

EUREKA STREET

Vol. 7 No. 8 October 1997

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The Uncritical Culture

Tim Bonyhady

on Bernard Smith and Australia's failure of memory

EUREKA STREET TALKS

at Richmond on the hill

Reconciliation: where to from here?

Patrick Dodson

Chair, Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation

&

Fr Frank Brennan SJ

Director, Uniya, Jesuit Centre for Social Justice

Wednesday, 29 Oct 1997, 7.30pm

St Ignatius Church,
326 Church St, Richmond

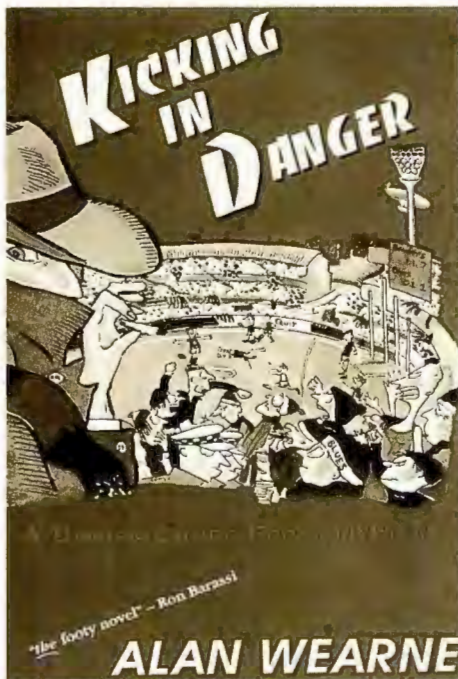
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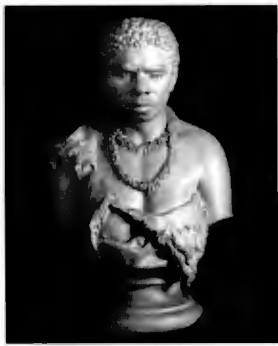


Kicking in Danger

Alan Wearne

Whether you cheered for the Crows or groaned for the Saints last month, now you have a chance to assuage your withdrawal symptoms. Alan Wearne's *Kicking in Danger* is a novel about the true religion, a mystery story that uses the great mysteries of footy. Whether you love or hate Melbourne's greatest passion, you will still be enthralled by Damien Chubb, Alan Wearne's laconic ex-Bomber PI.

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A magazine of public affairs, the arts and theology

'Truganini's place in [Bernard] Smith's work over the last 40 years provides a vehicle for exploring how Smith's ideas have changed over time and how he has responded to new social and intellectual developments.'

—Tim Bonyhady

See The Uncritical Culture, p24.



This project has been assisted by the Commonwealth Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body.

Cover: One of Benjamin Hall's series of busts of Truganini.
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Beyond writing

Wrongs

AS THE LITERACY DEBATE WAS HOTTING UP in September, with accusations flying back and forth about falling standards, the derelictions of teachers and the political agendas of ministers, I went to school for the day.

In the western suburbs of Melbourne, seven groups of Year Eleven students from schools as far flung as metropolitan Adelaide, Springvale, the multicultural heart of the south east of Melbourne—and Geelong—the Victorian regional city that bore the brunt of the Pyramid collapse—came together to show one another the results of their six months' work on a project called Justice and Democracy.

I'd met them before, early in the school year, when they were at the start of their venture. It would be fair to say, at that stage, that the words justice and democracy were familiar to them but only with the half-life shimmer that abstract concepts have for teenagers focused on growing up, getting results, coping with jobs, family, weight worries and peers.

But come September, with some extraordinary field work behind them, they had fleshed out the ideas of democratic representation, of justice, equity, and a fair go. They'd gone, in their seven groups, out into their communities, to investigate family breakdown, the justice of current systems of higher education funding, substance abuse and its impact on families, perceptions of social class, prejudice, racism and the state of Australia's regional towns. They'd lobbied politicians, organised town meetings, spent nights in refuges, put in the hard time digging out the facts that will have an impact on their future lives as citizens in a democracy.

The project was a voluntary one. The students worked closely with their teachers, who stretched their time and resources to fit it in, as good teachers have always done. The students' final presentations were sophisticated multi-media events, combining video, sound, drama, spoken word and written scripts—so good they surprised themselves. 'Don't expect much', warned one lad from Ararat, as he got up to deliver his sharp analysis of the economic and social change his home town has seen in a decade. But we did expect and he delivered, in spades.

These were not 'privileged' schools. But their students were engaged. Their teachers understood that education is never just vocational preparation. The final presentations were literate and numerate in ways that no test could properly assess. And underpinning it all was trust—young people's newly-won trust in their own ability, their teachers, and the possibility making their society a better one.

I wish the minister had been there. ■

—Morag Fraser

Note: This month's Eureka Street carries a number of advertising inserts. No party-political endorsement by the magazine should be inferred from any such inclusions.

When we want to be alone

AFTER DIANA, ANOTHER CRY RISES for privacy protection under law. But for whom? The private what? Protection how? Justifiably breached when? How to measure the damage and assuage it without compounding the breach? And how to stop the 'Royals factor' from distorting the Australian response?

We know, with Orwell's Winston Smith, that privacy is a precondition for liberty. We feel, even if we rarely analyse it, that privacy is essential to selfhood.

However, we accept some loss of privacy, either as the inevitable result of being in society, or in return for benefits. The simplest example is disclosure of our financial affairs to a bank in return for credit. What might justify breach of privacy by the media (other than consent for reward of the Bob and Blanche Bathrobe variety)?

Accepting that the public interest is more than public curiosity and that the media's definition of 'newsworthiness' can be too self-serving, we need tests of public interest such as were proposed by the Australian Law Reform Commission. Is the topic related to sustainability of, or candidature for, public, commercial or professional office or decisions or activities of those in office? Property or services offered to the public? Apprehending offenders, enforcing law, protecting health or safety or administering justice? Or is it 'otherwise of legitimate concern to the general public or to any section of the public'?

Adequate or not, such tests beg a final, vital question. What kind of fame does the person enjoy/suffer? Different fame can mean different privacy loss, with different justification.

- Fame by election or appointment is for politicians, judges and others in public office. They trade anonymity for power and prestige and lose some privacy because accountability requires it.

- Fame by achievement comes to actors, TV presenters, sportsmen and women, business leaders and some writers. Many invite publicity to get fame, earn money in exchange for privacy, then protect privacy using wealth.

- Fame by chance happens to anonymous people caught in the randomness of tragedy or disaster (Lindy Chamberlain, Stuart Diver) or, less often, good fortune. Such fame also comes to those declared 'typical' (Paxton family). Here, privacy is not traded but stolen. (At least initially: later, with greater or lesser naïveté, they may sell their testimony of suffering.)

- Fame by association is the lot of a politician's spouse, a sports champion's children or the mother of a criminal. It is reflected fame, but not always glory. Justifiable breach of privacy depends, as always, on the circumstances. For instance, the share dealings of a politician's spouse may be relevant to holding the politician to account.

- Royal fame is unique. Members of that family, by birth or marriage, have no clear divide between private and public.

From the time they are cradled on the pavement outside hospital to the time the gun carriage bears their coffin, they exist to be photographed. Unlike the politician, film star or victim of tragedy, there is no reason for public interest in the Royals except that they are there.

Not having been elected or appointed; not having any legislative, executive or adjudicative powers; not having achieved anything except birth or marriage into a particular family; they cannot easily be brought within the 'public interest' criteria which may justify breaches of the privacy of other types of famous persons, yet preserve an inviolable private zone.

On the contrary, in seeking a purpose, the Royals have themselves shrunk the zone almost to nothing. At least since World War I, when their German heritage was a tricky issue, the royal family has been offered as a model family. The children go to good schools and behave, the men serve in the military and select brides who dress up, do charity work and produce heirs. Their weddings are always fairytales. Their deaths close and open eras. With their names we mark time.

IF SIMPLY LIVING IS THEIR PUBLIC PURPOSE, where does their right to privacy begin? If the model isn't working, with all the private suffering that it entails, why shouldn't the public know? The public has been invited to be interested in the lives of the royal family; it is not similarly invited to take an interest in the marital troubles of a politician, or the financial affairs of a sports star. In Britain, where citizens subsidise royalty without electing them, the public is a shareholder.

Through divorce, Diana had exited the family but not the stage. Since her death it has become a cliché to say that because French privacy law is strict but did not prevent invasion of her privacy, privacy laws are therefore of no value. This is silly. A law is not pointless because some people break it, but rather if most people do. A majority of the media is a tiny minority of the people but has a very loud voice.

In France, privacy protection is part of other laws protecting aspects of personality, including reputation and the rights of an artist to defend the integrity of his or her work.

Areas covered by privacy law include family life, sexual activity and orientation, illness and death and private repose and leisure. Courts have restrained or penalised the publication of photos of famous people ill or dying in bed, in wheelchairs or attended by relatives.

Modesty and dignity are enforceable: the former empress of Iran restrained publication of photos of herself in a bathing suit. The plaintiff need not prove that he or she was injured by the breach, nor that the defendant was at fault or had an improper motive.



French law could have assisted Diana and Dodi Fayed in France had they invoked it.

As connected computers embed themselves in our lives, we will not 'solve' the issue of privacy protection. But we will think more clearly about it in Australia if we acknowledge frankly that the Royals' experience is uniquely unhelpful; French law is neither useless nor readily adaptable; and the media's self-interest will distort the debate, but 'free speech' and 'public interest' notions *are* important.

Wealth can buy privacy protection as well as access to law for most famous people, who tend to trade privacy for fame.

Yet money and timely legal advice are usually lacking for people affected by tragedy or disaster, who become famous at the worst moment of their lives. For them, the best protection will be a greater willingness among media people to extend the compassion and discretion which they habitually show when tragedy afflicts one of their own. ■

Paul Chadwick was a member of the committee to review the code of ethics of the Media Alliance (Australian Journalists' Association). Its report, *Ethics in Journalism*, was published in September by Melbourne University Press.

COMMENT: 3

LIZ CURRAN

Belting justice

POLITICS AND VOTE-CATCHING ASIDE, the Northern Territory and Western Australian mandatory sentencing laws are draconian, vengeful and disproportionate.

Mandatory laws give no weight to the circumstances of an individual case. They take away judicial discretion, thus rendering irrelevant the nature of the specific offence, the impact on the victim and the offender's circumstances.

The Northern Territory mandatory laws, effective as of March 1997, mean that a child of 15 or 16 years of age faces a mandatory sentence of 28 days' imprisonment for a second offence. If the person is 17 years or over, he or she faces 14 days' imprisonment for a first offence, 90 days for a second offence and 12 months for a third offence. Offences can include minor ones such as stealing, unlawful entry, and criminal damage.

The mandatory sentencing laws of Western Australia, which came into effect in November 1996, make it compulsory for a judge to sentence a repeat offender (someone who has been convicted on a previous home burglary for example) to a minimum of 12 months' detention or imprisonment. The legislation appears to apply to persons 10 years of age or over.

In a case in the Northern Territory on 24th June 1997, a man was sentenced to 14 days in jail for a \$9 theft. In another case, a young mother faces imprisonment for the theft of an item worth \$2.50. In a case in Western Australia, a homeless boy stole a small amount of money for food and was imprisoned despite an admission by the Department of Family Services that they had failed in their responsibility to look after the boy. In another case a 12-year-old boy was sentenced to 12 months' imprisonment.

The Starke Report and a large body of domestic and overseas research has repeatedly highlighted the negative effects of imprisonment. They include damage to physical health, damage to mental health, psychological problems, placing stress on marital and family relations, jails becoming incubators of crime, licit and illicit drug dependency, institutionalisation and exposure to physical and sexual assault.

The principle of sentencing as a last resort is contained in section 5 (4) of the Victorian Sentencing Act. The Northern Territory law not only flies in the face of Recommendation 92

of the *Royal Commission Into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody* (which states imprisonment should be a sanction only of 'last resort'), but it also offends all concepts of fairness, justice and proportion. In addition the laws are contrary to the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice (The Belting Rules) which state that:

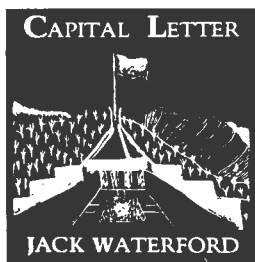
'5.1 The juvenile justice system shall emphasise the well-being of the juvenile and shall ensure that any reaction to juvenile offenders shall always be in proportion to the circumstances of both the offenders and the offence.'

A criminal justice system built primarily on a philosophy of vengeance and punishment holds out little hope for those who may be capable of reform or who are treated unfairly because they belong to a minority, are poor or disadvantaged and prone to come to the attention of the law. In a climate of social strain, where a majority of the women in prisons have apparently suffered some form of physical or sexual abuse, when legal aid is restricted, where there is high unemployment, rising levels of homelessness and families in financial strife, government policies should ameliorate, not add to suffering. Diversionary sentencing options which educate and reform can often return offenders to a society as constructive human beings, unburdened by the sense of bitterness and anger that a disproportionate prison sentence is likely to instil.

MANDATORY SENTENCING IS LEGALISM acting in a vacuum and is contrary to our community endorsement of forgiveness and reconciliation. It contradicts the role of society as the protector of human dignity, and can only lead to recidivism, a sense of anger and volatility—a situation contrary to the long-term interests of the common good.

In convict days, people could be transported and imprisoned for the theft of a loaf of bread. Today, with the lessons of history behind us, one would have expected a more enlightened, considered and compassionate response. ■

Liz Curran is a lawyer and Executive Director of the Catholic Commission for Justice, Development and Peace (Melbourne Archdiocese).



Corruption of the spirit

NOTICE SOMETHING ABOUT the new rushes of scandals or would-be scandals everywhere?

We've seen them all before.

Politicians rorting travel allowances? Ask a dozen or more former ministers or members from Queensland or Western Australia in only the past decade. Politicians who would not know a conflict of interest if it bit them in the nether regions? Look at the allegations made against poor old Phillip Lynch in 1977. Politicians defiantly trading on the share market and seeking share offers? Ask Joh Bjelke-Petersen and half of his Cabinet about their deals with Comalco shares. Prime Ministers seeking to get the numbers in the Senate by exercising patronage on a disaffected member of another party? Ask Gough Whitlam about Vince Gair. Fiddling the tender system to make sure that some mates get the tender? I could think of a number of Hawke and Keating Government examples of that.

It is not necessarily that politicians will not learn. They are not all crooks, and find themselves writhing at the low estimation in which all politicians are held, and their inability to be able to achieve much because of this popular scepticism. It's hard to move minds when everyone thinks you are on the take.

A major part of the phenomenon of Hansonism is founded on this profound distrust. A large part of the phenomenon of the Howard majority (or at least the crushing defeat of Keating) was in disaffection deriving from a popular perception that home groups had a privileged in at the Keating counsels while others were ignored and treated contemptuously

And every time there has been a major scandal there has been at least the pretence of fixing things up. And making things more transparent so that those who slip must recognise a real risk of getting caught. Look at some of the checks and balances imposed after the Fitzgerald Royal Commission, the WA Inc Royal Commission and any number of similar scandals in the states. Look at the Bowen report at Commonwealth level into public interest and private duty, and the more recent reports (admittedly sometimes written by people who seemed to have problems understanding what the fuss was about). Look at mechanisms such as public declarations of shareholdings and assets, and the regular publications of how deeply snouts have been in the trough. Look at judicial and administrative review, freedom of information legislation, and the role of Auditors-General in blowing whistles, even as Governments, state and federal, have tried to muzzle them. Not only do rules and principles abound, but so also, one might think, has the probability of being caught out and disgraced.

The fact is, however, that the latest nettings of politicians are only at the surface of the sorts of corruptions of the spirit, incompetent supervision of the public interest and lack of regard for process which this government, like ones before it, routinely manifest.

Members of this Government have, for example, consciously played a populist line with the idea of welfare scroungers and dole bludgers and promoted highly punitive legislation designed to persecute them into the grave.

In just the same week that John Sharp and Peter McGauran were talking long about innocent mistakes, for example, the Ombudsman was reporting to the parliament about a host of cases in which the Social Security Department seemed unable to manifest any flexibility or comprehension of the possibility of innocent error in relation to benefit claims. One case involved an Aborigine living in fringe camps around Alice Springs who spoke no English and had

departmental counter staff make up his claim. Even a populist could not fail to notice that such a person got less in a week for his wife and four children than Peter McGauran got for staying in his wife's apartment in Melbourne.

The very same Ombudsman's report complains that Government is going willy-nilly into outsourcing and the contracting out of government services without protecting the public, keeping risk in the public sector, or protecting records, privacy, or access to information. She was not complaining of the change in culture involved in handing over services to the private sector but the lack of thought about how the public, and those who are now called 'clients' can be sure they are getting what they should.

Precisely the same attitude abounds with proposed new public service legislation, supposedly focused on replacing that unhealthy obsession with 'process' by a focus on outcomes—whether or not public administration is actually achieving what government and the public want of it. [It has been process, of course, which has stood in the way of getting the outcomes the rorting politicians wanted].

Strip out almost all of the protections a public servant once had, make it clear that she or he is just an employee like any other, emphasise that the careers of even the most senior public servants are entirely at the whim of government [even constitutional fictions about the governor-general and the Executive Council have been stripped from the appointment and dismissal process] and you have a formula for a compliant and politicised public service.

Just before John Sharp handed in his resignation, it emerged that he had demanded of all of those whom he appointed to supposedly statutorily independent boards, that they sign an undated letter of resignation that he could use whenever it suited him.

In the same vein, the Minister for Immigration, Phillip Ruddock threatens to sack members of a supposedly independent immigration tribunal who hand down decisions with which he disagrees. And an interdepartmental committee dominated by Max Moore-Wilton, the hand-picked head of the Prime Minister's Department, tries (unsuccessfully) to have all administrative review bodies brought under bureaucratic control.

BACK AT CABINET, MORE TIME IS SPENT ON approving patronage appointments, and in vetting people for secret Labor sympathies, than on considering industry protection. Even poor old Robert De Castella, a Xavier lad like Peter McGauran, gets the flick from the Australian Sports Commission for having had the nerve to accept his initial appointment from Labor.

It's not a pretty sight, and it makes little difference that the Coalition's predecessors ran things in their own interests as well.

John Howard wanted to create a new culture and recognised that to do so he had to break up the old one. Fair enough, up to a point, if he is straightforward about what is happening and why. But the problem about taking too many short cuts, and making too many presumptions on the public's tolerance of partisan government, is that too many of those involved seem to lose the fibre for the little personal rectitudes and responsibilities.

Usually it takes a party a term or two to realise that it holds office on leasehold, rather than freehold. This lot have been showing all of the arrogance and corruption of the spirit of people who have forgotten being in opposition. It took Labor more than a decade to get to that point. ■

Jack Waterford is editor of the *Canberra Times*.

Pastoral cynical

From John Kersh

Something is rotten in the state of Queensland. Do I not hear its government making very strong calls for the moral necessity of upgrading the tenure of Queensland leasehold country? So can someone please explain how they can concurrently downgrade the grazing homestead perpetual lease of the Orindi-Cloncurry property 'Greenwood', to a term lease?

There were district owners of other small, marginally viable GHP leases, most anxious to purchase the said place to enhance their own viability. Yet while hearing verbal assurances from the highest-ranking National Party hierarchy that the mooted downgrade of the lease would not occur to enable the Stanbroke Pastoral Co. (AMP subsidiary) become an eligible purchaser, this outcome is now *fait accompli*. For how much longer will the rank and file of this party be the victim of such contempt? Are National Party principles as flexible and as grossly inconsistent as the size of a company's cheque book?

John Kersh

Bora, Maxwelton, QLD

Ex ædificio Elvis sortitus est

From H. J. Grant

The US Memphis extravaganza remembering Elvis Presley twenty years after his death in 1977 has been excelled in Finland, where a University classics professor translates and sings Elvis' songs in Latin. Emulation in Australia is urgently needed to save the classics, in particular the Latin language.

Boudoirs have been full of Latin lovers, some not lousy. Not less generally should Australian universities with classics professors in mortar and gown echo in Elvis technology, supported by student bands and econometric choirs, the Latin seeds of The Seekers.

The seeming lack of interest of the Federal Government in the classics could well have arisen from lack of submissions written in Latin; advocates' declining to declaim has been attributed to Napoleon's conqueror, the Duke of Wellington

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



who when British Prime Minister (1828–30) gave this advice to a new MP: 'Don't quote Latin, say what you have to say, and then sit down.'

The adoration of Elvis through Latin should however, be pursued and is a clear sign to the Catholic church to reintroduce this noblest of languages. What could be more enticing to a game of tennis than this Latin invitation couched by a Cardinal: '*Ludere manubriato reticulo quisnam vult?*' (Is there someone who wants to play the game of the net with a handled instrument?) Rock on Elvis—in Latin—and save the classics.

H. J. Grant

Campbell, ACT

Last words

From Brent Howard

Helga Kuhse (*Eureka Street*, September 1997) correctly points out that the fact that 96 out of a pool of 1112 doctors said that their last terminally ill patient would have been able to receive better or more appropriate care if the law had allowed active voluntary euthanasia (AVE) and/or assisted suicide is a matter of great moral significance and constitutes a powerful argument for the legalisation of AVE and/or assisted suicide. Dr Kuhse however did not directly address Fr Uren's question (May and July-August 1997) about the likely effect of legalisation on the incidence of end-of-life decisions taken without

patient consent. Surely no one is seriously suggesting that there will be more open discussion about euthanasia and related matters when AVE is illegal than when it is not.

If they are, they would do well to consider the words of Dutch researchers. AVE was effectively legalised in the Netherlands in the mid 1980s, and in *The Lancet* of May 8, 1993 Pijnenborg et al. refer to 'comments from our respondents about the increasing possibilities for open discussion'. Similarly, in *The Hastings Center Report* of November-December 1993 van Delden and colleagues speak of 'more possibilities for an open discussion between doctors and patients and growing readiness (and skill) of physicians to discuss end-of-life decisions'.

Does increased open discussion lead to a reduced incidence of end-of-life decisions taken without patient consent when patients are competent to decide? We are entitled to conclude, again unsurprisingly, that it very probably does.

Reporting the results of the 1990 Dutch survey, van der Maas et al. wrote (*Euthanasia and other Medical Decisions Concerning the End Of Life*, p59): 'A respondent sometimes indicated that greater involvement of patient and others in the decision-making process would certainly have been possible. Several times cases were involved that had occurred several years ago and the respondent indicated that due to present day acceptance of clear decision-making in such matters he certainly would now have opted for a more extensive decision-making process.'

Furthermore, across all end-of-life decisions, research data suggests a significantly higher competent patient consent rate in the Netherlands in 1995 than in 1990. Van der Maas and his co-authors write in the relevant report (*New England Journal of Medicine*, Volume 335, No. 22, pp1699-1705): '[W]e thought it likely that the incidence of decisions to end life without an explicit request by the patient would decrease because of the growing openness with which end-of-life decisions are discussed with patients. A coherent picture emerges from the present study that confirms [this expectation].'

Now, with the Kuhse survey, we see that in a country with AVE banned (Australia) the incidence of end-of-life decision-making (including active



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non-voluntary euthanasia) without patient consent is significantly higher than in a country with AVE effectively legal; and that (projecting from the survey results) Australian doctors report that in several thousand cases per year the legal availability of AVE and/or assisted suicide would have allowed them to improve their care of their dying patient.

I suggest that there is more than enough evidence about the probable benefits in terms of increased respect for patient autonomy—as well as the near certain benefits in terms of the alleviation of great suffering—to justify the legalisation of active voluntary euthanasia.

Brent Howard
Rydalmere, NSW

Glib and glibber

From Geoff Hastings

Full marks to Paul Turnbull for his concise and incisive essay 'The Body & Soul Snatchers'. It is worth 'drawing Priam's curtain in the dead of night' if something so worthwhile is exposed. I hope the Kooric elders remain resolute and ensure that their descendants are equally resolved.

I'm one of the millions of people who have walked through the tombs of the Pharaohs and gazed without any sense of shame or irreverence at the exhumed remains of those who took such infinite pain to secrete and protect their bodies, but find themselves in unholy glass cases in museums throughout the world.

I shudder when I hear politicians attempt to extend their political continuum by such glib expressions as 'multi-racial harmony'; as if culture is merely the donning or doffing of colourful costumes at the weekend. The more prudent, and accurate, say 'multi-racial harmony'.

Canadian, American, and Australian are non-ethnic geopolitical designations, yet not all can be eponymously identified without, it seems, a qualifying prefix. I've yet to see a Chinese-Brit, but French-Canadian, Afro-American and Chinese-Australian are supposedly indicative of racial harmony. They do of course save strangers getting nasty surprises before meeting people.

Geoff Hastings
Watsons Bay, NSW

Culpable ignorance

*From Edward Khamara,
senior lecturer in Philosophy,
Monash University*

I admire Mr Kennett's ability to quote, accurately and off the cuff, Christ's intercession at the Cross on behalf of his enemies: '(Father,) forgive them, for they know not what they do' (as reported in the *Age*, 22 August; the reference is to Luke 23:34). These hallowed words encapsulate a central moral tenet of Christianity which is undoubtedly relevant to the current debate about what to do with Konrads Kalejs and his like.

However, as the great German philosopher Hegel pointed out nearly two centuries ago, Christ's moral stance in these his last words has often been distorted; and I find it worthwhile, in view of the current debate, to report and elaborate his points.

The main point to notice is that Christ himself is not forgiving his enemies, but praying on their behalf for his Father to forgive them. And the right way to spell out that prayer is, I suggest (with Hegel), the following:

(i) Although they (my enemies) do not know that they are committing a heinous sin, this does not mitigate their sin, but I pray my Father to forgive them.

The distorted interpretation that has sometimes been foisted on Christ's last words is the following:

(ii) They (my enemies) do not know that they are committing a great sin; that renders them innocent and calls for 'forgiveness'.

This construal is so morally perverse that one wonders how anyone could be attracted to it; and indeed it seems to yield the very opposite of what Christ's words were intended to convey. For it suggests that people are not to be held morally responsible for their actions unless they act with a bad

conscience through their knowing that their action is morally wrong. But, Hegel objected, not all bad actions are accompanied by qualms of conscience; so that, on this view, the arch-sinner who commits crimes without the slightest qualm of conscience is not to be morally blamed! Against this perverse moral principle, Hegel invoked Pascal's powerful retort (which I here give in translation):

'In that case only the half-hearted sinners would be damned, those who have some love of virtue. As for the arch-sinners, the hardened sinners, the unalloyed sinners who are completely unperturbed, hell will not receive them; they have deceived the devil by giving themselves up to him.'

Hegel had another objection to the second construal of Christ's prayer: 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do'. He remarked that, on that construal, this would be 'a superfluous prayer', since 'the fact that they did not know what they did made their action innocent, and so took away the need for forgiveness'. To explain: those who were responsible for Christ's crucifixion had no bad conscience about it; and so, on the view that Hegel is attacking, they ought not to be blamed. But Christ prayed for them nonetheless: which shows that he did not consider them blameless despite their 'not knowing what they do'.

Edward Khamara
Clayton, VIC

De mortuis ...

From John Lee

William Byrt's 'forgotten source' (*Eureka Street*, letters, Sept, 1997) is W.H. Auden's poem 'In Memory of W. B. Yeats'. The stanza is:

*Time that with this strange excuse
Pardoned Kipling and his views,
And will pardon Paul Claudel,
Pardons him for writing well.*

In the last line the author being 'pardoned' is clearly Yeats (d.1939), not Claudel (d.1955), who at the time Auden was writing was not safely dead. The implication of the lines seems to be that 'pardon' (i.e. admission to Auden's Hall of Literary Fame) for good writers with bad politics can only be posthumous. Presumably not quite the sort of point Mr Byrt wanted to make about Manning Clark.

John Lee
Dudley, NSW



THE MONTH'S TRAFFIC



Love for sale

THERE WAS A MOMENT DURING Diana's funeral when I caught myself smiling. Watching the faces of the Queen and Prince Phillip, etched deeply with tension and concern and, many of us liked to think, by a modicum of guilt, I remembered for a moment *my* royal family; a royal family of innuendo, gossip, joke, where Prince Charles' greatest wish was to be one of Camilla's tampons, Fergie was the renowned Queen of Tarts, and Prince Phillip couldn't be trusted to open his mouth in public without putting his foot in it.

I say 'my' royal family because each of us uses them, I think, to fulfil a different need. Some of us need them as arbiters of taste and refinement; some of us need them as moral guardians, as heirs of tradition or as champions of the people; some of us need them to rebel against; the British need them especially as the guarantors of their threatened sense of greatness, and as a steadying influence in their battered outpost of Europe.

And we all, even the hardest of republicans, need their stories. We use them to shed light on our lives, our values, our outlooks—we use them to position ourselves as people who think and feel and have opinions. The loves, hates, triumphs and misadventures of the royal family feed our insatiable need to connect—positively or negatively—with a world beyond the ordinary. We devour the gossip, ogle the pictures, take sides in the royal squabbles, tut-tut the moral lapses, laugh at the inadequacies—and cry at the funerals.

My particular royal family is a republican one. For as long as I can remember, it has served as a source of satire and a chance to kick out at the presumptions of the rich and (en)titled. This version of the royals was banished from the scene following the death of Diana and the emotional response to her funeral. Newspapers that had been happy to criticise the dysfunctional Windsors and their highly public and somewhat unnatural lives, were suddenly professing love and loyalty as if their heads depended on it. Even the Internet, home of the Royal Family Swimsuit Parade and the Camilla Parker-Bowles diary ('Queen by 2010'), was

strangely subdued, given over to virtual chapels and collections of Diana pictures.

This was not a time for cynicism. It was however a time of hyperbole and overstatement, of embellishment and exaggeration. A time of suspended judgment and an almost Orwellian turnaround in media reporting and public opinion. Somewhere within the fog of eulogy, objectivity, balance and truth was lost. With the death of Princess Diana we saw doublespeak at its finest.

The royal story became one-dimensional as it lurched, media-driven, towards classic tragedy: Beauty and innocence lost, the scheming Family, the insurrectionist Earl, the young heirs left behind, bewildered and in danger. There's a trick here that writers of soaps know well; make the ordinary extraordinary and the extraordinary ordinary. If Diana was extraordinary, as so many have pointed out, it was not because of her capacity to love, her empathy with suffering or her support for charities the royals don't publicly support. Nor because she was beautiful, which she was, or very intelligent, which she was not. She was extraordinary because, despite the trappings of her aristocratic life, we believed her to be deeply ordinary.

This is the key to Diana's popularity, and the source of her troubled relationship with the Windsors; she committed the royal sin of admission—she admitted she was ordinary, she wanted us to think she was ordinary. 'I'm as thick as a plank', she famously told a little girl whom she was trying to put at ease during a public function early on in her career. The sin was committed once again in the *Panorama* interview of 1995 where she admitted being bulimic, depressed and suicidal. In the kingdom of the Windsors a sin of admission is a cardinal one. None could attract greater magisterial opprobrium, and none, it seems, could garner more sympathy from the people.



As a victim of the Windsors, Diana became the focus of a discontent against the royal family which has blurred the boundary between republican and monarchist. For republicans—here and elsewhere—this may prove dangerous; crucial arguments about democracy, equality and matters of constitution have been swamped by an emotional over-reaction which will allow the Windsors to reinvent themselves in a manner worthy of

Madonna. This will have a lasting effect; Prince Charles and The British Prime Minister Tony Blair are now pushing for a 'people's monarchy', a contradiction in terms which may see the Windsors well into the twenty-first century.

The problem is that mass emotion is always at the mercy of political manipulation. 'I'm not a political animal', Diana said, 'but I think the biggest disease this world suffers from in this day and age is the disease of feeling unloved, and I know that I can give love for a minute, for half an hour, for a day, for a month ... and I want to do that'. The irony here is that while we all want to believe in the power of love,

it is the political animals of the world who take ownership of these ideals, and who distort them to less simple ends. Tony Blair has already trodden this path, talking eloquently about love in his funeral reading from Corinthians, using the example of Diana's life and the tragedy of her death as a leg-up towards a new Britain. Royal stuffiness and protocol has been forced, with his help, to make way for the wishes of the people. It's a situation in keeping with Blair's vision of a more relaxed, informal, less repressed nation, and in the process his prestige and his reputation have increased. He may become the most powerful prime minister that modern Britain has yet seen. A confirmed royalist who has royalty under his thumb.

The media's role in all of this is vital. The unprecedented public show of grief at Diana's funeral was as much to do with the media's complicity in the Blairite vision as it was with genuine love. It's tempting to think that editors around the world felt guilty for the constant sniping at Diana and for the shameless intrusion of privacy that

passes for journalism in the mass market. More likely, there have been edicts and memos from on high, whispered advice in corridors to keep it clean for a while, and to profit from the public emotion. This will pass, and despite the alacrity with which the tabloids have renounced their love affair with the paparazzi, sooner or later someone will buy and publish *those* photographs of the accident; the stakes are too high, and the mass obsession with Diana, given time, is not beyond fascinated horror.

But the media alone did not kill the Princess. This was a point missed by Tony Blair when he admonished the press to 'stop using members of the royal family as commodities'. A commodity requires a buyer as well as a seller. The paparazzi wouldn't be interested if we didn't want to see—and pay to see—the long-lens photographs of Diana kissing Dodi Fayed, Fergie having her toes sucked, the Queen weeping as Windsor Castle burned. We buy the papers and wallow in the gossip and we're ultimately responsible for the ongoing saga. Diana, we are told, was the most photographed woman in the world. Put her picture on the front cover and your sales would break records; Diana smiling; Diana shy; Diana petulant; Diana running from the paparazzi; and infamously, Diana at the gym; Diana holding hands with Fayed. She was an ordinary mortal with ordinary concerns struggling bravely in a cold universe of intrigue, power and jealousy. How far she contributed herself to the making of this image—the extent to which she manipulated us and the media to her own advantage—is an important point.

Love sells, as does victimhood. The danger for republicans is that it's just too easy to buy. —Gary Bryson

When the devil's got your number

IT WAS JUST AS WELL that the Western Bulldogs won the last AFL game ever to be played on Footscray's legendary Western Oval. It was the 666th time the dogs had played there, but they didn't look in the mood for either apocalyptic omens or for nostalgia. Before the ball was bounced, players had singled out the young West Coast Eagle ruckman, Michael Gardiner, for some heavying up. Three Western Bulldogs were fined as a result of the incident, which led the president of their

club to say that 'the AFL has reduced Australian rules football to a game of netball.' It was an ill-tempered match. Mick Malthouse, the West Coast coach, said afterwards that he was glad he never had to return to such a hostile place. The *Herald-Sun* ran back-page screamers on three days of the following week: 'Wild Dogs', 'Dog Gone' and 'Dogs Snarl.'

The mood in the crowd was more festive. The Western Oval had seldom been as crowded, but the dramatic change in the local team's fortunes throughout 1997, coupled with the chance to farewell the venue, had turned supporters out in force. On the way to the ground, a ten-year old Vietnamese scalper tried to sell us some tickets. Once inside, we quickly gave up on finding any shelter from the pouring rain and the driving wind. The Western Oval was built in days before people came to the football for comfort.

By half time, the windsock on the Geelong Road side of the ground was so wet that not even a gale could lift it. We reassured ourselves that at least we were not going to blow away. On the other hand, we weren't so sure about the old pie van behind us, which whistled in the wind like a bad set of teeth. The Vietnamese bloke standing behind us, no more than a year out of school, met an old school teacher and asked him if he wanted a 'bite of my tinny.' The bar near the windsock closed early, not from lack of trade, but seemingly because they were not sticking to the two-can limit. After all, what could the law do? Prevent them from trading in the future?

Michael Cordell followed the team with a camera throughout the 1996 season when the Western Bulldogs, then known as Footscray, finished second last, better only than their unhappy co-tenants at the Western Oval, Fitzroy. No other Australian documentary has ever had such wide cinema release than the work that resulted, *Year of the Dogs*. The film is a wonderful account of human adversity. Its hero is Shaun Baxter, a young player who spent most of the season

battling cancer. His plight seems to encapsulate much of what the club went through and to explain why the fans should be untroubled by a mere downpour. Only a handful had brought umbrellas. The supporters were to need all that grit in the weeks ahead when the team missed a place in the Grand Final in the last minutes of their preliminary final and when Chris Grant missed the Brownlow medal because he had been suspended for just a week early in the season on video evidence.

Winter in Melbourne this year also saw a remarkable retrospective of the work of the Aboriginal artist, Ginger Riley. Riley's use of colour is a cure for the experience of grey on grey which describes a visit to Melbourne's concrete National Gallery in the middle of the year. Some of his paintings had been commissioned by the AFL during 1996. One of these is called *Munanga (white fella way) AFL football*. Another is called *Wul gori-yi-mar—football for all Aboriginal people*. One difference between the two paintings is the use of concentric circles which, the exhibition explained, designate sacred space. In the painting of 'football for all Aboriginal people', the players are inside the sacred space. In 'white fella way', they stand around it.

Maybe this is why the crowd for the 666th game at the Western Oval spent so long on the ground, inside the concentric circles, after the game. West Coast had kicked to within two goals in the final quarter, but the Bulldogs regrouped and gave the old ground one last happy memory. Afterwards, a West Coast supporter yelled at strangers, asking the directions to Sunshine. Meanwhile, crowds were making their way around to the front of the stands where Peter Corlett's sculpture of the Footscray legend, E.J. Whitten, had been unveiled a few days earlier. They waited their turn to be photographed in front of the statue. They laid flowers under it. They reached up to touch it and held up their children to do the same. After all, it is a contact sport. —Michael McGirr SJ



News in handcuffs

IN THE SECOND WEEK OF JULY, Cheng Sokna found himself wandering around the streets of Phnom Penh, his hands secured at his front by a pair of handcuffs. He had just bribed his way out of police custody and was looking for someone to set him free.

'The police wanted me to pay', Cheng said through an interpreter. 'I was released with the handcuffs still on because if they opened the handcuffs that meant ... a problem.'

'If I was recaptured then he [the police officer] could say to his boss that I escaped.'

Cheng Sokna is the director of *Khmer News*, a newspaper that had been highly critical of Hun Sen up until the weekend of the 5th and 6th of July, and one of the twenty or so news organisations that shut down after that weekend. He believes that Hun Sen has made him a target, even though the police were willing to take the money and let him go. He cites as evidence a phone call he received from the editor of another paper critical of the status quo, *Save Cambodia*. The police had arrested the editor, then, under duress, he called Cheng on his mobile phone and asked him to come to his office. It was there that Cheng Sokna was arrested.

Unable to find a locksmith after he had bought his freedom, Cheng eventually cut the handcuffs away with a power saw. He

then attempted to leave the country. He first tried to cross into Thailand to the North East of Phnom Penh through Poi Pet. Roadblocks made this impossible so Cheng returned to the capital, from where he was smuggled by boat and plane.

Huddled around a table soaked in the kind of yellow light that suggests the clandestine, Cheng Sokna is among a handful of Cambodian journalists explaining why they are in Bangkok and how they are lying in wait. Their surroundings are a far cry from the fashionable hotels just a couple of blocks away in Silom Road. They lean forward to make themselves heard above a clattering air conditioner. The ride in the lift up to their rooms on the 10th floor requires a leap of faith. The whole group must save money because they don't know when they might return to Cambodia.

At first glance it's hard to imagine that these good-humoured people could constitute a threat to Hun Sen. They claim, however, that they have good reason to be in Bangkok. As editors and newspeople involved with some of the papers and organisations that criticised the activities of Cambodia's second Prime Minister they fled a Cambodia they believed was about to revisit its all-too-recent past. An added danger is the association many members of their organisation—the Khmer Journalists' Association—have with the opposition parties, not only Prince Ranariddh's Funcinpec, but Sam Rainsy's Khmer Nation Party, plus the Khmer Neutral and the Buddhist Liberal Democratic Parties.

Pim Samkhon is the President of the KJA. When he returned to Cambodia in 1993, after spending 17 years in France, he founded *Khmer Independent News*. Asked why he and his colleagues are reluctant to return to Phnom Penh, given that some papers have reopened and a few are publishing criticism of the government, he replies that there have been too many deaths.

'I think the government has no control over its military and its police', he adds.

'I classify myself as in opposition to Hun Sen. Sometimes they [the government] wrote statements against me; sometimes they spoke on the radio and the TV against me.'

'Hun Sen wants the world to recognise that he is the first Prime Minister and for that he needs some of the opposition papers to reopen. He has asked deputies and reporters to reopen the papers—such as Cheng Sokna's paper—and provide money to do it and they attack Hun Sen, but now he is happy.

'It has created a climate of freedom. But in reality it is a temporary freedom in Cambodia. It is puppet opposition.'

The denouncing of the KJA precipitated a split in June and the formation of another organisation that was more in line with Hun Sen. The press had divided itself, in keeping with other Cambodian institutions that had succumbed to the bipolar nature of the power-sharing that followed the 1993 election.

Pim Samkhon implies that the links he and his association have with Ranariddh exist only because they have a common enemy.

'If they [Funcinpec] do something bad for the country then they would face the same criticism.'

Pim Samkhon's accusation of extra-judicial killings was supported by the UN's Special Representative for Human Rights in Cambodia, Thomas Hammarberg. In a report released on September 5, he documents 41 confirmed—and possibly up to 60—politically-motivated, extra-judicial executions following the July coup. This hard evidence will provide a stumbling block for Hun Sen as he attempts to secure the world recognition that Pim Samkhon suggests he is anxious to achieve.

Pim Samkhon's belief that international pressure can influence Hun Sen—despite his marathon rants on television and radio during which he has castigated the UN, the United States and ASEAN—is shared by Prince Ranariddh. At a press conference in Bangkok on September 1, he, with his fellow leaders of the Union of Cambodian



Lap-top news conference in a hotel room, Bangkok.

Democrats, announced a 10-point plan for the restoration of peace and democracy in Cambodia. It called for the signatories to the 1991 Paris Peace Accords, including the UN and ASEAN, to provide enabling technical and financial support and also for these aforementioned organisations to preside over an independent commission that would supervise the safe return of political leaders and activists.

Ranaridh left in the days following the coup to ask world leaders to continue pressuring Hun Sen. The response of the international community demonstrates some uncertainty about the National Assembly's appointment of Ung Huot as Ranaridh's successor.

At the same press conference Sam Rainsy told the assembled media that the situation in Cambodia can change very rapidly and it is getting more difficult for Hun Sen all the time.

'He said he could take O'smach in a day, and it has now been one month', Rainsy said [at the time of writing Royalists forces were still holding out], 'and the economic and social situation is getting more difficult and diplomatic pressure is going to increase.'

Assessments of the financial stability of Hun Sen's government vary depending on whom you listen to. Many Cambodians are mindful of Hun Sen's past as leader of Vietnam's puppet state, and rumour has it that the Vietnamese are heavily behind Hun Sen. These reports may be coloured by Cambodian resentment of Vietnam. Other rumours suggest his involvement with the drug trade. Teng Boonma, the high-profile president of the Cambodian Chamber of Commerce, denied (in an interview published in the *Phnom Penh Post*) that the \$US1 million he gave to Hun Sen bankrolled the July putsch. He said the money was provided to stop soldiers looting after opposition forces had fled Phnom Penh. The US State Department alleges that Teng Boonma is 'heavily involved in drug trafficking'.

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WORLD

'It may be profitable for you to reflect, in future, that there never were greed and cunning in the world yet, that did not do too much, and overreach themselves. It is as certain as death.' (David Copperfield to Uriah Heep.)

Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn. (Deuteronomy 25:4)

C Perks, lurks and rorts

CONFECTIONERS TEND TO ALLOW WORKERS an open go at the lollies on the conveyer belt. Members of parliament have generous travel allowances, study leave, use of government cars, and a host of other comforts designed to make up for the fact that they have to mix with other politicians and turn up for work for about six months of the year. These side benefits of employment are 'perks'.

The word is a colloquial shortening of 'perquisite', a word that *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* tells us was first used in 1450, and derives from a mediæval Latin word *perquisitum*, meaning acquisition. *Perquisitum* in turn derived from the Latin *perquirere*: to seek diligently, something you might do if you're looking for a way of including a perk in your package. The sense of 'perquisite' that gives us 'perk' means, according to the *Macquarie Encyclopedic Dictionary (MED)*: '1. an incidental emolument, fee, or profit over and above fixed income, salary, or wages. 2. Also, **perk. a.** anything customarily allowed or left to an employee or servant as an incidental advantage of the position held. **b.** any fringe benefit, bonus, etc., attaching to a particular post which an employee receives in addition to his normal salary.' In other words, something extra-salary that you get from a job, all quite legal, all above board.

Lurks, on the other hand are not at all above board. The fact that the verb 'to lurk' also means to sneak or hide, often with a whiff of being in ambush, gives the noun a sense of underhandedness. If the confectionery worker, instead of snacking on the sweets at work or taking home some misshapen rejects for the kids, were to start quietly selling those rejects out of the boot of his/her car, the perk would have transformed into a lurk. If the honourable member were to take study leave in Las Vegas or Amsterdam to make a very personal survey of gambling or brothels, then that perk would have become a lurk. Lurks are, at base, frauds.

Sometimes a lurk is, in itself, a way of life or, as *MED* puts it, 'a convenient, often unethical, method of performing a task, earning a living'. Poachers, black marketeers, embezzlers, all are lurkers. The word has an air of sticky fingers in the till, cops on the take, the labyrinthine tax avoidance scheme that has found a loophole in the overburdened letter of the law and flouts its spirit—all lurks, though some might take issue with the last since it clings by a manicured fingernail to the ledge of legality, and whether you can have a legal lurk is debatable. Ask the bottom-of-the-harbour chaps—while they were doing it, it was legal.

'Rort'. It seems to be a peculiarly Australian word meaning very much the same as 'lurk', but perhaps with added connotations of outrageousness, shamelessness.

'**rort** ...*n.* Colloq. 1. a trick; lurk; scheme. 2. a wild party. -*v.t.* 3. to gain control over (an organisation, as a branch of a political party) esp. by falsifying records. 4. to take wrongful advantage of; abuse: to rort the system. [orig. uncertain] -*rorty, adj.*' (*MED*)

I first came across the word as a fresher at uni, æons ago. The engineering faculty was advertising one. I was warned by friends that overconsumption of beer and deflowering of virgins figured largely at engineers' rorts, although the former may well have precluded the latter. Before long there were attempts to prevent such excesses, not by banning them, but, with a touching faith in the power of *culcha*, to require all engineering students to do one humanities subject. (The Life Drawing Class was always the first to be booked out, as indeed most of the lads could scrawl two circles with central dots. But there were dark murmurings of rorts of the other sort from those who missed out and had to read a novel.)

—Juliette Hughes

AUSTRALIAN BOOK REVIEW

in October:

John Button reviews Donald Horne's
The Avenue of the Fair Go

Trish Goddard on *Understanding Troubled Minds*

Gillian Rubinstein on Isabelle Carmody's *Greylands*

Don Anderson on reviewing

an extract from Dorothy Hewett's
work-in-progress *The Neap Tide*

'Lost Things in the Garden of Type'
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Diplomatic involvement is also likely to be limited, at least until early 1998 when the next election is due. ASEAN tried to broker a truce in early August. But governments have not heeded Prince Ranariddh's call for them to recall their ambassadors, and Japan has resumed dialogue with Hun Sen's government. Pim Samkhon believes that ASEAN should be doing more.

'ASEAN can be a partner of democracy,' he stresses. 'If ASEAN think they can change Burma to be a good country why not Cambodia?'—a reference to Burma's admission to the organisation ahead of Cambodia.

There is an air of intractability about the current problems afflicting Cambodia. Hun Sen has tried democracy and found it not to his liking. His CPP party was beaten in 1993 by Funcinpec, a result he couldn't accept, and his attempts at pork-barrelling his way into favour have, reportedly, not won over the Cambodian people. Given the chance, they would vote the opposition into power and ensure a landslide defeat for the CPP.

Hun Sen is no friend of due process. But Ranariddh and Funcinpec are certainly not the innocent victims they claim to be either. It was the negotiations between Funcinpec and the Khmer Rouge leadership who ousted Pol Pot that triggered a pre-emptive strike from Hun Sen.

All this transpired in an atmosphere of escalating tension which Ranariddh had done little to ease. His call to Hun Sen to recognise that the King, Ranariddh's father, must play a role in securing peace, is constitutionally valid, but impractical, given that Hun Sen has already rejected outright any role for King Sihanouk.

Yet in spite of these concerns, Pim Samkhon and his fellow journalists are confident that stability will return, and along with it, freedom of the press. The 1998 election, according to Pim Samkhon, is the key.

'If the international community can provide an environment for a free and fair election, then I think we have no problem and next January we will be in Phnom Penh.

In the meantime the journalists will stay where they are, garnering support where they can—from the UN or philanthropic agencies. Their visas are due to expire soon. Yet even in these

circumstances they have managed to produce a newsletter called *Free Citizen News*. Friends and colleagues back in Cambodia have smuggled copies into Phnom Penh. Pim Samkhon points to a copy.

'These are the facts', he says.

—Jon Greenaway

This month's contributors: Gary Bryson is executive producer of Radio National's *Late Night Live*. Michael McGirr is consulting editor of *Eureka Street*. Juliette Hughes is *Eureka Street's* sub-editor; Jon Greenaway, is *Eureka Street's* South East Asia Correspondent.

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In at the death

In the early eighties Tracey Leonard worked as a volunteer at Mother Teresa's Kalighat Hostel for the dying. The experience was unforgettable.

THE FIRST THING THAT HITS ME is the smell. Death, decay and despair mix in a pungent cocktail. Beside my feet lies a man on a narrow bed. He is placed under a shrine to Mary. I know that he is alive because I see his chest rise and fall. His eyes are partially open and staring blankly. Every bone in the man's body seems to be trying to pierce through his skin.

The ward is set out in rows. The left and right sides are elevated about two feet above floor level. Each side holds about fifteen beds. Beds also stretch down the middle area with a small aisle at the left hand side. Altogether the male section has fifty-one beds. The beds themselves are made of metal and are almost six feet long and about two feet across. A plastic-covered mattress of about two inches' thickness completes the basic makeup. About eighteen inches

look at the cargo in the back of a council ambulance is usually enough reason to pass them on as a hopeless case. The sisters and brothers also bring people here that they have found lying in the streets. Another way to gain admittance is for the person to get themselves to the front door and pray that there is a spare bed and that the sister in charge considers them sick enough for admission.

Malnutrition is at the root of every disease seen at Kalighat. Tuberculosis is endemic and complications arising from this disease are a common cause of admission. Dysentery in all its many forms is another leading contender. Malaria and countless other fever-related conditions are plentiful. Intestinal parasites, viral infections and good old-fashioned trauma account for several other diagnoses. Each

in the makeup of Kalighat is Sister Luke, the sister in charge of the whole operation. Nurses trained in the hospital system can easily identify Sister Luke as a fearsome charge sister: the type who, if you poke your head up might just shoot it off. As with most charge sisters, she has a voice which carries its blunt message to the person receiving it and to any one else in a half-mile radius. The loud speakers of the temple are no match in volume.

Sister Luke has run Kalighat for the past ten years. She and another sister are the only professed, or blue-bordered sisters here, all the others are young novices. This is their learning experience and part of their training. Sister Luke runs everything, from administration, diagnosis and treatment, stores and supplies, admissions and discharges to the workers' wages and family disputes. She is barely tolerant of volunteers and will only speak to you if you survive a couple of weeks and she has assessed you as genuine. Any volunteer stupid enough to waltz into Kalighat and give Sister Luke the benefit of their wisdom is usually given an earful and told of the great benefits in emptying bedpans. These types don't hang around for long. I'm more than happy to keep my head down and mouth shut and work quietly in the cleaning and feeding department. No special skills are required and the close contact with the individual patients remove the fear and intimidation I had first felt.

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The monsoons are nearly upon us. I hope it provides some relief from this stifling humidity. Overhead fans provide little assistance and each morning I wake up covered in sweat. Volunteers are leaving in droves, heading out for the cooler climes. A handful remain, scattered around the various homes. I am spending most of my time at Kalighat these days and am even acknowledged by Sister Luke. She is from



separates each bed and above each is a number. This is the physical and clinical layout of the ward. Describing each and every person on these beds is the hard part.

The men range in age from twelve to sixty, although Weil informs me that the average age is around thirty. Admission to Kalighat can occur in several ways. The most constant admissions are the people that are picked up from the street by the Calcutta City Council. These people must have been refused admission to all of the city hospitals to qualify for a bed here. One

patient has a cocktail of these complaints with some more severe than others.

The female ward is set out exactly like the male side. Blue is the colour of choice on this side and all the women wear check gowns. There are fifty-seven female beds. All are occupied and the women seem more robust than their male counterparts, although several are just skin and bone and obviously not long for this world. The middle section of Kalighat comprises the water storage tanks, a wash area and the morgue.

Probably the most important ingredient

Singapore originally and is a trained nurse. She would have to be somewhere in her early fifties.

As I continue to work with her, the burdens and complexities of running this home become more apparent. This morning Sister Luke is screaming her head off as I walk in the door. Apparently a patient is missing. What is even more disturbing is the possibility that this Muslim man has been inadvertently mixed up with a Hindu. Nobody seems sure about the status of this man, that is, whether he is dead or alive. As I try to pass by Sister Luke she grabs my arm and tells me to check the morgue.

'How am I supposed to find him? Ask him to stand up?' I ask.

'Don't be stupid,' she yells. 'Check the dead bodies and make sure that the Muslims and Hindus are not mixed up.'

'And how am I going to accomplish that?' I ask.

'Muslims are circumeised,' she informs me and then sweeps past.

Approaching the doors of the morgue, I am unconvinced of my suitability for the job but have learnt never to argue with Sister Luke in one of these moods. The morgue is a basic cement-and-tile room about 12 ft by 10 ft. There are two shelves on either side where the bodies are placed. The rule of thumb in here is 'Hindus on the left, Muslims on the right and Christians on top'. The only concession to refrigeration is a overhead fan which is rarely turned on. A small framed quotation proclaiming, 'I'm on my way to heaven' adorns the far wall. There are several bodies in residence and each is wrapped in a thin white cotton sheet, tied at the head, middle and toes.

I have been in and out of this room on dozens of previous occasions and never greatly worried about it. Now I feel like some form of criminal. I part the sheet of the first person on the Hindu side and heave a sigh of relief when I recognise one of the women. I'm starting with faces in the hope that recognition will make further investigation unnecessary.

UNFORTUNATELY THE NEXT BODY is a man and he looks similar to many that have passed before my eyes. Taking a deep breath, I inspect the poor man's genitals and justify his place on the left-hand benches. As quickly as possible I look at the remaining six bodies and convince myself that everything is as it should be.

There is one man that I am not sure about and the last thing I want to do is go out and ask for a second opinion.

Escaping to the roof for a cigarette, I run into John, a Canadian volunteer. Dragging deeply on each calming breath of smoke, I relate my problems to John. Inexplicably he collapses into fits of laughter. Several minutes later he informs me that Sister Luke found the missing Muslim ages ago. He was in the wrong bed, semiconscious and covered with blankets. I storm back down the stairs. Sister Luke is crouched beside one of the beds and as she stands, hands me a white sheet and says, 'Here is our missing

In Malcolm Muggeridge's Something beautiful for God he uses images such as a divine light streaming through the windows. I can only believe that he must have been there on one of the many days when the stove blows up and the entire place is shrouded in smoke.

man'. Once again I am back in the morgue. At least this time everyone is at rest. The great panic over this man is all to do with burial practices. The Hindus are cremated and Muslims buried and there is hell to pay if they are mixed up.



For six days a week, Kalighat is the centre of my existence. Many books have been written about Mother Teresa and her work here and they all seem to describe Kalighat in ethereal terms. In Malcolm Muggeridge's *Something beautiful for God* he uses images such as a divine light streaming through the windows. I can only believe that he must have been there on one of the many days when the stove blows up and the entire place is shrouded in smoke. To me it often resembles photos I have seen of World War I field hospitals.

It is a brutal and demanding place, where the results of man's inhumanity to man end up. Not only are patients admitted with diseases, many find their way here after acts of violence committed against them. Some of the saddest cases are those of young beggars, usually mentally retarded who have had hot oil thrown in their faces by shopkeepers, anxious to move them on. It is the callous treatment of these and many others in Calcutta which often lead you to despair that anything will ever change here. To see a human being brought in with barely an intact inch of skin left on his back and legs, with maggots infesting his flesh, and know

that only hours previously other people had walked over him and around him without a second glance, is enough to make you wonder if this society deserves to survive. But the philosophy of the Missionaries of Charity centre on the man and not the cause, and his care and comfort are the reasons for their existence.

Since my foray into the morgue some time ago, I have often been deputised to inspect the inhabitants and make sure that all are present and correct. Today as I check

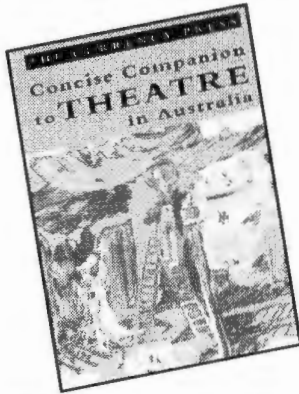
the bodies, movement on the second shelf on the left-hand side almost has me joining the residents of the right-hand side. With my heart pounding in my ears and the ever-present sweat turned to ice, I tentatively reach for the offending sheet. My fingers are shaking so badly I can barely untie the knot. I recognise the man and immediately realise he is still alive, if only just. Storming from the morgue I feel nothing but rage. Sister Luke starts yelling once I have calmed down enough to inform her of my discovery. The poor man is rescued from the morgue and his shroud removed, only to discover that there is no bed for him. Sister Luke then performs the Kalighat shuffle and the person deemed least sick is ejected to make way for this man. His condition is critical and it will only be a matter of hours before he makes a return journey, but for now he is safe under the statue of Our Lady.

It has been part of my work here to instruct and educate the brothers and sisters in basic nursing care. They have no academic or practical training before they are let loose on the patients, either here or at the other homes. While this place is far from being described as an acute care medical facility, I have tried to stress to the brothers and sisters that our goal should be, at least, not to cause any harm.

Gathering the brothers around me, I ask the all-important question: 'How do you tell if somebody is dead?' The general consensus among them seems to be that you have to be cold and not moving. With more

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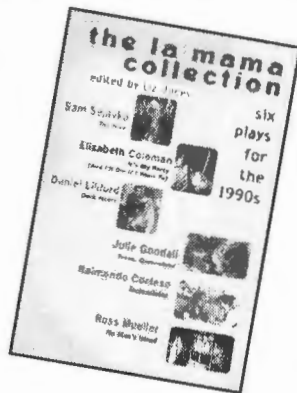
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patience than I ever knew I possessed, I carefully explain the rudimentary function of both the heart and lungs. They find this highly amusing and inform me that of course they know all about these things. I take them all back down to the man in question and with aid of a stethoscope ask them to check his heartbeat. As fate would have it, one look at the man tells me that we are already too late. However, the first brother happily reports a heartbeat. There is no heartbeat. He is supplying the answer he thinks I want. Once again I give a detailed list of the signs of death and demonstrate each one. I will only find out how successful this lecture has been when next I am on morgue patrol. The only person remotely pleased with this turn of events is the man selected for discharge. His eyes are glowing with the prospect of regaining his bed.

The sisters are the same as the brothers. They are all young girls mainly from the South of India and as a result speak no Bengali and only a little English. They come to Kalighat on a rotation basis in three month blocks. Just when I can see myself making headway with one group, their time is finished and the next incompetent lot arrive. The innocence and naïveté of the sisters is compounded with their religious instruction into a philosophy of 'leave it to Jesus'. Unfortunately, Jesus is not the one giving out the medications and drawing up injections for the patients. Whenever I yell at them and accuse them of murdering the patients they simply smile and tell me that it is all in God's hands.



Sister Luke and all at Kalighat are in a frenzy yet again. The cause of the mayhem this time is the annual street-children's picnic. This yearly event requires weeks of planning and preparation. The sisters entertain about four hundred children from the general Kalighat area. During the past several days the lady on the sewing machine has been busily making a few hundred dresses in various sizes. I have no idea as to the purpose of the new clothes and have discovered that any questions about them are met with a manic scream from Sister Luke and the inevitable clip around the head. I take refuge with the patients and continue the normal running of the home. The sisters have become totally focused on the picnic preparations and we volunteers are left to the daily work of patient care.

Seven a.m. has me wandering down Kalighat Road still half asleep. I am soon violently awakened when a sea of children

swarms upon me as I try to reach Kalighat's front door. There are hundreds and hundreds of children clamouring for attention and a place in the picnic. Small bodies have attached themselves to my legs and back while several others try to dislocate my arms. I am rescued by a large Indian policeman brandishing a large wooden baton. He obviously enjoys his work and lays into my escorts with relish. Safely inside Kalighat I retreat to the roof with a calming cigarette and survey the several hundred children massed below me.

BACK DOWNSTAIRS in the hub of Kalighat, Sister Luke is organising the battle plans. Four hundred children will be allowed inside and these will then be bathed and given new clothes. Part two of the exercise is to board buses and drive to the picnic area. Once the instructions have been given, we all man our posts. I have the dubious honour of front-door selection duty. The customary method of selection seems to be the ability to pass between two arbitrary marks made on the door frame. The lower of these marks is around the two foot six inches level and the higher is about four feet. There are well over seven hundred children facing us, all determined to be among the picnickers. I am reminded of rural Australia as the front door is used in a similar fashion to a gate when drafting sheep.

Several older children try to gain admission but the height rules are ferociously adhered to by the brother on the door. I get sucked in by an older boy who carries a young cripple, only to drop him once in the door. Within half an hour the quota has been reached, a sister yells 'Enough' and the doors are locked shut.

The scene inside Kalighat is as if a plague of locusts had descended on the patients—little bodies are perched wherever they can find space. The wash area is a frenzy of activity as old and filthy clothes are discarded, small brown bodies are soaped, scrubbed and rinsed. These bedraggled figures are then passed down the line to be powdered and dressed in their smart new clothes. Waifs of the streets go in one door and clean little angels appear out the other side. The children, sisters and workers take everything in their stride. It is only the poor bloody volunteers who flounder through the absurdity, trying to find rational explanations for this dramatic transformation.

Stage Two of this exercise is to escort fifty children at a time onto each bus. In their new pristine state the chance of any interloper joining the group is impossible.

One or two volunteers and a couple of sisters join each bus. As I board our bus I notice several empty five-gallon biscuit drums strategically placed up the aisle. The use of the biscuit tins becomes painfully obvious within fifteen minutes of travel. Excitement and the novelty of bus travel combine to produce a potent display of vomiting. We are kept busy while several children relieve themselves of whatever they last had to eat.

In another piece of baffling logic we are trapped in the sweltering buses as they make their way through the center of Calcutta all the way to the other side of the city: Kalighat is only minutes from Tollygunge and some lovely rural settings. Our destination proves to be the grounds of one of the Catholic schools. With undisguised relief the children make a hasty exit from the bus.

The food for today has been donated by local people and some businesses. Large tables have been erected and are laden with sweets and pastries. The children have their minds set on one thing only, and that is to eat as much as possible. Another exercise in military planning has the children marching in single file past each of the different tables and collecting their food. They then form small groups and sit on the barren and dusty sports field to consume this remarkable feast. The richness and amount of food is confounding the capacities of many small bellies to cope. As soon as all the food and drink is eaten or hidden, the children start returning to their buses.

EVEN THE ENTHUSIASTIC CAJOLING of some of the volunteers can not persuade these children to participate in any games. It seems that the one and only purpose has been achieved and the idea of fun and games is secondary to a quick return to their environment.

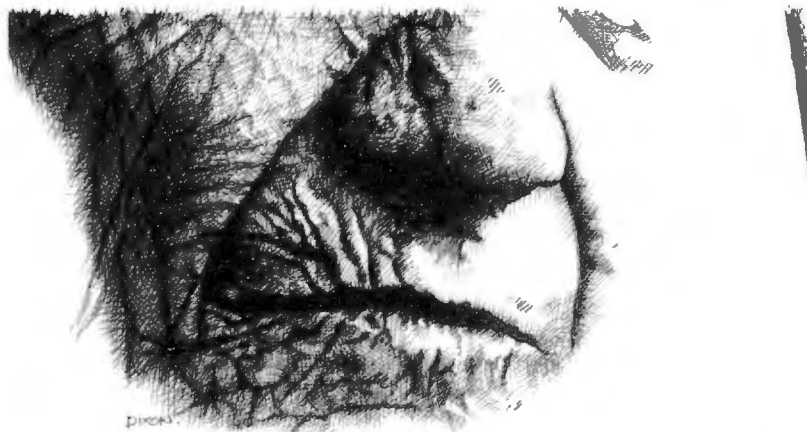
We are back on the buses by 1.30 p.m. and rolling back into the traffic. I work overtime on biscuit bucket duty, not always reaching my target in time. Several little explosions certainly don't miss me as a target. The traffic is even more congested on the return journey and it is close to 4 p.m. when the Kali Temple comes into view. There is no more welcome sight in all the world. Within moments of stopping, the children have disappeared and the only evidence of the day's activity is the technicolor interior of the buses. A dozen smelly and bedraggled volunteers emerge like survivors of a bomb blast and make their way into the relative sanity of Kalighat.

As the afternoon draws to a close, we try and work out if today's picnic was a success. There is no general consensus and many different views on the definition of success. I have no idea whether the children enjoyed the day or not. As we collect our bags and prepare to leave Kalighat, the only real measure of the day is gained from Sister Luke as she thanks us all for our work and is smiling from ear to ear.



Sister Luke has decided that I must meet Mother Teresa before I leave. It doesn't worry me one way or the other. It was because of her name and notoriety that I first came here, but I have discovered that it is the people here and the work which are the more important to me. Mother is like a magnet that draws people in and many come just because of her fame. I've been at the Mother House and seen dozens of foreigners surround her waiting to get her autograph. She obliges all these people and dispenses blessings and words of comfort but I can't help but feel sorry for the poor old lady and wish that they'd just leave her in peace. This is the price of fame and she is treated in much the same way as any famous star.

The price of this type of fame extends to all the homes and it is not unusual to have groups of tourists come to have a look.



Awareness of the plight of the poor is one thing but the voyeuristic attitude of a lot of these tourists brings my blood to the boil. They neither ask permission of the sisters nor of the patients before taking photographs. The other group that regularly invades the homes in Calcutta is the documentary film group. As with all things to do with human beings, there are the good and the bad. Films are the most important pastime in India and when the patients see the lights and cameras they mistakenly believe they too are headed for the big screen. (It is only the seriously ill that have

no interest in these happenings and of course these are the only ones that make it onto the film.) There was, however, one director who indulged all the patients in their thespian aspirations and he did more for their well-being than we ever could.

As fate will have it my mother meets Mother Teresa before I do. Mother T. went to Australia and opened the new Mater children's hospital and as my mother is a past nurse there she also attended the opening. She met Mother Teresa and told her that I was working in Calcutta and Mother nodded and said, 'Oh, yes I know her'. It certainly made my mother feel better even if it wasn't the truth. Even living saints tell the occasional white lie!

Sister Luke eagerly informs me that Mother T. is coming for a visit. As any nurse will know, the imminent arrival of the matron can send many charge sisters to unimagined heights of cleanliness and patient preparation. When she finally has all of us reduced to emotional and physical exhaustion she eventually stops shouting. Mother Teresa starts the visit with a prayer to Mary and then she seems to ignore her surroundings and Sister Luke and spends her time talking to the patients. It is during this time that I realise that the trappings of fame and expansion have denied her the real joy that only work-

ing with these people can give. A day of anonymous feeding and cleaning would be for her a golden dream. She certainly has a presence, and all the patients seem to find some comfort from the time she spends with them. Sister Luke finally grabs me by the arm and introduces me to Mother. She offers me a blue-bordered sari and I tell her that they don't make them in my size and that is the end of the conversation, much to Sister Luke's annoyance. ■

Tracey Leonard is a freelance writer based in Toowoomba.

Indonesia's global warnings

ONE EVENING IN JAKARTA, in the week of Mohammad's birthday, I sat in the hotel room transfixed by prime-time TV. Three main channels were all broadcasting the final event of the 18th annual Koranic recitation competition.

Ranks of regionally garbed young people stood on a field behind banners announcing their archipelago-wide origins. Rows of middle-aged dignitaries and their wives were arranged on a dais, the women chatting with that mannered *politesse* of the official classes. The TV presentation duo pattered and the speeches hammered on: desperately long lists of sponsors and prizewinners. Then the female announcer and the great hauled-in breaths of the finalists' nerve-wracking performances. It went on and on. Awful television.

So was the TV on the afternoon train from Yogyakarta to Surabaya. There was no avoiding this, four hours of horror, violence and obscenity from video screens strung along the train corridor. American-made horror, violence and obscenity. The paddy fields flew by.

I have a modest acquaintance with Indonesia—a mere three weeks this time and a less focused stay twenty years ago. This time I went to hear people talk about religion, democracy, pluralism and the future, and I heard enough to make my State-sponsored and quasi-compulsory televisual experiences emblematic. The

themes they render are broad and intersecting: on the one hand the role of Islam in Indonesia, on the other, Indonesia's experience of globalisation.

We used to speak of 'westernisation' or 'industrialisation' but the new term 'globalisation' displaces them. It subsumes the notion of 'development', implying the rise of a new economic man/woman equipped with moveable technical and intellectual skills.

The benefits of globalisation 'trickle down'. There are some who believe that democracy rides on its tail, but that's the extent to which globalisation talk invokes human values as distinct from economic benefits. Even then, it is assumed that democracy has economic purpose and advantage. Inevitably, the scale of unfettered globalising change—for all the glorious infrastructure and service development—is such that for some people it is an experience of violation.

I began my trip in Sumatra so the complexities gathered as I moved east. On my first day in Medan, young graduates, still jockeying for jobs six months to a year after leaving university, described their ideal futures in marketing, tourism, on television and in the timber industry. In the meantime they yearned for scholarships overseas, studied English, watched TV, never read books, and, as Bataks whose tribal identities determine whom they might marry, were always careful to enquire after a new acquaintance's

tribal name. (I met a young man called 'Yarra', as testimonial to his father's student days by its murky waters.)

In Jakarta, of course, there were the air-conditioned shopping malls where one can feel at home in front of a Benetton store or before an Italian coffee-making machine. In a magazine office an editor described a burgeoning readership: Muslim, middle-class, Western-educated, professional, 'very well-acquainted with cyberspace and with CNN' and relishing the opportunities proffered by Indonesia's seven per cent growth rate.

In Central Jakarta, Medan, Surabaya, the banks stood forth; the rupiah is a tiger (or even a colossus), declare the bank buildings, but word from the headquarters of the global finance markets was giving the lie to that. The rupiah and little brother Malaysia's ringgit were shrinking and even the Indonesian government was saying that some of those edifices must, metaphorically speaking, come down.

In a south Jakarta slum they talked about demolition to make way for development: at the Jakarta Social Institute a priest and a lawyer showed photographs of a woman on her knees before the police. A child tugged at her, the security police and the military stood by. Behind them her shack burned. The settlement had been torched. The shock was too much for the woman's husband, the lawyer said. He was taken to hospital, where he died.

THE PRIEST WAS Sandyawan Sumardi ST, who faces trial for sheltering young pro-democracy demonstrators in the aftermath of



We used to speak of 'westernisation' or 'industrialisation' but the new term 'globalisation' displaces them. It subsumes the notion of 'development', implying the rise of a new economic man/woman equipped with moveable technical and intellectual skills.

the 27 July, 1996 Jakarta 'incident'. As we talked, young people wandered in and out—students, dropouts, activists. Some of their pro-democracy peers arrested after 27 July will be in jail for a very long time. The perpetrators of church-burnings, in Surabaya, Situbondo, Tasikmalaya, haven't made it to jail. 'The army generals say they know who is behind these movements but they do nothing.'

In the last two years more than 200 churches have been destroyed. Add to that the flare-ups of inter-ethnic violence. It is violence created by political engineering, said someone in Yogyakarta. There are real feelings, real resentments abroad, but the mystery is the way they are translated into particular kinds of violence. 'They are playing games', said Professor Sahatapy in Surabaya.

HE DIDN'T EXPLAIN WHO 'they' are but why, he asked, after a riot in Banjarmasin were over a hundred people found dead huddled in a corner of a building. 'People just keep quiet. How come their families don't make statements: my brother, my husband, my child is killed?'

I met women activists with an inter-religious feminist group who described the contraception mechanism used to quell Indonesia's population growth. If women do not accept this 'family-planning' their husbands will not climb the job ladder or gain credit for business, they said. Canada produces these implants for the Third World poor. Seventy-five per cent of users experience problems—hypertension, varicose veins, excess fluid.

In Central Java the elders complained that the new textile factories brought to their rural village a 'proletarian' work force—people who belonged nowhere and owed obligations to no one, and who indulged in 'free sex' and alcohol. The village was poor, they said, there was no choice but to accept the factories and prepare their young people morally. Every week for five years they had collected a glass of rice from each household; the money they earned by selling the rice financed a road. Now they were

collecting for what seemed an impossibly costly water supply. With \$A10,000 to go, it was hard to maintain the villagers' confidence, but if the women did not have to walk for water at the end of each day, they would have more time with their children who were running wild. The factory wages were Rp3000 per day. No, it was not enough to survive on (not quite \$A2) and no, there was no trade union—not yet.

The leader of SBSI, the independent trade union, is in prison. He incited riots and mass hysteria against the government, say the authorities. I write one year after his arrest and Muchtar Pakpahan is at last on trial, for subversion. Meanwhile he has been in hospital, prohibited by the government from seeking medical treatment overseas. On the plane to Jakarta I sat next to Spencer Zifcak who was on his way from Melbourne to enquire after Muchtar Pakpahan's case, and others, on behalf of the International Society of Jurists. It was his first visit to Indonesia. Professor Zifcak was detained on arrival, questioned for two hours and put on the next plane home.

This is why I retain in my mind that train journey to Surabaya: it stands for a certain, even pervasive, force or violence which is part of the Indonesian people's experience.

However, I heard the language of human values from the village elders, I heard it from the feminists, from Muchtar Pakpahan and Sandyawan Sumardi. The village elders, who are Catholic, spoke of 'sacrificing ourselves for others'. The feminists found in their diverse religious backgrounds common elements than can liberate women. Pakpahan's language is the Biblical language of justice for the people—he was formed as a Batak Protestant. Sandyawan speaks of a theology of the *warung tigel*—the street food vendor—to whom everyone may come, especially when they are afraid, stay as long as they wish and

move away when they need to. But the food vendor is always there, traversing the neighbourhood, the focus of a community and a kind of parliament of the people.

Even the Catholic bishops, historically wary of rocking the boat, have found a prophetic voice. Their Lenten pastoral letter this year, 'Concern and Hope', noted 'the weak, unjust and inconsistent enforcement of the law, disregard of the rights and dignity of man; where justice is, as it were, only for the strong, the rich and the powerful; ... corruption, collusion and manipulation ...'. People told me about the letter, thrilled.

For many people in Indonesia, religious faith provides the frame within which they can articulate ideas about justice, democracy and pluralism. Religious tradition is the foundation and the resource for discussions of tolerance, human dignity, human rights.

But it is especially the case among Muslims that religion, rather than its rejection, is the means of envisioning a just society.

Amien Rais, who chairs Indonesia's second largest Islamic organisation, is fond of remarking that Muslims form 88 per cent of the population and ought to be given that level of representation in Parliament. 'Islam must be given a fair, honest and just representation. The only way to transform our society into a harmonious, peaceful, stable and decent future is of course by establishing justice for all people—where there is no majority dictatorship over the minority and there is no minority dictatorship over the majority.' At the same time, 'Muslims do not feel neglected or

On my first day in Medan, young graduates, still jockeying for jobs six months to a year after leaving university, described their ideal futures in marketing, tourism, on television and in the timber industry. In the meantime they yearned for scholarships overseas, studied English, watched TV, never read books.



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discounted any more.' Gestures like the compulsory broadcast of the Koranic recitation competition are designed to contribute to that sense of recognition.

Amien Rais' organisation, Muhammadiyah, is heir to Masyumi, the Islamic political party banned in 1959 when some of its members were implicated in organising an insurrection in Sumatra. Amien Rais' own parents were members of Masyumi. With its dismissal from the public scene, organisations like Muhammadiyah, confined to social and educational roles, took on new life. While Masyumi had voiced hopes for an Islamic state, Muhammadiyah had to come to terms with the pluralism expressed in *Pancasila*, the Indonesian state ideology.

In Amien Rais' rhetoric, 'Muslim' was, it seemed to me, most often a synonym for the 80 per cent of Indonesians who do not control the economy—who have not creamed the benefits of economic expansion. That leaves the non-Muslims as those to whom Muslims remain subordinate and whose commanding role in Indonesian economic and political life must be rejected. It was easy to find people who take up Amien Rais' argument and contract the non-Muslim minority to 'the Chinese'. Of course, there were those who go a step further: 'the Chinese' are 'the Christians'.

The real picture is more complex—down to the fact that of the 13 conglomerates owning 67 per cent of the nation's wealth, six are owned by the family of the Muslim President. It is hardly possible, still, to speak of an 88 per cent Islamic majority in a politically or religiously meaningful way. Religion in Indonesia, Islam included, is just too plural. Amien Rais must know this. He knows certainly that no election return has provided an Islamic party with a clear vote of confidence.

FROM AMIEN RAIS' POINT OF VIEW, democracy is bifurcated—there is a majority and a minority—and 'true Islam' is the means to achieving the protection of minorities, harmony and justice in Indonesian society. Islam is harmony, he said, and the Koran teaches human brotherhood, religious harmony and many other noble things. The values are unassailable, but the mechanisms are a puzzle to minorities unclear about their status should the teachings of Islam be implemented in a 'collective' way, by majority rule, as opposed to the means of an Islamic state.

The strongest criticism of Amien Rais comes from Islamic quarters. His vision is

frightening, said Abdurrahman Wahid, who leads the Nahdlatul Ulama, the largest Islamic organisation, 30 million strong. People like himself would like to see 'a modern Indonesian society where Muslims would implement the teachings of their religion voluntarily and individually. Even if they act in a collective way it would be an individual decision to join or not.'

In his own being Abdurrahman Wahid expresses the pluralism of Indonesian Islam, implicitly denied by Amien Rais. He is a Muslim intellectual, drawn to traditional Javanese mystical practices and certain Western cultural forms. He could cry at the right kind of Koranic recitation, with its marriage of meaning and sound, he said, but the TV competition mystified him. 'This is all that is left for the government to do to placate Muslims. It does that with much cost.'

Abdurrahman Wahid is not a politician but he is a figure of national importance. Unlike Amien Rais he avoided coöption by the state-sponsored association of Muslim intellectuals, ICMI, an association established, some say, in another move to placate Muslims. (Amien Rais has subsequently been 'spat out' for criticising the status quo too stridently). In spite of some enigmatic public gestures, such as joining with the President's daughter during an election campaign event, Abdurrahman Wahid remains a source of inspiration for many people, young people especially.

Among young Muslims, democracy and pluralism are flourishing ideals. There is a host of non-government organisations where young intellectuals, taking their lead from some notable antecedents, take issue with traditional Islamic teachings by going back to the Koran, rejecting literal readings, and examining the sacred text 'contextually'. In the scholar William Liddle's phrase, they look for the substance of the Koran's teachings. The substance, they find, is not exclusive, or sexist. Depending on the focus of their organisation, they carry the message out to schools, rural communities, universities, Islamic religious leaders.

There is an interesting range among these NGOs. I went to one, Paramadina, which caters for Jakarta's middle-classes, inviting them to a 'rational', 'moderate', even 'post-modern', Islam. The emphasis here is on Islam as spirituality, one that is well-tuned to the demands of contemporary life. The language clearly appeals to those who want to integrate Islam into their lives as Western-educated technically-trained

people (those who are 'well-acquainted with cyberspace'), hence the emphasis on 'rationality'. Sometimes there are hiccups. When I listened to a conversion discussion going on in a back room I discovered that, from one Paramadina associate at least, there was deeper analysis of political and economic aspects of Islam than social ones. The 'teacher', a businessman involved in multi-level selling, remained certain that there was in Islam a place for the *jilbab* (veil), for polygamy, for female circumcision.

I didn't find the same kind of incoherence among those Islamic organisations serving the poor. Amongst them, the issue of gender equality was intrinsic to discussion of democracy and economic development. From LKPSM, a Nahdlatul Ulama 'Institute for Developing Human Resources', the members go out to rural communities taking Islamic teachings as the basis for grass roots training in gender perspectives. 'The question may be, who owns the buffalo? The man or the family? We ask, what is justice? What is equality in Islam?', and we reinterpret the teachings step-by-step. At first the people are shocked. But after that, they are eager to deconstruct and reconstruct again.'

At Kalyanamitra, an inter-faith women's organisation in Jakarta, the Muslim activist wore a veil. On her feminist head, she said, it was a symbolic rejection of both Muslim patriarchy and the coöption of Islam by the State. In order to change society in Indonesia it was necessary to start with religion. Religion was not merely a personal belief but a way of being active to change society and the struggle was not to reject Islamic law but to reinterpret it.

In Yogyakarta, at an Islamic institute which 'researches the response of religion to social, political and economic problems', young intellectuals spoke about introducing a 'variety of thought, even extremes of thought' on Islam. They listed issues of human rights, equality between men and women, the democratisation of political life in Indonesia. It wasn't an attempt to reject their elders they said, but again a question of reinterpretation.

Democratisation was their key concern. 'In our opinion, the old interpretation of the Koran put the people as servant to the King—in Javanese, *kowalo*—so in Indonesia the important thing is to democratise political life by reinterpreting Al Koran and reinterpreting *fiq* (law)'.

In their group, they said, 'we do not reject the Chinese. We do not reject anyone

who wants to live in Indonesia. We see them as equal to Muslims. It is our Islamic opinion in LKIS'. These young Islamic democrats disseminate their ideas through publishing and through leadership training courses. Some of them have links with Interfidei, an organisation made up of people of different faiths who come together voluntarily and not as official representatives of their religious institutions. (They are keen on the distinction between faith and religion). Interfidei is equally vigorous in its educational activities—distributing books through a wide network, holding seminars and monthly discussions, doing field research (what really happened, for example, when the churches were burned in Situbondo?). Democracy, human rights, tribal religion, how to live together in a pluralistic society, how to achieve clean government—these are the topics they discuss.

EVEN AT THE LEVEL of the Majlis, Muhammadiyah's law-making body, there is busy reinterpretation from its only female member, appointed in 1991. She is Ruhaini, an academic at a Muhammadiyah university (she studied social theory at Monash) who has the great advantage of fluent Arabic. Her way of going about achieving change is to look closely at the Arabic religious texts, including the Koran, to extricate the general meaning rather than the cultural meaning Indonesian Islamic tradition teaches. She was also instrumental in the setting up of Indonesia's first women's crisis centre in Yogyakarta in response to a high rate of domestic violence, '70 per cent from Muslim families!' In Yogya, she said, there were many groups training people, alerting them 'to the way culture moulds perspectives, including the way we interpret a Bible or a Koran.'

I retain that image of the Koranic recitation competition on television not as a *pro forma* one but rather as a complex image. It seems to me that there is a tension in it, between the young people set cheerily out on the field and the earnest officials on the dais. On the dais they are going through the motions. They are paying their dues in all the appropriate directions. There is no certainty that they even mean what they say. There is only hopefulness and pride on the field. ■

Margaret Coffey is a program-maker with Radio National.

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The Uncritical Culture

Tim Bonyhady

IS ANY AUSTRALIAN SCULPTURE SADDER? Even when we know that Truganini was not 'The Last Tasmanian', Benjamin Law's bust of her is profoundly melancholy. The downcast eyes, the furrowed brow, are full of foreboding. Although cast by Law in 1836, 40 years before Truganini died, her death—and that of so many of her people—seems before her.

Bernard Smith made the most of Law's bust when he put it on the cover of his Boyer Lectures for 1980. The white bust against the black background is 'The Spectre of Truganini'—the title Smith gave his lectures. It can also be seen as a manifestation of Smith's interest in the characterisation of Australia as a land of contrarities—of antipodean inversions and apparent freaks and oddities of which the kangaroo was long the most notorious example. What could be more contrary than an albino Aborigine?

SMITH'S BOYER LECTURES REVEAL HIM at his most political. While most of his successors have been either pedestrian or portentous, Smith delivered the Boyer lectures when they still mattered. The anthropologist W.E.H. Stanner had delivered 'After the Dreaming' in 1968; Nugget Coombs 'The Fragile Pattern' in 1970; Hugh Stretton 'Housing and Government' in 1974. Smith matched this company despite the ABC's denying him his first choice of subject. When Smith suggested he discuss illegitimacy, the ABC refused because it mistakenly feared he would examine the origins of the Fraser Government in Whitlam's sacking. As a result, 'the lucky young bastard' deferred examining his own status until his autobiographical *Boy Adeodatus* and explored instead what it meant for Australian culture to have its roots in invasion and conquest.

Smith argued that by trying to forget all the violence Europeans had done to Aborigines, white Australians had not only skewed their understanding of the past but also corrupted the present, because there is 'a close connection between culture, place and morality'. As Smith put it, 'in order

to develop and survive' a culture has to 'put down firm ethical roots in the place from which it grows'. He maintained that white Australians needed to come to terms with 'the story of homicide, rape'—and all too pertinently for 1997—'the forcible abduction of children from their parents'.

Smith also argued that it was not enough for white Australians to acknowledge these crimes; they needed to give Aborigines inalienable title to land and adequate reparations for their debasement and degradation over 200 years. Smith predicted that, if Aborigines gained these political and economic rights, a 'mature' culture would follow in which there was 'effective cultural interchange' between white and black Australians. But if white Australians denied Aborigines these rights, not just Aborigines but all Australians would be the losers.

Smith was exceptionally well equipped to develop these arguments. Just as John Mulvaney instigated the academic discipline of Australian prehistory and Manning Clark brought unprecedented substance to the study of Australian history, so Smith created Australian art history. Before him, it was chronicle. Smith not only made it intellectually exciting through his reading of Marx and Lenin, Toynbee and Wöflin, but also recast its empirical base through ferocious research. The result is a powerful set of cultural arguments written with unusual clarity. More than fifty years on his earliest writing has hardly dated.

Smith first showed how exciting Australian art history could be in *Place, Taste and Tradition* which was published in 1945 when he was 29 and yet to enrol as an undergraduate at the University of Sydney. He followed in 1960 with *European Vision and the South Pacific*, a revised version of his doctorate from the Australian National University. Two years later came *Australian Painting*, which art historians and curators now like to dismiss in conversation, though not print, as dull, even mechanical. Yet their criticism ignores the depth of Smith's research, his command of his material and the customary verve of his writing. If only we had *Australian Painting's* equal exploring Australian photography, printmaking or urban design.

ART HISTORY, HOWEVER, IS JUST A SLICE OF BERNARD SMITH. Like Mulvaney and Clark, he has never been confined by the discipline he established. Instead he has made major forays into anthropology and architecture, Aboriginal history and autobiography; he has been almost as at home in the rest of the South Pacific as in Australia. Even in his 'retirement' since 1977 when he stepped down as the first Power Professor of Contemporary Art at the University of Sydney, he has covered greater intellectual ground than any academic art historian in Australia.

Like Mulvaney and Clark, Smith has also been an exceptional academic in his commitment both to writing books of enduring importance and to engaging with the culture and politics of today. Between writing and editing more than a dozen major books, he has been an effective urban activist and an incisive newspaper art critic. Significantly he has almost never bothered with articles in refereed journals, let alone the *international* refereed journals, given such excessive credence by modern university managers and their counterparts in the Australian Research Council.

For all these reasons, it is more than time Smith himself was the stuff of a book. Until now, the only substantial essays about Smith have been written by Humphrey McQueen in the *Independent Monthly* and *24 Hours*. Nancy Underhill's *Making Australian Art* includes a fine account of how it was that Sydney Ure Smith of *Art in Australia* published *Place, Taste and Tradition* even though Ure Smith was a 'King, Empire and Menzies man' and Bernard an active member of the Communist Party. But *Australian Art and Architecture*, the 1980 festschrift in Smith's honour, is characteristic of so much of this genre in almost ignoring Smith's work. Smith's own award-winning autobiography *The Boy Adeodatus* stops in 1940 when he was just 24 and had abandoned his own painting but was yet to publish his first article. Smith's book on the artist Noel Counihan—often suspected of being his vehicle for writing more of his own life—is no such thing. Smith's regard for Counihan is too great for him to abuse his memory in this way.

Now Peter Beilharz has begun giving Smith the extended attention he deserves, in *The Antipodean Imagination*, alias 'Culture, Theory and the Visual in the Work of Bernard Smith'. Whereas Smith considers himself a cultural historian and Humphrey McQueen has cast him much more broadly as Australia's greatest living historian, Beilharz identifies him as a social theorist of international importance. He maintains that Smith is 'best read ... as ... a theorist of peripheral vision' who has understood that the antipodes is not a place but a relation. The key to Smith, for

A more 'mature' culture ... would not just acclaim the theoretical facet of his writing. Nor would it just honour the remarkable depth and breadth of Smith's books. It would also show its admiration for Smith's work by giving it the criticism it deserves.

The busts of Truganini and Woureddy, by Benjamin Law, are reproduced from the cover of Bernard Smith's 1980 Boyer lectures. 'The Spectre of Truganini', published by the ABC, and from Bernard Smith's European Vision And The South Pacific, published by Oxford, 1960. The photograph of Bernard Smith is from The Boyer Lectures.

Beilharz, is his recognition that for all the impact of metropolis on periphery, 'the subordinate, or colonial partners in the global relation of master and slave also affect the dominant culture, however opaquely'.

This argument is seductive on several counts. It is perfectly conceived for current academic fashion which can imagine no greater achievement than to be judged a major theorist. Beilharz also writes with panache: his book is a remarkably fast read for a book about theory. Not least *The Antipodean Imagination* offers us a sensible nationalism. Situated 'down here' we cannot hope to be the centre of the world, yet we are not just dominated by London, Paris, New York. The traffic is two-way—and Smith (perhaps more than Beilharz) might add that, for all the irritation of often being ignored, there are sometimes advantages in the freedom which comes from being on the periphery.

Beilharz's blunder is to elevate this argument into a governing, sustaining vision rather than treat it as one major aspect of Smith's work. The result is disturbingly reductionist. While there probably *are* some people who are best explained in terms of a single idea even though they live beyond 80 and write and edit a good shelf of books and countless significant articles, Smith is not one of them. By trying to explain Smith in terms of just one grand thesis, Beilharz either distorts or ignores much of what he has to offer.

Beilharz is equally remiss in being utterly uncritical of Smith's work. Instead his book is a confusing mouthpiece for Smith: it repeatedly blurs where Smith's ideas stop and Beilharz's own start. While robust in defending Smith against Richard Haese's *Rebels and Precursors*, as well as *The Necessity of Australian Art* by Ian Burn, Nigel Lendon, Charles Merewether and Ann Stephen, Beilharz fails to engage with the extraordinary empirical base on which Smith has built such rich theoretical foundations. As a result, Beilharz is in no position to analyse, let alone question, the validity of Smith's major arguments.

THE SPECTRE OF TRUGANINI IS ONE CASUALTY OF THIS PROCESS. As the Melbourne historian, Bain Attwood, has recognised, Smith's lectures played a significant part in breaking what W.E.H. Stanner dubbed 'The Great Australian Silence' in his celebrated Boyer Lectures of 1968. That Smith himself saw his lectures this way is obvious from his text. Having begun by referring to Stanner's lectures, Smith went on to quote Stanner's criticism of Australian historians for practising a 'cult of forgetfulness' in relation to Aborigines. He also drew on Charles Rowley's acclaimed *Destruction of Aboriginal Society*. Not least he invoked Nugget Coombs who had inspired Smith's lectures with his call for a Makaratta: a Treaty of Peace and Friendship between Aboriginal Australians, Torres Strait Islanders and the Commonwealth.

Beilharz is blind to this context. While he recognises that Smith's lectures 'anticipate something of the spirit of the debate after Mabo', he gives no hint that Smith's work built on one of the most significant lines of scholarship-cum-advocacy in Australian historiography. Although Beilharz delights in drawing out Smith's understanding of Freud and Nietzsche, Hegel and Lévi-Strauss, he ignores Stanner, Rowley and Coombs. He also misplaces *The Spectre of Truganini*—treating it as a book about the Pacific, not Australia.

Beilharz equally diminishes Smith by failing to consider his writing about architecture, which was informed by his long years teaching at the University of Melbourne from 1956 but was inspired by his urban activism after he moved to Sydney in 1966. Two years later, Smith gave the Paddington Society crucial assistance when he helped to persuade the Bunning inquiry into the widening of Jersey Road that Paddington was worth preserving on account of its architectural and historical

significance. A year later a meeting at Smith's house in Glebe gave rise to the Glebe Society. As the Society's first president, Smith played a crucial role in trying both to save Glebe's architectural heritage from two freeways and indiscriminate high-rise development and to maintain Glebe's social mix in the face of increasing gentrification.

Smith initially melded his architectural scholarship and activism in an essay reviewing Max Freeland's *Architecture in Australia*, the closest architectural equivalent to Smith's own *Australian Painting*. Then, more significantly, Bernard and his wife Kate published *The Architectural Character*



*The Melbourne Age
broke with
convention and
chose him [Smith]
as its critic
rather than a
practising artist.*

of *Glebe* in which they sought 'to create a better informed and more appreciative public for the Australian architecture of the second half of the nineteenth century' and by doing so encourage its preservation both in Glebe and elsewhere. At the same time, the Smiths emphasised that Glebe was more than just buildings because there were groups such as pensioners who had lived most of their lives in Glebe, wished to remain there and had 'a special social and even moral stake in the area'.

BY THE TIME *THE ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER OF GLEBE* APPEARED IN 1974, the Smiths had helped to render it partly superfluous by working to secure federal intervention in Glebe. Encouraged by a range of organisations, including not just the Glebe Society but also the Leichhardt Council and the Anglican Church, the Whitlam government decided to buy the Church's Glebe Estate. As described by the Melbourne architect Neil Clerchan, 'On the day the review copies were posted, the Government announced that it had bought the central area of Glebe with the admirable if impracticable intention of preserving its present social mix and maintaining, which is easier, its original character.' In fact, the federal government's unprecedented decision not only preserved Glebe's buildings but also went some way to maintaining its diversity because the 700 dwellings within the Glebe Estate were increased by careful infill to 1100 and retained as public housing.

The most far-reaching fruit of Smith's architectural writing was, however, his discussion of Australian domestic building between the late 1880s or perhaps the mid-1890s and the First World War. Until then, houses of this period were typically dubbed 'Queen Anne': a reference both to English domestic architecture of the first decade of the eighteenth century and the British revivals of this style in the 1860s and 1870s. The implication was that the Australian buildings characterised in this way were typically derivative; they were mere foreign imports.

Smith argued that this view was mistaken, although his reasoning shifted markedly between essay and book. In *The Architectural Character of Glebe* he accepted that Australian houses from the turn of the century had possessed links with Wren's England such as their 'partiality for red bricks and terracotta ornaments'. But he maintained that they also revealed French, American and distinctively Australian influences. The result, he argued, was buildings of 'a character that is unique to Australia and deserves therefore an Australian name'. His suggestion was 'Federation' because 'it flourished throughout Australia from Fremantle to Bondi during the years immediately before the federation of the Australian colonies into the Australian Commonwealth in 1901'.

Smith's manifestly nationalist suggestion caught on. The prominent architectural historian Morton Herman embraced 'Federation style' in 1974. Soon it was in general currency—a linguistic feat on Smith's part which changed the way Australians understood their suburbs, naturalising what had previously seemed foreign, and leading them to look with more regard on their own surroundings.

Beilharz is no more alive to the significance of this aspect of Smith's work than he is to Smith's literary foray into the sources of Coleridge's 'Rime of the Ancient Mariner'. While making no claim to 'any new explanation of the profound moral and spiritual experience' conveyed by Coleridge, Smith argues that a key source of its naturalist base was William Wales, the astronomer and meteorologist on James Cook's second voyage, who taught mathematics at Christ's Hospital when Coleridge was a pupil there. Smith maintains that both the course of the Ancient Mariner's voyage and much of Coleridge's imagery grew out of Wales's stories. In particular he argues that 'the precision and clarity of Coleridge's atmospheric imagery derives much from the precision and clarity of Wales's astronomical and meteorological observations'.

This argument is significant because so much of what Smith has written about in both *European Vision* and its successors—whether the paintings of the still to be identified 'Port Jackson Painter' or even those of the Royal Academician William Hodges—occupies little or no place in accounts of European culture written with a metropolitan lens. The 'Ancient Mariner' is very different because it is a cornerstone of high culture—part of the international literary canon. If one wants to demonstrate what Smith has described as 'the relation of regional content to the universal forms of art', it is an essential example.

Just as Beilharz's omission of Wales's influence on Coleridge weakens his account of the two-way relation between centre and periphery in the eighteenth century, so his failure to consider the impact of Smith's work on the study of Coleridge over the last 40 years weakens his analysis of the antipodean relationship today. This issue is significant because most of Coleridge's biographers, as well as literary critics writing detailed studies of his work, have ignored Smith's study even though he first published it in the *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institute* in 1956, republished it in *The Antipodean Manifesto* in 1976 and then again in his *Imagining the Pacific* in 1992. One of

the few books to make anything of Smith's account is Ian Wylie's *Young Coleridge and the Philosophy of Nature* published in 1989—and then Wylie's acknowledgement of Smith's work is scant.

Why has Smith's work on Coleridge had so little impact? As Humphrey McQueen has suggested, one reason is 'the unfashionableness of Smith's anchoring of febrile fancy to the crafts of seafaring'. Most literary critics are loath to credit any source as mundane as Coleridge's school-teacher. The places where Smith has published his essay are also significant since, for all the prestige of the *Warburg Journal*, most literary critics would never think to open a periodical primarily devoted to the visual arts, let alone a book of essays about the Pacific or a collection titled *The Antipodean Manifesto*. Yet their oversight is also a consequence of Smith's antipodean position.

Had he held a chair at Oxford or Cambridge, Harvard or Stanford, his discovery would by now have been taken up in the mainstream of literary history.

BEILHARZ'S FAILURE TO TAKE UP SUCH ISSUES both diminishes and misrepresents Smith, yet evaluating Smith's work is not easy because there have been few attempts either to extend or to challenge his arguments. Take *European Vision and the South Pacific*, generally regarded as Smith's seminal book. When first published in 1960, it attracted some thoughtful reviews. For example, Bob Brissenden suggested in *Meanjin* that some of the key concepts discussed by Smith, such as the 'noble savage' and the 'primitive', were much more complex than Smith acknowledged. In the *Journal of Polynesian Studies* a less charitable Peter Tomory challenged Smith's arguments about the emergence of 'typical' or 'regional' landscape suggesting that Pacific topographers were not a major force in the regionalisation of landscape painting in Europe because 'the topographical instinct was fully exercised in Europe from the seventeenth century'.

There the discussion stopped. When Smith published a second edition of *European Vision* in 1985, he had good reason for lamenting the dearth of debate of his work. The 'lack of critical comment', he wrote, was 'understandable but regrettable'. This critical silence has not always been helped by Smith's own interpretation of the significance of his own work, particularly his attachment to 'The Antipodean Manifesto' which accompanied an exhibition of paintings in

Melbourne in 1959 by Charles Blackman, Arthur and David Boyd, John Brack, Robert Dickerson, John Perceval and Clifton Pugh. Although it also bore the names of all seven artists, the Manifesto was primarily Smith's work. In drawing on notes written by four of the contributing artists, he created a tract very different from its constituent parts.

The Manifesto argued that, while figurative painting represented 'some form of acceptance of, and involvement in life', abstract art was not just meaningless but dangerous. According to the Antipodeans, abstraction was destroying art in the west just as socialist realism was crippling art in the East. 'Wherever we look', they declared, 'New York, Paris, London, San Francisco or Sydney, we see young artists dazzled by the pageantry and colour of non-figuration'. Smith's dismissive view of 'the great Tachiste Emperor' was that he 'has no clothes—nor has he a body. He is only a blot—a most colourful, elegant and shapely blot.'

Although it was less than 1500 words and occupied just two pages, Smith has cast the Manifesto as central to both Australian art history and his own writing. It provided the conclusion in 1962 to the first edition of his *Australian Painting* in which, without adequately

acknowledging his own role in writing the Manifesto, he used it to legitimate his view of Melbourne as a centre of highly original figurative expressionism and Sydney as a centre of derivative abstraction. The Manifesto equally provided him with the title to his first volume of selected essays published in 1976. He republished it again in 1988 in his second selection of essays, *The Death of the Artist as Hero*. A year later he published his speech opening the Antipodean Exhibition in *The Critic as Advocate*.

Why does Smith see the Manifesto as so important? The answer must in part be personal. The Antipodeans made for one of those occasions when Smith shifted from commentator to participant. He did not appear just as joint author of the Manifesto; he was chairman of the new group; his name appeared on the exhibition poster and on the back cover of the exhibition catalogue as an



The Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery in Hobart exhibited Law's bust of Woureddy in a showcase which had as its centrepiece Truganini's skeleton

equal with his 'brother' Antipodeans who were showing paintings and sculptures. Smith's involvement, in other words, made him an artist again for the first time since he stopped painting in 1940. As he subsequently has explained, he saw the Manifesto as being his 'special contribution to the show', it was his 'work of art if you like'.

Yet Smith also values the Manifesto as a work of international significance. In an essay in 1983 lamenting that the 'wrong questions' had always been asked about the Antipodeans, he asked rhetorically: 'Who were the first group of artists to publicly challenge the aesthetic values of the New York hegemony: were they Italians, French, Mexicans, Australians?' In 1993 he was even bolder, claiming that the Manifesto 'substantially asserted' what Serge Guilbaut argued in 1983 in *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art* and rebuking Australian art historians for failing to consider the Manifesto's global setting. According to Smith, the Manifesto was 'at bottom ... an attack on the policy of the State Department of USA to use abstract art as a political instrument in opposition to the Soviet Union's use of socialist realism as a political instrument'.

I should say that I like the Manifesto. I think that it was right to warn against too ready acceptance of the latest ism; it was as well directed as polemics are likely to be, and our culture would be all the richer if there were more such writing. But Smith's recent claims for the Manifesto go too far. While he may have intended to attack the State Department and the US Information Service, he neither identified them as his targets nor developed any explicit arguments about American cultural imperialism. As a result, it is as unconvincing for Smith to cast the Manifesto as the pioneer of these arguments as it is characteristically uncritical of Beilharz to repeat this claim without evaluation in *Imagining the Antipodes*.

A more profitable way of considering the Manifesto's significance is to ask what would have happened had Smith published it, like so many of his essays, under his own name in *Meanjin*. Had he done so, I suspect that even Smith would regard it as just a restatement of his humanism. In other words, the Manifesto largely owes its significance to the fact that it also carries the signatures of seven of Australia's best post-war artists, even though Bob Dickerson resigned during the second week of the exhibition, while Clifton Pugh was quick to explain to members of the Contemporary Art Society that 'all sincere directions of art are valid'.

ANOTHER WAY OF EVALUATING THE MANIFESTO is to contrast it with the weekly reviews Smith wrote from 1963 until 1966 after the Melbourne *Age* broke with convention and chose him, rather than a practising artist, as its critic. While Beilharz devotes one of his seven chapters to the Manifesto and ignores Smith's journalism, he might have reconsidered had he read *A Quiet Revolution*, Christopher Heathcote's account of Australian painting from 1946 until 1968, which recognises Smith's significance without being deferential. Unlike so many Australian art historians, Heathcote does not simply throw up his hands and say that Smith has been everywhere first, done it impossibly well and that in any event the days of big books and grand narratives have passed.

Heathcote argues that the Antipodean exhibition only seems to hold a central place in Australian art history because Smith has made it so. He quotes John Brack, 'The artists involved in that episode do not regard it ... in such a light.' By way of contrast, Heathcote argues that the benefits of Smith's criticism 'remain inestimable'.

As described by Heathcote, 'On occasion his weekly column was stretched beyond pragmatic reviewing into criticism proper, a consideration of subject matter, cultural history, politics, philosophy ... Ruminating over an exhibition, Smith could see beyond the immediate visual debt to Picasso, to the intellectual legacy of Aristotle, Kant or the Platonists. Many viewers started to look at exhibitions in a new light, expecting more of artists than mere craftsmanship or decorative diversion.'

The Quiet Revolution provides one example of how Smith's engagements with contemporary culture can be cast in new light. Heathcote's deep understanding of Melbourne in the 1950s and 1960s enables him to reassess Smith's significance. *The Quiet Revolution*—unlike Beilharz's *Antipodean Imagination*—reveals how the world can be made to look different, and infinitely more interesting, by someone ready to engage with more than a few readily accessible texts.

*Law's casts were
'the first attempt
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Art history, however, is just a slice of Bernard Smith. Like Mulvaney and Clarke, he has never been confined by the discipline he established. Instead he has made major forays into anthropology and architecture, Aboriginal history and autobiography; he has been almost as at home in the rest of the South Pacific as in Australia.

But what of Smith's other writing, particularly his books? Truganini offers another way of examining Smith—and not just because of the impact of Benjamin Law's bust on the cover of his Boyer Lectures. Law's sculpture is also central to Australian art history; it is of manifest anthropological interest and its significance extends beyond the cultural to the political. Not least, Truganini's place in Smith's work over the last 40 years provides a vehicle for exploring how Smith's ideas have changed over time and how he has responded to new social and intellectual developments.

When Law sculpted Truganini and her 'husband' Woureddy in 1835-36, he was so confident of contemporary interest in Tasmania's Aborigines that he cast about 30 pairs. Each was available in two versions. One was 'stone-coloured', the usual colour for plaster casts of Europeans, which offered the pretence of marble. The other was 'bronze' which suggested metal. Almost all Law's contemporaries preferred the bronze, most likely because they could not imagine Aborigines other than dark. For some colonists, these busts were important as art. The *Hobart Town Almanack* recorded (not quite accurately) that Law's casts were 'the first attempt at sculpture in the colony'. Others saw them as ethnography. The Polish scientist John Lhotsky observed, 'As the race of the natives of this island is nearly extinguished, these casts will retain a constant historical value.'

Within a few years, this view had triumphed. Nearly all the known versions of Law's work ended up in ethnographic collections ranging from the Royal Anthropological Institute in London to the *Musée de l'Homme* in Paris and the Anatomy Department of the University of Edinburgh to its counterpart in the University of Melbourne. Until 1947, the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery in Hobart exhibited Law's bust of Woureddy in a showcase which had as its centrepiece Truganini's skeleton which had been

articulated, following its burial and exhumation, by Professor Baldwin Spencer of the National Museum of Victoria.

THIS DIVISION BETWEEN ART AND ETHNOGRAPHY did not trouble Bernard Smith when he published *European Vision and the South Pacific* in 1960. Had he confined himself to what was then considered art, he would have had little to write about. Even so, he considered Law's work only at second-hand. Instead of reproducing Law's busts, Smith included lithographs of them published in the 1840s in the anthropological atlas of the French explorer Dumon d'Urville's *Voyage to the South Pole*. In doing so, Smith identified the lithographer Léveillé but not Law. His only comment was that Dumon d'Urville thought that the Tasmanian Aborigines 'were somewhat worse off than the beasts'.

This observation fitted perhaps Smith's best-known thesis in *European Vision* about how Europeans began by seeing the people of the Pacific as noble savages. Smith argued that when James Cook visited Australia in 1770, his company fitted the Aborigines into this classical mould. They looked on them as 'hard primitives' distinguished by their courage. But while this image of the Aborigine as 'an idealized figure possessing proportions, attitudes, and expressions derived from classical art' survived the arrival of the First Fleet, it collapsed in the mid-1790s as Aborigines were degraded by contact with Europeans. Instead the Aborigine was 'depicted as a monstrous and comical absurdity'.

This argument about the transformation of the noble savage into the ignoble savage is flawed because it takes no account of the many sympathetic portraits of New South Wales Aborigines from the 1830s—particularly those by Charles Rhodius. It also ignores all representations of Tasmanian Aborigines in the 1830s except for John Glover's Aboriginal landscapes. In doing so, Smith omitted Thomas Bock's portraits of the Aborigines and Benjamin Duterrau's portraits, history paintings and large-scale ethnographic paintings of them. Not least he ignored Law's casts of Truganini and Woureddy.

These omissions distorted the place of Aborigines in colonial art. As Law's neo-classical busts amply demonstrate, there was no straight trajectory from noble to ignoble savage. Instead the noble savage flourished in Tasmania in the 1830s just as the Black War was being won by the settlers and the Aborigines brought in by George Augustus Robinson were being transported to Flinders Island. While Smith was probably right to suggest that conflict over land inspired negative portrayals of Aborigines, he did not recognise that as this threat disappeared, at least some colonists were happy to restore Aborigines to a classical mould.

Smith implicitly recognised something of this continued significance of the noble savage in 1962 in the first edition of his *Australian Painting*. While he made nothing of Bock's Aboriginal portraits and ignored Duterrau's *Conciliation* beyond identifying it as Australia's first history painting, Smith wrote incisively about Robert Dowling's *Aborigines of Tasmania* of 1859. As Smith recognised, Dowling cast the Aborigines as a doomed race. Smith argued that Dowling 'identified himself with the subject and succeeded in evoking an atmosphere of tragic melancholy ... The natives are seated—emblematic of their situation—around the dying embers of a burnt-out log near a great blackened stump, and in the far left corner there is a leafless tree with shattered branches.'

As part of this analysis, Smith broke new ground when discussing the noble savage. Rather than casting this ideal as just an expression of fashionable eighteenth-century taste, as popular in romances as philosophy, he presented the noble savage as a projection of an inner state. According to Smith, Dowling had succeeded in executing 'a history painting in the full sense of the word [which] not only provides a valuable record of the last members of 'the most primitive people in the world' but also serves to celebrate yet another death of the noble savage—that enduring symbol of the civilised man's guilty conviction that he is at heart far more savage than the savages.'

SMITH HAD PARTICULAR CAUSE TO THINK about Truganini around this time because David Boyd made her the subject of a series of his paintings, some of which were first shown in 1959 in the Antipodean Exhibition. These paintings not only prompted Smith to develop his ideas about white guilt still further but also, arguably, stimulated Smith's Boyer Lectures 20 years later. If so, they are a rare example of weak art inspiring great writing. They are also an example of Smith failing to maintain his aesthetic judgment as a result of his friendship for Boyd, his admirations for Boyd's intentions and his own status as a member of the Antipodeans.

The weakness of David Boyd's paintings was a commonplace in the late 1950s. Already in 1958 critics castigated his paintings of explorers, accusing him of attempting grand moral themes when he lacked the technical skill if not also the visual imagination to do so. John Brack was most damning when he declared, 'Boyd has nothing like the equipment necessary for such tasks. He relies heavily on his brother and on Nolan for his images, but has curiously managed to borrow only their faults'. Franz Philipp, one of Smith's colleagues from Melbourne University, was almost as dismissive about Boyd's Truganini series. Philipp warned: 'Mythmaking is not a light-hearted adventure. There have been many wrecks on the cliffs of melodrama'. In Philipp's judgment, only one of Boyd's paintings escaped this fate.

Smith focused instead on the significance of Boyd's subject-matter which he applauded. From the outset, he recognised that Boyd was trying to break what Stanner later called 'The Great Australian Silence'. In an essay on 'The Antipodeans' published in *Australia Today* already in 1959, Smith first developed one of the key themes of *The Spectre of Truganini* as he acclaimed Boyd for probing 'into the more hidden parts of the national consciousness' by 'giving expression to certain deep-rooted guilt feelings which the majority of Australians possess towards the contemporary remnant of Australia's native peoples'.

Had Smith stopped there, his views would be unremarkable. But he went on to argue that Boyd's paintings were great art. With an excess of fervour, Smith applauded Boyd in the fortnightly *Nation* and then in his *Australian Painting* for turning 'the Tasmanian tragedy ... into a universal expression of the conflict between white and coloured. The paintings belong to the world of Notting Hill riots, Little Rock, Sharpeville and the trial of Albert Namatjira. They are concerned with human conflict, guilt, love, compassion and forgiveness; and what they express they express as paintings, not as literature or propaganda.'

Not least, Smith identified Boyd's work as an embodiment of the Antipodean ideal. Again the question of white guilt was paramount as Smith declared Boyd's 'image of Truganini raped and dead, clinging to her sealer lover in a timeless agony of hate and love' as 'an inverted image containing a dark truth which Dante (who placed purgatory down here in the southern hemisphere) would have understood'. In a characteristic swipe at abstract painting, he applauded Boyd for showing



'In order to develop and survive' a culture has to 'put down firm ethical roots in the place from which it grows.'

—Bernard Smith

that it was 'still possible for an artist to express the moral conscience of his time and assert his own freedom and the dignity of painting as one of the liberal arts.'

By 1980 when Smith returned to Truganini as the symbol of his Boyer Lectures, there was a new Tasmanian Aboriginal politics which resulted from the descendants of Tasmanian Aboriginal women and white sealers on Cape Barren Island asserting their Aboriginality. In 1973 an Aboriginal Legal Service (later known as the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre) opened in Hobart and Launceston with Commonwealth funding. In 1977 Michael Mansell became

renowned, if not notorious, for presenting the Queen with a claim for Tasmanian Aboriginal land rights at a gala reception at the Wrest Point Casino in Hobart. The following year there was intense controversy over Tom Haydon's film *The Last Tasmanian* which documented the removal of Truganini's skeleton from the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, her cremation and the scattering of her ashes at sea. As posters for this 'Story of Genocide' went up, Aborigines responded by adding stickers which dubbed the film racist because it denied Tasmanian Aborigines their land rights.

Smith remarkably ignored these developments in *The Spectre of Truganini*. Instead he relied on *The Black War*, Clive Turnbull's account of 'The extermination of the Tasmanian Aborigines' first published in 1948, which had also been David Boyd's primary source for his paintings of Truganini in 1959-60. At the start of his lectures, Smith quoted Turnbull on Truganini: 'Her uncle had been shot by a soldier, her sister stolen by sealers, her mother stabbed. Her man had his hands cut off in life (and [was] left to drown) and her last compatriot had his hands cut off

in death ... Her last years were comfortable, it seems, but there was a shadow over them—her fear of the body-snatchers and mutilation after death ... "Don't let them cut me up", she begged the doctor as she lay dying. "Bury me behind the mountains".'

WERE TRUGANINI'S WISHES RESPECTED? While Smith implied that Truganini had not escaped the body-snatchers, he failed to explain that her remains had finally been laid to rest two years before his lectures. Smith also ignored both recent political events and Lyndall Ryan's first writings on Aboriginal survival in Tasmania when he stuck to Turnbull's view that the Black War had involved 'The extermination of the Tasmanian Aborigines'. Smith declared of Truganini: 'When she died in 1876 the last of the original Tasmanians died. It was the end of a war, the only war that, unaided, Australians have ever won. But it was a complete victory. None of the original Tasmanians survived.' In doing so, Smith added to the greatest problem of the Tasmanian Aborigines identified by Michael Mansell on the ABC's *Monday Conference* in 1978: 'We are the only race of people that I know of on earth, the Tasmanian Aborigines, who have to daily justify our existence.'

Smith equally failed to weigh new curatorial and art historical interest in Benjamin Law's busts of Truganini and Woureddy when Yale University Press republished *European Vision* in 1985. Perhaps Smith should have let his text stand and simply written a new preface for this lavish new edition, as he did when Oxford University Press republished *Place, Taste and Tradition* in 1979. Instead he claimed to have taken account of 'a good deal of original work' published since 1960, particularly where it bore 'upon major theses and topics considered'. But Smith did not live up to this promise. Even though art galleries across Australia had finally recognised Law's importance by including his sculptures in their displays and the Sydney art historian Mary Mackay had written the first substantial article on Law, Smith still ignored the implications of Law's busts for his thesis about the fall of the noble savage.

These omissions matter because, far from being just questions of detail, they undermine Smith's arguments. They affect both his analysis of the past in *European Vision* and his treatment of contemporary art and politics in *Australian Painting* and *The Spectre of Truganini*. They are also the kind of issues which a more vigorous culture would have pursued long before Smith turned 80. A more 'mature' culture—to take Smith's own term from his Boyer Lectures—would not just acclaim the theoretical facet of his writing. Nor would it just honour the remarkable depth and breadth of Smith's books. It would also show its admiration for Smith's work by giving it the criticism it deserves. ■

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*'Her uncle had been
shot by a soldier,
her sister stolen
by sealers,
her mother stabbed.
Her man
had his hands
cut off in life ...'*

Singapore stands trial

IN LATE MAY THIS YEAR the Singapore High Court awarded damages totalling \$8.075 million (nearly \$9 million) to eleven members of the Peoples Action Party, which has governed Singapore since its first independence in 1959. Each of the eleven argued that they were defamed by the same man, the Workers Party candidate Tang Liang Hong, in the lead-up to last January's election.

The alleged defamation occurred during the vigorous contest for the multi-member electorate of Cheng San. Led by the veteran opposition politician J.B. Jeyaretnam, and supported by enthusiastic crowds at a series of large party rallies, a five-person Workers Party team was making some headway in the always difficult task of winning opposition seats in parliament. Early in the campaign Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong announced that the government would concentrate its firepower on that one electorate.

Voters were warned that their government-built housing estates would suffer if they elected opposition MPs; Goh even hinted at reprisals against individual apartment blocks, each of which has a separate polling booth which could be monitored by government scrutineers. He enthusiastically endorsed Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew's allegation that Tang was 'anti-Christian' and a 'Chinese chauvinist', labels that raised the fear of racial division which has such resonance in Singapore politics. Goh went further still, describing Tang as a 'dangerous' character whose motives for entering the election were 'doubtful'. When Tang began to fight back against the Prime Minister, another nine government MPs joined in the attacks.

Tang responded by calling the eleven MPs liars, and on election eve he lodged

two reports with the police requesting that they investigate the comments and asking that they prevent any unpleasant incidents stirred up by the racially based comments of the PAP leaders. Within a few days the government MPs had issued writs against Tang and he had left for Malaysia.

It was the mere mention of those two police reports that led to the eleven defamation actions against J.B. Jeyaretnam. Just before the end of the final Workers Party rally, on election eve, Jeyaretnam briefly interrupted the flow

Vulnerability became one of the great themes of Lee Kuan Yew's government. The feeling of economic vulnerability translated into policies to create a disciplined, coöperative workforce and promote export-oriented industrialisation. The fear of internal unrest brought on measures calculated to suppress parliamentary opposition, as well as tight control of the media and an obsessive intolerance of dissenting opinion.

of his argument to say: 'And finally, finally, Mr Tang Liang Hong has just placed before me two reports he has made to the police against, you know, Mr Goh Chok Tong and his people.'

The whole case against Jeyaretnam rests on that sentence. Were those words a premeditated, last-minute attempt to win votes by defaming the eleven PAP leaders? Were they, as the plaintiffs claim, loaded with innuendo? Were they indeed, in Goh's words, a 'molotov cocktail' prepared by Tang and hurled by Jeyaretnam?

THROUGHOUT THE WEEK OF the trial the huge lawn opposite the Singapore High Court building was occupied by rows of plastic chairs, stretching almost all the

way from the 127-year-old Singapore Cricket Club to the rebuilt Singapore Recreation Club. Preparations were underway for a Singapore National Day concert to be held on this grassy area—the *Padang*—where European expatriates once played cricket. But although this year was the thirty-second anniversary of full independence, a strangely colonial performance was taking place across the road.

While those chairs stood empty, a long queue of people assembled each day in the corridor outside courtroom 14, hoping for a seat in the public gallery and a chance to see the two British QCs, George Carman and Thomas Shields, fighting on opposite sides of the opening case—Goh versus Jeyaretnam—in this widely anticipated series of actions.

Inside the courtroom were journalists from all the major wire services, the ABC and the BBC, the *London Times* and the *Guardian*. Representing Amnesty International was Judge Paul Bentley from Canada; representing the International Commission of Jurists was Stuart Littlemore QC. There was a man from the American embassy, and a woman from the Australian embassy. And spilling over into the gallery was a crowd of lawyers—I counted twenty—all but two of them representing Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong and his colleagues.

This first trial, a test case for the eleven, placed Goh head to head with the 71-year-old Jeyaretnam. For Jeyaretnam, the consequence of losing the case—and payment of damages to the eleven plaintiffs—would be bankruptcy and disqualification from his new 'non-constituency' seat in parliament. Whatever the outcome, this was the latest in an extraordinary series of legal

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actions and parliamentary hearings launched by the government since 1981, when Jeyaretnam became the first opposition politician to sit in the Singapore Parliament in well over a decade.

IT WAS THE PRESENCE of the international observers and the unusually large foreign media contingent that helped give the trial its special character. Indeed, at one point in particular—Goh Chok Tong's three hours in the witness stand—the foreign coverage of the trial became an issue within the trial itself.

Although it occurred on only the second of five days of hearings, Carman's cross-examination of Goh Chok Tong on behalf of Jeyaretnam was the climax of the trial. Carman's argument hinged on two main themes: that Goh had suffered no real distress as a result of Jeyaretnam's words, and that the actions against his client were motivated simply by the desire to drive him from political life. He showed how Goh himself, with Lee Kuan Yew, had released the contentious police reports to the press on election day, and he gained from Goh the admission that a confidential letter to the Speaker of the Singapore parliament had been given to the press without the Speaker's permission.

Faced by a fairly tough line of questioning, Goh's performance lacked assurance: on one occasion he became tangled in a trap laid fairly openly by Carman, when he conceded that 1997 had been 'a good year' in which his standing as a leader had not been damaged. This action, after all, was launched on the basis of the damage wrought by Jeyaretnam's words.

Carman's cross-examination of Goh was a gripping courtroom performance. Reports in the *Guardian* and the London *Times* and through the news agencies, the BBC and Australia Television emphasised the key points of Carman's argument and his allegation, on two occasions, that Goh was not being entirely truthful in his answers. Day Three opened, consequently, with Shields foreshadowing his intention to use the media coverage of the cross-examination as evidence in support of a claim for aggravated damages, which he duly did on the last day of the hearings.

This level of media interest—contrasting with Tang's hearings—was partly a recognition of Jeyaretnam's long

career in opposition politics. Jeyaretnam helped revive the Workers Party back in 1971, and became its first post-independence MP in 1981. He has been one of the targets of the dozen or more defamation actions launched over the years by Lee Kuan Yew. And, as the video-taped evidence showed in court, he is a skilled performer on the hustings.

From the British media's point of view the attraction of the trial was the presence the two London QCs, especially the 69-year-old George Carman who, the *Straits Times* reported, is paid up to \$10,000 a day back in the UK. As well as bringing publicity for the case, Carman showed his remarkable advocacy skills throughout the hearings. His right to appear for Jeyaretnam was contested by the plaintiffs in a preliminary hearing; once he had been given permission to take on the case, the plaintiffs appointed Shields as their counsel.

In the absence of a jury, Carman's strategy was partly to appeal to the court by challenging Goh's case, and partly to appeal to international opinion (and to liberal opinion within Singapore) by setting the case in the context of the pattern of the government's dealings with opposition figures. According to Carman, Goh's claim that his reputation had suffered was not only contrived, but it fitted a pattern of government behaviour that had generated a 'climate of fear' in Singapore.

The tension within the trial was generated by these two overlapping strategies, and on a couple of occasions the conflict between them brought an uncomfortable moment in the courtroom. At one point Carman, insisting on his right to put his case to Goh in the witness stand, said to the judge: 'The assertions are made against my client. Is he not allowed to defend himself against them? Am I not allowed to put his case to this witness? Is that what you want me to do in Singapore?'

Carman, as he later said himself, was simply doing a 'job of work' in the courtroom, attacking the motives of the plaintiff as effectively as he knew how. But there was a whiff of the old colonial relationship there that provoked the Prime Minister and may well have annoyed the judge.

In tactical terms, Carman might have overplayed his hand.

But the real source of those awkward moments in court is the PAP government, still in the grip of Lee Kuan Yew's take-no-prisoners style. Post-colonial Singapore adopted many of the institutions of the British system—parliament, the legal system and the judiciary—but those institutions have been distorted by one-party rule.

As we heard during Goh's testimony, this means that complaints made to the police about government figures can be in the hands of the subjects of the complaint within a couple of hours. It means that confidential parliamentary documents are freely distributed by the executive. And it means—as Goh freely admitted in court—that voters can be threatened by a brutal choice: vote for the opposition or vote for improvements to your apartment block, but don't expect both.

AROUND THE CORNER from the High Court, at the National Museum of Singapore, is a new exhibition called *From Colony to Nation*, a celebration of the island's often-extraordinary history since 1937. When I made a quick visit to the museum during an adjournment of the trial, I was pulled up by one striking exhibit. A television screen shows Lee Kuan Yew weeping in response to Singapore's expulsion from the Malaysian Federation in August 1965; finally he asks the interviewer, 'Would you mind if we stopped for a while?'

Repeated over and over, the footage offers a puzzle to the visitor: are we being invited to consider a different side of the tough Senior Minister, the man whose fingerprints, nearly forty years after he became Prime Minister of an island still controlled from London, can still be seen all over Singapore?

One of the messages coming from that television screen is the same one that Lee Kuan Yew repeated, over and over, during his prime ministership. Singapore is physically small, has few natural resources and a population smaller than Victoria's. Union with Malaysia back in 1963 offered the security of size. 'Nobody in his senses believes that Singapore alone, in isolation, can be independent,' remarked a Ministry of Culture booklet in 1960. Singapore (or at least Lee Kwan Yew and his supporters) felt vulnerable, politically

and economically, and the internal ideological and racial tensions that had hastened the split from Malaysia added to the threat of instability.

Vulnerability became one of the great themes of Lee Kuan Yew's government. The feeling of economic vulnerability translated into policies to create a disciplined, coöperative workforce and promote export-oriented industrialisation. The fear of internal unrest brought on measures calculated to suppress parliamentary opposition, as well as tight control of the media and an obsessive intolerance of dissenting opinion.

Oddly, despite Singapore's great economic success and its internal orderliness, these fears still seem to motivate the leaders of the PAP. Or perhaps the theme of vulnerability has become a way for the PAP to express its distrust of the electorate. There were signs of a thaw in 1991, when Lee moved into the new position of Senior Minister and Goh Chok Tong became Prime Minister, promising 'a more accommodative and participatory style of government'. But with a new generation of voters showing increasing signs of interest in the opposition parties, Goh showed during the election campaign last December and January that he was prepared to use the techniques refined by his predecessor.

The personal attacks on opposition candidates and the threats to voters took their toll. The editor of the *Straits Times*, a paper that almost invariably supports the government, is among those who have written about the implications of Goh's brutal appeal to voters' material interests.

Although it's impossible to trace a direct relationship with the government's conduct, one in five Singaporeans told a recent survey that they would like to live somewhere else. The PAP's tactics will only aggravate the sense of alienation suggested by that figure, and will work against Singapore adapting itself to a more difficult economic environment in Southeast Asia. ■

Peter Brown is producer of ABC RN's *The National Interest*.

The judgment in this case was delivered as this issue went to press. Although PM Goh received \$20,000 in damages, the judge described his case as 'overstated', and was critical of the PM's solicitors.

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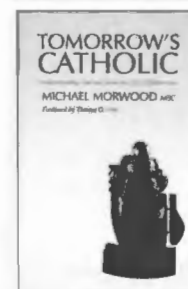
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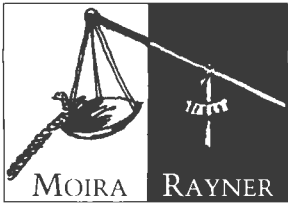
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Silence about the lambs

HOW DO YOU PROTECT YOUR CHILDREN from sex offenders? Teach them they have rights; that their body may be touched only with respect, and their permission. Treat them so they expect to be taken seriously, and listened to. Do not assume that family, friends, and pillars of the community would not harm your child. Do not discipline your children by force or fear. Train them to object to being hit, hurt, or subjected to unwanted caresses, from anyone—police, priest or principal.

At most, only about 20 per cent of known sexual exploiters of children are 'strangers'. Most are fathers, siblings, extended family and people known and trusted by both the child and usually *her*, (much less often *his*), parents. Pædophiles are often kind, respectable people whom children are taught to obey. They are not gay men, who are attracted to other gay men, nor dirty-old-men-in-raincoats—very few pædophiles loiter around playgrounds and public lavatories. They eat dinner at your table, teach Sunday School or swimming, drive buses and baby-sit. They are your friends.

We would prefer not to believe this. Evil strangers and pædophile rings protected by high personages are easier to deal with than the worm in our hearts. So it was that many, including the prurient and conspiracy theorists, were upset and disappointed when Justice Wood released his *Pædophile Report*, on 26 August, and failed to name names. There was no one to pillory but ourselves.

Woods warned at the start of the public hearings of his Inquiry into corruption in the NSW Police, in March 1966, that we would be shocked by the pædophile evidence. We were more shocked about official callousness. Police didn't charge a Catholic schoolteacher, though they possessed video tapes of his squalid activities with crying little boys. Child protection authorities didn't dismiss 'T7', a senior welfare officer, accused by ex-wards of sexual misconduct, because they respected his industrial rights. He told the Inquiry that by accessing Department of Community Services files, he had tracked down a former ward and paid him for sex: he was also running a pornographic mail order business.

The *Report* was scathing. Children were unprotected because officials were careless, jealous, defensive and cowardly. Services for abused children were grossly under-resourced. Their staff were untrained. Agencies with child protection and investigation responsibilities were inept, aloof, fought over 'turf', and largely refused to admit their staff could do any wrong. Mandatory reporting laws were largely ignored by teachers and principals—not that reporting to a flabby child protection service would have done much good.

Worst of all, deference to authority figures both discouraged children from complaining, and ensured that the abusers of their trust were protected, especially within church authorities, by 'less than thorough or impartial' police investigators.

The *Report's* 140 recommendations were scrappily reported. Many journalists highlighted a few controversial, and largely symbolic, proposals, such as a national 'pædophile register' (very popular in the tabloids); lowering the age of consent to homosexual acts between males, and the civil liberties implications of checking employment records of workers with children.

Disgracefully, the most damning finding dropped off the front pages within 48 hours, testimony to community and institutional

hypocrisy. Despite myriad reports and promises, every single agency responsible for managing child sexual abuse in NSW had mealy-mouthed, and failed to deliver on, a commitment to inter-agency coöperation.

Wood recommended, and the Carr government is expected to announce in mid-September that it will create a new, powerful, Children's Commission to deal with this. The resources of the NSW Community Service Commissioner, and the Child Protection Council, will be used to support it.

Let us consider the mission of this new Commission. To begin, it should be recalled that Roger West, NSW's Community Services Commissioner, was charged by Premier Carr, in early 1996, with the job of informing every State ward of his/her rights to complain about sexual abuse. He was given no additional resources for this, didn't complete the job, and incurred the Minister's displeasure for publicly raising both facts.

Neither West's Commission nor the Child Protection Council will have the role Wood describes:

to monitor and advise on the performance of the relevant departments and agencies involved in child protection, to assist in policy development, to collect intelligence, to assist in the dissemination of information concerning suspected child abuse and offenders, and to perform an important role in making administrative decisions as to whether persons working, or seeking work in positions involving close contact with children, are suitable for that purpose. (Para 20.17)

because, according to Wood, the Community Services Commission 'covers other matters than child protection,' (why couldn't a specialist division be established and resourced?) and because the Council 'lacks statutory authority' (which it could have been given).

INSTEAD, WEST'S JURISDICTION IN CHILD PROTECTION, and his resources, are proposed to be handed to the Children's Commission. The Child Protection Council's secretariat would be shifted to the Commission ('to preserve its special expertise'), but the Council will disappear, as will the Community Services Commission if it appears to lack sufficient residual responsibility to justify its retention. Wood suggests its remaining functions—disability services, particularly—and budget should pass to the Ombudsman. That office seems remarkably unsuited to such investigations.

The relatively new (April 1996) Office of Children and Young People, close to the Premier, will apparently remain and perform its policy advisory role. Given reputed disagreements over 'turf' between that Office and the Child Protection Council, and the Children's Commission's broad-ranging responsibilities—set out below—this could result in border skirmishes between the two young agencies.

The proposed Children's Commission would report to Parliament. Its three divisions would be:

- a Centre for Child Protection, which would coöperate child protection agencies' activities, carry out research, training and community awareness programs;
- an Employment Information Centre. This would issue 'unacceptable risk' certificates in relation to offenders wishing to



work with children (the Commission's own staff would be subject to an external checking process); and

- an Investigation and Review Unit would monitor systemic issues, complaints about children's care and protection, and review foster or substitute care as well as backing up the Employment Information Centre's work.

As well, a Children's Commissioner would lead the new body: a 'Special Guardian' for children in care; with the right to take matters to the Children's Court, and to report to Parliament if police commitment to child protection flagged, or if inter-agency coöperation or resources were inadequate for child protection.

This prescription does not quite fulfil the hopes of those who have long advocated for a 'Children's Commissioner'. Children have more than a right to be rescued and helped to recover from exploitation or abuse. Their interests must be first in government priorities. But though Australians hold dear a warm and fuzzy vision of 'the family' we do not care to commit sufficient resources to protect its most vulnerable members. We love children but fear that to acknowledge, and teach them that they have, 'rights', will take away parental authority: yet without such self-confidence any child is a sitting duck in a sexual predator's sights.

The *Paedophile Report* recommendations posit a Children's Commission preoccupied with sniffing out that tiny proportion of potential sexual abusers of children who are strangers to them. It would be primarily concerned with children already damaged by *sexual* exploitation, with less emphasis on the far more common physical and emotional maltreatment, and neglect.

Our moral obligation is to prevent child abuse by promoting child and family well-being. The proposed Commissioner has no explicit responsibility to persuade governments to give primacy to every child's right to a decent life, and to see that this is not denied by niggardly community services; poverty, homelessness, isolation, lack of support, or inadequate parenting skills.

The integrity and personal qualities of that Commissioner will determine whether the Commission is for children or, five years down the track, just another child protection scandal.

Commission with care, Mr Carr. ■

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Hidden seeds of destruction

UNLIKE SOME OTHERS OF ITS ILK, the school had not rushed headlong into computers. Sure, there were several computers around for the students to use, but until the last year or two there seemed little serious effort to introduce all students to the information revolution. One of the reasons became clear at a recent speech night. During the evening—at which considerable expenditure on a network of computers for the school was announced—the principal made her disquiet about computers clear. It was not a simple, Luddite distrust of technology. The reasoning was much more profound. She found the cold, solitary, unambiguous world of interaction with computers strangely out of place in a school community which unashamedly worked at civilising and humanising students. In short, she felt that the old virtues of teaching the humanities had been too easily discarded for the vocational advantages of teaching technology; that computer skills were easily acquired by educated people, social skills were not.

She has a point. Too easily in last gasp of the twentieth century, we have lost sight of the fact that science is a tool, rather than an end in itself. We can use science to acquire and provide us with information and knowledge to make decisions, and technology to give us the power to put those decisions into action. But *we* still have to make those decisions.

In April 1993, more than 400,000 people in the city of Milwaukee, Wisconsin became ill with diarrhoea. About 4,400 were admitted to hospital. And at least 69 people, most of whom were HIV positive, died. It was the largest outbreak of waterborne disease in US history. The finger was pointed at poor operation of a water treatment plant which became overloaded with dirty, contaminated water from an unusually large spring thaw into Lake Michigan. Less than a year later, 103 people in Las Vegas contracted severe diarrhoea. By May 1995, at least 41 of them had died. Once again, almost all were HIV positive. Once again, studies linked the disease with drinking water. But this time, there was no obvious reason for what had happened. The water supply authority was using the latest equipment, and drawing its water from a relatively clean reservoir.

Both outbreaks were caused by an enigmatic, microscopic, single-celled animal or protozoan, known appropriately as *Cryptosporidium* ('hidden seed'). At present, there is no simple, straightforward, unequivocal test for it, either in water or people. It is a parasite of the gut and infects people by means of its tiny eggs which can pass through all but the finest filters and survive in a chlorinated swimming pool. They can also be encountered in food or in nappies at the daycare centre as well as in water. Noöne knows for sure what the most common source is. For the vast majority of people *Cryptosporidium* is not much of a problem. It is a bug that makes life unpleasant until the immune system eradicates it within five to 10 days. But in those severely affected by HIV or who are undergoing treatment, such as chemotherapy, which suppresses their immune system profoundly, it's a different story. *Cryptosporidium* can become chronic and lethal. There are no known antibiotics and no vaccine against it. At present, according to the experts, the number of people at risk in Melbourne amounts to about one in 5,000.

To eliminate *Cryptosporidium* from drinking water is expensive. At the very least, you have to pass large volumes of water through very fine filters. Just last year, for several reasons (not just *Cryptosporidium*) Sydney installed such a system at a cost of \$500,000,000. Melbourne's catchments are more highly protected than those supplying Sydney, and its water is largely unfiltered. So there you have the science of what we know. But someone still has to make a decision. Should Melbourne filter its water supply for the one in 5,000? Ultimately humans have to decide when the benefits outweigh the costs. Scientific method is only a tool to help us make that decision. ■

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Four just men

Brothers To Us: The Story of a Remarkable Family's Fight Against Apartheid, Kristin Williamson, Viking, 1997. ISBN 0670876569 RRP \$24.95

CHRISTIANITY IN SOUTH AFRICA has a complex record. For a long time the Dutch Reformed Church endorsed apartheid, while the former regime always claimed to uphold religious values and promoted what it termed Christian National Education. But well before the end, even Afrikaner clergy such as Beyers Naudé turned round and attacked the system. Some people in the English-speaking churches had been doing so for years: Desmond Tutu represents a black modulation of a tradition of political dissent which goes back a century or more, via Trevor Huddleston to Bishop Colenso. These figures are all Anglicans: the essentially civic nature of that creed, which in South Africa as elsewhere could lead to its enfeeblement, could also under the apartheid regime insist on a direct connection between personal faith and public citizenship. A residual Gladstonian liberalism could become applied Christian ethics.

It was not always enough, of course. In South Africa the word 'liberal' is as much a smear-word as 'intellectual' can be in Australia. Indeed the Watson brothers, the subject of Kristin Williamson's book, dismiss white liberals unequivocally: 'When push comes to shove', said Valence Watson, 'they back down. They all act as if they are anti-government because of the wrongs committed, but when you ask them to do something concrete about it, they back away.'

The Watsons' faith was fiercer, more linear, perhaps even more autochthonous, germinated on the veld on a property run by God-fearing parents, one of whom was a lay preacher. (Williamson has the characteristic Australian impulse to marginalise religion, so we do not know the denomination, and are left to assume it was more traditional than the Pentecostalism Cheeky Watson

now ardently espouses.) Black farmhands were not only treated decently, but given a share of the profits, much to the intense dislike of the neighbouring Afrikaners. The four boys learned Xhosa even before they had mastered English, and in an inchoate way realised as soon as they left the farm for boarding school that they were out of joint with society.

Their bonding as brothers seems to have grown enormously in consequence. Thanks to their gifted rugby-playing, they almost came to run Graeme College as though it were a one-party state, and as schoolboy heroes, developed the inspiriting quality they took with them wherever they went. In the Army, Valence Watson was eventually able to persuade his platoon not to take up arms against the blacks, while when much later they were jailed in one room with 26 others, including three murderers and the inevitable security policemen, they were soon organising prayer meetings. As successful businessmen, they were reputed to pray before opening and closing their shop. Their faith was rock solid, and gave them certainty where others feared to tread; some saw it as arrogance. Getting to heaven may even have been an

explicit, small-business type objective, but so too was the injunction to set an example to others. In a country soaked with Christian rhetoric, firm insistence on that faith could sometimes stop evil in its tracks. A menacing phone caller threatening the children was bravely told by one of the wives that they would come to no harm, since they were covered by the blood of Christ. There was no answer to that.

Such deeply-felt Christianity, Williamson shows, is the explanation for the conundrum which seems to have sustained her interest. What was it that led these four brothers, who 'had everything white South Africa had to offer—wealth, fame, good looks, female adulation and male respect', to side so emphatically with the blacks, and at such great cost to themselves?

WILLIAMSON PACES HER NARRATIVE well, and drawing on extensive interviews, reveals how there was also a transparent quality about the Watsons' faith. It was so ardent and so defined it could be manipulated, and was. An ANC activist, Mono Badela, had been watching them for

some time, when one day, after having been to their store a few times, he threw out a challenge—to their faith and their skills. Why didn't they come to the African townships, and coach teams there? It was something they could do. Naïvely believing that much could be absolved by such Christian gestures, the Watsons agreed. Soon Badela was suggesting they watch games, and then that they play in one. Inevitably they agreed to that too.

Although there were no repercussions from an up-country mixed-race rugby match, the first ever played in South Africa, the apartheid state was not prepared to tolerate one in a city like Port Elizabeth. There was an attempt to



Ronnie Watson and Archie Mkele outside court after Valence's conviction for arson and fraud, 1987. Photo: Colin Urquhart, Weekend Post.

bribe Cheeky Watson, the star among the brothers, with a soft job as an army rugby instructor. On the appointed day, a cabinet minister came on the radio to warn white players against participating, while the police turned up in armoured cars. The Watsons managed to avoid them and duly played. Their lives would never be the same again.

Cheeky had been all set up to become a member of the Springbok team; that prospect now vanished. But that was merely the beginning of it. Friends, even relatives, melted away; so too did a good deal of white custom. Black custom went too, in the second big boycott against white-run businesses.

There was also to be the whole repertoire of threats and minor persecutions, together with arson and all-out murder attempts against the brothers. If one says it was a miracle they came through alive, the word is not used altogether loosely: they were subjected to every conceivable trial (including a trumped-up one). Their faith, supplemented by family solidarity, kept them going.

As did an increasing commitment to the liberation struggle. The brothers became ANC activists, a fact they withheld for a long time even from their wives. While they still had it, they poured their money into the cause, hid people on the run, even used their shop as a field hospital to remove shotgun pellets from people wounded in demonstrations. Yet the government did not charge them with being members of a banned organisation, even though it could have put them away for ten years. It was known how popular they had been, and it was not seen to be advantageous to reveal to the public that prominent whites were now active members of the ANC.

THE PARTICULAR VILLAINS in all this are the security police. Apart from the serious crimes already referred to, no tactic was too low for them to engage in—the spreading of malicious rumours, the deliberate failure to call ambulances in the hope that enemies would die, the torture of witnesses so that they would give false evidence, and so forth. The totality of their opposition to any inter-racial amelioration is what comes through this narrative with frightening clarity.

Today, the white town of Port Elizabeth seems at one level as innocent as the Geelong it resembles, but Williamson gives us a glimpse of former operatives sitting around glumly in seedy cafes. Her masterly account of a conversation with the former

local security head reveals his closed values, his sometimes surprising and sophisticated calculativeness, and his persistent grubby certainties.

This book originated in a film proposal—a number of film proposals, in fact. It is a great pity that none of them got up, since this is less likely now. Since it is such a striking example of the radicalisation of ordinary people, Williamson understandably could not let the story go.

Her book, as John Pilger implies in his foreword, is a good example of journalism as the first draft of history. It may not have breadth, and there are a number of small mistakes. But *Brothers To Us* does have clarity and urgency. At times it reads like a thriller, and should prove of lasting value to anybody interested in South Africa. ■

Jim Davidson teaches a course on the Rise and Fall of Apartheid at Victoria University of Technology.

BOOKS: 2

GREG DENING

Beside the seaside

Kostka: Xavier by the sea, Helen Penrose and Catherine Waterhouse, The Eldon Hogan Trust, Melbourne, 1997. ISBN 0 646 32444 6

FATHER WILLIAM HACKETT left two gifts to Catholic Melbourne. One was the Central Catholic Library. The archives of its lending cards, displaying who read what through the 1930s and 1950s, show how rich a gift it was. It was apologetic, of course, but, like Father Hackett himself, adventurous in exploring the broadest heritage of Catholic thought.

I remember once riding a bicycle with others beside Father Hackett, he in a horse-and-trap, from Corpus Christi to the top of the You Yangs. It was after Christmas Midnight Mass and he had agitated us to go with him to see the sunrise over Port Phillip Bay from the mountain top. He talked G.K. Chesterton, Dorothy Day and Irish history all the way.

Father Hackett left another gift, a special sort of Jesuit school, Kostka Hall. *Kostka: Xavier by the sea* is a history of that school from its beginning till the withdrawal of the last Jesuit in residence in 1994. It is published by the Eldon Hogan Trust.

Xavier by the sea begins on the Feast of the Dedication of St Peter and Paul, 18 November 1936. Father Hackett was saying mass for the first time in the house which he, as Rector of Xavier College had found and bought as Xavier's Preparatory School. Mass for him was a wriggling, writhing dance as he arched his shoulders back and exploded his Irish-accented Latin over the missal. It was a splendidly symbolic moment for him. He had often said Mass conspiratorially and secretly in Black-and-Tan Ireland. Now on a starched waxy cloth for a temporary altar stone, on a table for an

altar, in the beautiful bay window of the parlour at Maritima, he would have enjoyed the ironies of the Introit—*Hoc est locum terribile*, 'This is a terrible place'. He had searched high and low for this place and felt he had triumphed in securing Maritima, 'By the Sea', the long-time residence of the famous Professor of Natural History at The University of Melbourne, Professor Frederick McCoy. Father Hackett's long-time friend, Archbishop Daniel Mannix would have enjoyed his triumph too. Kostka would raise the Catholic flag in rich Protestant Brighton. He would have been sure to have had something sharp to say over another possible site, overlooking Caulfield race-course.

William Hackett was a maverick Rector of Xavier College. He had little time for the notion of a Public School. He had little or no interest in sport or money. The 'old boys' would never really forgive him for that. His educational ambitions were all for the mind, the spirit and the heart. But he did laugh at his own entrepreneurial acumen in purchasing Kostka. He bought Maritima and its six acres just a few steps away from Brighton beach for £20,000 over twenty years—£1000 a year. And almost immediately he bought an acre beside it with its large riot of a Tudor house for £4000. This 'terrible place' would make a wonderful school.

And Kostka did make a wonderful school. For all the apocryphal belief about what the Jesuits could do if only they had a seven-year-old boy under their influence, they were not very good with small boys.

That is my prejudice at least, take it for what it's worth. They tended to think that primary education was just secondary education writ small. Their energies were too exhausted with discipline and institutional face to be patient and imaginative with the really young. Where the priesthood was an asset of extraordinary value among older boys because it allowed them to counsel understandings of how morality and spirituality really work, the simplicities of small boys were just too complex.

At Kostka it was different. One of the many graces of Helen Penrose's and Catherine Waterhouse's history is that they show how Kostka was different. There are not many school histories that capture a sense of place as well as they have. They do

it with a brilliant selection of visual records. More importantly they weave into the narrative of their research the memories of hundreds of boys and teachers. By a simple device of setting the memories in a distinctive font, they create a sense of immediacy and presence for those they interviewed.

These two women's skills in re-creating the school obviously does not come from experiencing it. They are not 'old boys' after all. It is patent that they are good listeners. Oral history is a tough task. The interviewees easily stiffen with the expectancy of what should be said, or of what is 'true' history. It is a good oral historian who allows the interviewees to be themselves.

Their essential thesis about Kostka is

that the location, the character of the original and continuing Jesuits, the humanity of the lay staff, the freedom that distance from the 'big school' allowed them, gave a familial, not an institutional, character to the school. I am sure that characterisation is a compliment any school would like to have made about it. For Kostka it is well deserved.

I have another thesis to add to theirs, though: from the beginning William Hackett's spirit hovered over the school, impishly no doubt, always ensuring that there was no contradiction between faith and humane education. ■

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BOOKS: 3

JAMES GRIFFIN

The great incorrigible

Abiding Interests, Gough Whitlam, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, Queensland, 1997. ISBN 07022 2879 6 RRP \$29.95

HAVING ONCE HAD A GLASS OF water dashed in his face in Parliament by Gough Whitlam, Sir Paul Hasluck might have been expected to turn a baleful gaze on him in his posthumously published *The Chance of Politics* (1997), a portrait gallery of his contemporaries. In fact, Hasluck is not ungenerous, even if, as usual, determined never to be too impressed. Writing in 1975 before the Kerr 'king hit', Hasluck wonders that Whitlam could have been 36 when he entered Parliament and all of 56 when he became Prime Minister:

'It had always been characteristic of Whitlam to act younger than his age ... not that he is intellectually immature or that his development has been in any way retarded but that he still takes the role of "the bright boy of the family".'

This is as true of the octogenarian Gough today as it was a half century ago.

This lively if cluttered miscellany of the great man's 'abiding interests' has one supervening preoccupation: to demonstrate that the great man has almost always been right. One says 'almost' because Whitlam does express an odd regret at having let his tongue overrule his tact. It was not the occasion when he reduced Garfield Barwick

to tears of frustration, triumph though that was, but it was 'cruel' of him to call the future Chief Justice 'a truculent runt'. Another man might simply record regret at using unparliamentary language but Gough finds it reprehensible 'in view of my height'!

When Whitlam entered Parliament, says Hasluck, he was 'a real smarty pants' with 'a good memory, a wide range of information and a ready tongue'. But Hasluck warmed to 'the quickness of his mind and his good-humoured observations' even about himself, 'his courtesy and attention to his duties', and 'the favourable impression both of himself and of Australian public life he generated overseas'. Hasluck might have added the vision that Whitlam brought to resurrecting the Labor Party, to international issues such as the recognition of Red China, Aboriginal land rights, and education and health policies, even if he could not co-ordinate a cabinet, or pay his bills, or resist parading overseas when his home turf needed him.

Naturally enough, although his rage at Kerr's coup has not been maintained, his scorn for the events of 1975 has, especially in view of the publication of Barwick's *A Tory Radical* (1995). The first two chapters,

a 'review of' and 'clues to' the coup continue Whitlam's apologia. He reduces Barwick's constitutional view to absurdity: obviously the Chief Justice thought that, without control of the Senate, there was no right to govern.

In practice, this would have stultified government in Australia. Whitlam persists with his conviction that the crisis was a *political* not a *constitutional* one in 1975. Given a little more time, the Senate would have capitulated. The evidence is not conclusive either way. However, while excoriating Barwick for giving Kerr advice at all, Whitlam ignores the fact that Sir Anthony Mason, whom he admires, did so too. To his credit, Whitlam sees no need—and never has—to suspect a CIA conspiracy.

Chapters three and four are concerned with the 'Legacy of Empires' in Asia and Europe respectively. Here not all readers will think Whitlam as free of 'distorted memories and compressed chronologies ... selective amnesia and selective animosities' as he thinks they should be. He offers a plausible exculpation of his alleged role in encouraging Indonesia to annex East Timor. However, he still thinks that economic non-viability is an argument against

independence and that annexation was inevitable. Mercifully, he no longer calls the Fretilin élite 'mixed breeds' with an anti-Iberian prejudice that goes back to his anti-Franco, anti-Salazar youth.

Whitlam's bias against small polities is all too evident in his glib reference to the Bougainville 'problem' to which he believes he had a solution. He seems to believe that Bougainville was somehow not an integral part of German New Guinea over which Australia was granted a mandate after World War I. He prides himself on having raised 'the possibility of amalgamating the British Solomon Islands Protectorate and PNG' with (Sir) Michael Somare in January 1973, thereby apparently solving the 'problem' of Bougainville secession. Without prejudice to Whitlam's judgment in precipitating early independence in PNG, this incident illustrates his sciolism in matters Melanesian. If there was a facile solution to the Bougainville 'problem' it lay in transferring Bougainville to a separate Solomon Islands archipelagic state, not in overextending PNG further.

At the time Whitlam was also saying that Bougainville was 'ethnically' part of the Solomons archipelago when this is true only of the Western Solomons. The substantial population of Malaita, for example, are as distinct in culture and colour from Bougainvilleans as any PNG mainlanders.

WHAT WHITLAM'S suggestion, repeated in London in April 1973, did was to stir up nationalism in BSIP. Not so strangely, its politicians did not want to be part of PNG but Whitlam had not bothered to consult them. His misconceptions were corrected in *Australian Outlook* (December 1973) but he continues to repeat them.

The chapter on Europe deals with the break-up of Yugoslavia. Quoting Colin Powell he sees 'the biggest mistake' there in the 'recognition of all these little countries when they started to decide they were independent'. Multicultural Australia's opinion-makers failed 'to make a positive contribution' to Yugoslavia's dilemmas because only:

The merest handful of them would have understood words such as patriarch, exarch

or metropolitan, ecumenical, uniate or autocephalous, *ex cathedra in partibus* or *filioque* which are basic to the understanding of Europe between the Baltic and the Balkans.

Somehow, however, his insight into the Baltic states (Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia) let him down in 1974, when he recognised, without consulting Cabinet or Caucus, their *de jure* incorporation into the USSR. Apparently there were three reasons: their size; they were 'all fascists', he said, in the 1930s (cf the Portuguese in Timor); and he wanted red carpet treatment in Moscow



The Chief Justice and the Prime Minister at the High Court site, September 29, 1975.

(See *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, April 1979). This decision was reversed by Fraser soon after his election and rejected by Labor as soon as Whitlam retired in 1977. How silly would we have looked today with the breakup of the Soviet empire!

The rest of the book is a medley of advocacies relating to the United Nations as our best guarantor of 'national independence and national identity', land rights, labour standards, the environment, health standards, the republic, the flag, the national infrastructure, equal suffrage, railway gauges and even interstate fire-hose couplings. Inevitably for a fellow of salacious wit 'a straight-faced Liberal minister' is

quoted in the 'End-Notes' on the incompatibility of some 'female' and 'male' apparatus until Malcolm Fraser 'toys with an hermaphrodite coupling'. Carmen Lawrence's Attorney-General in Western Australia in 1990, Joe Berinson, is 'Carmen's José'.

Abiding Interests will become a source book of Whitlamania, a supplement to his apologia, *The Whitlam Government 1972-1975* (1985). A psycho-biographer will have fun. The marvellous thing is that everything hangs out, the quirks and the 'clarities'. Could any professed egalitarian be less of a literary leveller than our Gough, forever airing arcane genealogies, and knowledge of titles, honours, orders of precedence and historical corrigenda. Our Queen's grandmother, on the basis of one mention in an 'End note', is indexed as:

Mary (Victoria Mary Augusta Louise Olga Pauline Claudia Agnes), Queen Consort of the United Kingdom of Great Britain, Ireland and British Dominions beyond the seas, Empress of India.

And did you know that Amanda Eloise Vanstone's 'first [sic] stepfather' was a certain J. F. Brazel who assisted the Rupert Max Stuart Royal Commission in 1959? The zest for gossip is stupefying. More rewarding are the japes and pleasantries. Geoff Muntz, a former Minister for Corrective Services, represented Queensland before the World Heritage Bureau. He was not 'a subtle lobbyist': he invited the Muslim members out for a beer. His description of Whitlam as 'the Castro of the Pacific' also fell flat. When a decision affecting him was made he was 'out to a long lunch'.

Gough notes that Muntz returned to Corrective Services after being convicted for misappropriating funds.

And then there was the time Gough and Margaret entertained the Prime Minister of Swaziland to dinner. Returning from farewelling him, they found his press secretary had 'passed water in full view' of the guests. Gough dismissed the solecism 'as another press leak'.

Whatever about his corrigenda, Gough himself is incorrigible; he deserves to have the last word. ■

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Tix in the sticks

MANY PEOPLE might have the impression that professional theatre in Australia is entirely a major metropolitan phenomenon. It is true that the majority of professional theatre activity occurs in the main capital cities, but there have been, since the late 1970s, professional theatre companies in many of our larger non-capital cities, especially in New South Wales.

In fact, during the heyday of the development of professional regional theatre in the mid-1980s, there were fifteen more or less full-time professional companies, stretching from Townsville in the north to Geelong in the south and as far west as the Eyre Peninsula. There were a further eight young people's theatre companies in non-capital cities. Some have since folded, but there are still about ten regional adult companies, at least nine young people's companies and a further three or four organisations, such as Theatre North in Launceston and Northern Rivers Performing Arts in Lismore, which occasionally create their own productions but mainly host shows under the auspices of Playing Australia or the states' various arts touring programmes.

These don't include the numerous regional arts centres or civic theatres in cities such as Bunbury, Townsville, Newcastle, Geelong and Renmark. Through their various networks like NARPACA (Northern Australian Regional Performing Arts Centres Association) and ANAPAC (Association of NSW and ACT Performing

Arts Centres), these are essentially receivers of other people's goods. The richly refurbished Civic Theatre in Newcastle, for example, runs a subscription season correctly boasting 'the best of Sydney theatre', while the Geelong Performing Arts Centre offers its subscribers the pickings of the annual seasons of Playbox, the Melbourne Theatre Company, the Sydney Theatre Company, Company Skylark and so on. This is not a new thing: as early as 1978, the new Townsville Civic Theatre offered its traditionally theatre-hungry citizens attractions as diverse as the Queensland Ballet, Brian May and the Melbourne Showband and Rolf Harris, plus theatre productions from Nimrod and the Adelaide Festival.

As Raymond Omodei once remarked, 'those outside the metropolis are entitled to their share of the entertainment/arts tax dollar', but the question is how to provide them with that share. The touring-from-head-office model seems to be increasingly favoured at present, but in the 1970s there was a strong mood in favour of regional production.

THE FIRST PROFESSIONAL theatre company of any longevity to be established outside an Australian capital city was the Hunter Valley Theatre Company (HVTC) which began in Newcastle in March 1976 with Terence Clark's production of John Romeril's *The Floating World*.

The Newcastle company's aim was to



Anthony Simcoe and Jenny V
Riverina Theatre Compa

maintain a full-time core acting company, but it was bedevilled by every possible problem. The HVTC had no home theatre, insufficient funding for a full year's work, no clear sense of how to be a regional company, little support from local business or the City Council—and a community perception that the company was imposed upon it by a Sydney entrepreneur with Sydney actors, money and director. In 1977 it had to lay off the company after only its third production, following losses on the first two.

In 1979, the City Council gave it the Wintergarden of the Civic Theatre to convert into a 190-seat theatre of its own (known as the Playhouse) at a diminished rent, although it still charged the full commercial rate for the larger Civic Theatre



Acrobatic in *Double Deception* for
my and Hothouse theatre.

where the company had to do its bigger 'money-making' musicals. The same year it had a promising hit with *Cabaret*, but it was not until 1981 that it could feel secure.

The main reason for this optimism was the world première of local writer John O'Donoghue's mighty play about the founder of BHP, *Essington Lewis: I Am Work*. The play has been revived with enormous success many times and has since been performed Australia-wide. And though the HVTC was in its usual state of financial crisis at the end of 1982, the fourth artistic director, Brent McGregor, managed to turn the company's fortunes around from 1983 onwards. But financial problems and some of the old problems of identity recurred in the mid-1990s—its landlord in the Civic Theatre was also its competitor for

audiences and product—and the company apparently disappeared in 1995. However, with the appointment of Ray Scanlan as Artistic Director last year, the HVTC seems to have made a shaky comeback, with a revival of *The Venetian Twins* in the Civic and yet another of *Essington Lewis*.

Other companies of slightly different kinds followed in NSW in the ensuing years. Victoria also joined the act when the Mill Community Theatre, a community activity of Deakin University, was established in Geelong in 1978; community/young people's touring companies Crosswinds and Four's Company began operations in Benalla and Ballarat respectively in 1979 and the Woolly Jumpers (a TIE company) followed suit in Geelong in 1980.

South Australia had Harvest Theatre Company, which began on the Eyre Peninsula in 1982 but later toured the state. Queensland's first regional company, New Moon, was also a prolific tourist; it began in Townsville in 1982, but its brief was to tour annually through Mackay, Rockhampton and Cairns. After it folded in 1990, more stationary organisations like Just Us Theatre Ensemble, Tropic Line and others have taken root in the far north.

For many reasons, the enthusiasm for regional companies has receded, especially in Victoria where Geelong's Back to Back and the MRPG are the only survivors. Competition from the head-office touring organisations is one reason; increased costs is another (it's a long time since any of these companies maintained a full-time acting troupe); a third is the old 'if it's local it can't be as good' syndrome. Those remaining companies have been forced to reinvent themselves in various ways, one of which is the practice of co-production, which gives each production additional life and helps amortise costs.

BUT THE 18-YEAR-OLD MRPG has sought a different route. As a community theatre, rather than a repertoire company, it has usually created its own works, often on local issues and identities, and presented them in community halls, clubs, on the road, in parks and gardens, and even on a Murray Riverboat. But its recent radical restructure has replaced a single artistic director with a 12-member directorate, who will each oversee one production over a three-year cycle. It also countenances some co-production with other regional companies, increasing reliance on extant and commissioned plays rather than the ensemble-devised shows of the past, a new

name (HotHouse Theatre) and a move into a fixed theatre venue for the first time.

The new venue is the old Butter Factory in the Gateway Village site on Lincoln Causeway, just on the Wodonga side of the border. It will seat about 200, and in a rare example of interstate co-operation, Arts Victoria and the Ministry for the Arts in NSW combined to award HotHouse an out-of-round capital grant to acquire and instal the seating, lighting and other equipment from the just-closed Napier St Theatre in South Melbourne. Both arts ministries—and the Theatre Fund of the Australia Council—continue to subsidise the company's artistic programme as well. Local support is also invaluable.

The broadly-based artistic directorate seems a good idea; artistic directors of regional companies have rarely lasted more than a couple of years before isolation and burn-out take over. A fixed home, however, is a mixed blessing. It certainly gives an organisation a clear identity, it enables it to develop far stronger production values and it can generate useful income from other hirers, but venue-management and maintenance can soak up creative energy and cash.

CHARLES PARKINSON and Fiona Barber share the task of HotHouse's general manager. Both are old hands at community and regional theatre and show energy and commitment to the new company. On the strength of its August production, *Double Deception*, the new HotHouse vision looks pretty plausible. *Double Deception* was a well-organised double bill of Sarah Vincent's extremely funny comedy of mistaken identity, revenge and deception, *Hey Jack*, and Kate Herbert's poignant drama of self-deception, *Hit and Run*.

Barber and Parkinson conducted intensive audience research in the lead-up to the change of identity. Respondents persistently said that they wanted to see productions their peers in Sydney and Melbourne could see every night of the week—and to the same standard of production values. They were tired of seeing group-devised shows about themselves, and the dangers of blue-green algae, in draughty halls. On the strength of *Double Deception*, I look forward with relish to Tes Lyssiotis's *Hotel Bonegilla* in the Butter Factory at the end of September. ■

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

FLASH IN THE PAN



Not boys in blue

Men in Black dir. Bob Sonnenfeld; (cinemas everywhere). Men in black are the stuff of urban myth, paranoid conjecture, of fears that were once of demons and witches, but are now of aliens and government conspiracies. Tales about them pop up from time to time in the *Fortean Times*, the American supermarket tabloids (whose investigative qualities are given mock deference by *Men in Black's* script) and of course *The X-Files*: if you are careless enough to be abducted by aliens, you can expect a visit from them, with their mysterious memory-vaporising gadget. Agents of the New World Order, black ops and dirty tricks, shielding the public from knowledge that would be disruptive—it all sounds as familiar as your morning cuppa now.

Men in Black is a bit of fun that takes all the detritus of this popular semi-consciousness concerning UFOs, alien abduction, bodysnatching et cetera and gives us a few chuckles about it. It portrays these figures of fear and loathing as likeable, in much the same way Clint Eastwood made you start cheering for trigger-happy cops in *Dirty Harry*: government agents are well-meaning and caring about the mental health of the general populace, no Cigarette-Smoking Man here. Tommy Lee Jones and Will Smith play the eponymous heroes, searching against the clock for a tiny missing galaxy to appease hostile aliens who will otherwise destroy the earth. (Maybe we can find one to give to native forest loggers.)

The movie has been tailored very obviously to its lucrative PG rating: no swearing, overt violence (though plenty is suggested), no sex. The costumes, with their waycool black sunglasses, make you think

of *The Blues Brothers*. There is an obvious effort to reproduce *Blues Bros* cult status without its depth of wit, observation and fabulous music. But it would be churlish to say there was nothing of value in *MiB*, it's just that its artistic and perceptual levels are closer to that of *Ghostbusters* than anything else: mostly some good belly laughs and plenty of slime. Nothing wrong with that, and a great relief to have something to take the ten-

year-olds to.

The best part of the whole film is the witty final coda, where the theme of the tiny galaxy is revisited in our terms: do we feel safe knowing that our entire universe is nestling in a bag of super-Broddingnagian marbles?

—Juliette Hughes

Past imperfect

Career Girls dir. Mike Leigh, (independent cinemas). It takes a long time to get to like Hannah and Annie. When they start sharing flats together as students in the late eighties, it's pretty clear that they each have a chip on their shoulder. Hannah (Katrin Cartlidge) comes from a troubled family and Annie (Lynda Steadman) has been scarred by appalling dermatitis. They develop alienating defence mechanisms; they are nervy, temperamental and fractious. They have aggressive ways of coping with the future, one way being to ask questions of 'Ms Brontë, Ms Brontë' and open a copy of *Wuthering Heights* at random. For all that, Hannah and Annie take under their wing an obese and equally nervous student of psychology called Ricky (Mark Benton) whose response to any emotional demand is to go downstairs to the Chinese fast food shop for more curry and chips.

The film tells the story of Hannah and Annie's student days against their reunion six years later when Annie spends a weekend in London. Mike Leigh's script does come up with one or two coincidences too many: the real estate agent who shows Hannah through a house happens to be a former boyfriend, they return to their old flat and find Ricky sitting there, still in emotional disarray. Leigh's characterisation occasionally has a cruel edge, but the point of this film is to celebrate the survival of

two awkward women and their unlikely friendship. They have reached thirty in reasonable shape. Hannah has gained better control of her wit, which she uses brilliantly against a coke-addict who has made money in futures and wants to sell them his apartment. Annie's skin has cleared up and her allergies are less dominant in her life.

Career Girls uses a technique familiar from Leigh's *Secrets and Lies*: the camera often stays more still than the people in focus. Shots linger at the end of a scene; the camera often holds a single position rather than follow characters. The result is a more gentle and thought-provoking experience than Hannah and Annie at first seem likely to offer.

—Michael McGirr SJ

To bee or not to bee

Ulee's Gold dir. Victor Nunez (independent cinemas). The quiet guts and determination of the lead character are this pic's heart and soul. Peter Fonda brings to *Ulee's Gold* an enigmatic strength that, although a perversion—he is emotionally withdrawn and stubborn—provides the anchor for the film and a family in turmoil.

Ulysses Jackson (Fonda) is a grandad left alone to support two young girls, the daughters of his jailed son, Jimmy (John Wood). The trio are deeply divided, the result of individual responses to personal loss: a man minus his wife, children abandoned by erratic parents and clearly without each other. They cohabit, submerged in the relative isolation of their distinct worlds: Ulee within a dogged work ethic; Penny in teenage rebellion; Jimmy confined by iron bars; his wayward wife, Helen, lost to the elements, and Casey, to

EUREKA STREET

THE FINAL FILM COMPETITIONS

The winner of the July/August competition, who remembered Elvis' cowboy career, was Bill Rouse, of Manly, NSW. The winner of the September competition was Pat Martinelli of Toorak Gardens, SA, who named Alfred Molina and Mia Kirshner as the actors playing Levin and Kitty in Bernard Rose's *Anna Karenina*. Next month: a new game.



the seeming powerlessness of childhood observation.

But the demands of cultivating *Ulee's Gold*—tupelo honey, the traditional Jackson trade which sustains what's left of the family and Ulee's sanity—brings a slight bond between Ulee and his youngest grandchild. Seeds of friendship also take root when their neighbour-tenant breaks through the staunchly self-reliant Jackson unit.

The drama of the story unfolds when a call from prison sets the reluctant Ulee a task of blood-ties and obligation, to rescue Jimmy's drug-riddled wife from the clutches of 'bad men'. Those 'bad men' and the loot from Jimmy's last heist give this small-town film its edge and tension. Their increasing proximity to danger forges some renewed family cohesion, previously frustrated by pain, though their recovery is subject to cinematic time constraints.

Ulee's Gold is a gritty portrayal of a family in crisis: intense, believable and moving. Ignore the boring title and potential bleakness. Take this journey: it is its own reward.

—Lynda McCaffery

A pub with no peer

Kiss or Kill dir. Bill Bennett (Independent Cinemas). This is not a comfortable film to watch. Nikki (Frances O'Connor) and Al (Matt Day) have a routine going whereby they lure businessmen into a trap, drug them and rob them. One time they accidentally kill their target. Wasting no time on sympathy, nor even on thinking through their predicament, they take to the road and head across the Nullarbor. Their only protection is the fact that they found a video in the hotel room of their victim which shows the legendary football star, Zipper Doyle (Barry Langrishe) engaged in child pornography. Doing little to cover their tracks, they put up at one of those outback motels which rates negative three stars on the day the bathrooms get cleaned and negative four the rest of the time. It's lucky for the proprietor, Stan (Max Cullen), that most of his patrons are unfussy eaters who don't mind their cheese fondue a little rough. Unluckily for him, the following morning finds his throat cut. The police are narrowing in. So is Zipper.

For much of the film, the audience is left to wonder whether Nikki or Al is a killer. Nikki wants to be. Her life has been traumatised by an experience as a child. As the number of bodies pile up, she is ready to

confess. 'I kill men,' she says. 'That's what I do.'

Kiss or Kill is a funny film, but the humour shares the same desperation as the characters whose story this film tells with limited compassion. Nikki and Al have a moment's triumph, but the triumph sees them cut adrift again with nowhere to go and, as the last scene makes abundantly clear, no one to trust. I may be taking the whole jaunt too seriously: *Kiss or Kill* is certainly worth more stars than the motel on the plain.

—Michael McGirr

White trash

My Best Friend's Wedding, dir. P.J. Hogan. (All cinemas). P.J. Hogan (of *Muriel's Wedding* fame) has chosen to head down the aisle one more time, marching lightly but hilariously to the strains of Burt Bacharach. It is hard to underestimate the popular power of a good Burt Bacharach number. *Do You Know The Way To San Jose* is certainly a hearty snack for the greediest and most discerning trash consumer. So, I might add, is *My Best Friend's Wedding*.

Julianne (Julia Roberts) and Michael (Dermot Mulroney) have been best friends since college. Making blood oaths, indulging in late-night phone marathons and sharing one another's daftest secrets has kept their friendship comfortably exclusive—until Michael decides to marry. News of the impending union plays merry hell with Julianne's heart and she responds by appointing herself head wedding-wrecker. But the bride-to-be, Kimmy Wallace (Cameron Diaz), despite looking remarkably like a butterfly cake, is far from being a pushover.

My Best Friend's Wedding is a wonderfully lightweight film, obstinately refusing to be dragged down by any feel-good nonsense. Despite being upstaged by her improbably gorgeous (not to mention enormous) hair, Julia Roberts manages to put in a very serviceable performance. But as is so often the case in romantic comedies, the finest performances are to be found outside the main coupling. In this case it's Rupert Everett as Julianne's gay friend George, and Cameron Diaz as Kimmy who really liven up proceedings. Given that both actors corner the opportunity to belt out a Bacharach classic it's hardly fair to compare them with those actors confined to speaking-roles. Everett's rendition of *I Say A Little Prayer* is all but sublime.

While *Muriel* gleefully transcended genres and tore up ideas of modern white weddings, *My Best Friend* is a little more traditional in its approach to this maddest of modern rituals. But be a guest at this event—even the most hardened cynic will titter.

—Siobhan Jackson

Paying dues

Doing Time for Patsy Cline dir. Chris Kennedy, (independent cinemas). Ralph (Matt Day) is an innocent boy from a far-away farm. His good old dad buys him an air ticket to fulfil his life-long dream of going to Nashville and making it big as a country and western performer. His good old mum gives him some good old advice. His dad cranks up the good old truck to take him as far as the road. From there, Ralph has to hitch to the airport.

Ralph doesn't need to get as far as Nashville to lose his innocence. He only has to get beyond the farm gate. He gets a lift with a shifty-looking pair in a smart Jaguar. Boyd (Richard Roxburgh) and Patsy (Miranda Otto) are running drugs. They are not the wholesome company Ralph is accustomed to keeping. The threesome stays for the night in an out of the way roadhouse which has run out of coffee because they've had a 'run on it.' This is a different establishment from the one that hosted Matt Day's performance in *Kiss or Kill*, but roadhouse proprietors must be nervous these days about when their turn will come to be hit by an Australian film crew. During the night, Patsy and Ralph discover a strange rapport as musicians. The next day, the police have been tipped off and Ralph and Boyd are taken into custody while Patsy makes her escape. Ralph takes the rap for Patsy. Try and work out why.

This is a difficult film to categorise because the motivations of the main characters are always just beyond the reach of your understanding. It is made even more elusive by what I took to be a recurring fantasy of Ralph's that he and Patsy make it as stars in Nashville. I could well be limited by my lack of appreciation of C&W and am happy to testify that a group in suede behind me in the cinema certainly enjoyed all the in-jokes. It is a good-natured and clever film in which Ralph is neatly returned to his original innocence. He consoles himself that at least he spent longer behind bars than Johnny Cash.

—Michael McGirr SJ



Parading a reign

THE PHONE RANG on the sunny September Saturday afternoon. 'Turn on Channel Nine now!' hissed my sister and hung up. Wondering if a relative was suddenly up for fifteen minutes' infamy, I switched on

and understood immediately. A shellac-smooth Miss America contestant was ululating enthusiastically, if inaccurately, through *Una voce poco fá*. Like the Oscars, Emmys, ARIAS (what a schemozzle *that* was), Baftas, Logies and Christmas, Miss (never Ms) America comes but once a year, thank God. But unlike the award shows, however, which beat Mogadon hands down, *Miss America* was fascinating and ought, like *Ricki Lake*, to be watched whenever we get too uppity about Western civilisation being the pinnacle of evolution.

Watching Miss North or South Dakota or Carolina assaulting Rossini reminded me of the famous saying about a dog talking; you marvel, not at what's said, but rather at its being said at all: a sop of middle-browery thrown into the stew of tat. Here be girls in their late teens and early twenties all got up like Ivana *before* she detrapped and got herself a stylist and some placcy surgery. Not that there wasn't a lot of silicon and collagen pouting one way or another on the stage. It reminded me of Dolly Parton's immortal words: 'It takes a whole lotta money to look this cheap.' Another contestant flourished and fangled through some short and showy Chopin. She was twenty-four and didn't have Big Hair. Not a chance, we thought, and we were right.

In the end the title was won by young amazon Kathy Shindle, who had bellowed 'Don't Rain On My Parade' with a hubristic brio that made Streisand's seem like the Christopher Hogwood version. La Shindle had a notable lack of eye contact with her gushy co-finalist as they waited for the decision—basic etiquette for the last two is to clasp like long-lost sisters as they await the verdict that consigns one of them to the mightabeen bin and the other to the Sultan of Brunei. Then it turned out in the papers next day that Poppa Shindle was on the board of Miss America, something that made his video clip wishing his daughter good luck seem more interesting in retrospect. No-one was *ever* gonna rain on her parade.

Big Events that drag you to the screen can have a cathartic effect: you totter away, your brain a referential maelstrom, ready for the gentler stimulus of the regular commentators on our society.

'This country I am come to conquer! Have you honours? Have you riches? Have you posts of profitable pecuniary emolument? Let them be brought forward. They are mine!'

—Wilkins Micawber, on his imminent remove to Australia.

Four Corners, that indispensable regular commentator, continues to do its job well after 37 years of tough investigative reporting. Sally Neighbour's September 22 documentary (produced by Janine Cohen) considering the five years of Kennett rule in Victoria caused a furore.

Mr Kennett himself guaranteed good ratings when he went on Neil Mitchell's morning program on 3AW and called the forthcoming episode 'an hour of slime'. A spokesperson at the ABC

was jubilant: 'He handed us the promo on a silver platter.'

Two of Neighbour's interviewees, ex-premier Sir Rupert Hamer, and David Edwards, CEO of the Victorian Employers' Chamber of Commerce and Industry, went into print and onto radio in the ensuing days to claim they had been quoted out of context. It's a pity, because Sir Rupert's statement on ethical business standards for people in political life was truly that of an elder statesman, redolent of the man's own wisdom and probity. Used as a counterpoint to an examination of Mr Kennett's share dealings it was dynamite, as was David Edwards' opinion that too much democracy was inefficient. Both men complained that there hadn't been enough on the earlier Kennett years, that there was too much negativity, that the share dealings affair was old news. But they were wrong: *Four Corners*' perspective was essential viewing, including as it did a major scoop and a crucial follow-up to the aftermath of the share deals controversy and its implications for free comment.

The scoop was Stephen Mayne's willingness to talk on the record about what he had observed as a trusted member of the Premier's staff. This was important: whistleblowers are few and more necessary here than in, say, the US. Australia's libel laws are draconian and not always conducive to the free flow of information that is in the public interest. In an age where the phones and bedrooms of the Prince and Princess of Wales were bugged and the resulting tapes used with impunity by the Murdoch press, it can often be extraordinarily difficult to obtain information about politicians' use of our taxes. So full marks to Neighbour, Cohen and their researchers.

COUPE NUMBER TWO WAS THE IMPORTANT follow-up to the original *Today Tonight* program that had tried to break the news of the Guangdong share deals. (Seven did eventually show it, but only after the newspapers broke the story.) It was illuminating, given how anodyne that program has become since then, to see that almost everyone involved in the story has been 'let go'. Jill Singer and the production staff at Seven were under enormous pressure not to offend Premier Kennett. Their small rebellion in announcing that the pulling of the story's was due to a 'senior management' decision rather than legal advice was met, one can only conclude, with sanctions that spelt the end of their careers on the channel. When one remembers what happened to Jana Wendt, it seems as though the last twelve months has been hard for investigative reporters on Seven.

So Neighbour and Cohen showed us more than a look at the actions of a very powerful politician; they showed us what happens when you try to be a tough investigative reporter anywhere but on the ABC. If you try on the commercial channels, the wages may be bigger, but it looks as though you're always going to run up against the agendas and interests of powerful proprietors who do business with the elected powers. At a time when the Freedom of Information legislation is being tightened even further in Victoria, programs like *Four Corners* are even more valuable. Someone has to keep raining on their parade. ■

Juliette Hughes is a freelance writer and reviewer.



Eureka Street Cryptic Crossword no. 57, October 1997

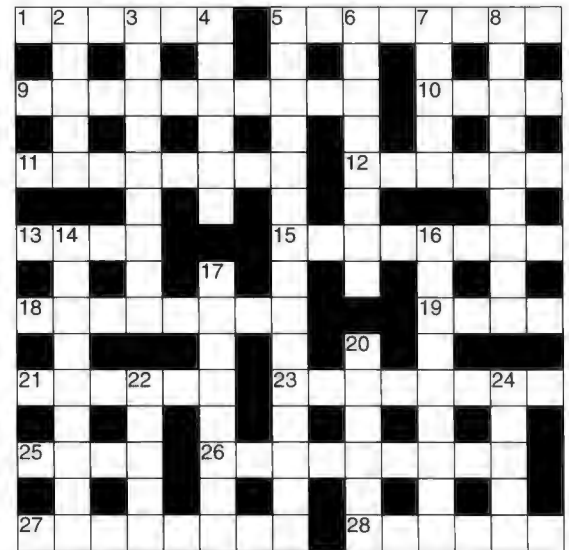
Devised by Joan Nowotny IBVM

ACROSS

1. Double current I at first thought led to a tree. (6)
5. The vegetables should be stored in a cool crib, perhaps. (8)
9. On holiday on a Greek island, let us sound out who wants to produce a Caesar salad. (3, 7)
10. Call the message boy! (4)
11. Some like to take a pot at old English servants for a start ... especially when they are in their jackets at table! (8)
12. Inducement for Bluey to move cart or dye hair another colour. (6)
13. Leaders of indigenous mobile people invade territory of Bantu warriors. (4)
15. South American capital has head related to 16-down. (4,4)
18. Unexpectedly the Cranes, involved with their bridge partners, were surveyors of the scene. (8)
19. Gemstone found on two unknown quantities. (4)
21. The fact that you could eat it belied unreal expectations. (6)
23. Gathering up livestock to find the approximate number. (8)
25. Fruit a mile away! (4)
26. Often a companion to 11-across—rather bitter but the best there is. (4,5)
27. Carries on remorselessly to press its somewhat dubious point. (8)
28. It's important for him to be sincere without a doubt! (6)

DOWN

2. Choice vegetable is a knock-out, without ice. (5)
3. Serve a light meal to that *numero uno*, tall, commanding officer, returning over there. (9)
4. Throw coin at busker, for example, for his performance. (6)
5. City's growth's an ingredient, of course! (8,7)
6. Arrive after a spell of bowling, deeply affected by it all! (8)
7. Recap mad frolic round the shrub. (5)
8. A line under many a Roman soldier. (9)
14. I once made a mixture of diced vegetables. (9)
16. Inferior route could be an acceptable choice for the course. (5,4)
17. Setbacks experienced about the poems. (8)
20. Who in France would invite a revolutionary to eat this? Not a real man, surely! (6)
22. Sounds superior to the red or silver varieties. (5)
24. 'Rings' possibly means 'calls' in America. (5)



Solution to Crossword no. 56, September 1997



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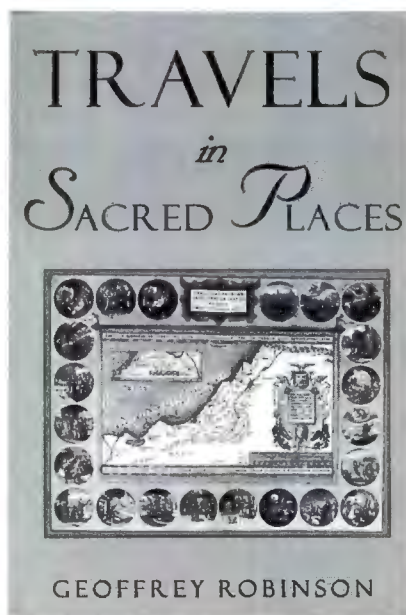
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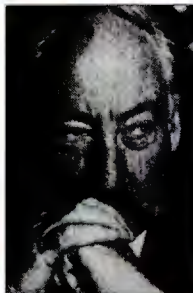
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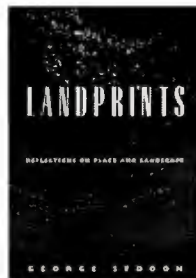
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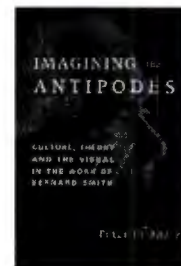


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