EUREKA STREET

A MAGAZINE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS, THE ARTS AND THEOLOGY
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Jack Waterford

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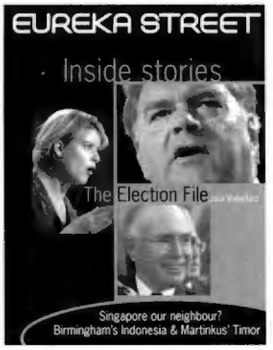

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Friends

THE TWO MEN STROLLING in the quadrangle of Sydney University in the image at left (by documentary photographer Andrew Stark) are not in fact Henry Bolte and Gough Whitlam.

But imagine a political world in which such leisured conjunctions were possible. Imagine one where learning and politics were not oppositional by default, where political and ideological tensions led to imaginative compromise, not just a hardening of the intellectual arteries.

It would not be today's political Australia that you were imagining. The pre-poll mood in the electorate is sour and the news and analysis from the media magnifies rather than dissipates the prevailing cynicism. Tax and disparagement—that seems to be our lot.

Yet when you walk into a suburban school gym packed with citizens who go out on cold winter nights to discuss everything from water conservation to the way our sport is run, the mood is oddly positive—and energetic. People want to discuss social policy, they want a say. They want leadership but they also want participation in the democratic process. They don't believe they are getting that at the moment. There is a lag between national aspiration and political delivery.

One of the functions of a magazine like *Eureka Street* is to provide a forum and a meeting place for such discussion. Since March we have been having regular gatherings, in Melbourne, then in Adelaide, soon in Brisbane and Sydney (Darwin and Perth—we will visit as soon as we can). We have also launched a Friends of Eureka Street (FEST) program, to help us keep body and soul together but also to establish a group of people from all walks of life who can link up to talk to one another about the direction we want this country to take, and then work for the appropriate action or legislation. (See our website, www.eurekastreet.com.au, for details of FEST activities and benefits. Keep an eye out for developments in both).

So please join us in this new venture. Join FEST. Add to the groundswell for lively, civil debate—about values, even about the much-derided vision thing. And in the process enjoy yourselves, as our cartoonist Peter Fraser did (see centre left) when we offered him an honorary gold membership. ■

—Morag Fraser

Education blues

AUSTRALIAN MEDICAL researcher and Nobel Prize winner, Peter Doherty, has been in town recently. Predictably, Professor Doherty has had a few conversations about education, and about universities in particular.

One of the people the scientist spoke to was a federal minister. His view on university funding was straightforward: if the government gave the universities any more money, he said, they'd just spend it on their gardeners.

The minister's remark would be funny if it did not in fact signal a failure of trust and a gap in understanding between universities and the government of the day. How wide that gap has become is clear from the recent comments made to a Senate committee by Michael Gallagher, first assistant secretary in the Higher Education Division, Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DETYA).

Mr Gallagher contends that there is no crisis in higher education. Those advocating that position, including vice-chancellors, are simply not facing up to their management responsibilities, he says.

Australian universities currently find themselves in difficult financial straits. This is pretty much common ground. The government may not grant it in public statements, but the situation was in effect acknowledged in Education Minister Dr David Kemp's leaked Cabinet submission of 1999 (which explains why the leak was embarrassing to the government at the time). It might be instructive to quote one passage from that document: 'Universities are currently in a difficult financial position. While government funding is stable, they face rising costs in salaries and investment in new technology.'

In Britain the minister for education is an advocate for his sector. It seems that it is possible to be that and also to be fiscally responsible, both to the electorate and to the government.

The situation that has developed in Australia is different: relations between the department and the tertiary sector are increasingly uneasy.

The tone of the assistant secretary in his public remarks is one clear symptom of a rupture in relations. At a recent conference, Mr Gallagher told a Canberra academic audience that universities no longer had a monopoly on 'knowledge products', and that they needed to become more service-oriented and outward-looking if they were to remain viable.

That sounds more like a threat than a constructive suggestion. The public has good reason to be alarmed if universities are indeed in danger of becoming unviable. What has DETYA been doing over the last decade or so, under governments of both persuasions, if things have come to this pass? The public has even more reason to worry when the story being told by the mandarins who control the education purse-strings is at such variance from the account being given by the administrators, teachers, researchers and students who work in universities.

THERE IS ANOTHER DANGER arising out of this climate of divisiveness. When the higher education debate degenerates into a blaming game, with contradictory figures being wielded like pikestaffs, it becomes increasingly difficult for the public—who after all have a huge investment in Australian education—to ascertain what is in fact the case. And in the general melee the cynics and the naysayers find their opportunities.

John Stone, writing in the August *Adelaide Review*, joined in a merry chorus of condemnation of Kim Beazley and the ALP's ambitious education blueprint, *Knowledge Nation*. 'Noodle Nation, as it has been widely, and not unfairly dubbed', wrote the former Treasury head. He gave no reasons for his judgment.

Former Labor Finance Minister Peter Walsh weighed in as well. He admitted he didn't know whether tertiary education was dangerously underfunded. But he was confident that the country would benefit from the defunding of courses that yield negative social and economic returns. 'Such courses are usually called something or other "studies"', he averred. Watch out biblical studies. You may be sharing limbo with business studies as well as cultural studies.

Derision is economical, requiring little by way of argument or evidence from its practitioners. As a rhetorical device it can be effective. As a political mode, it is simply destructive.

Finally, about those gardeners in potential clover: there is no evidence that campuses around Australia are being transformed into botanical gardens. But university industrial relations are a thorn in the side of government, and withholding funds is one way of controlling the way universities deal with their staff. So much for institutional autonomy. ■

—Morag Fraser

SNAPshot

Man in the middle

Cardinal Jean-Marie Lustiger stimulated great interest on his recent visit to Australia. In his Helder Camara lecture, he spoke of the modern city. His talk was realistic: he explored the discontents of urbanisation through the images of the murderous city of Cain, the proud city of Babel and the totalitarian City of Sodom. The new Jerusalem and the pilgrim's way—a life that values service over acquisition and competition—embody the hope which he offered.

His theme of pilgrimage echoes aspects of Cardinal Lustiger's life that attracted popular interest. A convert from Judaism, whose mother died in the Holocaust, he insists that he remains a Jew. Many Jews have understandably found disturbing both his journey and its Catholic destination.

The image of pilgrimage itself is inherently unsettling. To travel light, to remind citizens of the larger journey, and of the blessings of hospitality, is attractive. But pilgrimage is always on the edge of tourism. Pilgrims seek lodging in the lower depths of the city. There they draw life and offer hope. Tourists offer sunny messages about ways to transform the city from its towers.

By these standards, Cardinal Lustiger is a pilgrim. His life commends his message.

Down to earth

In recent months the art pilgrimage to the National Gallery in Canberra has had Mexican artist Frida Kahlo as its destination. In the publicity fanfare about this painter—now as much a fetish as an icon, and merchandised as such—you could miss another small, perfect exhibition.

Anne Dangar is not a household name. Like so many 20th-century Australian artists, male and female, Dangar felt she had to go abroad to do her work. Much of the pottery in this National Gallery exhibition was made in the artists' community in a small French village, Sablons, where Dangar went to learn from the cubist painter, Albert Gleizes.

The National Gallery holds a small number of Dangar's experimental pots. That holding (works impossible to forget, once seen) is augmented for this exhibition by a number of works brought from France. The pots are shown in a space that seems to float in light above Fiona Hall's fern garden. They look robustly Australian—the kind of pots you might expect from a woman born in Kempsey—and yet they are exemplary craft pieces made from the clay of another country and in a tradition of European pottery to which Dangar gave her considerable energies.

There is poignancy about such works—small cracks in the glaze, sometimes in the clay itself—that is testament to the fragility and the bravery of the enterprise. We piece together human civilisations from shards of pottery. This collection is still whole, and on its surface you can see the intellectual energy of modernism. In its shapes you sense an older interplay between form and function. They are works of palpable spirit.

They may never be collected under the one roof again, so if you are in Canberra, go and see them. The exhibition continues until October. You can also read Anne Dangar in the letters she wrote to her friend and fellow artist, Grace Crowley. The collection, *Earth, Fire, Water, Air*, edited by Helen Topliss (Allen & Unwin) is an important sequence in the emerging story of the art of Australian women.

What's in a name?

It might sound like your Great Aunt—Eudora—but in fact it's the name of the email program that we, and 20 million others worldwide, use to collect and file electronic mail. Every snippet or feature you read in this issue of *Eureka Street* has passed through Eudora at one stage or another.

It's a comfortable system, one that operates by conventions that you pick up as easily as you pick up a pen or lick a stamp—though if you speculated that there is a lot more going on beneath the surface you'd be right.

And that's the point of the name.

Eudora, the computer program, is named after Eudora Welty, the writer, born in Jackson, Mississippi in 1909. Welty was celebrated for her spiky Southern style, and deemed by some a Nobel Prize contender. She died in her hometown on 31 July this year—which is why we are now hearing about the source of the name. Welty wrote, among other things, about the communication failures, the gaps and evasions of family life. She probably used a fountain pen.

Internet pioneer, Steve Dorner, who developed Eudora while doing research at the University of Illinois, had an early working title for his program: UIUCMail. Try saying that out loud or fast without biting your tongue or doing an injury to your dimples.

Dorner, who is no slouch, understood his problem well enough. He found the solution in the memory of a short story he'd read in college. Called 'Why I Live at the P.O.', it came from Eudora Welty's first fiction collection, published in 1941. 'Why I Live at the P.O.' is an eccentric piece about an eccentric woman who retreats to the 'P.O.' to escape the mayhem of her intrusive family. She moves in with all her chattels and then sets about creating her own kind of mayhem, one suspects, in the place where the letters come and go.

Early morning or late night email slaves and addicts will get the joke that is implicit in Dorner's choice. Eudora Welty certainly did, and gave her name to Dorner's invention with the ironic grace her readers had come to expect of her.

So next time you open your email and find 50 unsolicited items, three of them with pernicious and ineradicable viruses in their attachments, you might remember Eudora Welty—and Steve Dorner's way of humanising one nook in this global world.

Capital Letter

Jack Waterford

Selling off the silver

The Commonwealth Department of Finance and Administration is trying to upgrade its image. It doesn't, for example, want to be called DOFA, the inevitable title in the city of acronymphomania. It wants to be called Finance. Perhaps the aversion to DOFA comes from a Cabinet meeting earlier this year at which Peter Reith said contemptuously, 'DOFA: stands for Does FA while Fahey's away.' (Finance Minister John Fahey was off sick.)

Finance, or DOFA, has its problems even when the minister is not away. The real problem is not the department itself but government and the style of thinking which has dominated financial management and public administration over the past few decades.

Consider some of the current crises. The Commonwealth has sold about $1 billion worth of public buildings during the past five years, having decided that it was not in the property management business. It would rent from the private sector and use the funds thus liberated for more important things, such as health or paying off government debt.

The minister and the department agreed upon a 'hurdle rate' which would decide whether a building would be retained, or sold and rented back. The hurdle rate was set at a 15 per cent annual return. According to the Auditor-General, nine or 10 per cent would have been about right. At 10 per cent, about 75 per cent of the property could be said to be paying its own way. At 15 per cent, only one per cent was.

The general Finance strategy (maximise the sale price, forget about the lease conditions) has meant that in most cases, government agencies concerned have been heavily burnt. The $187 million sale of the Pizza Hut-like Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade was one of the great snaps: the new owners are about to increase the rent by 38 per cent.

Queried about the sale, a Finance officer grandly told the Auditor-General that Finance was 'not charged with the role of protecting the overall interest of the Commonwealth'. John Fahey also rejected each of the Auditor's criticisms: the decision to sell was government policy; in making the policy the government gave the attention it thought necessary to the interests of the Commonwealth, and the department's job was simply to implement the decision government had made.

It was hardly the first time that an ideological decision had seriously damaged Commonwealth interests. Only months before, the Auditor had confirmed something most observers of public administration had known for a while. A government directive, supervised enthusiastically by Finance, that departments and agencies outsource their computer and information technology requirements to the private sector, had been an utter fiasco and had cost the taxpayer dearly. Officers of virtually every agency had warned of the risks, and begged to be allowed to make decisions based on what was best for them.

John Howard closed down the Department of Administrative Services in a fit of pique about suspected leaks on travel allowance rorts. What was retained went to Finance. At the time, DAS was in the process of selling off old government business units. The sales, completed in Finance and Administration, seemed to operate as a fire sale, with those responsible being paid off as the process developed. This left the government amazingly exposed to fraud. One officer was recently convicted of liberating nearly $9 million. In court he told lurid tales of a complete lack of supervision and of officers selling businesses to themselves and then transferring assets to their new operations. In evidence, a psychologist speculated that much of what the defendant had told him suggested an active fantasy life. The Crown prosecutor commented to the judge that the fantasy was the truth.

It would be idle to blame only this agency, or even that set of ministers. Similar ideas were being tried under the Hawke and Keating governments, if without quite the zeal that the Howard government brought to the task. They have had full run in state administrations too. Not everything has been a disaster. There is nothing wrong with testing new systems of delivering government goods and services, or necessarily wrong with providing them from the private sector. It can be just as ideological to refuse to contemplate new models. It is when ideology and not common sense rules the roost—and when process and accountability take a second place—that one can confidently expect disaster.

Recently, in the ACT, criminal proceedings were completed in the case involving the supposed implosion of the Canberra hospital. It was a job contracted out to the lowest bidder, by an agency which had jettisoned all of its engineering, and much of its supervisory, expertise. Contrary to expectations, the building did not fall inwards but exploded outwards, in the process decapitating a young girl standing amid thousands of spectators nearly a kilometre away. It's taken four years to get to nothing by way of charges—almost all involved in the administrative chain of command have moved on to bigger things, many in private enterprise. An inquiry into the system failure would only be an academic exercise. It might raise some questions about whether the modern messiahs of government have got it right, but who wants to know that? ■

Jack Waterford is editor of the *Canberra Times*.

Club footy

It is hard to disagree with Amanda Smith's argument ('The Name of the Game', July/August 2001) that the assertion 'sport is business' has limited value when applied to football clubs. Her essay misses the point, however, about where the parallels between sport and business really lie. Smith focuses on the wrong place.

To use her football example, the real parallels between business and sport are found by looking at the AFL itself rather than its constituent clubs. It is there that the sport–business analogy really stands up. While it's of course true that the Essendon Football Club is weakened in the long run if it succeeds in driving its competitors to the wall, the goal of the AFL is indeed to vanquish its competitors. That's precisely why the modern AFL Commission plays a far more paternalistic and proprietorial role with its constituent clubs than it did in the past when the sport was less professional.

The AFL is acting as a business enterprise will. The AFL would be pleased to dominate, perhaps even destroy, its competitors in other codes of football, such as rugby or soccer, other sports such as basketball, or perhaps even the myriad other non-sport entertainments available to the 'consumer'. In the sport entertainment industry it is the AFL which is the business unit, not Richmond, Brisbane or Fremantle football clubs. Those entities are more akin to departments of the enterprise that is the AFL and, as with all departments of a corporation, a degree of competition is healthy but in the long run they need each other.

Geoffrey Freeman
Balwyn, VIC

Our raffle winners

The Jesuit Publications Raffle was drawn on Monday 16 July at our offices in Richmond. Winner of the first prize—$10,000 worth of travel from **Harvest Travel**—is **Austin Brady** of Middle Park, Victoria. Austin's parents, who bought the ticket, are subscribers to *Eureka Street*, as is the winner of the fifth prize. Second prize to Mr and Mrs Oswald of Seaford, Victoria. Third prize to the Milne family of Newport Beach, NSW. Fourth prize to Mary Hale of Carnegie, Victoria. Fifth prize to P. Duff of Kilmore, Victoria.

June 2001 Book Offer Winners
P. Armstrong, Chadstone, VIC; D. Carl, Ringwood, VIC; I.F. Fleming, Narrabundah, ACT; G. Forrest, Carlingford, NSW; R.A. Grant, Donvale, VIC; S.P. Ihlein, Camden, NSW; C. & R. Jones, South Melbourne, VIC; S. Kerr, Sydney, NSW; A. Knight, Sydney, NSW; K.B. Morgan, Happy Valley, SA; M. Murphy, Mulgrave, VIC; K.J. Owen, Kew, VIC; G. Seabill, Kirribilli, NSW; C. & E. Thornton-Smith, Balwyn North, VIC.

Eureka Street welcomes letters from our 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. Send to: eureka@jespub.jesuit.org.au *or* PO Box 553, Richmond VIC 3121

Logging off

It was with impotent rage that I saw Nick Bolkus pass the Labor Party off as earnest environmentalists ('Promising the World', July/August 2001).

It is only a few months since Kim Beazley re-endorsed the Tasmanian Regional Forest Agreement of 1997, the deal abolishing woodchip export quotas and unleashing the logging frenzy which has produced a rate of native vegetation destruction proportionately twice that of Queensland's and greater than Brazil's. Tasmania has surpassed the entire Southern US to become the world's largest regional producer of hardwood chips, and now produces (from 0.9 per cent of its land area) 80 per cent of Australia's export woodchips. And all at a net loss to the Tasmanian taxpayer.

To confirm that we have not misread him, Mr Beazley has more recently tried out the logging industry's PR furphy that the pulpwood plantations springing up on former forests are an antidote to global warming.

From the evidence, it appears that Labor's environment policy is to utilise Nick Bolkus as a good, but unarmed, cop. It is not prudent to alienate those generous extractive industries.

John Hayward
Weegena, TAS

THE MONTH'S TRAFFIC

United notions

FACING THE FACTS OF HIV IN VIETNAM

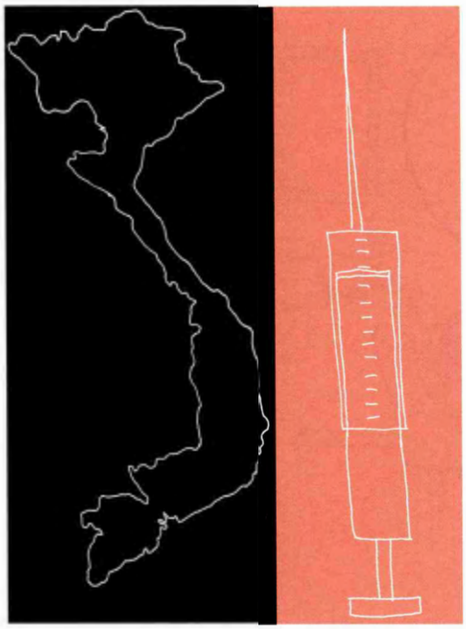
WE ARE CRUISING slowly, in a *cyclo* along Pham Ngu Lao Street in Ho Chi Minh City. I feel the work of the driver's legs pressing the pedals and lurching us forward. He deftly dodges motorbikes, pushbikes and pedestrians. On the right are shiny hotels, travel agencies and backpacker bars. On the left, a vacant block surrounded by a high fence. Apparently a shopping centre is to be built, but nobody knows when. For now it is home to the dispossessed and is littered with used syringes. On the corner I notice a boy squatting. He must be about seven or eight years old. With his teeth he is holding a thick rubber band, pulled tight around his upper arm. He is concentrating on the needle which is just about to enter his vein. For a moment, he looks up, then he crumples back against a pole.

I'll never forget that child. I'll never stop wondering how he got to be in that place at that time, shooting up. I thought of him when I read about the outcome of the recent United Nations HIV Summit in New York. He is a member of one of three so-called 'vulnerable' groups deleted from the Summit's final document after pressure from Muslim countries and the Vatican. Intravenous drug users, prostitutes and men who have sex with men are not explicitly mentioned in what Penny Wensley, Australian Ambassador to the UN, described as 'not a perfect text ... a good text—action orientated and practical'.

The document—*Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS: Global Crisis – Global Action*—sets out deadlines at three, five and ten years by which certain goals must be achieved. The goals relate to setting up prevention programs and access to treatment as well as curbing the actual spread of disease. Women who are raped or who are not empowered to make decisions about safe sex are referred to specifically. And the document suggests that countries protect the health of 'those identifiable groups ... which currently have high or increasing rates of HIV infection'. But these groups are not named.

Does this omission matter? The document is not legally binding. Maybe it is enough to refer to these groups covertly. But the real power of these kind of international agreements is in the hands of non-government organisations who can hold them up to donors and governments to legitimise their demands and requests for funding. It is important to be specific. Not naming the at-risk groups may contribute to unhelpful prejudice in public policy.

The story of HIV in Vietnam is instructive. In Ho Chi Minh City intravenous drug use carries an incredibly high risk of HIV. Vietnam currently has an estimated 130,000 to 180,000 carriers of the virus. Sixty-five



per cent of these are known to be intravenous drug users. Thirteen per cent are prostitutes. Gay people are socially and politically invisible, so whether the rest are part of the homosexual or heterosexual community is difficult to assess. But it is clear that Vietnam cannot fight HIV without also looking at the problems surrounding drug use and prostitution.

Vietnam's drug problems are seemingly insurmountable. Supply is almost unlimited as Vietnam lies on a major trade route out of the Golden Triangle (that area where Laos, Burma and Thailand meet, which is thought to supply 60 per cent of the world's heroin). Severe penalties for traffickers and tough border controls have had little effect. And domestic demand for heroin is increasing because of unemployment, tourism and the loosening of systems of social control since Doi Moi (renovation) in 1986. Prostitution too has increased since this time, with an influx of foreign businesses and a new thriving sex tourism industry.

HIV emerged as a major problem in Vietnam in the 1990s. The government initially took a no-tolerance approach, jailing drug users and sex workers as a corrective measure against what they described as 'social evils'. The no-tolerance policy drove both drug and sex industries underground. When combined with limited public education (relating only to HIV transmission and its avoidance through monogamy and morality) this government action has had a devastating effect on the spread of HIV. Condoms were not easily accessible. Few drug users had their own equipment as needles and syringes were expensive. Users would visit professional injectors at establishments known as 'shooting galleries'. A few attempted sterilisation, but mostly this was inadequate.

I wonder how different the HIV epidemic in Vietnam would be if the government had not taken such a tough approach to at-risk groups. Ignorance and denial is rarely helpful. Official attitudes are now changing. In Ho Chi Minh City a Condom Café hands out condoms and clean needles. The café is in a public building and is partially government-funded. Voluntary rehabilitation centres are opening up throughout the country. But education is still lacking and the general public is largely ignorant of the extent of the epidemic. Frighteningly, the message coming through to the Australian Vietnamese community is that drugs and HIV are a problem in Vietnam only for tourists and foreigners. Believing Vietnam to be the 'cleaner' country, parents are sending their kids there to detox. Some have shared needles, putting themselves at risk.

UN secretary Kofi Annan described the HIV Summit document as a 'clear battle plan'. It could be a great deal clearer. The Summit was an opportunity to use 20 years' worth of experience with the HIV virus to create a plan for the future. But some lessons from this epidemic are yet to be learned by the global community, lessons that are slowly filtering through in Vietnam, about looking honestly at the factors contributing to the spread of the disease and ways to bring about change. And about the importance of calling a spade a spade.

—Kathryn O'Connor

Performance anxiety

SPORT ON THE COUCH

I HAD MY FIRST encounter with psychology in sport when playing football at school. After a poor first half in a pre-season practice match, our coach decided to single me out for a verbal spray. His invective left me more stunned than inspired and, needless to say, I didn't play much better in the second half.

I only understood what he was up to when he apologised after the game. 'I'll never do that again; I see that's not the way to motivate you.'

That was in the early 1980s, when 'sports psychology' was relatively new in Australia outside elite circles, and viewed mainly as a way for struggling or fringe athletes to improve their performance.

The practice has been around since the mid-'60s, though it was not until 1984 that sports psychologist, Jim Bond, was appointed to assist the Australian Olympic team. Nowadays you'll find a sports psychologist in the coaching entourage of just about every major national team. But while many sports have willingly embraced sports psychology, the AFL has been a bit slower off the blocks.

Jim Brown worked briefly at Melbourne Football Club under Ron Barassi in the early '80s but, nearly 20 years later, still only one AFL club, Hawthorn, employs a full-time sports psychologist.

'It's definitely in its early stages of development ... when I first started I had to educate the players on my role,' said Simon Lloyd, who has worked full-time as a sports psychologist at the club for the past two years.

Lloyd, himself a former player and brother of Essendon full-forward Matthew, describes his role simply.

'I'm an opening, or a line of communication between players and the coach. I think it [the acceptance of sports psychology] really depends on the coach at the club—and you really need to understand players. Everyone reacts differently to different types of feedback ... there are some players you might have to—for want of a better word—pamper, but it's about finding out where they're coming from.'

Jacqui Louder works part-time as a sports psychologist for the Kangaroos. While full of praise for the confidence that senior coach Denis Pagan has shown in her, she also acknowledges there's been resistance from some AFL clubs.

'Denis is fantastic, but I don't get the impression AFL coaches have anywhere near the individual understanding of each player of some other sports,' she says.

'Outside the AFL they are much more aware of it. I find in football there's sometimes not much individual communication.

'We have a couple of players who are quite visual in the way they communicate, so if they're getting a lot of information verbally, they often don't process it as well. It's not that they're not listening but sometimes it's the way the message is presented.'

General Manager of Football Operations at Melbourne Football Club, Danny Corcoran, acknowledges that younger players undergo extensive psychological testing to understand their strengths and weaknesses, but agrees that the AFL is only just starting to discover the benefits of sports psychology.

'It's gone from a culture where only the out-of-form players went to a sports psychologist to where elite, in-form players are using them to maximise their performance.

'They'll go to learn how to deal with a bad match, or a loss, just as much as to cope with success and maintain good form.

'Every team that leaves Australia has a sports psychologist with them. We can't afford to have a full-time sports psychologist as some clubs can, but we work closely with the Australian Institute of Sport.'

Interestingly, the impetus for a greater awareness of 'the individual' in football has come from junior ranks. David Code has worked closely with many young players coming through the AFL's under-18 competition, the TAC Cup. He says that the junior program has worked extensively on developing the kids coming through.

'There's a real emphasis on developing the whole person, paying attention to their study and giving them a really balanced approach to football as part of their lives.

'Years ago we would have been thrilled to hear "I only want to play league football." Nowadays that sets off alarm bells because it's so competitive and so few kids make it. We have to be careful about setting them up for failure.'

Lloyd agrees that younger players adapt more easily to the idea of a more psychological approach to the game.

'There's much more of an acceptance of it from the younger kids—they're much more accepting of change. When I started at Hawthorn some of the senior players came up and said, "I'm never going to need your services." They're the guys I see most now.'

Former Melbourne Captain Garry Lyon acknowledges that football, despite being ultimately a team game, has benefited from trying to understand the best way to develop each individual, but he is sceptical about the benefits of sports psychology.

'John Northey [former Melbourne coach] brought down a sports psychologist for a while. Some players used him, but I think everyone has to find what motivates them and no-one can tell you how to get the best out of yourself.'

Nevertheless Lyon acknowledges attitudes have shifted in the past decade—particularly when it comes to fitness training.

'I would have lost a few more years than I did if I'd always had to train the same way we trained when I first started,' said Lyon.

'There have always been older players who've stayed off the track during the week but the difference these days is that, while they might not be out kicking the footy they'll be swimming or on the bike, and not losing fitness.

'It took a while for a lot of the old-school coaches to get over everyone doing it together. It was difficult having people off doing different types of training all the time, but it's been of enormous benefit in terms of preparation and realising each player has different fitness needs. That's not dissimilar from what's being done by sports psychologists.'

Does all this sound a bit like molly-coddling? Jacqui Louder certainly believes the old-fashioned motivational methods still have a place. But, she says, 'You must find a balance between telling a coach how to coach and how to get more out of a player.'

'If a player gets a verbal caning from a coach and doesn't play better then I have to tread a fine line—pointing out that that approach may not get the best out of that individual, even though someone else might respond to it.'

Louder believes that the biggest professional hurdle she has to overcome is the fact that the benefits of her work are often intangible.

'I don't think very many people, let alone AFL coaches, understand exactly what a sports psychologist does ... It's difficult because our job is very hard to measure. If a player breaks a bone the doctor fixes it, but if I help a player get the best out of himself, it's harder to measure.'

The AFL might have won the battle for the hearts of their supporters, but it's only just starting to understand the untapped potential in the minds of its players.

—Tim Stoney

Bank on it

GLOBAL PROTESTS RECENTLY
RESURFACED IN HAWAII

In May, thousands of protesters descended on the plush Honolulu Convention Centre, home to this year's Annual General Meeting of the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

Try lateral

In a good month, international Catholic news offers a mixture of the familiar, the unfamiliar and the routinely extraordinary.

The familiar is pressure for centralisation and control of image. So, recently the English-speaking bishops have been told how to speak English in the liturgy, American theologians will be expected to have a mandate to teach; the Vatican helped amend a United Nations document on AIDS. And a priest, accused of participating in the Rwanda massacres, was shielded from trial.

The unfamiliar has been public and courteous disagreement between Cardinals Ratzinger and Kasper about whether the local or universal church is to be given priority—a vital question because it underpins the ideology of a centralised church. The exchange reflects broader public debate by bishops about other positions on which Rome has a view.

The routinely extraordinary is papal travel to Athens, Syria and Kiev, centres of an Eastern Christianity from which the Western church is separated.

What to make of this mix? It depends on how you place the Pope's travels. If they are part of business as usual in Rome, then you may see the rise of public debate as something radical: the seeds of a more liberal and decentralised church which will abandon its distinctively counter-cultural positions.

I believe that the project of a centralised church is waning; nonetheless its decline does not mark the victory of a liberal church. The Pope's travels offer a longer and better perspective. In them an old and frail man spent himself in a passionate commitment to church unity and his desire to move beyond ancient patterns of division. He projected the image, not of a ruler taking his rightful place over a scattered people, but of one church leader visiting other centres. In his addresses, he asked pardon for the part played by the Western church in a history of failure and division.

His journeys recalled a time when, in the church, there were many centres, many voices, and many ways; they also showed how much was lost when the centres became isolated from one another. The Western church lost because the cultural role of the Roman church has made it seem that a centralised source of authority and power is part of tradition. The sight of a frail Bishop of Rome working to build unity of faith and life with other churches offers a better impression.

The image of a church with many centres also suggests, in footy speak, that to belong to a church is less like playing for the Brisbane Broncos than being a Rugby League guy. We might expect robust exchange of views with our fellow League supporters, and less concern for the image of our own club or for the superiority of its game plan.

Certainly the history of a many-centred church discourages expectation of a more polite church, less committed to truth. Early doctrinal disputes in the church featured the use of personal bodyguards and the burning of churches as well as urbane discussion.

Truth itself, however, is best sought through robust conversation. ■

Andrew Hamilton SJ is *Eureka Street*'s publisher.

The voices of dissent in Hawaii were many and varied. Pakistani workers protested against ADB-funded dams which have displaced entire communities. Indigenous Filipino farmers spoke out about agricultural projects which have pushed them off their land. Others described the impact of hydroelectric dams on river systems, fish stocks and the livelihoods of poor communities in the Mekong basin. Sri Lankan farmers criticised the privatisation of water, while Thai workers protested against ADB loans that require the abolition of minimum wages.

The ADB is a multilateral development finance bank like the World Bank, with a regional focus on Asia and the Pacific. Its 59 member countries include donors such as Australia, the US and Japan, plus borrowing countries including Cambodia, Nepal and Sri Lanka. The bank is funded by contributions from donor countries and money borrowed in international markets. The

ADB grants loans to developing countries for large-scale development projects (often at interest rates below those of commercial banks), and assists countries with economic restructuring through measures including the privatisation of government-owned enterprises.

The ADB has some impressive rhetoric about poverty reduction, but communities directly affected by its projects paint a different picture. Their concerns have a common theme: while claiming to fight poverty, the ADB has a history of funding projects that damage the environment and undermine the rights of poor people.

Protesters in Hawaii presented a petition to the bank's President, Tadao Chino, titled 'People's Challenge to the Asian Development Bank'. Endorsed by more than 50 organisations from across the Asia-Pacific, it reads:

> In the name of development, [the ADB's] projects and programs have destroyed the livelihoods of people, brought about the disintegration of local and indigenous communities, violated ancestral domains, undermined sovereign self-determination, promoted a sharp rise in inequality, deepened poverty, and destabilised the environment.

The petition left no doubt as to the protesters' demands:

> We, representatives of peoples, indigenous communities and organisations through the [Asia-Pacific] region, have had enough of this destruction in the name of development. We have had enough of an arrogant institution that is one of the most non-transparent, undemocratic, and unaccountable organisations in existence. We seek genuine dialogue with the ADB, demanding that it recognise the error of its ways and yield the space to promote alternative strategies of development that truly serve the people's interests.

Australia is a key player in the ADB's operations. Since the bank's inception in 1966, Australian taxpayers have contributed more than $1.3 billion through the aid program—making this country the third-largest donor to the ADB. Australia's 2001 Budget papers reveal a further contribution of $112 million this financial year.

Australia also performs a key role in the bank's governance and day-to-day management. Treasurer Peter Costello is an ADB Governor, and Australia holds one of 12 executive directorships on the bank's Board of Directors. Currently occupied by ex-Federal Court judge John Lockhart, this directorship gives Australia a permanent voice in the operations of the bank—though the position represents a broader constituency of up to ten member countries.

To his credit, Lockhart had the courage to meet with some of the ADB's fiercest critics in Hawaii. Villagers from Klong Dan, a fishing community on the outskirts of Bangkok, told Lockhart of their fears about the ADB-funded Samut Prakarn wastewater management project currently under construction in Thailand. They are concerned that the project's toxic waste-water outfall—into a bay where they have farmed fish for more than a century—will potentially endanger the food source and livelihoods of 30,000 men and women who rely on coastal fishing.

In response to these concerns, as well as allegations of corruption and claims that the ADB was breaching its own environmental policies, Lockhart recommended that the bank send an independent inspection panel to investigate.

The crux of the ADB's problems is its failure to recognise human rights as a key responsibility. Many of the bank's donor countries support the integration of human rights standards into the projects it funds. But there is resistance from some borrowing countries, in particular those with questionable human rights records.

The ADB's reluctance to confront this tension leaves it lagging behind other international institutions. The United Nations has explicitly linked human rights and development processes by promoting a rights-based approach to development. Secretary-General Kofi Annan recently described this as:

> An approach to development which describes situations not simply in terms of human needs, or of developmental requirements, but in terms of society's obligations to respond to the inalienable rights of individuals, empowers people to demand justice as a right, not as charity, and gives communities a moral basis from which to claim international assistance when needed.

The ADB has no formal obligation to respect human rights, and there is no scrutiny of the impact of its operations on local people. Australia donates colossal sums, but has to rely on the bank's overall evaluations of its impact and effectiveness.

The Australian government could exercise more control over its aid dollars by pushing for independent monitoring of ADB operations against international human rights standards, and for those standards to become explicit ADB programming benchmarks. Thus the ADB could uphold, rather than undercut, basic human rights.

—James Ensor

In memoriam

[illegible]

At the 1985 Synod of Bishops marking the 20th anniversary of the conclusion of the Second Vatican Council, Archbishop Francis Rush began his allotted speech by saying, 'I speak for the Bishops of Australia when I thank God for the Second Vatican Council.' His death brings to an end a special period in the history of the Australian church as he was the last Australian bishop to have participated in that Council.

It was the Council above all which shaped his life and ministry these past 40 years. The exceptional intelligence and commitment which he brought to his work as a priest in the Townsville Diocese and as a bishop in Rockhampton prepared him for what would be his special ministry of translating the teachings and decisions of the Second Vatican Council into the life and mission of the Australian church.

He was a privileged translator because the Council had claimed his mind and heart and he never doubted that it was God's great gift to the church at the end of the 20th century. He believed very deeply, as he said in 1985, that the Holy Spirit 'undoubtedly' guided the Council. He went on to say, 'If there have been failures, they have not been the fault of the Council. They have emanated from neglect of the Council or from misinterpretation of its spirit and teaching.'

As Archbishop of Brisbane, he could become very frustrated with those who used the Council to push their own ideologies or ecclesiastical tastes. He believed passionately that the teaching of the Council itself contained an abundance of theological insight and wisdom as yet unexplored by those who felt the need to move beyond its teaching. At the same time he would have agreed with his great friend, Archbishop Guilford Young of Hobart, who explained to young seminarians like myself on the 25th anniversary of Pius XII Seminary, that the Council gave us a series of 'affirmations' which it would be the task of theologians and pastors to 'synthesise'. I have often wondered how much the balance and moderation of Archbishop Rush shaped some of the finer statements of his friend. They would surely have discussed everything about the Council. Archbishop Rush was wary of such attempts at synthesis only when they failed to carry forward the affirmations which he understood, loved and was utterly certain were gifts of the Holy Spirit.

He expressed a concern in 1985 on behalf of the Australian bishops about one aspect of the encyclical *Lumen Gentium* (dealing with the church) which he believed was often somewhat threatened since the Council. He continued to express this same disquiet up until the time he died. His words deserve quoting in full:

> The question of Collegiality and the relationship of the local Church to the Universal Church is a major internal question, which is causing sufficient anxiety and wasting enough energy to distract the Church from what should be its major concerns.
>
> From the very first moment of his Pontificate the Holy Father stressed the importance of Collegiality. His very first encyclical spoke of it at length.
>
> Diversity among the Local Churches and the principle of subsidiarity argue that local solutions should be found for local problems, as long as these solutions do not jeopardise the unity of the Local Churches with and under the Holy Father.
>
> Bishops and theologians sometimes get the impression that their orthodoxy is questioned lightly and that their difficulties and industry are not appreciated. This leads to a loss of trust which only damages the Church.
>
> ... We see the need for an even more refined theology and a more effective use of Episcopal Conferences.

The second concern named by Archbishop Rush at the 1985 Synod was secularisation in Australia, which he described as 'one significant phenomenon at the base of most of the problems confronting the Church since the Second Vatican Council'. His concern was that the world's salvation was being sought in ways only loosely related to the church. As he said:

> *Gaudium et Spes* [the encyclical dealing with the church's attitude to the modern world] ushered in a transformation in our attitudes to the world. However, its message, or the best of our thinking based on it, has not succeeded in giving enough men and women a sufficiently clear and inspiring vision of the Church's role in the world of our time. Too many people, even among Catholics, find the Church peripheral to their concerns.

Archbishop Rush added a handwritten note to the written text of his intervention at the Synod which in many ways summarises his own great contribution to the Australian church:

> It has been said already but it cannot be exaggerated: the task of translating the Council's theology of Church into action has only begun. The great merit of the Synod will be the encouragement it gives to those who are anxious to complete the task.

It would be a great mistake to think that Archbishop Francis Rush was concerned about the quality of this 'translation' of the Council because of some narrow ecclesiastical focus to his life and ministry. Ecclesial his focus certainly was but this was because he was committed to the mission of the church in the world today. Even more important for him, and he underlined it in his text, was what he called 'the only ultimate question: "Quis est Christus pro mundo hujus temporis?"' Who is Christ for the world of today? This was the only ultimate question because, like St Paul whom he so often quoted, for him only Christ mattered.

He was a great bishop and a great friend to thousands. He remembered everyone's name and, more importantly, who they were. He loathed pomposity and arrogance and would discontinue reading theologians or commentators who he believed were indulging their egos at the expense of others, or criticising others or the pre-conciliar church without respect and even reverence for those who had gone before and were equally men and women of the Spirit. This was part of a peculiarly Australian style and spirituality which marked the whole of his life and ministry. He was a mentor to many and will be sorely missed by those like myself who found in him a great friend, a great Australian and a great bishop.

—Michael Putney

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JACK WATERFORD

Labor intensive

It's not New Labor, but will a return to Old Labor win the ALP government?

THE BATTLEGROUND has finally been selected, even if there will be many skirmishes before battle is actually joined. The contest will be over the size of government and its role in the community. Alternatively, it will be about taxes, which is almost, but not quite, the same thing.

John Howard has done as much as any to define the issue. The difference between the parties, he says, is that the Coalition would return any budgetary surpluses to the community via tax cuts; Labor instead would spend it. Kim Beazley has not run away. He rates public investment above private choice. He is prepared to use public infrastructure, including Telstra, to promote social outcomes. He thinks that more should be spent on health, education and the environment. As Labor has pitched it, there will be no taxation increases, but there will be unembarrassed intervention in the economy to achieve public ends. Knowledge Nation, the centrepiece of his policies, may not be a program of immediate spending, but stands for the sort of policies an activist government will be pushing, as and when it can afford it.

John Howard himself would seem to acknowledge the need for a program of public spending to deal with demographic change and environmental projects. He is trying to keep the debate more narrow—positing his fistful of tax-cut dollars against a Labor Party which has effectively ruled out tax cuts over the next term. As it happens, on tax cuts, they may not be so far apart. There has been so much public spending, in this financial year and committed over the next two or three, that there is very little prospect of substantial surpluses in the immediate future. Most of Howard's spending, however, has not been in carefully programmed investment in the future, but in attempting to woo back interest groups which have wavered in their allegiance to the Coalition. As this panic spending has pretty much restored the size of the public sector to what it was before his 'black hole' cuts, Howard is in no great position to speak of the size of government.

On the evidence of the opinion polls, Labor should win comfortably. The issue Howard has defined may be the best with which he can travel, but, to the ideologues in the Coalition, it carries an extra risk. The formal issue on which voters are being invited to make a choice will, if decided against them, affect the Coalition as much as it does Labor. Kim Beazley can describe it as an historic decision by the electorate and a mandate for bigger government. Yet he too is taking a risk. On the evidence of the opinion polls, he could win anyway, and without the risk of becoming involved in an auction of tax cuts. His own promises about rolling back some of the goods and services tax, vague as they are, complicate the choice. The issue hovers between economic and social policy and, usually, the other side is more clever and opportunistic, and he and his side more prone to stumbling, whenever it gets down to financial detail.

THE 'MEAN AND TRICKY' Coalition, after all, has been on the nose for ages. The GST has settled in, but not without massive continuing resentment about the extra paperwork, particularly in small business. John Howard may have spent billions in appeasing particular interest groups and will, no doubt, commit more before the election, but, on the evidence of the polls, his doing so has excited great cynicism but relatively few votes. Some Labor strategists will no doubt be arguing that the record of the Coalition government should be presented as the only issue.

If that is their advice, the fact that it is being rejected would be cheering news in Labor's own constituencies, who have been as anxious for a reason to vote Labor as they have been for an opportunity to reject the other side. The party has itself stripped considerable enthusiasm and idealism from its ranks through its fashion for financial rectitude and for seeming to be embarrassed about litmus social issues—instance its policies on Aborigines, refugees, migration and unemployment. Then there are the questions of Beazley's leadership and Labor's seeming incapacity over six years of opposition to resolve some of its own contradictions. Now, at last, there are choices to be passionate about. There is not,

if one looks closely, much proposed by way of action on the mandate, because Labor promises progress only at the rate at which it can afford it, but at least there are some signs of good intentions.

It's not New Labor, in the model of Tony Blair, though some will claim it. New Labor—in the sense of Thatcherism with a human face, or, as others put it, socialism with an inhuman face—has been about in Australia since Bob Hawke was elected in 1983. For the past six years, indeed, the unresolved dilemma in the party has been about a transition back to government intervention while retaining credentials for economic rectitude. Britain's New Labour, in the wilderness through the 1980s, had exactly the opposite problem. Australian Labor has its Thatcherites and those who are dedicated to market solutions, but Beazley, for all of his failures to resolve internal party debates, is firmly pitched on the old Labor side. Indeed, this position is a fundamental part of his image of being a decent and avuncular chap, which the Coalition has found so difficult to attack.

The irony is that Labor could be comfortably preparing for government, simply by being prepared to fight on the Coalition's terms. Labor has been slow to issue clear policies, although the heat is now on. Recently, it has published a number, but these have been vague on details and specific promises, standing rather as beacons for the direction in which they want to go.

Though the slow progress with policy has served a tactical purpose—of keeping the focus on the government's own agonies rather than on Labor itself—it has also masked the party's own internal problems and inability to make choices. Further, it has underlined its opportunism and willingness to run away from battles that are very important to many in its constituency.

Its frontbench is at least as competent as the government's, and is better positioned, in terms of actual experience in government, than the Coalition was in 1996. Only a few, however, will go into portfolios with clear ideas of what they want. Labor has never had so few heavy-hitters.

Only a few on the frontbench are well known in the electorate—in some cases this ought to work to their advantage—and there are the usual numbers of drones and hacks, if in no greater proportions than in Howard's ministry. Some are, of course, itching to get back to the business of dividing the spoils among their mates via the processes that helped bring Paul Keating down. This time, however, Labor is not as closely tied to interest groups, other than the trade union movement. So scarred are many of them by the retributive policies of the Coalition in government, that it may take longer than usual for them to settle into familiar roosts.

Normally when a party loses power so emphatically, and when the rejection is as much of its leader as it is of the party itself, the period in the wilderness produces real soul-searching and substantial structural change. Paul Keating is gone—almost irrelevant now, other than as a symbol of what gutsiness is possible—but this party remains pretty much untouched by exile. Labor made little attempt to get back to its roots, or to renew its constituencies. Both the party and the caucus system are essentially unchanged. If anything, the power of party bureaucrats, already substantial in Keating's time, has increased, and at the expense of the branch membership system. Participation at community level in the activities of the party, and a branch role in the development of policy, are even more marginalised. Policy now comes from market research and focus groups, with even the caucus largely ignored.

Beazley's lack of ego may allow more room for others, and less pressure for him to be seen to have wins—the ultimate source of bad policy.

The party as a whole no longer has its own parliament for resolving difficult issues: party conferences are now entirely choreographed for public relations purposes, while matters of principle are resolved in the back rooms then presented as splendid, if somewhat messy, compromises. Membership of Cabinet and the ministry is still resolved by the party factional system, which also distributes patronage.

Kim Beazley, a man who has long benefited from the patronage of the least attractive power-brokers on the party's right, is more comfortable with, and less likely to exercise any of his own prerogatives over, the system than any of his predecessors in a generation. The quid pro quo for him, provided he keeps only a few factional chiefs happy, is that he is probably less accountable to his caucus, or to the formal councils of the party, than were even Keating or Hawke. In most things, however, he is so unadventurous, and so comparatively devoid of ego, that the extra rein will not make much difference.

BEAZLEY LACKS THE capacity of a Bob Hawke to keep the outcome in view and to preside over affairs in a way that resolves most of the arguments. He may also lack Hawke's antennae for problems in the making. He lacks the sense of excitement and the recklessness of a Paul Keating. Nor does he surround himself with ruthless operators who will or can do what Beazley will not or cannot do himself.

Yet he is not without his own leadership qualities. He is a good listener, and his instincts are sound enough. His lack of ego may allow more room for others, and less pressure for him to be seen to have wins—the ultimate source of bad policy. He has capacity for detachment and can, and will, read a brief. He has a very close understanding of government processes. In government he is less likely than any of his predecessors to remain attached to policy which is manifestly not working, and will be unconcerned about whether or not this makes him appear weak. His avuncular air has the capacity to make him appear above politics on some issues. On the other hand, he needs more capacity to close off an argument, and he can be expected to be even more sentimental than Keating or Howard in dumping liabilities.

At the last election, Beazley gained a new backbench. It contained relics of the Keating administration who could be accused of being the same lot returning to the troughs. But the majority of the backbench were fresh to parliament. Most have not yet staked their claims to ministerial office. If, this time about, Beazley wins as handsomely as expected, the majority of his backbench will be relative new chums, some of whom will be impatient about waiting around until their turn comes under the factional system. Most, of course, will be there because of the factional system, but since that itself is so hidebound by ancient disputes, it may prove insufficiently flexible for a new Labor government.

Some things will have changed. Labor is now in office in every state bar South Australia—where it is odds-on come the state's next election. Organisationally, Labor cares more about that than being in Canberra, because there are more spoils to distribute, but the fact of being in power, and with still relatively popular state premiers, gives the party access to election-fighting resources at least equal to the Coalition's. The GST is already having a major impact on Commonwealth–state relations, a fact that ensures that rollback will not be fundamental. Indeed, some of the most popular changes will hardly have an impact on the bottom line at all. Beazley will get a bigger electoral dividend from paperwork-saving shortcuts for groups such as pharmacists and café-bars, who operate in a mixed GST and non-GST environment, and for charities, than from cuts in any particular area.

One of the major political problems ahead is that the states should now be held far more politically accountable for the way in which they spend the GST revenue, and be less able to blame the federal government for every shortfall in education and health. Yet there will still be heavy pressure for Commonwealth subvention—whether to equalise facilities in the states, or to develop more wide-ranging initiatives that the states neglect or judge to be of secondary importance. At the same time, however, federal Labor faces new disciplines, particularly if it is too wedded to fiscal balances and low interest rates. One of the first disciplines will come before the election, with the charter of budget honesty. Beazley, thus far, has deferred making specific promises until the Treasury and the Department of Finance prepare current balance sheets—only a few weeks before the election. If these, as expected, suggest that the cupboard is nearly bare, John Howard will not be the only person embarrassed.

Labor's first priority is to win seats in provincial areas rather than in the mortgage belts, the latter being probably more susceptible to Coalition scaremongering about Labor and interest rates. The primary constituency is more susceptible to arguments about infrastructure, the quantity and quality of services, nation-building and jobs for our kids, and rather more likely to be exasperated by the legacy of Coalition government. The best chances for Labor are in Victoria, Queensland and South Australia. There are prospects of gains in NSW, but these will probably be within a more narrow compass. NSW Labor, so successful at state level, has been letting down federal Labor for years and may well do so again, especially given that it has an inflated role in the campaigning. But that may be precisely because it has so limited a view of what can be achieved in government. If Beazley can win with the opposite argument, perhaps it will be the first sign that he is his own man, dispensing with some of those who have never really been on message.

Jack Waterford is editor of the *Canberra Times*.

LIZ CURRAN

Refuge in the law?

When legislation limits the power of the courts, where do asylum seekers go for justice?

IN A CASE DECIDED on 24 May, the High Court criticised the conduct of proceedings by the Refugee Review Tribunal. The Court noted that constant interruptions to the refugee applicant gave him little opportunity to put his case, thereby giving rise to a perception of bias.

Our administrative systems are not perfect, hence the importance of court oversight of administrative decisions—particularly in cases of this kind, where a wrong decision could lead to the return of a refugee to a dangerous homeland.

The High Court criticism is timely, coinciding as it does with renewed attempts by the federal government to restrict the role of the courts in reviewing applications for protection by asylum seekers. In addition, there is discussion within the office of the Minister for Immigration about the drafting of a Bill that prevents a liberal interpretation of the definition of 'persecution' in the *Convention Regarding the Status of Refugees* (1951). In a media release on 10 May, Minister Philip Ruddock is quoted as saying that 'courts have become too generous' in relation to refugee claims.

The amendments proposed, which amount to a constraint over which areas the court can look at in a claim for refugee protection, could have serious ramifications for asylum seekers. The government's responses and rhetoric suggest that it is overlooking the context—including dictatorship, ethnic persecution and abuse of women and children—in the countries from which a large proportion of these boat arrivals and others seek refuge.

The wording of the *Convention Regarding the Status of Refugees* is clear, and designed to protect persons who have a well-founded fear of persecution and who seek protection. The Minister is currently speculating that the Convention (to which Australia is a signatory) is being interpreted beyond the scope of what was envisaged back in 1951. This overlooks the fact that the document is now in its 50th year of operation and that its great strength has been its flexibility in a changing world. For Australia to mount a call for a rewriting of the Convention is to diminish our standing in the international arena. It is also anomalous, given the number of refugees Australia takes—small by comparison with our Western counterparts.

The court's role in all this is to apply legislation that is passed by the parliament, having particular regard to the facts and circumstances of the individual case before the court. It is therefore for the court, and not the state, to determine the case on the basis of the evidence before it. The individual circumstances of the case ought not to be predicated on some imperative dictated by the public service. It is this feature of our court system that guards against abuse of process, keeps a 'check' on the state's powers of coercion and guards against the risk of erroneous decisions.

The court is required to apply the law in an impartial manner, unhindered by political influence or pressure, and never on an ad hoc basis. The court's role is also to find a balance between the competing

interests of the individual and the state. All of these roles are complex.

If the government proposes to circumscribe the court's critical role, then what mechanisms are to be put in place to ensure impartial and independent consideration of these cases? What will guarantee that miscarriages of justice do not occur? Too often the decision-making at a primary level is problematical, making review imperative, but the quality of that review is also important.

SUBJECT TO THE limitations contained within the Constitution, the parliament in the Australian political system is sovereign to all other arms of government. In the case of asylum seekers, section 51 (xxxvi) of our Constitution gives power to the Commonwealth in matters of immigration.

If the parliament seeks to pass laws which undermine the rights of a person, then there is a limit to the extent to which the judiciary can intervene to uphold the individual rights of people on our shores.

In the *Migration Act 1958* (Commonwealth) under section 481(1)(a), the capacity of an applicant to appeal to the Federal Court has been significantly eroded over time by limitations placed on the grounds of appeal. The High Court has strongly criticised these limitations. In its 1999 decision in *Abebe*'s case (*Abebe v. The Commonwealth*), the court, although determining that parliament was acting within its power, commented that legislative 'restriction[s] may have significant consequences for this Court because it must inevitably force or at all events invite applicants for refugee status to invoke the constitutionally entrenched section 75(v) jurisdiction of this Court. The effect on the business of this court is certain to be serious.'

The Executive continues to respond to court review by moving the goal posts. In the High Court case of *Chu Kheng Lim v. Minister for Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs* (1992), some members of the court were critical of parliament's haste in rushing to legalise detention of some asylum seekers by placing legislation before parliament the night before the hearing of an application in the Federal Court.

In another case, Justice Sackville in the Federal Court held that a Chinese couple were indeed refugees, as they faced persecution as a result of their membership of a particular social group. The then Minister for Immigration (after lodging an appeal in the Federal Court) hedged his bets by drafting a Bill. The Bill, the *Migration Legislation Amendment Bill (Number 3) 1995* (Commonwealth) provided that fertility control practices could not be used to found a claim of refugee status. The Bill subsequently became unnecessary as the Full Federal Court overruled Sackville's decision.

There are many illustrations of such patchwork attempts, through legislative measures, to close off any avenues that the High Court or Federal Court have found available to claimant refugees who have established their case. Such a defensive approach by the legislature could lead to injustice. It could also lead to more High Court appeals because of the high risks involved in the return to their homeland of people likely to be persecuted there. One may acknowledge the importance of parliamentary sovereignty in a Westminster tradition, while at the same time arguing that the judiciary has a long-recognised responsibility to ensure that due process is followed and that the court, in the exercise of its judicial powers, should remain unfettered by executive intrusions. The abuse of process by some asylum seekers ought not to become a justification for the removal of due process for many others, especially when the stakes are so high.

In the case of asylum seekers, the reductions in the court's ability to scrutinise executive action, although held constitutionally permissible by the High Court, may still offend international law. (Article 16 of the refugee Convention requires that refugees be treated as nationals before the courts.)

Legislative changes can seriously reduce a court's capacity to exercise judicial review in an effective and real sense. As the judges stated in *Chu Kheng Lim v Minister for Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs*:

> It is one thing for the Parliament, within the limits of legislative power conferred upon it by the Constitution, to grant or withhold jurisdiction. It is quite a different thing for the Parliament to purport to direct the courts as to the manner and outcome of the exercise of their jurisdiction. The former falls within the legislative power which the Constitution, including Chapter III itself, entrusts to Parliament. The latter constitutes an impermissible intrusion into the judicial power which Chapter III vests exclusively in the courts which it designates.

Politicians in recent times have often seen the approach of the courts as 'problematic' and 'uncertain'. But to neglect liberty and to finesse the protection of human life may also prove problematic. For the courts to be effective, and to retain public confidence, they must be armed with the capacity to be flexible enough to deliver justice, particularly in cases which are so distinct and various in their circumstances.

Sending asylum seekers back to their homeland, before allowing them the opportunity to establish before the court that they have a well-founded fear of persecution, could lead to the loss of human life. Are Australians really giving their parliament permission to do this? ■

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To our knowledge

We've had change. Now, the word most often used to describe the state of Australian education is 'crisis'. **Madeleine Mattarozzi Laming** reports.

Among the academics and postgraduate students I know, only two or three under the age of 35 are not looking for work overseas. The ones who are staying in Australia are staying because they are caught in a web of family responsibility, have elderly parents, a spouse who is reluctant to move or a child with special needs that would be difficult to meet elsewhere.

It's not just IT specialists or scientists who are leaving: it's historians, philosophers, linguists and experts in a dozen fields who cannot find meaningful work in this country. The last time I applied for a lecturing position, there were around 200 other applicants for the same job. I know because I rang the personnel office and asked. The young woman who took my call told me that ratios of 150–200 were normal; sometimes it's even higher.

This is the reality of Australia's brain drain—there are just not enough academic jobs, in research or teaching, for all those bright young postgraduates. Salaries have not kept pace with those in other English-speaking countries, class sizes are bigger, the administrative workload has increased and funding for research has declined.

At the same time, employment opportunities in non-university research and development have also declined as a consequence of the abolition of the 150 per cent tax rebate. Yet Australian universities keep encouraging more students to undertake postgraduate research since the amount of money universities receive from the Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DETYA) depends on the number of postgraduate students they enrol. What we have here is not really just a university employment problem—it's an overproduction problem of the same kind that led to the fabled European butter mountain. Unbalanced policy and inappropriate subsidies encourage producers to

keep churning out a product that cannot be used in the community at large, but vested interests resist any suggestion that funding should be redeployed into more appropriate areas. In the case of universities this would mean undergraduate education, which has borne the brunt of funding cutbacks.

Australia's universities are in crisis. The term might be contested but the figures speak for themselves.

Investment by government in universities accumulated in the 1960s and early 1970s, but has since been allowed to run down and conditions have deteriorated accordingly. Between 1990 and 1999 the overall ratio of effective full-time students to effective full-time staff in teaching-related positions rose from 12.8 students to one teacher to 17.8 students. In the four years from 1995 to 1999 total funding (from fees, charges and government grants) per student fell by 6.1 per cent, and that is despite a 75.8 per cent rise in HECS revenue, a 71.2 per cent rise in fee income from international students and a 152.9 per cent increase in domestic student fees. (For these and subsequent statistics, see M. Considine et al., *The Comparative Performance of Australia as Knowledge Nation*.)

Vocational education and training (VET), which was promoted as the solution to youth unemployment and to the chronic shortage of skilled workers only a few years ago, is in an even more difficult position. According to Australian Bureau of Statistics data, government expenditure on VET declined by 17.3 per cent in real terms between 1990–91 and 1997–98. Vocational education courses do not attract the same kind of fees as university courses, and they are far less attractive to sponsors. With rising costs and declining fees, VET institutions are struggling to deliver their courses effectively, and some are struggling to survive.

The rest of the public education system is not in much better shape. Australian children are much less likely to attend pre-school than their OECD counterparts—33.8 per cent compared with an OECD average of 60 per cent. Australian government funding is miserly in comparison with that made available by most European nations. This is despite the many, many years of research that indicates the importance of early childhood education. Children who are well prepared for school perform better and are more successful in the long term. Pre-schools also play a vital role in the early diagnosis of physical and learning disabilities, such as deafness or information-processing disorders that require early intervention and treatment.

Funding for Australian schools is better, just above the OECD average, but is heavily geared in favour of private schools at the expense of public ones. According to Peter Crimmins, Executive Officer of the Association of Christian Schools, this translates into Commonwealth expenditure of $3.90 per day on government schools by comparison with $12 per day on non-government schools ('School for $30 a day! Who pays?' *Educare News*, no. 117, August, pp26–27). The bulk of this money is paid to poor schools, mostly Catholic parochial schools and some community schools, which would not survive without it.

Until 1999 Commonwealth funding was paid according to perceived need, and the high-fee-paying, asset-rich Category A schools received little or nothing. In 2000 the method of making grants to non-government schools (excluding Catholic schools) was revised. The new funding arrangements use a complicated formula known as the Socio-Economic Status Score that measures parents' capacity to pay fees in order to determine the size of the grant. Total grants to non-government schools are expected to increase substantially and the increases, on average, will be largest in the high-fee-paying schools (G. Burke & A. Spaull, 'Centenary Article—Australian Schools: Participation and Funding 1901–2000', Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2001).

Participation in the post-compulsory years of secondary education has slipped since 1992. Recent figures show that only 65 per cent of 25–34-year-old Australians have upper secondary qualifications compared with an OECD country average of 72 per cent and 88 per cent in the USA.

Overall, these figures present a picture of a nation that is going backwards in investment in education.

Why? Because for years, educational policy has been driven by successive governments' desire to reduce costs. Investment in education fell by five per cent between 1985 and 1998 with the sharpest decline occurring between 1996 and 1998. But most recent Australian governments have been reluctant about funding education generally, and universities in particular, because the sector yields comparatively few tangible returns within the short term, certainly not within the three or so years that any party can count on in government. Long-term planning has been sacrificed for short-term gains.

Members of the broader community could be forgiven for underestimating how serious the situation is, or even for thinking that the universities are in good shape. Universities are respected in the community and they continue to be the preferred destination for an overwhelming majority of students going on to tertiary education. They even seem to be working efficiently: they push more graduates through the system at less cost to government than ever before, something that probably seems desirable to many taxpayers. More students, more postgraduates, more for less? Yes—but only if we are prepared to accept a decline in the quality of education.

WHAT ALTERNATIVES are on offer? Would the Australian education system look any different if the Australian Labor Party's policy *Knowledge Nation* were in place?

Certainly, in this election year, the ALP has staked a lot on its commitment to education—and on *Knowledge Nation*. The document was produced by a taskforce of 23 experts, led by former ALP President and polymath Barry Jones, who holds degrees in Arts, Law and Science and who has earned a reputation for writing about the challenges facing society as it passes through a post-industrial revolution.

Knowledge Nation is policy-making at a level of intensity unusual in a party in opposition. Certainly Kim Beazley is using *Knowledge Nation* to differentiate his party from the Coalition. Sources close to Beazley say that few things make him angrier than the suggestion that the two parties offer voters a choice between Tweedledum and Tweedledee. *Knowledge Nation* does argue an understanding of the value of education that is different from that of the current government, but also from the previous Labor government's policy. In some respects it is a return to old-fashioned Labor policy

that talked about social justice. As *Knowledge Nation* states:

> Our aim must be to ensure that all children, regardless of their parents' wealth, have access to a quality education and the same chance to achieve their full potential.

This could almost be Kim Beazley Snr, Whitlam's Minister for Education, talking:

> [Education] is the instrument of every child's and young person's dignity and competence.

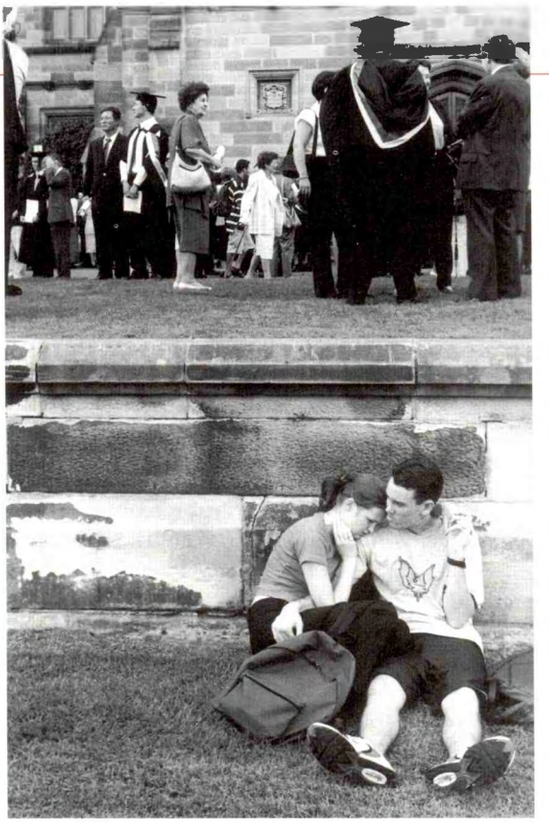
The tone of both quotes is a world away from the 1987 Green Paper that set in motion the extensive process of reform eventually described as the Dawkins Revolution. Then, the Green Paper implied that the higher education system was important in so far as it would enable the country to deal with new developments and challenges. Dawkins defended his stance by repeating the familiar refrain that the Hawke government had been elected to provide sound financial management.

Knowledge Nation is full of that earlier kind of optimism and drive for equality of opportunity. In its commitment to 'making information available as a public good, outside commercial exploitation', there are echoes of Chifley's famous speech:

> I try to think of the Labor movement not as putting an extra sixpence in somebody's pocket, or making somebody Prime Minister or Premier, but as a movement bringing something better to the people; better standards of living, greater happiness to the mass of the people. We have one great objective—the light on the hill—which we aim to reach by working for the betterment of mankind, not only here but anywhere we may give a helping hand.

Knowledge Nation makes 20 recommendations about educational reform: the first of these is that the prime minister should take a leading role in advocating Australia as a 'Knowledge Nation' at home and abroad.

One of the first tasks that Beazley has set himself, if elected, is to oversee the creation of an inventory of Australia's knowledge resources and to outline a specific national policy framework in education, training and research. Indeed, Beazley is on record as saying that he wishes to be remembered as the 'Education Prime Minister'.



This is the reality of Australia's brain drain—there are just not enough academic jobs, in research or teaching, for all those bright young postgraduates.

This is an ambition that we have not heard for a number of years. And yet Australia has, during the last 50 years, been richly endowed with prime ministers who were former ministers for education or who took a very strong personal interest in education. Curtin and Chifley were adamant that higher education was a matter of national interest, too important to be left to the goodwill and uneven resources of the states. Menzies viewed education as a priority and commented on more than one occasion that he regarded receiving the Martin Report into Australia's universities as the finest achievement of his years in office. Whitlam brought a new and different vision to education when he abolished university tuition fees and, even more significantly, when he made pre-school education a reality for hundreds of thousands of children. Malcolm Fraser, whose Razor Gang slashed funds to public education and higher education in the late '70s, nonetheless increased funding for the TAFE sector in recognition of the role it played in economic development. It was not until the 1980s that education became less than a top priority, and that economic management became *the* measure of good government.

It is not easy to gauge how effective *Knowledge Nation*'s recommendations would be in practice because the document lacks specific detail. It does, however, emphasise the importance of supporting Australian research in universities and non-university organisations. It recommends that the Commonwealth should co-ordinate with the states to develop a comprehensive research policy and find ways to assist researchers to develop and market their work. Since the '50s, when the Menzies government decided not to continue work on the Blue Streak Rocket, the Australian tendency to make the new discoveries in science and technology here and then watch them be developed overseas has achieved legendary status. And as with all legends, there is a grounding in the real world. The list of Australian inventions earning big money for overseas companies goes on and on—the black box flight recorder, the orbital engine, gene shears technology, to name just a few. *Knowledge Nation*'s advent is particularly timely given the recent release of the OECD's annual report, *Education at a Glance*, which indicates how far Australia has slipped. In the 1980s, for example, Australia made a promising start in developing cyber technology, but has failed, over the last few years, to maintain its place.

Knowledge Nation also makes specific mention of support for the humanities and social sciences in a belated recognition that there is more to education than business studies and information technology. It also commits the next Labor government to boosting funds for pre-schools and introducing a range of targeted programs into secondary schools that will raise participation and tackle disadvantage—something along the lines of the Participation and Equity Program

Hard cell

WHILE THIS COLUMN HAS ADOPTED the great researcher and inventor from Syracuse, Archimedes, as representing science, there is an argument that another Ancient Greek would make a better symbol—Pandora. It seems that every new research finding and each wondrous new piece of technology opens a box full of complications with which society then has to cope.

It's not just the pace of science which leaves administrators and legislators in its wake, but the complexity of the issues thrown up. They don't resolve easily—the good, the bad and everything in between come all mixed together.

Genetics is one headache for legislators. As this column was being written, the US House of Representatives had just passed a Bill to prevent human cloning, a goal with which the overwhelming majority of scientists would agree. But many fewer would, I suspect, support the American legislation. For the Bill has been framed in such a way as to block not just the production of cloned babies, but also the creation and use of embryonic cells for research. Such a law seems to be the stuff of nightmares for those involved in one of the brightest areas of medical research, work on human stem cells. But there may already be ways around it.

Human beings develop from a single cell. That original embryonic stem cell has a built-in capacity to become many different cells—nerve, skin, muscle, heart, liver cells. If we learned to control a cell like that, it could be used to treat medical conditions ranging from Parkinson's and heart disease to burns and compound fractures.

As cells divide and change into their adult forms, they lose flexibility. That's why stem cell research and treatments depend on cells like those found in embryos. Not surprisingly, though, using embryonic cells is distasteful to those who think of them as already human. But we can now take embryonic stem cells and grow them indefinitely as cells, which never grow into embryos. The existence of these cell lines (which originally came from surplus IVF embryos) may make it possible not to have to create embryos solely for stem cell research.

Then there are the cells in bone marrow and in hair follicles, and those active in wound healing, which retain the capacity throughout adult life to regenerate and change like stem cells. Scientists are already investigating these cells for therapeutic purposes, while others hope to turn back the clock on adult cells and reprogram them as stem cells. Do they thereby become embryonic?

Unlike nuclear physics or space exploration, genetics research is not particularly expensive—and thus can be undertaken almost anywhere. If the American legislation is enacted, most assume that research will carry on elsewhere. We are already facing the prospect of human cloning in Italy.

Who can police developments such as stem cell research and cloning internationally, and how will they do it? It all makes the headlong rush towards the marketplace and the corporation as the universal arbiter of values more than a little frightening. ■

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(PEP) of the early 1980s. PEP succeeded in raising Australia's school retention figures to an all-time high. Given the link between an educational 'underclass' and persistent, long-term unemployment—described in detail by Richard Teese in his recent work, *Academic Success and Social Power*—any program that specifically targets potential early leavers would be an improvement over the current situation.

One of the more dismaying sights in recent Australian politics was that of the Minister for Education, Dr David Kemp, deriding a diagram from *Knowledge Nation* as 'spaghetti and meatballs'. The rather complex diagram—demonstrating the way the elements of *Knowledge Nation* would fit together—was a tactical error, given the adversarial nature of our politics. But reducing debate on a matter of national importance to the level of schoolyard invective (in which the media became a willing accomplice) and marginalising education as an electoral issue are more serious errors. It is also a sad reflection on the state of political discussion in Australia when the mainstream media believes that complex policy issues must be reduced to 10-second soundbites to render them appealing to the public.

In the 1980s, the renowned Swedish educator, Torsten Husen, wrote extensively about the process of educational reform in his native land. The reform, and finding a satisfactory model, took almost 20 years. Husen was quick to point out that this did not mean all political parties had agreed about what was necessary—quite the opposite in fact. But it did indicate a level of commitment to education, and a willingness to adopt a long-term approach to educational reform, that has been conspicuously absent in Australia for a very long time.

Perhaps the most striking feature of the Labor Party's policy, *Knowledge Nation*, is that it recognises that educational reform cannot be rushed, that there are no quick-fix solutions. *Knowledge Nation* proposes a ten-year process. Whether Kim Beazley will have the conviction to see it through remains to be seen. ■

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MOIRA RAYNER

Facing the other side

Fronting up to hypocrisy about child abuse.

My Christian upbringing was very Old Testament. My Presbyterian God was a judge and a despot. My Sunday School Jesus didn't 'suffer the little children'. Rather, he was a vengeful saviour, driving out money-changers with a whip. But I do remember, all these years later, his strange remark that all sins can and will be forgiven, except the sin against the Holy Ghost.

What did it mean? One of my teachers gave me to understand that it was associated with my habit of 'asking too many questions'. I supposed, in the end, that the unforgivable sin was the refusal to accept an evident and crucial truth.

From the continuing fury about paedophilia in both the UK, where I am now, and in Australia, where I will shortly be again, I believe that we have, in the public mind, another popularly unforgivable sin: paedophilia. But is it?

A few weeks ago Britain's Channel 4 broadcast a fake documentary about paedophilia in the *Brass Eye* series, made by Chris Morris. I watched it by accident, but was soon snorting with unwilling laughter as a range of celebrities made fools of themselves by wearing T-shirts that proclaimed, 'I'm talking nonce sense' (say it out loud). They told us that paedophiles share the same genetic makeup as a crab, and then they stabbed the offending crustacean. A well-known rap singer claimed that paedophiles are so damnably clever that they can emit stupefying drugs through a TV screen to control children using the internet, and can even 'feel' such children through the keyboard.

All hell broke loose, of course. Ministers threatened censorship, litigation and crackdowns on the public TV channel's management. Opinion-makers who had not seen the program described it as sick, and the celebrities, whose lack of judgment had been beautifully exposed, squawked mightily about deception.

Paedophilia has become the great public obsession, the unforgivable sin. But from the outrage that greeted his satire, you might think that Chris Morris had committed a greater sin: he had 'trivialised', they said, a terrible crime.

Sexual abuse of children *is* a great crime but it is rarely a strangers' crime. It is terrible because it destroys the fiduciary relationship between all children and any adults, and the younger the child, the greater the affront to our notion of appropriate sexuality. The sexual exploitation of children is a grave breach of trust. Children put their hands trustingly into the hands of others. That's why the CCTV pictures of Thompson and Venables leading little James Bulger to his death are so dreadful: innocence—his, and theirs—was destroyed. That's why the audio tape of ten-year-old Lesley Ann Downey pleading to 'Mummy' for help as she was sexually tormented by Ian Brady, and Myra Hindley's cold 'Shut up!' response, has condemned Brady and Hindley to perpetual imprisonment.

Paedophilia is an unimaginable crime for most of us: we can't walk in the shoes of a paedophile, though we can imagine ourselves committing almost every other crime. Paedophiles are, for most of us, irredeemably 'other'. But there is something anomalous here. Our fears about strangers are illogical, deep and false when it comes to paedophilia. Children are at greater risk from their own families and friends. The chance that a deviant stranger will abduct our children is remote: the greater risk comes from among ourselves. And it comes both directly—children are most often abused by those they know—and indirectly. We allow children of 12 or 14 to model adult sexuality in fashion photography and music. Newspapers condemn paedophilia and incite mobs to pursue the innocent, while at the same time they accept advertisements that sexualise children. We read popular literature that portrays children as sexually accessible the moment they reach the age of 16.

There is a very old process at work in the current furore here in England: Chris Morris, Channel 4 and the *Brass Eye* program have been made scapegoats, symbolically imbued with the sins of the community then driven out into the wilderness. We are 'purified', but only symbolically, when we turn out not just the paedophiles, but those who try to make us reflect upon our response to them and our ambivalence about children.

I did think the Channel 4 satire shocking, not because it trivialised a grave crime but because real children were used as mock 'victims', and because it missed the central issue about their powerlessness. We can only sexually engage with children because we are more powerful than they are, because we fail to appreciate both their unique vulnerabilities and their right to be treated with respect as moral equals.

We'll never see the program in Australia. We have the same mockable crew here as in Britain: shallow politicians, eager celebrities and prune-faced journalists, plus our own endless willingness to be titillated by sex and children. It is easy for morals campaigners to make fools of themselves. There is a moral purpose in letting them: making people think. But this entails the commission of another unforgivable sin: laughing at the self-righteous. We won't do it. But we should. ■

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Singapore's woulda

SINGAPORE IS A QUIET AND DISCIPLINED SOCIETY perched on an overgrown sandbank at the end of the Malay peninsula. Its highest virtue is efficiency. It has achieved extraordinary prosperity, without benefit of any advantage other than its strategic location on world shipping routes.
The city state has been praised for maintaining harmony among Chinese, Malay and Indian while industrialising and lifting itself up from uncertain beginnings in the 1950s. Political stability and good government—pioneered, designed and watched over by the local version of the Colossus of Rhodes, Lee Kuan Yew—are cited as the foundations of Singapore's achievement.

Its soaring glass towers and its manicured gardens, criss-crossed by paths protected from the tropical sun by shady banyan trees, spell success. Not even an occasional beggar scuffs the cleanliness of its streets and pavements—testament to the achievements of a people, and of a nation that was never meant to be.

been democrat

J.B. JEYARETNAM

OR SO THE Singapore Story goes. The telling seems to stop at the entrance of an office building on North Bridge Road. Four decades old—ancient by Singapore standards—its dimly lit halls are lined with travel agencies and jewellery shops, stuffed into glass-fronted cubicles. On each of the floors, serviced by cantankerous escalators, there are hanging electrical wires, boarded-up doors and broken ceiling tiles. It is an oasis of sprawl in a desert of order.

Tucked away in a forgotten corridor leading from a fire exit is the office of J.B. Jeyaretnam, Singapore's other political icon. At 75, Jeyaretnam is two years younger than Lee Kuan Yew. Both men studied law in English universities and both tasted politics for the first time working for Labour candidates in post-war elections in the UK. They share a talent for powerful oratory, but that is where their similarities end. Since 1959, Lee Kuan Yew, first as Prime Minister then as Senior Minister, has built a system that has become the envy of neighbours in the region. J.B. Jeyaretnam, by his own admission, has spent most of that same time trying to tear the system down.

Sitting at a desk surrounded by files, sacks of rice and stacks of a self-published volume of his speeches to parliament, 'J.B.J.', as he is known in Singaporean shorthand, denies that he has failed in his task. And he does so with an idealism matching the words from the preamble to the American Constitution that are printed on his T-shirt.

'Some people may take the view that I have squandered my talent for making money and building up a fortune. If that is the object to living then they would be right, I have failed ... but I believe I have been called to do something.'

He was speaking early in May. But Jeyaretnam's current circumstances do not lend themselves to great optimism. On 27 May he was replaced as Secretary-General of the Workers' Party (which he had run since 1971) in what looked very much like a leadership spill.

On 18 July he lost an appeal against bankruptcy in Singapore's highest court. As a consequence, Jeyaretnam was removed from parliament, reducing the number of opposition MPs to just two out of 81. Speaking from his sister's house across the causeway in the Malaysian province of Johore Baru, he voiced his disappointment at what he saw as an unjust decision.

'All I want to say now is that my immediate priority is to pay off this bankruptcy so as to clear the way for me to participate in the elections next year.' (One of the ways J.B.J. hopes to pay off the hundreds of thousands he owes is by continuing to sell the collection of his parliamentary speeches and by doing a little begging.)

Characteristically, Jeyaretnam does not talk of an end. Earlier in the year he told me, 'I'm not giving up my political career. I shall be contesting the elections, provided I can clear the bankruptcy. By no means am I finished yet.'

REQUIEMS FOR JEYARETNAM began flowing two years ago when damages of S$223,000 were awarded against him in one of a series of defamation suits. The suits had begun even before Jeyaretnam's 1981 by-election

victory ended 16 years of domination of parliament by the ruling People's Action Party (PAP).

Devan Nair, a former cabinet minister who fell foul of Lee Kuan Yew and was 'kicked upstairs'—as he put it—to the Presidency, described Lee as being possessed by a 'caged fury' the day after Jeyaretnam's victory.

'I will never forget his [Lee's] last words: "I will make him crawl on his bended knees, and beg for mercy"', Nair wrote, in an article published in the *Sydney Morning Herald*. He continued: 'Jeyaretnam was made of sterner stuff. To his eternal credit he never did crawl on bended knees, or ever begged for mercy.'

Jeyaretnam dismisses out of hand the suggestion that Goh Chok Tong's new guard is opening up Singapore ... 'In parliament I asked the Minister for Finance to tell me how much was paid to all the ministers last year in salaries and allowances. He told me, "No, you can't have that answer."'

The governing People's Action Party has frequently brought defamation action against opposition politicians. Jeyaretnam has been sued for defamation successfully by Lee Kuan Yew more than once before, with combined damages of S$780,000 awarded against him. His bankruptcy stems from a case brought over an article published in the Tamil language in the Workers' Party newspaper, *The Hammer*. Jeyaretnam is not able to read Tamil. Nonetheless, he was found to have defamed the organisers of a PAP-sponsored cultural event who were criticised in the article.

Another action was brought by Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong after Jeyaretnam had addressed a rally held prior to the January 1997 election with these words: 'Mr Tang Liang Hong has just placed before me two reports he has made against, you know, Mr Goh Chok Tong and his people.'

Tang Liang Hong is now in self-imposed exile in Australia, having had over S$5 million awarded against him by the courts following allegations he made concerning the purchase of property by the Lee family.

Stuart Littlemore, lawyer and former presenter of ABC's *Media Watch*, observed court proceedings in the case brought against Jeyaretnam by Goh Chok Tong. He concluded (in a report published by the International Commission of Jurists) that undue deference had been paid the Prime Minister by the presiding judge and was concerned that the judge found Jeyaretnam's words defamatory—but not the way the plaintiff argued them.

'It would be unfortunate indeed', Littlemore wrote, 'if the judge's articulation of a lesser meaning imputation were irregular within the Singapore judicial system—because it would strongly suggest that the Prime Minister had been given specially favourable treatment to avoid the embarrassment of losing his case.'

Littlemore's observations set off a storm of protest.

But the use of legal action does not in itself explain the almost complete dominance of Singapore politics by the People's Action Party for four decades. Nor does the existence of gerrymandering, and a unicameral parliament selected by first-past-the-post ballot. A more likely explanation can be found in the extraordinary executive attention to detail. In his recently published memoirs, Lee Kuan Yew notes that long hair was banned in the early '70s—they did not want their teenagers 'adopting the hippy look'. He remembers and includes this and other pieces of minute domestic detail in between discussion of his encounters with international leaders and the management of national crises. Without such capacity for micro-management, Lee and the cohort of Western-educated professionals who formed the party would not have managed to win the 1959 election with the support of militant communists, and then, in the decades following, purge them from the party and go on to shape the island into a model of capitalist enterprise.

One of the other best-selling titles in Singapore at the moment is a book of essays by former *Straits Times* journalist, Cherian George. Drawing its title, *Singapore: The Air-conditioned Nation*, from Lee Kuan Yew's nomination of the air cooler as the most significant invention of the 20th century, it is a calculated work that doles out accolades and black marks for the government in almost equal measure. The title of the collection, and its theme, suggest that Singapore is as much a concept as it is a physical reality—a work in progress. A point made often in its pages, and repeated elsewhere, is that the government's intervention at nearly all levels of society has left little room for any agenda other than its own.

'In a more developed democracy the opposition would not be sued for defamation,' argues Sinapan Samydorai. Samydorai is the director of Think Centre, a two-year-old civic group that is tentatively testing the boundaries of openness under the new-guard leadership of Goh Chok Tong. The Centre lobbies for stronger democratic institutions and freedom from excessive government intervention. Samydorai continues: '[As a result] there is not the democratic space as there is elsewhere for opposition parties and civil society groups to exist.'

But the long reach of government has always been defended and justified by Lee Kuan Yew. 'I say without the slightest remorse that we would not be here, would not have made the economic progress, if we had not intervened in every personal matter—who your neighbour is, how you live, the noise you make, how you spit, or what language you use,' he argued in a 1986 interview with the *Economist*. And, post-Lee, there remains in place a range of measures that ensure close government supervision of Singapore's four million residents. Jailing without charge is permissible

under the Internal Security Act; public gatherings have to pass strict criteria, and the government reserves the right to determine when public debate becomes too political. There is no Freedom of Information Act to enable citizens to check on what government is doing in their name.

Singaporeans are self-conscious of the image they have abroad—of being the subjects of a long-running experiment in people management and social control. 'Singaporeans do think for themselves, are open-minded and have voted for the opposition in the past in large numbers,' says a local journalist. 'We are more than just efficient worker bees.'

Despite what seems a hegemonic control of the Singapore electorate by the PAP, many believe that it is possible to have a significant opposition presence in parliament—it is just that the opposition parties have blundered their way into inconsequence.

At the 1991 general election, following Lee Kuan Yew's handover to Goh Chok Tong the year before, there was a minor flowering of political diversity. Three seats were won by the Singapore Democratic Party, making it the largest opposition party in parliament. But at the next election in 1997 (the five-year term is sometimes extended by electoral delay) the party disappeared from parliament, rent asunder by bickering. The PAP vote rebounded to the levels it had reached under Lee. Hardly surprising. With a big enough slice of the economic miracle—jobs, consumer goods, substantial savings invested in pension funds and ownership of their Housing Development Board flats—why would the people jeopardise their security by voting for a rabble?

At the press conference after taking over the Workers' Party leadership in May, Low Thia Khiang, the other MP from the party, returned again and again to the need to attract a younger following and more capable candidates to stand at the election due next year.

'I think the focus now should be on renewal,' said Low during a rare appearance before the government-owned media (he broke off frequently to refer to the unfair treatment his party received in the Singapore press). He also speculated that J.B. Jeyaretnam's legal problems have created a fear among would-be candidates that they will be victimised.

'They are worried about getting involved in opposition politics because there might be repercussions in their job, in their business. [I say] to people who say they will be victimised by the PAP, "give me the evidence and I will ask the minister concerned in parliament". There have been rumours but so far no-one has given me the evidence.'

Low's election in the absence of Jeyaretnam (J.B.J. failed to turn up to the meeting for reasons neither would divulge) was reported as a bloodless coup against Jeyaretnam. At party headquarters—two white-washed rooms with concrete floors above a motorcycle repair shop—there was some evidence of dissent. As Low began answering questions, one of the delegates milling around made show of kicking a stool and stormed down the stairs. The new Secretary-General was reluctant to talk about Jeyaretnam, saying his future was in his own hands. At the end of the meeting, however, he did grudgingly admit J.B.J.'s history with the party and the voters.

'He has done much for the party. The party has no intention to kick him out whatsoever ... I think he has made a contribution to the party in the last 30 years and he is a political icon in Singapore whether you like it or not. He is the first man who broke the stranglehold of the PAP.'

Think Centre sought and obtained permission to hold a rally and fund-raiser in support of J.B.J. in April, not because they support his policies, Samydorai is quick to stress, but because every opposition member of parliament is vital.

Above:
J.B. Jeyaretnam,
'Singapore's other political icon.'

'He is a well-known figure,' Samydorai explains, 'and if he loses the chance to sit in parliament and voice opinions it is a loss for many of us who believe in democracy and human rights.'

J.B. JEYARETNAM first came up against Lee Kuan Yew when he was a magistrate in Singapore's subordinate court in the 1960s. There he ruled against the government on a case of unlawful assembly brought against one of the independent unions that would soon be subdued and replaced with the PAP-backed National Trade Union Congress. In 1971 he took over the Workers' Party, founded by Singapore's first Chief Minister, David Marshall. It has been plain from then on that Jeyaretnam and Lee Kuan Yew were on a collision course.

'One time in parliament J.B.J. turned to Lee and said, "do you really hate me that much?"' says a colleague of the embattled opposition figure. 'Lee replied to the effect that it was beneath his contempt to hate J.B.J.'

Lee is the pragmatist who does not believe in universal values or ideologies, only in what will materially benefit Singapore. Jeyaretnam is the liberal, firm in his support of individual rights and privileges.

'The law on contempt of court [in Singapore] is archaic, just as the law on libel is archaic,' Jeyaretnam says (while at the same time refusing to be drawn on the independence of the judiciary). 'The law on libel has developed in Europe and America, where they say the need to give the people freedom of expression, especially in matters of national interest, outweighs any damage that may result to public leaders and officials.'

Jeyaretnam dismisses out of hand the suggestion that Goh Chok Tong's new guard is opening up Singapore.

'I've said it again and again: it's just a mirage to make people think things are changing when they are really staying the same. It's Lee's fiat that runs this country.

'In parliament I asked the Minister for Finance to tell me how much was paid to all the ministers last year in salaries and allowances. He told me, "No, you can't have that answer."'

Sinapan Samydorai, on the other hand, thinks there are some encouraging signs that political debate is slowly broadening in Singapore. He cites the setting up of a government feedback unit, decentralisation of power, and the symbolic gesture of opening a speakers' corner in Hong Lim park near the business district.

'I think the new form of politics to come will be more mainstream ... more liberal. I think the younger generation admire Goh Chok Tong.'

Samydorai adds, however, that some of the old ways persist, pointing to the controversy over whether the government should reveal more about how and where the Government Investment Corporation (GIC)

is managing assets worth S$140 billion, much of it derived from workers' pensions. Lee Kuan Yew, as chairman of GIC's board, went on television in May to tell Singapore, in old Confucian style, that they should trust those in charge to invest well.

Samydorai has been able to follow the activities of GIC, shrouded in secrecy in Singapore, by reading reports in the Australian media of Singtel's pursuit of Cable & Wireless Optus and Singapore Airlines' quest for a stake in Air New Zealand. Both Singtel and Singapore Airlines are controlled by GIC funds. The fears associated with the Singapore government's becoming a much larger player in Australian telecommunications were articulated by an opportunistic Channel Seven head, Kerry Stokes, in his submission to the Foreign Investment Review Board. Stokes warned the Board (which has deferred its decision on the $17 billion offer for Optus until this month) that it would be dangerous to approve the bid as Singapore was 'an extremely intrusive and authoritarian state'. Channel Seven's opposition is connected to its pay-TV arm, C7, which is negotiating to extend its contract with the Cable & Wireless Optus pay-TV network. The contract expires at the end of this year. Stokes has also alleged that Singtel engages in phone-tapping for the government.

The ever-optimistic Jeyaretnam conceded earlier this year that his political career—at least as it has been up until now—would be over if he were unable to overturn the ruling of bankruptcy in Singapore's Court of Appeal. But in his next breath he spoke of winning a clutch of seats in parliament 'himself' at the next election.

'Parliament will have to change then; the government can't keep continuing as they have when there have just been one or two opposition members.'

Sinapan Samydorai believes the next shift in Singapore politics will have to come from a new breed of opposition figure.

'If you look at the Workers' Party, there is a whole history. Then you look at what happened to the Democratic Party, the in-fighting, the washing of dirty linen in public. Finally they lost the seats they had. People are put off. They want to see something new.'

EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENS in Singapore seems to happen with a greater sense of purpose than elsewhere. Blocks of Housing and Development Board flats are all populated with a variety of ethnic groups to prevent ghettos and racial tension. Ministers are paid handsomely so that government can compete with the private sector for talent. Walking through the place one imagines that even the street hawkers selling water near city hall are only allowed there to save lost and thirsty tourists.

Yet at a World War I memorial for British dead, a group of kids are skateboarding up and down its steps. It's just after lunch on a weekday and they flip their skateboards and spin them around like tops. They have no elbow or knee guards, but when they hit the concrete hard they are up immediately, chasing their boards before they are crunched under the wheels of passing traffic.

The skateboarders have no recollection of communal riots, the uncertainty of Singapore's inclusion in the Malaysian federation in the 1960s, or of its subsequent expulsion. They might have heard that the British once had a large garrison here but would not comprehend the impact of its withdrawal in the early '70s on their tiny nation at a time when South East Asia was riven by war. They take for granted the economic success of Singapore, despite the fact the very water they drink has to be bought from Malaysia. They know Lee Kuan Yew as a father figure but would not appreciate the achievement of Lee and his successors—or indeed of J.B. Jeyaretnam—in carving out a place for an independent Singapore.

They do know, though, that breaking rules made by other people is fun. ■

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

ESSAY

MARK MORDUE

Free as a bird

It's a lazy summer Sunday, and I can smell salt coming in from the coast, carried ocean-fresh for miles by a strong afternoon wind. Eucalypts are outside my window, excited in the bright Australian sun. Maybe it's in the mood of the weather, but I'm feeling mellow and trippy, so I put on a 'new' old CD, Van Morrison's *Hard Nose the Highway*.

Morrison's exultant voice and mystic inclinations suit the day's roll and slide. But there's a particularity to playing this music that sets me thinking a little more deeply than inside the moment. After spying *Hard Nose the Highway* in a bargain bin at my local music store, I did at age 40 what I had failed to do as a confused 15-year-old so many years ago. I bought it.

My initial contact with this record was at my local supermarket, where I used to stand at the record section looking at one of the girls working at the checkout. It took me months to work up the courage to ask her out, the first girl I ever asked out in my life, and she said she was busy. The build-up to the situation was so intense, I had no comeback to her refusal. I could not even think to ask if she was free on another day. Instantly defeated, I slunk off as quickly as possible. Such is young love.

Over the time I dreamt about this 'love', admiring her from afar, I also had Van Morrison's *Hard Nose the Highway* in my paws. I would play it on the small stereo thoughtfully provided for customers at the supermarket. I'd stand at the music section and listen to it again and again, not quite sure why I liked it or if I should buy it. But there I would be a few days later, playing it again, trying to understand my attraction to it, studying the album cover art (by Rob Springett) which portrayed Van in some astral, psychedelically cool zone where Vietnam, black power, doves, death and the solar system spun around him. I was immensely curious.

Listening to the record now, I realise that the jazz-touched arrangements were what confused me. I was a naive 15-year-old kid. I had no idea of what jazz was. My favourite songs at this time were mostly pop mulch and commercial rock 'n' roll. It was the early '70s and bands like Kiss, to me at least, were as underground and avant-garde as you could get! Stuff like Van Morrison, well, the music—like the album cover art—seemed to come from another world.

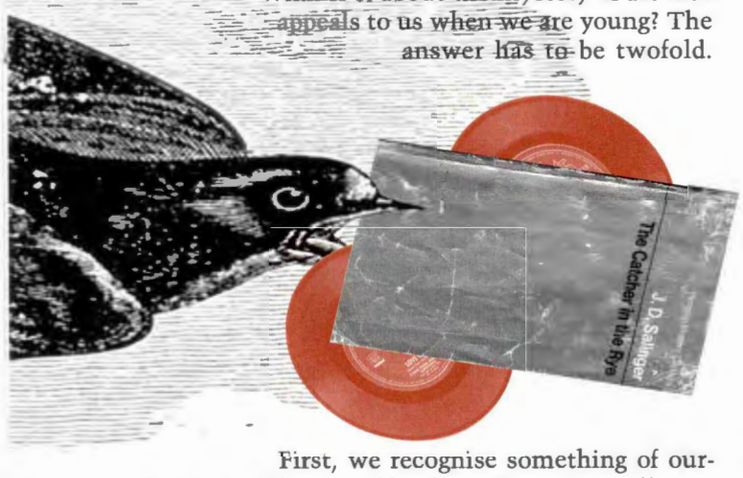
Listening, I can hear a melodic serenity I somehow missed then. Morrison's trademark quest for the ecstatic place takes you there, for just a few seconds or minutes, with his equally ecstatic voice. Oddly enough, his ecstasy exists on the difficult line between yearning and loss, between a wise and worn old adulthood and a notion of pure youth unwounded by knowledge. Morrison would explore these childhood 'lost horizons' again and again in song, notably on 'Got to Go Back' (on *No Guru, No Method, No Teacher*).

My purpose here, however, is not to engage in an extended reverie on the music or career of Van Morrison. No. This isn't an album review. It's just that discovering this flawed mid-career recording of Van Morrison some 25 years later causes me, now, to recall the role that art plays in our lives before we become overly cultivated by its forms. It's a thought that leads me to consider the great myth and poison

of our age—niche marketing, and the underlying 'truth' it promotes: that popular creative expression and the media should pursue what people want rather than give them things they do not understand, or have not yet even imagined.

That a child knows the opposite of this is indeed a curious thing. You can say that I didn't cross the line and buy the damned record when I was a kid. But it made its mark, and here I am all this time later appreciating it.

What is it about the mystery of art that appeals to us when we are young? The answer has to be twofold.



First, we recognise something of ourselves in it. Like a good book, as George Orwell once said, it tells us something we already knew, but which needed articulating, which needed to be said for us to recognise it in ourselves. Second—and this is the deeper, stranger truth—the art somehow inspires in us a feeling of reaching, a suggestion of something just beyond us that perhaps we don't fully understand, but which we feel we would like to. It's this latter ambition which is forsaken in the ways the present consumer-driven culture is manipulated. As if economic rationalism is the only path to understanding the wants of a society and its constituent individuals, let alone the so-called 'tribes'.

Similarly, I can ask, why did J.D. Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye* inspire me, as it continues to inspire generation after generation of people in their teens? The answer is because it evokes that essential mood of apartness which somehow defines puberty, particularly for bookish teenage boys who feel life's pulses a little too strongly.

So now I feel I have to nod a thank-you to that art which awakened me to a world I didn't quite understand—but which I knew, intuitively, to be a part of me.

Morrison's *Hard Nose the Highway* at a supermarket when I was falling for a girl with green eyes. Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye* when I felt wrong in my teenage world. A poster-print of Van Gogh's crows flying over a field of swirling corn, a painting whose name I still do not know. Neil Young telling everybody they're just 'pissing in the wind', on his album *On the Beach*. Hearing Bruce Springsteen's 'Born to Run' on a suburban radio station and feeling I could break out of my industrial suburban world with a mighty roar and a big, big car. Seeing The Beatles break up on the TV news, and watching them replay footage of The Apple rooftop show and knowing they were a part of something big and sad and wild passing me by as a ten-year-old. Watching Lou Reed strut across a dark stage in an advertisement for his 'Sally Can't Dance Tour' to Australia, the way he looked like a dangerous alien, with short-cropped peroxide-yellow hair and mirror sunglasses, an androgynous freaky allure I found fascinating and confronting all at once.

MOST OF THESE ART REFERENCES, my art references, are of course pop culture ones. And very much a part of the media I derided earlier. In fact these references made me fall in love with both artistic expression and the media, most particularly through the music that increasingly attracted me.

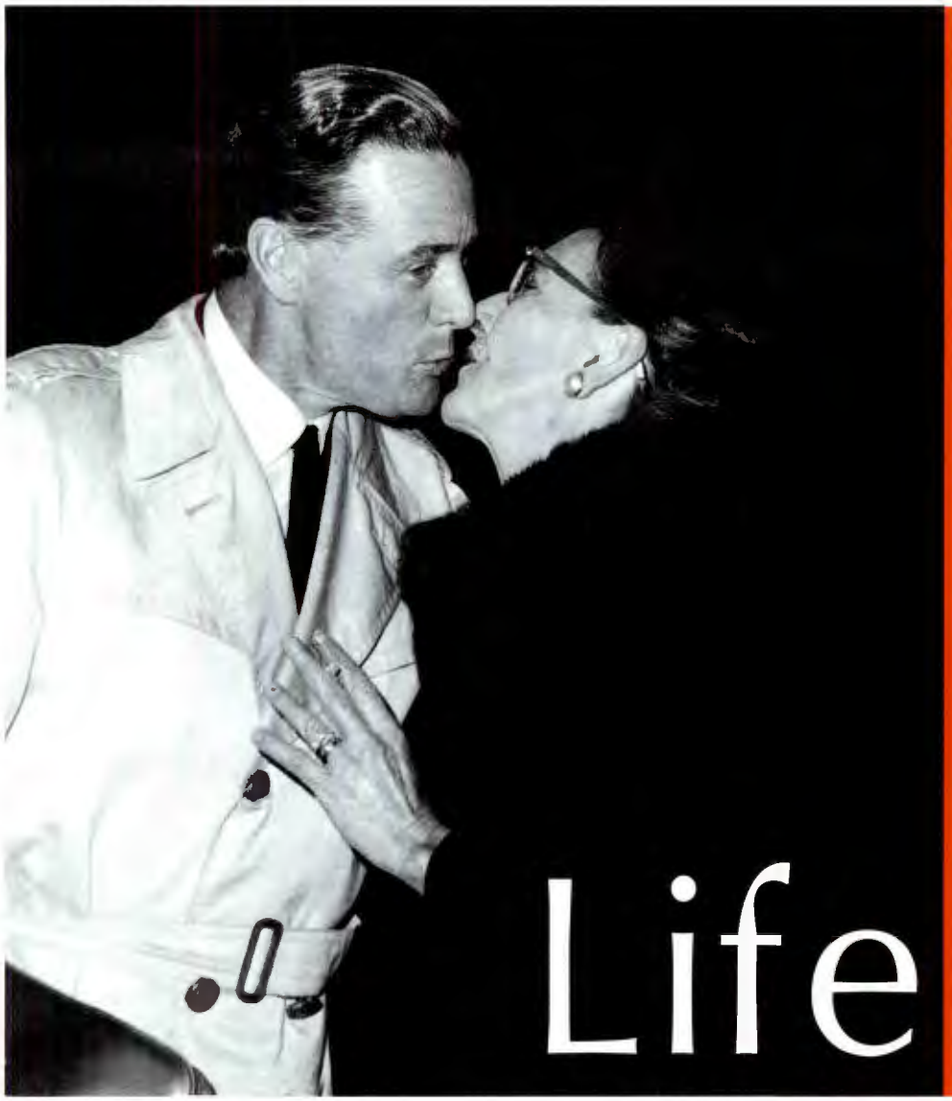
I sought these voices out over the years—and formed myself out of their influence. Ever so slowly. Experimenting, stumbling, in form and image, in taste and passion. But always there was this volatile sense of over-reaching myself. Of going beyond reassurance and the known or accepted. Of taking an interest in an art and expression that enlarged my world, rather than confirmed its dimensions.

This is the child's journey into becoming a man or woman. Today, as our global culture continues to become a processing factory for all desires and aspirations, are we so moribund, so stupid, so fixed in our childishness, that we cannot bear the experimental, the ambitious, the unpredictable in our mass-media age? Have we refined ourselves out of all adventure? Are the entrepreneurs so right about what appeals, what we can cope with, what can succeed?

I don't think so. But the spin-masters and economic rationalists and niche marketers would give you a very different answer: music and books and magazines and artists as packages targeted to appeal with a tight and closed familiarity that suffocates all possibility of chance, error, ecstasy. Their agenda: to capture the next big thing. But the next thing is bigger than that, mostly ahead of them all. All these spin-masters can do is copy it, reprocess it, gut it of all majesty. Kurt Cobain must have felt that, bitterly.

As for me, I guess I still have faith in those 15-year-olds out there in the suburban malls or driving down small-town roads, caught up with love and lust, colliding with accidents of expression that make it through the processing factory of commercial culture—and carrying the seeds of it on. May they stay always out of our control and free as birds. ■

Mark Mordue is an Asialink Australia writer-in-residence at the University of Beijing. He is the author of *Dastgah: Diary of a Headtrip*, to be published in November by Allen & Unwin.



WRITING

PAUL STRANGIO

We never tire of biography—it's a perennially popular literary form. But what is it like to write? Do you need to like your subject? Is it possible to be dispassionate about someone with whom you are completely preoccupied? **Paul Strangio** found out when he tackled the life of one of Australia's most complex politicians—Jim Cairns.

Life class

Above: Jim and Gwen Cairns. Photo courtesy Barry Cairns.

Last December, while scanning the newspaper, I came across an in-brief column in the *Sunday Age* headed 'Cairns' wife dies'. It continued: 'Gwen Cairns, the wife of the former deputy Prime Minister Jim Cairns, died yesterday after a long battle with lung cancer'.

I had been aware that Gwen Cairns was seriously ill, but her death still came as a shock. I was greatly saddened because I had come to know Gwen during my many visits to the family home to interview Jim—the biographical subject of my doctoral thesis. I had even been invited to the couple's 60th wedding anniversary celebration in February 1999. News of Gwen's death also led me to wonder how Jim would cope in her absence, as well as causing me to wonder—as I have during his various health scares of recent years—how I will feel when Cairns dies. How will I react when this man, who has figured so prominently in my life for the best part of a decade, is no longer? Gwen's death triggered some introspection about where I stand with Cairns and, more generally, prompted me to reflect on the strange, somewhat artificial, relationship that exists between the biographer and the subject.

Writing the life history of a living subject is a problematic task. At a fundamental level, the relationship between biographer and subject can probably never be one between equals. If a biographer is to have the co-operation of the subject for interviews, access to records and so on, then necessarily there is an element of dependency. But at the same time the biographer wields a curious power over the subject: by being engaged in a process of dissecting and holding up to judgment the subject's life.

There are other challenges. As a biographer you are investigating a 'work in progress'. Even when the subject is in his ninth decade, his life can assume a peculiar dynamism; there may be no more great dramas or feats to document, but there is always introspection and, in some cases, reinterpretation of past deeds. In my dealings with Jim Cairns this has been both a blessing and a curse. He has seemed more

forthcoming in the past few years about issues that previously he had kept well hidden. The most dramatic instance was his revelation in mid-1999 that his mother had contracted syphilis from her husband (who shortly after abandoned both wife and infant son) and that this was a reason for the physical (and emotional) barriers she placed between herself and the young Jim. But in recent years Cairns has also come forward with versions of events that are inconsistent with what previously he had put on the public record. Are these products of a new frankness or a memory distorted by the passage of the years?

A living subject also renders more immediate and acute the ethical dilemmas that a biographer faces in addressing matters that are of great sensitivity, and therefore likely to be very painful, to the subject and his or her family. In a recent article in *Meanjin*, Cassandra Pybus, a veteran of controversy through her study of the Orr case (*Gross Moral Turpitude: The Orr Case Reconsidered*, 1993) and her biography of James McAuley (*The Devil and James McAuley*, 1999), reflected on those dilemmas ('Dogs in the Graveyard', *Meanjin*, vol.59, no.4, 2000). A wounded-sounding Pybus writes of the biographer's responsibility 'to consider the human frailty of those who will be hurt by the secrets of the dead'. It might be best, she now thinks, that writers have an 'internal monitor—something like a spell check—that can prompt you to ask yourself, what will be the impact of this when it is *in the public domain*?' However, for the biographer of a living subject, and especially a biographer who has relied on the subject's goodwill, a potentially disabling 'internal monitor' of another form is at work: the day will come when the subject will peer back into the mirror of their life that you, the biographer, have constructed. The commitment to be fearless in investigation and revelation can wither in the face of such sobering knowledge.

This problem inevitably leads back to the nature of the relationship the biographer develops with the subject. While seeking co-operation from the subject, should you, as biographer, also be careful to ensure that there is a businesslike quality to that relationship? Certainly if one considers examples of Australian political biographies where the writer has enjoyed a pre-existing relationship with their subject—as in, for example, Graham Freudenberg's *A Certain Grandeur: Gough Whitlam in Politics* (1977) and John Edwards' *Keating: The Inside Story* (1996)—it seems that closeness is a double-edged sword: it affords a rare view but is ultimately constraining. But at the same time it is not entirely clear whether detachment from a subject will enhance or hinder understanding.

MY PERSONAL SEARCH for Jim Cairns has been protracted. When I first approached him with the idea of a biography several years ago, I was immediately struck by how withdrawn, how remote, he seemed. Not that he ever placed any barriers in my way to writing his story. On the contrary, he was a model of co-operation. He granted me over a dozen lengthy interviews and never hesitated to give me the authority to access various records relevant to the biography. And yet, while he was certainly not unfriendly, he was somehow distant, even aloof. This troubled me. I felt it was impossible to break through. I was spending so much of my time researching, analysing and writing about Cairns, yet I could not establish any sense of personal connection with him. It felt surreal. Here was someone who monopolised my waking thoughts as I struggled to work him out, yet he remained at arm's length. Indeed, the more I learnt about Cairns the more I feared that at another level he remained hidden from me.

I recognised that the remoteness I was encountering with Cairns was to a significant extent symptomatic of a broader pattern in his human relations. Indeed, part of my quest in the biography was to work out why Cairns has lived his life as a kind of permanent emotional refugee. It was reassuring, too, that I was not alone in finding him personally elusive. From the time Cairns began to make a public name for himself in the early 1960s as a lion of the Labor Left, through his years at the head of the anti-Vietnam War movement and later as the Treasurer and Deputy Prime Minister in the Whitlam government, he baffled commentators with his inscrutability. Even those close to Cairns struggled to divine the inner man. In 1981, launching the Paul Ormonde biography, *A Foolish Passionate Man: A Biography of Jim Cairns*, Bill Hayden reflected on 'a long and warm association' with Cairns during the 16 years they were in parliament together. Tellingly, however, Hayden admitted he had never quite fathomed Cairns:

> Jim Cairns is often portrayed as an enigma; a man whose soul is powerful, but who is, in the final result, unknowable by even those closest to him. While I've always had deep affection for Jim [and] been privileged to enjoy a warm and productive friendship with him, I've always found it difficult to know the whole man and I confess I never did ... the process of knowing him has been more difficult than with anyone else ...

It is, of course, for others to judge whether I have succeeded where others failed to comprehend the man. But further issues troubled me as I sifted through the minutiae of his life. I worried that I had unearthed facts about that life of which Cairns was himself unaware. For example, by obtaining the 1st AIF record of his father, James John Cairns, I effectively solved the riddle of why he chose not to return to Australia in 1919 to be reunited with his wife and child. How would Jim react to my discovery, particularly as the truth was not a palatable one? I fretted, as well, when I discovered this sentence in Cairns' 1996 book, *Reshaping the Future*: 'It seems that those who write

about politicians, want to write of warts-and-all, wanting to believe that they themselves always tell the truth and that personal intimate exposure of others raises their own status.' Was this directed at me, I wondered? Gwen Cairns was not so subtle. Still smarting at the Ormonde biography, she once pulled me aside to let me know that I would not be forgiven if I wrote anything hurtful about her 'Jimmy'. I was especially concerned about how the family would react to what I had written about Jim's marriage with Gwen and, most sensitive of all, his relationship with Junie Morosi.

FOR THESE AND many other reasons, I remember being full of apprehension when the time came to give Cairns a copy of my thesis. I rang in advance to tell him that I was coming. He seemed surprised, even mildly amused, perhaps not believing that I had finally finished. He invited me to come to the house that afternoon. So off I headed, nerves jangling. When I arrived he greeted me at the door in his typical deadpan way. I hadn't seen him for over a year and he seemed frailer than I remembered. We sat down and I handed over the thesis. I could tell he was taken aback by its size. While Gwen chatted to me, Jim slowly leafed through, pausing now and then to read a paragraph or two. Unable to bear the suspense, I blurted out that if he had any criticisms of my interpretation of certain things I would be happy to discuss his concerns. His reply meant a lot to me: 'Paul, I might disagree with what you have written but you will have been entitled to your opinion.' After what seemed an eternity he got to the end. He announced that I should be proud of how much effort I had put into the thesis. I stayed for a cup of coffee and then as I got up to leave, Jim said: 'You'll let me know when you are graduating.' 'Why?' I asked. 'Gwen and I will come,' he answered and with that crossed the floor and shook my hand. Had I always been craving his approval, his imprimatur? I'm not sure, but I went away that day feeling that my search for Cairns was at an end.

It was not over, of course. As I have laboured to transform the thesis into manuscript and soon-to-be book, Cairns' complexities have continued to intrigue and, occasionally, confound me. And I realise that I would not have it any other way: a life so rich and multi-layered, indeed any life, is not to be neatly captured between two covers. In her *Meanjin* article, Pybus refers to 'writerly sensibility; writers are always moving on, using up and discarding the last object of fascination'. I disagree. With Cairns—and I suspect with any biographical subject—there are too many things left unresolved. You can't simply move on and not look back.

Paul Strangio is a nomadic academic. His *Keeper of the Faith: A Biography of Jim Cairns* will be published by Melbourne University Press in 2002.

PETER MARES

Documenting complicity

A Dirty Little War: An Eyewitness Account of East Timor's Descent into Hell, 1997–2000, John Martinkus, Random House Australia, 2001. ISBN 1 74051 016 X, RRP $24.95

'Appeasing Jakarta: Australia's Complicity in the East Timor Tragedy', John Birmingham, *Quarterly Essay*, Issue 2, 2001. ISBN 1 86395 386 8, RRP $9.95

I WILL BEGIN WITH a confession. When I began reporting on Asian and Pacific affairs in the late 1980s, I was one of those journalists who wrote East Timor off. I did not lack sympathy for the plight of the East Timorese people, but I could not believe that they would ever break the shackles imposed on them by Jakarta. Reporting East Timor was tedious. Unless one had the courage to sneak across the border from West Timor and climb up into the mountains—and I did not—then 'news' from East Timor essentially took the form of unsubstantiated accusations and predictable denials. Reluctant to get bogged down in such a fruitless exchange, I argued instead that the vast nation of Indonesia should not be seen only through an East Timor prism—a valid point of view, but one which was in part an excuse for finding the whole thing too difficult.

28 May 1999: Julio Caetano Ximines' mother (left) refused to hand over his body to soldiers from the unit who had shot him. Julio was shot in the head when Indonesian troops opened fire on a religious procession near Baucau. The UN was due to arrive in Baucau the following day. Photograph by Dean Sewell, from *A Dirty Little War*.

My attitude changed with the fall of the Berlin Wall. Before joining the ABC, I had lived for two years in West Germany and I had taken the solid grey reality of that wall as physical proof of a nation permanently divided. My student friends in Frankfurt, children of the long post-war boom, had no interest in the East and a healthy suspicion toward any kind of nationalism. Beyond the wall was a different world, one that did not concern them.

But of course it was politics, not concrete, that kept the wall standing. When it collapsed, along with the Stasi regime in East Berlin, I realised that change in Jakarta could mean change in Dili. It was obvious that Indonesia's New Order would not last forever.

When Suharto was finally pushed from office in 1998, brave students in East Timor immediately became active, organising unprecedented public meetings and demonstrations. This time I was paying attention and at Radio Australia for the first time we found people in Dili who were willing to be interviewed over the phone and to describe what was going on.

Australian journalist John Martinkus went much further, taking the considerable financial and personal risk of relocating to East Timor to cover the story from the ground. It was not an easy task. Being the only foreign journalist in place gave Martinkus 'exclusive' coverage of dramatic events, but he discovered that this could be more of a curse than a blessing. Editors did not always believe his stories because they were not being reported elsewhere. If it was not 'on the wires', then how could the editor know that Martinkus had got it right?

Martinkus tells his story with pace and passion. As someone who had watched developments unfold from afar, I was familiar with major events in his narrative, but knowing the outline of the story in advance did not make it any less gripping or any less shocking. Martinkus tells the East Timor story with a wealth of detail; the places he went, the people he met, the stories they told him. The fabric of his narrative is stitched together from these many small vignettes, and together they form a coherent whole. A distressing picture emerges of a calculated, ruthless and well-organised plan to terrorise the people of East Timor into submission, and if this should fail, to visit massive revenge upon them.

It was soon obvious what was going on, but conveying this to the world was no easy matter. Like all journalists, Martinkus was compelled to report 'both sides' of the story. He went to the press conferences organised by the militia leaders and their political spokesmen. Confronted by their mendacity, he nevertheless had no choice but to faithfully report barefaced lies and empty assurances. Official pronouncements by the Australian government and United Nations officials were little better; their failure to condemn Indonesia's actions and call a spade a spade (or a gun a gun) led diplomacy to the verge of complicity.

Martinkus was the first journalist to get documentary proof of what Indonesia was planning, in the form of a leaked memo from the Indonesian government that detailed plans for 'the destruction of facilities and other vital objects' should the people of East Timor vote to separate from the Republic. Still the UN and Australia failed to act decisively, failed to condemn the Indonesian plans publicly, failed to make a fuss and demand the presence of international peacekeepers to provide security for the ballot.

The climax of *A Dirty Little War* is a detailed account of what went on in the besieged UN compound in September 1999, when UN headquarters in New York made ready to evacuate expatriate staff, and

abandon the East Timorese sheltering there to their fate at the hands of the militia/military:

> Posters printed in three languages—Portuguese, Tetun and Indonesian—saying the UN would not abandon the East Timorese after the ballot still hung all around the compound. The East Timorese had believed the international community would not abandon them, and responded with 98 per cent of all those eligible voting in the ballot ... Now, after all that, the UN was just going to walk out and leave them in the middle of a destroyed and depopulated city, surrounded by those who were still looting the place.

Martinkus believes that the Australian government supported this decision. He says that during this time, the chief of UN civilian police, Australian Commissioner Alan Mills, was in regular phone contact with Prime Minister John Howard. According to police officers who were present in the compound, the Australian view, put to them by Commissioner Mills in a briefing, was that UN staff who had been attacked elsewhere in East Timor 'had put themselves in that position by getting caught in crossfire between two hostile groups'. The myth that the East Timorese were fighting among themselves was kept alive to the very end, even though it was patently obvious that there was only one aggressor, that the violence and destruction in East Timor was not a conflict but an attack on an unarmed civilian population.

The evacuation plan was only changed after the remaining foreign journalists and more than 100 UN staff petitioned UN Chief Ian Martin not to leave. When the final pull-out did come a few days later, most of the refugees sheltering in the compound were airlifted to Darwin.

After returning to East Timor with INTERFET (International Force East Timor), Martinkus was able to make more sense of the violence. He reveals the cold logic that underpinned the last burst of killing and burning as Indonesian forces withdrew from East Timor:

June 1998: Following the fall of Suharto in May, East Timorese demonstrated openly for independence in Dili. For the first time since 1975 the demoralised Indonesian military did not respond with violence. Photograph by Ross Bird, from *A Dirty Little War*.

> When we were finally on our way down the hills to Cassa, we passed through deserted villages where the stench of decomposing corpses was interspersed with the fresh smell of the tall grass and trees. We didn't stop to look; it had become commonplace—in even the smallest hamlet or village, you'd find at least one body. That seemed to be the pattern. As they arrived, the troops of militia killed at least one person to terrorise the rest into getting on the trucks and going to West Timor.

JOHN BIRMINGHAM opens 'Appeasing Jakarta' with his own description of the violent Indonesian withdrawal, or in particular, the withdrawal of Battalion 745 and its almost disastrous confrontation with Australian peacekeepers. The Australians emerge from Birmingham's recreation of events as heroes, disciplined and well trained. By holding their fire and allowing Battalion 745 to proceed unharmed, they saved the Australia–Indonesia relationship from much more serious damage. As Birmingham writes: 'How much greater would that chasm now be if somebody's trigger finger had twitched that night?'

The dangerous stand-off between Battalion 745 and the young Australian soldiers is the end point of decades of failed policy. The usual suspects—Whitlam, Woolcott, Keating, Evans—appear in Birmingham's account, and he does a good job of synthesising the historical material into a cogent polemic without, generally, sounding self-righteous or demonising the responsible actors.

Birmingham's point is that Australia's policy about East Timor resulted not from some moral deficiency, but from intellectual failure. He shows that there was plenty of alternative advice available before the Indonesian invasion of 1975. Senior officials in defence and foreign affairs warned that Indonesian annexation would become a 'running sore', and recognised that if the Australian government backed Indonesia then this would generate such strong domestic opposition that it would ultimately damage relations with Jakarta. As Birmingham notes, this was the true 'realist' view. The prevailing orthodoxy—that good relations with Jakarta's generals came before all else—was the result of wishful thinking:

> It is one of the abiding ironies of the last quarter-century that the least realistic and in some ways the most romantic view of Indonesian policy held sway in Canberra ... When framing Australian policy, the question should always be asked, what is sustainable over the very long term? The answers will not necessarily provide short-term comfort, but they might just help avoid creating a situation where, once again, a regime in Jakarta feels justifiably betrayed by the apparent skittishness of its southern neighbour.

Unfortunately, it seems that neither Jakarta nor Canberra have learnt much from the East Timor experience. With Abdurrahman Wahid sidelined long before his ignoble removal from office, efforts at dialogue with Indonesia's separatist movements appear to have been abandoned. As the Indonesian armed forces employ their East Timor 'militia' tactics in Aceh and Irian Jaya, guaranteeing a continued cycle of violence, our leaders prefer to look away and to croak out the tired refrain that Australia supports the territorial integrity of its northern neighbour. ■

Peter Mares presents *Asia Pacific*, weeknights at 8pm on ABC Radio Australia and Radio National.

TIMOTHY GADEN

House divided

Faithfulness in Fellowship: Reflections on Homosexuality and the Church,
The Doctrine Panel of the Anglican Church of Australia,
John Garratt Publishing, 2001. ISBN 1 87593 847 8, RRP $34.95

MANY PEOPLE LIVING in London in August 1998, as I was, were astonished to see footage on the evening news of an Anglican bishop throwing a wild punch at another bishop. Not once but repeatedly we were treated to news reports of bishops pushing and shoving each other, hurling insults at other bishops, refusing to sit in the same room together and accusing one another, in press releases, of heresy and hypocrisy. This was the spectacle of the 1998 Lambeth Conference, an international gathering of Anglican bishops held every ten years to consider important issues facing the worldwide Anglican Church, and to affirm the unity in diversity which is a hallmark of the Anglican Communion.

The issue which generated this heat was the question of whether practising homosexuals, especially clergy, could be accepted as equal members of the Christian church. The Conference produced a resolution 'rejecting homosexual practice as incompatible with Scripture', but this did not conclude the debate. In fact it merely inflamed it, as liberal Anglicans rejected the resolution and conservatives continue irregularly to consecrate 'pure' bishops, in order to rescue congregations in America and elsewhere from their official but wayward liberal leaders. No other issue, not even the debate about the ordination of women, has polarised liberal and conservative groups so sharply within the church, and never before has the worldwide Anglican Communion been brought so close to formal schism. In England, at least, and in some American dioceses, a measure of functional schism already exists.

Although they have been spared the worst excesses of the international situation (so far), Australian Anglicans are no strangers to the debate, and this book, *Faithfulness in Fellowship*, is the result of the 1998 Australian General Synod's request for further study of homosexuality and the issues it raises for the church and its discipline. The ten essays in it are designed to foster further study and 'widen the discussion to include Anglicans and non-Anglicans all over the country'. In these aims it succeeds well. There is little in these essays that is new or, with one notable exception, takes the debate in new creative directions. But each piece presents a solid statement of current scholarship. Together, they constitute a substantial summary of the historical, scriptural, scientific, ethical and theological background to the debate.

The entire history of Christian thought on the issue is covered in an essay by Dr Muriel Porter, a church historian and religious correspondent for Melbourne's *Age* newspaper. She situates the debate usefully within a wider context of changing Christian attitudes to sexuality and heterosexual marriage, which serves as a reminder that the construal of sexuality has a history.

The scriptural material is covered by three essays—a general introduction, followed by essays on the Old Testament and New Testament texts which bear on homosexuality. The general essay on biblical sexuality by the Revd Dr John Dunnill is excellent. It concludes with the reminder that all expressions of human sexuality stand under God's judgment and are criticised by Scripture. Heterosexual marriage itself, Dr Dunnill writes, is not 'the biblical norm': the Old Testament urges its refashioning after the model of the covenant love that God desires with Israel, and the New Testament urges celibate devotion in anticipation of the transcendence of sexual being in God's kingdom. This is an enormously important corrective in a debate in which heterosexual marriages are sometimes presented as without sin and the only arrangement hallowed by God, and extra-marital relationships demonised as being without virtue.

THE PRIMATE OF THE Anglican Church in Australia, Archbishop Peter Carnley, has written a piece exploring the possibilities of 'friendship' as a more fruitful metaphor for homosexual relationships than 'marriage'. This is a new departure in the Australian debate, and received considerable publicity after a précis of the article was published in the *Bulletin* earlier this year. It is a rich metaphor, with the potential to enhance our understanding of all human relationships. One wonders, however, whether the metaphor of friendship can carry the burden Dr Carnley places upon it. Is a friend with whom I have covenanted a lifelong and exclusive fidelity and intimacy not something quite different from my other friends, different not in degree but in kind?

The essay on homosexuality and the question of ordination by the Most Revd Dr Peter Jensen, the new Archbishop of Sydney, was the only piece submitted too late for peer review and discussion. That is a great shame. He is the only contributor who attempts to answer explicitly the crucial hermeneutical question of why biblical strictures against homosexuality should continue to be binding when so many other requirements of the Old and New Testaments (prohibitions against touching menstruating women or against women teaching in church, for example) are routinely ignored. But simply to cite Article Seven of the Thirty-nine Articles, ignoring the problems he himself notes that this raises, and then baldly to assert again that the condemnation of homosexuality is 'part of the moral law of God' is an entirely inadequate answer. Discussion of this point with the other members of the panel might have saved him from this, and produced a more robust foundation for intelligent debate.

Scott Cowdell situates the homosexuality debate within the three-fold authority of scripture, reason and tradition, which constitutes the traditionally rich background of Anglican moral decision-making. Experience was added to this threesome in 1988 by an earlier Lambeth Conference, and this aspect of the debate is addressed by Graeme Garrett in a sensitive essay, which reflects on his personal experience of a lesbian relative.

The diversity of views contained within this collection represent at its best the Anglican conviction that truth is to be sought out in the midst of differing positions. Some may fear it also represents Anglican theology at its worst, urging in its introduction no change to the church's traditional disciplines. But then prudence and circumspection are also important core Anglican virtues, for heterosexual and homosexual alike. ■

Timothy Gaden is the vicar of St John's Anglican Church, Camberwell, and was formerly the Vicar of Battersea, London.

Programming children

The Child and the Machine: How Computers Put Our Children's Education at Risk,
Alison Armstrong and Charles Casement, Scribe Publications, 2001. ISBN 0 90801 153 9, RRP $30

When NSW Treasurer Peter Egan presented his Budget earlier this year, he emphasised spending initiatives on public-school computer technology, particularly lauding 'e-learning accounts' for every public-school student. When pressed for details about the workings of the scheme and the intended education outcomes, Egan professed ignorance, candidly admitting that he was a pen-and-paper man.

Either the Treasurer had not been briefed, or the details had not been worked out. Perhaps the policy-developers believed a statement of intent would suffice, and assumed that the details and benefits would be obvious, given widespread acceptance of the notion that computer technology is the biggest boost modern education can get.

This incident is characteristic of the rush during the last two decades to computerise classrooms and education throughout the developed world. There has been much hype and assertion, but little in the way of analysis and informed public discussion. *The Child and the Machine: How Computers Put Our Children's Education at Risk* seeks to redress this imbalance.

The Canadian authors, Alison Armstrong and Charles Casement, have special interests in educational issues, including literacy. Their book is based on a deep trawl of British, American and Canadian literature, a variety of official reports, and articles in specialist computer, education, and medical journals. The bulk of the book draws on these specialised journals. The authors deserve congratulations for bringing this material into the public arena, because significant academic and specialist material all too often remains isolated in small-circulation refereed preserves, away from public awareness.

The title of the book is provocative, with its hint of Luddism. The provocation is deliberate, for Armstrong and Casement are challenging widely accepted views about computer technology in schools—views that their research indicates are often based

on the unquestioned acceptance of 'the blandishments of computer companies and software developers'. As the authors point out, critical and independent research and analysis of computer technology has only developed in the past few years.

Introducing computers to schools is not simply a matter of bringing the technology and the schools together. The initial introduction usually involves a corporate scheme (involving tax breaks, advertising and consumer loyalty spin-offs), or political initiatives, or a blend of both. Thereafter the problem lies in finding the funding needed to maintain and update the technology, and the teachers who know how to use it effectively.

The evidence in *The Child and the Machine* indicates that the large, ongoing expenditure required to fund school computer technology invariably results in education budget cuts elsewhere. In America, this has resulted variously in curriculum cuts (with art and humanities programs particularly at risk), building maintenance and library funding cuts, loss of teacher and teacher-support jobs, and increased class sizes. At the beginning of the millennium, 33 per cent of US schools required major building repairs.

While some schools manage to adjust, by embarking on ambitious and intensive fundraising programs or developing corporate links, they are the exception. Beyond the illusion of a seamless technological 'level playing field', the reality is marked by inequities. Half of US public schools in 1995 were not even adequately wired to accept computer and communications technology.

It is expensive to provide teachers who can effectively use computer technology in the classroom. Armstrong and Casement argue that in the US such teachers do not exist in the number required, and there is little to indicate they will. Apple Computer has found it takes an average of five or six years for teachers to adapt their teaching methods to use computers effectively in the classroom. According to some estimates, the cost of appropriate teacher-training surpasses the amount spent on the technology itself. Currently only five per cent of the total US school technology budget is allocated to teacher training.

In the US, computers are being introduced to classrooms without due regard for the health needs of children. Computers do have physical effects on their users, and these can be serious and long-term, if not permanent. The list of troubles ranges from musculoskeletal ailments through to the potential health hazards of toxic emissions and electromagnetic fields produced by computers and visual display terminals. Few resources have yet been allocated to studying the health effects of computer use on children. However, as Armstrong and Casement demonstrate, many school buildings are not designed for the use of computers, and tight education budgets are unable to provide, for example, appropriate space, ventilation, air-conditioning, furniture and floor coverings. The upshot is that schools 'have routinely ignored [the] health and

ROSEMARY WEST

safety issues surrounding the use of computers'. Anecdotal evidence suggests the same is happening in Australia.

There is 30 years' worth of research into the link between improved academic success and computers, yet the evidence is inconclusive. As Armstrong and Casement explain, the results are mixed and contradictory, though it appears that computer-based education suits boys more than girls, and is beneficial for low-achieving students. Sometimes technology does enhance the education of students more generally, but usually in schools that are well funded and where there have been no education trade-offs. Such schools are the exception, not the rule. What is generally true is that computer technology casts the bulk of students 'alternately in the role of data processors and information consumers'.

Armstrong and Casement are not opposed to computer technology as an educational tool. They are opposed to the current preoccupation with the technology, and to the funding it attracts at the expense of face-to-face teaching, reduced class sizes, library stocks, curriculum breadth, financial aid to students, and the capacity of schools to provide a multiplicity of stimulating and creative real-life experiences. The authors contend that children 'need to live in real time in real space with real people [and] require a real social context in which to learn'. Children need to grasp ideas rather than 'a mountain of raw data', and human values must be taught by human beings; 'a computerised substitute is no substitute at all'. ■

Rowan Cahill is a freelance writer.

Fair shares

Ethical & Active Shareholding: An Australian Investor's Guide, James Rose, Wrightbooks, 2001. ISBN 1 87662 757 3, RRP $22.95

When John Howard boasts that Australia is the world's largest shareholding democracy, he must be joking.

Leave aside consideration of what we may have lost if this means we are undergoing conversion from a nation of citizens to a nation of shareholders. Leave aside also the manner of this conversion: the sale and subsequent share market floats of substantial public assets and utilities, like the Commonwealth Bank and Telstra, that were once owned by us all and had been built up for us by provident older generations.

At issue here is this: while more of us now may own shares, how much of a say does that give even those of us who are shareholders?

Democracy, after all, means more than just being part of a body politic or a body corporate. Slaves were an integral part of the domestic economy of US plantations on which they were forced to work, as were the Aboriginal and domestic staff who were paid in flour, sugar and tobacco on Australia's cattle stations. Solzhenitsyn's political prisoners were integral to the functioning of the Gulag Archipelago, prisoners are integral to modern Chinese prison-factories and sweated labourers and children are integral to the Third World factories to which much of our manufacturing industry has relocated and which help to produce our abundance of cheap consumer goods.

Few if any of these disempowered workers have rights or indeed any say in their wages and conditions. Our shareholding democrats do have nominal rights to control the companies in which they hold equity by voting at Annual General Meetings. But how much influence do they have in practice?

Precious little, to judge by the smooth passage of BHP's motion to merge with multinational miner Billiton through its recent AGM, despite significant shareholder unrest over the alleged overvaluing of Billiton shares and the potential for control of BHP to move offshore. As shareholder activist Stephen Mayne said, 'It's a $5 billion gift from Australian shareholders to Billiton.'

As they marched past the television cameras into the meeting, BHP shareholders may have felt important, but the

overwhelming majority of the votes went management's way. If the shareholders would sell the Big Australian, what wouldn't they sell out?

Yet the BHP 11.7 per cent protest vote was hailed as a 'significant show of activist corporate governance by Australian institutional investors' by *Investor Weekly* magazine. The protest vote flushed out vocal opposition from the fund manager Perpetual while Colonial and AMP Henderson grumbled but voted 'for'.

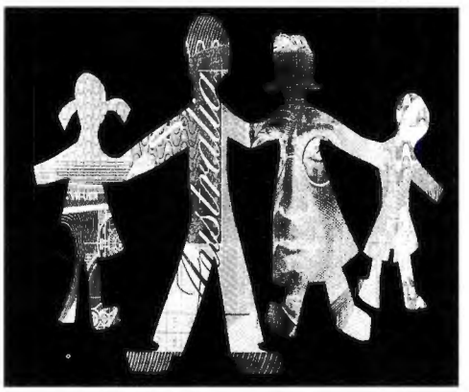
All of which makes James Rose's guide for ethical and active shareholders timely and useful, for shareholders seem to have an uphill battle ahead of them and to be much in need of the signposts he provides.

Rose writes as a crusading optimist, if sometimes edging towards naivety. The next 'inevitable stage' for ethical investment, he says, 'would see it become an accepted component in investment decisions in the new century'. One can only applaud his intention and hope he is right.

But when he suggests that street protests 'in many cases can be successfully supplanted by an ethical shareholder campaign', he strains the credibility of all except those who deplore any form of peaceful street protest. However that may include most of his target readership: according to a cover note, the book is aimed 'at those who have plunged or are about to plunge, into the share market in the hope of making money, but who understand that shareholder values and ethical values need not be mutually exclusive.'

Ethical investment has a long history, predating the rise of capitalism by a millennium or so. Rose traces it back to an ancient Athenian who chose not to invest in the silver mines of Laurium because child labour was used. Religious groups played an important part in this history, led by the Quakers in colonial America, who refused to invest in tobacco, alcohol or anything which used slave labour. Rose reminds us that the word 'plant', now applied to a place of manufacture and associated machinery, originated in the plantations worked by slaves in the 18th and 19th centuries.

James Rose worked as an advisor to the Australian Democrats until 1998 and left in part because he sensed that power was shifting from parliaments to company boardrooms. He got involved in ethical investment through a lawyer friend who was representing the North Ethical Shareholders Group in its opposition to plans by North Limited to open Australia's third uranium mine, Jabiluka, in the Kakadu world heritage area against the wishes of the local Mirrar Aborigines. He noted the influence wielded by some of the large US pension funds, like the Californian Pension, Employees and Retirement Scheme (CalPERS), which developed policies on governance and social issues and voted their company shares along those lines. So Rose decided to turn his efforts to assisting



Australian shareholders to exercise similar influence.

Australian shareholder numbers have certainly increased, from just over 20 per cent of the population in 1997 to about 50 per cent now, but Rose acknowledges that Australian shareholder activism lags well behind the US and the UK. In the US, 80 per cent of shares are voted, and in the UK 50 per cent are voted. (A share being 'voted' means that the shareholder participates in the running of the company by voting at the Annual General Meeting.) US citizens are legally required to vote their shares but not to vote for their governments. In Australia these roles are reversed and only 35 per cent of company shares are voted. British authorities, shocked that only 50 per cent of UK shares were voted, are now considering how to legislate.

While he has high hopes for the cause of ethical investment, Rose leaves potential active investors under no illusions about the difficulties they may face, including the threat of legal action from irate company management.

This book is loaded with good advice and information, though case histories could have been fleshed out in more detail. Even the story of the challenge by North Limited's ethical shareholders, assisted by the Wilderness Society, to the company's plans to mine uranium at Jabiluka, is told rather disjointedly in several different sections of the book. Last year's shareholder campaign to have Rio Tinto adopt more stringent corporate governance and labour standards is only sketchily reported. This and other brief references needed to be spelt out at least in footnotes to satisfy the reader. In these and other respects, the book would have benefited from more stringent editing, for instance to make the graphs more legible.

Rio Tinto has now taken over North and since the book's publication, has recommended withdrawal from Jabiluka (an event hailed by Rose in the *Financial Review* as 'the beginnings of a new corporate culture in Australia'). Rio Tinto's chief executive, Leigh Clifford, stated that this was because of public concern first and the poor world market for uranium second. This suggests that the decision might be sheeted back to the efforts of North's ethical investors, but cynics may doubt the stated order of reasons and point out that Rio Tinto is still mining uranium in Kakadu's Ranger mine.

Rose could—and to some extent does—satisfy his readers' curiosity by following up such developments on his company website, www.integrativestrategies.com.au. The website offers a further service to ethical investors who, for a $110-a-year fee, can access reports on the ethical performance of 50 of Australia's top companies (in time he plans to cover 300) and of four of the leading ethical investment funds (again with plans for more).

Ethical & Active Shareholding deals deftly with points that might discourage ethical investment, including questions about how to define it, and whether it can be profitable. The book provides information on a number of questions that might be raised by investors concerned about the environment, human rights, equal opportunity, animal welfare, corporate governance, marketing ethics and political donations.

Rose's case—that shareholders can do well by doing good—is convincing enough that those who want to be either ethical or active are likely to be both by the end of the book. After all, this argument should not turn on whether ethical investment can supplant street protest (or other political action or public critique) but rather on whether it can serve as a useful, complementary means of curbing the socially, economically and environmentally unsustainable activities of publicly listed corporations. If some good can be done by this means, so be it. ■

Rosemary West is a freelance journalist and a member of the media industry superannuation fund JUST Super.

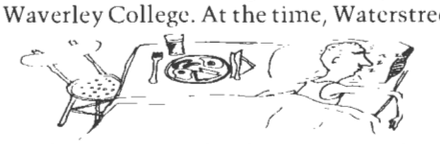
The thing not said

Precious Bodily Fluids, Charles Waterstreet, Sceptre, 2001. ISBN 0 73361 324 1, RRP $20.95
Repeating the Leaving, Charles Waterstreet, Sceptre, 2001. ISBN 0 73361 111 7, RRP $20.95

CHARLES WATERSTREET grew up in Waterstreet's Railway Commercial Hotel, a family business which stood only metres from Albury Railway Station. The hotel and its clientele provide a wealth of funny stories and *Precious Bodily Fluids* makes the most of them. Albury in the early '60s was the fiefdom of Mayor Cleaver Bunton who'd held his office for as long as anyone cared to remember. Bunton was steadfastly opposed to the fluoridation of the local water supply. Whether fluoridation was supported by health officials in Sydney or by communists trying to work their way through South East Asia was a fine distinction. It was an idea that came from out of town and Bunton organised a referendum to give the locals another chance to show their support for him.

The hotel, however, was the fiefdom of Waterstreet's father, a man who 'cut more corners than Jack Brabham'. Waterstreet senior was only ever one step ahead of the licensing board. A few bottles in the boot of the police vehicle enabled him to trade on Sundays. He used bed sheets as tablecloths, despite the unpleasant stains which appeared between items of crockery, much of which had been pilfered over the years from neighbouring pubs. He chained the cutlery to the tables, and as the chains gradually lost links, his regular boarders, many of whose accommodation was paid for by the St Vincent de Paul Society, found they had to put their chins closer and closer to their plates and to the stains on the table linen. The publican was a vocal opponent of the standard rail gauge. He said that it would undermine 'states' rights'. It would also undermine his business which thrived on the thirst of the numerous rail workers who were needed to shunt trains at Albury. But Waterstreet senior presented himself as a man of principle. Waterstreet junior made his pocket money by punching the time clock at the yards for workers who were in no condition of either mind or body to leave the bar. The boy listened, observed and acquired 'an invaluable sense of rumour'.

It says a lot for Waterstreet that he can recreate the chaotic household of his childhood with such affection. He remembers the foibles of one aunt who believed 'a good cliché hits the nail on the head', and another who sent him to the chemist for her hair dye because she didn't want people to think that her blue hair was anything but natural. *Precious Bodily Fluids* is skilfully woven around the impending fluoridation referendum. Its sequel, *Repeating the Leaving*, is organised around the brief visit of President Johnson to Sydney in 1966 when Waterstreet was doing his final year at Waverley College. At the time, Waterstreet



was busy pursuing his first serious infatuation. Georgina George was Greek, and opposed to the Vietnam War. Waterstreet makes light of himself trying to join a protest in a Christian Brothers' school uniform.

BUT THERE IS a great deal more to these memoirs than light-hearted nostalgia. Like any vibrant re-creation of the past, they are rooted in the present. For Charles Waterstreet, this means dealing with a burden of pain.

Charles' mother emerges gradually from the shadows over the course of these books. She is introduced in passing as 'still sick' and needing to stay at home while dad takes the kids to Mass, a ritual for which neither father nor son have much enthusiasm. Over time, the mother's alcoholism and dependence on a variety of pills becomes more and more excruciating: 'mum's drinking was a family secret confined to a circle of Antarctica but we never spoke of it. It was a given. The thing not said.'

At the end of *Precious Bodily Fluids*, Waterstreet describes his final Christmas at home before going to boarding school. By this stage, his mother has 'worn out her welcome' at hospitals in Melbourne and is a patient somewhere in Sydney. His dad works valiantly to make something of the occasion. Mrs Waterstreet comes home in time to farewell Charles, the eldest, before the new school year. She cries. The sight of her tears is unfamiliar to Charles and disturbs him: 'She had never cried in front of me. Ever. Not Ever. Not even in her worst times. Never for herself. Now she was crying for me.'

Repeating the Leaving shifts the focus. It opens with a brief portrait of Charles' own experience of mental illness. He is homeless, loveless, depressed and a patient of Northside Clinic. No matter how funny the memoirs that precede or follow that description, they are coloured by it. At one level, the title of *Repeating the Leaving* refers to what used to be known as the Leaving Certificate. But it also refers to Waterstreet's separation from his mother. She turns up drunk to see him presented with the prize for being dux of the school and urinates in a laneway in front of one of her son's friends. His father spends time driving his wife up and down the Hume Highway to Kenmore, a psychiatric institution in Goulburn.

Just as Charles is set to start university, his mother dies. There is some suggestion that she may have committed suicide but, after many years, Charles finds reason to doubt this conclusion. The adult Charles is still dealing with his grief and confusion. He does so with courage and grace.

The least affectionate parts of Waterstreet's memoirs deal with his religious education. In some ways, he offers a familiar account of memorising the green catechism and attending old-fashioned devotions. It may be that circumstances had inoculated Waterstreet at a young age against the influence of any of the ideas and spirituality that lay beneath those practices. But it is curious that the very religious education for which many pessimists still feel nostalgia provided no resources for Waterstreet, either as a boy or an adult, to deal with the uncertainties and tragedies of his life. He learnt answers to somebody else's questions. They didn't help. ■

Michael McGirr, a former publisher of *Eureka Street*, is the author of *Things You Get For Free*.

GEOFFREY MILNE

The greatest of ease

Circus Oz and Rock 'n' Roll Circus were both in town this July, reminders of the huge and growing popularity of contemporary circus and physical theatre in Australia.

Circus Oz (formed in 1978) and Rock 'n' Roll (1986) are two of our oldest companies, followed by Legs on the Wall and the Flying Fruit Flies. In the past couple of years younger companies like Circus Monoxide, Dislocate, Acrobat and Club Swing (among countless others) have been touring Australia, tracked by clones of the Canadian-based Cirque du Soleil.

The groups are diverse. Monoxide is a low-key outfit, a bit like Circus Oz 15 years ago, performing in the open air and on the ground to families. At the other end of the spectrum, Club Swing does sophisticated stuff about gender and sexuality for adults, the best of it in the air. In between, Acrobat are edgy, danger-courting performers with a 'higher-faster-harder' approach in the air and on the floor, and fearsomely loud rock music. Their audiences are multi-age.

What unites such diverse companies is that they all use the now-familiar apparatuses of contemporary circus. Many were imported from China (including the Chinese pole, hoops, plate-spinning, chair-stack and so on). Others came from Europe—including the Russian ring and the beautiful *tissu* (two strips of fabric that are used a bit like the hanging rope known as the web)—but many also come from traditional circus (especially the trapeze, slack- and tight-wires). Still others have been invented by local companies or are hybrids of old and new tricks, like Circus Oz's mad piece in which the bass-player is whisked aloft and jerked randomly about; parting company with his instrument, he then feverishly chases it through the heavens.

All these companies use some form of circus rig, but I haven't seen them in a tent for years. During the 1980s, Circus Oz used circus techniques to create narrative (often with a left-wing political bias) before reverting to straightforward displays of skill, danger or just plain fun. Legs on the Wall, by contrast, focuses on exploring themes, like the dysfunctional family in *All of Me*.

The growth in the 1990s of so many new companies (not to mention competition from the very commercially marketed Cirque du Soleil) increasingly challenged Circus Oz's supremacy. Contemporary circus came more and more to resemble a specialised form of *theatre*, and Oz has been obliged to rethink its strategies, under Mike Finch's artistic direction. The once cutting-edge larrikins had become the conservative elder statesmen.

Oz's 1999 show looked tired, and its virtually identical tour in 2000 seemed to be losing momentum. They weren't physically tired—the skill level was still very high—but the structure and ideas lacked freshness.

However the 2001 show, *Spinning You Out*, is their best show in years, though now aimed squarely at the mass family market. It runs about 100 minutes and there's no interval. And while there are no really new acts or apparatuses, nearly all of the show has been restructured, redesigned, recontextualised and rethought.

The opening is certainly new. Onstage are bits of set but no performers. They eventually arrive, apologetically 'late', clear away and begin rhythmic floor-based acrobalance around the edges while a large shroud covers the central area. Then the acrobats move towards the middle, where the now air-inflated shroud flies up to reveal a human pyramid. Newcomer Felicia O'Brien seamlessly ascends through the pyramid and into a pretty good trapeze act.

Michael Ling's long-established tight-wire act has been recast as a mini-drama in which he desperately needs to get to an outdoor dunny, but his every attempt is thwarted, requiring many re-crossings of

the wire. Finally he blows the dunny walls down, and the toilet roll up in the air. All this is great fun for the kids.

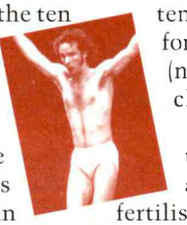
A new and cerebral adult act features Anni Davey—who broke her neck performing for Circus Oz in 1991—and it is great to see her back. TV monitors show her close-up commenting on ageing performers and their failing bodies, in somewhat disparaging fashion. Meanwhile, her own onstage body is raised by the hair and swung about as if to defy both gravity and age. This is brilliant, and will doubtless develop greater fluency and punch.

Per Westman's plate-spinning act has a fresh context based on the leopardskin-clad strongman/drag queen Daryll John's wedding to a unicyclist. When Westman runs out of plates, the unicycle wheel and even the wedding cake are added—the latter shedding 'cream' as it spins. Westman, as class weakling, and John, as macho bully, team up again later, revitalising an old juggling act with bowling balls. The climax is a high throw in which Westman is brained as the ball comes down.

The show finishes with Tim Coldwell's famous upside-down walk, also given a fresh twist. He enters his dressing room in civvies and changes into clown costume, crooning Sinatra's 'My Way'. Then he notices 'the old pole from the old pole act we used to do' *rising* from his perspective but *lowering* to the floor from ours. 'I used to climb up that pole and walk across the ceiling,' he goes on, 'but you don't want to see the old pole act, do you?' 'Oh, yes, we do!' we cry in panto style, and he arduously climbs 'up' the pole towards the floor—neatly reversing the trajectory of the show's opening.

When he arrives at ceiling/floor level, the rest of the company do the pole act. It's a smashing finish to an excellent show. Other highlights include Kareena Oates' dazzling hula hoops; all the work in the air by Oates and Davey; anything the diminutive clown Toni Smith does; Mel Fyffe's Russian Ring act and Suzanne Simpson's hot violin-playing—not to mention Laurel Frank's vibrant new costumes. *Spinning You Out* is about to tour overseas but goes to Sydney in January.

Rock 'n' Roll Circus' *Sonata for Ten Hands* (with new Artistic Director Yaron Lifschitz) is very different from its earlier work and from Circus Oz. The usual rock music is replaced by live piano sonatas—renowned pianist Tamara Anna Cislowska and four circus performers make up the ten hands of this cleverly constructed piece, as well as their feet, heads, torsos, buttocks and other body parts.



Schumann's bright and brittle Piano Sonata No. 1 Op. 11 provides the stimulus for a children's party in which gifts are exchanged, games are played and the 'children' show off in dark power-trips—one-legged performer Andrew Bray's false leg is stolen and he has to use inspired floor-based acrobatics to win it back.

Thirty years later, the same characters (now in sophisticated 'after-five' dress) interact in a fluctuating series of personal relationships at, on, under and high above a table set for a dinner party. Backed by Brahms' moody Sonata No. 3 Op. 5, this almost seamless *adagio* act features breath-taking acts in the air and on the floor. While upside-down, for instance, Azaria Universe and Andrew Bright use a blood-red double *tissu* to provide a 'cloud-swing' for a third performer.

The act is typical of this intelligent and inventive company. *Sonata* is marred a bit by awkward dismounts and some pieces lack extension, but Rock 'n' Roll is really breaking new ground, and you wouldn't want to miss their work for quids. This show is going to the Equinoxe Festival in Nouméa in October; Rock 'n' Roll's next show, *Tango*, opens at the Brisbane Powerhouse in early September.

One reason for the success of Australian physical theatre is that, not being spoken-word dependent, it is well suited to the export market. Australians may like contemporary circus because, of all art-forms, its physicality and risk-taking (not to mention larrikin spirit) come closest to the ideals of sport.

Circus Oz, the Fruit Flies, Legs on the Wall and Rock 'n' Roll have been around long enough to allow cross-fertilisation, role-modelling and mentorship. Trace a line through the CVs of the newer companies' performers and you'll usually find experience in or influence of the older circuses. Pam Creed's circus training course at Swinburne University is destined to perpetuate this welcome phenomenon. ■

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FLASH IN THE PAN

The art of revolution

Before Night Falls, dir. Julian Schnabel. Not your usual movie, this one. No holographic battles, no virtual actors, no dollars incinerated on set to propitiate the gods of box office. Just intelligent directing, plus Javier Bardem's fluid actor's body guiding you down a street in Havana (shot in Mexico, but no matter—Bardem was born in Spain) and weaving in and out of the complexities of Fidel Castro's revolution.

Julian Schnabel, painter-turned-movie-director, records the life of Cuban writer, Reinaldo Arenas (Bardem, above left) from his rural birth in 1943 to his AIDS-related death in New York in 1990. It's in part an act of homage, Schnabel's genuflection before Art, and the Artist as Hero (he made it once before, in *Basquiat*). But that's the only weakness in the film—and a venial indulgence, given how much else is examined.

Before Night Falls is expansive ('I wanted a huge depth of field,' says Schnabel), unexpected and curiously joyful. The revolution pulses past and so does its social aftermath—in memorable faces and historical sequences intercut with Arenas' own remembered and imagined world of politics, writing and homosexual experience. (After some years in prison, Arenas was allowed to leave Cuba under the 1980 provision that allowed the mentally ill, homosexuals, and those with a prison record to be boat-lifted out: America's immigration strategies are rarely simple.) The cinematography is raw and immediate. You come away believing you could walk through the final credits and find your own way around Havana. What's more, you want to.

Schnabel blends archival footage (his two directors of photography have extensive documentary experience) with a complex, loose-jointed narrative held together by Bardem's performance and Schnabel's own integrative nous. But this is also great ensemble film-making. Sean Penn (as Cuco Sanchez), and Johnny Depp (doubling as Bon Bon the drag queen and Victor the sadistic lieutenant) draw no more attention than their roles demand. Olivier Martinez (above right) is moving and understated as Arenas' friend and heir, Lázaro Gómez Carriles. The script (part-written by the real Carriles) is formidable, the soundtrack erratic and memorable. And then there is Cuba (even when it's Mexico): irrepressible, loud, decaying and resurrected.

—Morag Fraser

Re-minder

Sexy Beast, dir. Jonathan Glazer. If you were expecting a Cockney Tarantino—all rhyming slang, shallow ideas and gratuitous violence—you will find *Sexy Beast* sadly disappointing. 'Cause what you got here, my son, is a stylish little number; sort of Davey Lynch meets 'arold Pinter. Know what I mean?

Gary Dove (Ray Winstone) has escaped London's underworld for the sunshine of the Costa del Sol. Tanned, flabby and content, this former hardman has retired to a villa with his paramour, ex-porn star Dee Dee (Amanda Redman), and adopted the ways of the Spanish. ('Fink I'll 'ave the calamari. What you havin'?')

Unfortunately Dove's peaceful idyll is gatecrashed by an old pal. Don Logan (Ben Kingsley) is an A-grade nutter who insists that Gary does one last job back home for the 'Prince of the Dark Arts himself', Teddy Bass (Ian McShane).

Kingsley—best known for his portrayal of the pacifist Gandhi—is superbly malevolent, and often very funny, as the unpredictable Logan. Dangerous like a child with a cocked gun, the rapid-talking Logan refuses to take 'no' for an answer. The part, though studded with obscenity, could only be delivered by an accomplished Shakespearean actor.

Whether he likes it or not, Gary is forced to meet his fate. The action switches to the Mother Country and *Sexy Beast* takes on another, even darker, hue. In London it's night, it's raining and Gary is alone. And in an obvious nod to the original London gangster movie, the star of *Performance*, James Fox, is cast as the louche banker whose actions set the plot in motion.

Despite his MTV credentials, first-time director Glazer doesn't mind keeping the camera still, knows how to compose a shot, and sustains our attention with grown-up techniques like character and dialogue. He keeps the jump-cuts to a minimum and plays up the neo-Jacobean antics without losing his balance. Nice one, Guv.

—Brett Evans

Tangled web

Along Came a Spider, dir, Lee Tamahori. Films like *Along Came a Spider* are proof that children need to spend more time outdoors playing with rusty nails and old tin cans. If they did this, then there'd be less chance of their being kidnapped.

The kids in *Along Came a Spider* spend most of their schooling perched in front of whiz-bang computers doing higher-order learning and sending photos of lions and elephants to each other on the sly. But not everyone in this educational facility uses technology for good.

Along Came a Spider is a psychological suspense thriller whose main action takes place around the kidnap of the delightful and sassy young daughter of a two-bit senator, from a posh school in uptown USA. It's the sort of school where kids have teaching aides to help them carry their brains around. The president of Russia sends his son there. What was wrong with the local Moscow State School?

The senator's IT-savvy daughter is snaffled by Gary Soneji (Michael Wincott), a kidnapper who would love to make a name for himself. Soneji seems to have committed the perfect crime. His evil intentions are even more audacious given that the senator's daughter was constantly guarded by a secret service team lead by Jezzie Flannigan (Monica Porter). Jezzie is a bit of a flake for a secret service agent, but she has perfect skin.

The film stars Morgan Freeman as Alex Cross, a Washington DC police detective and psychologist whose job it is to track down Soneji. Alex Cross' pursuit of the kidnapper proves once and for all that in our world, it is unwise to trust even a labrador.

Although the frantic pace of *Along Came a Spider* means that the storyline is woven together like an old hessian sack, the film does thrill. People do look surprised when they are blown away.

The film deals with those eternal enemies: greed, fame and cash. Alex Cross helps us understand some of the dimensions of these deep evils with a bit of on-the-couch psychobabble. And when the smell of gunpowder finally drifts away, *Along Came a Spider* leaves us with the sobering thought that we are all, in some ways, damaged people. It's just that some of us are more crazy than others.

—Paul Sinclair

Not the apex

Planet of the Apes, dir. Tim Burton. In 1968, when *Planet of the Apes* was first filmed, I left the cinema agog at the monkey masks worn by the actors, wondering where Linda Harrison got her uplift bra and whether Charlton Heston had been wearing underpants. Thirty-three years later and after a spate of sequels and a TV series, director Tim Burton revisits Pierre Boule's tale about an astronaut caught in a time warp in the future, on a planet where apes rule and humans are no better than slaves.

Sadly, no amount of style, high-tech effects, screaming action and attempted satire, can hide the shortcomings of this latest version. It is a hollow film, lacking a story that matters, and while it might have been passable at 90 minutes, it sags when stretched to two hours.

As the lost astronaut, Mark Wahlberg never threatens to take his gear off like Charlton did, and indeed seldom changes his facial expression let alone his clothes. Tim Roth is the vicious human-hating ape, Thada. He creates a simian Richard III with a distinct neck problem and a capacity to overact that is almost human.

As Ari, the female ape with a social conscience, Helena Bonham Carter looks incredibly like Michael Jackson with his nose pressed against a windowpane. Her dialogue is largely inaudible and her manner of speech suggests that someone has neglected to unstitch the mouth-opening in her mask. Despite these problems, however, she achieves a warmth (oops, I almost said humanity) that the film otherwise lacks. Handicapped by confusing action and a 'who cares?' story, the new screenwriters have had a go at satire with such lines as 'youth is wasted on the young' (apparently the apes read G.B.S.) and 'God has created all apes in his image.' Apes talk about the perils of having a human teenager and how 'you can't tell one human from another'. Spare me! With that sort of dialogue, Jim Carrey should have been cast as the astronaut and Eddie Murphy as Thada.

The famous ending of the original movie has been monkeyed with and the new ending suggests the frightening prospect that the cash-cow hasn't been completely milked and a sequel is likely to beat its chest at us shortly.

Footnote: At the preview I attended, I sat next to an escapee from the Planet. He possessed the digital skills to operate his mobile phone during the movie, but lacked the social awareness to know he shouldn't. Perhaps there's a monkey in all of us?

—Gordon Lewis

Hats off

The Tailor of Panama, dir. John Boorman. Spy films, like westerns, seem to belong to another time. Cattle rustling and spying are the sorts of things that happened in the suspicious shade of a black hat, in a time before product placement and perestroika. But I guess I wasn't counting on the enduring shade of the panama hat. Thanks to director Boorman and author John le Carré, it's safe to say the spy thriller is not only alive but in quite good shape.

Harry Pendel (Geoffrey Rush, below with Leonor Varela) is Panama City's finest tailor. His fitting room is the city's secular confessional, privy both to political scandals and to whether Noriega dressed left or right. Harry's a mixed bag of cockney ex-con, wonderful mother (to his children and his customers), loving husband, and lying hound. He's what you might call a highly moral con man. British spy, Andy Osnard (Pierce Brosnan—yes, a nice little post-mod nod to Bond), on the other hand, is a moral vacuum. Having been banished to Panama for bad behaviour, Osnard decides to make this his last official post. Harry's local knowledge, tall stories and precarious debt levels make him a perfect recruit for Osnard's last covert operation.

Boorman portrays the British and American government agencies with wicked disrespect. Scenes in the Pentagon Control Room play out like hybrid episodes of *The West Wing* and *South Park* while the British Embassy staff all behave more or less like three-day-old toast. Very entertaining.

But really the most important thing about this film is Geoffrey Rush. He shapes the character of Harry Pendel right in front of you, every snip of his scissors and mark of his chalk adding another layer. It's theatrical without being stagey—just damned near perfect.

The Tailor of Panama plays merry with the spy genre, resulting in a seriously playful film about porky pies and washed up spies.

—Siobhan Jackson

Shot through

My Uncle Frank once shot the telly. It only surprised people who didn't know him. As usual his reasons were not as other people's. A scientist, self-taught, one of the last of the great generalist engineers, he felt the time had come to amuse and instruct his baby-boomer children, something that the telly had, he felt, signally failed to do.

Taking out his old service revolver, he demonstrated for them the principle of implosion. Aunt Margaret, a wonderful housewife, was worried there'd be a terrible mess, but it wasn't as bad as one might have thought. When you shoot your telly, you'll note this too: the cathode ray tube is a vacuum, so the bits don't spray out, they suck in. Hitting the screen with a sledgehammer will also do it, but you'll be too close to the action to observe the phenomenon fully, and the blunt instrument won't give the elegant result you get from a bullet. Throwing it out of an upstairs window is not to be recommended either, because the rest of the telly will smash all over the place and you miss the implosion in the general splat. Poor old Keith Moon never quite understood this, poor chap, being a drummer, and in the early '70s he littered hotel swimming pools and patios from Miami to Moscow with the results of failed experiments.

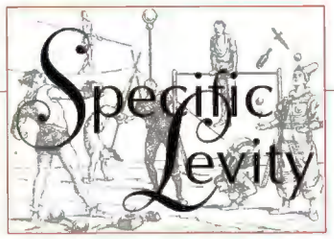
My TV is safe for the moment because *Big Brother* is over and I don't own a firearm. And the ABC, despite things like the drowning of *Quantum*, the ending of *Media Watch* and the adoption of that nasty chrome logo that looks like a K-Mart bathroom accessory, has done some things right lately. The new science program, *Catalyst*, is no replacement for the depth of *Quantum*, but is very good at doing science-in-the-news. If there was a bit of patronising in the mid-August program on the human genome section (talking airily and unspecifically of 'proteins' without giving enough real information) the section revealing that almost 100 per cent of racehorses suffer constantly from stomach ulcers hit the target. The simple, brutal fact is that horses' stomachs produce acid 16 hours a day, because the horse should be grazing roughage continually. Racehorses, pampered, massaged, groomed, are fed twice a day on concentrated food that goes through quickly, leaving the poor beasts in agony. Gai Waterhouse deals with the problem by making sure that her horses always have hay to browse. Other trainers can't be bothered. Here was science aiming firmly at the middle to lowbrow and getting there. (*Catalyst* shows on Thursdays at 8.30pm.)

In late July the three-part series *Playing the Game* was a rare and excellent thing. Unfortunately the screening time (Thursdays at 9.30pm) clashed with Nine's *Footy Show*, so very few would have seen it. Written and directed by Cambridge history graduate Peter Du Cane, it probed and ranged through the results of the Atlantic Charter, the bargain Winston Churchill entered into to save his country from defeat by Hitler in 1941. It was a tad triumphal about the ending of the principles that underpinned colonialism (Bad old British Empire! Down boy, down!) and a little too positive about the forces that were keeping Roosevelt out of the war. Joseph Kennedy, US Ambassador to Britain, had been feeding Washington from the start with ideas of Britain's hopeless position. More background would have been good here; perhaps there just wasn't time. But it would have been useful to show that only three months before, Churchill had finally routed the anti-Semites and fascist sympathisers in his own government, and ousted Chamberlain. The phoney war was over, and Churchill came to Newfoundland ready to give away his shirt to save us all from the Nazis. It wasn't enough simply to say that Kennedy's Irish background meant that he wasn't very pro-British—old Joe Kennedy was one of the most horrible Nazi sympathisers around, and would cheerfully have seen the jackboots win. If he was naive to think that Hitler would have then liberated the Irish, then hatred gives us all a paradoxical tendency to trust the devil.

But that quibble aside, the series was uncomfortably brilliant. The two following programs dealt with the tragedies of the Congo and of Cambodia. If you are inclined to be sensitive, be aware, when you catch the repeats, that there are hideous scenes of mutilated corpses, part of war's appetite in more ways than one. The curious prevalence of cannibalism in both conflicts made me reflect that humans are much closer to the chimpanzee than the gorilla. But the hopeless face of Patrice Lumumba going to his death will remain as one of those figures of pity and terror that scar the memory.

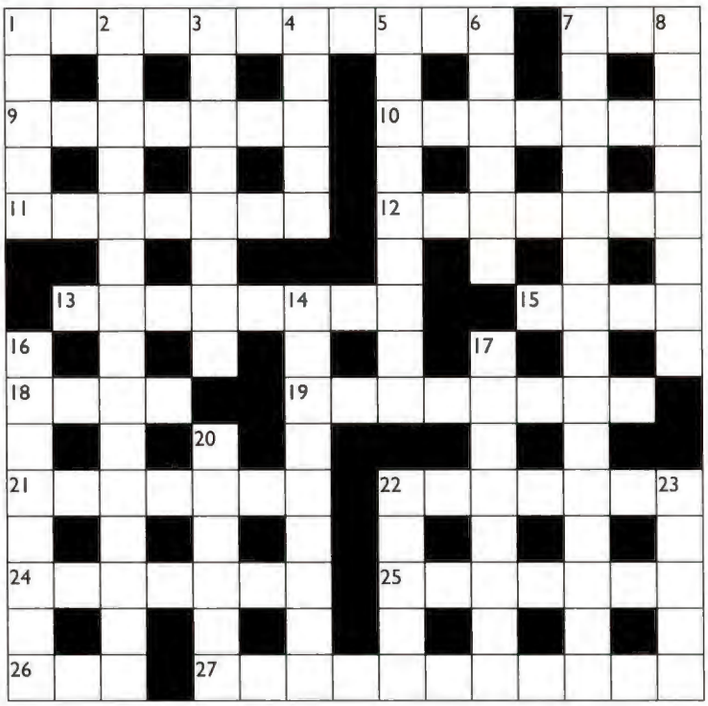
Programs like this remind you why you haven't shot the television yet. The messenger sometimes gives us bad news in a way that reminds us that we're all frail, chaotic beings who survive this strange world and each other for a time by a combination of luck, grace and the occasional good deed. Uncle Frank would have regarded that statement as needlessly dramatic. After all, he did go out and buy another telly. ■

Juliette Hughes is a freelance reviewer.



Eureka Street Cryptic Crossword no. 96, September 2001

Devised by
Joan Nowotny IBVM



ACROSS

1. Seasonal delirium, perhaps? (6,5)
7. After unusual fall, left off to run the footy finals. (1,1,1)
9. Harsher headache involved east wind, perhaps. (7)
10. Artists paint a lion, for example, with its cubs—casually arranged. (6)
11. Member of schismatic religious group—a mixed-up scary extra-terrestrial. (7)
12. The umpire is the one in the untidy jacket on the east. (7)
13. Playing for time to order last fish. (8)
15. A kind of club for the choir. (4)
18. Put down roots and suspend action! (4)
19. We are perhaps told oral promises to pay, for instance, are not acceptable on this highway. (4,4)
21. He provides income, possibly, but at the end, is a debtor himself. (7)
22. Neither list nor rearranged index provides record of this air vent? (7)
24. For starters, did Ian offer Peter Thomas electronic records of this optical measurement unit? (7)
25. Spanish painter was sick inside his wall. (7)
26. The sun sets on the National Union of Students (1,1,1)
27 & 23-down. Do feathers fly in this unequal contest undertaken, however, with pride? (5,6,5)

DOWN

1. Complains about the reported volume. (5)
2. The heavens might open on Geelong and old Footscray supporters. (4,4,3,4)
3. At night, perhaps, in a twisting lane, beam of light can be identified. (8)
4. Hurry to change top for some thing warm and comfy—like mink, perhaps. (5)
5. Somehow live with grace on the advice of the Governor General. (9)
6. Brush off the dust from the furniture and give it another polish. (6)
7. Once Britannia ruled the waves, but now another code plays the game. (10,5)
8. Was he the last seer, perhaps, who searched for gold reef? (8)
14. Does farmer bury and germinate seeds in alternate rows so plants may do this? (9)
16. Do they display world's best practice in 7-down? Nods can be seen on all sides! (8)
17. You can keep the confiture. (8)
20. Finally asks what we heard about the alteration. (6)
22. At first Ned adjusts same handles. (5)
23. See 27-across.

Solution to Crossword no. 95, July/August 2001

D	U	S	K	■	P	R	O	P	E	R	T	I	E	S
E	■	P	■	B	■	A	■	A	■	A	■	M	■	O
E	L	E	V	A	T	I	O	N	■	I	M	P	E	L
P	■	N	■	T	■	S	■	A	■	N	■	R	■	O
W	I	T	C	H	■	I	N	C	I	S	I	O	N	■
A	■	■	■	T	■	N	■	H	■	■	■	M	■	R
T	E	E	M	I	N	G	■	E	X	A	M	P	L	E
E	■	S	■	M	■	■	■	■	■	F	■	T	■	L
R	E	S	P	E	C	T	■	A	S	A	R	U	L	E
S	■	E	■	■	■	E	■	N	■	I	■	■	■	N
■	I	N	T	E	R	N	E	D	■	R	I	G	H	T
E	■	T	■	A	■	A	■	A	■	C	■	R	■	L
D	R	I	F	T	■	B	O	N	V	O	Y	A	G	E
A	■	A	■	E	■	L	■	T	■	P	■	C	■	S
M	A	L	I	N	G	E	R	E	R	■	M	E	S	S

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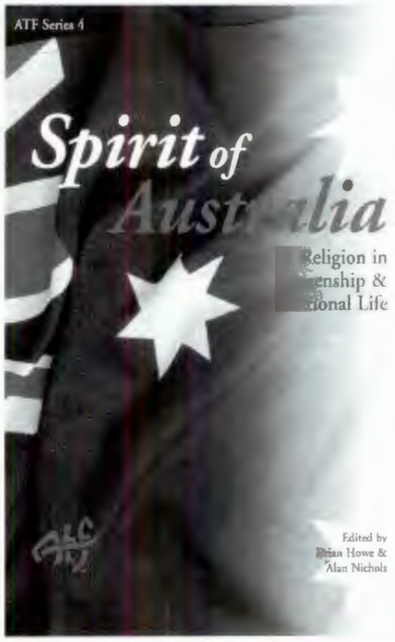

Spirit of Australia

Religion in Citizenship & National Life

Edited by Brian Howe and Alan Nichols

With essays by John Bannon, Winifred Wing Han Lamb, Max Charlesworth, Frank Brennan, Rosemary Owens, Geoffrey Lilburne and Marion Maddox.

Australia, since Federation, has prided itself on being a secular society. Yet many of its citizens describe themselves as religious. We have embraced liberal ideas but they have not been lacking in social content: the influence of religion may have been subtle, but it was real.

In this ecumenical exploration, nine experienced commentators examine the part religion has played in the life of the nation and the role it might continue to play.

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