Australian immigrant who meets a grisly end when he returns to his native country in search of his ancestral roots—and we get some idea of the diversity of Australia people and subjects being represented in our current drama.

We must use the word 'drama' in a pretty wide sense here, since eligibility for Premiers' Literary Awards is not restricted to stage plays alone. Judges have considered—and occasionally awarded the prize to—film and TV scripts, radio plays and even an opera libretto.

The most recent awards have in fact all gone to successfully performed stage plays: Barry Dickins's *Remember Ronald Ryan* (Victoria, 1995), Joanna Murray-Smith's *Honour* (Victoria, 1996) and John Misto's *The Shoehorn Sonata* (NSW, 1996). Other shortlisted plays have included *Blackrock* and *Good Works*, by the prolific and deservedly

successful Nicholas Enright, the Hannie Rayson and Andrew Bovell co-commission for the Melbourne Theatre Company, *Scenes from a Separation*, and Tom Petsinis's *The Drought* (premiered in a La Mama production at Napier St Theatre in 1995).

Some plays have been shortlisted in both states; one state's winner can be another's placegetter. While it happens that each of the past four winners in Victoria (and eight of the twelve awarded since 1985) were all plays which premiered in Melbourne, entries are received from all round Australia and the short lists reflect merit rather than geography.

Last year's Victorian winner, Barry Dickins, is very much a Melbourne writer. A couple of his plays have been first produced in other cities but the vast majority of his prolific output has only been seen in Melbourne. After getting his start at the old Pram Factory, his plays have been most frequently produced by Playbox and La Mama. A prolific playwright, Dickins is also a fiction writer and satirical cartoonist and journalist. His plays celebrate and satirise Melbourne institutions, identities and issues in a style characterised by an anarchic blend absurd situations and flights of fanciful speech. His work is decidedly theatrical: not at first glance the

stuff of literary awards.

REMEMBER RONALD RYAN, however, is a much more orthodox work. It is based on carefully researched real-life characters (including Ryan himself and his family, his partner in petty crime Peter Walker, Fr John Brosnan, Justice Starke, Philip Opas QC and Pentridge Governor, Ian Grindlay). It deals with the actual events leading up to following the killing of a Pentridge prison guard

during Ryan's famous break-out in 1965. Although Dickins leaves no doubt in our minds as to the political nature of Ryan's hanging, and his sympathies clearly lie with Ryan as a loser, this is neither documentary drama nor a sentimentalised whitewash. Ryan is portrayed as a bungler, a rogue and a misfit with a pathological hatred for authority. But in the end (as Dickins has Governor Grindlay say) 'Something there was good in him. But not burglary. No one can sanctify him. Nothing can resurrect him. Christ forgive him.'

It is a play that reads very well on the page and it played very well in the Playbox premiere production in September 1994.

The Sydney-based screenwriter and occasional playwright John Misto (with TV credits like *The Damnation of Harvey McHugh* and *Palace of Dreams* behind him) has also bridged fiction and documentary fact successfully in *The Shoehorn Sonata*. His factual scenario is based on the fall of Singapore in 1942 and its aftermath, in which 150,000 women were imprisoned in Japanese POW camps in Sumatra. The fictional framework is set in the present, when two survivors are reunited to take part in a television documentary celebrating the 50th anniversary of the



Ronald Ryan as Truth photographed him on Guy Fawkes' Day 1966

end of World War II. The play's simple dramatic structure has the two women answering the on-air questions of an unseen interviewer (accompanied by the screening of slides and newspaper facts and figures), then raking over their past relationship in their rooms after each day's shooting.

THE TWO WOMEN ARE the Irish-Catholic Australian Bridie and the stiff and unbending Sheila. Bridie saved Sheila's life and they were to remain deeply dependent on each other throughout the war. However, after their belated liberation, Sheila deliberately lost contact. The TV documentary provides the latter with the chance to uncover the secret Sheila has kept to herself all those years.

On one level, Misto uses the documentary/historical fact of the story to fashion a persuasive drama of reconciliation between his two beautifully drawn fictional characters. If this works well enough on the page (well enough, at least, to convince Currency Press to publish it very shortly) it worked superbly in the simple, spare Ensemble Theatre production of August 1995, with Melissa Jaffer and Maggie Kirkpatrick.

But I suspect there is another level to Misto's reconciliation agenda. Perhaps his play is also saying that it's time to recognise and reconcile—on both sides—the horrific facts and dark secrets of the wider Australia-Japan conflict.

Conflict of a less cataclysmic, but no less dramatically effective, kind lies at the heart of Joanna Murray-Smith's Victorian award-winner of 1996, *Honour*. Murray-Smith first came to light as a playwright in 1987, when her *Angry Young Penguins* (a rather literary play about the perpetrators of the celebrated 'Ern Malley' hoax) was premièred at the Church Theatre in Melbourne.

She has since written a string of plays for Playbox, the most successful to date being *Love Child*, has been picked up by theatre companies all over Australia (and by some

abroad) and successfully adapted for radio. She has also written television scripts, a novel, some pot-stirring journalism and short prose.

Murray-Smith again turns to family conflicts in *Honour*. The apparent centre of this play is a noted senior journalist called Gus, whose comfortable, successful lifestyle is given a severe jolt when he is interviewed by a strikingly smart (and attractive) young writer, Claudia, for a book she is compiling on Australian celebrities. Surprise, surprise, they fall for each other and s by scene

Do our premiers (many of whom are also arts ministers) need to be encouraged to consider including 'theatrical' merit among their criteria? Do we need another category altogether for the judgment of works for the theatre?

seven he leaves Honor, his wife of 32 years, and their University-aged daughter Sophie and moves in with Claudia.

All four characters are then subjected to a searching examination—all in duologues—of their motives, losses, gains and changing attitudes. Murray-Smith's structure is impeccably tight, her dialogue is highly polished and wickedly witty and all her characters have somewhere to go. Like the other plays discussed here, it reads very well and it sprang off the page in the superb Playbox 1995 production.

The matter of theatrical production draws attention to some interesting difficulties in judging plays. As one who has typically seen more than half of the entries in performance before reading them in type-script or in print, I have found that a potentially good play can sometimes be robbed of its potency by an undercast or underskilled production, whereas a play of lesser quality

can be made to look highly theatrical and effective in the hands of a skilled and sympathetic production company. At other times, one wonders what a clumsily presented but promising script might be like in performance.

This problem is far less evident in the other categories, such as poetry, fiction and non-fiction. A poet or novelist can be made to sound good in selected readings at writers' festivals or on Radio National, but the usual outcome is for them to be read in the privacy of our study (or bed).

The principal criterion for judging plays for the purposes of literary awards is 'literary merit'. This might seem to be at odds with the principal purpose of the drama, which I take to be performance in the theatre, but the truth is that really good plays are going to be impressive in print and in performance. It is interesting to note that the companies which read and produce the most new Australian drama tend to be those that produce the most award winners: Playbox, for example, with its practically all-new Australian repertoire, has produced the last four Victorian Premier's Literary Award drama winners.

DOES THIS, NONETHELESS, beg some questions? What are we to make of new performance works: physical, visual, puppet-based and other non-verbal theatre pieces? There can be no question that companies like Legs on the Wall, Rock 'n' Roll Circus, Handspan, Gilgul and Skylark, and writers like Jenny Kemp are producing work of artistic excellence and even elegance.

But how are we to assess their literary merits? Do they *have* 'literary' merits? Do our premiers (many of whom are also arts ministers) need to be encouraged to consider including 'theatrical' merit among their criteria? Do we need another category altogether for the judgment of works for the theatre? ■

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

Bazza meets the Bill

William Shakespeare's Romeo & Juliet, dir. Baz Luhrmann; all cinemas. I have always preferred *Carmen Jones* to any other production of the opera and *Clueless* to the dull and silly version of *Emma* that is now showing. It's not surprising then, that I was enchanted by Baz Luhrmann's film.

There are, of course, cuts in Craig Pearce's screenplay, but they don't matter as they did with the Zeffirelli. And there is a real relief that that fake flat Southern English dialect so often used in Shakespeare is ditched in favour of the actors' own American accents. The energy thus released for real acting is amazing; the vitality of this production never flags.

Baz Luhrmann has assembled a wonderful cast and directed them brilliantly. The performances of Leonardo DiCaprio and Claire Danes as the lovers are sumptuously intense, sympathetic, and always deeply embedded in the context that surrounds them.

And what a rich context it is.

EUREKA STREET FILM COMPETITION

Above is a still taken from the superb *Oxford History of World Cinema* which has Burt Lancaster and Kirk Douglas showing off a medal or two. If you can name the film this was taken from you might just win the *Eureka Street Extravaganza* (i.e. a \$30 trip to the movies).

The winner of the October competition was J.M. Moran of Mosman Park, WA who correctly named the gangster flick *Little Caesar*. (That's Edward G. Robinson playing the tough guy in the bowler hat.)



There are chilling visions of the Verona Beach city state, built and sustained by nepotism and religion, with Capulet and Montague as successful mobsters. Paul Sorvino's Capulet is a flint-hearted *capo* whose viciousness towards his wife and daughter when he is opposed provides fresh insights into the text. Juliet's desperation is fully borne out here: one advantage of cinema is that its broader canvas lets us see the societal disorder stemming from the natures of the two fathers, particularly Capulet.

Smaller parts shine too: Pete Postlethwaite's Fr Lawrence has rare energy and strength. Miriam Margolyes (you might remember her as the Spanish Infanta in *Blackadder*) is the best Nurse you're likely to see this century, even if half her dialogue is excised.

This film fizzes with bold ideas and most of them work. It all looked and sounded wonderful, although I still haven't worked out the recurrent water imagery. But that might come to me when I've seen it a few more times.

—Juliette Hughes

Knight on the tiles

The Horseman on the Roof, dir. Jean-Paul Rappeneau (independent cinemas). In his earlier success, *Cyrano de Bergerac*, Rappeneau conjured with a hero and tale of substance. Here he limits himself to a cadet version: Angelo, a soulful young Carbonaro (Olivier Martinez), is on the run from his mum—she wants to make a revolutionary man of him—and the heavies of the Austro-Hungarian Empire who want to terminate his Piedmontese politics and his person.

Exiled in pastoral Provence he meets with cholera (there's a lot of it around) and Pauline de Theus (Juliette Binoche), who is a chaste but witty married woman. Young



Angelo is an officer and demonstrably kind to cats so it follows that he will also be a man of honour with his new-found lady (a marquise, of course). Together they have a number of adventures, mostly on horseback, but occasionally in Provençal interiors where Pauline wears the exquisite local lace and doles out tea with potted plums and wine.

It's all a bit of a miss—a late 20th century version of early 19th century courtly love, directed without a hint of irony and even less of a sense of history except of the costume variety. Pity, because Binoche is so accomplished she makes Pauline credible, even when she is obliged to cry, 'No, I'd rather die!' when her young cavalier attempts to massage cholera fever out of her with an alcohol rub. And director of photography, Thierry Arbogast, allows the country—from Arles to Briançon—to become as crucial a player as the Appalachians were in *The Last of the Mohicans*. But Olivier Martinez, alas, is no Daniel Day Lewis, and the script, based on Jean Giono's lush *Horseman Cycle*, is diverting trash. But there's one fleeting Hitchcock-like cameo by Gérard Depardieu—he plays it as Molière farce—which makes the film worth the price of all its dripping candles.

—Morag Fraser

Captain Snooze

The Pillow Book dir. Peter Greenaway, (independent cinemas). Greenaway has ventured into the East and returned with a celluloid version

of the Chinese water torture.

Two birthday rituals punctuate the childhood of Nagiko Kiohara (Vivian Wu). Each year her father marks her face and neck with calligraphy to commemorate her birth, and her aunt reads to her from *The Pillow Book*, written by her namesake a thousand years before. Nagiko grows up like a good art-house-cinema child—



Above and p49: Juliette Binoche and Olivier Martinez in *The Horseman on the Roof*.

watching secret sexual activities through gaps in screens and being an innocent witness to the 'complex and cruel' grown-up world. As an adult, she searches for lovers to replace her lost, dishonoured father. Men must write on her body, their calligraphic skills deciding the continuation of her favours. Then Jerome (Ewan McGregor), whose brush work is found wanting, suggests she 'become the pen rather than the paper', and for this stroke of brilliance he gets to stick around.

From here we get an orientalist version of Greenaway's earlier film *The Cook, the Thief, the Wife and her Lover*—ink and brushes replacing the pheasant and meat cleavers. Nagiko finds true love, the bad guy spoils everything, the hero expires and the heroine enacts revenge. All this is peppered with familiar Greenaway clichés: dismembered books, sex in front of the servants, the male corpse as fetish object and the obligatory cameo from a pile of rotting offal. It's all too tired to be confronting—like so many boys crying 'wolf'.

Decorative insets and overlays festoon the screen, depriving the viewer of space for their own visual imaginings. *The Pillow Book* appears as textureless as corporate advertising: when a scalpel slices through dead flesh you might just as well be looking at a loaf of bread.

The journey to Japan might have marked a departure from the Roman decadence and eurocentricity of Greenaway's earlier works but no—calligraphy receives the same stylistic treatment as any of his previous borrowings.

The film notes explain that 'Eastern and Western calligraphy share in the same mystery: visual language is manifest thought.

The word is made flesh.' But as usual, Greenaway's flesh is pretty rotten.

—Tim Metherall

It's a commie plot

Children of the Revolution dir. Peter Duncan (independent). Geoffrey Rush, just one of the names in this film that has seemingly gathered together every Australian actor currently of note, describes it as '*The Battleship Potemkin* meets Mel

Brooks'. Chuck in *Das Kapital* and *The Simpsons* and you'd be getting close to an adequate description of this flick. It is a witty political spoof that is observant of the more common human frailties.

The central idea of *Children of the Revolution* is mad enough: Stalin personally invites a pretty and fervently committed Communist party member from Balmain to the 5th Party Congress in Moscow. His ulterior motive is to have his own congress with her. He dies in the act and maybe, just maybe, is the father of the child who will grow up to become el supremo of the police union, and come very close to toppling the Australian government.

But the tasty bits of this film are the side dishes: unrequited love; love against obstacles; legacies, both inherited and forced; guilt, subterfuge and murder. All of this is mixed together well by a script which has some lines that are absolute pearls ('Frankly, I don't think we'll ever get the revolution going with 6 o'clock closing' is this reviewer's favourite) plus some pretty fair acting.

If you've got Judy Davis, Sam Neill, Richard Roxburgh, Rachel Griffiths, Geoffrey Rush and F. Murray Abraham all in the one show, you're doing well.

Children of the Revolution finished second to *Shine* in the AFI awards but

that's not too bad. After all, Sainly finished second to Octagonal in the Derby last Easter.

—Jon Greenaway

Brave attempt

Dead Heart dir. Nick Parsons (Hoyts, Village). Films about the Australian Aborigines have come to be regarded as box office poison. In that context Bryan Brown's decision to produce and star in *Dead Heart* deserves praise. Set in a desert settlement in central Australia, the story is told in retrospect by a pragmatic Aboriginal survivor of the personal and racial crises that ultimately destroyed the small town.

An Aborigine arrested for drunkenness and assaulting the town cop, hangs himself in the local lock-up. The tribe's anger is satisfied by a pay-back spearing of the Aboriginal Police Aide supposed to be guarding the prisoner (Lafe Charlton). Shortly afterwards a local Aborigine, Tony (Aaron Pedersen) takes a white woman (Angie Milliken) with whom he is having an affair, to a sacred site.

The tribe becomes aware of this devastating transgression and Tony dies shortly afterwards in mysterious circumstances. The blundering local cop Ray Larkin (Bryan Brown), desperate to enforce the law, arrests the suspected killer who is the son of the Aborigine who hanged himself six weeks earlier.

From the prisoner's escape onwards, the film becomes little more than a desert western and inconsequential compared with the film's main theme of the clash between white man's law and Aboriginal law, mysticism and culture. The film has many virtues, particularly the strong performances, with Brown excellent as the lawman, however, as often is the case with a film adapted from a play, the material does not quite stand up to the more expansive medium of cinema. Some of the

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dialogue loses its impact in the red dust and sand of the desert. Oddly, another casualty is the rich canvas of the landscape which seems washed out and one dimensional, in country as rich in colour as a Ken Done shirt.

—Gordon Lewis

Obscure charm

Jude, dir. Michael Winterbottom (independent cinemas). Thomas Hardy's Jude Fawley must be one of the most hapless creations in literature. His luckless first marriage, his aspirations to a university education and his inability to marry the woman who bears his children culminate in a scene which is so disturbing, even by modern standards, that indeed it takes a hardy reader not to look away.

The young son of the first marriage strangles his two step-siblings and hangs himself, leaving a note saying clumsily 'because we are too many.' One, of course, is too few and Jude becomes a solitary figure of both pity and admiration. He has clung to his dream and his ideals at an exorbitant cost. Dickens might have powdered your feelings with a liberal dusting of melodrama: Hardy has no such mercy.

Winterbottom, who directed Roddy Doyle's TV serial 'Family', is reasonably faithful to Hardy's intentions. The film begins with young Jude fighting crows against a black and white farmscape. When we meet the adult Jude (Christopher Eccleston), the farmscape fires into colour: he stands by ineptly as his wife Arabella (Rachel Griffiths) takes control of the killing of a pig. When Arabella returns to his life after many years, she is trussed up in black, looming over the efforts of Jude and Sue Bridehead (Kate Winslet) to keep their young family fed, housed and clothed. Jude is a stonemason who prefers handling books. He is stymied by a rigid class system, a rigid code of public morality and the rigidity of his own aspirations.

If your kids are grating on your nerves these holidays, go and see this film. It is a thing of beauty but hardly a joy.

—Michael McGirr SJ

The Maine course

The Spitfire Grill dir. Lee David Zlotoff (independent). The one thing I resent in films is emotional manipulation. The sight of cinema audiences sobbing, laughing and

smiling on cue scuttles the rumour that humans are cerebral beings. *The Spitfire Grill* does exactly this to the viewer. The unfortunate thing is, it's a wonderful film.

The Spitfire Grill is a cookhouse in the slowly decelerating town of Gilead, a speck on the map of Maine. Percy Talbot (Alison Elliott), like the town, is looking for a fresh start and lobs—or is rather lobbed—on the doorstep of Hannah Ferguson (Ellen Burstyn) the owner of the Grill. Gilead is the sort of town which has a lot to it but the people there keep a lid on things—out of fear and out of apathy—yet Percy manages to overcome their suspicions and inject some life into their community. But she also discovers that there is a reason the town was in a state of atrophy before her arrival.

The relationship between Percy and the delightfully truculent Hannah is added to by Shelby (Marcia Harden), a timid young mother who blossoms when she helps out at the Grill during a crisis. Hannah is too old to run the place and together they come up with a scheme to sell it: an essay contest with a ten-dollar entry fee. When the money and stories start rolling in, a lingering resentment of Percy's impact and influence leads to disaster—and at the same time regeneration.

This film has no special effects, nor box-office stars but it is still compelling viewing. You can't beat a good story and some magic scenery to shoot it in—as long as you don't mind being played like a marionette for an hour and a half.

—Jon Greenaway

Insidious denial

Holy Week dir. Andre Wajda (Jewish Film Festival—Melbourne, November). *Holy Week* is set in Easter 1943, during the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. Hidden by Piotrowski, her former lover, Irena, a sultry young Jewish woman, is sexually assaulted, then evicted, by malicious neighbours.

Though the film is reasonably candid about Polish anti-Semitism, every negative response to Irena is neatly balanced by acts of compassion and heroic self-sacrifice. The most painfully implausible is the suicidal mission of Piotrowski's boyishly good-looking partisan brother Julek, who leads a band of armed teenagers, Indiana-Jones style, into the burning ghetto.

Wajda's moral balancing act is overlaid

by a religious schema, expressed in the contrast between the dark, sensual and embittered Irena and the angelically blonde, loving Anna, Piotrowski's heavily pregnant wife. Irena's provocative and transgressive sexuality conforms to the Polish stereotype of the dangerously seductive Jewess. Her troubled mind mirrors her disturbing beauty. She can't shut out the vision of the burning ghetto. When evicted, she prays that her tormentors will burn and suffer like the Jews.

Anna's prayers are more charitable: unlike Irena, the tall, ethereal, blonde is sustained by her faith. On Easter Sunday, during the rape and eviction scene, Anna kneels in church amid tapers and incense, embracing the crucified Christ. The camera pans between the horror of Piotrowski's senseless death, Irena's stumbling return to the inferno of the ghetto, and the young mother-to-be, a living madonna grieving over her suffering son and tortured humanity.

In this most insidious form of Holocaust



denial, the apocalyptic fires of the Warsaw Ghetto are appropriated by Christian iconography. Wajda's distinctively Polish-Catholic construction of the Holocaust casts the victims as suffering, damned souls, shut out from light, redemptive faith and forgiveness.

Like the convent in Auschwitz, *Holy Week* is a holier-than-thou apologia.

—Felicity Bloch



Situation normal: all fouled up

TRUTH OR DARE: Who were your star crushes when you were too young to have any discrimination? Not the cool, respectable Lennon-Hendrix-Jagger choices of your mid to late

teens, but true 12-year-old infatuations with characters like—well OK, damn it—Dr Kildare.

Yes, I know I'm being a tad courageous at this point, but we all have a past. I bet you have a few pop-culture skeletons you wouldn't like your teenage kids to find out about, either—one day they *will* find your old Frank Ifield fan magazines, and the really fashionable photos. You know the ones: the Afro hairdo, those Bay City Rollers jeans—and guys, what about that brown double-breasted suit? I defy the most dedicated retro fanatic to rehabilitate that lot into the realms of cool. I take refuge in the fact that I was not alone in my devotion; myriad females world-wide, tragically deluded as to our blond idol's proclivities, lost our hearts over him as he fought battles against death and disease and never never swore, harassed the nurses or misdiagnosed a fulminating elbow as a suppurating spleen. Television styles might come and go but the organ recital has never lost its appeal for producers and viewers. (Somehow, these pioneers of the scrub-up and scalpel took over from the Wagon Trains, Bonanzas, Rawhides. The only Western you're liable to see that's made these days is *Dr Quinn, Medicine Woman*.)

Overall the three most durable themes in television drama have been police stuff, situation comedy and medicine. And of these medical drama is such a twentieth century thing, such a *tv* thing. An extraordinary shift of focus has occurred: doctors are no longer minor characters, hired hands along with the spear-carriers, but heroes, the centre of attention. If that sense had prevailed in Shakespeare's time, Lady Macbeth would be just another client of the Doctor's, perhaps referred to specialist care:

'More need thou the divine than the physician, my lady, and methinks thy body politick needeth a purge.'

Or that play about Friar Lawrence of Verona, and the sad tale of a rash young couple he prescribed for ...

Now *Dr Kildare* and *Ben Casey* have given way to *ER*, *Chicago Hope* and, here in Australia, the wonderfully awful *Medivac*. All these series rely on a basic premise, that the lives and work of doctors and nurses are fascinating. This is something that many in the medical profession would find grimly funny since most of them don't *have* a life in the maelstrom of casemix and underfunding.

Their lives are not the only aspect that gets romanticised—a study, released in June by researchers attached to three large American medical centres, found that TV portrayals of cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) are two to five times more successful than in actual medical

emergencies. In the study, 77 percent of patients receiving CPR on *Chicago Hope*, *ER* and *Rescue 911* survived, and all but one with no long-term disability. Real-life survival after CPR ranges from 2 per cent to 30 per cent, and of those, many have appalling neurological complications.

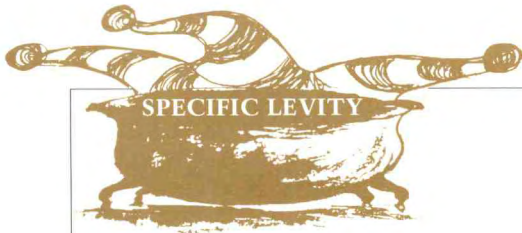
An antidote to all this medivacuity can be found in the ABC's savagely funny *Cardiac Arrest*, a 1994 British series that was written by a junior doctor, John MacUre. Some critics complained that the series was 'far-fetched'—the situations too harsh, the characters too unsympathetic. But all the doctors and nurses I've talked to about it say that it's not at all far-fetched: that they've all worked under such conditions, which are the logical consequence of the miserly attitudes of those in power who would, as someone said recently on the Gael Jennings show on 3LO, end up providing us with 'Star Wars medicine for the rich and Third World medicine for the poor'.

Absolutely Fabulous took an oblique swipe at this in the episode where Edina received VIP treatment for her ingrowing toenail in a plush private hospital: it's all there for you if you are rich. MacUre himself said of *Cardiac Arrest*: 'People will hope it is make-believe. But it's not.'

FROM THE TITLE OF THE FIRST EPISODE, 'Welcome to the House of Pain' there is no compromise. Dr Andrew Collin, newly-qualified, fresh-faced, arrives at his ward with an idealism that will soon be ground down by overwork and cynicism in a system that is collapsing. MacUre's dark view is supported by none other than Dr Sandy Macara, chair of the British Medical Association. This year he was quoted in the British *Daily Telegraph* (not a wildly Trotskyite organ) as saying that the once famed British National Health System was 'sinking like the Titanic', because the Government refused to fund it adequately. Dr Macara claimed that the system was underfunded by six billion pounds. My favourite episode so far was 'The Killing Season', referring to the month of August when it is not a good idea to become ill or have an accident. That is the time when all the new graduates are thrown in at the deep end of kill or cure.

'You come out of medical school knowing bugger-all—no wonder August is the killing season. We all kill a few patients while we're learning', Andrew is told. The pressure is relentless, and the series' title takes on more than just its medical meaning: under a regime where all spending is deemed to be loss, compassion fatigue (how quickly that phrase was injected into the global media after BandAid) is the norm. The heart of a whole nation is arrested by the colossal snafu that passes for public policy under monetarism. ■

Juliette Hughes is a freelance writer and reviewer.

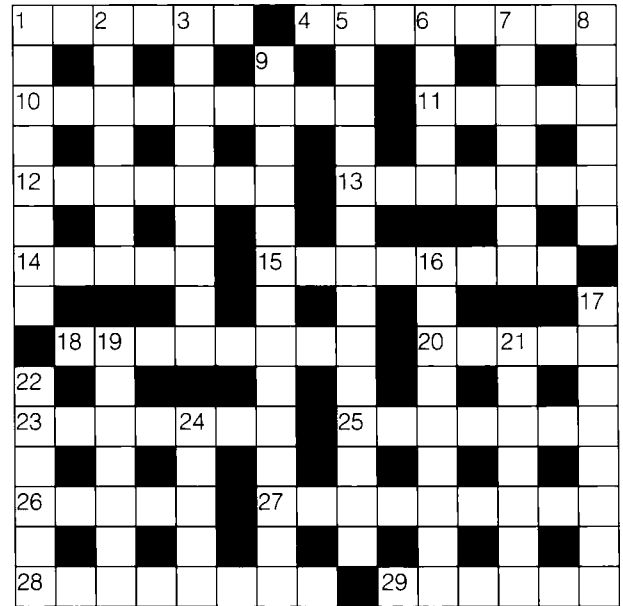


Eureka Street Cryptic Crossword no. 49, December 1996

Devised by Joan Nowotny IBVM

ACROSS

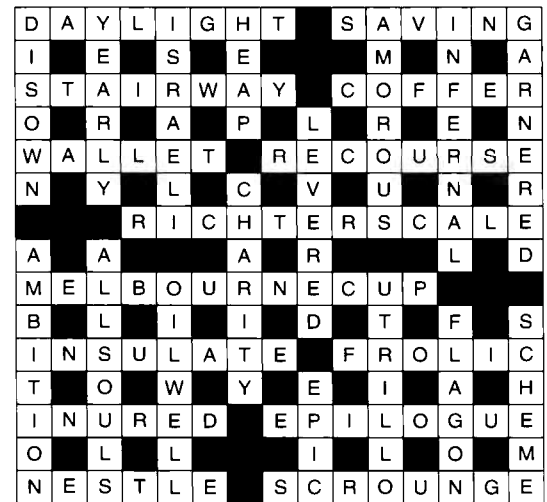
1. At the present time, an opening to birthday celebrations is coming. (6)
4. Leave about ten round, in charge? That would be idealistic but impractical. (8)
10. Returned to the land and paid again. (9)
11. Unsuspecting about a vine being replanted. (5)
12. Bill is singing well at present. (7)
13. He went back on his word? Need Reg apologise? (7)
14. If there's more of this the pace will be reduced, they say. (5)
15. A line of heat, or fire possibly, is round the Marines. (8)
18. Unlikely thrower I thought more deserving of the discus prize. (8)
20. Arrange a Merc for me to drive. It's the pick! (5)
23. Part of monastic habit worn right off the shoulder-blade. (7)
25. What's the time? You'll get it from Starface. (7)
26. Monarch from the East barely making a living? (5)
27. All corporeal entities personified! (9)
28. Whose child is full of grace, as the old rhyme says? Duet arranged for the announcement. (8)
29. Affix closure to one of the final total. (6)



DOWN

1. Publicise parsimonious proposal? No, it should be leak-proof. (8)
2. Double entry permit cut short for meeting face-to-face. (3-1-3)
3. A 5-down sort of person could do with a mixed mint and nut repast? Yes, but now, in the present—not the past! (9)
5. Over-fed? On the contrary, he has somehow endured hours in hunger! (14)
6. What's the number of this gas element? Not one under ten. (5)
7. Set in motion, he attempts to contain the child's horse. (7)
8. Grass in the Civil Service? That's beyond all beliefs. (6)
9. Sick, for example, with it, I'm at Ely castle unlawfully. (14)
16. Does mediocre journalist need to sound so trite? (9)
17. Used unexpected poem delay without a qualm. (8)
19. Work on a story about a stone that is gem-like. (7)
21. A minced pie to me is a typical example of a satisfying food. (7)
22. The combination, since despatched, produced agreement. (6)
24. Advocated Strasbourg edition be included in the catalogue. (5)

Solution to Crossword no. 48, November 1996



Correction: In the November crossword one clue was omitted and replaced by a clue, from the October issue, that just didn't want to go away. After lurking in cyberspace for a month it reinserted itself into the November puzzle. Apologies to devotees and to Sr Joan Nowotny IBVM, who devises each month's cryptic. November's 8 Down should have read as follows:

8. Ailing gardener confused about what he picked. (8)

Psst... The winners of the Jesuit Publications raffle are:

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2nd: Sr Mary Baulderstone, Marryatville, SA

4th: M. Murphy, Rooty Hill, NSW

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