

THINGS YOU GET FOR FREE

by Michael McGirr

When Maureen McGirr finally takes the big trip she had planned for her honeymoon, she still has the cosmetic case she was given for her wedding almost 40 years before. She also has another lifetime's experience and a 30-something son, a Jesuit priest, to take with her. The pair make unlikely companions as they travel the clichés of Europe, but not as unlikely as the tourists they encounter.

Eureka Street publisher, Michael McGirr SJ, is the author of this warm, funny and insightful book.

Thanks to Picador, *Eureka Street* has 15 copies of *Things You Get for Free* to give away, each worth \$20.80.

Just put your name and address on the back of an envelope and send it to: *Eureka Street* September Book Offer, PO Box 553, Richmond, VIC, 3121. (See page 9 for winners of the June 2000 CD Offer.)



**SHARED MEANINGS
Conference Retreat**

**Spiritual Perspectives on Contemporary
Social and Personal Issues in Australia**

with Richard Rohr OFM

& Joy Ryan-Bloore ANZSJA

University House, ANU, Canberra

26 November to 1 December 2000

Shared Meanings grows out of a conviction that we need to address current issues in Australia within a spiritual framework and setting. Up to 200 spiritually oriented Australians from a cross-section of disciplines, interests and vocations will spend five days in deepened reflection, sharing, listening and worship to help move this country of ours from a society of privatised meanings to one of shared meanings—a true 'common wealth'.

For a flyer and details please contact:

Noel Giblett, 3 Holland St, Wembley WA 6014

email: knowell@iinet.net.au

tel: (08) 9383 9932 (h) or

(08) 9321 5801 (w)

fax: c/- KinWay (08) 9321 5804

marked 'Attention: Noel Giblett'

Hawkstone Hall, England



How would you like to spend some sabbatical time in a beautiful Georgian mansion house set in peaceful English countryside?

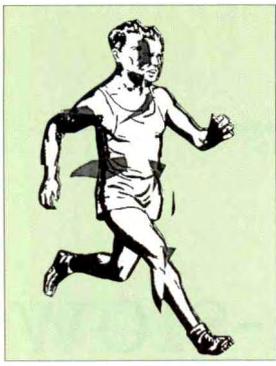
A Redemptorist house, the mixed community of priests, sisters and lay people here offer you a 3-month course to study scripture and personal development. A popular extra of each course is a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Our lecture programme explores Jesus and the Gospels, The Parables, Paul and his Communities, Spirituality in the 21st century, and much, much more. You may join our seminars on such topics as Celtic Spirituality, Facing Stress or Parish Ministry Today; Aromatherapy, Art, Reflexology and Shiatsu are also offered. Whilst at Hawkstone, you can take up new hobbies and relax in lovely, tranquil surroundings.

For more details on our Course dates, content and costs for 2000, contact Julia at Hawkstone Hall, Marchamley, Shrewsbury, SY4-5LG, England.

Fax: +44 1630 685565 or e-mail

HawkHall@aol.com

Web-Site: www.hawkstone-hall.com



*For Henry Lawson,
running was
something you did
either to escape
the law or to fetch
the midwife.
Or both, if the
child wasn't yours.*

—Michael McGirr, 'The
ultra-slow marathon', p4.

Cover design by Siobhan Jackson.

Cartoons pp11 and 13
by Dean Moore.
Photograph pp16-19
by Associated Press AP.
Graphics pp21 and 46
by Siobhan Jackson.
Photograph p22 by Peter Davis.
Photographs pp27-31
by Andrew Stark.
Photograph p32 by Market-Place.
Photograph p33 by David Kirby.
Photograph p34 courtesy National
Council of Churches in Australia.
Photograph p42 by Rob McColl.
Photograph p43 by Jeff Busby.

Eureka Street magazine
Jesuit Publications
PO Box 553
Richmond VIC 3121
Tel (03) 9427 7311
Fax (03) 9428 4450

CONTENTS

4	COMMENT With Michael McGirr.	24	THE NEW IRAN Anthony Ham finds a country and a people full of surprises.
7	CAPITAL LETTER	27	IS THE UNIVERSITY FINISHED? If we need to ask the question, then the situation is serious, argues Raimond Gaita.
8	LETTERS	32	ECUMENICAL ACUMEN Maggie Helass interviews Anglican Primate Peter Carnley and Catholic Archbishop John Bathersby.
10	THE MONTH'S TRAFFIC With Brett Evans, Edmund Campion and Peter Mares.	36	DAWN CASEY Suzanne Edgar meets the Director of Canberra's new, controversial National Museum of Australia.
12	SUMMA THEOLOGIAE	42	THEATRE Geoffrey Milne brings up the lights on the illusion-makers behind the scenes.
14	ARCHIMEDES	44	FLASH IN THE PAN Reviews of the films <i>Chopper</i> , <i>One Day in September</i> , <i>Mr. Death: The Rise and Fall of Fred A. Leuchter, Jr.</i> , <i>Wonder Boys</i> and <i>American Psycho</i> .
15	IN MEMORIAM Paul Collins remembers Frank Flynn.	46	WATCHING BRIEF
16	MAHATHIR Jon Greenaway analyses Malaysia's hardy perennial.	47	SPECIFIC LEVITY
21	ALL IN THE FAMILY Moirra Rayner raises the issues missed in the current IVF debate.		
22	IT'S WHAT I DO Peter Davis profiles PNG community health worker, Helen Ashwell.		

General manager

Joseph Hoo

Editor

Morag Fraser

Assistant editor

Kate Manton

Graphic designer

Siobhan Jackson

Publisher

Michael McGirr SJ

Administration manager: Mark Dowell

Editorial and production assistants

Juliette Hughes, Paul Fyfe SJ,
Geraldine Battersby, Ben Hider

Contributing editors

Adelaide: Greg O'Kelly SJ, Perth: Dean Moore

Sydney: Edmund Campion, Gerard Windsor

Queensland: Peter Pierce

United Kingdom correspondent

Denis Minns OP

South East Asia correspondent

Jon Greenaway

Jesuit Editorial Board

Peter L'Estrange SJ, Andrew Bullen SJ,

Andrew Hamilton SJ

Peter Steele SJ, Bill Uren SJ

Marketing manager: Rosanne Turner

Advertising representative: Ken Head

Subscription manager: Wendy Marlowe

Administration and distribution

Mrs Irene Hunter

Patrons

Eureka Street gratefully acknowledges the support of C. and A. Carter; the trustees of the estate of Miss M. Condon; W.P. & M.W. Gurry

Eureka Street magazine, ISSN 1036-1758, Australia Post Print Post approved pp349181/00314, is published ten times a year

by Eureka Street Magazine Pty Ltd, 300 Victoria Street, Richmond, Victoria 3121

Tel: 03 9427 7311 Fax: 03 9428 4450

email: eureka@jespub.jesuit.org.au

<http://www.eurekastreet.com.au>

Responsibility for editorial content is accepted by Michael McGirr SJ, 300 Victoria Street, Richmond.

Printed by Doran Printing,

46 Industrial Drive, Braeside VIC 3195.

© Jesuit Publications 2000

Unsolicited manuscripts, including poetry and fiction, will be returned only if accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Requests for permission to reprint material from the magazine should be addressed in writing to:

The editor, *Eureka Street* magazine,
PO Box 553, Richmond VIC 3121

The ultra-slow marathon

THIS YEAR IN SYDNEY, the athletes will be running the Olympic marathon in a little over two hours. On a normal day, it would take almost as long to drive the route. You could, of course, walk the course of the Sydney marathon. There would be plenty to look at and even more to see.

The race begins at North Sydney Oval. This used to be the home of the North Sydney Bears. The club has a proud history of near achievement, culminating last year in near destruction. Indeed, traditional supporters were surprised some years back when an anti-smoking activist was appointed to improve their ranking. The story went around the club that David

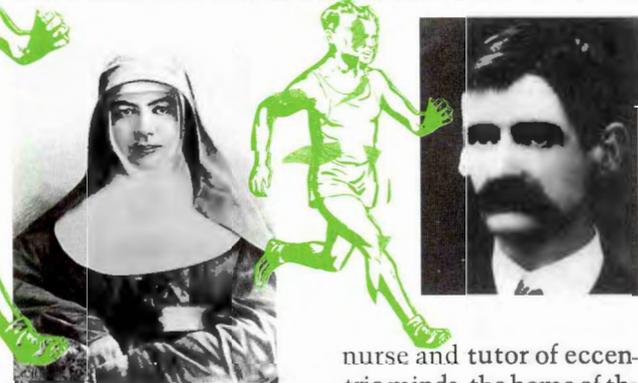


Hill had personally ordered the lower branches be lopped from the Moreton Bay Fig that stands at the northern end of the ground. He was said to believe that it was impossible to stand beneath those branches and see the field. Precisely. This was where the most sturdy supporters gathered for home games. They were loyal. They just didn't want to see what was happening on the field. Norths won their most recent premiership in the '20s. They did make the grand final in the early '40s when most of the good players in the league were on the Kokoda Trail. Other than that, it was a long time between celebrations. But not a long time between drinks. By half time, many supporters would be weaving their way across Miller Street to get to Percy's.

The marathon runners will not be hanging around to hear the lore of Percy's and the Moreton Bay Fig. Nor even to hear how the beautiful wrought-iron Bob Stand was shifted from the Sydney Cricket Ground to North Sydney to accommodate the large number of Bobs who were being targeted in a membership drive. The runners will be disgorged on to Miller Street and sent past Doris Fitton's Independent Theatre, past Mount Street where the remains of Mary MacKillop draw pilgrims from around the world and past the Rag and Famish which used to draw Henry Lawson when he needed to cadge cigarettes. From there on to the Harbour Bridge.

In days gone by, Henry Lawson could have watched them run past. He died in 1922 and the bridge was opened in 1932, so had Sydney won the bid for what became the Antwerp Olympics, the runners would have headed down Blues Point Road to await the punt to take them across the water. Either that or swim. But the triathlon, invented to solve precisely such problems as fallen or missing bridges, is a newcomer to the games. Henry Lawson was photographed sitting on the pavement on Blues Point Road. Even sober, he would have been bemused. He'd have wondered about the sudden crime wave. Or population explosion.

For Lawson, running was something you did either to escape the law or to fetch the midwife. Or both, if the child wasn't yours. Other than that, only to chase loaded dogs. You could have tried telling him that these men and women were running for gold, as the major sponsors of the Olympics keep reminding us, and he would have reached under his hat to scratch his head in his characteristic gesture. Lawson was born of a goldfield. The family didn't do well. Gold was a fatal lure. Lawson described the bush as 'the



nurse and tutor of eccentric minds, the home of the weird'. The city was where

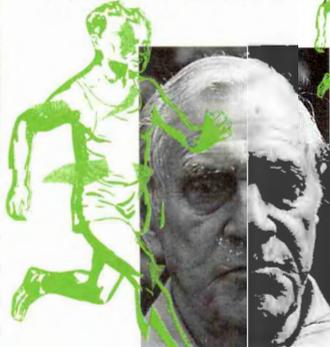
you coped with the discomfort of uneven pavements. The bush was where you ran.

BANJO PATERSON WORKED in a collar and tie in North Sydney. So did Bryce Courtenay when he was in the advertising business, creating such icons as Louie the Fly. Given that Homebush is a former waste site, Louie the Fly would have made a fine Olympic mascot, representing the supply of food to the endangered frogs of the area. But Courtenay's idea of breaking records these days is confined to print runs.

The athletes will come off the Harbour Bridge on to the Cahill Expressway, the roadway immortalised by Jeffrey Smart in a painting of a man with one arm, standing on his own. Paul Keating wanted to have the Cahill Expressway removed but his hand was stayed. Such carnage would have meant the buildings of the AMP, the major sponsor of the torch relay, would have been less prominent in the broadcast of the marathon. Besides, it would mean that athletes would have had to run around Circular Quay, dodging buskers.

Lawson wrote about the conditions in which the poor 'dossed out' at Circular Quay: 'the usual number of bundles of misery—covered more or less with dirty sheets of newspaper—lay along the wall under the ghastly glare of the electric light'. You won't get a bed on Circular Quay during the marathon for much under a thousand dollars. The runners, however, could do worse than to run around the plaques dedicated to Australian writers at Circular Quay: Thea Astley, Patrick White and so on. For his plaque, Morris West chose some words spoken by the historical character Giordano Bruno in West's play *The Heretic*: '... I claim no private lien on the truth, only/ A liberty to seek it, to prove it in debate,/And to be wrong a thousand times to reach/A single rightness.' Bruno was torched in 1600.

THE SYDNEY MARATHON heads through the city along Macquarie Street, past the Mitchell Library. There should be a gold medal for speed reading. The manuscript deposit at the Mitchell could provide one of the most interesting courses for this event in the world. The library is named after one David Mitchell who,



following a broken romance and the death of his parents, set himself the task of gathering every printed item relating to Australia, the Pacific, the East Indies and Antarctica. He died an old man in

1907, leaving 60,000 volumes behind.

The runners proceed along Macquarie Street, past the State Library, which proudly displays a copy of the first newspaper produced in New South Wales, the *Sydney Gazette* of 1803. I imagine that its column inches are taken up with the difficulties, with only 93 years to go, of bringing the Athens Olympics in on time and on budget. Further along Macquarie Street is the site of what was once the Oxford Hotel, now the Supreme Court building. Robert Louis Stevenson always chose to stay at the Oxford Hotel, although the premises are never acknowledged in his books. Stevenson came to the Pacific for the sake of his health. He wasn't much of an athlete. But he was an excellent runner: in flight from a number of shadows which trailed after him, including that of his mother. She ran him to ground at the Oxford.

From there to Oxford Street. But not before passing the Archibald Fountain in Hyde Park. SOCOG should arrange for the water in the fountain to be

The literary race, pp4-6, starting from left: Dorothy Hewett, Banjo Paterson, Mary MacKillop, Henry Lawson, Patrick White, Thea Astley, Morris West, Thomas Keneally and Mary Gilmore.

replaced with Gatorade. The fountain will make a far more picturesque drinks stop than the plastic tables we saw used with such artistic insensitivity in Gaudi's Barcelona. J.F. Archibald was one of the founders of *The Bulletin*. He was a staunch republican, an obsessive, a bundle of nervous energy and one of nature's talent scouts. He gave Lawson and Paterson their first run. Sadly, he broke down and spent some years in Callan Park, not far from the site of the Homebush Stadium. He said of one journal he established, *Lone Hand*, that 'its religion [is] the conservation of the public health and the adornment of the homes of the people. It will teach Australians how to live in accordance with the conditions of their own sunny clime, and not according to the dour and depressing customs illogically imported from chilly distant regions to our warm and radiant fatherland.' Archibald was not the first to find that a sunny climate was no guarantee of a sunny disposition. Indeed, the gap between the expanse of the land and the narrowness of the soul, the open sky and the closed mind, was



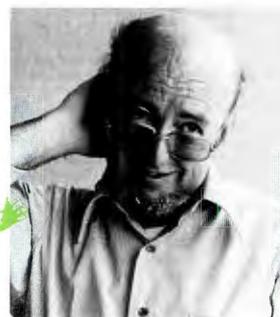
the basis of the fragile Australian spirituality developed in *The Bulletin*.

As they pass through Paddington, the runners will be able to clear their throats in the direction of premises once occupied by Mary Gilmore, Barbara Baynton, Christopher Brennan and Kylie Tennant. In *Bobbin Up*, Dorothy Hewett writes: 'Oxford Street lapped them round with promises, lured them with impossible dreams.'

THE OLYMPIC MARATHON heads along Anzac Parade, past the Sydney Cricket Ground and into Centennial Park. Patrick White moved here from Castle Hill in 1964. According to his memoirs, *Flaws in the Glass*, this move from Castle Hill marked the end of White's athletic career. He said that his ghost would haunt the place he was leaving: 'those who are psychic or unhappy may still catch a glimpse of us running out naked by moonlight amongst the regimented boxes which now stand where the trees were cut down. Perhaps my laughter will be heard on Nobel Avenue (true!) where I fell on my back in the mud beside the cow-bail, cursing a God in whom, I realised, I must believe after all.' White's experience of God was physical. 'My inklings of God's presence are interwoven with my love of the one human being who never fails me.' Still and all, White would have been wonderfully grumpy about having the Olympics on

his turf. It's a pity he didn't live to pout as they went by. It's a pity that Xavier Herbert, literature's Mr Machismo, didn't live long enough to be pouted at. Herbert didn't like gays. But he liked running. Even as an old man. Poor fella.

THERE IS HARDLY A PART of the marathon that has not been encoded in art and literature. The runners will get as far south as Kingsford before doubling back through Moore Park to Glebe. Then on to the Anzac Bridge and west along Parramatta Road through Leichhardt, named after the explorer who inspired White's *Voss*, and Burwood, remembered as the ideal setting for a colourful childhood in Bernard Smith's *The Boy Adeodatus*. Parramatta Road is one of the most congested shopping strips in Sydney. It eventually empties on to the M4 motorway from where, the



Olympic publicity tells us, the marathon runners will be able to see Stadium Australia three kilometres away. If they are still standing, of course.



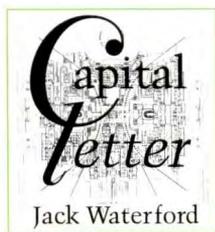
The runners will enter a different Homebush from the one Thomas Kenelly writes about in *Homebush Boy*. He presents himself as a gymnast:

At sixteen, I was in the business of defying gravity in an unlikely place called Homebush. I think it might have been named this because it had once been a tangle of scrub not much more than 15 miles west of Sydney and encountered by nineteenth-century colonial gentry as they rode west or came up the Parramatta River to their country homes in Strathfield. By 1952, Homebush was a lesser suburb of the remote Commonwealth of Australia in the still existent British Empire.

For a few weeks this spring, Homebush will not be a lesser suburb. It will be the centre of the universe. Crowds will come to see history in the making. Indeed, the whole Olympics is based on the premise that the faster you go, the more history is made. But if you slow down, there is plenty of history already underfoot. There are no tickets required, not much organisation to stuff up and it won't be packed away in October, either. ■

Michael McGirr is *Eureka Street's* publisher.

Note: The women's marathon starts at 7.30am on Sunday 24 September. The men's marathon starts at 4pm on Sunday 1 October.



Talk for the dole

CAN JOHN HOWARD make welfare work for him? On the face of it, it might seem that the best he can hope for is to neutralise the issue. He has been told often enough that he loses votes every time he campaigns on social issues, and picks them up again when the voters' minds are fixed on economic matters. He has been successfully cast as uninspired, mean-spirited and narrow-minded on almost any social issue, to the point where even his colleagues writhe at the prospect of his intervention.

That's not to say that some of his interventions have not been successful, at least in political terms. His work-for-the-dole scheme was cleverly targeted at pub-talkers who think that the unemployed are bludgers, and only later developed a rhetoric about mutual, or reciprocal, responsibility. Falling unemployment may owe more to an improving economy, but many will still give Howard's schemes some credit.

At the same time, he has disarmed many of the lobbies which might normally be expected to be highly critical. In some cases, the action has been ruthless—simply removing the government funding for advocacy services, with which governments have previously built rods for their own backs. If ever there was a case that government welfare money created its own dependencies, it has been demonstrated by the incapacity of many of these lobbies to sustain their efforts from their own resources, as they should have done long ago. Others have been compromised, not least the networks of church and community groups which are now so busy taking government funds to provide government services on contract that they scarcely have time to draw breath, let alone promote independent views.

It is easy enough to imagine that these policies come from a desire to punish those who are on welfare and those who have formed their political careers by speaking the language of entitlement. There is more than a little in that, given Howard's open resentment about the way in which the political culture of the 1970s to the 1990s was captured in this way. But seeing the development of such policies only in such terms is doing both Howard and his Coalition a serious disservice.

That Labor cannot find the language to attack him shows its own recognition that the older welfare philosophies are dead, and that the electorate is responding to new forms of government intervention. Labor, in fact, played a considerable role in developing some of the new ideology of welfare, from the time that it moved away from schemes of universal entitlement in the early 1980s, to the way it skilfully developed job-creation and regional policies in the mid 1990s.

It is clear that Labor wants such policies and recognises their political potency. At most, Labor promises more new-model intervention or assistance than Howard is offering,

or promises that the dividing lines will be set in marginally more compassionate ways. Only a few of the shadow ministry make anything but the most ritual bows to an older ideology, and their assistance is not usually regarded as welcome.

Howard, in short, has largely won the policy argument, as he has with the Goods and Services Tax, and the most that his rivals can do is nibble around the edges. They may well do so successfully—or be seen to have done so—because Howard has exhausted the patience of the electorate, but the next election is still Labor's to lose.

THE CYNIC MIGHT WONDER whether Howard would be prepared to gamble and take his welfare debate right into the centre of Labor uncertainty—Aboriginal affairs. He might well figure that he has nothing to lose, if only because Labor has kept its own flag waving by trading off Howard's missteps in the reconciliation and stolen children debate. Aboriginal affairs is the last great redoubt of old-fashioned welfarism, and the last area where some people appear genuinely to believe that more of the same might do the trick. There are plenty of others, not least Aboriginal people, who have the most profound doubts—doubts about the institutions, the policies and the programs, and about whether one can even identify targets which will, if achieved, make any material or social difference to Aboriginal people.

All along, Howard has been insisting that Aboriginal affairs is about health, education and jobs. He has rejected as empty symbolism talk of apologies and native title developments. He may well have made progress impossible by fundamentally misjudging the mood on the symbols and alienating the people whose assistance he needed. Yet the fact is that his government has been continuing to feed money into old welfarist policies from which, by any standards, the dividend is still meagre. Moreover, he has continued to work through the old mechanisms, focusing on communities rather than families, and on bureaucratic structures which measure inputs rather than results.

Aboriginal affairs is wide open to genuine reform. The government could focus on transferring responsibility, 'empowerment', agreed target setting, getting kids into school and people into jobs, and making better and more accountable use of the resources of state and local government. Such reform would cause consternation in Labor ranks and suspicion among those who think that John Howard is incapable of entering Aboriginal affairs with good intentions. It would, of course, go down well in the pubs, but it might also make some difference. ■

Jack Waterford is editor of the *Canberra Times*.

Dark glasses

From Denis Minns op

I am sorry that Ray Cassin (Letters, July/August 2000) has supposed that I meant to be contemptuous of any claims that newspapers or journalists might make to conduct themselves with professional moral probity. But I see that I did say that nobody would expect a newspaper to have a conscience, and his supposition is a reasonable inference from that, so it is understandable that he is cross.

I meant a conscience in the sense of a collective memory embracing the whole history of an institution and, most particularly and explicitly in the context, 'its remote past'. The church makes very high claims for such a memory; it calls it, no doubt somewhat pompously, its 'sacred tradition' and likens it to 'a mirror in which the church, during its pilgrimage on earth, contemplates God' (*Dei Verbum* 7). As mirrors go these days, it is very dark, and over the centuries it has also become very dusty.

The church has been very slow in recognising this: that it has at last set about cleaning it, however late, however elliptically, even however pompously, is a sign of health. An analogous case might be made for a nation's collective memory—a mirror in which it can contemplate itself. The grandeur of the claims they make on the allegiance of their members puts the church and a nation especially at risk of pomposity and ridicule. Newspapers, making far humbler claims, do not expose themselves to such risk. I did not say, even by implication, that they did or should.

Denis Minns op
Oxford, UK

Animal harm

From Thomas Ryan

John Wamsley's vision (Archimedes, *Eureka Street*, July/August 2000) of buying up at least one per cent of the nation's land mass for native animals is a laudable undertaking and

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 email, a contact phone number is essential. Address: eureka@jespub.jesuit.org.au



evidence of a deep concern for our native flora and fauna. However I do have reservations about some of the means he employs, and dispute his assertion that 'it's not our job to get involved in ideological matters'. If he assumes that ideology entails engaging in speculative and visionary thinking, I would have thought that this was a prerequisite to thinking about animals and why they matter and responding in an appropriate manner. Ideology refers to a framework of ideas and provides the conceptual language in terms of which questions one asks, the calculations one makes and the answers one gives. It entails an examination of our moral obligations and duties towards animals, this not being 'sentimental' about them. Sentiment, being a thought influenced by or proceeding from emotion or feeling, is an integral component of all compassionate moral thought and indeed it informs and underlies rationality.

To argue, as Wamsley does, that eating and or privatising our wildlife are legitimate expressions of our concern for their well-being is to confuse means and ends. This argument assumes that it is morally legitimate to view individual animals as instrumental to the greater good of species and ecosystems. Undoubtedly the well-being

of individuals is integrally linked to healthy species and ecosystems, but species are comprised of individuals. To argue that certain individuals are not ends in themselves but reducible to some notion of the greater good is itself ideological and, according to American philosopher Tom Regan, is equivalent to environmental fascism.

I find it rather depressing that beings with such interests and value can be viewed as self-generating and regenerating assets. Such language may sit well with the pervasive ideology of economic rationalism, yet it is pointedly out of place in compassionate moral thinking. This is precisely why attention to ideology is of paramount importance.

Thomas Ryan
St Helens, TAS

First concerns

From R. Vermeesch

Chris McGillion's review of *Who is Worthy* (*Eureka Street*, June 2000) does not address the important, topical and contentious matters raised in Fr Kennedy's publication. The author's primary concern was the way in which misunderstanding the role of conscience and the significance of the Eucharist affects marginalised groups in the church. Mr McGillion's main concerns were that Fr Kennedy was one-sided and that he failed to celebrate the 'pluralism' Mr McGillion finds in the church evidenced by, for example, the suppression of the Third Rite of Reconciliation.

As to Mr McGillion's first concern, I read Fr Kennedy, not as attempting to assess the attitude and conduct of each Australian bishop, but as responding to a particular challenge. (In this regard, however, I cannot recall reading of any public dissent from Archbishop Pell's well-publicised views by any of his brother bishops.) Fr Kennedy was not attempting, as Mr McGillion suggests he should have, to reconcile the differences between his own and Archbishop Pell's views. Rather, he drew on contemporary authority, including Vatican II, Pope John Paul II and the Catechism of the Catholic

Church, as well as the practices of the early church, to reject Archbishop Pell's position. The church has always countenanced such debate.

As to his second concern, Mr McGillion seems to suggest that the 'pluralism' he finds in the church should be celebrated by silencing a voice evidencing the church's concern for the marginalised. This could suggest an indifference to the plight of the people Fr Kennedy defends.

R. Vermeesch
Lane Cove, NSW

Timor and truth

From Stephen Langford, Secretary, Australia East Timor Association, NSW

It was with great sadness that we learned of poet and writer Judith Wright's death on Sunday 25th June. Earlier in the year we had approached Judith Wright and many other well-known citizens, asking them to sign a letter asking our government to make public its information on the Indonesian military and its crimes in East Timor.

Those who graciously agreed to sign the letter were: Gillian Armstrong, Dr Faith Bandler, Rabbi Jeffrey Barnet Kamins, John Bell, Bob Brown, Jane Campion, Bryce Courtenay, Peter Garrett, Bruce Haigh, Alan Jones, Ramona Koval, Max Lane, Professor Marcia Langton, Rodney Lewis, Sandy McCutcheon, Andrew McNaughtan, Leo McKern, Josephine Mitchell, Gordon Moyes, John Pilger, the Reverend Ray Richmond, Shirley Shackleton, Robyn Williams and Judith Wright.

This was, as far as we know, the last public statement by Judith Wright.

After 25 years of occupation, and the destruction of their country as the Indonesian military finally left, the East Timorese are still suffering. One hundred thousand East Timorese are still trapped in Indonesia as virtual hostages. The East Timorese deserve help, they deserve justice, and they deserve the truth from the Australian government.

Stephen Langford
Paddington, NSW

Getting it right

From Gavan Breen

The East Timorese have had their win and colonialism has had a defeat. So has the Australian Government, which supported the Indonesian colonisers for 25 years.

It is said that the colonial era ended in the 1950s and '60s, but colonialism—even European colonialism—will not be dead as long as there are peoples which have become unwilling—often oppressed—minorities in former colonies, and national boundaries whose only justification is that they are the edge of the territory that was formerly occupied by one of the European colonial powers. Like, for instance, the line that divides the island of New Guinea into two halves. It seems to be accepted without argument in most cases that the Dutch, the British and the rest of them had a divine right to set the international boundaries throughout the world for all time.

For example, in a recent article in *The Australian* (9 June 2000), Greg Sheridan, supporting Australia's support for Indonesian rule of West Papua, said that West Papua was part of the Dutch East Indies, to which Indonesia is the successor state. But, worse, the major reason, in his view, why we should support Indonesia against West Papua is that West Papua lacks international support. As if we should support self-determination movements or not on the basis of whether or not a lot of other countries support them.

Sheridan is probably correct in saying that 'if the Javanese empire of Indonesia ever did break up, it would almost certainly be a bloody and terrible business'. But hasn't Indonesian rule of its rebellious provinces been a bloody and terrible business, even under the more benign rule of Wahid? He mentions the flight of Indonesians from East Timor, but he doesn't demonstrate that this was necessary to save their lives. In fact, I think it likely that if the Indonesians had not adopted their scorched-earth policy those of their nationals who had been serving the Timorese people

may well have been welcomed. Certainly Xanana Gusmao would not have been responsible for driving them out.

The Australian Government is simply contemptible in the way it refuses to support the obviously just aspirations of subjugated peoples. It is unfair to regard these as just ethnic separatist movements, when they involve peoples who had no say in their incorporation into a state—the Kurds, the Kashmiris, the Tibetans and others as well as the West Papuans. Australia could support such aspirations without supporting racist policies like those espoused by the rebels in Fiji. The fact that self-determination movements will sometimes turn ugly is not a reason for supporting the status quo, when that means the indefinite continuation of a present ugly situation.

East Timor will need support for years yet, and it will get it from its support groups in Australia and elsewhere, but Mr Howard can be assured that a lot of the political energy that went into the East Timor freedom cause will now go into the West Papua freedom cause.

Gavan Breen
Alice Springs, NT

Winners!

Raffle

We are delighted to congratulate the winners in the **Jesuit Publications Raffle**, which was drawn on 10 July 2000. **First prize**, \$10,000 worth of travel and accommodation, went to **Kevin Flynn of Leabrook, SA**. The other winners were: Roslyn Ashing of Glen Waverley, VIC; R. & M. Commane of Mooroolbark, VIC; Sr G. Carroll of Leongatha, VIC and Alan Biggs of Higgins, ACT. Congratulations to them, and many thanks to everyone who supported the work of Jesuit Publications by participating.

June 2000 CD Offer

D. Beaumont, Thornbury, VIC;
T.A. Bekema, Hughes, ACT;
J. Campbell, Deepdene, VIC;
F. Derriman, Ballarat, VIC;
J. Mulcahy, Beaudesert, QLD;
M. Nunn, Kingston, ACT;
R. Peterson, Ivanhoe, VIC;
C. Torode, Mitcham, VIC.



The Month's Traffic



Not keeping up with Jones

THE KEY SYMBOLIC moment of Labor's 42nd National Conference, held this August in Hobart, occurred when two middle-aged men embraced each other in a pool of artificial light.

Observed by an encircling posse of TV cameras and 189 applauding delegates, outgoing ALP President Barry Jones had hugged his successor, Victorian union boss and factional warrior Greg Sword, after marking his exit from office with a graceful speech.

Though 67 years old, Jones had wanted to stay on, but a factional deal ensured that the nondescript Sword got the job. The unionist had replaced the futurist, but who of the two best symbolises the future of Labor? Barry Jones, the intellectual who coined the term 'information poor and information rich', or Greg Sword, general secretary of a union representing Old Economy workers?

One of the main questions for modern politics is: 'Does the new economy require a new politics?' Had the ALP just answered in the negative? And what did this baton change tell us about the state of the ALP? Had yesterday's man replaced tomorrow's?

Tactically speaking, Labor had brilliantly organised its conference. The much-heralded stoush on trade policy was ultimately stage-managed into passivity. And Beazley's leadership—under pressure in the wake of John Della Bosca's lunchtime indiscretions about the GST—was strengthened by an opening speech in which he chose not to use the phrase 'rollback' even once.

But strategically, Labor faces long-term difficulties, as do all the major parties. Whether we like it or not, globalisation is transforming Australian politics.

A rapidly accelerating media cycle is dumbing down public debate. As another recent retiree from the Labor game, former

National Secretary Gary Gray, pointed out not long ago, 'the modern media cycle, for a Canberra politician, is now measured in hours not days'. Gray worries that Labor is breeding a race of 'white-bread politicians', addicted to the seven-second soundbite. Similarly, Jones told the Hobart conference: 'I am concerned about the current cynicism about politics, which is so often reported as part of a gladiatorial contest between power blocs, so that political journalists are very much like sports writers.'

A growing percentage of Australians are no longer partisan voters. Due to the changing nature of work, Labor's traditional base is declining. In 1990, Labor had 1.73 million affiliated union members, today there are 1.35 million—a decline of 30 per cent. Like its opponents, Labor's future is hostage to this profound shift in social relationships.

An increasing number of Australians are turning to minor parties. As the senior union official John Sutton pointed out to the conference during the debate on free trade, the million or so Australians who voted for One Nation at the last election are still out there looking for answers.

Such issues go to the heart of modern Labor's dilemma. Now nearly a century old, the federal Labor Party must find a new story to tell the Australian people. Every time Labor has taken office in the post-war era it has had to develop a story that engaged the public's imagination. Whitlam had 'the program'. Hawke had the Accord. Beazley has acquired the Knowledge Nation—and not before time.

The Keating Government of the early 1990s left Labor with a powerful legacy of policies: free trade, Mabo, the Republic and engagement with Asia. Unfortunately, in combination these policies helped to spawn Hansonism.

Once in Opposition, Labor took a long time to find an appropriate response to the electoral backlash these policies created. Unable to renounce them, Labor floundered until the advent of Howard's tax reforms. Indeed, since the close-run federal election

in 1998, Labor has been a victim of its own near-success. It stopped struggling with the legacy of 'Keatingism' and concentrated on the glib politics of hammering the GST.

In the end, maybe John Della Bosca did Labor a favour by forcing it to switch its policy emphasis decisively away from the GST. Even Labor's long-time internal critic, MP Mark Latham, seems excited by the prospect: 'I think politics now becomes more dynamic because Labor's on the front foot with positive ideas.'

Knowledge Nation is therefore Labor's belated response to the demand that it do something about the negatives of economic restructuring. Labor is attempting to tell its traditional supporters: 'No, we will not move to protect your jobs from international competition, but we will help you retrain to acquire new jobs. If the international economy insists that workers are well educated and flexible, then we will help you to achieve this.'

Beazley, the son of a former federal Minister for Education, is absolutely sincere about the Knowledge Nation. As he told the conference: 'If some people find my passion for education a little quirky or obsessive, let me assure you it is not. We are not talking about Lasseter's Lost Reef here, it's not pie in the sky. It is the future; if we are to even maintain our standard of living, it's inescapable. But we have to get education right. Primary, secondary, tertiary, continuing. All the way.'

But to a workforce already suffering from job insecurity, this might reasonably seem like political sophistry. As Jones pointed out to the conference: 'Many of our traditional supporters may find the idea intimidating and it will be our task to explain and explain and explain.' It will not be easy.

This is Labor's gamble. It is hoping that Australians can be convinced that Knowledge Nation is not just rhetoric, that it makes sense, and that it will make a difference, at a time when the voters are more cynical, more fickle, and harder to engage, than ever before.

And Labor may yet be proven right. The same party which lacked the wisdom to keep Barry Jones on as President at least had the wit to appoint him as chair of Kim Beazley's Taskforce on the Knowledge Nation.
—Brett Evans

To be sure

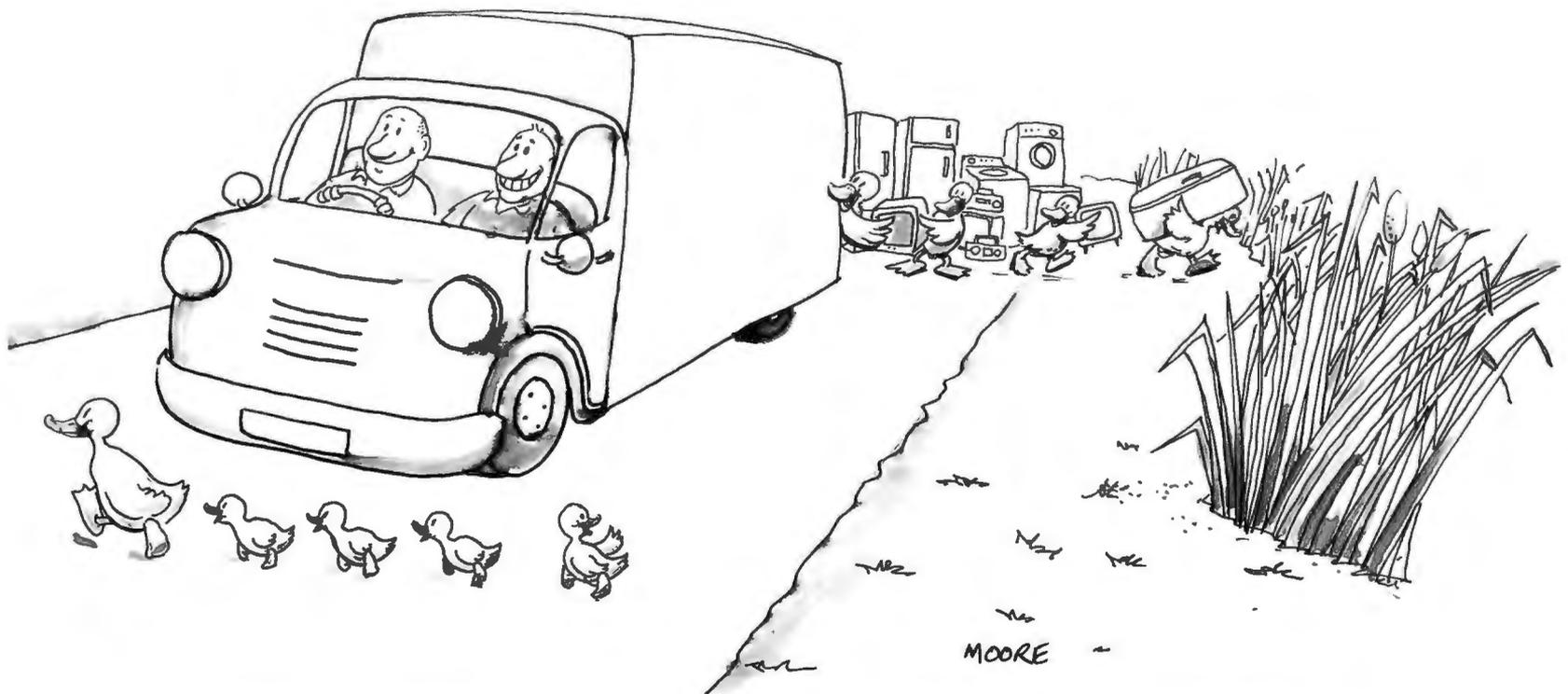
The Irish are the Aborigines of Europe; they have long memories. When Aboriginal businessman John Moriarty was in Europe 20 years ago he decided to visit Ireland and try to uncover traces of his Kerryman father,

the remains of a fishing rod, three sticks tied together and a brass reel. 'Your father left his fishing rod here.' And he handed it over to the astonished son: 'He left this here for you.'

John Moriarty tells this story in *Saltwater Fella* (Viking), the even-tempered account of his journey from stolen child to successful businessman. Born in the Northern Territory on the Western side of the Gulf of Carpentaria, he was taken away at the age of four and progressed through the system to become the first Aborigine to win a university degree in South Australia. Soccer star, public servant and Aboriginal activist, Moriarty set up the Balarinji

Aboriginal art, white Australians won't connect with Aboriginal culture, said miner Robert Champion de Crespigny, launching the book. Make no mistake: they haven't sold out. Their Aboriginality is intense, and they are proud evidence of the failure of the assimilation policies which Kim Scott explores in his Miles Franklin winning novel, *Benang*. But they know how white society works and they are making it work for them and their people.

As the anecdote about 'Aeroplane' O'Shea suggests, *Saltwater Fella* is a book of self-discovery. Its most compelling pages come towards the end, where John Moriarty goes back to the Gulf of Carpentaria to



whom he had never known. Leaving Ireland in 1928, his father had not returned. Fifty-two years later, would there be any trace of him?

John Moriarty took himself to the west coast and, asking around, found himself at the home of Pat ('Aeroplane') O'Shea, aged 92, who in his day had been a famous Gaelic football player. For 20 minutes they sized each other up; then O'Shea invited young Moriarty inside. He remembered the father all right: 'Your father was here for three days in 1928. We went fishing.' The old man even remembered how many trout the two of them had caught 52 years earlier. Then Pat O'Shea got a little stool, climbed up and rummaged at the back of a cupboard in the front room. He pulled out

design studio, whose best work has been the two Qantas jets painted in Dreaming motifs.

A few weeks ago, one of those jets sat on the tarmac at Sydney's Mascot airport while a hundred of Moriarty's friends crowded into the Qantas Club lounge overhead to launch *Saltwater Fella*. Rugby champion Mark Ella remarked that he had never seen so many Aborigines in the Qantas Club lounge. They wore their Aboriginality with a difference: blue suits and power dressing. Like the Balarinji design studio, here were success stories. They had kept the Aboriginal faith but had got their hands on the levers of whitefella power and used them to advantage. Unless you have Aboriginal businesses coming out of

make connection there and relearn the Aboriginality that had been denied him. He puts himself under an elder, Musso Harvey, who takes him into the country and shows him where everything fits. It's a gradual process, like watching a dead man come back to life slowly. The authenticity and intensity of this experience make Moriarty's autobiography, in this year of reconciliation, a necessary book for all Australians (although the tabloid columnist who called it the most important book for decades was being silly). It is good to record that the first print run was sold out before the book launch. By chance, that evening another Aboriginal, Anthony Mundine, won his first professional bout as a boxer. But that is another story.
—Edmund Campion



Sound foundations

THE TITLE OF THIS COLUMN might suggest to the unlatininate reader that it (and the writer) stand at the summit of theology. That would be a mistake. But the idea of a summit encourages reflection on the base of theology—the people who ensure that the ideas of the great and good can enter the theological conversation of others. The people of the base include booksellers, librarians, publishers, the organisers of conferences and talks in churches and pubs.

Those who belong to the theological base are rarely household names and rarely appear in histories of the church or of theology. But occasional events disclose their significance. Recently Therese Hilton retired after 40 years service to the Melbourne Central Catholic Library and to the associated Catholic Bookshop. Apparently a very local event, but such humble institutions and the contribution made by people like Therese were crucial to the development of theology in Australia.

The Central Catholic Library was begun in the early 1920s. Like St Mary's Hall and Newman College, the Library and Bookshop expressed Archbishop Mannix's conviction that the future of Australian Catholicism depended on young adult Catholics becoming literate in their understanding of faith.

Church sponsorship of bookshops and libraries requires trust in God and the reader. To let people loose in bookshops and libraries housing a variety of writers, many of whom you disagree with, is an expansive gesture. The untrusting resort to censorship. But the patrons of these enterprises were congenitally bold. The Jesuit, Matthew Egan, appointed by Mannix to keep an eye on the rumbustious little journal *Australia* whose editor was once accused of sedition, confided that he never saw any need to intervene. His colleague, William Hackett, who guided the Catholic Library and Bookshop, was sent to Australia because he was *persona non grata* to the English forces in Ireland.

The Bookshop and Library served generations of Catholic laity and clergy, introducing them to the dangerous new theological ideas which flowered in the Second Vatican Council. The institutions also encouraged reflectiveness in the Young Catholic Workers and other movements for social change.

After William Hackett died, another Jesuit, John Arnold Phillips, guided the Library and Bookshop in the expansive period following the Second Vatican Council. Of straightforward theological views himself, he did not impose his theology on the Library or Bookshop. He, too, was a man of ingenuity in the encouragement of learning. When librarian of Canisius College in the 1940s, he provided himself with a Licence to Trade with the Enemy in order to maintain access to German scholarship.

But neither Hackett nor Phillips were the base. Behind libraries and bookshops are invoices, order slips, dealings with Customs, relations with publishers, and conversations with customers to match their inarticulate desires to available stock. In these areas Therese Hilton has operated with skill, judgment and the confident trust with which the library began. With her retirement, contact with a long tradition begun by Mannix and Hackett is broken. The Catholic world owes her much. ■

Andrew Hamilton sj teaches at the United Faculty of Theology.

The Senate on sanctuary

AT THE END OF JUNE, the Senate Legal and Constitutional References Committee reported on its year-long investigation into Australia's processes for dealing with refugees and others who seek to stay in this country for humanitarian reasons. The matter was referred to the Senate in May 1999, following controversy over the harsh treatment of two failed asylum seekers.

The first case involved Ms Z, a Chinese woman who suffered a forced abortion after being sent back to China when she was eight-and-a-half months pregnant. The second concerned Mr SE, whose return to war-torn Somalia was only halted at the last minute by the intervention of the UN Committee Against Torture. By the time Canberra received the UN's request to halt his removal, Mr SE had already been taken out of a detention centre in Melbourne and put on a plane to Perth.

Despite intense interest in both cases at the time, the Senate's weighty report raised barely a ripple in the media. *The Australian*, for example, devoted just 50 words to the story, reporting that the Committee had found Australia's refugee system to be 'flawed, with insufficient safeguards to prevent breaches of international human rights rules'. Accurate enough, but lacking detail on the proposed remedies. Bad timing was partly at fault—the report was released just three days before the implementation of the GST—and despite the shocking nature of the cases that prompted the Committee's inquiry, its final report dealt less with attention-grabbing tales of individual suffering than with arcane legal and administrative processes.

Perhaps the Committee could have made more of a splash if it had toughened up some of its 46 recommendations. Much of the language is infuriatingly vague. For example, the recommendation that 'the government ensures that decision-makers are well enough resourced to facilitate proper assessment of claims for refugee status' (2.1). This arrow shoots in the right direction, but lacks the force to hit a target. It requires no specific response or action on the part of government and will land lamely on the floor of the House. Surely it would have been better at least to call for increased funding?

This does not mean that the Senate report should be ignored or forgotten. Quite

the contrary. It is the end result of enormous intellectual effort. A dip into the Committee transcripts reveals that the Senators took their commission very seriously. They were originally due to report in October, but the huge volume of material forced the deadline to be extended twice. The Committee received written submissions from almost 100 different individuals and organisations, and heard oral evidence from a similar number of people at 17 separate hearings in four cities.

If the final report is too moderate to make headlines, then this is partly because the Committee has succeeded in shepherding political rivals on to common ground. In all key respects, the report is unanimous; the recommendations may be weakly

worded, the outcomes a compromise, but at least they have cross-party support.

Arguably the most important recommendation is 3.1, that the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (DIMA) 'investigate the provision of videos or other appropriate media in relevant community languages, explaining the requirements of Australia's onshore refugee determination process' and that this material 'should be available to those in detention'. Informing asylum seekers about their situation may appear routine; indeed it should be routine, but it is not. This proposal addresses one of the most disturbing aspects of current procedure, DIMA's deliberate decision *not* to inform immigration detainees of their legal rights, neither

their right to see a lawyer nor their right to seek asylum. As the Committee notes:

Under current law, an immigration detainee has a right to make an application for refugee status, and is provided with legal assistance ... when making an application. However the department and its agents are under no obligation to provide any information or services unless requested to do so. The onus, therefore, is on the detainee to expressly make a request. (paragraph 3.20)

The Senate Committee is clearly very uncomfortable with this niggardly approach to fundamental rights:

The committee recognises that there is often a great disparity among asylum seekers in terms of knowledge, education, and financial resources, and any factor which limits the access of asylum seekers to information can severely disadvantage a genuine applicant ... (paragraph 3.32)

It would have been more satisfying to see the Committee confront the issue head on, and recommend in a much more forthright manner that DIMA simply advise all detainees of all their rights. Clearly the Senators believe that a less confrontational approach is better politics. I hope that they are right and that their modest proposal brings results.

Another important recommendation (2.2), calls for the Attorney-General's Department, in conjunction with DIMA, to 'examine the most appropriate means by which Australia's laws could be amended so as to explicitly incorporate the non-refoulement [non-return] obligations of the CAT [Convention Against Torture] and ICCPR [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights] into domestic law'. This is important to asylum seekers like Mr SE, who may fall outside the narrow definition of a refugee under the UN Convention, but who nevertheless face serious risk if returned to their homeland. Australia's refugee determination procedures offer no protection to such people, apart from ministerial intervention. Under Section 417 of the Migration Act, the minister can provide a visa to a rejected asylum seeker, but his discretion is non-compellable and non-reviewable—in other words, no-one can force him to turn his attention to a particular case, and his decisions cannot be appealed to any court.

Ministerial discretion occupies a good portion of the report, and the Senators make





Cutting off the future

IT'S ONE THING TO DEVELOP new technology, and quite another to get people to use it. Not only do people feel physically more at ease operating with traditional technology, they also feel more comfortable financially, because they can predict the risks and costs. Better the devil you know. In recent times it has become even harder to introduce significant new technologies, as governments have withdrawn from the provision of infrastructure and services.

Take power stations, for example. Coal is the backbone of Australia's power industry. It's a fuel which Australia has in plentiful supply, and it is also widely and cheaply available in many developing nations, particularly China and India, whose growing economies are going to have an enormous impact on the world in the coming decades. In these times of sensitivity about emissions of carbon dioxide, any new technology which increases the efficiency of extracting energy from coal, and decreases greenhouse gas emissions, is welcome.

The good news is that such technology exists. The Co-operative Research Centre (CRC) for Clean Power from Lignite, based in Melbourne and Adelaide, is putting together and testing a series of advanced technologies which have the potential for reducing greenhouse emissions from brown coal by more than 30 per cent. At the same time, these technologies will increase the efficiency of energy output from brown coal from about 29 per cent to about 44 per cent.

But who will be the first to try the new technology out in a power station? Here's the dilemma. Coal-fired power stations are expensive to build. They cost billions of dollars. If you construct a power station using tried and true technology, you know it will work, what it will cost and how efficient it is likely to be.

With new technology—however good—it generally takes four or five tries before power stations start to work at optimum efficiency. The first few power stations are bound to be more expensive to build, and more expensive to run than those built subsequently. In the past, this cost impost did not matter so much, because governments built power stations, and the extra expense of the early power stations was borne by taxpayers. But these days, when power stations are built by independent consortia backed by banks and private investors, nobody wants to take on the added risk of being first with new technology.

Yet, for greenhouse reasons, it has become imperative to switch over to newer and more efficient technology. So who is going to foot the bill? The CRC's Chief Executive Officer, David Brockway, has suggested that we may have to call on government again—perhaps a consortium of governments, or some mechanism arranged through the World Bank. In the end, because we are only talking about underwriting the added risk of introducing new technology, it may not end up being all that expensive, says Brockway—perhaps a couple of hundred million dollars spread across several countries over a decade or so. But for banks and construction companies it's a financial hump that will have to be levelled before they will be willing to dabble in new technology.

It is important to solve this problem. Power generation is likely to be only one of many areas where efficient new technologies will require such a kick start if they are ever to see the light of day. ■

Tim Thwaites is a freelance science writer.

sensible recommendations for improving the operation of this section of the Act. For example, the Committee recommends that people making section 417 requests should not be removed from Australia before the process is finalised (currently there is no such guarantee), that all asylum seekers be fully advised of the procedures available to them under s417 (which they are not currently), and that all s417 requests should be considered in the light of Australia's international obligations under the CAT, the ICCPR and the CROC (Convention on the Rights of the Child). Such recommendations are welcome, but fall far short of turning ministerial discretion into an adequate safety net for vulnerable asylum seekers who fail to fit the narrow UN definition of a refugee. As Senator Cooney (ALP) notes in his additional comments to the report, 'section 417 does not constitute a program, a system, an ordered process for dealing with those who claim humanitarian relief from Australia'. Senator Cooney calls for the current system of refugee determination to be amended to encompass broader humanitarian concerns, as in some comparable jurisdictions.

Again Mr SE is a case in point. His requests for consideration under s417 were repeatedly knocked back by the minister, yet the UN Committee Against Torture found that he would be at great risk if returned to Somalia. In the UK, Mr SE may also have been refused formal refugee status, but there is a fair chance he would have been granted 'exceptional leave to remain' instead, on the basis that Somalia's continuing clan warfare makes it impossible for him to return home safely. (Exceptional leave to remain was granted to 11 per cent of asylum seekers in the UK last year.)

The Senate Committee has developed some specific recommendations to prevent a repeat of Ms Z's experience. Recommendation 9.2 calls for 'a protocol on the "fitness to travel" of pregnant women' to be developed 'as a matter of urgency', and Recommendation 9.3 says that pregnant women should be given special consideration 'to remain in Australia until after the birth' to ensure that they are not at risk of forced abortions.

Other useful recommendations are: the call for an inquiry into the use of sedation and other means of restraint in detention centres and in removing people from Australia (10.1); the call for a detailed cost-benefit analysis of the provision of temporary safe haven (1.1); and the recommendation that officers from DIMA, the

Father Frank Flynn

MSC, AC, AO

6 December 1906 – 29 July 2000

Attorney-General's Department and DFAT (Foreign Affairs and Trade) should not be members of the Refugee Review Tribunal (5.6). This latter measure would make the Tribunal a little more independent, even though it fails to address deeper concerns about the Tribunal's relationship to DIMA and the minister.

The Committee also makes sensible suggestions on the provision of legal advice to asylum seekers. Notably the recommendation that Legal Aid Commissions be allowed to provide limited advice to asylum seekers, to determine whether it is worth their while lodging an appeal before the courts (3.7). It would be better simply to restore asylum seekers' full access to legal aid, but at least the proposed measure should reduce the number of asylum seekers pursuing hopeless actions and appearing unrepresented before the Federal Court.

Also welcome is the call for distinct funding of translation and interpreting services for asylum seekers (3.3). Migration agents currently meet these costs out of a standard payment received from DIMA, inviting unscrupulous agents to cut corners with interpreting in order to fatten their own share of the fee.

Democrat Senator Andrew Bartlett, who moved the motion initiating the inquiry, admits that he would have liked stronger wording, but he says the report does highlight a number of problems and 'puts the lie to the idea that we've got this perfectly functioning system'. The Senator points out that the Committee has 'produced a lot of information which would not otherwise be on the record' and notes that cross-party agreement is all the more significant 'given the fact that refugee issues have become so politicised'.

It is now up to the government to respond to the report. Let's hope that the backing of Liberal Senators will help to get its moderate recommendations implemented.

A Sanctuary under Review: An Examination of Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Determination Processes, Senate Legal and Constitutional References Committee, June 2000.

—Peter Mares

This month's contributors: **Brett Evans** is a current affairs producer with ABC TV and a freelance writer; **Edmund Campion** is an emeritus professor of the Catholic Institute of Sydney; **Peter Mares** presents *Asia Pacific* on ABC Radio National and Radio Australia and is currently writing a book on asylum seekers in Australia.

IT WAS ONE OF THOSE things that tend only to happen in Canberra. Late 1987 I was discreetly asked by an historian friend to 'have a look at' a list of people who were being proposed for national recognition at the time of the 1988 Bicentenary as 'the two hundred greatest Australians'. I have no idea why I was asked. I was probably a priest-historian in the right place at the right time.

The embarrassing problem was that 'there were not enough Catholics' on the list! From memory, there were only about ten. I was quietly asked, 'could I perhaps explain why there were so few Catholics', and even suggest some names for inclusion.

It was immediately obvious why there were only a few: the selection committee was a virtual 'who's who' of the secular establishment, the type of people whose peculiar myopia regarding religion ensured that not only Catholics, but leaders of all denominations, did not enter their consciousness. Even the Rev. John Dunmore Lang and Bishop William Grant Broughton, as well as many other leading Anglicans and Protestants, were missing.

Among the Catholics I nominated was Father Francis Stanislaus Flynn, Missionary of the Sacred Heart (MSC), priest, Air Force chaplain, author, world-renowned ophthalmic surgeon, anthropologist and extraordinary human being. To the credit of the committee he was included, an honour he richly deserved. It was an easy case to argue.

But they still could not get it quite right: a picture appeared in *The Australian* in 1988 of 'Father Frank Flynn' shaving in the bush with his mirror standing on the bonnet of a ute, and with a rather prim-looking 'Mrs Flynn' in the background. God knows what the papal nuncio thought! They had confused Frank with Presbyterian minister and founder of the Flying Doctors, the Rev. John Flynn—'Flynn of the Inland'.

The real Father Frank Flynn's life was extraordinarily rich. Trained in medicine

at Sydney University and at the Royal Ophthalmic Hospital at Moorfields, he was professed as a Missionary of the Sacred Heart in February 1937 and ordained in March 1942. His genius was to be able to hold the two professions together in a kind of integrated mutual support.

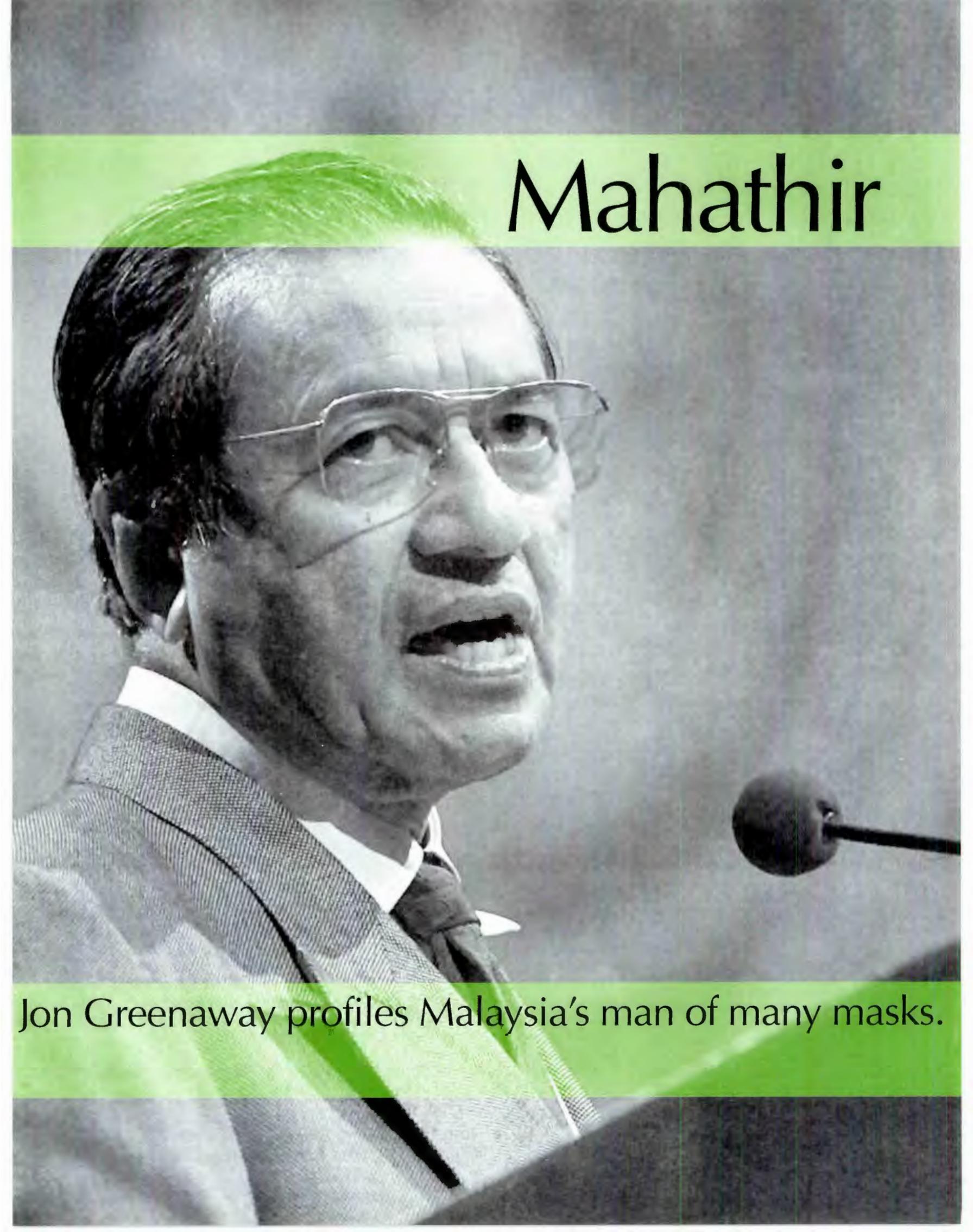
Most of his ministry was in the Northern Territory, with the exception of six years in Port Moresby. His work on trachoma, especially as it affected Aborigines, is recognised throughout the world, and his special glasses for dry eyes (from which he suffered himself) helped a great number of people. His priestly ministry reached throughout the Northern Territory and beyond. It also extended beyond Catholic community. He had a breadth of vision and a tolerance that is rarely found, and a warm openness and sense of humour that was extraordinarily attractive.

In some ways I owe my own priestly survival to him. The late 1970s was a bad period for me. I had two rather bruising arguments with the then provincial and at one stage I was asked to leave the MSC house at Kensington. In the course of it all I met Frank, who was down from Darwin. He was aware of what was going on and without saying much he simply accepted me and thereby modelled a whole other way of being a priest.

That was his great strength: an ecumenical breadth and tolerance, a sense of humour and an ability to ride out problems. In a time of clericalism he was never a clerical priest nor a sanctimonious religious, nor did he take his extraordinary achievements or himself seriously. But he was also profoundly loyal to the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart.

For him the priesthood meant using all your gifts. He was a healer of both body and spirit. In the best sense he was a truly catholic man. ■

Paul Collins msc is a writer, broadcaster and priest.

A black and white photograph of Mahathir Mohamad, the former Prime Minister of Malaysia. He is shown from the chest up, wearing a suit, white shirt, and tie. He has short, dark hair and is wearing glasses. He is looking slightly to the right of the camera with a serious expression, his mouth open as if speaking. A microphone is visible in the lower right foreground. The background is a plain, light-colored wall. The image is framed by a green horizontal bar at the top and bottom.

Mahathir

Jon Greenaway profiles Malaysia's man of many masks.

ON AUGUST 8, Malaysia's former Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Anwar Ibrahim, was convicted of sodomising his family driver and was given a nine-year jail sentence. The presiding judge ordered that he serve the nine years after the completion of the six-year sentence he received for abuse of power in April last year. Anwar greeted the end of the 14-month trial with the same defiance he showed in the face of his initial arrest in September 1998.

Allowed by the judge to address the court in appeal for a mitigated sentence, he used the opportunity to chide the bench and point his finger at the man he says contrived the charges against him.

'There has been no trial in this courtroom, only political persecution. In Malaysia no-one is above the law, but that principle doesn't apply to Mahathir Mohamad,' he said, before the frazzled judge called an immediate recess.

Nearly two years earlier, at a press conference Dr Mahathir gave after the arrest of Anwar Ibrahim, the first issue he addressed was whether the incarceration of his former deputy was politically motivated.

'Some assume I am a dictator who wants to arrest my potential rival. At least one prime minister has already mentioned that,' he remarked. The 'one prime minister' was John Howard, who had commented on the drift towards authoritarianism in Malaysia that the initial detention of Anwar (without charge, under the Internal Security Act) represented. The Australian Prime Minister's statement was put to Dr Mahathir directly by an ABC journalist when he began answering questions. It was batted straight back at him.

'I think it is authoritarian when you make a decision without reviewing the facts ... the Prime Minister is wrong.'

This was Mahathir in typical form. For the two decades he has led his country, Dr Mahathir has eschewed the 'constructive engagement' approach to foreign relations and diplomacy in favour

of plain talking and, when it suits, a punch or two directed at critics and representatives of powerful interests.

He has constantly rebuked foreign media for their misrepresentations; during economic downturns in the 1980s and '90s, he accused industrialised countries and fund managers of colluding to prevent Malaysia's development; he lauds Malaysian society for its conservatism, distinguishing it from the West where, in his view, the cohabiting of unmarried couples and the acceptance of homosexuality is destroying the nuclear family.

Yet even his harshest critics would baulk at describing him simply as an irascible xenophobe—at least where the Anglophone world is concerned—as this is only one facet of a many-sided personality. And indeed he is just as capable of confronting his own, having often criticised his country's native Malay population for its sub-standard work-ethic and excessive reliance on government policies that discriminate in their favour. At a Kuala Lumpur conference in June, that brought together 56 Islamic countries, he denounced those in the Muslim world who turn their backs on modernity. 'Technologically backward and economically poor, we will slide further and further into depending on others for everything that we need,' he warned.

Parti Islam SeMalaysia (PAS) Vice-President, Mustafa Ali, speaking on the eve of the Anwar verdict, argued that the defining qualities of Mahathir's time in power have been the corruption and cronyism he has fostered. Businesses loyal to Mahathir and to the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO, of which he is president) have prospered through favourable government treatment. Favours have included bail-outs during the economic turmoil brought on by the 1997 financial crisis. Yet Mustafa Ali prefaced these remarks by saying, 'Dr Mahathir is undeniably a very intelligent man and a clever politician.'

PAS has been subjected to a verbal onslaught from the government. It has been linked to an attack, in July, on two army depots in the state of Perak by an extremist Islamic group, during which two members of Malaysia's security forces were killed. While his department worked on a paper outlining measures to prevent the use of religion in politics, Dr Mahathir made a public suggestion that PAS might be contemplating bringing the government down by force.

Following last November's national election, PAS has become the most powerful opposition group in Malaysia, tripling its number of seats in the national parliament. It is now in control of two state parliaments. Those results were achieved through greater support from the Muslim majority. Previous successes had come from a tactical

Chinese vote which sent a message to the ruling coalition.

IN HIS 1995 biography of Mahathir Mohamad, *Paradoxes of Mahathirism*, Dr Khoo Boo Teik portrays him as an amalgam of the themes that have marked his time at the helm: nationalism, capitalism, Islam, populism and authoritarianism. As an individual, Dr Mahathir has come to represent the Malaysian experience as much as he has influenced it, and that interweaving—national icon with medical doctor with political maverick from the rural heartland of Kedah—makes the job of pinning down the essence of Dr Mahathir Mohamad a difficult one.

'He seems to be most approachable when regarded as a series of personae,' Khoo writes, 'and most comprehensible when taken as a composite of personal and social paradoxes.'

Mahathir Mohamad entered parliament in 1964, having built a profile around the Kedah town of Alor Star through his medical clinic and political activities. It earned him the sobriquet 'Dr UMNO'. His first five years in politics were stormy—it was an era when

racial politics was at its height in Malaysia. In his first year he led attacks for the ruling Alliance on the Chinese-dominated People's Action Party of Singapore and its already formidable leader, Lee Kuan Yew. This was before Singapore was expelled from Malaysia in 1965. The controversy surrounding the National Language Act in 1967 and the Labour Party-led *hartal* (shopkeeper strikes) of the same year saw Mahathir, along with other Malay politicians, identified as Malay 'Ultras', a phrase coined by Lee Kuan Yew.

Mahathir would later claim that he was not anti-Chinese (the Chinese, at around 30 per cent of the population, were the most significant ethnic minority in numbers and had a strong grasp on the nation's wealth). His claim was that he only wanted to see Malays have a 'fair share'. Whether that was the case or not, Mahathir lost his seat in the 1969 elections when Chinese voters deserted him in favour of the PAS candidate. Most political aspirants would have remade at least their outward appearance after such an experience. Not Mahathir. He blamed Chinese voters for 'deserting' him and not only stuck to his tune, but played it louder.

It is not in Dr Mahathir's nature to back down, and in any case the political

several people were killed in a spree of violence that would see its reprise 29 years later in Indonesia. Parliamentary government was suspended by the regent sultan and an emergency administration took over.

Mahathir was pushing for an end to the Alliance, within which the major partner of UMNO was the Malaysian Chinese Association. He argued that they should not be represented in Cabinet because, as he told the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 'the MCA is not supported by the large majority of Chinese'. He suggested that the Chinese community was in some part responsible for the violence because it had asked too much of the Alliance Government and had pandered to the idea of setting up a Malay coalition in government. He brought his confrontation with the UMNO leadership to a head with a widely circulated letter that criticised its leader, Tunku Abdul Rahman, for not being in touch with the people, and called for his resignation. Tunku responded by having Mahathir expelled from UMNO.

Khoo suggests that, without the notoriety gained from his expulsion (during which he wrote his signature work on Malay aspirations, *The Malay Dilemma*), Mahathir might never have

who exploited ethnic tensions during the campaign. Perhaps deliberately, he fails to mention what happened after the poll, and argues that the near-split in the Alliance and the formation of a Malay coalition would have been a disaster for Malaysia.

'There would be a monopoly of power by the Malays, and they would use it to grab everything for themselves, including, of course, the nation's economic wealth.'

AN IMMEDIATE response to the ethnic clashes of 1969 was the implementation of an affirmative action program designed to give Malays a greater slice of the economic cake. Begun in 1971, its aim was to increase the economic share of 'bumiputeras' (Malays, who were then nearly 60 per cent of the population) from a miserly 2.4 per cent to 30 per cent. Non-bumiputeras (the Chinese and Indians predominantly) would see their proportion remain relatively steady, while the big drop would come in foreign ownership which was to be halved to 30 per cent.

When Dr Mahathir announced the end of the New Economic Policy, as it was known after victory in the 1990 national elections, its goal—to provide an economic solution to a political problem—had largely been achieved. Malays were better educated through preferential access, more were employed in the professional classes and they had a higher share of the nation's wealth. Whether or not government policy was directly responsible, Malaysia had not witnessed clashes between the indigenous and non-indigenous races, then or since.

'I look at what has happened in Fiji and I wonder, with all our flaws, that at least we have managed to avoid that,' says journalist and author Rehman Rashid. Rashid has set up a website entitled 'Agenda Malaysia', following others who are exploiting the rare opportunity the internet offers for free comment. He sees a Malaysia that is still relatively content with material success, that has seen the average income rise to US\$5000 a head. He warns, though, that in time the people will want something more.

'We've got the roads, we've got the airports, thanks very much, but the question is, where do we go now?

An internal challenge may come, but Mahathir has so successfully eliminated talented successors that those who are left are more accustomed to being led than leading.



climate at the time did not lend itself to reflection and reinvention. People were taking sides. The long election campaign had ratcheted up tensions between ethnic groups and their representatives. This culminated in an anti-Chinese riot by Malays three days after the May 10 poll. Houses and cars were destroyed and

become prime minister after he was re-admitted to the party in 1972.

It is interesting, then, to read Dr Mahathir's description of this period in Malaysian history in his explanation of national policy, *The Way Forward*, published nearly 30 years later. In a reproving, aloof tone he condemns those

Mahathir has flung the country into an industrialised future and this has bought him a generation.'

Rashid, as with many others, declines to give full credit for the successes of the New Economic Policy to Mahathir, as it was well in place when he became prime minister. Economic growth continued, however, and in conjunction with his long-time financial adviser Daim Zainuddin, Mahathir managed to drag Malaysia out of the slumps caused by the collapse in world tin and rubber prices in the 1980s, by providing government support for manufacturing. He lifted the *bumiputera* share in the economy through privatisations organised under the title of 'Malaysia Inc.'. And now, trading with a currency that analysts argue is undervalued because of a government peg that Mahathir brought in the day before he arrested Anwar, and with a rebounding stock market, the Malaysian economy is predicted to grow nearly eight per cent this year, according to the Malaysian Institute of Economic Research.

When the verdict on Anwar was handed down last month, observers looked at the streets, emptier and quieter than they had been in April 1999 when Anwar was given his first sentence, and wondered whether heavy police restrictions on assembly were really needed. Did the public really want an end to the draconian Internal Security Act? Did they want to overturn the curbs on media and the publicising of opposition parties? Or, most importantly, did they want an end to the two-thirds domination of parliament by the UMNO-led Barisan Nasional? That domination has allowed Barisan Nasional to change the constitution at will, as happened in 1988 when Mahathir sought to control the independent-minded judiciary by placing it under the control of the executive.

'Before the 1995 elections, we polled the people and asked them which party they were going to vote for,' says Mohamed Rahmat. As Information Minister, Rahmat had bombarded television screens and airwaves with jingoistic messages about Malaysian success. 'They told us that they did not care what the party was; they wanted to vote for Dr Mahathir. He is the most pragmatic leader we have had since the first prime minister and people appreciate the

changes he has made. Being Malays, we want to see deeds, not just hear words.'

Mahathir, if he has been anything, has been a man of action, but he has also cleverly manipulated the public's view of national events. Through his rise to power, that culminated in his succeeding Hussein Onn as UMNO President in 1981, and his tenure as prime minister



Dr Mahathir has eschewed the 'constructive engagement' approach to foreign relations and diplomacy in favour of plain talking and, when it suits, a punch or two directed at critics and representatives of powerful interests.

since then, Dr Mahathir has been able to dominate political debate by slipping one or more of the running themes of 'Mahathirism' into his belligerent rhetoric.

YET WHILE HE HAS proved himself a master of adaptation to the prevailing circumstances, he has, Khoo Boo Teik believes, begun a steady swing from the populism of the early days to the authoritarianism of recent years.

'His treatment of Anwar is the proof of this, and I think he has suffered a loss of legitimacy, a loss of credibility because of it.'

As Anwar Ibrahim began more often to contradict his leader's pronouncement on the economy and argue for greater openness following the 1997 crisis, critics were pointing to the government-sponsored bail-outs of companies that supported the ruling coalition. It is symptomatic, they said, of Mahathir's rule that only a few were really benefiting from the economic growth.

Perhaps the biggest group to enjoy favoured treatment is Renong, a company

that sells itself as 'the nation's building partner'. As the former investment arm of UMNO before being split from the party, it certainly was that. Before Anwar was arrested, Renong was suffering badly under the weight of excessive borrowing. In late 1997 a partially owned subsidiary, United Engineers Malaysia, bought up a third of Renong shares owned by

institutional investors, in a US\$700-million bail-out that was exempted by the government from normal takeover restrictions. The stock market plunged 20 per cent in response to the news that a sound company was being forced to assume the debt of a politically favoured conglomerate. \$100 billion ringgit were wiped off the stock market.

Even before his dismissal and arrest, Anwar claimed publicly that he wanted to see an end to cronyism and corruption. Having seen it first hand, perhaps he knew where the bodies lay. In his absence, the favoured treatment of Renong continued.

In May this year, Khazanah Nasional Bhd, a state-owned investment fund, began negotiations to acquire a 30 per cent stake in Time Engineering's telecommunications unit, Time dotCom, for about two billion ringgit, after a deal to have Singapore Telecommunications buy the stake fell through. When a government rescue package was hastily cobbled together, the *Asian Wall Street Journal* suggested that the Malaysian government officials had balked at the idea of

allowing Singapore to buy into the group that had the largest number of fibre-optic cables in Malaysia.

In some ways this episode highlights what Dr Mahathir wants to protect, moving forward to 'Vision 2020'. His goal, announced along with the end of the New Economic Policy and the beginning of the National Development Policy in 1990, is that by 2020 Malaysia would have caught up to the West.

Dr Mahathir has always favoured the grand scheme as a means to propel his country forward: the longest bridge, the tallest building, the highest flagpole. Those that were in the works in 1997 are now mostly on hold, but one he would dearly love to see completed is the 'intelligent city' of the future. It will run from the Petronas Towers in downtown Kuala Lumpur to a building site in the jungle, 40 kms to the south. The building site houses a partially completed, paperless administrative centre and a yet-to-be-built multimedia super corridor called Cyberjaya. The exercise will cost US\$10 billion and the government has been avidly courting companies like

Microsoft and Sun Microsystems to invest. If the project goes ahead, the fibre-optic cables would mean profit for Renong.

Dr Mahathir is 73 years old and even he admits that he will not be around for much longer. At the back of the nation's mind there has always been Mahathir's health—he underwent bypass surgery in 1989. Yet his casting aside of Anwar and his willingness to take on new challenges, such as that thrown up by the Islamist party PAS after the last election, suggests he has lost none of his enthusiasm for the job.

And there seems to be no immediate alternative. The Reformasi push for more openness and accountability in government is now being run by a coalition of opposition parties. But their ability to present themselves as a serious alternative is limited.

Prominent among them is Parti Keadilan Nasional (National Justice Party), set up last year before Anwar's first conviction for abuse of power and headed by Anwar Ibrahim's wife, Dr Wan Azizah Ismail. Veteran politician Chandra Muzaffar is her deputy and he also describes Mahathir as presiding over a culture that stifles dissent.

'We don't have a licence to publish our newspaper, even though we applied for one a few months ago. If we don't get a police permit to hold a forum or a public meeting—which happens very often—we are forced to cancel the event at the last minute. Many of our members and leaders had lost their jobs partly because of the harsh action taken by government bureaucrats or local-level politicians. Our supporters are sometimes harassed by the police or local-level authorities.'

It is symptomatic of Mahathir's grip on power that the only thing likely to prevent his choosing his own retirement date, or dying in office, would be another catastrophic failure in the economy or a split in UMNO similar to one he faced in the 1980s. Another meltdown is a possibility, given that many of the companies that made it big under 'Malaysia Inc.' have negotiated their debt with banks through bond issues, and so the government is gambling on growth. But, in the short term at least, things are looking good for Mahathir.

An internal challenge may come, but Mahathir has so successfully eliminated

talented successors, Anwar Ibrahim being the last in a long line, that those who are left are more accustomed to being led than leading. More than likely it will be the last of his 'anointed' successors that will be the next to preside—more through luck than political management.

AMONG THE FEW who have been free to make comment during the Mahathir years has been Instant Café Theatre, a satirical group that often pokes fun at politicians in its shows, including Dr Mahathir himself. Jo Kukathas plays a generic politician whom she adapts to fit the personality in question. She says the audience can pick when it's Mahathir when she tells them exactly what the news is and includes his trademark 'disingenuous' comments.

'It seems that he is the only person in Malaysia who doesn't understand what's going on in politics. He always answers a question with another question.'

One of her more popular routines is a version of Frank Sinatra's 'My Way', which is rumoured to be Dr Mahathir's favourite song.

Even though the group's routines are at times stinging parodies of national affairs (they do one very effective send-up of Mahathir and Anwar denying a rift between them just before the latter's arrest), they have not been muzzled. Dr Mahathir saw the show himself some years back. Jo Kukathas believes they are tolerated because they play only to small houses filled by the middle class and are not seen and heard by the whole country on radio and TV.

Kukathas concedes that Dr Mahathir is the consummate politician, but she also sees a shift—following last year's elections the Barisan Nasional won a two-thirds majority in the national parliament, but their percentage of votes dropped sharply.

'The Anwar saga has caused a shift in people's thinking. Mahathir's government realises now that they will have to be nicer to people and listen to them more.'

A new and improved 'nice' Dr Mahathir might be a rich vein for a professional satirist to strike. ■

Jon Greenaway is *Eureka Street's* South East Asia correspondent.

D J (DINNY) O'HEARN MEMORIAL FELLOWSHIP

Applications are invited for this fellowship from writers yet to become established. The successful applicant will be offered a **writer-in-residency** on a full-time or part-time basis at the Australian Centre, University of Melbourne, during first or second semester 2001, with **remuneration of \$3,000.**

Applications (4 copies), including a curriculum vitae, an outline of the proposed project and a sample of writing should be sent to:

Ms Rhyll Nance
Australian Centre
University of Melbourne
137 Barry Street, Carlton Vic 3053
by Friday 3 November 2000

Enquiries: (03) 8344 7021; e-mail: r.nance@arts.unimelb.edu.au

Application form and guidelines can be downloaded from the Centre's website: <http://www.australian.unimelb.edu.au/events/awards/>

All in the family

ON 28 JULY, the Federal Court upheld a complaint of discrimination made by a single woman who, with her doctor's support, had challenged the Victorian Infertility Treatment Act. This Act made her ineligible for treatment because she was neither married nor living de facto. The Commonwealth's Sex Discrimination Act makes it unlawful to distinguish between people because of their marital status: Section 109 of the Australian Constitution provides that where a State Act is inconsistent with a Commonwealth Act, the Commonwealth Act prevails.

What followed has profound consequences for both women and children.

The Prime Minister announced that the Commonwealth would amend the Sex Discrimination Act to let States discriminate, because a child had a fundamental right to expect the love and care of a mother and a father. His Health Minister went further, threatening to prosecute doctors who allowed 'fertile' women to use assisted reproductive technology or claim Medicare rebates. A week later, the Victorian Government announced that it would change its law so that access to IVF depended only on women being medically infertile or with genetic abnormalities.

The debate has raged about the 'competing' rights of children and of women who choose how and when to have children; about 'good' families and discrimination against lesbians and gays, with unedifying public polls on whether lesbians 'should' have babies; about government's role in defining what makes the 'right kind of family'.

IVF practitioners have pointed out that most single women and lesbians do not need IVF, because they are fertile: they seek donor insemination. By definition, heterosexual women who seek donor insemination are fertile too: their men are not, many because they had children in previous relationships and then had vasectomies. Donor insemination is not a major cost to the community.

The issue, though, is not the cost to the taxpayer, but rather the social and moral costs. 'Should' single women without male partners access sperm banks and relatively simple artificial insemination processes to



have chosen children? Those who say no argue that if we do allow it we have turned children into consumer goods. But children are already treated as commodities. Child-focused marketing of children's products is a billion-dollar industry. Any family lawyer sees warring parents turn their children into the prize or penalty by-products of their failed relationships. Parents can already choose not to proceed with pregnancies where the foetus might be born with a disability. Specifying designer-quality genes is simply the next step. And surrogate motherhood is a growing business.

Three months ago the international press ran the story of a serial surrogate mother who 'sold' her IVF-conceived twin girls on the internet, after the European commissioning parents wretched on their contract. The anonymous 'donor' gametes of selected ethnicity) decided that they didn't want girls. They invited the surrogate mother to abort. She sold the babies instead. A US lesbian couple adopted the twins. We can only wish them well. Those babies' human rights have already been dreadfully violated. They will never know their biological parents or ancestry. They have been denied their human right to an identity.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child protects this right, and imposes a duty on state parties to remedy that wrong. Yet in Australia, the only State that allows children born through IVF to have identifying information about their genetic parents is Victoria. The Commonwealth could enact laws giving every child the right to that information. But it won't. No federal government challenges the States on their failure to protect children's rights.

Reproductive technology *will* be used; people *will* go to desperate lengths to conceive a child, whether or not it is a

morally justifiable choice. We do not protect the public interest by driving the practice underground.

If we took children's rights seriously, any parent would be under an enforceable obligation—not a right—to be a part of their child's life: ordered to visit, write letters, come to school events, send birthday presents (they do this in Scotland). If we really respected the rights of children, no child would go to bed hungry and miserable and feeling unloved, because their parents were poor, or sick, or feckless, or in jail.

Mr Howard rejects any suggestion that the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child should have any effect in Australia. If he believed that the rights it enshrines were even as important as the sensitivities of the populist Chief Minister of the Northern Territory, he would have invoked the Commonwealth's powers, and the Convention principles, to override the Northern Territory's mandatory sentencing legislation. Since the legislation was implemented, there has been a rise of about 70 per cent in the imprisonment of Aboriginal boys. Mandatory sentencing has also led to a far higher imprisonment rate of Aboriginal mothers, up by more than 200 per cent. What kind of effect has that had on their children? We care more, it seems, about middle-class women forming particular kinds of families.

THERE IS A REAL RISK in allowing these amendments to the Sex Discrimination Act. If State or Territory governments were allowed to discriminate in access to medical services, it would be easy to justify discrimination in other areas.

Recognising a child's human rights does not deprive a woman of hers. We should implement the whole UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. We should start by promising all children, as the Convention's Preamble requires, that we will guarantee and be accountable for ensuring that they are all, quite simply, brought up in 'a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding'. ■

Moira Rayner is Director of the Office of the Children's Rights Commissioner for London.

It's what I do



Helen Ashwell

**Community Health
Worker in PNG**

**Salvation Army
member**

This month, Papua New Guinea celebrates 25 years of independence from Australia. Around 15,000 Australians live in Papua New Guinea and many of them work in development projects.

Peter Davis met one of them.

A HOTEL ROOM MAY NOT be an ideal home for everyone. But for Salvation Army member Helen Ashwell, room 308 at Port Moresby's Island Inn has been home for the past 13 months. It may be smaller than her permanent home in Sydney, but it suits her well. 'I prefer this to living on my own in one of the high-security compounds. I walk in here after a day's work and I am greeted by the staff. I can choose to be with people or I can be alone. In my line of work I find this very convenient.'

Helen Ashwell's name card reads 'Community Health Educator'. Her paid employment is as a team member of the Women's and Children's Health Project. This major development project is a collaboration between the government of PNG and AusAID—Australia's official government overseas development agency.

Much as she enjoys her hotel room, Ashwell spends considerable time travelling through the provinces of PNG. 'Most people in this country live in villages. I've written a manual for village birth attendants and now I'm developing resource materials for community activists. To do this I have to travel to villages to assess people's needs. The travelling can be rugged but I get to see a lot of this country.'

Rugged conditions have never fazed Ashwell. She was a midwife before she moved into health education and training. She doesn't know exactly how many babies she has delivered. 'Somewhere around two thousand,' she guesses. China, Indonesia and Ghana have been her spheres of activity. 'I lived in Ghana for six years. The political situation was so unstable I lived for six months with a packed bag in preparation for an emergency escape. We had some close calls and I saw some terrible things. There were many nights when we were surrounded by gunfire. I learnt to deliver babies under conditions that would be unimaginable in Australia. Often I would hold a torch in my mouth as I eased a baby into the world. I recall one particular night in which I delivered five babies.'

Ashwell's three siblings in Australia—two brothers and a sister—are all doctors, but she reckons she's performed more medical procedures than all of them put together. 'In countries like Ghana and PNG I've made decisions that someone in my position back home would never make. I've sewn people up, cut things out and helped repair major injuries. It's a question of survival really.' Her real-estate agent father wouldn't allow her to be a doctor. 'He thought I would fail and disgrace the family name. So I became a nurse. It's 30 years now since I graduated from King Edward Hospital in Perth—I'm not sure about the way they train nurses now at university. I think experience is surely the best teacher.'

Helen Ashwell was raised as an Anglican, but at the age of 13, she fell in with a group of missionaries on a school holiday camp. As a young adult she joined the Salvation Army and has maintained her commitment ever since. 'I do feel a calling to what I do. I'm not into converting people. But I do like to share my faith. In Port Moresby I attend church every Sunday. The singing is wonderful. It gives me a lot of energy and it's a great way to meet other people.'

Ashwell left Australia 25 years ago. Apart from short visits at Christmas, she hasn't really lived here since. 'I do find the emphasis on material life in Australia hard to cope with. But I love Australia and I don't want to be one of those people who can't settle down because they've been away too long. I'm looking forward to returning to my home in Sydney. I'm not far away from retirement, but I can't imagine not working. I'll probably do some consulting on health issues and some voluntary work in the community. And I'd like to write a book. I've seen a lot over the years.'

Development workers—the big picture

It's hard to say how many Australians are actively employed as development workers. Estimates vary between five and ten thousand. They are employed directly or indirectly through more than 50 aid and development organisations. And they are spread across more than 65 countries. Some are engaged as volunteers through such organisations as Australian Volunteers International or through AusAID's new Youth Ambassadors scheme. Volunteers are usually attached to a local organisation and live on a local wage (with some allowances). Other development workers are engaged as project officers in non-government organisations such as Community Aid Abroad or World Vision, or through Australia's official government overseas development agency, AusAID. Financial remuneration for salaried development workers varies dramatically depending on the employer. Such workers can earn from below the average Australian wage to six figures with tax-free allowances.

Many Australian workers in the development sector are committed to using their skills for the betterment of societies less fortunate than their own. A recent United Nations Human Development Report revealed that while Australians have risen to fourth on the human development index, an increasing majority of the world's population are sliding further into poverty. According to Jim Redden, Policy Director, Australian Council for Overseas Aid (ACFOA, the umbrella representing Australian aid organisations), over one-third of the world's population does not have enough to eat while every day 30,000 children die from preventable diseases.

ACFOA encourages the Australian government to help alleviate global poverty by adopting the following measures:

- Support deeper and faster debt relief for developing countries.
- Work for fair trade agreements that benefit the poor and open rich-country markets to the exports of developing countries.
- Reverse its opposition to a global currency tax that would redistribute wealth to the poor.
- Increase our level of overseas aid (currently at its lowest level in history) to at least 0.4 per cent of GNP.
- Support enforceable international codes of conduct for multinational companies.

Peter Davis is a Melbourne-based writer and photographer. He lectures in professional writing at Deakin University and Photojournalism at Photography Studies College.

The new Iran

There's a time lag in the Western view of Iran. While we think in stereotypes and Ayatollahs, Iranians are making their own future in surprising ways.

HISTORY MARCHES on in spite of summits. At Camp David, the talks between Israelis and Palestinians ebbed and flowed. In the deliberate seclusion of Okinawa, the G-8 summit focused on building bridges between rich and poor countries—bridges which may ultimately prove unstable.

And yet, it is not in a presidential retreat near Washington or in Okinawa that historical changes, if any, will take place. Middle East peace will be won or lost on the streets of Gaza, Tel Aviv, Jerusalem. Promises of debt relief will mean even less unless they affect the lives of ordinary people in Lagos, Kampala or Niamey.

the end of Islamic rule were rife. More significant and immediate was the often-overlooked fact that Iran had evolved into one of the more democratic states in the Middle East, that the overwhelmingly young population of Iran had found a voice amid the constraints of a revolution that had never been theirs.

In the ancient mud-brick city of Bam, I spoke with Mehdi, a 20-something local who, like many in Iran, was keen to discuss politics. He was a young boy at the time of the 1978–79 Revolution. His memories are a tapestry of competing images—excitement, optimism, the power of Islam. He described the songs of his youth. They speak of the omni-

take over the government. 'This is the way of Iran.'

Elsewhere—on the streets of Iranian cities and towns—you hear the same subversive streak. It makes a mockery of the stereotypes of monolithic and faceless Islam. In the public forum, the subversion is manifested in the proliferation of newspapers defiantly critical of the theocracy ruling Iran. It is also clear in the genuine and widespread expression of support for President Khatami.

In private, the resistance is more subtle, more mundane, but also ultimately more effective. One Iranian woman, Maryam, told me that Iranians hate to be told that something is forbidden and will automatically seek to undermine the prevailing edicts which curtail freedom—edicts about alcohol or dress, for example. 'First the Shah forced women to remove the chador, so many started to wear it. Then the mullahs told us we must wear it so we try not to whenever we can. If there were no laws, some would wear it and some wouldn't. When will they realise that Iranians will not be forced into anything? That is why things will change. This was their Revolution, not ours.'

Ali, in the town of Kerman, couches his resistance in religious terms. 'In Iran, we are Shi'ite Muslims. As Shi'ites, we believe that every day we must progress and become new. The government wants us to stand still in the past. This is not the Shi'ite way.' Ali has watched from within the changes wrought by the Revolution. He has endured official suspicion and imposed unemployment because of his perceived connections with foreigners. With a hint of bitterness,

Iran is more than Islam. Its heritage—magnificent architecture, literature and religious tolerance—continues to have a firm hold over Iranian society. The largest annual festival, No Ruz, is not an Islamic holiday but one originating in the Zoroastrian faith, which is practised openly in Iran.

Iran is a compelling study in how lasting change is often more a question of evolution than revolution, of creeping shifts in national dynamics rather than summits between the world's most powerful men.

When President Hojjat-ol-Eslam Seyyed Mohammed Khatami was swept to power in Iran in 1997, predictions of

potence of Islam, the blood of the martyrs, dire warnings to the enemies of the Revolution. The optimism remains, but in a radically different form. With a smile as wide as the citadel of Bam, Mehdi told me that the government and the people have always been separate, parallel maybe, but that it is inevitable the people will slowly



Photograph by Luis Ascui

he spoke of his friends' leaving Iran for a better life. 'I was the one who stayed behind and had to survive.' Still, he remains optimistic. 'Life is a series of rises and falls. For 20 years we have been down. Things will again rise. The people will rise. I hope my friends will come back. I have lost too many friends.'

Iran is also more than Islam. Its heritage—magnificent architecture, literature and religious tolerance—continues to have a firm hold over Iranian society. The largest annual festival, No Ruz, is not an Islamic holiday but one originating in the Zoroastrian faith, which is practised openly in Iran. Almost as powerful as religion is the poetry of ancient Persia—Omar Khayyám, Ferdousi, Sa'adi, Háféz. It is not unusual to come across groups of Iranians in the *chaykhane*s, or teahouses, reading or reciting from memory the poetry of Háféz.

Another Ali told me that in Iran a house must have two things: 'First the

Quran, then Háféz.' In an ancient underground teahouse of vaulted ceilings, elegant archways and discreet alcoves, I was initiated into the charms of Háféz. His couplets resonate with the imperatives of kindness.

On his recent visit to Germany, President Khatami unveiled a statue in the town of Weimar: two chairs facing each other, one representing Háféz, the other Goethe, for whom the Persian poet provided profound inspiration. The monument is a public avowal of President Khatami's policy of encouraging 'a dialogue between civilisations'. Many Iranians, and perhaps even Khatami himself, read the unveiling as a more subtle indicator of change: the poetry of Háféz is a radical challenge to oppression and religious rigidity.

In the *chaykhane*, Ali read aloud, without so much as a look over his shoulder:

The religious man who shows himself
to be high

knows nothing about the people and
how they live ...

And:

It is better that the powerful pay
attention to the weak
For power does not last forever ...

'Just like in Iran,' said Ali.

It would be wrong to suggest that change in Iran is coming easily. The conservative opposition to change within the religious establishment is considerable and still powerful. Reformist newspapers have been closed in recent months and their editors imprisoned on charges of propagating discord against the Revolution. A court in Shiraz imprisoned a number of Shirazi Jews on charges of spying for Israel, sentences which have attracted international condemnation. The reformist-dominated parliament, or *Majlis*, remains subservient to the Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei (successor to Ayatollah Khomeini); the

unelected Council of Guardians and the Revolutionary Courts both claim to be the protectors of the Revolution.

In the beautiful city of Yazd, one of the oldest inhabited cities in the world, I found myself temporarily arrested by soldiers of the visa office suspicious of my questions about visa extensions. Little was likely to happen to me, but it still took some discussion, often heated, to secure the release of my interpreter, who was tainted by his proximity to a potential enemy of the Revolution. There was hostility, a sense of floating menace in search of a target.

In Kerman, the Tourist Office doubles as the 'Office for the Supervision of Foreigners'.

This official mistrust stands in stark contrast to the openness of ordinary Iranians, almost to a person warmly ingenuous and hospitable. Mehdi, Ali, Mohammed, Elham, Maryam, in a humbling dance of a thousand kindnesses. Where are you from? Australia, Holland, America. You are welcome in Iran. You must come to my house for dinner. My home is your home. Mehdi of Bam identified the greatest mistake of the Revolution as its forgetting of the age-old Iranian motto: a strong Iran at friends with the world.

My experiences with Iranian officialdom indicate the uncertainty generated by ongoing upheaval, the government's creeping loss of control over the Revolution, and its inability to understand who the enemy really is.

At the other end of the political spectrum, there is a small but growing band of former supporters of President Khatami who have become disillusioned with the pace of change. While the mainstream reform movements move cautiously in an attempt to minimise the backlash from conservative clerics, some, like Hossein in Shiraz, have become impatient about the dividend of reform not being more apparent. 'This is rubbish, that we must move slowly.

Medicine is no use if you are already dead.'

THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT that ownership of the Revolution was once the sole preserve of the mullahs from the holy city of Qom. These clerics based their appeal on the powerful Shi'ite motif of the 'righteous-wronged', claiming for themselves the victory denied to the martyrs, Ali and Hossein, who were treacherously denied power in the early years of Islam. Every year, in the month of Moharram, the ceremony of Ashura re-enacts a passionate reaffirmation of allegiance to the wronged of Islam, the Shi'ites.

A younger generation of Iranian Shi'ites, the new generation of the righteous-wronged, have started claiming a similar link between the conditions of their own oppression and the Shi'ite legacy of throwing off the shackles of unjust rule. By asserting their allegiance to the integrity of Shi'ite history, the reformers have diluted the appeal of a

clergy who have traded on their self-appointed monopoly over righteousness. By aligning themselves so closely to temporal power, and by exercising it so rigidly, the Shi'ite clergy have become associated in the popular mind with oppression and the misdeeds of the powerful.

In the same way that ownership of Shi'ite history is asserted by competing strands of Iranian society, the poetry of Háféz has been appropriated by reformers and conservatives alike. Clerics claim he was an Islamic poet. Reformers contend that he was a religious subversive. Háféz and the Quran: the two elements of an Iranian house divided and jostling for ownership not just over the disputed facts of history, but over the right to call themselves the true inheritors of the legacy of the Prophet Mohammed, of Ali, of Háféz and the rich history of Persia. It is a corrosive but liberating battle, the resolution of which may already be found in the poetry of Háféz:

I have received word
that the sad times will come to an end.
As time did not stop before
So it will not stop now.
Even if I am made low and people mock
me,
He who is now high will not remain
high forever ...
In my view, whatever I choose will be
correct. ■

Anthony Ham writes on the politics and culture of the Middle East.



Men of hospitality

Living and proclaiming God's hospitable love

As lived out by St John of God over five centuries ago, our vocation is to give of ourselves completely and freely; to be a brotherly presence; a symbol of hope for the world; proclaiming God's hospitable love to all.

We are called to a charism of hospitality and love that promotes healing,

advocacy and reconciliation for those marginalised by our society.

Our core of hospitality compels and urges us to depth our relationship with God, ourselves and with those whom we share our lives, community and ministry.

We are the: 'Brothers of St John of God.'

Will you dare to accept God's invitation to a life dedicated to hospitality?

If so please contact:

Br. John Clegg OH.

Vocations Director.

PO Box BN 1055,

Burwood North. NSW 2134

Australia.

Telephone (02) 9747 1699

Facsimile (02) 9744 3262

Email provincial@stjohn.com.au

Website: www.stjohn.com.au



Is the university finished?

IS THAT AN hysterical question? Quite a few people, I suspect, will think it is, and I'm sure that many will think it hyperbole, intentionally provocative. To show that it's not, I'll describe two quite different institutions not far from where I write this—the University of Melbourne and the Australian Catholic University.

Melbourne University is a member of a group of eight universities which seek to distinguish themselves from others by standards of the kind that are now measured by the Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DETYA). It is embarked on a project to improve its performance as measured by those standards, hopeful that it will join the ranks of the great international universities. There can be argument, of course, about whether it measures itself realistically, even now, according to local standards, and also about whether it can realistically hope to achieve the international standing to which it aspires. For the sake of the argument I'll assume it is right in its assessment of itself and realistic in its ambitions, and that much the same is true for the other seven.

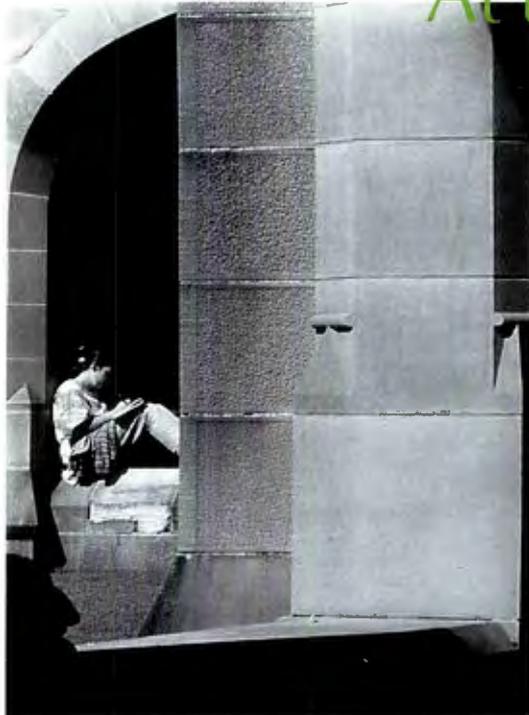
I'll assume too that the example of the eight will invigorate other institutions and inspire them to higher performances measured by much the same standards.

That being so, how can it possibly be a serious question whether the university is finished? Are universities not set for a new renaissance?

The form of the answer I think is pretty obvious. The institutions that make up the group of eight are set to flourish as one kind of institution of what is often called higher education. Whether they are thereby set to flourish as universities depends on whether they flourish according to a serious conception of the university, one that requires more than success as a high-flying institute of higher education and research. And it should also be obvious that many people who have spent their lives in universities believe that the practices and the ideals which regulate even the group of eight are to some degree inconsistent with such a conception and actively erode it. Of course there is controversy about this.

An analogy might make the conceptual point more vivid. Imagine a nation which had over a long period lost its identity, a loss which was partly the cause and partly the effect of demoralisation and cultural atrophy. After a time it is colonised by a foreign power that promises it renewed vigour and wealth. To achieve that, it is told by the colonisers and their local administrators,

'At the beginning of the day and at its e the good we see in the life of the



it must overcome nostalgia for the past and learn to speak a new language, one more suited to the new enterprise culture. Naturally enough, many people in the nation welcome this, dismayed by the rot of the old culture. Younger citizens especially have little living idea of what the values of the old culture were. Old and young both become administrators of the new colony. Soon the old language disappears except in pockets where it fails utterly to engage with the new one. The values it gave life to seem anachronistic.

That is pretty much how I see the universities. Long before the 1980s 'reforms' of Labor's Minister for Education, John Dawkins, they lost their way, lost any serious sense of what distinguishes them from other institutions of higher education. Now they have been colonised by managerial newspeak, and it is almost impossible to articulate the deeper values that are essential to their identity. (I call it managerial newspeak, intending all its derogations, because it obliterates important distinctions, seeing almost all the ways in which human beings organise themselves as forms of management. It's a form of barbarism, because as G.K. Chesterton put it, 'Civilisation is suspended by a spider's web of fine distinctions'.)

Defence of the colonising regime is often marked by illiteracy concerning the concept of the university even among the older administrators who claim they understand it and say that it has had its day. Younger people have little idea of it

and are therefore inclined to believe that appeal to it is elitist nostalgia.

In a recent article in *Policy* (Autumn 2000), Lauchlan Chipman, Vice-Chancellor of Central Queensland University, says, 'Although as scholars and researchers we may squirm at the suggestion, knowledge is a commodity in the classic economics textbook sense.'

He would be right if he meant only that knowledge can be described that way (up to a point) for the purposes of slotting such descriptions into economic theories of one kind or another, and managerial talk of one kind or another. What he neglects to say, however—and the neglect is astonishing—is that there are other descriptions of knowledge and the search for it that are in tension with—some are inconsistent with—their description as commodities.

All sorts of tensions exist between seeing someone as a student and seeing him or her as a customer, and between seeing someone as a teacher and seeing him or her as a provider of commodities. The ideals and responsibilities that are internal to a conception of teaching as a vocation are deeper and at critical points inconsistent with responsibilities that are owed to customers. Students are described as customers because customers know how to demand value for money. Customers typically know what they want and what counts as getting it. The trouble, however, is that students are often initiated into things they don't understand and which take time to understand, things which often they had not even dreamed existed. How often does one hear it said of teachers that their value was not appreciated until years afterwards? If we describe students as customers, we will not create a suitable form of accountability. We will only make many of their teachers servile, pandering to their students rather than rising to their responsibilities to them and to their disciplines.

ONCE WHEN I despaired of teaching, a fine teacher told me that there are two ways to think about teaching. One is to dream of pulling a switch that will make a thousand lights come on. Another is nourished by the image of passing a candle from one person to another, or of planting seeds, not knowing when or where they will grow. It was the wisest

advice about teaching that I have ever received. Afraid to be unpopular among students demanding their consumer rights, how many teachers will risk planting seeds?

TAKE NOW THE Australian Catholic University. Like many—most?—of the institutions granted the title 'university' by Dawkins, it has not been able to rise to its demands. Most, if not all, of the Dawkins universities are universities in name only. This is not their fault, or not for the most part. They were practically oriented institutions, oriented in the case of ACU to teaching and nursing. During the '60s many of them recruited staff in the more theoretical disciplines—philosophy, psychology, social science—partly because it was widely believed that these disciplines would deepen practical training. Because of the shortage of jobs in the universities, the staff recruited to those positions were often as good as many in the universities—perhaps not as good as in the very best of them, but certainly as good as in many which had no reason to be ashamed of their standards.

Pre-Dawkins, the institutions that became Dawkins universities often did those things that constituted their identity—teacher and nurse training, for example—very well indeed. Now they find themselves judged according to standards appropriate to a university and, therefore, often at the bottom of various lists determined by those standards, to the chagrin and humiliation of the staff and the students. Understandably, they feel that if they are to be judged by those standards then they will press for inclusion in the concept of what belongs to a university, what they had previously excelled in.

Sometimes this is justified, but mostly it is not. Recently I provoked outrage by suggesting that because universities are homes to forms of the life of the mind, nursing is not a university discipline, no matter how much intelligence is necessary for it, and no matter how much science a nurse now needs in order even to be competent. I thought that to be relatively uncontroversial. I was naive, however, not to expect considerable hurt and anger, for where have nurses to go now that the institutions in which they were honoured

nd, we must speak, in the first person, about mind.'

are all called universities? To say what I did seems to suggest that they are second-class citizens in institutions which only a few years earlier celebrated their achievements.

That nursing is not a form of the life of the mind is not thereby a reason for excluding it from universities, for universities have always included the professions. People used to argue about whether engineering, and even medicine or law, were properly university disciplines. Those who warm to the expression 'elitist nostalgia' point that out, again and again. Never before, however, did such professional courses determine the idiom, set so much of the tone, transform the language, and set the goals of the institutions to whose essential identity they had previously been marginal. In the process, they have forced the essential disciplines of the humanities and sciences—philosophy and physics, for example—to become mendicants for a respected place in institutions which should honour them.

IT WAS PREDICTABLE from the outset that divisions of the kind Dawkins set out to obliterate would reassert themselves and, up to a point, I think it is right that they should. The title 'university' will not, however, be taken from the institutions to which he gave it. It is therefore hard to see how the elite eight can think they could distinguish themselves from the Dawkins universities by appeal to a serious concept of the university. You can't keep appealing to a word whose meaning (if it is remotely continuous with its past meaning) excludes the vast majority of the institutions with that name, unless you invoke the word just to point that out—to point out that the majority of universities are universities in name only. But nobody will do that.

As for the Dawkins institutions themselves, some will and some will not aspire to the title, or perhaps more realistically, some parts of them will and some won't. But while they are under the yoke of market imperatives, they cannot really develop those parts of themselves that would earn them their right to it. To the contrary, they will bring in outside money to the extent that they excel in just those subjects which had in the past distinguished them from universities, or subjects of the same kind. The government

and the eight will then say to them, 'This is what you do well. Stick to it. Don't aspire to excel in philosophy or history. Leave that to us.' The members of the School of Philosophy at ACU, for example, are, in my judgment, equal to many in the departments of some of the pre-Dawkins institutions. Under pressure to bring in money in order to survive, the School will channel its efforts into those practical branches of the discipline—business, medical and educational ethics, for example—thus compromising, perhaps beyond redemption, its capacity to establish itself as a serious school of philosophy. A similar story can be told, I'm sure, about other disciplines in many Dawkins universities. Most of them seem, however, to be sleepwalking to the fate that the elite eight and the government have in mind for them.

Does it matter? I think it should, even for those who, like myself, believe that the Dawkins 'reforms' were a mistake. Now, so many years down the track, after so much enterprise and hope have gone into the aspirations of at least some of the Dawkins universities to become real universities, it would be a terrible waste if we did not seek imaginative ways of realising those aspirations. But that will take more imagination, courage and heart than the present regime is likely to nourish, let alone inspire.

If I'm right in suggesting that the many differences between Melbourne University and ACU—differences that justify Melbourne's claim to be part of a small elite—don't add up to the difference between a real and a counterfeit university, then what makes for the difference?

I don't want to be misunderstood on this matter. I think those differences are for the most part real and important. Nonetheless, standards of the kind that set the eight apart are consistent with a philistine conception of the intrinsic value of academic work. These standards lack any serious conception of why they should nourish the life of the mind beyond nourishing just those intellectual capacities which enable academics to produce work of the highest standards as measured by DETYA.

There are standards and there are standards. There are high standards as measured by Australian Research Council (ARC) applications, by refereed



journals and so on, standards which place Melbourne University near the top of one hierarchy and ACU near the bottom of it. And there are high standards as shown in the spiritual relation to the practice of a discipline. The second will include anything that matters in the first, but not vice versa, and concentration on the first can often undermine the second. In his notebooks, Wittgenstein agonises over whether his work is infected by a dishonesty born of vanity. Seen in the light of the concept of an academic vocation in service to a love of truth, that is no more than should be expected of one who is lucidly mindful of its requirements. But in the light of the concept of a career or a profession, and certainly in the light of a conception of oneself as a provider of services to customers, it is likely to appear neurotic or precious.

The belief (true enough as far as it goes) that the Dawkins institutions are not up to standard is not the belief that they did not meet the standards that had, just as a matter of fact, been achieved in most of the pre-Dawkins universities. It is the belief that they are the standards that are necessary for an institution justifiably to call itself a university. Why?

Part of the answer is that such standards are necessary if a university is to contribute to our knowledge and understanding of the world. Already, however, after the expansion of universities in the '60s and '70s, it became implausible to say that most academics were capable of making such contributions. And if there is a distinction to be

'Now universities have been colonised by manageri articulate the deeper values that are essential to

made, as I urge there is, between high-flying research institutes which also do some teaching, and universities, then it looks implausible that the distinction will depend on the ways they contribute to and disseminate knowledge.

I won't explore the many possible responses to those points. Let me cut quickly to the chase. The difference between high-flying research institutes which sometimes teach, and something that answers to the tradition of thought which took seriously the idea of university is, I think, that the latter, but not the former, requires most of its members to be reflective about their disciplines. It requires them to consider the relation of their discipline to other disciplines in ways that go beyond whatever need there is for such reflection to further the development of their disciplines.

But, in a university, that requirement is part of another: that most of its members reflect on what it means to live the life of the mind, on the place and value it can have in a human life. If that is true, then I think it follows that members of a university have to be capable of engaging with the best work in their disciplines, but it does not follow that they must be able to advance their discipline. They need only be capable of participating in a conversation with colleagues who can and do advance it and also of participating in that conversation, differently but indispensably, with students.

It was evident, again long before Dawkins, that the privileges of university life were often abused. Many of the great satires on university life—*The History Man*, for example—were written in the '70s. Everyone has stories to tell of incompetent teaching. Moreover, one has reason to suspect that the education industry is particularly self-serving. It is notable that one of the first fruits of mass education has been considerable contempt for education, for teachers in schools and universities. Grant all that.

Even so, can anyone really refuse to acknowledge that our measures of accountability almost always degrade academic life? Publish or perish, for example, inevitably tempts academics to cut their subjects down to their own size in order to secure the number of publications per year necessary for promotion or even to keep their jobs. The grant system in Australia is even worse. But I don't

want to labour this. Everyone knows that we are caught up in lunatic schemes of accountability made necessary by the huge expenditure on universities and that we can't find our way to sanity.

One of the finest academics I have known spent a large part of his sabbatical reading, but not writing. There came a time in his life when writing became very difficult, but in my judgment it did not diminish in the slightest his stature as a teacher and as a colleague. Often I would fall silent listening and marveling at his scholarship, penetration, wit and audacity as he piled irony upon irony. I cannot say that for many of my colleagues, including those who publish often.

WAS THERE EVER A conception of the university, taken seriously by serious people, in whose light one could soberly ask whether most institutions presently called universities deserve the name? There was. It made it possible for people to say that one can't have a university without a philosophy department, or without a history or physics department. There was, of course, argument about what a university could be without and still be a university, but these were arguments about the institution's identity, not merely about whether it would be good to have philosophy, history or physics, for example, in this or that institution of higher education. And when people said that hospitality and accounting, for example, are not subjects to be taught in universities, they didn't mean that their presence would be detrimental to an institution conceived merely as an institution of higher education. They knew it might be good for such an institution because, for example, much needed money might flow to it.

It takes time to learn what a university is, and one cannot learn it from outside. It is learning that comes from inwardness with value slowly perceived through living the life of the mind in community with fine exemplars of it, and learning which awakens desires we never had in response to value we had never before seen.

Dawkins' restructuring, and the colonisation of universities by the agents of managerial newspeak, could not have happened if there had been serious resistance. Cowardice is part of the

reason why there wasn't. But accusations of cowardice can rightly be defeated by sincere protestations that the things for which one was asked to sacrifice oneself and one's prospects weren't worth it, weren't sufficiently valuable. Few people would have said outright that the old ideal of a university wasn't worth defending, but there was plenty of confusion about what it was, and the language in which its treasures could be identified and appropriated had long gone dead on us.

In the '60s, when the universities were enlisted to support the revolution, or more modestly the cause of social justice, I remember how lame the defences were of courses that were not strictly relevant and, more generally, of the intrinsic value of study. Such defences amounted to the claim that the intrinsic value of study was a higher pleasure. Understandably enough, many people thought that could be sacrificed to the interests of justice. And my appeal to the concept of a higher pleasure, first introduced I think by John Stuart Mill when he attempted to explain why the life of a Socrates dissatisfied was preferable to the life of a pig satisfied, suggests that our troubles go back a long way indeed.

Again, long before Dawkins and long before Chipman's defence of managerial newspeak, academic unions offered descriptions of academic life and work that made them indistinguishable from factory life and work. It is not surprising, therefore, that both managers and academic staff in universities ceased to see their first responsibilities as being to their disciplines—responsibilities conditioned by the fact that those disciplines were practised in a university. As much as straightforward cowardice, that tempted academics to betray their disciplines and their institutions for the sake of keeping their jobs.

What is to be done?

First, we should tell the truth. More simply, we should stop lying about the compromises and betrayals that have been made for the sake of keeping jobs. The soul-rotting mendacity that pervades university has created terrible cynicism, which erodes our capacity to keep our attention on the highest ideals of the university. Cynicism erodes the trust necessary to learn from example. Mendacity corrupts the conceptual space

al newspeak, and it is almost impossible to their identity.'

in which examples may speak to us, and show us value where we had not seen it before and values we had not before understood, or even dreamed of.

Second, we must argue for and about what we value. At the beginning of the day and at its end, we must speak, in the first person, about the good we see in the life of the mind. Of course we must seek to understand the social context and social causes of where we are, but if we are to understand where we now are, we must be able to offer an analytic description of the decline of the concept of the university. That is not a value-neutral exercise. And it would be absurd to think we could characterise the concept of a university, its history and its decline, independently of other values, values that have changed over the history of the concept and which some accept and others reject.

Disagreement about what we value in the university and about the values in which competing conceptions of the university are embedded will go deep. I believe, for example, that the deepest value of academic study for its own sake is interdependent with a conception of the love of truth, or as Simone Weil says, with an understanding of the spirit of truth in love. I think of that as a spiritual conception though I don't mean that it relies on speculation about metaphysical or supernatural entities. Were I to try to teach someone the meaning of the word 'spiritual'—or one of its meanings—disassociated from vulgar speculation about things that go bump in the night, I would point to examples of the love of truth, among other things. But of course all that is controversial and, although it doesn't depend on metaphysical speculation, it is embedded in many other values that some people find alien.

THERE ARE ALSO DEEP arguments to be had, within the humanities, about the nature of the humanities, and between the humanities and the sciences. In this country there has been no real engagement between philosophy and cultural studies, yet in the distance between them we find some of the biggest and most difficult questions.

In those arguments it will be important to recognise the diversity of institutions that are home to different

forms of the life of the mind and also institutions which are essentially vocational. The university is one kind of institution in which the life of the mind may be lived. It is by no means the only one, nor should it be a model for all institutions of higher education. On one side of it stand research institutes, on another, training institutes, and on another, important forms of non-institutional intellectual life, from whose perspective academics will often seem strange, even buffoons. Academics have always been (and often deservedly) the butt of jokes and I am sure that will not change while they are true to the essentially otherworldly nature of their calling.

There is, I think, a widespread misconception about the public role of the university. When a university provides students with a space that protects them from the pressures of the world—and from the pressures which conspire to make them servile, doomed to repeat what their elders have done, or to live the lives bureaucrats and politicians have planned for them—then it fulfils its primary public obligation. It is a space in which they form new desires and ideals in the light of values that they had probably not dreamed of and certainly never before fully understood. A preoccupation with relevance is a preoccupation with present interests, and if one panders to it, one binds students to those interests and limits their vision to the values they express.

It might at first seem like a paradox, but their freedom is best preserved when the past becomes alive for them, when past and present become for them an extended continuous present and they feel themselves to be members of a community of the living and the dead. They may then be able to distance themselves from, and to see from many perspectives, the preoccupations of the present which would otherwise overwhelm them, making them, in the pejorative sense, children of their times. The unworldly nature of all this should not be an embarrassment to academic administrators and to those who devise curricula. To the contrary, it should be celebrated as of the essence of a university and its public duty.

In the end I think we must reduce the number of universities. That could not be done justly, however, unless universities were to cease to be part of the



search for social status. In one way or another, it has been the drive for status that has transformed and ruined our universities, and it is this that gives the ring of truth to talk of elitism. Everyone pays lip-service to the fact that the value of a life should not be determined by one's social ranking, but as Simone Weil said, quoting a Spanish song, 'If you want to become invisible, then there is no surer way than to become poor.'

It is the condescension they suffered that drove nurses, for example, to seek higher pay and to become professionals, with university degrees. What is true of them is true of many who wish to be in a university rather than a technical college—they would like to have a degree rather than a diploma.

Unless we strive to create a society whose institutions reveal rather than obscure the full humanity of all of human beings, a society in which a university degree confers no special status, then the pejorative connotations of the word 'elitism' will still attach, if only just a little, to those who invoke the concept of a university to distinguish some institutions of higher education from others. ■

Raimond Gaita is Professor of Philosophy at Australian Catholic University and Professor of Moral Philosophy at University of London, King's College.

This article will also appear as part of a discussion in *Arena Journal* No. 16.

Ecumenical acumen

What happens when an Anglican Primate and a Catholic Archbishop hit the road together? Maggie Helass reports.

TWO AUSTRALIAN Archbishops are talking up church unity in the wake of an international summit of Anglican and Roman Catholic dignitaries in Canada.

Anglican Primate Archbishop Peter Carnley (below) and Brisbane's Roman Catholic Archbishop John Bathersby together drafted the joint statement 'Communion in Mission', endorsed by the summit in Mississauga, Ontario.

church unity (while the other bishops went to see Niagara Falls), but he and Dr Carnley are confident that 'Communion in Mission' will breathe new life into Roman Catholic/Anglican relations.

'We noted that ARCIC has been the conversation of theologians,' Dr Carnley said. (Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission is a dialogue between the two churches which has

sign a Joint Declaration of Agreement setting out 'our shared goal of visible unity, an acknowledgment of the consensus in faith that we have reached, and a fresh commitment to share together in common life and witness'.

Charles Sherlock, since 1991 one of eight Anglican theologians engaged in the ARCIC talks, says that the bishops have pledged to deliver the fruits of 30 years of theological dialogue to the rank and file of the church. 'It is time to stop being just friendly and start being practical,' said Dr Sherlock. He suggested that Roman Catholic bishops could, for a start, take their Anglican peers with them on their obligatory visits to the tombs of Peter and Paul in Rome—an appropriate venue for an ecumenical pilgrimage.

Invitations have kicked off on a more sober note with Dr Carnley raising the possibility of inviting Archbishop Bathersby to the next Anglican Bishops' Conference.

In spite of historical antagonisms, friendships have long been forged between the two churches. In Brisbane during World War II, Archbishops Duhig and Halse went every week to a matinee at the Rialto cinema together—but never entered each other's churches. Following Vatican II, Brisbane Archbishops Frank Rush and Sir John Grindrod signed a pledge to work together to heal past enmities between their churches. In June this year, Archbishop Bathersby preached at Brisbane's Anglican Synod Eucharist.

Anglican and Roman Catholic bishops in Newcastle worked together during the BHP ironworks closure. In



The May meeting of 26 prelates from 13 countries was convened by Cardinal Edward Cassidy, President of the Vatican's Council for Promoting Christian Unity, and Archbishop of Canterbury George Carey.

Archbishop Bathersby says that it was hard work drawing up a plan of action for

been going on since 1966.) 'We felt that, as bishops, we now had to take a role in ... promoting practical steps forward.'

'Communion in Mission' is backed up by a 15-point action plan, which includes a new Joint Unity Commission to be set up by the end of this year. The document also recommends that the two churches

Melbourne strong friendships developed between Roman Catholic Archbishop Frank Little and Anglican Archbishops Robert Dan and David Penman. In Melbourne's Anglican cathedral, a chapel for unity was blessed by the Pope in 1986. Cardinal Clancy has issued joint statements with Sydney Archbishops Donald Robinson and Harry Goodhew. Sydney is also the venue for the ecumenical Halifax-Portal Lectures inaugurated in 1996, the centenary of Pope Leo XIII's Papal Bull which declared Anglican Orders to be 'totally null and utterly void'. (Lord Halifax and Abbé Portal held ecumenical conversations between 1921 and 1926).

ARCHBISHOPS Bathersby and Carnley first got to know each other in 1997 during a trip to East Sri Lanka's war zone, where they represented the National Council of Churches. Archbishop Bathersby looked down the barrel of a gun for the first time on their route to Batticoloa. 'We prayed all right. It's the first time I've been in a war zone and I did feel the fear of it on occasions. We were over there without special privileges. They wanted us to experience what the people were experiencing. So as a result there was no carpet rolled out for us in any way. We went through the checkpoints that the people had to go through on a daily basis ... with very nervous young soldiers who had their guns trained upon us in the van that we were travelling in.'

'Communion in Mission' affirms the role of the bishop as a symbol of unity, but Archbishop Bathersby is undismayed at the controversial role his brother bishop is playing on the national stage. 'I admire Peter. I found him very easy to work with ... He's got a great flair for the English language and he has a very organised mind ... I think he's very eager to allow religious debate to engage Australian society, and quite obviously if you are going to do that then certainly there is always the element of controversy that will follow him. There is that tension between a focus of unity and trying to lead forward without alienating sections. That's a challenge that every person in leadership has—particularly bishops of the church.'

What role could the church take in public life? It would be naive to conclude that the Corroboree 2000 walks in



Ecumenical toss: Archbishops John Bathersby and Peter Hollingworth taking Shrove Tuesday (but not their head gear) seriously.

Sydney and Brisbane (the largest since the anti-Vietnam demonstrations) were just a vote for indigenous rights. No doubt individual motivations varied, but it seems likely that 'reconciliation' was the Trojan Horse for mass disillusionment with a political process which has become the playground of economists. People are manifestly fed up with trading morality and ethics for consumerism and expediency.

People are also on the move in France, where rallies demonstrate against McDonald's—the ultimate affront to French culture. In England last year, a quarter of a million people marched to support the rural way of life. In Seattle, internet activists in huge numbers picketed economic summits.

The Jubilee Year could prove to be a pivotal moment for the Church in Australia, which is, after all, the largest

ON 4 JUNE IN CANBERRA, eight national heads of churches got on a bus and set out for Uluru. The 3166km pilgrimage through Narrandera, Griffith, Cobar, Wilcannia, Broken Hill, Peterborough, Port Augusta and Coober Pedy, ended at Pentecost at the red heart of the nation.

Aboriginal elders in Narrandera sent message sticks with the party, which included the Rev. Shayne Blackman, chairman of the National Council of Churches (NCCA) Aboriginal and Islander Commission.

For six nights, between Canberra's Government House and the fireside at Uluru, the 26 pilgrims were hosted by local churches.

Anglican Primate Dr Carnley was impressed by the vigour of church life outback. 'There was clearly a lot of ecumenical activity generated by the journey in among these local communities. There was also a remarkable number of indigenous people very naturally involved in the worship, and leading parts of it, and in concerts.'

Of the pilgrimage he says, 'It wasn't just a busload of tourists. Somebody said that "tourists pass through places, and places pass through a pilgrim".'



Archbishop Peter Carnley, Custodian Reggie Uluru, Rev. Shayne Blackman and pilgrimage director, Rev. Tony Doherty.

It was Dr Carnley's first visit to the centre. 'I've seen plenty of photographs of Uluru, but it is much more awesome than I imagined. When we first got there—we went round it in the bus—what struck me was how different it all is at different places, and how the light changes on it as you move around it. It is a very awesome spot, and clearly, if it has spiritual significance for Aboriginal people, for those of us who come out of the Hebrew Christian tradition with our view of God as the Rock of our Salvation, then here is a very tangible rock which speaks of the timelessness of our God too.'

A Pentecost liturgy of reconciliation with the Mutitjulu people, a Lutheran community, took place round a fire.

'I think the liturgy was a bit wordy and a bit long for the Aboriginal people, who about half way through sort of sat down round the fire and warmed themselves and watched us—others joined in. It was a typical Aboriginal event from that point of view. Very free and easy.'

The pilgrimage made an unscheduled stop at Woomera on 8 June, the day refugees broke out of detention there. Assyrian Orthodox youth representative, Deacon Genard Lazar, an Iraqi, knew two of the refugees and led prayers for the detainees—whose plight church leaders promised to follow up. ■

and oldest grassroots organisation in the country.

At his installation as Primate in Sydney's St Andrew's Cathedral, Archbishop Carnley drew attention to Czech poet and politician Vaclav Havel's address to the US Congress after the end of the Cold War. The Marxists mistakenly thought, Havel said, that if you get the outward material circumstances of human beings right, then right thought, right values, right morality, right human relationships and right culture would follow. 'And it is something for us to learn,' Carnley said. 'For we currently often hear the view expressed that if we can get the economy right, then everything else will fall happily into place. Thus, Aborigines are told that what they need is housing and health services and all will be well.'

'There is no doubt in my mind that better housing and vastly improved health services are certainly needed. But something else is missing, something to do with consciousness—right fundamental attitudes, generosity of spirit, an open preparedness to acknowledge and honour original custodianship of the land, and to own the many injustices of dispossession.'

In a word, spirituality is the nub of the matter.'

IN 1987, as preparation for the Australian Bicentenary, churches published a commitment to justice for indigenous people. 'A Just and Proper Settlement' was a joint statement by the Australian Council of Churches' Commission for Church and Society, the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace and the Uniting Church in Australia Social Responsibility and Justice Committee. It pledged to support Aboriginal Australians' right to self-determination; entitlement to restitution; right to land; and the protection and integrity of indigenous culture.

Thirteen years later, churches have made some progress with public education on land rights, with advocating justice as the basis for reconciliation, with liturgical acts of repentance for past wrongs. Consultation and transfer of church-owned land, where appropriate, to Aboriginal communities has proved less popular.

In Brisbane, one of Archbishop Bathersby's parishes found themselves in a messy controversy over a piece of

church land on the Redcliffe Peninsula at Kippa Ring. Archbishop Bathersby takes up the story. 'But the parish wished to sell that land in order to rationalise the church presence there, and consulted and sought advice from Aboriginal people before they moved ahead with the sale ... And so, having received advice and without a great deal of involvement about where the sacred land was supposed to be there, the parish eventually went ahead and sold the land.'

The sale generated a public stoush with the Foundation for Aboriginal and Islander Research Action (FAIRA).

Bathersby does not underestimate the problems of cross-cultural dialogue. 'When you try to get the opinions of Aboriginal people ... It's very difficult because of the tyranny of time.'

The Brisbane Archdiocese is currently pursuing a project to mark the church's commitment to reconciliation by setting apart a lawn with Aboriginal symbols in the grounds of St Stephen's Cathedral. But most of the site is heritage-listed and legal advice does not favour the church's chances of clearing land for the garden. In this instance the Archdiocese shares the frustrations of indigenous people over red tape.

Archbishop Bathersby concedes that the church has much to learn. 'You learn how difficult it is when you try to respect the rights of indigenous people with regard to prior ownership—you consult, consult, consult—even at the end you may come up with nothing.'

ENGLISH IS THE language of negotiation with indigenous groups, which gives the false impression that everyone is speaking the same lingo. Misunderstandings are magnified in the western venter of reconciliation's public environment—courts, board rooms, media conferences, television documentaries—where indigenous people have to convey their message in a foreign language.

Dr Carnley was at Corroboree 2000—centre-stage between ATSIC chairman Geoff Clarke and fellow-West Australian and Aboriginal activist Mick Dodson. He fears the reconciliation debate could get bogged down in disputes about the meaning of the word 'treaty'. However, he believes that a document is necessary. 'When Australia was settled by whites in

1788 they were commanded by the British Crown to seek permission of the original occupants and that never happened. Some kind of document making up for that omission I think is necessary.'

(King George III instructed Captain Cook: 'You are also with consent of the natives to take possession of convenient situations in the country in the name of the King of Great Britain, or, if you find the country uninhabited, take possession for His Majesty by setting up proper marks and inscriptions, as first discoverers and possessors.')

A language to interpret people's experience religiously is on Dr Carnley's agenda. He thinks people are more religious than they are aware—he was delighted with the letters he received from declared non-churchgoers following his appearance on the ABC's *Compass* program in May.

He takes his Eastertide spat with Sydney Evangelicals a step further in his mission to bring orthodoxy to the common weal. 'The predominant biblical theme (of the Atonement) is the sacrifice—which involves the concept of the Son's self-giving. It has nothing to do with the Father punishing the Son.'

'In one sense, the concept of sacrifice belongs to the ancient world. Because we don't belong to that world we have difficulty with it. Just let's think of this idea of sacrifice—every time you see a First World War memorial there it is, the supreme sacrifice. It is a word that *has* currency in the modern world ... I think it's a concept that is really very important religiously.'

This kind of language evidently reaches more ears than the average sermon. Dr Carnley found 300 letters waiting for him on his return from Canada, though not all of them were fan mail. 'One man I've had about three or four letters from ... and clearly he's changed his mind on a number of issues. In the first letter he was very hostile. I think anybody who sits down at a typewriter and writes two pages of letter asking questions—and is clearly confused—deserves ten minutes to try and sort out a few points ... Anyway I'm going to try and respond to people.'

An influential body of opinion holds that the church should sort out its own divisions before it declares its opinions on the national stage.

Archbishop Bathersby preached in Brisbane's Anglican cathedral in June, but he did not make his communion there. 'Deep down it's not about the actual validity of the eucharist, it's a matter of what full, visible communion means. The Roman Catholic approach is that you can't have full visible communion without the sharing of the eucharist—but we haven't reached that stage yet ... and we have to experience the pain. And it really is pain. It really reduced me to tears over there (Canada), the fact that we were worshipping together and yet we were separated.'

Normally Anglican clergy will extend an invitation to communion to any visitors in the congregation who are communicants in good standing in their own church. But Archbishop Bathersby stresses how touchy the invitation can be. 'In some ways that becomes a difficult matter when there are Catholics out there because some of them do go up to accept communion, others don't. Archbishop Carnley has said to me that he's written to his clergy to say to be enormously sensitive about extending an invitation ... particularly if there are large numbers of Roman Catholics in the church.'

CLERGY CELIBACY IS one of the sticking points between the churches. In what seems a cruel twist, significant numbers of married Anglican priests have been accepted into the ordained ministry of the Catholic Church at a time when hundreds of Catholic priests have been forced to give up their priestly ministry to marry. Archbishop Bathersby is acutely aware of the problem. 'I get letters constantly about that from priests who are married. I'm aware of that pain that it causes there. The only thing is that Rome says that this is an exception to the rule of celibacy. If the spouse were to die in that particular marriage, well, there wouldn't be permission for the Anglican married priest to remarry. I'm very conscious of the pain it's caused.'

'What we are moving towards is a married diaconate in Brisbane. There already are a number of married deacons in Australia ... We see it as a way of lifting some of the sacramental burden off the priests.'

Maggie Helass is a Brisbane journalist.

Dawn Casey

Suzanne Edgar profiles the Director of the new National Museum of Australia.

A COUPLE OF YEARS ago a senior Canberra public servant confided to me that the best and fairest boss he'd ever worked for was a woman called Dawn Casey. I arranged to interview her. My first impression, of an attractive, youthful person, smiling and remarkably relaxed, has not changed over time. She was then in the Department of Communications and the Arts and busy planning a theatre for Aborigines to present their life stories. The theatre was to be part of the proposed National Museum of Australia (NMA) in Canberra. Her principal goal, Ms Casey said then, was to change society for the better. It still is.

In the course of her long career Dawn Casey has received three Commonwealth Public Service Australia Day medals. Perceived as an effective 'trouble-shooter' in April 1999 while the new museum was still being built, Casey became its acting director and on 18 December 1999 she was elated to find herself confirmed in that position. The job presents an ideal opportunity for her to achieve her goal.

Many people in the wider community are now asking, who *is* Dawn Casey?

On 12 March 2000, Canberra's 'birthday', Casey, who is a Catholic and a board member of the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture at Barton, ACT, was keynote speaker at an inter-faith gathering to celebrate the founding of the capital. She praised the ACT Legislative Assembly's unanimous motion (1997) that 'we are deeply sorry', to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and urged religious groups to keep the 'stolen generation' debate alive; she deplored mandatory sentencing.

Unlike many successful women I've met who have been excessively duchessed, Dawn Rosemary Casey shows none of the arrogance of a duchess. Although she claims to be shy, she appears confident, self-possessed, open and friendly. When asked about her life, however, she is quicker to praise older, disadvantaged women like her mother, who struggled to raise seven children, than to describe her own career—one which has profited from the opportunities available to women of her generation.

Casey is now a proud grandmother, but her early life and that of her first family spanned difficulties common to many indigenous Australians in the 20th century. Her father's mother was Aboriginal and his father was an Irish station owner in the Normanton district of Queensland. Dawn's father was therefore deemed a 'half-blood' and at 11 he was removed from his mother's care to work on the station. He became a stockman and champion rodeo rider.

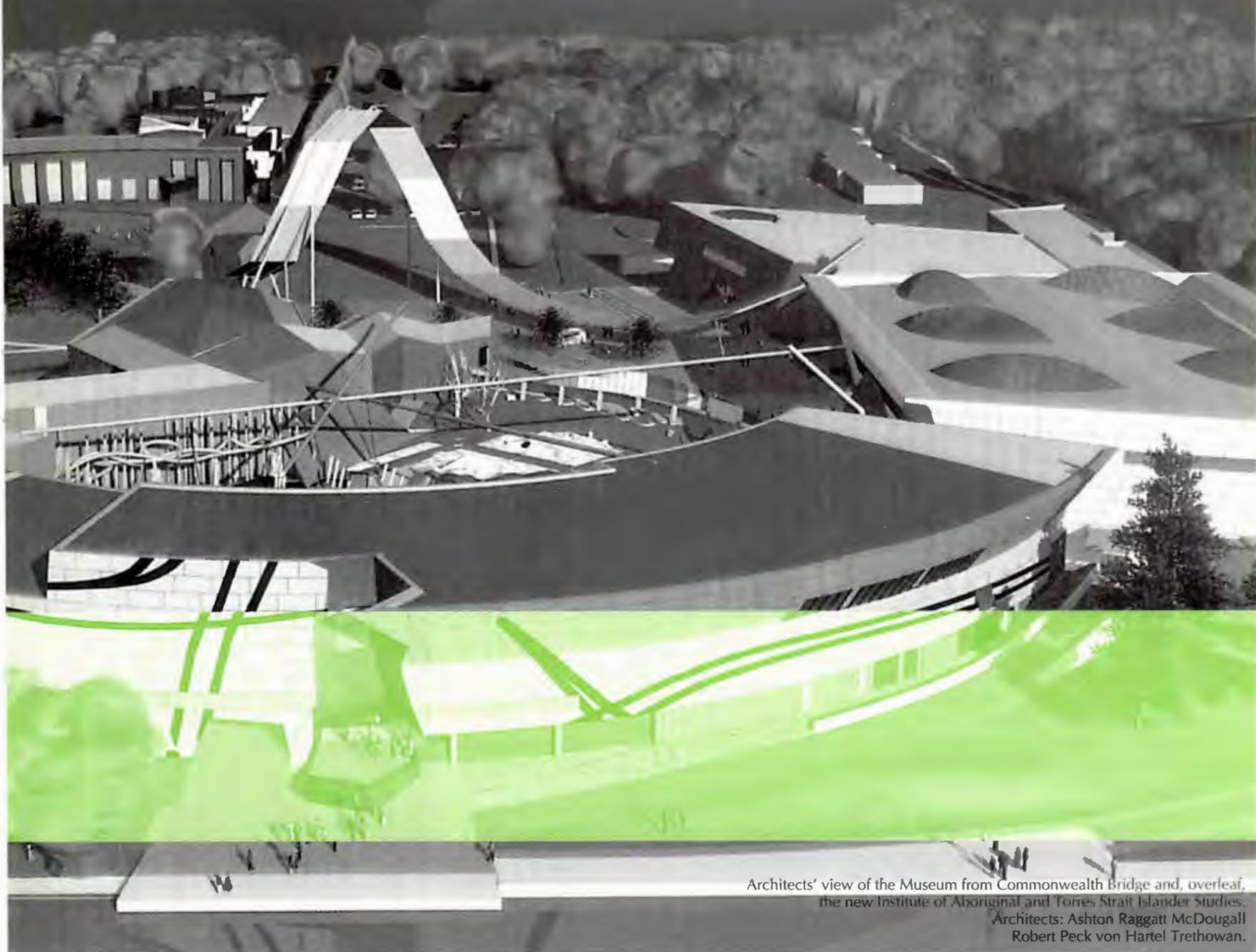
Dawn's mother's mother also lived on a north-western Queensland cattle station. After suffering a broken hip, she was sent for treatment to the infamous Palm Island reserve (near Townsville) where the residents' liberties were severely limited. She was unable to return home to her children and Dawn's mother did not see her for about 25 years. Neither of Dawn's parents had the opportunity to learn to read and write.

When Dawn's mother grew up she was, like all Queensland Aborigines then, controlled by the *Aboriginals Preservation and Protection Act 1939*, which prohibited movement from her place of work without government permission.



She lived on a station near Croydon which, like Normanton, is inland from the Gulf of Carpentaria. While holidaying further south at Mareeba, famous for its annual rodeo, she approached a solicitor who showed her how to apply for an exemption certificate; the notorious 'dog tag' would grant her normal citizenship rights. Her application succeeded and about 1949, having placed her son in boarding school, she moved south.

On 9 November 1950, at Rockhampton, her second child Dawn was born. Her father was later to marry her mother, but at that stage her mother was alone. She took the baby to Cairns and rented a room across the road from a Chinese café. Here she worked while Dawn lay in her basket out the back. It was a bold move by a bold woman; there were few Aboriginal families in the town.



Architects' view of the Museum from Commonwealth Bridge and, overleaf, the new Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies. Architects: Ashton Raggatt McDougall Robert Peck von Hartel Trethowan.

Clearly, her mother's energy and determination are in Dawn Casey. During her childhood, she was twice beaten up badly: once by Aboriginal kids, once by white kids. Her mother always responded, 'Don't whinge to me. Learn to stand on your own two feet.' Tough. Casey became a leader, at the Central School and at Cairns State High School. She feels lucky to have grown up at a time when education was compulsory for *all* Queensland children. She believes this benefited her compared with those Aborigines who grew up on outstations where they learned only the tribal language.

Dawn gained a diploma of secretarial studies from Cairns Business College and married for the first time at 17. She has one son. In 1974, aged 24, she became one of the first Aborigines to enter the Commonwealth Public Service. As a

clerical assistant, receptionist and typist she joined the local office of the Federal Department of Education and Youth Affairs. While working in Brisbane in 1977-78, she did some anthropology and linguistics at university, but a transfer back to Cairns in 1979 put an end to study. Having responsibility for student travel meant that she lived for short periods in the Torres Strait Islands. In 1984, with her marriage breaking up, Casey transferred to Canberra.

That year she was seconded from the Department of Aboriginal Affairs for a seven-month stint as public relations and protocol officer at the Louisiana World Exposition in New Orleans, United States of America. Back in Canberra, Casey rejoined Aboriginal Affairs. In 1991-92, in the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, Casey headed the

unit providing secretariat service for the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation (established 1989). She also advised the prime minister on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues and co-ordinated the government's response to the report of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody.

THEN CAME A change of direction. From 1995 Casey was assistant secretary, heritage branch, in the Department of Communications and the Arts (now Communications, Information Technology and the Arts). Cathy Santamaria became a mentor. Casey's *ex officio* duties included chairing the Heritage Collections Council, the Historic Shipwrecks Committee and the Built Heritage Committee. She was also chief general manager of the task force set up

to build the circa \$155.4 million NMA (began February 1999).

After much argument, Acton Peninsula, jutting into Lake Burley Griffin, had been the site chosen for the museum. When it opens on 12 March, Canberra Day, 2001 it will be the federal government's major enterprise to celebrate the centenary of federation.

GREAT IMPORTANCE is placed, these days, on the 'public face' of big cultural institutions. No doubt it suited the government to choose a woman who was not only super-competent, but who had Casey's profile and background, to head the NMA. She reminded me that the directors of the older, state museums are all male and most have a PhD; so she has good reason to be proud. Her initial appointment was for a three-year term, causing rumours (wishful thinking?) about her future replacement by a director with curatorial training.

When the new acting director took over, she inherited a condition of dangerous inertia and, as she puts it, 'hit the ground running'. The optimum cooking time for an exhibition is about three years. She faces a 'horrendous program from now until the opening' and both her second husband and her garden are lucky if they see much of her. During a spell in hospital (postponed because of work pressure) late in 1999, Casey continued working indefatigably, by telephone.

By October last year, due to poor geological conditions and contamination of the land, the project had outrun its budget and construction was about four weeks behind. This despite the fact that, like the director and most of her curators, the builders were working extended hours and seven-day weeks. In mid March 2000 the auditor-general reported that the project was still seven-and-a-half weeks behind schedule and \$1.5 million over budget. The construction timetable had been revised three times and the project managers now anticipated a completion date closer to the time of the official opening. The parliamentary public works committee, however, concluded that given the project's size and tight timetable, the department had managed it well. This is partly due to the alliancing approach chosen for construction.

The Acton Peninsula Alliance is the delivery team undertaking the design and

construction of the museum and a new home for the 40-year-old Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) being built nearby. AIATSIS is the country's leading centre for research into indigenous affairs and includes a Native Title Research Unit, Aboriginal Studies Press and a Family History Unit. Prior to the start of building, in July 1998 AIATSIS sponsored a smoking ceremony conducted by local traditional owners, Ngunawal people, to ritually cleanse the peninsula.

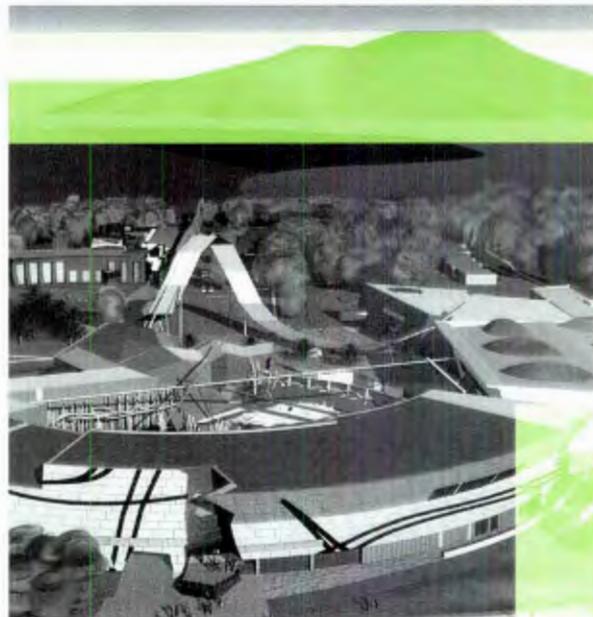
The project alliance method is innovative. The Queensland University of Technology, the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology and the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation are all recording the experiment. The alliance comprises the architects Ashton Raggatt McDougall, and Robert Peck von Hartel Trethowan (post-modernists, again); the contractors, Bovis Lend Lease, Tyco Australia Pty Ltd and Honeywell Ltd; the exhibition designers, Anway & Co.; and the clients, the federal and ACT governments. All partners in the alliance have contributed financially to the undertaking and are jointly responsible for the results. Contractors and subcontractors belong to one big contract and litigation is prohibited within this 'no dispute' culture. Both risks and rewards are shared. Savings are shared 70 per cent by the contractor and 30 per cent by the government; cost blow-outs of up to \$7.2 million are funded 30 per cent by the government and 70 per cent by the contractors. Above that figure, the government pays.

OVERWORKED AS SHE IS, Casey happily assumes a public persona to popularise her museum. She is aware that in Canberra its image had been damaged by the 1997 demolition of the Canberra Hospital, previous occupant of the site. During that demolition, 12-year-old Katie Bender was killed by flying shrapnel from the explosion and the whole city went into mourning. The accident exacerbated feelings already aroused by the relocation of the museum from Yarramundi Reach, also by the lake. Many Canberrans, including the eminent prehistorian John Mulvaney, had opposed that relocation.

Dawn Casey intends to dispel these unhappy ghosts. She acknowledges Canberra people's attachment to Acton

Peninsula and hopes to create a cultural precinct there. In no way obliged to, she has included Mulvaney in meetings to discuss the museum's progress and now even that doughty intellectual warrior is eating out of her hand and advising on content. He has praised her willingness to listen.

With all the cost and time problems, alliancing has not ruled out tensions within the museum's organisation, presently housed in city offices. While



staff are working extremely well together, under pressure, there has been a lot of restructuring; people hired on short contracts have not been renewed and their skills have been lost. This has engendered an atmosphere of insecurity.

Casey's reign was initially marked by approachability, but this may have diminished. While one staff member rated her management skills highly, another thought them middling and others are less polite. Casey has been known to deliver crushing news about funding cuts to the program of an individual curator publicly rather than, tactfully, behind closed doors. Perhaps this was meant to warn everyone not to become too specialised, too attached to favourite programs. As director, Casey has to maintain a balance in what is displayed. Indeed, she is conscious herself of a need to restrain her natural interest in indigenous affairs.

The museum's staff includes many PhD graduates, the place providing a

natural feeding ground for those denied posts in the country's shrinking academic history departments. Some of these people, often left-wing and trained to approach history via argument, want 'issue-based' displays. They mistrust the celebratory treatment of Australian history and fear that this theme may produce over-simplified exhibitions. To Disney-fy or not? That is the question, and one that caused some conflict in 1999. Like the boss, few of the curators

opening will embrace the safe but rather hackneyed subject of gold. It will also be costly (about \$3 million). One can hardly blame the government and the director, for wanting to make a Big Splash for the opening. This has meant that smaller projects have been slashed to fund it. In 2001, 'Gold and Civilisation' will be followed by 'Lost Kingdoms' (July–August), about Australian megafauna, and 'Journeys Into Space' (October). Except for 'Gold' (organised for the museum by Art

the fact that nobody in Australia has done anything quite like this before. The older State museums focus on mainly natural history; this one will cover the human story.

Casey's four senior managers have fine reputations: Dr Stephen Foster, in charge of content development and technology, began his career as an academic historian before running his own commercial operation, Australian Heritage Projects Pty Ltd. As general



have tertiary training in cultural heritage management. Furthermore, most of them lack Casey's long experience within the bureaucracy, serving political masters of either party. There has been huff, and grumbling in corridors.

A conservative government is sponsoring the NMA (Keating wouldn't have a bar of it) and has lobbied supporters like David Barnett, Christopher Pearson and chair Tony Staley (minister for the arts in the Fraser government) on to the museum council. Casey finds Staley excellent to work with. One would expect these appointees to have a sharp nose for political correctness and any 'black armband' presentation of Australian history. The council vets all exhibition content and design. Yet Casey is adamant that the government exerts no 'editorial' power over her and argues that the council represents the range of views out there in the community.

The politically neutral 'blockbuster' show planned to follow the museum's

Exhibitions Australia), all exhibitions are being developed by the Anway team, in America. That team has been criticised for a bland style and for an alleged lack of knowledge of Australian history and society, criticisms that may derive from the anti-Americanism common among Australian intellectuals. The leading American museums have a very pure sense of history and take the subject seriously. Other curators have found the American designers quite willing to be taught about Australian history. In at least one section, Anway had to go ahead and design a space for an exhibition when, due to staff turnover, the content of it had not yet been worked out—quite a handicap.

Doubtless many of the disputes amount to little more than the teething problems normal during the erection of a large, new cultural institution; especially one with the capacity to convey powerful messages about our past. The problems are compounded by

manager, commercial and operations, Greg Andrews comes from the National Gallery of Australia. Freda Hanley, previously at Griffith University, Queensland, runs collections and corporate services. Dr Darryl McIntyre oversees public programs.

IN THE COURSE OF Tony Staley's address to Queen Elizabeth, along with an audience of Torres Strait Islander and Ngunawal people, in the museum's Main Hall on 27 March, he quoted a leading architect's view that the museum would do for Canberra what the Opera House has done for Sydney. Kookaburras in the surrounding trees shook with laughter. But jokes aside, the two buildings *are* similar in the way they relate to their geographical locations.

On Sunday 12 March the site was opened to the public for the first time. About 8500 Canberrans flocked to look and lunch on sizzled sausages. Casey was there, working alongside 200 volunteers

who guided visitors around. The sunny, picnic atmosphere generated a mood of optimism and excitement reminiscent of the days when the new parliament house was going up. People strolled about, inspecting AIATSIS (accommodated in a separate, two-storey building overlooking the lake through tall trees) and the arching, steel shell of the museum buildings. These are further down near the point and are deployed in a horseshoe shape that follows the contours of the peninsula and encloses the central 'Garden of Australian Dreams', a distinctly cloying title. The Aboriginal concept of the Dreaming is frequently misused and sentimentalised; although the garden's name was probably chosen to avoid such abuse, it sounds like something from a theme park.

Unlike the cultural monoliths across the lake, none of the museum buildings rear up to dominate the skyline. The Burley Griffins' drawings for Canberra showed cultural palaces around the lake, but theirs hugged the shoreline. They were never intended to challenge the blue backdrop of mountains around the bush capital. The new museum's roofs will not rise far above the fine old trees, a mix of the native and the imported, which already adorn its site; these will be augmented by new planting. A broad band of gravel, red like the inland, will run through the grounds in a direct line to Uluru and the heart of the country. Access to the peninsula will be by car, bus or paddle-steamer.

Visitors will arrive first at the 1000-square-metre space for temporary exhibitions, close to the administrative area. Nearby is a broadcasting studio. In this, a Northern Territory dance ceremony can be brought into the museum and new material from it can be transmitted immediately to the territory; and outfits like School of the Air can readily be involved. Casey is determined to make the museum available to isolated Australians. Visitors will proceed through the semi-circular building to the 1000-square-metre Main Hall, lit by skylights and massive windows. Outside the hall is an amphitheatre where up to 2000 people can watch performances of dance and concerts. After the main hall comes the rotating Crossroads Theatre, a venue to introduce the museum's themes of land, nation and people; and the Visions

Theatre, which will screen the orientation presentation on a continuous loop.

The museum will have over 4000 metres of permanent exhibition space in its six galleries. Initially these galleries will contain: 'Eternity: stories from the emotional heartland of Australia', curator Dr Marion Stell; 'Tangled Destinies: land and people', curator Dr Mike Smith; 'Horizons: the peopling of Australia since 1788', curators Foster and Dr Nicole McLennan; 'Nation: symbols of Australia', curator Guy Hanson; 'Discovery Spaces: Story Place, Our Place', specifically for children (curator not revealed); and, the grand finale, 'First Australians', in the Gallery of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, curator Margot Neale. As with the garden, there is a B-grade movie, or greeting-card, tone to a few of those titles. In 'First Australians', visitors will be welcomed by Ngunawal people before seeing ancient artefacts juxtaposed with scenes of contemporary indigenous life. The gallery will include a repository for sensitive artefacts, only accessible via small, monitored tours.

THE MUSEUM HAS been collecting material since its foundation in 1980. Among items in store are: 110,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artefacts, including about 95,000 stone tools ranging in size from tiny backed blades to an axe-grinding stone almost too heavy to lift; Australia's largest collection of bark paintings; convict paraphernalia; prints and lithographs (1798-1876) featuring early European images of Aborigines; material from federation ceremonies; migrant documentation; protective garments and equipment from the 1994 Sydney bushfires.

In May this year Casey visited Brazil, Canada and the USA where at Baltimore she attended a conference of the American Association of Museums. She was impressed by the spread of IMAX theatres in museums and was a member of a panel discussing 'disaster preparedness'. The panel envisaged a pastoral role for museums. The speakers concluded that museums could better serve their communities by helping victims of fire and flood to restore and archive personal items; and that museums should step in to persuade local governments not to automatically destroy damaged buildings where it might be feasible to conserve and rebuild.

Beyond the NMA's opening, Casey has plans for an archaeological exhibition and conference in 2002 that will emphasise the *southern* hemisphere. In Europe, archaeologists quibble about whether dates for human habitation go back 12,000 or 12,500 years, ignoring the fact that in Australia, habitation has been fixed definitely at 40,000, possibly at 60,000 years or more. She also intends to stage public lectures and discussions covering history 'as it unfolds'; topics of national relevance will be argued by leading thinkers with diverse views. It is never a bad thing to extend our public intellectual life beyond academic confines.

As it is planned, the museum looks bright. By contrast, in the museums of my childhood, one could drift and dream, often in semi-darkness, among the dusty exhibits. This sparked the growth of an imaginative empathy with the insects, butterflies and birds of our country and with other peoples, whether in distant regions of Australia or remote lands. Our new keeping-place will certainly not resemble those dim and musty institutions. They, however, did not compete with rival bodies for high visitor numbers, as if touting for business or selling 'product' to fill a city's hotels. Already the NMA is running an 'outreach' program, involving an archaeologist and an Aboriginal expert in tools and weapons visiting Canberra primary schools.

A poll this year found that most Australians respond negatively to the word Canberra and this result does not surprise those of us who travel in the outlying states. Partly because journalists use 'Canberra' as synonymous with the federal government, many Australians confuse the city with the politicians sent here from the states. Yet most respondents in the poll reacted enthusiastically to the term 'the national capital', associating this with cultural institutions which elicit feelings of pride and communal ownership. Sir Robert Garran, who drafted the federal Constitution, always believed that Canberra would become a significant cultural centre. A hundred years later this is a reality and the National Museum, planned to commemorate federation, is set to enhance the capital's image. ■

Suzanne Elgar is a Canberra writer.

AUSTRALIAN BOOK REVIEW INC

Australian Book Review and Reader's Feast Short Story Competition

1 August—23 October
competition and prizes sponsored by
Reader's Feast Bookstores,
Opera Australia and Black Inc.

Entry forms are available in the August,
September and October issues of *ABR* or
by sending a SSAE to:
ABR and Reader's Feast Short Story Competition
PO Box 2320, Richmond South, Vic, 3121

Prize winners will be published in the
February/March 2001 issue of *ABR*

Special offer for Eureka Street readers
a year's subscription to *ABR* for \$60.50 (\$55.00 + \$5.50 GST)
commencing with the August issue
plus a complimentary book

New Subscribers \$60.50 for ten issues (inc the GST) & a free book
Ph (03) 9429 6700 or Fax (03) 9429 2288

ARBN A0037102Z

ABN 21 176 539 338

CACE

Centre of Applied Christian Ethics

Ridley College
University of Melbourne

CONFERENCE

Business Ethics & Corruption

A Christian Contribution
Monday 2nd October 7.00pm

STANWAY & LECTURE THEATRE
160 THE AVENUE, PARKVILLE

Registration 6.45pm

SPEAKER

Dr Richard Higginson from
Ridley Hall, Cambridge is the
author of *Dilemmas,*
Transforming Leadership,
Called to Account etc, and the
editor of *Faith in
Business Quarterly.*

Cost \$10, Conc. \$5
RSVP - (03) 9207 4914 by 28th September

EUREKA STREET Classifieds

GOT THAT GAGGED FEELING?

For five years, Free Speech
Victoria has drawn attention to
attacks on free speech. We have
helped those who have spoken out.

In 1999, we awarded the
outspoken Victorian Auditor-
General, Ches Baragwanath, our
first Voltaire Award. If you are
interested in Free Speech Victoria,
contact Terry Lane, PO Box 93,
Forest Hill VIC 3131

GRAPHIC ARTIST

Lucille Hughes charges very
reasonable rates for superior
graphics. Also specialises in
portraiture. Tel: 03 9499 6840

OLD FINE & RARE BOOKS

bought and sold.
Louella Kerr & Lorraine Reed,
139 St Johns Rd
Glebe NSW 2037.
Tel: (02) 9571 5557

Email: lnlbooks@anzaab.com.au
Catalogues issued, or browse
through our entire stock on our
website: [www.anzaab.com.au/
~lnlbooks](http://www.anzaab.com.au/~lnlbooks)

FINE FURNITURE

Made to order by meticulous
craftsman. Library stands, revolving
bookshelves a specialty. Australian
timbers available. Contact Graham
Willis. Tel: (03) 94397149

PSYCHOLOGIST

Julie Houniet
(B.A., Dip. App. Soc. Psych.,
MaPs.S., Member of A.P.S. and
clinical member of V.A.F.T.)
Individual/marital/family therapy;
anxiety; depression; relationship
difficulties; phobias; compulsive
disorders; addiction.
Tel: (03) 9482 7836

FAMILY LAW

For sensitive, confidential, expert
advice in NSW on all aspects of
Family Law, call (02) 9808 6277

HOLIDAY HOUSE BEECHWORTH

1 up to 4 bedrooms, magnificent
lake views, close to town.
Weekends, holidays, midweek.
Tel. John (03) 5728 2467

OUTREACH CENTRE COORDINATOR

St John's Anglican Church,
Darlinghurst, seeks a coordinator
for its Outreach Centre to provide
ministry to the street-focused
community of Rough Edges. The
coordinator works as part of a
parish ministry team and has
associated responsibilities for
communication and support.
The position involves: engagement
with marginalised groups,
supporting an experienced team of
volunteers, training new workers.
For a job description and
information about Rough Edges
and St John's, contact Neil Holm,
office hours on (02) 9360 6844

COTTAGE ANGLESEA

Pt Roadknight 3BR, brand new
dual occupancy; own facilities,
linen supplied, views of ocean,
wood fire, close to beach.
Tel: 03 5263 2725

THEOLOGY & SCIENCE IN CONVERSATION

an introductory workshop
26-31 January 2001.
Luther Seminary, Adelaide.
This workshop is an introduction
to science/theology dialogue,
focusing on cosmology and
biological evolution. Contact
Workshop Director, Hilary Regan.
Tel: (08) 8340 3060 or
hregan@camtech.net.au

SELF-PUBLISHING

Sick of rejection? Why not publish
that book yourself?
Contact Sylvana Scannapiego.
Tel: (03) 9427 7311

EUREKA STREET CLASSIFIEDS

Got something to sell or lease?
Want to buy? Need staff? Want to
offer professional services?
Eureka Street classifieds ads for just
\$25 are your answer.

Mail your ad and cheque by the
5th of the month for display in the
following month's edition.
25 words for a single ad (\$25) or
55 words for a double ad (\$50).

Send to:
Eureka Street Classifieds
PO Box 553
Richmond VIC 3121

Next deadline: 5 September
for October edition

Some light on the subject

*'Give us some light on the stage,
electrician. How can we
Playwrights and actors put forward
Our images of the world in half
darkness?'*



THUS BEGINS ONE OF Bertolt Brecht's celebrated theatre poems. Writing in 1950, Brecht decried the tendency for lighting designers of his day to opt for realism and moody atmosphere (which he claimed induced sleep in the audience) and called for lots of clear, even coverage so that the audience could 'do their dreaming in the light'.

I have some sympathy with Brecht's case, but advances in theatre technology since 1950 have created a new world for lighting technicians and designers undreamed of in his day. The development of powerful luminaires, increasingly

sophisticated and now computerised control desks, 'smart' lights and an ever-expanding and more subtle palette of 'gel' colours mean that it is no longer necessary, for example, to sacrifice visibility for mood.

Work practices have also changed markedly in recent years. When I joined the Melbourne Theatre Company as a lighting technician in 1968, I was welcomed at rehearsals, but had no real work to do until the week before bump-in—when all artistic decisions about the look and feel of a production had been effectively made. The lighting was mainly there to support the

production. Now it is common for lighting designers to be part of the decision-making process from the very beginning.

Another factor that has made the lighting designer a more influential player is the tendency to use non-theatre venues for productions, both routinely for some companies and occasionally (in festival and touring productions) for others. Before any substantive artistic decisions can be taken, the venue's limitations (power-supply, height of ceiling, and so on) and the lighting designer's judgments on how they can be overcome or exploited must be taken into consideration.

Similarly, the development of new and increasingly non-naturalistic forms of theatre has also offered new challenges for lighting designers and, at the same time, has increased their importance to the creative process. While orthodox spoken-word drama may be enhanced by sensitive lighting, it is rarely strongly influenced by it. But I would argue that certain forms of puppetry, visual and physical theatre could not have developed *without* the active collaboration of the lighting. The so-called 'black theatre' technique in puppetry, for example, depends entirely for its effectiveness upon the extremely skilful control of light and darkness. Likewise, much of our 'New Media' theatre (with its use of computer-graphic imagery and screen effects) is also light-driven to an extent unheard of when I was first working in the trade 35 years ago.

Another influence on contemporary lighting is rock 'n' roll. In the 1970s and '80s, the rock concert increasingly became a theatrical event, and new technologies, luminaires and techniques were invented to theatricalise the rock industry. Not surprisingly, lighting designers are today reappropriating some of the tricks of the rock trade back into theatre and, in turn, some of the effects developed in rock 'n' roll, puppetry and visual theatre are finding their way even into orthodox drama.

Thus we now have a new breed of lighting designer working in our theatres, as much of the work of Phil Lethlean and Rachel Burke reveals. Both are based in Melbourne, although their work is widely seen in other cities and overseas as well.



Phil Lethlean began working in puppetry with Handspan Theatre in Melbourne in the early 1980s but fell into lighting accidentally when the company progressed from simple street and public-space shows into theatre production, on the grounds that he 'understood electricity', having done a course in electronics at RMIT. His first major production was Nigel Triffitt's *Secrets*, which was created for the International Puppet Festival in Adelaide in 1983 but needed someone to light it for its subsequent Melbourne seasons and its extensive international tours. Lethlean describes the next few years, during which he learned the art of lighting black theatre on the job, without specific training, as 'years of terror, I really jumped in at the deep end'.

Since then, he has lit all of Handspan's major productions (including *Four Little Girls*, *Frida Kahlo* and *Cho Cho San*) and developed a close relationship with Company Skylark in Canberra, for whom he created the lighting for *Inside Dry Water*, *Mum's The Word* and *Wake Baby*. He also lit *Stowaways* for Compagnie Philippe Genty and the recently re-toured *Hobbit* for Christine Anketell and Malcolm C. Cooke. His love of visual theatre and puppetry comes from a passionate painterly and sculptural vision of the theatre, in which making pictures with light is what drives the form. His pioneering work with saturated colours (especially the blues) and smoke-filled hazes, cut through with cold directional white, has become a trademark of visual theatre in this country as has his precision with black theatre techniques. His advice to young lighting designers is to study Rembrandt!

In later years, Lethlean has diversified into spoken-word drama (including several productions for Playbox Theatre), chamber opera (*The Cars That Ate Paris* for Chamber Made Opera), corporate entertainments (including many large-scale dance projects with choreographer Alanna Scanlan) and architectural lighting.

Rachel Burke also fell into lighting when, training as a dancer at Rusden College in the late 1980s, she had to arrange all of the production elements for her major project. On graduating, and having been bitten by the bug of stage lighting, she became an intern technician at St Martin's Youth Arts Centre in 1990. The following year, she got the job as Head Technician there and had her first full-scale professional challenge lighting *Vincent*, an *a capella* opera about the life and times of the impressionist Van

The photograph on the opposite page shows Phil Lethlean's black theatre technique in Skylark's *Wake Baby* (1997), in which the central character plays with a piece of rope which assumes many 'characters', including a worm, a dog and, well, a piece of rope. But the piece of rope is really a rod-puppet operated from behind by a black-clad puppeteer. The trick here is to highlight the live actor from the front and from above and the rope from the sides and above in a sharply-defined 'curtain of light'—while leaving the manipulator in total darkness. Just visible on the floor is the hazy deep blue backlight which operates as a blocking screen.

The photograph below left shows an approach to spoken word drama in Gabrielle Macdonald's *Like A Metaphor* for Playbox in April this year. Here the play of light and shadow appears to surround the solo performer with more chairs than are physically present on the set as well as to make her seem much larger (as seen in the shadow) than she really was.

Gogh. She has since become one of Australia's bravest and most adventurous users of the colour range. Like Lethlean, Burke is also driven by a painterly vision in her work in spoken-word drama (also with many productions for Playbox), dance and ballet (including work for the Australian Ballet and the Melbourne-based Wu Lin Dance Theatre) and small-scale opera.

She also likes using saturated colours (including yellows and mauves) from behind as highlights, working down through the palette from less intensely coloured overhead and side lights to paler versions of the range (straws and lavenders) from the front. In particular, her multiple layers of light (in recent shows like Hit Productions' revival of *Hotel Sorrento* and the Playbox premiere of Joanna Murray-Smith's *Nightfall*) create a deeply three-dimensional impression. For Burke, 'light is sculpture in the empty space' and she revels in the chance lighting designers get nowadays to make light 'part of a complete artistic synthesis of an artistic vision' from the very beginning of a project.

Lighting design and operation have clearly come a long way since Brecht drew attention to them. But this is not just due to advances in technology; Brecht would also, no doubt, be pleased to witness the collaborative processes whereby what he once called 'the sister art' of lighting has become central to the production concept rather than peripheral to it. ■

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

FLASH IN THE PAN



Lively and deadly

Chopper, dir. Andrew Dominik. I would have liked more of this film. And yes, I did keep my eyes open during the ear-slicing scene. And the punch-to-death-with-naked-fist scene.

Partly I wanted more because Eric Bana as Mark Brandon 'Chopper' Read is such a magnetic actor. You're drawn to watch him not just for virtuosity or flourish—though he has both—but because you are pretty sure that whatever he does next will surprise you. Or fascinate, or appal you. Bana doesn't domesticate his character and he doesn't make him pathologically alluring either, as Anthony Hopkins did with Hannibal Lecter. His Mark Read is a man who is normal, if chronically exhibitionist, one moment, and a murderer the next. And you want to know why. You want to know why he violates codes that he seems himself to honour, why his thresholds seem so different from our own.

But you also want more because Andrew Dominik (who wrote the script and directed) has mixed his modes—documentary and fictional narrative—just enough for you to come away feeling unsatisfied. Bana's

performance gives you a character still in process. That's fine. But Dominik's script leaves you with the sense that there is more to discover—but it's just out of frame. Maybe if we went to Tasmania, where, as the final credits tell us, the real Mark Read now lives, we could find it. We could finish the documentary. But it's *not* documentary, for all the blue-toned, cropped and angled inside-of-Pentridge intensity. The film's disclaimers tell you that. It is a work of art. But one that doesn't quite add up. The structure is messy, as fragmented as life, with loose ends, unanswered questions, characters slipping through the cracks. There should have been more. But in the film itself. Heaven preserve Mark Read, and us, from *Chopper*, the sequel.

—Morag Fraser

Black September

One Day in September, dir. Kevin Macdonald. There used to be a song called 'One Day in September'. It wasn't really a song, more a jingle about the Aussie Rules Grand Final. This documentary is also about sport but it couldn't be more different. It is one of the few documentaries that thoroughly explores the crossover between sport and politics. Its release at the time of the

Sydney Games is poignant. *One Day in September* shows the dark side of mass hysteria. It is brilliant and disturbing.

Few can recall the 1972 Munich Olympics without thinking of a mob of Palestinian extremists called Black September. They broke into the Olympic Village and took 11 Israeli athletes as hostages. Doing all they could to distinguish these games from the 1936 Berlin Olympics, the authorities had organised relatively little security. The Israelis were sitting ducks. All 11 athletes ended up being killed. The three surviving terrorists were never brought to trial.

Kevin Macdonald's reconstruction of those events is meticulous. He and his team culled through thousands of hours of contemporary footage. They painstakingly extracted interviews from all of the key figures involved. They put together loose ends to suggest aspects of the tragedy which have not been appreciated. Among these was the co-operation of Germany in staging a hijack to make an excuse for freeing the Palestinian prisoners. But perhaps the greatest coup of the film was to track down the one terrorist who is still alive, Jamal Al Gashey. He lives in a secret location in Africa. Macdonald writes, 'he was deeply paranoid and found it very difficult to talk publicly about what he had done'. And he was only one of those who continue to be affected by the events of '72.

—Michael McGirr SJ

Alive and dead

Mr. Death: the Rise and Fall of Fred A. Leuchter, Jr., dir. Errol Morris. Errol Morris, the director of the documentary *Mr. Death*, isn't so much interested in trying to 'tell the truth', as he is in emphasising the doubt and uncertainty that comes with any such attempt—in his words, questioning '... the idea that we're in a position of certainty, truth, infallible knowledge, when actually we're just a bunch of apes running around.' In spite of, or perhaps because of, this emphasis on the impossibility of knowing 'the truth', his films push the viewer towards the ethical questions that surround his subjects, especially the viewer's own relationship to them. In *Mr. Death*, the subject is Fred Leuchter Jr, manufacturer and repairer of electric chairs, gas chambers and other tools of capital punishment. Leuchter is a geek of the first degree, a man who smokes six packs of cigarettes and drinks 40 cups of coffee a day (so yes, the

question of how he sleeps at night comes up in more than one way), a proponent of capital punishment, but not, as he says, of capital torture. This, he says, is the motivation for his work—to make sure that the executees die as humanely and efficiently as possible.

The loving attention he gives to the craft and detail of his work seems macabre, but almost admirable, until Leuchter is called upon to be an expert witness for the defence for Holocaust revisionist Ernst Zündel. Despite having no experience or qualifications beyond the construction of execution equipment, Leuchter is sent to Auschwitz to 'prove' that it could never have been a death camp, and that the gas chambers could never actually have been gas chambers. Zündel is still found guilty of course, but the 'Leuchter Report' has become one of the key 'proofs' for neo-Nazis and Holocaust revisionists everywhere (revisionist historian David Irving calls Leuchter a 'hero') and Leuchter himself has been fêted on the neo-Nazi lecture circuit wherever he goes.

What do you make of a man like this? Is he as evil as his acts suggest? Or is he just a simpleton attracted by the applause of the neo-Nazis? Why would a man with no prior connection to such groups lend his support to the proponents of one of the vilest lies imaginable? What is the connection between his apparently 'humane' interest in capital punishment and the genocidal actions of the Nazis? These are not questions that a documentary, or any other film, can answer. It is the singular power of documentary, however, to force us to ask these questions of ourselves, not in the abstract, but in the face of a concrete, if unknowable, reality.

—Allan James Thomas

Uni. blues

Wonder Boys, dir. Curtis Hanson. *Wonder Boys* is an unlikely follow-up by director Curtis Hanson to his 1997 success, *LA Confidential*. In contrast with the violence of its predecessor, *Wonder Boys* is a gentle, quirky, character-driven movie. The title is directed at the *wunderkinden* who have created something special early in their lives and then have to cope with the expectation that they will produce more of the same.

Michael Douglas stars as the academic and writer, Grady Tripp. Author of a bestseller seven years ago, Tripp is a darling

of the literati, who eagerly await the next great work. Tripp is also waiting.

He lectures in literature at the University by day, while back in his apartment, his novel, now more than 2700 pages long, refuses to complete itself. The manuscript has become a monster. Tripp, faced with the spectre of failure, has lost the ability to control and complete the work. A flop will mean the end of the wonder boy image.

Surprisingly, Douglas makes Tripp a warm, likeable character who looks comfortable with his character's eccentricities. As he is seldom off-screen and provides a laconic voiceover, the film's success is dependent on the quality of his performance—which is excellent. The supporting cast is strong. Tobey Maguire is a gifted but unpredictable student who, like Tripp, is headed for wonder boy status. Frances McDormand puts in a touching performance as Sara, the University Chancellor involved with Tripp.

Whether or not it's due to the mannered performance of Tobey Maguire, fresh from *Cider House Rules*, there is a real John Irving feel about the script (the film is actually based on a novel by Michael Chabon). Although the humour at times borders on slapstick, the characters are human and likeable and it is a pleasant change to see Douglas take on a different type of role. The ending could have been handled with a little more subtlety, but other than that, I look forward to Curtis Hanson's next film.

—Gordon Lewis

Mind out

American Psycho, dir. Mary Harron. I remember when the book by Bret Easton Ellis came out in the early '90s that the main readership seemed to be young men. I didn't read it then and after seeing the film I still don't want to. The film seems to want to say something about the rampant consumer snobbery of the '80s; there is a sop thrown to a broader political context when we see Reagan blarneying about the Iran-Contra affair on a TV screen in a smart bar with hypocritical young merchant bankers showing token disapproval. But the politics that are put into the mouth of Patrick Bateman (Christian Bale), crazed serial killer, are the left-liberal anti-racist pro-community ideas that fell under the relentless attack of the very industry to which he

belongs—high finance/merchant banking of the Gekko/Boesky type. And since the other opinions he gives are verbose appreciations of some of the worst pop music that that decade produced (Whitney Houston; Phil Collins) what are we to assume about the film's ethical standpoint?

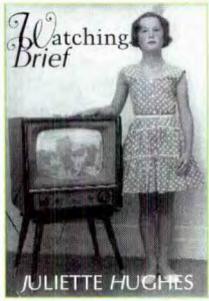
The danger when creating a Bluebeard is that you might end up sympathising with him more than with his victims; Hannibal Lecter is the obvious comparison, eating someone's liver 'with fava beans and a nice Chianti'—Hopkins' lipsmacking at that point distances us properly from Lecter. And Chaplin's *Monsieur Verdoux* was a moral fable about the heart of darkness. But when we see the severed heads that Bateman keeps, Dahmer-like in his freezer (and that was when Dahmer was really doing what Easton Ellis was fantasising about) we are only surprised that this fastidious person would be so grottyly careless.

But apart from the art direction, which has some fun with the obsessional brandname-driven self-care that has replaced spirituality in such circles, this shallow film has little to say, particularly since it spends five-sixths of the time having Bateman murdering very literally and then undermines it all, leaving several gaping holes in the plot, by suggesting that it was all in his poor tortured mind.

—Juliette Hughes



Images of the late Alec Guinness: *Return of the Jedi*, 1983; *The Lady Killers*, 1955; *The Fall of the Roman Empire*, 1964; *The Bridge on the River Kwai*, 1957; *The Man in the White Suit*, 1951.



Oh really?

*I'm so worried about it,
Worried about it,
Worried about it, you know.
I'm so worried about
The baggage retrieval
System they've got at Heathrow.*

—Monty Python, *Contractual
Obligation Album*

THERE HAVE BEEN A LOT of 'real-life' programs lately on network telly. Some help people with their gardens: *Burke's Backyard*, *Ground Force*, *Backyard Blitz* and the indisputable best, Peter Cundall's *Gardening Australia*, heir of an honourable heritage that stretches back to Kevin Heinz. They advise on money (*Money!*); they show why it's a bad idea to put your daughter on the stage, Mrs Worthington, or indeed anywhere near the mean-hearted jerks who run popular singing (*Popstars*). But few are as full of awful warning as *Airport*, a continuous documentary about London's Heathrow.

Look poor or black and some truly nasty immigration officers will take an unhealthy interest in you and ravage your luggage for evidence that you might want to stay. Diaries and personal letters are their especial prey. A cold-eyed woman with spectacles pored over one young Colombian woman's diary; bingo—on a student visa, she hadn't done her exams and had written about a 'new life' without her boyfriend, so out she went. Three young French Canadians coming over from Paris, obvious backpackers, were next. One of them, a young girl, had written in her diary that they hadn't got proper work permits, so they were out, too. 'But we are *Canadian!*' said her companions, half-amused, incredulous.

So—don't look poor (or non-white) if you're going through Heathrow, or they'll think you're trying to settle there in the land of hope and glory, mother of the free. Don't look nervous or preoccupied (or non-white) or they'll body-search you for drugs. Don't, whatever you do, take your diary or personal letters unless you want your private writings fingered through by a dreary cow who's looking for a reason to deport you. Then contrast the treatment of the flashy rich and the ordinary middle class (such distinctions being quite important there) in the matter of luggage retrieval. *Monty Python* was right to worry. In one program, a nice ordinary man had paid an extra fee for his baggage to be extracted early. His stuff came out last, and his very reasonable complaint was 'handled' by a female official: it was felt he'd be less aggressive with a woman.



However, he was amazingly polite, seeing he'd paid extra for earliness and received lateness and a large amount of bulldusting from the 'handler'. But oh, how they stressed about Donatella Versace's mislaid 13th bag! How they grovelled and fussed and walkie-talkied and wrung their hands as her huge Vuitton-laden trolley trundled bereft to the private jet! ...

But there is more. There are abysses and nadirs that defy the human spirit, that you can plumb only if armed with Hail Marys, numbed with gin and ice-cream. I speak of Nine's *Dreamhome*. Yes, I know there is competition: *Big Brother* in the UK, spawn of a dreadful Dutch cavesdropping-homage to *The Truman Show*, pandering to the nasty stickybeaked voyeur in us all. Wait for the inevitable copycat here, as we resistlessly accept the erosion of personal privacy even as governments become more secretive. Where indeed would Great Britain be without its plethora of bugs, taps and spycams? Until that one arrives here, *Dreamhome* is the true pits, worse than *Jerry Springer* (which is about as real and spontaneous as *World Championship Wrestling*, whose audience it no doubt shares).

WHY IS SUCH A horrible thing successful? It didn't happen overnight. A whole culture has had to change to permit it; the fair go is dead. *A Current Affair* and *Today Tonight* have so massaged the smugness of their viewers with their constant bashing of single mothers, dole recipients and other such undeserving types that any couch potato can now be a couch-Caligula and wreck someone's hopes just by picking up the phone.

In *Dreamhome* two families get to do up a house each. Only one gets to keep it and that is decided by a phone plebiscite that rakes in money for the program through a 1902 number. The families must appeal to us; must attempt pathetically to manipulate us with their hardworkingness ('I worked 40 hours this weekend!'), their attractiveness, the number and cuteness of their offspring and the general deservingness of their demeanour. How does one look deserving to a network TV audience these days, when compassion is suffering chronic fatigue syndrome? If you have to watch *Dreamhome*, at least don't boost their budget by ringing the number to give one of the poor dupes the thumbs-down. *Dreamhome* slides us down the evolutionary ladder. Down there in the pits is the land of soft heads and hard hearts—ripe for programming into pogroms. I really am worried about it, you know. ■

Juliette Hughes is a freelance reviewer.



Eureka Street Cryptic Crossword no. 86, September 2000

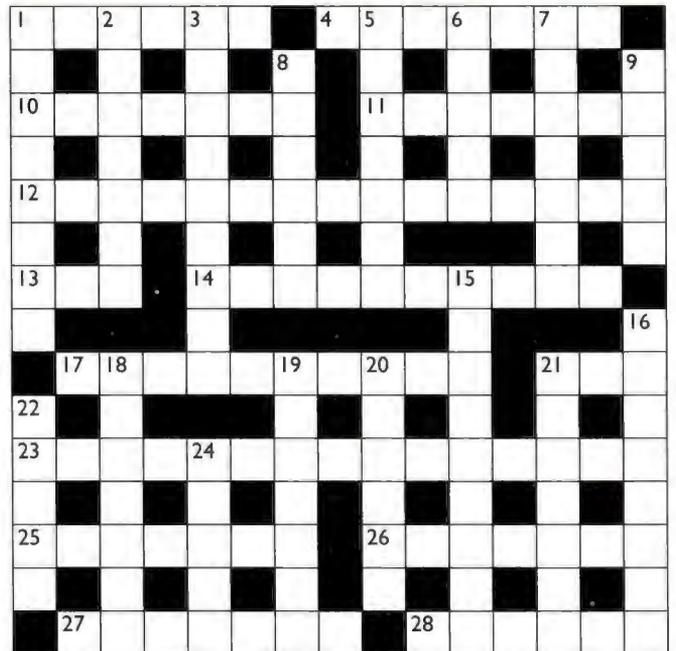
Devised by
Joan Nowotny IBVM

ACROSS

1. Given time, the first woman's irritation will cause a spasmodic reaction. (6)
- 4 & 24-down. Company, in short, may glimpse, perchance, this millennium event. (7,5)
10. For a start, one very expedient trick indicates too much exploitation. (7)
11. Fish has a medal in sight, perhaps. Nothing but the best! (7)
12. Not the sort of methods and practice permitted in the early dilettante 4-across and 24-down. (15)
13. Accomplished performance! (3)
14. Follow the trail of what happened on the field. (5,5)
17. Stygian camps, oddly, could be the training places for these athletic exercises. (10)
21. Ionic columns not in consideration by the architects of the games. (3)
23. Second reason such racket is disturbing for the hard-of-hearing. (10,5)
25. Visiting here on the web, perhaps I'm a step ahead in up-to-date information. (4,5)
25. A soulful philosophy, in reality. (7)
27. Study metropolis for the auditors to assess its population size. (7)
28. Less restricted sample required for inclusion. (6)

DOWN

1. Descriptive handle for breathing water missile? (8)
2. The Italian Australian young tennis player involved in the Cup, for instance, could be described as aloof—to say the least! (7)
3. Instigator of the modern games was inspired to contribute, maybe timelessly, to the spirit thereof. (9)
5. Journal of the Timber Reserve Society? (7)
6. She enjoyed peaches and cream—one more time! (5)
7. Representing Spain or Portugal—could be Britain—with time/energy exchange. (7)
8. For every single one, a carpet from old Iran. (6)
9. Sides with mates, uncharacteristically perhaps. (5)
15. Hindu religion shines with vim you reportedly misinterpret out East. (9)
16. Sensational headline about Spain's leading milk coffee-substitute. (8)
18. By arrangement, I teach you initially about sailor familiarly referred to. (7)
19. Ammunition in place for this event. (7)
20. Particle Scotsman found in sea off Greece. (6)
21. Beginning swimming lessons in pool's shallow part—in it I always feel safe. (7)
22. Bottomless depth to which Mother Superior, we hear, has sunk. (5)
24. See 4-across.



Solution to Crossword no. 85, July/August 2000



This subscription is:

- New Renewal Gift

Length of subscription:

- One year (10 issues for \$63, \$54 concession for pensioners, students and unemployed, inc. GST)
- Two years (20 issues for \$115, \$98 concession, inc. GST)

overseas rates on application:

tel +613 9427 7311
email: subs@jespub.jesuit.org.au

Jesuit
 Publications
 100 Queen St
 Melbourne VIC 3000
 Australia
 (No postage required if sent by
 airmail)

Your Contact Details:

Mrs/Miss/Ms/Mr First Name

Surname

Street No. Street Name

City/Town/Suburb State Postcode

Daytime Telephone No. Fax/email

Gift to: (Please also fill in your own contact details, left)

Mrs/Miss/Ms/Mr First Name

Surname

Street No. Street Name

City/Town/Suburb State Postcode

Daytime Telephone No. Fax/email

Payment Details

- I enclose a cheque/money order for \$ made payable to Jesuit Publications.
- Please debit my credit card for \$

- Visa Bankcard Mastercard

Cardholder's name

Signature Expiry date

- Mailing list: I would like to remove my name from the mailing list when it is used for outside advertising.



ISSN 1036-1758



9 771036 175017