EUREKA STREET

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Easter 1992

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EUREKA STREET

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GUEST COMMENT

FRANCIS J. MOLONEY

Seeking the living among the dead

WHILE SOME PEOPLE DESPAIR of the religious future of Australia and Australians, others point to something deep and almost mystical in the Australian character as evidence of the religious—the quest for something more than what we have at hand. Can there be something uniquely Australian in our religiosity: the beaches, the deserts, the unique flora and fauna, the cities gathered around the rim of the country, the heat, the forests, the torrential rain?

Like most other professionals working in the area of religious studies, I have often reflected on these questions. I remain persuaded that those of us who claim a religion, those few of us who minister to a religious practice and cult, and those few of us who have been given the chance to reflect professionally on the phenomenon of religion should do so, in Australia, without too many quirks or dogmas. But Easter, and the need to write this comment, has turned my thoughts on religions in Australia in another direction.

Among the many religious traditions seeking to express themselves within Australian societies, Christianity has something special to offer: the proclamation of the Easter message. 'You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, the man who was crucified. He has been raised. He is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him' (Mark 16:6). Or, as Luke asks: 'Why do you seek the living among the dead?' (Luke 14:5).

There is something about Easter that necessarily defies explanation but which prods the imagination. For too long Christian scholars have asked the question, 'What happened to Jesus at Easter?' I have no fewer than five books on my shelves that ask that question in one form or another. But the Easter proclamation is not primarily interested in the detail of what happened to Jesus.

'They', the people who crucified Jesus, seem to have had a victory. They nailed him to a cross and abused him as he writhed in agony, crying out 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' (Mark 15:37). This, at least, is the way the Gospel of Mark savagely reports the story. But the last thing they did was to lay him in a tomb. The women are asked to look at the place where they laid him. He is not there because God has entered the story; he has been raised.

What will the women do? The women are told to go to the disciples to tell them that Jesus is going before them into Galilee. They will see him there, as he has promised (Mark 16:7). In the Gospels of Matthew and Luke they do as they are told (see Matt 28:8; Luke 24:9), but the disciples will not believe

in either the words of the women (Matt 28:16; Luke 24:11) or even the sight of the empty tomb (Luke 24:12). In the Gospel of Mark it is not the fickle male disciples who fail at Easter. Already at Gethsemane 'they all forsook him and fled' (Mark 14:50). Now the women join the fleeing men: 'And they went out and fled from the tomb; for trembling and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.' (Mark 16:8).

In the gospels the Easter proclamation produces further failure and doubt. Everyone fails, the women as well as the men. Yet, somehow, in far-flung Australia, distant in so many ways from the country, the culture, the period and the faith of the earliest disciples, we are still telling the story of what God did for Jesus and the failure of all the followers of Jesus, women and men.

Why do we go on telling this story? Because the most important thing about Easter is not what happened to Jesus, but what happened to his followers. They experienced the death which is failure. Jesus did not fit their schemes, and thus they failed to see in him the power of God. What happened to Jesus is the consequence of a life lived in unswerving loyalty to a God whom Jesus trusted would not fail him. The amazing thing is that this same God did not fail the disciples, no matter how much and how seriously they had failed his Son.

Deposition attributed to Andrea Mantegna

Dare I say that the death of certain forms of religion may be a good thing? Too many religions create their own heavens on earth, forgetting that there is no person or institution that will ever satisfy our longings and dreams. If this religiosity is being pushed into irrelevancy in Australia, so be it.

EASTER PROCLAIMS AND CELEBRATES not so much what God did for Jesus but what God has done and continues to do for us: making sense out of nonsense; raising us to life out of death which is failure. The resurrection of the crucified is the paradigm against which such a proclamation and celebration must be measured, but Easter tells of hope for the hopeless and life for the dead.

Is religion in Australia dead? Maybe not, but some would see it as dying a slow death. Dare I say that the death of certain forms of religion may be a good thing? Too many religions create their own heavens on earth, forgetting that there is no person or institution that will ever satisfy our longings and dreams. If this religiosity is being pushed into irrelevancy in Australia, so be it. But at the heart of the preaching of Jesus rings a message of hope for the many Australians who may have lost faith in the traditional religions of Australia: 'Listen to me, all of you, and understand: there is nothing outside a person that by going in can defile; but the things that come out are what defile.' (Mark 7:14-15). What is the true measure of religion in Australia: the things that are in our hearts, or the intellectual adherence to correct dogmas? The practice of a code of moral directives, or the precise observance of liturgical laws?

The Easter celebrations are dramatic: the fire in the darkness of the vigil, the joy of the *Exsultet*, the readings of the story of God's action through our sacred history, the baptism of new Christians and the proclamation: 'This is my body ... this is my blood ... broken and shed for you.' But these symbols are not just good drama. They call us to recognise that our situation is equally dramatic. We 'religious people' who celebrate these rituals are summoned, through them, to see the meaning of Easter: unless we are prepared to die with Christ, there can be no resurrection (see Rom. 6:5-11). Does religion in Australia have to suffer death before it can lay claim to the resurrection? Are too many 'religious people' seeking the living among the dead? Maybe there is a life on the other side of death of which many of us would never dare to dream. Maybe, like the risen life of Jesus, it will be nothing like our present understanding and practice of religion. ■

Francis J. Moloney SDB is head of the Department of Biblical Studies at Catholic Theological College, Clayton, Victoria. He is a member of the Vatican's International Theological Commission and a fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities.

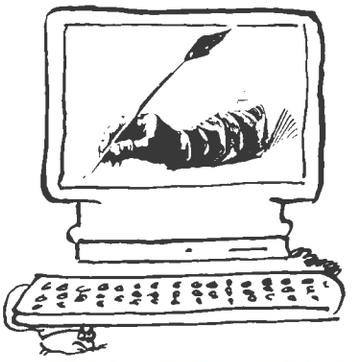
From the Rev. Gerry Costigan, director of Anglicare, *Perth.*
In the December issue you dealt with housing. *Anglicare* runs SAAP-funded and other housing programs, and K. Power spoke strongly to my housing staff. My wife Chris, who read that article more than once, maintains that women in the USA and Australia have been striving to get that article's message promulgated for some time, but less well.

Your December cover should win a prize. Please enter it wherever appropriate. I think Bill Thomas's pictures might give you the material you need for postcards, posters and even the first *Eureka Street* calendar.

Gerry Costigan Cottesloe, WA.

From David de Carvalho
In February I attended the Australian premiere of Bruce Beresford's *Black Robe*. The audience contained more than your usual smattering of people 'interested in religion'. I am sure that most of them, like myself, could not fail to have been provoked into serious reflection about the church's mission as a result of the film's stark conclusion, which announced unequivocally the dire consequences of Christianity for the Huron people.

A key theme in the film was the 17th century theology regarding the necessity of baptism and the nature of salvation. Three hundred years ago, the main, if not the only, aim of the missionary was to perform the ritual of baptism upon the unbaptised, thus guaranteeing them entrance in heaven. To this end, and for the sake of the people to whom they went, missionaries endured horrendous hardship. Today, the church speaks more readily about the need to bring justice and peace to this earthly existence.



Eureka Street welcomes letters from its readers. Short letters are more likely to be published, and all letters may be edited. Letters must be signed, and should include a contact phone number and the writer's name and address.

The question that the film challenged me with is simply this: given the Christian's belief that God loves us and wills our happiness, what are we to make of the fate of the Hurons? If we accept the historical causation suggested by the film, Christianity made them less vicious towards their enemies and hence more vulnerable to the attacks of those more vicious than themselves. Their society was no longer based permanently on fear and hatred of outsiders. Is this not the very ideal that we wish for our own culture today? But the consequence for the Hurons was obliteration.

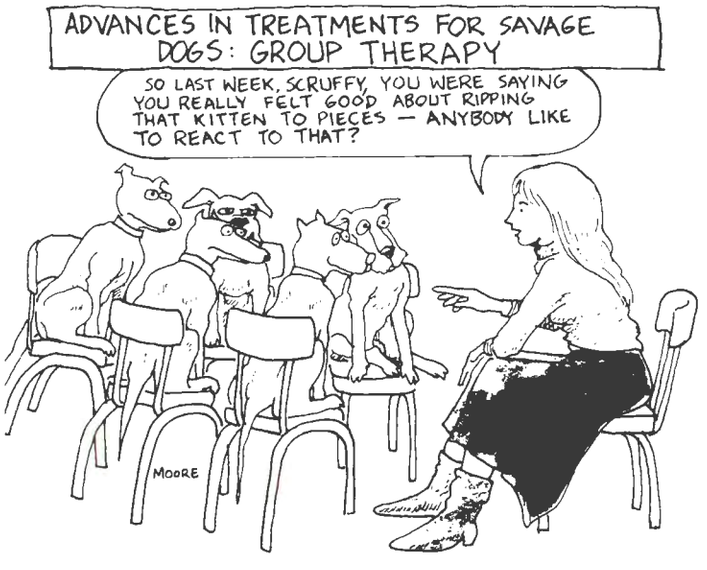
What steps, then, as Christians, should we take to promote faith in Jesus in today's world? Did God smile when the Hurons were baptised? Did he cry when they were slaughtered? Did he do neither? These might seem ridiculous questions, but the answers have implications for the way we perceive the Christian mission.

David de Carvalho Blackburn South, Vic.

From John Rasmussen
It is rare to find a story as honest and moving as 'A shout for the jug girl' (Quixote, Jan/Feb).

Whatever Ray Cassin's feminist or chivalric credentials, thanks for the shout. I heard.

John Rasmussen Eltham, Vic.



When Indonesian troops gunned down at least 100 East Timorese civilians outside Dili's Santa Cruz cemetery on 12 November last year, they set in train events that could be a watershed for East Timor and for Indonesia itself.

There have been many massacres during the 16-year Indonesian occupation of East Timor: the killing of Australian journalists in 1975; the execution of civilians on the Dili waterfront after the invasion in December of that year; the killings at Craras in 1983, after the breakdown of peace talks between Xanana Gusmao and Colonel Purwanto; and the extra-judicial executions carried out by occupation forces. The Indonesian military have also carried out massacres in Indonesia: the massive, officially sanctioned pogrom of the left after the attempted coup in 1965, innumerable killings of West Papuans in Irian Jaya, the slaying of Muslim demonstrators in Jakarta in 1984, and the slaughter of thousands of Muslim separatists in northern Sumatra during the past couple of years.

The butchery at Santa Cruz, however, can be distinguished from other excesses by its timing and by the publicity it received, for it happened in the presence of American television journalists. Indonesian officials like the Foreign Minister, Ali Alatas, and the head of the country's Centre for Strategic and International Studies, Jusuf Wanandi, regard the massacre as a major setback, and in the context of Indonesia's foreign policy and internal changes it is not hard to see why.

World trends in favour of democracy have not been lost on Indonesia, which remains heavily dependent on foreign aid and is aware that its strategic importance has lessened with the end of the Cold War. Indonesia has consequently striven to improve its international standing, and last year it joined the UN Commission on Human Rights. It has established normal relations with China and the then Soviet Union, and begun an expensive cultural offensive in the United States; the latter campaign is designed to dispel what former Foreign Minister Mochtar Kusumaatmadja called the image of Indonesia as 'a nation that eats people'.

The appointment of the urbane Sabam Siagian, a civilian journalist, as

REPORT

PAT WALSH

Shots heard round the world

ambassador to Australia was part of this strategy. 'I am the new face of Indonesia', Sabam declared when interviewed on *The Ray Martin Show* after his arrival in Canberra. But the Dili massacre and subsequent tough talk from the military undid much of this work. It is not surprising, then, that Jakarta quickly moved into damage-control mode, setting up an inquiry, prosecuting senior officers and presenting the 'incident' as a local aberration.

The massacre also coincided with a movement for change in Indonesia. Though not yet a serious challenge to the regime, a movement for democracy is emerging that questions official attitudes towards security and seeks respect for basic rights. The massacre has fuelled debate about the future shape of Indonesian institutions. In the words of one Indonesian commentator, the Timorese who died at Santa Cruz are 'martyrs for Indonesian democracy'. Although Amnesty International described the report of the official inquiry into the massacre as 'fatally flawed', the inquiry itself was welcomed by liberal Indonesians. It represented a victory over the military, and a first step towards establishing notions of accountability.

The Dili tragedy has demonstrated even to the crudest apologists for Indonesia that the 'integration' of East Timor is only kept in place at gunpoint. The several thousand protesters at Santa Cruz on that day came from a wide spectrum of East Timorese society: young people, many of them not born in 1975; public servants; representatives of both Fretilin and UDT; and representatives of the Catholic Church, to which most East Timorese adhere.

The protesters' clear calls for independence confirm claims that the resistance movement enjoys wide support and is essentially nationalist in character. The massacre will undoubtedly have stiffened its resolve. As a foreign missionary who was present put it, if 80 per cent of East Timorese were anti-integration before the massacre, the figure must now be 95 per cent.

But whether or not the massacre marks the beginning of the road to democracy for Indonesia and East Timor depends largely on the international community. By holding the inquiry, disciplining its military and, to some extent, cooperating with the UN, Jakarta has shown its responsiveness to world opinion. If the modest pressure applied so far can win these concessions, it is arguable that stronger diplomatic action by the world community, including Australia, would achieve more substantial change. Australia, however, has chosen to ignore repeated offers by the East Timorese to hold talks with Indonesia under UN auspices, and the Foreign Minister, Senator Evans, talks instead of 'reconciliation'.

THE TERM IS INTERESTING on two counts: it is President Suharto's buzz word for integration, and it is central to the Australian government's policy on relations with the Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders. A clear implication of using the word is that, in Australia's view, the East Timorese must accept that integration with Indonesia is irreversible—Australia is no more sympathetic to the aspirations of the East Timorese than it is to Aboriginal claims of sovereignty.

Lois O'Donoghue, chairperson of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, explained the implications of the term for Aborigines bluntly when she said, 'It seems to me that the process of reconciliation is asking Aboriginal people to stop beating their heads against the now unalterable facts of Australian history'. Aborigines, she said, had to reconcile themselves to having been swept aside by immensely powerful forces, and to their weakness as they work towards an accommodation with modern Australia.

There are obvious commercial and strategic explanations for Australia's unwillingness to push the issue of East Timor within the UN, including Canberra's defence of the Timor Gap Treaty at the World Court. It is a shocking irony, however, that Australia's Timor policy might also be driven by defensiveness over the appalling treatment of the Aboriginal people, which Indonesian critics of Australia delight in pointing out.

For East Timorese, the notion of reconciliation with Indonesia is about as appealing as the notion of reconciliation with an incorrigible serial rapist. They know their rights and entitlements and they know Indonesia; they are not about to enter a relationship on terms dictated solely by the aggressor, nor should they be expected to. Talks yes, but under UN auspices. Portugal, to its credit, has convinced the European Community of the merits of this proposal. It is an idea that should be vigorously supported, if necessary by withholding military sales and cooperation.

If it fails, however, considerable blame will rest with Australia, which not only opposes self-determination for the East Timorese but champions integration in world forums. ■

Pat Walsh is director of the human rights program of the Australian Council for Overseas Aid, and coordinator of the East Timor Talks Campaign.

DEAN MOORE

Touchdown, Notre Dame

IN JANUARY THIS YEAR Australia's second Catholic university, the University of Notre Dame Australia, opened its doors in Fremantle. Some may be surprised that sections of the Catholic community in one of Australia's smaller capitals should take up such an expensive enterprise as a private university—especially since Perth already boasts four public universities, one of which has a theology department. And the project has in fact been regarded with misgiving by many Western Australians, Catholic or otherwise.

The origin of Notre Dame Australia lies in a familiar Australian phenomenon: the steady decline in the proportion of teachers in Catholic schools who are members of religious orders or congregations, and an increasing reliance on lay staff. Yet Perth has never had a Catholic teachers college, and in 1986 the chairman of WA's Catholic Education Commission, Dr Peter Tannock, proposed establishing one. Tannock discussed the matter with Denis Horgan, a former schoolmate and prominent Perth businessman, and Horgan suggested that, instead of a teachers college, a Catholic university should be created.

The idea won the support of both Tannock and Perth's then archbishop, the late William Foley, and Tannock and Horgan travelled to the University of Notre Dame, Indiana, in search of a suitable model. Both men were impressed by what they saw and returned to Perth with a vision for a similar university in WA. In August 1988 Archbishop Foley formally announced the proposal for a private Catholic university in WA: it would be called the University of Notre Dame Australia and would have substantial links with its Indiana namesake.

The original proposal envisaged an eventual student body of about 6500, paying a total of about $65 million a year in fees. A planning committee was established with Horgan at its head and Tannock as vice-chairman, and which included representatives from Notre Dame, Indiana. Horgan may seem to have been an unusual choice as chairman, since his own formal education ended when he left school at 14. Indeed, Tannock was the only person on the planning committee who had worked as an academic in WA.

In July 1989, the archbishop announced that the university would open in 1992, with an initial enrolment of 400. The bill incorporating the university was passed by both houses of state parliament in December 1989, an impressively brief time after the announcement of the official go-ahead.

An inauguration ceremony was held at the Perth Concert Hall on July 2 last year, at which David Link, a former law professor from Notre Dame, Indiana, was invested as vice-chancellor. And on January 22 this year, the first students held their orientation day in the university's college of education building in Fremantle. But there were not 400 enrolees, only 76—31 in a one-year graduate diploma in education, and 45 in two part-time master's degree courses, in educational leadership and religious education.

ON THE SAME DAY that the new students were exploring their campus in the port city, upriver in Perth the university was being mentioned at the royal commission into WA Inc. The university itself was not under scrutiny, but the basis on which Denis Horgan had been granted a loan by the state-owned Rural and Industries Bank to buy properties for the university in Fremantle was. Later this year, the WA Legislative Assembly's public accounts committee will investigate a government grant to the university of 150ha of land at Alkimos, 50km north of Perth. The grant includes 50ha for a planned second campus and 100ha of endowment land to help fund the university.

It was unfortunate that the opening of the university should have coincided with public reviews of its

financial dealings, for one of the goals set for Notre Dame Australia by its planning committee was to make a 'special contribution' to the economic development of the state. Establishing a Catholic institution to contribute to the economy of an already prosperous state might seem to be a fairly unusual specification of the church's mission. This goal was high on Horgan's agenda, however, as is apparent from comments reported by WA's Catholic newspaper, *The Record*, in August 1988. Noting that although WA had only eight per cent of Australia's population it contributed 25 per cent of national exports, Horgan said: 'We have to live in a real world and earn our living in a real world.' It was important, therefore, that Western Australians should develop a 'world aspect', and they would best do so in an educational environment in which they mixed with students 'from all parts of the nation and different parts of the world'.

So a private Catholic university that attracted interstate and overseas students would enhance WA's stake in international trading markets. Clearly, this desire for a generation of Catholic entrepreneurs could not have been met by a teachers college.

Other planners argued the case for the university in less commercial terms. The notion of a university producing informed Catholics who would become active in social issues was set out by Fr John Neill OP, who was appointed to Notre Dame's planning office in 1988. But the need for a separate institution to promote this kind of lay apostolate has been contested by some WA Catholics, including Fr Paul Pitzen OSM. In a letter to *The Record*, Pitzen responded to Neill's comment during a public lecture that Notre Dame would produce mature Catholics to enter 'the public arena'. WA was 'already producing these "mature" Catholic people without the university,' Pitzen said.

'In my experience,' he wrote, 'Catholic people in our community daily front up to make submissions to federal and state working parties, are involved in review tribunals, [and] are involved in law changes that improve the conditions of people in our community. Isn't this "the public arena"?' Further, the Catholic Church had already been involved in offering religious studies courses at two public institutions, Murdoch University and Edith Cowan University. 'It would seem to me,' Pitzen said, 'that it would be more helpful to strengthen that Catholic presence, for example through the Catholic [Pastoral] Institute, the Perth College of Divinity and the proposed Bioethics Centre, whereby Catholics can be better equipped to continue to go into the marketplace, right into the centres of learning in WA.' Interestingly, Pitzen was born and raised not in WA but in Indiana.

As soon as the university's intention to teach theology was announced, controversy arose over the issue of academic freedom. In *The Record* in July 1989, Archbishop Foley described encouraging 'freedom of thought and expression' as one of the aims of the university. At the same time, however, the archbishop explained that if the bishop of the day were to clash with a member of the university's academic staff over a matter of church teaching, the difference would be 'noted in public'. It would then be for the university to determine the academic's standing.

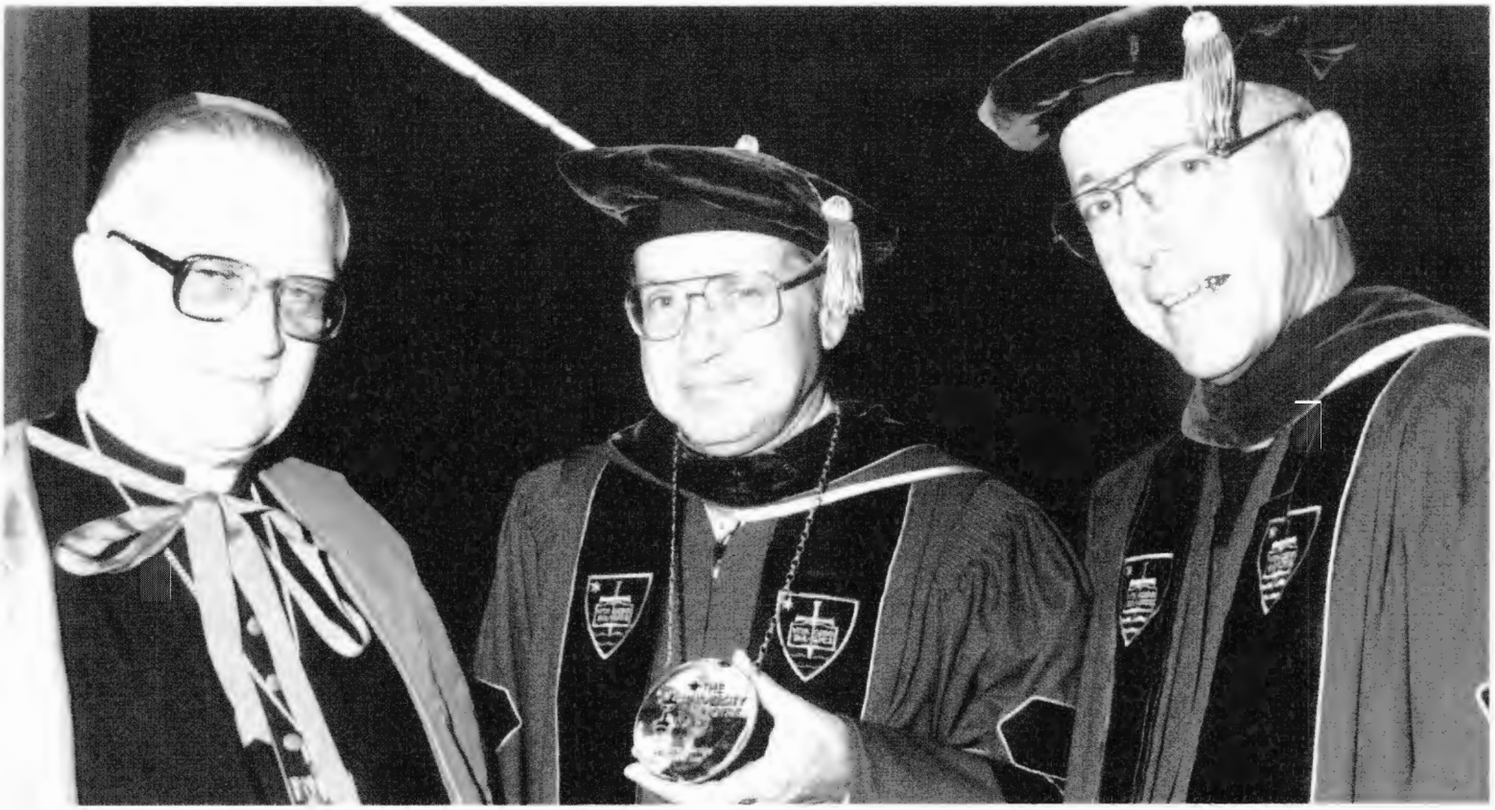
This notion was further explained by Peter Tannock in the 1989 Veech lecture at Sancta Sophia College, Sydney. Tannock said that university theologians would be licensed by episcopal imprimatur, and that if the lecturer were 'preaching or teaching things ... contrary to the teachings of the church, then the ordinary, if the university authorities fail to do it, should make clear that what he or she is teaching does not have the sanction of the church and the official imprimatur could, and probably should, be removed.'

This proposal was attacked by Dr Veronica Brady, a Loreto sister who teaches English at the University of WA and is a former ABC board member. In *The Record*, Brady pointed out that a university was 'an institution dedicated to the pursuit of truth and open to all ideas without restriction, save for the restrictions imposed by the discipline itself. The notion of academic freedom ... guarantees that outside authorities and interests should not interfere in this process ... what Dr Tannock envisages seems rather close to the Catholic school or seminary.'

But perhaps the strongest resentment that Notre Dame has caused within the Catholic community has been in regard to the university's finances. When Archbishop Foley announced the university proposal in 1988, he said that financial support would be sought from the state government, and that income would come from fees, fund-raising, endowments, investments and business undertakings. But in an information pamphlet the university made available to parishes in August 1989, it

Hoping for a generation of Catholic entrepreneurs: Denis Horgan before giving evidence at the WA Inc. royal commission.

Photo: *The West Australian*



It's an inauguration! Cardinal Clancy, Fr Malloy, of Notre Dame, Indiana, and Professor David Link (right), of Notre Dame, WA.

Photo: *The West Australian*

was made clear that the Catholic lay community was expected to be a significant source of financial support for the university.

The university was faced with the problem that charging all students full fees would not only make it clearly elitist but would almost certainly result in its failure. Like Bond University, it would be unable to attract enough students to meet its costs. The planners realised that Notre Dame would need a substantial scholarship fund to offer places to those who could not afford the expected fees of $10,000-$11,000 a year. The university not only had to seek funds for establishment costs but for fee subsidies as well, and in 1990 Tannock announced that it intended to raise $15 million from public contributions over three years. Although support from outside the Catholic community was welcomed, it must have been expected that most of this would come from WA's Catholics.

The decision to seek funds from the Catholic community seems to have occurred without public discussion of the priorities for financial support for other Catholic institutions and projects in WA. Yet the decision must have seemed questionable to many under-resourced Catholic schools and welfare services, and to new parishes struggling to make ends meet. After all, the creation of Notre Dame in effect provides those Catholics who are in the privileged position of being able to undertake university studies, and who already have a choice of four public universities, with further options for self-advancement. That this should be a priority for the Catholic community's financial goodwill is at least debatable, yet no forum for such a debate has been provided and no such considerations have been reported in the Catholic press.

The university plans to accept students in five 'colleges': arts and sciences, business and management, education, law, and medical and health sciences. All five areas of study are represented by courses at other WA universities. All four public universities offer degree courses in arts, science, business studies and education, two have law schools and two offer nursing degrees. There is only one medical school, at the University of WA, but there has been no suggestion that it cannot produce enough medical graduates for the state's needs.

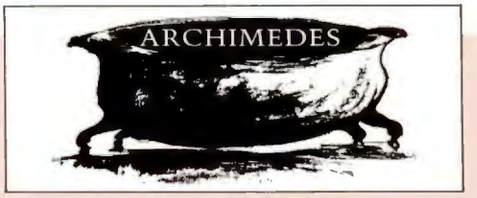
The aim had always been to establish the college of education first, as has now happened. Undergraduate courses in education are to be offered from 1994. The college of arts and sciences was to have been the next in line, with the theology department—central to the ethos of the university—included within it. At the inauguration ceremony, however, it was announced that the college of business and managment would be the university's next academic endeavour. A large donation had been received to establish the business college, whereas endowments for theology have been harder to come by. Perhaps the university's supporters believe that a just society can never have too many accountants.

NOTRE DAME AUSTRALIA has the 'total education' of its students as one of its declared aims. This involves pastoral care and, eventually, the creation of a residential student body when the Alkimos campus opens. At one stage the university's planning officer, John Neill OP, also suggested that course requirements would include a physical education component. The idea, which perhaps reflected Neill's many years as a school

principal, appears to have been abandoned. The residential plan is modelled on the practice of Notre Dame, Indiana, but how easily it will be accepted by Australian students is debatable. In Perth, as in other Australian cities, most undergraduates choose to live off-campus and many remain with their families. And a residential requirement would substantially increase the cost of a student's education. Notre Dame's planners have been quick to deny that the requirement reflects a 'ghetto mentality', but the idea of a largely residential Catholic campus located on Perth's metropolitan fringe, with students doing courses they could readily do in the public universities, seems perilously close to isolationism.

Certainly, it will be a challenge to the university to prepare students who have come from the protected environments of Catholic schools, and then studied in a Catholic university, to take their place in 'the public arena'. Many WA Catholics, like Paul Pitzen OSM, believe that this purpose would have been better and more economically served by extending the church's involvement in the existing universities, and in supporting the many able and committed Catholics who already work and study in these institutions. ■

Dean Moore is counsellor at Aquinas College, Manning, WA.



Proof

FATHER MATTEO RICCI, the first Jesuit missionary in China, had the bright idea of a science-led conversion effort. Reasoning that superiority in science was more easily demonstrated than any advantage in the spiritual realm, he equipped himself with world maps (which did not show China in the middle), globes, astronomical instruments and so on. Ricci's efforts were not without success. His diary records the following observation, which suggests there was a genuine meeting of minds, not just a show of trinkets:

'Nothing pleased the Chinese as much as the volume on the *Elements* of Euclid. This perhaps was due to the fact that no people esteem mathematics as highly as the Chinese, despite their method of teaching, in which they propose all kinds of propositions but without demonstrations. The result of such a system is that anyone is free to exercise his wildest imagination relative to mathematics without offering a definitive proof of anything.'

Proof, or demonstration. This is what has characterised mathematics since the earliest Greek thought. It does not, as far as is known, appear in Egyptian or Babylonian mathematics, though those traditions were very sophisticated in other ways. Nor does it seem to have appeared spontaneously in any other culture since, though many, like the Chinese, could recognise a class act when they saw it. Not that the conception of an absolutely certain method of arriving at truth has been accepted with acclaim by all. Especially, need it be said, in the present century, when 'critical thinking' is regarded as a virtue, even *the* virtue to be aimed at by education. Spoilsports of various persuasions have claimed that mathematical proofs are 'purely tautological' or 'socially conditioned' or the like.

But at the end of the century, proof, like certain other ideas previously thought moribund—democracy, for example—has had a new lease of life. It has come from the engineering profession, a group of people generally immune to the sceptical currents of an age. The computing gurus realised that a computer program is rather like a mathematical argument (though in the imperative rather than the indicative mood). So it is possible to prove that a program has the effect it is intended to have. But bolder still is the claim that even being textual is inessential to proof. A certain maker of silicon chips advertises: 'Viper is the first commercially available microprocessor with both a formal specification and a proof that the chip conforms to it.' The experts were scandalised, and predicted that the public would regret it if they believed any such thing. But it is a sign of the way things are going. ■

Our guest columnist, in this Chinese Year of the Monkey, is **James Franklin**, lecturer in mathematics at the University of NSW.

PETER NORDEN

Justice: not blind but shortsighted

GOVERNMENTS AFRAID OF LOSING the next election often display knee-jerk reactions to expressions of community opinion. This is so even when the government is being asked to curtail traditionally accepted civil liberties, as is shown by recent legislation in Western Australia and projected legislation in Victoria.

The WA legislation, which was strongly supported by the Premier, Carmen Lawrence, allows 20-year prison terms to be imposed on juvenile offenders. In Victoria, the Attorney-General, Jim Kennan, has drawn up legislation enabling the government to retain in custody some serious offenders who have completed their full term of imprisonment.

Extraordinary penal measures such as these result from community fears generated by an especially serious crime, or because of an unusual series of events. In WA, several deaths occurred after high-speed police car chases of teenagers in stolen cars. Those killed included a pregnant young woman, an innocent bystander who became the latest victim of what amounts to a feud between young car thieves and the police.

In some parts of WA the police have been subject to extreme provocation—youths will entice them to start a chase by drawing up outside police stations in stolen cars with the horn sounding. Some of these youths have many previous convictions for property offences such as car theft and burglary, and have spent much of their lives in insitutions. Many are Aborigines, with little education and no prospect of employment.

The Serious and Repeat Offenders Sentencing Act, which was passed by the WA Parliament early in the new year, allows indeterminate sentences to be imposed on repeating juvenile offenders and provides for jail terms of up to 20 years for teenagers convicted of serious offences. Carmen Lawrence apparently believes that community feeling in WA is so great that her government had to introduce such legislation.

The legislation was not, however, without its critics. A national conference on the role of education, employment and training in the criminal justice system, held in Fremantle in February, carried a resolution declaring that the legislation contravened fundamental human rights, and would 'neither prevent nor deter serious or violent crime'. The Catholic Archbishop of Perth, Barry Hickey, said that the act had robbed the courts of the flexibility needed in dealing with young offenders.

Throughout the debate on the Sentencing Act, there was little serious discussion of police responsibilities in high-speed car chases through suburban areas. Nor did the underlying causes of the behaviour of juvenile offenders receive much attention in the media. Certainly, the teenagers concerned start the car chases and are primarily responsible when tragedy occurs. But should we not expect government authorities to regard the protection of human life—whether that of bystanders or of the car thieves themselves—as more important than the arrest of property offenders?

IN MELBOURNE, COMMUNITY FEARS about violent crime have been aroused by incidents such as the Hoddle Street and Queen Street shootings, in each of which innocent people were killed. So when a prisoner about to be released from Pentridge Prison began writing to the media, threatening a more serious crime once he was granted his freedom, he had an eager audience.

The prisoner, Gary Webb, also known as Gary David, was a self-mutilator who had been sexually assaulted as child and had spent most of his life in institutions. Those who knew Webb recognised his threats as expressions of fear—he was reluctant to face the responsibilities that release would place on him in the wider society. But for the media, and hence for the Victorian community, his threats and life history created an image of a monster living in the cells of Pentridge, a monster who should never be released.

In 1990 the Victorian Attorney-General, Jim Kennan, introduced the Community Protection Act, which allowed David to be kept in prison beyond the end of his term. A novel piece of legislation in that it applied to only one person, the act originally had a 12-month 'sunset clause' but was later amended to include extensions of three years at a time.

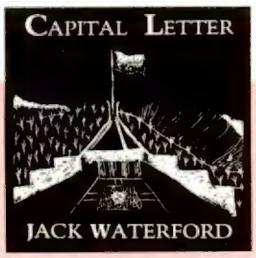
Many who opposed the act did so on the grounds that it set a precedent for keeping others in custody after the end of their sentences, and these fears have now been confirmed. The Attorney-General's department has drafted a Community Protection (Violent Offenders) Bill, which is expected to be presented to parliament later this year. The bill extends the powers of the existing act to a range of 'dangerous offenders' regarded as suffering from 'a severe personality disorder'.

Opposition to the legislation has come from many in the criminal justice system—lawyers, judges, psychiatrists and criminologists—who ask why the bill focuses on 'dangerous' prisoners at the time of their release, rather than at the time of conviction and sentencing. Psychiatrists, in particular, have doubts about the powers that this new legislation would give them to predict 'dangerousness'.

These changes in the criminal law in WA and Victoria are quick-fix solutions put forward by governments anxious to soothe community fears. But the changes could pose more dangers than does the criminal behaviour they are intended to prevent. The principle of proportionality—the notion that the sanction to be imposed should not outweigh the seriousness of the crime that has been committed—is clearly under threat.

In responding to a short-term crisis of confidence in existing laws and practices, the WA and Victorian governments appear to be willing to undermine a consensus on limits to the power of the state that has developed during the past 200 years. ■

Peter Norden SJ is a former chaplain to the Victorian prison system. He now works as a public advocate for Catholic social services in Victoria.



Commanding centrestage

PAUL KEATING, THE GREAT POLARISER of Australian politics, is justifying the faith that made a slender majority of caucus adopt him as Labor leader in December. Keating, whose natural combativeness was honed in the hurley burley of the NSW Labor Party, in fact has more intellectual rigour than he is given credit for. His genius, however, lies not so much in having the better argument as in knowing when more votes will line up on his side than on the other. Once that point is established, it is no-holds barred. Far more than Hawke, Keating has a talent for the quick phrase and the fluent argument. And he has a command of the vernacular that lets him adorn everyday language with a rhetorical flourish possessed by few people in public life.

Keating has succeeded in drawing attention to the electorally difficult aspects of the *Fightback!* document, not least of which is the 15 per cent goods and services tax and its impact upon the Australian family. He has also shaken confidence in the notion that the figures in the Hewson statement stand up. Among the electorate, most of the claims and counter-claims about projections and econometric models are either obscure or rightly dismissed as dressed-up hope. Keating knows that but his campaign—with not a little help from the Treasury and the ABC—has planted a few doubts.

The next election has now been presented as a clear choice, with battlelines drawn more sharply than any time since 1975 or 1983. Typically in such contests, third parties are the first to lose because they find it hard to be heard in the tumult. It is not just the Australian Democrats who are at risk, but conservation groups, welfare lobbies, and selected business groups that have a big stake in interventionism. Insofar as they survive, Labor can feel fairly confident of the vital penultimate preference.

This is something more than the old Labor assumption that alternative groups on the left have nowhere else to go. It is a reflection of the fact that the Liberal Party is making no effort to woo such groups. John Hewson, for example, appears to have derived some pleasure from sending the Australian Conservation Foundation off with a flea in its ear. Because of the Liberal Party's attitude, such groups have less to bargain with and much more to risk by being too coy.

Keating's tactic has been the familiar one of seeking the middle ground. There is an alternative tactic, close to the one that John Hewson has adopted, which holds that in a close game one should choose a position as far removed as possible from that of one's opponent. If the opponent is trying for the middle ground, this has the effect of pulling the other team in the same direction. But in that case one seizes the initiative, making the other side appear reactive, and often robbing it of self-certainty. One's opponents, of course, can step back to taws themselves, leaving the middle ground vacant. In this case an election is resolved by two primary factors: which party can best exploit the anxieties of undecided voters; and the broad momentum of events.

I have argued before in this column that the better tactic for Keating might be to retreat to the opposite end—saying, in effect, 'This is an election about the role of the government, in which my opponent says frankly that he intends to reduce its power and influence. I stand unashamedly for a major role for government—not for more intrusion into your lives, for I have no more time for nanny-staters and busybodies than any other Australian—but to maintain and build up our schools, our hospitals, our roads and our great national infrastructure, all the things John Hewson wants to destroy.'

In some respects, the *One Nation* document might seem to be that. He has combined a need to pump-prime the economy with an old-fashioned yearning for big projects—roads, railways, national grids and so on. Yet the statement is curiously devoid of ideology, and in no significant respect does it involve a retreat from Labor's economic-rationalist adventures of the 1980s. It contains fairly crude incentives or bribes, primarily tax cuts, based on economic expectation as hopeful as any offered by John Hewson. It gives Labor the appearance of a countering set of ideas and strategies. At the same time, however, it leaves Keating with total flexibility and the scope to adapt if and when recovery begins.

MEANWHILE, KEATING IS STIRRING a few other pots. There was nothing spontaneous about his rhetorical flaying of the Poms, his flirting with republican sentiments, multiculturalism and Aboriginal affairs, and his emphasis on the importance of Asian markets. (Though he has no more of a plan for the latter than his opponents, or any of his predecessors.) All of these are ploys, cynically motivated and largely symbolic in nature. But they are likely to do him little harm in Labor's basic constituency, which is sorely worried about the party's loss of principle and which no longer provides the organisation with much intellectual energy or practical help. It all adds up to capturing 50 per cent plus one of the middle ground.

But none of it could be said to be a real contest of ideas. So far, Paul Keating—who has rather more respect for ideas than most politicians—is still playing stale politics. He is doing it with more style than his predecessor, and some instant success. But he continues to be vulnerable. ■

Jack Waterford is deputy editor of *The Canberra Times*.

ALAN GILL

Looking for the stable door

In July the Anglican general synod will attempt to resolve the vexed question of women priests. To some it may seem more like a post-mortem. Last month's events in Perth, where Archbishop Peter Carnley has ordained 10 women, mean that the horse has bolted.

In 1978, when the Anglican general synod had its first major debate on women priests, two delegates considered 'in the know' about church government discussed the likely outcome of a blocked vote on the ordination issue. The question was whether an individual bishop, perhaps from a 'bush' diocese, might be tempted to break a prolonged deadlock by 'going it alone', thus presenting the church with a fait accompli.

Delegate number one, Melbourne's the Rev. Alan Nichols, now on loan to a Jesuit mission in Asia, considered such an act unlikely. Delegate number two, the Rev. Bruce Wilson, now himself a bishop—and tipped by many to be about to follow Perth's example—nodded in agreement. A discussion ensued on the appropriate punishment for a transgressor: 'Something with boiling oil in it?'

Well, now it's happened. On Saturday, March 7, Archbishop Peter Carnley of Perth ordained 10 women to the Anglican priesthood. He called the event 'A day of liberation and expanding horizons'. Opponents see it as a day of shame.

'Today,' Carnley told the crowded congregation,'we are peeling away the sickly yellow, faded, silverfish-ridden wallpaper with which the church has surrounded itself and imprisoned women for centuries past in its benign and perhaps well-meaning determination to confine them by role.' The wallpaper metaphor alluded to the writings of a 19th century American feminist, Charlotte Perkins Gilman.

Carnley, who hails from the 'high-church' wing of Anglicanism, has a liking for the saints. He chose the date for the ordinations (which coincidentally allowed the women to celebrate their first Eucharist on International Women's Day) because it was the feast of St Perpetua and her companions, martyred at Carthage in 203. This may suggest that he expects, if not boiling oil, then at least a degree of flak, probably in the form of a lawsuit seeking to have the ordinations declared unlawful.

The archbishop had support for his actions from his diocesan synod, as well as his assistant bishops and most of the clergy. He even had the support of a local Liberal Jewish rabbi, David Wallach, who invited Carnley and the women awaiting ordination to his synagogue a fortnight before the ordinations. Carnley did not, however, have the support of the former dean of his cathedral, Fr David Robarts, who with other members of with the Association for the Apostolic Ministry, had tried unsuccessfully to get a court injunction to prevent the ordinations.

Archbishop Carnley ordained a round ten. There is something special about the number 11. Rabbi Rudolf Brasch, author of a history of popular superstitions, says it is the fool's number—one more than 10, the 'number of perfection'. In some cultures 11 is unlucky, because it cannot be counted on both hands. If Owen Dowling, the Anglican Bishop of Canberra and Goulburn, is superstitious, which I doubt, he would have much to think about.

On January 31, the NSW Court of Appeal granted an injunction preventing Bishop Dowling from going ahead with the ordination of 11 women. The injunction overturned a decision of the NSW Supreme Court, which had regarded the ordinations as an internal ecclesiastical matter—though with wider human rights overtones—in which secular courts should not intervene. The appeal court saw its role in a narrower sense: interpreting the constitution of the Anglican Church of Australia as embodied in federal and state legislation.

Dowling says that he was motivated by a desire to interpret and follow 'the mind of Christ'. This prompted a lawyer to comment, outside the court: 'What on earth has the mind of Christ got to do with it?' According to Dowling: 'In the fundamental declarations of our church it says that "We shall forever obey the commands of Christ." I think part of the task of our church is to interpret what we believe to be the mind and spirit of Christ for our time.'

Critics say that Dowling, in proposing to act unilaterally, was setting himself up as 'some kind of Pope'. Dowling points out that his own diocesan synod voted him the right to do it, and instructed him to do so. This

You can't keep a good woman down: Emmaline Arney is ordained by Archbishop Carnley in St George's Cathedral, Perth.

Photo: Neil Eliot

differs slightly from the argument of the former Archbishop of Melbourne, David Penman, that a bishop may ordain any 'suitable' person—which term he understood to include male and female—on his own authority.

Dowling says he was moved to act unilaterally because of the impasse in general synod, which has debated the matter four times, and because of the failure of the appellate tribunal, the church's highest legal body, to resolve the issue. The last time synod voted on the issue, in 1987, delegates favouring the ordination of women were four votes short of the required majority.

Says Dowling: 'I take the point of view that the situation is deadlocked and probably will be deadlocked because of the attitude of the diocese of Sydney and perhaps of Ballarat and the Murray, maybe for years and years and years. We can go on arguing about it and never be able to do anything.' Forecasts about continued deadlock are probably correct. The Anglican Church League, formed to safeguard the Evangelical character of the Sydney diocese, has circulated a 'ticket' to ensure that only those opposed to women's ordination are elected to represent the diocese at general synod.

The Archbishop of Sydney, Archbishop Donald Robinson is a former vice-president of the league. In the old days this body battled Anglo-Catholics to keep 'Romish doctrines' out of beleaguered Sydney. It now courts Anglo-Catholics as allies. The debate on women priests has cut across factional groupings, with many Anglo-Catholics and some moderate Evangelicals, especially in Melbourne, supporting women's ordination.

In the synod itself there are oddities in the voting pattern. The Bishop of Carpentaria, Bishop Tony Hall-Matthews, travels from the Torres Strait Islands to register his 'yes' vote on the question of women priests. His synodical partner is a tall Murray Islander, Father David Passi, who invariably votes 'no'. Even more interesting is the attitude of Sydney's senior assistant bishop, John Reid. Four years ago Reid told me that he had no objection to a woman celebrating the Eucharist, but subscribed to the 'headship' theory that a woman may not have charge of a congregation. Because the two roles could not in practice be separated, he was forced to vote 'no' when women's ordination was debated in synod.

That was in 1989. He has since changed his mind—a situation that came to public knowledge when he was shortlisted for the vacant archbishopric of Melbourne. This change of heart has ruled out whatever chance he may have had of replacing Sydney's Donald Robinson, who retires next year. Interestingly, Reid sided with Robinson on the recent court injunction, arguing that the tactics of his colleague in Canberra were divisive and unlawful.

DOWLING'S VIEW of the church's constitution does not accord with the understanding of the appeal court. According to Dowling: 'You have to honour the spirit of the constitution as well as the letter of it. My understanding is that the spirit allows some flexibility and difference across the national church. It [general synod] should not attempt to prescribe things for every diocese.'

The Rev. Bruce Ballantine-Jones, a vice-president of the Anglican Church League, and spokesman for those who sought the injunction, says Bishop Dowling's theory about flexibility could backfire. 'How would he

The word is still 'no': Archbishop Robinson of Sydney.

Photo: Sydney Morning Herald

[Dowling] feel if another diocese broke [with general synod] on the issue of lay presidency? He would have no moral grounds to object.' (The diocese of Armidale has proposed that lay people should be allowed to be 'president', or celebrant, at Eucharistic services. Anglo-Catholics and some Evangelicals, including Archbishop Robinson, regard this move as horrendous.)

Dowling himself is a likeable man whose chief fault, according to critics, is that he appears 'pleasant and reasonable', even when he is not. Some years ago Dowling embraced the charismatic renewal, and is strongly into religious healing. In my experience, charismatics in the Anglican communion, as elsewhere, tend to be headstrong and more inclined to 'do their own thing'.

Robinson is also well liked. Sydney's handful of Anglo-Catholics supported his candidature for the archbishopric (after the retirement of Archbishop Marcus Loane) because of his sense of history—he frequently talks about 'catholic order'—and obvious integrity. He is international co-chairman of the Association for the Apostolic Ministry, which was formed 10 years ago in Britain. Many consider this body, rather than the Anglican Church League, the real force behind the litigation and other tactics that have been used to prevent the ordination of women.

THE QUESTION ON EVERYBODY'S LIPS is 'What happens now?' It should not be assumed that other bishops and dioceses who support the ordination of women will be prepared to wait until the next meeting of the general synod, in July. The Bishop of Bathurst, Bruce Wilson, and the Bishop of Newcastle, Alfred Holland, said at the beginning of the year that they would take the same path as Owen Dowling and Peter Carnley.

Wilson is a liberal Evangelical, liked even by his opponents, but a thorn in the flesh of the Sydney diocese during his years as a university chaplain and rector of a parish in Paddington. As a theological student at Sydney's Moore College, he placed a bucket of water over a door, intending that it should fall on the head of a fellow student. Instead, it fell on the head of the vice-principal, Canon (now Archbishop) Robinson. Wilson is a sociologist, famed for a suggestion that the church should become 'more Ocker'. He has described the 'religion of Australians' as 'a vague pantheism incorporating elements of the barbecue, beach and the bush.'

Alfred Holland, in Newcastle, comes from the Catholic wing of Anglicanism but has demonstrated an equally radical streak, particularly on social issues. He has been in trouble for offshore borrowing to improve the financial position of the diocese (it didn't) and has pursued such novelties as declaring the first bishop of the diocese a 'local saint'. Holland will retire within a few months, so his career—unlike that of the much younger Bruce Wilson—would not be jeopardised by an 'unlawful' act, similar to that already performed by Archbishop Carnley.

It is interesting to note that Dowling, Wilson and Holland are all from NSW. (Dowling's cathedral is in Goulburn, not the ACT). Though each is autonomous in his diocese, all three owe allegiance, in a manner not clearly specified, to Archbishop Robinson in his capacity of metropolitan of NSW.

A CONFIDENTIAL MEMORANDUM, circulated to senior people in the Sydney diocese says that in December, Robinson wrote amicably to Dowling, urging him to cancel or delay the proposed ordinations. Dowling declined, responding that the reasons he put forward were 'only a matter of opinion'. On January 3 Robinson wrote again, this time under formal archiepiscopal seal, invoking 'the bishop's oath of allegiance to his Metropolitan'. The response was the same. Robinson wrote a third time, pointing out that 'it was not my opinion that that I asked you to accept but my direction'.

A point frequently made by opponents of women's ordination is that it will dash all hopes of a reunion with the Eastern churches or with Rome. We live in odd times. Archbishop Carnley carries with him a briefcase full of letters from Catholics—priests, nuns and laity—who support his actions, hoping that the 'Anglicans will set an example'.

Archbishop Robinson has been accused of inflaming the situation by telling members of his own diocesan synod that unilateral action by a bishop or diocese would lead to a situation in which dioceses that ordain women would be 'out of communion' with dioceses that don't. He later changed the phrase to 'impaired communion'. This may hurt but it is true. What happens when a woman priest crosses state or diocesan borders? A woman priest in, say Canberra, would be 'unchurched' if she moved to Sydney for family or religious reasons, or even to take a holiday. According to some points of view, her ordination would not merely be unlawful but invalid.

IRONICALLY, ROBINSON HIMSELF has in the past acted unilaterally on a conscience issue concerning ministerial orders. In the mid-1980s he consecrated a North Shore cleric, the Rev Dudley Foord, as Bishop of the Church of England in South Africa. This body, whose previous leader, also from Sydney, had publicly supported the policies of the South African Government, is regarded as schismatic by the larger Church of the Province of South Africa, headed by Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

In fairness to Robinson, it should be stated that religious rather than political considerations motivated his action. The argument about historical authenticity—with Sydney as sole defender of the smaller Church of England in South Africa—dates back to long before the word 'apartheid' was even coined.

Before the ordinations in Perth, the primate of the Anglican Church of Australia, Archbishop Keith Rayn-

er, produced a peace plan that has evoked mixed reactions. It asked bishops not to proceed with ordinations before the July general synod; asked objectors not to resort to the courts (and existing plaintiffs to give up their proceedings); called for a 'consensus' for a general synod canon allowing women to be ordained; and promised a review of the church's constitution after the synod. A problem for Rayner is that as Archbishop of Melbourne and before that of Adelaide, he is perceived as being a personal participant in the struggle, on the pro-ordination side. In dioceses that oppose women's ordination he lacks credibility.

According to Robert Tong, a NSW solicitor who is a vice-president of the Anglican Church League: 'I think that's a fairly naive sort of package because people who are opposed to women's ordination get no guarantees the review will be serious. If the opponents agree to pass a canon, and withdraw from proceedings, then supporters of women's ordination get all that they want. All we get is some vague promise at the end of the day. We're left with nothing.'

COULD THE ANGLICAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA break up over the issue of the ordination of women? Tong, a Sydney member of general synod, sees four possibilities for what he calls 'constitutional accommodation'.

1. The most radical is for a parallel Anglican church, a situation similar to that of the two Anglican churches in South Africa. Such a body would be free to make its own laws—including those concerning the ordination of women. Though Tong doesn't mention it, this could involve problems of recognition—bishops of the Church of England in South Africa are not invited to the Lambeth conference, the periodical meeting of bishops from all the churches in the Anglican communion.

2. A second solution is for a diocese legally to withdraw from the general synod, while retaining some kind of loose affiliation to the church as a whole. Adelaide, which expressed reservations when the constitution of the Church of England in Australia was adopted in 1961, already has just such a bail-out clause. This situation appears to be recognised in Clause 69 III of the constitution, which reads: 'If any diocese in Australia does not assent to the constitution, such diocese shall not by reason only of that fact cease to be in fellowship or communion with this church or with the Church of England in the dioceses of Australia and Tasmania but may have association on any other agreed terms.'

3. A variation of the above would be to scrap the 1961 constitution and go back to the pre-1961 conditions, under which membership of general synod was voluntary. There would be voluntary levies to run a central office and national agencies such as the Australian Board of Missions.

4. A 'conscience' ruling, similar to that already theoretically operative in the US, under which a bishop who supports the ordination of women cannot force his views on a parish which opposes it, and vice-versa. Likewise, a bishop or clergyman who opposes women priests should not be victimised by 'reform-minded' superiors.

Though Tong didn't say it, liberals in the church can be just as dictatorial as conservatives—an example being the treatment meted out to Fr Robarts, who was squeezed out of his position as Dean of Perth after clashing with Archbishop Carnley on the women's ordination issue. Robarts, who went public, has not helped his cause by using inflammatory terminology such as 'priestesses'.

A variation of Tong's fourth solution would be to allow extra-territorial bishoprics (or personal prelatures), so that a parish or group of parishes in, say Melbourne, could affiliate to the Sydney diocese, or vice-versa. Odder things have happened. In the early years of European settlement all of Australia was in the diocese of Calcutta. Such an arrangement, however, would create practical difficulties and almost certainly there would be lawsuits over property and assets, as happened when the continuing Presbyterians decided not to join the Uniting Church.

EVANGELICALS SEE ADVANTAGES in the 'live and let live' approach that would result from a more loosely structured general synod. A trade off between Sydney and other dioceses would allow the Evangelicals freedom in such areas as clerical dress (some ministers wish to conduct services in street clothes), the ages of baptism, confirmation and first communion, and other liturgical discipline, all of which would become local issues.

An interesting, and to some people contradictory, aspect of the present situation is that it is Sydney diocese, which at first was not keen to belong to the structure set up in 1961, that now now stresses loyalty to the centre. Yet Evangelicals are less inclined than others to be scandalised at thoughts of schism and separatism, as is clear from the attitude that Sydney took in 1961.

According to Tong: 'People get their categories mixed. They talk of "unity" when they mean structural unity of the organisation. Evangelicals don't place a high order on unity of the organisation.

'They go back to the biblical idea of unity in the Lord Jesus and how this joins all Christians, Orthodox and Roman Catholics at one end to the Wee Frees and the Brethren at the other end. All who name the name of Christ as Lord and Saviour are joined together in that sort of unity.' ■

I know what I've done but what will synod do!: Archbishop Carnley of Perth.

Photo: Sydney Morning Herald.

Alan Gill, a Sydney journalist, was religious affairs writer for the *Sydney Morning Herald* from 1971-88.

RUSSIA

Gorbachev byline

MIKHAIL GORBACHEV MAY have been relegated to the political hinterland in what was the Soviet Union, but his popularity elsewhere appears to be anything but dented. If evidence were needed, what better than the 110 newspapers around the world, from *The Guardian* in London to Tokyo's *Asahi Shiinbun*, that have been tripping over themselves to pay for the right to publish a monthly think piece by the ex-president.

In a singular media coup, at the end of last year the Turin morning daily, *La Stampa*, talked Gorbachev into giving it world copyright for the articles for the next two years. The rush to buy in has not been an entirely gentlemanly affair. Said Vittorio Sabadin, the Italian paper's editor-in-chief: '*The New York Times* tried to take control of the thing. When it published his first piece (it appeared in *La Stampa* on February 6 and subsequently in other papers), it claimed it had negotiated the rights. We managed to convince them to print a retraction. It is the first time *The New York Times* has bought the rights to articles from a foreign publication.'

The US daily possibly thought it could strongarm the Italians, as Sabadin had commissioned *The New York Times* syndication service to sell the rights outside Europe—something it has done with some success. 'About 50 papers in the US, but also others in places as diverse as India and Saudi Arabia have signed up,' Sabadin said. The Australian press, however, appears to be too deep in the doldrums for such a luxury. No Australian title has yet expressed interest.

Not that Sabadin was keen on naming sums. Gorbachev, he said, would get 'a percentage' of what the sale of rights around the world brought *La Stampa*. The money would go to Gorbachev's new foundation, which formally saw the light of day in Moscow on March 4. (The London *Sun* reported that *The Guardian* was paying £1200 for each 800-word column. *The Guardian's* deputy editor, Jonathon Fenby, denied this but would not reveal the sum.)

The foundation's the thing. The mutual esteem felt by Gorbachev and Gianni Agnelli, *La Stampa's* publisher and boss of Fiat, helped clinch the deal. (That, said Sabadin, and the 'close friendship' between Gorbachev and *La Stampa's* long-time Moscow correspondent, Giulietto Chiesa.) Agnelli, too, has a foundation and, in a recently signed accord between the two bodies he accepted an invitation to become a member of Gorbachev's institution.

IRELAND

'Tis the most distressful country

DURING THE DEBATE before the 1983 abortion referendum in Ireland, some opponents of the proposal to change the constitution put forward nightmare scenarios involving child victims of rape or incest. These objections were dismissed as hysterical scaremongering. The dean of St Patrick's (Church of Ireland) Cathedral in Dublin, Victor Griffin, was uncannily prophetic in his warning. 'If the amendment succeeds,' he said in February 1983, 'and the life of the mother is interpreted by the courts as merely physical life, then abortion for rape or incest will be unconstitutional and a criminal offence.'

Those with long memories might have recalled those words as they watched a number of Irish women politicians face the world media on the steps of the Dail. The women responded to questions from television and press reporters and spoke of their solidarity with a 14-year-old girl who was pregnant as the result of an alleged rape, and who found herself at the centre of a constitutional impasse.

The parliamentary session from which they had come was one devoted to statements on the case by the political leaders. There are nine women in the Dail, several of whom had sought in vain to give a woman's perspective on the issues. Each had been refused, with the Speaker appealing to them to respect the rules of the chamber. So instead they made their points into cameras and microphones and onto reporters' notebooks, their words guaranteed transmission around the globe. It was a striking metaphor for the way the issue has been debated: Ireland's male leaders in their sealed tepee making earnest statements to an irrelevant Hansard, while the women outside had the ears of the world's opinion formers.

In the days that followed that hasty media circus in Kildare Street, the Dail became less and less relevant. As members deliberated, and no doubt wished the problem would go away, the running was taken by an articulate rock star. The acerbic Sinead O'Connor declared that the 'pro-life' amendment campaign in 1983 had attempted to legislate morality for the country's youth, but that the youth were now fighting back.

We await the full text of the Supreme Court decision overturning a ruling by Mr Justice Declan Costello that prevented the 14-year-old girl from seeking an abortion in England. No doubt it will be reasoned and erudite, but many Irish people will be convinced that the worldwide attention that the case has attracted was in the minds of the five learned judges. The world will be pleased that the Supreme Court has resolved the girl's 12-week ordeal, and seasoned observers of Irish affairs will have a tinge of regret that by its judgment the court has let Irish legislators off the hook.

Ireland has a written constitution whose main function, as in all such documents, is to enumerate the fundamental laws by which the state is governed. It is the duty of the legislature to flesh out those basic laws by enacting statutes that cover specific cases or by clarifying particular wordings used in the written document. These interpretations may be challenged in the Supreme Court, and it is not uncommon for the President to initiate such a challenge before signing a bill into law.

Because of the divisiveness of the abortion referendum, however, no Irish government or political party has been prepared to introduce a bill clarifying the 1983 amendment. Yet one of the outcomes of this case may be a relax-

Gorbachev, said Sabadin, would reach the biggest global readership ever achieved—110 million, in a combined circulation of 36 million papers. He dedicated his second article, which appeared in *La Stampa* on March 4, to his relationship with Pope John Paul II, whom he met in the Vatican in December 1989.

'There exists between us a deep feeling of esteem and understanding,' he wrote. 'Today we can say that all that has happened in Eastern Europe in these past years would have been impossible without the presence of this Pope, without the great role, also political, that he has played on the world scene.' Gorbachev wanted the Pope to see his article before it was published, and the Holy Father replied in the pages of next day's Stampa that Gorbachev was 'a man of providence' and that their 1989 meeting had been 'willed by God'. **—Damien Simonis**

ation of Irish abortion law. The Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child (known by the unfortunate acronym SPUC, which last week gave demonstrators the opportunity to chant 'SPUC off') was probably too successful in its campaign in 1983. The scope of the amendment was so unrestricted, the ban on abortion so context-free, that either the Supreme Court or parliament will eventually be obliged to specify such a context, which could well have the effect of making abortion more easily available to Irish women than it was before the amendment.

The Supreme Court's judgment on the present case seems in part to be based on the right of an innocent person to travel to another jurisdiction. This will not, however, prevent calls for legal termination services at home, and the 1983 referendum may yet be seen to have the unintended effect of promoting abortion. Perhaps the Irish people should listen more carefully to what Protestant clergymen have to say. **—Frank O'Shea**

Frank O'Shea teaches at Marist College, Canberra. This report is taken from articles originally published in The Canberra Times.

DAMIEN SIMONIS

EUROPE EUROPE

Old grudges make new maps

THE 'NEW EUROPE' BEING FORGED as the countries of the European Community head towards integration has been hailed as making the nation-state obsolete. Perhaps it is, but there is no indication that the sense of national or ethnic identity possessed by the various peoples of Europe is becoming obsolete along with it. Indeed, the diminishing sovereignty of the old nation-states has made possible a resurgence of even older regional and ethnic loyalties.

From Scotland to Catalonia, from Italy's northern provinces to Belgium's Flanders, the calls for autonomy, devolution or independence are growing louder. They have been inflamed by the example of the newly independent republics of the former Soviet Union, by the disintegration of Yugoslavia, and by the prospect of further splintering in the troubled new democracies of Central Europe.

The urge to redraw borders travels quickly. It took Europe less than a year to get from concern over recognition of the Baltic states to recognising the other republics of the former Soviet Union, along with Croatia and Slovenia. Any hesitation along the way was often explained away by Western governments as a fear that fragmentation of the whole might end up hurting the parts.

It is a little late for such fears, for on 11 September last year what the Spanish decided to call the Baltic virus had spread as far as Barcelona. 11 September is La Diada, the anniversary of the fall of Barcelona, capital of Spain's north-eastern region of Catalonia, to Philip V during the War of the Spanish Succession. It is traditionally a day on which Catalans emphasise what makes them different from other Spaniards, but last year thousands of demonstrators marched on government buildings to demand independence.

The term 'Baltic virus' was not fanciful. Lithuanian, Estonian and Croatian officials were invited to participate in La Diada, and the president of the Catalan Generalitat (regional government), Jordi Pujol, decided to send a message to Madrid by declaring 'Catalonia is like Lithuania'. Although only a minority of Catalonia's six million inhabitants seriously want out of Spain, most of them certainly want greater autonomy. And the example of the Baltic states and Croatia is grist to the mill.

Next door to Catalonia, the ancient Basque country straddles Spain and south-western France. The ETA (Euskadi Ta Askatasuna, or Basque Homeland and Freedom) independence movement, renewed its terror campaign in the first months of this year. In February peace marches against the ETA in the region's biggest city, Bilbao, demonstrated the limits of the movement's support, but the Basques do want greater autonomy.

From 1939 till Franco's death in 1975, the Catalans and Basques were kept in line with the rest of Spain, with their languages banned and administrative control centralised in Madrid. The memory of that has not been erased by the post-Franco autonomy pacts that devolved powers to Catalonia and the Basque country, but the struggle to extract

more from the centre continues. Moreover, since the new arrangements came into force in 1979, Madrid has had to grant a degree of autonomy to Spain's 15 regions to head off cries of favouritism.

Pujol, who at the head of his Convergéncia i Unió party has led the Catalan autonomous region since 1980, inflamed this side of the debate in September by claiming the 'historic nationalities' were entitled to greater autonomy that the rest of Spain—a claim they rejected immediately. Juan José Lucas, president of Castilla y Léon, and a member of the rightwing Partido Popular , spoke for the 15 'non-historical' regions: 'I am not going to let Castilla y Léon be a second-rank autonomous region.' Even the Vatican found itself compelled to comment when, also in September, three Catalan bishops spoke out in favour of Catalan independence. Rome judged that Catalonia should remain part of the present Spanish state.

Madrid is working on a new formula for regional finances, and for some observers of the Catalan furore this is what it is all about. According to figures compiled by *Tiempo* magazine, Catalonia and the Basque country are the two richest regions in Spain. Per capita income in both is above the national average, and Catalans have 20 per cent more disposable income than the rest of the country. The Catalans and the Basques insist, however, that Madrid takes more than its share and that in effect they subsidise the poorer regions.

The diminishing sovereignty of the old nation-states has made possible a resurgence of even older regional and ethnic loyalties.

Pujol has since said greater autonomy would be pursued within 'a unified Spain'. Similarly, Xabier Arzalluz, leader of the main Basque party, Partido Nacionalista Vasco, affirmed during February's protests that it opposed ETA's tactics and would work through the present structures.

If tensions in Spain cooled during the winter, however, the position is different in Belgium. Since last November's inconclusive national elections, the power of Flemish extremists has grown to the point where a breakup of the Belgian federal state has become a real possibility. It took three months of paralysing negotiations before deputies in the National Assembly agreed to reinstate the shaky four-party coalition government, with the former Prime Minister, Wilfried Martens, being replaced by his Christian Democrat colleague, Jean-Luc Dehaene.

The ultra-right wing, racist Vlaams Blok (Flemish Bloc) increased its share of the vote by 400 per cent in the November elections, winning 12 seats in the assembly. Disturbing in the context of the revival of the extreme right in Europe, the party's success also underline the Flemings' growing impatience with Brussels.

Flanders, long the bridesmaid to the French-speaking southern half of the country, Wallonia, has gradually taken the upper hand since the end of World War II. While Wallonia's heavy industry has suffered the same sorry fate of that in neighbouring northern France, the Flemings have diversified into various sectors, including plastics, chemicals and textiles and, according to the Flemish Employers Federation, have taken 60 per cent of national turnover into their hands. Their cultural and linguistic fight has been tougher. Until the end of the 19th century, Flemish (Dutch) was banned. Brussels, teeming with foreign Eurocrats, is still 80 per cent French-speaking.

A series of institutional reforms since the 1970s has seen power increasingly made over to the three regions (Flanders, Wallonia and a special zone round the capital) and to local government. However, the 5.7 million Flemings (of a total of 9.9 million Belgians) are restless about the way the central government distributes money. Unemployment, for instance, is much higher in Wallonia than in Flanders (where is below the national average) and the latter feels it is subsidising the former.

SOUND FAMILIAR? It is not unlike the arguments in Spain, where fiscal control is at the centre of much of the discontent. Unlike most Catalan and Basques, however, many Flemings seem not to baulk at the idea of allowing the nation to fall apart. Belgium as a state is an unhappy creation of the 19th century, and was then beholden to the great powers that were its guarantors. Belgium is at the heart of Europe's limping evolution towards some kind of federation; yet, as national parliaments will presumably be compelled to give up more powers to the EC, perhaps no European region feels more

than Flanders that the rest of the state's powers should fall to the regions.

Even in Britain, people are beginning to wonder how long the union between England and Scotland, begun seven years before the fall of Barcelona, will last. In the past 10 years the ruling Tories have been all but wiped off the electoral map of Scotland, now holding only nine seats of a total of 72. And with national elections called for April 9, talk of home rule abounds.

In January 50 per cent of Scots polled by *The Scotsman* newspaper and Independent Television News declared themselves in favour of independence. The Scottish National Party, once derided as 'tartan Tories' with no policy other than blind anti-English chauvinism, is gaining ground. A survey in mid-February gave it 29 per cent backing, a jump from the already unusually high 17 per cent before. Its present leader, Alex Salmond, is credited with lifting the party's fortunes by proposing a full economic and political program, the merits of which have yet to be thoroughly examined. And Salmond, like Pujol, made the Baltic analogy in speeches at the end of last summer.

Ben McConville, a Scottish journalist based in London, says the union has outlived its usefulness. He and others claim that in the 'new Europe', Scotland will recover its identity and profit from the single market.

Constitutional lawyers are not sure how it would work, and National Party assurances that an independent Scotland would automatically become the 13th star in Europe's flag are far from universally accepted. Nor their claims that most of the North Sea oil rigs would go to Scotland. One commentator, Frank Frazer, said recently that, in the least favourable interpretation of the law, an independent Scotland could be left with as little as 0.2 per cent of oil revenue. McConville raises another ugly spectre: Ulster is not the only place with sectarian problems. Scottish Protestants are, he says, fiercely loyalist. 'Remember that the Tories are called the Conservative and Unionist Party of Scotland.'

If they lose more seats, the Conservatives will have difficulty staffing the Scottish Office. Labour, which has pledged to introduce devolution—a Scottish parliament with a degree of autonomy—has accused John Major of putting the union at risk by playing the SNP off against Labour. The latter has also promised to introduce proportional representation in Scotland—a risky move if the SNP manages to garner as big a chunk of the vote as polls suggest it might. To many Scots, all the politicking in Westminister is irrelevant. The Scottish media talk of little else now, and even Fleet Street has noticed, although one Scottish journalist working in London said:

> 'There's a bloody revolution going on up there,but you'd never know it down here.'

The belief that autonomy would remove shackles also lies behind the rise of the 'leagues' in northern Italy since 1988. Umberto Bossi, 50, and his Lega Lombarda (Lombard League), the main group, face a make or break on April 5, when the country goes to the polls. The Lega, at first considered a fleeting protest party, gave the mainstream parties a fright with its 'March on Brescia' —an allusion to Mussolini's March on Rome in 1922—when it pipped the country's biggest party, the Christian Democrats, in the northern city's local elections in November. The volatile Italian press is talking of Bossi's own March on Rome, and some observers say the Lega could emerge as the country's fourth biggest party.

Belgium is at the heart of Europe's limping evolution towards some kind of federation; yet perhaps no European region feels more than Flanders that the rest of the state's powers should fall to the regions.

Central to Bossi's platform is a demand that the peninsula be turned into a loose federation divided into three—north, centre and south. The reasons are simple: the industrious north, long the powerhouse of the Italian economy is depicted as weighed down by subsidies to the impoverished, Mafia-riddled south and the hopelessly tangled web of Roman bureaucracy. The Lega is tapping into impatience with a central government increasingly seen as so corrupt and incompetent as to be positively inimical to the interests of all Italians, but especially those in the north.

To complicate matters further, part of the 'deep north' contains a German-speaking minority incorporated into Italy from Austria after World War I. The Lega is a new phenomenon in a nation state that, after all, has a short history. South Tyrol (the Alto Adige to Italians), however, has been a headache for Rome since 1919.

The Südtiroler Volkspartei (South Tyrol Peoples Party) has consistently demanded independence or reunion with Austria, and Rome has spent a lot trying to appease a people who still pretend not to know how to speak Italian. Anxious to keep the lid on the issue going into the elections, Giulio Andreotti's Christian Democrat-led four-party coalition finally implemented the last stages of an autonomy package on January 30 that was supposed to go into effect in 1972.

Rome hopes to have buried the problem, but Austria, which filed a complaint with the United Nations in 1960 over the treatment of the 440,000-strong minority, said it would only drop it if the Volkspartei was fully satisfied—something the party's leader, Hartman Galzemer, has not yet been willing to confirm.

Not that Vienna should be too smug about its backing for the Tyroleans south of the Brenner Pass. The head of the regional Tyrolean government in Austria, Alois Partl, declared recently that the Tyrol, including the Alto Adige) would soon be reunited as a separate and autonomous region. 'The era of the nation states,' said Partl, 'has passed.' In a 'federal Europe', Tyrolean unification would take place 'without centralist interference by nation states'—either from Rome or Vienna. ■

Damien Simonis is *Eureka Street's* European correspondent.

MARK SKULLEY

Taking it on the chin

AN OLD AMERICAN FIGHT MANAGER once said that any boxer could see red when he got stung, but a fighter who warmed up by thumping his opponent was a real find. The manager, Whitey Bimstein, said of his protégé Rocky Graziano, who became a middleweight champion in the 1950s: 'If he hurt you, he wouldn't lose you. He would never let you go. If he had to, he would grab you by the throat and knock your brains out and apologise after the fight.' A.J. Leibling, a sage observer of the boxing ring, wrote that Graziano relied purely on downright ferocity, a view with which Bimstein concurred: 'Nobody ever learned him nothin'. '

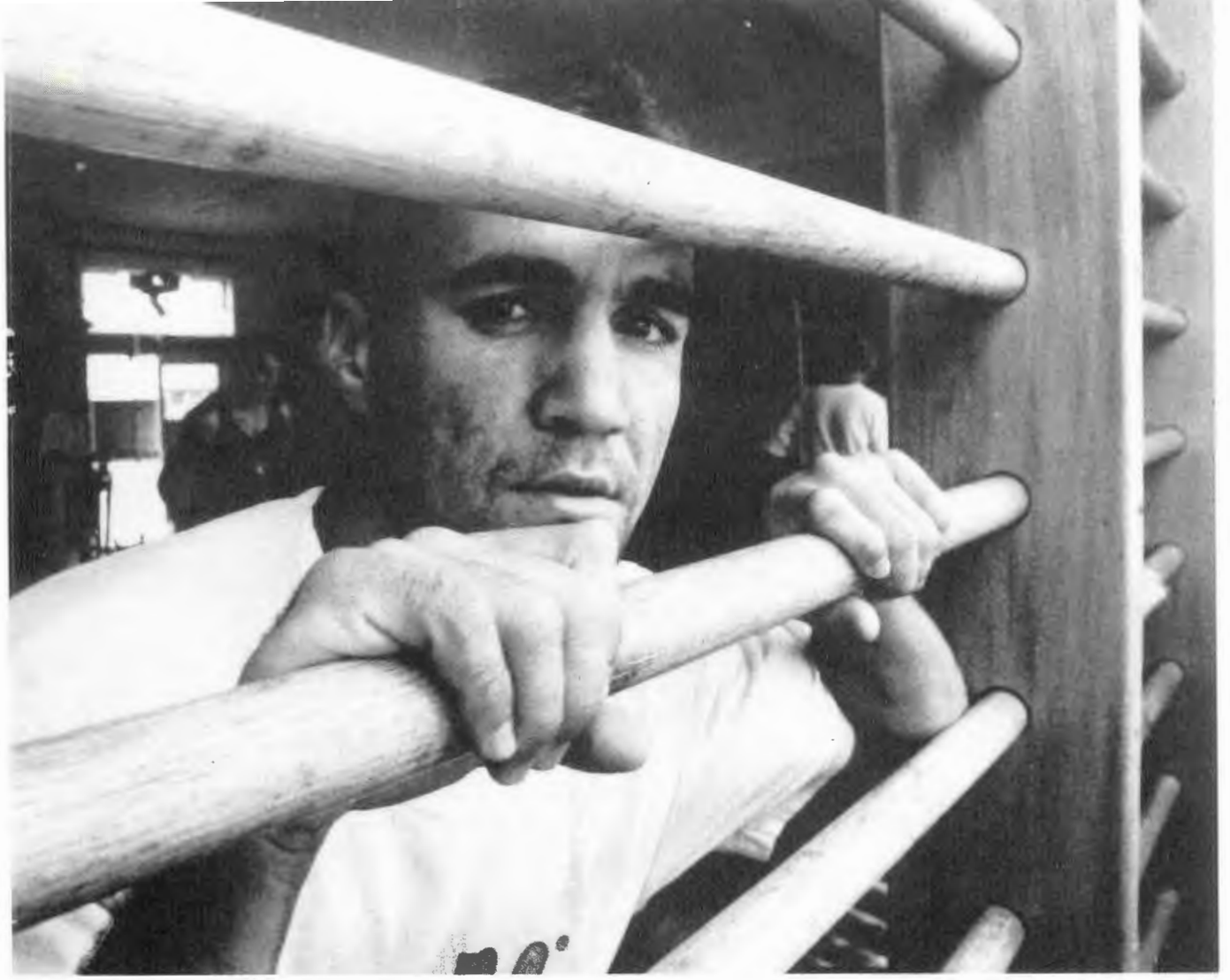
Whether downright ferocity, applied literally and professionally, should be rewarded, condoned, or allowed at all is not a question on which there is general agreement. Critics of boxing say it is a barbaric and bloody pursuit, and cite the brain damage blows to the head can and do cause. Boxing's supporters say it is like the French Foreign Legion: real tough but everyone's a volunteer. Few boxers make big money—an Australian titleholder reportedly makes only $30,000 a year—but it is easy for toffs to tell poor boys whose report cards aren't exactly covered in kookaburra stamps that they should have one less chance of making it big.

Johnny Lewis, trainer of the Australian boxer Jeff Fenech, has a more controversial view of what professional prizefighting is all about. In an interview with *The Sydney Morning Herald* he argued that the impulse to fight is simply *there*. Said Lewis: 'No one likes to see blood and guts spilled everywhere, but I don't know of any other sport where you can say "that was an achievement" more so than in boxing. I honestly believe that in most males there's a challenge to have a fight, whether it be in the park or in the pub. Most blokes want to see what it is like to king-hit some poor bastard.'

BUT WHO LIKES TO WATCH some poor bastard being king-hit? What didn't the sportswriters say last month when 35,000 people paid between $35 and $300 to be present when Jeff Fenech fought Azumah Nelson in Melbourne for the World Boxing Council's super featherweight championship? What is it like without the filter of television?

Fenech, 27, and Nelson, 38, who hails from Ghana, felt they had something to argue about after a hotly disputed draw in Las Vegas last June. Fenech, a three-time world titleholder, was on top towards the end of that fight; Nelson, the defending champion, said he had been laid low after a bout of malaria but had won anyway.

Before the return bout in Melbourne, the two fighters punched, weaved, skipped, grunted and sweat-



No excuses, just hard work: Jeff Fenech in the gym at Richmond, Vic.. *Photo:* The Age.

ed their way through the final build-up, three-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week. Outside the gym in Richmond where Fenech trained, men in overalls and men in suits lined the windows, their faces pressed against the glass; schoolboys in grey shorts and socks around their ankles stood on upturned rubbish bins to do the same.

ON THE DAY OF THE FIGHT it is overcast and humid with a forecast of late showers. The bout is set for 1.30pm on a Sunday, to meet the demands of US television. Mobs of people wander outside the venue, Princes Park football ground, including a knot of about 100 Ghanaian men, snappily dressed in smart casual clothes or traditional African clothes. They have brought drums and whistles, and are already starting to sing and dance. Young women in skin-tight blue jump suits emblazoned with ads for Toohey's beer are selling raffle tickets; the proceeds will help pay the medical expenses of Johnny Famechon, a former world champion who got out of boxing with his brains intact only to be hit by a car while jogging.

Inside, seats surround the ring in the middle of the oval and the grandstands and the outer are filling as the preliminary bouts begin. A canopy covering the ring is held in place by guyropes radiating out to pegs hammered into the grass arena. The pegs are covered by flimsy boxes on which is written in large print DO NOT STAND ON, and which are much trodden-on for the rest of the day. The spectators wander round the arena during the first bout, in which two heavyweights slug it out. The fight is declared a draw and most of the spectators blow a raspberry.

The crowd swells before the second fight. There are fewer women and fewer kids than you would see at the football or the cricket. Some of the women appear to be dressed for Flemington or Randwick, in hats and swaying skirts; they trail behind men in navy blazers who all seem to have binoculars slung round their necks. But more numerous are couples who might have lairised at, say, a big speedway meeting in the 1970s—people who like to dress 'flash'. A number of bikers also arrive and appear to enjoy being stared at by the vast majority of the crowd, who are men of all ages, shapes and sizes.

A ring announcer in a gold lamé jacket emerges to say 'And in the blooo cornahhh ...' and the second bout begins. Virgil Hill, a 28-year-old American who reportedly lost the world light heavyweight title through 'lack of aggression', is matched against a compatriot, Aundrey 'Boss' Nelson, who has said that winning this fight will be his stepping stone to the top and that he wants to help poor people in his native Detroit.

The crowd begins to warm up by cheering Hill who, like Fenech, is trained by Johnny Lewis. A big ginger-haired bloke sitting on my left laments that he is 'a little too far away to hear the punches.' Hill and Nelson are big and fast and the fight see-saws. But in the crowd necks are craned up and back towards one of the grandstands, where a row of wits is clutching cards that spell out FENECH RULES on one side and TYSON ROOTS on the other.

The ginger-haired bloke gets to hear one punch as Hill gives Aundrey Nelson a smack in the head that is loud enough to be heard 80 metres away. Hill is awarded the fight on points and Aundrey is Detroit-bound. An aeroplane circles overhead, towing a banner that reads, WE LUVS YA, FENECH. TOOHEYS.

NEXT UP FROM the Lewis-Fenech stable is a handsome Siberian, Kostya Tszyu, 22, who decided to stay in Australia with his hairdresser girlfriend Natashya, 19, after winning the light welterweight title at the world amateur boxing championships in Sydney. The program helpfully explains that the big Siberian's name is pronounced 'Tzoo'. He swarms over a hapless Queensland boxer named Darrell Hiles and the fight is stopped after 90 seconds.

Enter Grahame 'Spike' Cheney, 22, the Australian welterweight champion, who is described in the program as 'a natural brawler who can be like a pit bull terrier freed from a leash,' and who has a taste for macadamia-nut icecream. The program notes also say that Spike's mum, Carol, baked bathtubs of lamingtons in their cottage at Sheedy's Gully, near Lithgow, and worked three jobs to raise money for his first overseas fight. Spike is wearing white silk shorts split high up the thigh for his fight against Alberto Cortes, 28, an Argentine southpaw who has moved up from super lightweight and is maybe at the end of his fighting days.

Critics of boxing say it is a barbaric and bloody pursuit, and cite the brain damage blows to the head can and do cause. Boxing's supporters say it is like the French Foreign Legion: real tough but everyone's a volunteer.

The crowd, unfocused in the early bouts, now begins to switch on, and 'oohs' and 'aahs' in rhythm with the big punches. In the row where I am sitting a latecomer arrives and his mates explain the Fenech-Tyson sign. There are guffaws all round, which give way to growls as about 100 Africans emerge from a grandstand, singing and dancing and waving the Ghanaian flag, a handsome banner of horizontal red, yellow and green stripes with a black star in the centre. The Africans make a circuit of the oval, singing chants in praise of Azumah Nelson—'zoom, zoom'—and getting chants of 'piss off, piss off' in reply.

In the ring, Cheney is bleeding from a cut near his right eye and his revealing white shorts are bloody. But the pit-bull tenacity shows in the closing rounds and he wins on points, to the approval of a crowd now well-soaked by rain.

Fenech and Nelson are up next and impatience builds during the break, which is enlivened by the sight of Kerry Packer, at ringside, wriggling into a yellow plastic coverall. A flick through the program reminds me that Fenech is the 'Marrickville Mauler'. Nelson's monicker, 'The Terrible Warrior' seems to lose something in translation. The Victorian Opposition Leader, Jeff 'Jeff' Kennett, wanders by, and Dawn Fraser briefly goes missing before drawing the raffle to help Johnny Famechon. 'Hope she hasn't gone off for a few laps,' says the man in the gold lamé jacket.

The crowd stands for the the procession of Fenech and his entourage into the ring. He gets a mighty roar. Azumah Nelson, wearing a black cap covered with a ring of gold stars, gets boos and a smattering of applause. National anthems are played and there are about as many people who know the words of the Ghanaian anthem as there are people who know the words of *Advance Australia Fair*.

I am thinking about the preponderance of men at the fight when a woman behind me screams, 'C'mon Jeff, kick the shit out of 'im!'

The bell rings. They bounce into and away from each other, and soon Nelson zooms a short right to Fenech's head; Fenech takes a count of eight and the spectators look at each other in wonder. Fenech is down for another count in the second round, but the fans desperately agree with each other that he slipped. The video replay on the electronic scoreboard seems to confirm this and the crowd howls its disapproval of the count.

Round three is better for Fenech and it ends with Nelson appearing to land a few punches after the bell—the video replay shows Fenech lifting his knee in reply, an action that a sportswriter later describes as 'Fenech retaliates with a knee which misses Nelson's midriff.' The crowd begins to chant 'Fenech, Fenech,' before turning its attention to Nelson: 'Nigger!' This prompts a furious chorus of drums and whistles from the Ghanaian fans.

EYEBALLS ARE NOW LOCKED on to the ring, wandering only between rounds to the video replay or to the Toohey's women in the skin-tight suits, who circle the ring with a placard bearing the number of the next round. The ginger-haired bloke is unimpressed. 'I'm not too happy with the birds. I've seen better at Festival Hall.'

In rounds four, five and six the crowd starts to give some serious boxing advice: 'Keep that guard up! Hold him! Get him on the ropes!' One of the Ghanaian fans is clinking a cowbell, and the volume of the singing from the Africans begins to rise. 'Are they doing voodoo down there?' asks a man in the crowd.

Round seven is broken when the referee rules that Nelson has to tape up a glove. The crowd howls again, but maybe Fenech doesn't mind a breather. He comes

back early in round eight but Nelson has the edge, sinking Fenech with a flurry of punches. Fenech gets up on the count of eight and the fight resumes before the referee steps in and Johnny Lewis throws in the towel from Fenech's corner. It is over, two minutes and 20 seconds into the round.

The ring is swamped with flunkies, just like in the movies, but the crowd is mostly quiet. Many just file out. Some who have just been calling Nelson a nigger now say 'He's a champion' and 'He won fair and square.' The Africans dance on and chant 'Zoom, zoom, Azumaaah!'

Fenech leaves the ring behind Johnny Lewis. There are flecks of blood on his badly swollen face and his red boxing gloves are slung over the trainer's shoulders. Nelson's dancing supporters step up the tempo as he approaches, but his cap of gold stars only bobs along. Maybe he is hurting too. That night Fenech takes it on the chin again, saying 'no excuses', and Nelson says why he deserved his win. Each man has reportedly earned at least $1 million from the fight.

There is talk of a rematch. ■

Mark Skulley writes for *The Sydney Morning Herald.*

ANDREW HAMILTON

Crossing the great divide

'What difference does Jesus make?' is a classic theological question. It acquires a new urgency when Christians try to come to terms with other religions.

IF CONTROVERSY IS THE MEASURE of importance, the next crucial issue facing Christian theology will be the relationship between Christianity and other religions. The straws are already stirring in the wind. Critics of the World Council of Churches have turned from its espousal of liberation movements to the positive attitude it takes towards non-Christian religions. Cardinal Tomko, who is head of the Vatican congregation dealing with the question, frequently makes cautionary statements about unnamed but easily identifiable theologians who have 'dangerous' views about other religions. And even in Australia, the distribution to Catholic schoolchildren of stations of the cross depicting Aboriginal mythological motifs has caused controversy.

To treat people as though they can only be accounted for within the Christian system of belief, so that Christians need not take other accounts seriously, seems doctrinaire and myopic.

Although some of the views expressed have been more passionate than sensible, the issues involved are central to Christian faith, for at the heart of the Christian attitude to other religions lie two claims that sit uneasily together. The first claim is that God wishes all people to be saved, and that therefore Christ died for the salvation of all human beings. The second claim is that it is only through the name of Christ that we are saved. This statement can be made even more limiting if we believe literally that only those who believe and are baptised will be saved.

In the face of these two claims, three kinds of position have been adopted. The first position is exclusivist. It argues that all who are saved will be saved though faith in Christ. Protestant adherents of this position claim that explicit knowledge and confession of the Lord Jesus is necessary for salvation. Its Catholic supporters claim further that only those who confess their faith in Christ as baptised members of the Roman Catholic Church can be saved.

The second position is inclusivist. It holds that all those who are saved are in fact saved by the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The ordinary way of salvation is through faith in Christ, lived within the church, but those who have no Christian belief may be saved. Their salvation will be by God's mercy and it will be due to the work of Jesus Christ, even though they do not realise it.

The third position is pluralist. It gives priority to the first claim, that God wills all to be saved. It claims further that God saves human beings through a variety of ways. Faith in Christ is one favoured way to salvation, but neither Christ nor faith in him forms the only path to salvation. Those who hold this view often emphasise the human life of Jesus, and minimise the sense in which he is divine.

The positions that are adopted within most churches and by most theologians fall into the second, inclusivist, category. Within Catholic theology the difficulty with the exclusivist position is that it has been formally condemned. It is therefore necessary to say that people outside the church and without Christian belief can be saved. The difficulty with the third position is that it seems to remove the sense of urgency and centrality from faith in Christ.

TO ADOPT AN INCLUSIVIST POSITION, however, is not an answer but an invitation to further reflection. If God can save people who do not believe in Christ, it is reasonable to ask how this can be so. Not all would say that this question should be pursued—indeed, it is commonly held that Christians should preach and teach the necessity for Christ, while leaving the salvation of others to God's mercy. This position is not as self-serving as it may seem. Older Catholics will remember how speculation about whether unbaptised babies could be saved led to the notion of Limbo, a sort of second-class heaven, and to the grief of many mothers whose babies were still-born. In that case, teaching that such babies are saved, while leaving the way of salvation to God's mercy, has much to commend it. A theology built on exceptional cases is not always well balanced.

But, particularly in Asia, it is impossible for theologians to avoid the question of the necessity of Christ. They belong to church communities that are tiny

Continued p28.

INTERVIEW

MICHAEL MCGIRR

Caught out of context

The film Black Robe *depicts the pitfalls of the clash of religions and the clash of cultures.*

BRUCE BERESFORD DECIDED to cast Lothaire Bluteau as Fr Laforgue, the 17th century Jesuit missionary in *Black Robe*, after watching him portray a homosexual prostitute in a London stage play. 'It's funny what people see in you,' says Bluteau, and most of the characters in *Black Robe* would probably agree. The film shows a French Catholic making strange sense of the indigenous people of Canada, and vice versa. There is verbal condemnation on one side and violence on the other.

'The film doesn't attempt to sort out the historical rights and wrongs,' says Bluteau, 'because that is impossible. It simply shows an encounter between two points of view, two visions. We saw ourselves more as opening up questions than producing historical answers. Yet we worked hard for an accurate period feeling, so much so that our audience is caught out of context by what they see on the screen. It is hard to understand that the apparent extremism of the missionaries could be balanced by what was going on in the surrounding world.'

Since both visions will be alien to most modern audiences, can the film do more than just tickle their curiosity? 'There's the whole issue of labelling people,' says Bluteau. 'More than that, the film demonstrates the art of surviving. There's an encounter between two archetypes, the Jesuit and the Indian. What happens is that both sides develop a kind of survival kit, and labelling is part of the kit.'

In preparing for the film, Bluteau read contemporary accounts left by the Jesuits and got to know Indians near Montreal, whose land claims were in conflict with the electricity needs of the city. The task was to find a way of holding these two experiences in balance.

But is it possible to make a balanced film when there is so much violence inflicted by one side on another? 'The physical side of the violence was a big challenge for the film. We could hardly leave it out, because it happened. On the other hand, we weren't pushing it because it was only one of the things that happened. That's why I have been calling this an adult film. It is extremely demanding on an audience.

'I don't mean that we were expecting everyone to be holding degrees in history so they could understand it—I mean that it is a film in which you can't feel comfortable endorsing one side or another. That's why it's a film that Hollywood could never have touched. It's too hard for Hollywood. They can only make historical films by romanticising one side or another. There is no hero worship in *Black Robe*.'

What about Bluteau's own character in the film? Did he develop an empathy with Laforgue? 'Not really. I tend to endorse a film and not just one character. And Laforgue is a complex character who says little about himself. Can we really understand him ? He is very courageous. He is curious and adventurous. He is very much a product of his civilisation. [But] in a virtual war situation, where nearly all the Europeans were there for trade, he genuinely wanted to do something to help the natives. He wanted to save them. He is a leader ... and he is a survivor.'

Lothaire Bluteau as Fr Laforgue in Black Robe*: he sought to mortify his flesh; so did the Indians.*

Does Bluteau see Laforgue as a hard and lonely man? 'Lonely, yes. Hard, no. He is tough but not hard. There is an important difference.'

Might a modern audience find a trace of self-hatred in what Laforgue did? 'I do the same things,' says Bluteau. 'Maybe I hate myself. It took 60 days to shoot *Black Robe* and it was a very tough shoot. That didn't worry me. Now I am going to make films in Poland and Russia, where the conditions will be similarly tough. In Russia our location will not even have access to water. It is important for me to go out and discover things for myself, but by doing my job I am bringing back moments and emotions for others to share. It's not that different from what the Jesuits were doing in the 17th century.'

Why does Bluteau think that Bruce Beresford wanted to make *Black Robe* ?

'*Black Robe* came out of the same heart as *Fringe Dwellers*, Beresford's film about displaced Aborigines in modern Australia. That was really a rich picture. Like *Black Robe*, it followed the theme of a travelling culture, pushing people out before it. But *Black Robe* also has a lot in common with Beresford's more commercial work. *Driving Miss Daisy*, for example, is concerned with doing justice between two ways of life, two points of view. I think if you're looking for one word beneath all of Bruce's films it could be *rapprochement*.' ■

Michael McGirr SJ is a Jesuit scholastic and a regular contributor to *Eureka Street*. (See review, p39).

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minorities in the countries in which they live, and they realise that the path to salvation of an increasing majority of the world's population will not be through knowledge of Christ, let alone through faith in him. To these theologians, it seems dishonest to treat the massive statistical majority as an anomaly. Their knowledge of the dominant religions of Asia makes it difficult for them to accept that God does not act through these religions as well as through Christianity. Moreover, to treat people as though they can only be accounted for within the Christian system of belief, so that Christians need not take other accounts seriously, seems doctrinaire and myopic.

THESE CONSIDERATIONS, then, have led such theologians to give a positive account of the way in which God works through the world religions. Their problem now is how to reconcile this position with the claim that we are all saved through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In what sense can we say that Christ is unique?

Their attempts to reconcile the unique place of Jesus Christ and God's presence within other religions have built on the variety of faces of Christ within Christian faith. If, for example, we follow the early fathers of the church in thinking of Christ as the creative reason or wisdom of God, we can say that he is the one way to salvation in that all paths to God are expressions of the wisdom of God. Other theologians look rather to the Kingdom: Jesus Christ is unique because he preached the Kingdom of God, but it is Christ as he will be at the completion of the Kingdom, at the end of time, who is the one way of salvation.

The difficulty these views face is that they appear to lessen Christianity's traditional emphasis on the life and death of the historical Jesus—they risk turning Jesus into a symbol of universal human experience of the ways of God. The theologians who hold such views are aware of the problem, and this has forced them to look at the relationship between Christianity and human culture.

The fashion, in some sections of the church, for aggressive advocacy of Catholic views on moral issues such as abortion indicates a rather sanguine assessment of the possibility of changing a culture.

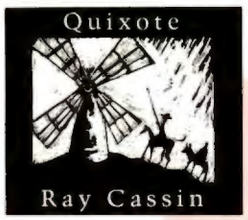
The tensions in this relationship were not felt when Christian faith was identified with a particular culture. This was the case in societies that were Christian or where, as in Australia, the churches as far as possible created a complete culture for people to live in, with a network of Catholic schools and hospitals, Catholic teachers and doctors, and even Catholic dances and football clubs. On this view, bringing the faith to a different culture was simply a matter of translating the prayers and formulae of faith, and introducing people to the universal Christian culture of the church, of which the Latin language was the chief symbol. It was a clear world, and many would like to return to it. But the growth of historical awareness has made clear that the supposed universal culture of the church was in fact a reflection of the societies and states in which it grew. It was the cultural expression of the Western church, and not necessarily a higher culture. Because of this changed awareness, certain questions about the relationship between faith and culture can no longer be evaded.

The first question is whether Christian faith as it is lived within the church has a culture of its own. The answer to this question would seem to be a limited 'yes'. For in practice faith is lived out in a church that has bishops, priests, creeds, sacraments and other stable and universal institutions. The way in which these have developed in the West has certainly been shaped by Latin culture, but many of the elements would be generally recognised as belonging essentially to the faith. It is not simply a matter, then, of expressing a general belief in Christ within different cultures, but of marrying two cultures in a way that preserves the integrity of each.

Secondly, if the situation is complex from the perspective of faith, it is no less so from the perspective of particular cultures. Given the diversity of cultures within a secular country such as Australia, for example, it is not easy to speak of embodying the faith in any straightforward way in Australian life. The controversy surrounding the Aboriginal stations of the cross is a case in point.

FINALLY, IT MAY BE ASKED how far any culture can be shaped by faith. The instinctive answer we give to this question will lead us to take different attitudes towards the culture in which we live: to remain aloof from it, to become part of it, or to seek to transform it. The fashion, in some sections of the church, for aggressive advocacy of Catholic views on moral issues such as abortion indicates a rather sanguine assessment of the possibility of changing a culture. Australia's history, however, suggests that church leaders who adopt an assertive public stance need to be extraordinarily holy, politically astute or personally popular if they are to be taken seriously. ■

Andrew Hamilton SJ teaches at the United Faculty of Theology, Parkville, Victoria. During 1992 he is taking sabbatical leave at the University of Central America, El Salvador.



Between the idea and the reality

A DISTANT RINGING INSINUATES ITSELF into my consciousness. I decide this is a consequence of the previous night's excesses and bury my head beneath a layer of pillows. The ringing continues, and I perceive that it is in fact coming from the telephone. I stumble towards the phone with a pillow in front of my face to block the light, and trip over the telephone cord. This means falling harder than I would normally wish to fall after an excessive previous night, but has the compensation of allowing me to grab the receiver on the way down. Lying stretched out in front of a mountain of out-of-date telephone books, I suspend the receiver somewhere in front of where I remember my mouth to be, and ask whether my caller is also in a state of health and vigour on this glorious morning.

It is the editor of *Eureka Street*, who politely asks whether she has woken me up. I reply to this superfluous question with the usual polite lie. The editor reminds me that this morning we have to attend something called an Ideas for Australia conference. I grunt enthusiastically, ascend the mountain of out-of-date telephone books and hang up. Soon I am briskly showering so that my body, if not my mind, may be *tabula rasa* for the reception of Ideas. The insinuating ringing resumes. Stepping out of the shower, I slosh my way across the flat, pick up the phone and ask whether, on this glorious morning, my caller is also *tabula rasa* for the reception of Ideas.

It is the editor of *Eureka Street*. Surprisingly, she does not ask whether she has got me out of the shower. Instead she reminds me to call a taxi so that we may attend the Ideas for Australia conference. I solemnly vow that nothing will prevent me finding a suitable taxi, and hang up. As I return to the bathroom, I notice that the topography of my flat has changed with this series of early-morning telephone calls. There is now a body-shaped indentation in the dust near my mountain of out-of-date telephone books, and two sets of footprints going in opposite directions. I decide that I must vacuum sometime soon. If the constabulary or an inquisitive Neighbourhood Watch person were ever to see these imprints, they might make the wrong deduction. I am also gratified by my own ability to make any sort of deduction after the previous night's excesses.

After procuring an appropriately *tabula rasa* taxi from the nearest rank, I collect the editor from the office. I can tell she is impressed. When we arrive at the conference, I ask the editor if I can borrow money to pay the fare. I can tell she is less impressed. We enter the hall, greet a colleague from the ABC and take our seats. The ringing sound begins to insinuate itself again but a glance at the editor reveals that she is no longer wielding a telephone. I realise that the excesses of the previous night are returning with a vengeance.

A panel of speakers begins to discuss education and training. The point at issue seems to be whether these are One Thing, Two Things, or Many Things. This is a pleasingly Socratic question, but the answers are not such as one would want to serve up to Socrates after a hot day in the agora. I sit back and make notes in desultory fashion while I wait for the Ideas to arrive. They do not, but the organiser of the Ideas for Australia conference does. He stands near the door, beaming as his panel of Idea-logues goes through its paces.

I try to imagine Socrates organising a conference called Ideas for Athens, and begin to understand why he preferred just talking to people in the agora. I remember how the Delphic oracle said that Socrates was the wisest man in Athens because he was the only one who knew that he did not know anything. I look again at the organiser of the conference and decide to abandon Socratic comparisons.

One of the speakers uses two pyramid-shaped graphs to make a statistical point about education and training. He thinks that education and training ought to be One Thing but are still mainly Two Things. The pyramids, one long and thin and the other not so long and thin, suggest that education and training are helping us all to become One Thing, namely smarter and richer. Our ABC colleague whispers that there is still a long way between the apex and the base of each pyramid. I nod sagely. How can I tell her that when I first saw the graphs I thought the excesses of the previous night were making me see double?

After the panel has spoken, a file of questioners from the audience pesters them to speak again. Noting that there are many questioners, and a busy schedule still to be got through, the moderator of the panel suggests that people may wish to forgo the usual morning coffee break. There is a murmur of acquiescent 'ayes' from the file of questioners, and a dull roar of dissenting 'noes' from those still seated. The 'noes' from the press benches are especially loud. The moderator remains silent, uncertain how to call the vote.

The impasse is resolved by the editor of *Eureka Street*, who rises from her seat and strides towards the coffee bar. Those still seated rise and surge after her, the surge becomes a tide of humanity, and the moderator limply concedes defeat. He announces that the first session of Ideas for the day is over.

I decide that, apart from a penchant for early-morning phone calls, the editor has many good points, not least of which is a determination that Ideas shall not disrupt morning coffee. At the coffee bar, I remember that the excesses of the previous night have left my wallet empty and ask the editor if she will shout me a cup. The editor graciously buys two cups of coffee, then pointedly suggests that I might like to take the day off.

I ask the editor if I can borrow the tram fare to get home. ■

Ray Cassin is production editor of *Eureka Street*.

The spectator

England's tabloids, Death, and an absence of passion: ***Gerard Windsor****, in London, draws some connections.*

ROBERT MAXWELL misappropriated the pension funds of his employees. A fraudulent act, but a straightforward concept, one might think. Britain's premier tabloid, *The Sun*, thought otherwise. It recast the story for its readers in allegorical form. The cover headline on 9 December 1991 announced 'Night Bob Got His Hands On My Assets: Secretary Tells'.

This witticism could pass as a metaphysical conceit, but context is all and this English version of explaining the Trinity by the shamrock is evidence more of an empirical cast of mind than of any metaphysical one. Locke would have been delighted to use this tic of the tabloids as evidence for knowledge coming through association of images.

Everything can be explained and most tangibly impressed on the mind by linking it with flutters in the groin. So, for example, Sara Keays, Cecil Parkinson's one-time mistress, has successfully sued *New Woman* for an article headed 'Laughing All The Way To The Bonk', and Social Democrat leader Paddy Ashdown's confession of past adultery was greeted by *The Sun* with 'Now It's Paddy Pantsdown'. There can be an ad-man cleverness about the genre, and I'd be suspicious of anyone who denied ever being amused by it. But the reductivist quality palls quickly. You itch for a greater range of jokes. Or let's say it brings out various Catholic and Irish prejudices in me.

There is an ad in the London tube at present that runs under the slogan 'And That's Guaranteed'. It pictures two places set with food. One is labelled 'Harry Ramsden's, Guiseley Yorkshire' and the other 'Harry Ramsden's, Heathrow'. The two settings are identical. The central item on each plate appears to be a platypus in batter, but by displaying interest in the ad (I was bowled over by it) and getting to the small print, you find that the offering is 'haddock fillet, chips, white bread and butter, cup of tea, £4.65'.

I had to be restrained from crying out upon this indictment of a people. What happened to Hogarth's raw, scarlet, sack-sized roast beef of old England? Predictability, bleached uniformity, and the promise of constipation—what a vision to set before a nation on the move. When Locke fell into his swoon, I'll say the Garden died, but it was a chip-slicer, nothing so graceful or individually named as a spinning-jenny, that God took out of his side.

LONDON IS CURRENTLY displaying another, high-culture, example of the same emaciated cast of mind. The Victoria and Albert Museum has an exhibition 'The Art of Death: Objects From the English Death Ritual 1500-1800'. The finger wags in the opening words of the accompanying brochure—'Death today is rarely discussed openly, euphemisms are employed ... our ancestors ... openly recognised death as a universal human experience ...' All very true no doubt, but the preacher's authority is fatally undercut when you learn that the exhibition was scheduled for January 1991, but was quick-frozen on the outbreak of the Gulf War. The V & A put out a press release to the effect that in a time of potential mourning among the families of Britain 'the aestheticisation of death' was inappropriate.

The exhibition has a curiosity value even if it is rarely enlightening: Cromwell's death mask, a ticket to Nelson's obsequies, a wrapper for a funeral biscuit, mementos mori, effigies, Van Dyck's *Venetia Digby on her Deathbed*. There are unexpected and moving items, but their impact is not helped by inaccurate and clichéd signposting. A sampler, for example, refers to death as 'the consummation of felicity' but the caption points it out as typical of the view that death was a release from the misery of life.

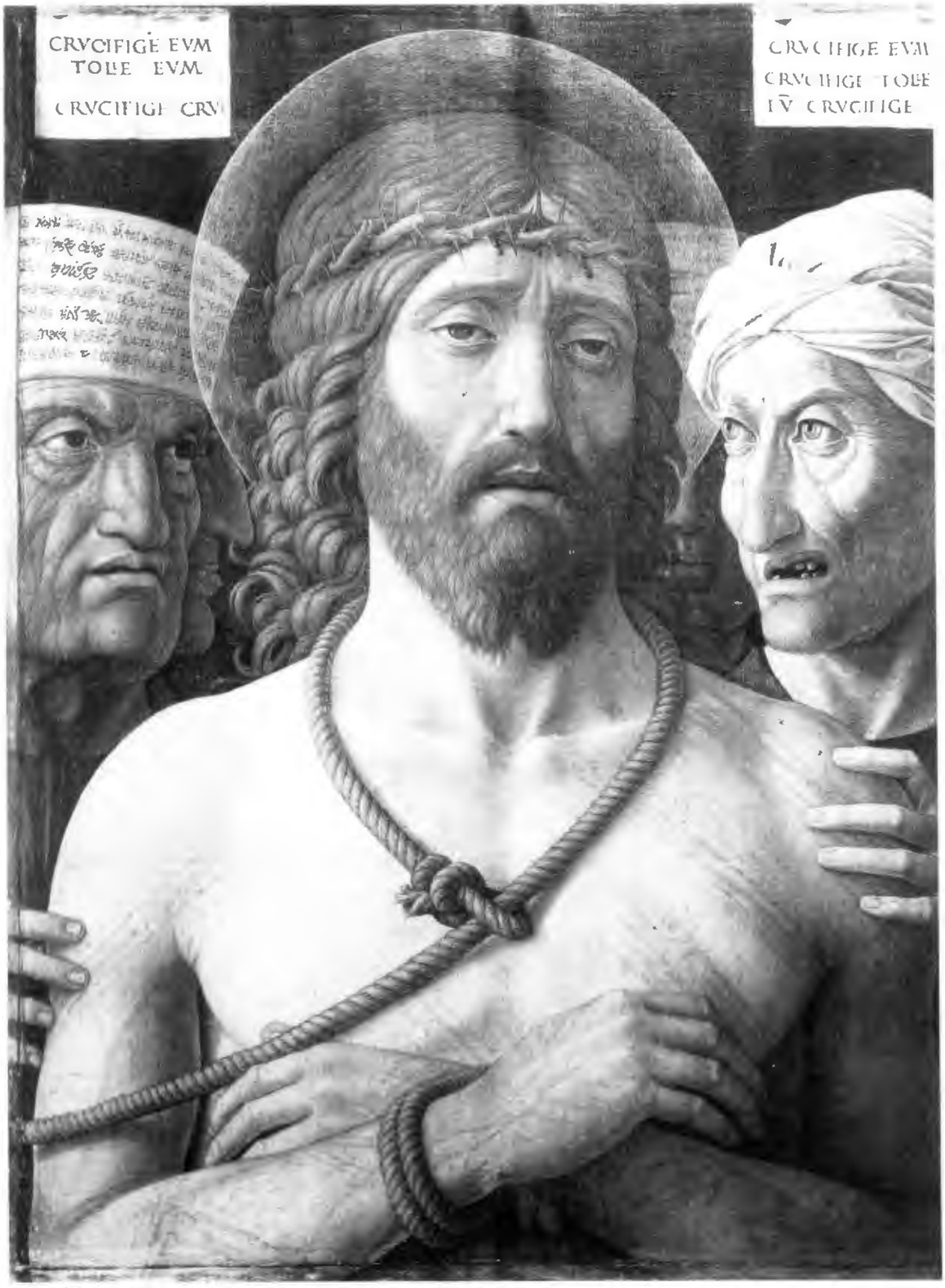
But for a Catholic viewer of this three century parade of death through a Christian country the clamorous absentee is any representation or referral to the mysteries of Christ's death. This emptiness becomes even more strident when you visit the current blockbuster at the Royal Academy, the eight-gallery Andrea Mantegna display. It is laid out to climax with the eight-panel *Triumph of the Caesars*, a lavish panorama of worldly success, and tiered terraces have been erected for the contemplative viewer. But the dominant subject—and there is hardly any surprise about this, merely its alien prominence here in London—is the passion of Christ. Man of Sorrows, Flagellation, Crucifixion, Deposition, Pieta, Entombment, Descent into Limbo, reworked again and again. Even the Madonnas and

Child and Holy Family with the Baptist andhis Parents are full of a sombre foreboding.

ONE OF THE MOST MUTILATING legacies of the Reformation was that this genre was a no-go area for the English visual artist and that all past efforts in it were destroyed. To visit the Tate and be reminded that English painting started with miniatures of Tudor worthies is to be clamped with the sense of an infant starved of oxygen at birth and irreparably damaged. The English visual imagination was barred from any confrontation with the core of the most richly significant suffering and death experience in the Western tradition. In the grass around Rievaulx Abbey there still lie the blemished faces of angels; only the rectangular blocks of stone were any use to the marauders of 1540 intent on building a modern English house.

It is this square set, pragmatic national bent that gives such point to Stanley Spencer's attempt, 400 years later, to suffuse with the Good News the folk of Cookham (almost as in Stubton, Biggleswade, Ompton, Swaffham Bulbeck, Tadcaster, Boothby Pagnell, and so on *ad infinitum*). It is not merely that Spencer was a throwback and an eccentric rule-breaker, but that he was actually trying to fit specifically and recognisably English people into his picture of the Redemption. His humanoid composites of bangers, lard and indistinguishability are clearly the trouser-rolled geezers of the postcards whose previous experience of heaven has been a sharp nip from a crab while swooning into an abyss of cleavage on the shingles at Bognor Regis.

SPENCER'S PORTRAITS of himself and his wife, all spectacles, chopped trunks, slack flesh and earth-bound pendules, must be amongst the least erotic, least sanctified nudes ever painted. Yet Spencer's work renders that paradox—the recognisably fallen world in process of being redeemed. In his nude self portraits, the relentless focus on the bare forked animal, the hovering together of the couple, stripped of disguise, in their barely more than monkey-like care of one another, presage a return to innocence. If Christ can be seen rising among these unlikely, un-



ECCE HOMO *c.1500* — ANDREA MANTEGNA

One of the most mutilating legacies of the Reformation was that this genre was a no-go area for the English visual artist and that all past efforts in it were destroyed ... The English visual imagination was barred from any confrontation with the core of the most richly significant suffering and death experience in the Western tradition.

glamorous saints, the Christian miracle is indeed possible.

All adults of course, including the English, fight with demons. But to lie locked in confrontation with principalities and powers is not a public English pastime. The matters for concern are what is known. You learn that young. England's answer to America's Ninja Turtles are Thomas The Tank Engine, Postman Pat and Fireman Sam—village life of transient grumbles and petty decencies. Not that the English can't write for children—Janet and Allan Ahlberg and Colin McNaughton, for example, have a zany linguistic ability and a busy pictorial imagination that gives them an edge over any picture-book writers in Australia, but Mr Creep the Crook and Mr Biff the Boxer and Grandma Swag and Officer Pugh have been around on the postcards for generations.

All adults of course, including the English, fight with demons. But to lie locked in confrontation with principalities and powers is not a public English pastime.

Of course all this Englishness makes for rationality and tolerance, and the irruptions into English life of the irrational in a form like Irish terrorism are all the more starkly alien. Still, for all the snug restfulness and civilised appointment that England affords, a lurch, a zig-zag, a hop-step-and-jump of the mind is a relief. I was one evening on a bus, immediately behind the driver, and he was Irish. The usual prominent sign forbade speaking to the driver whilst bus was in motion.

An elderly man boarded. He displayed his pension card, then took a firm two hand of the rail fencing the driver. The bus eased away. The passenger began to tell how he was 80, had been visiting a sister-in-law in a nursing home, liked getting out, did everyone good and so forth. The driver commended him, with transparent sincerity, expressed incredulity at his 80 years, and assured him 'I'll never be here myself when I'm your age'. The passenger again demonstrated his lung capacity. At length. Finally there was a pause. The driver said, 'Well sit down now and rest your legs'.

The felicity of the driver had its written equivalent in a column by Fintan O'Toole, in *The Irish Times* on 5 February, 1992. This was how puns and analogies could be employed, peeling back possibilities, suggesting covert connections. All in the cause of political, and national, analysis. (By contrast, someone like Alan Coren in *The Times*, speaks a brand of tired Wodehousean.)

Ireland has just got a new Taoiseach, Albert Reynolds, a midlands man who made his money out of dancehalls and pet food. His leadership of a rural, West-of-Ireland cabal prompted his predecessor Charles Haughey to a choice flash of inspiration of his own—Reynolds and his men were 'the country and western alliance'. Fintan O'Toole spun out the threads of this core image.

'Long before he got to be Taoiseach, Albert Reynolds ruled more lands than Genghis Khan: Cloudland, Roseland, Fairyland, Dreamland, Danceland ... While it may well be that he is not the first Irish political leader to have ruled, even to have inhabited Dreamland and Cloudland, there is something particular about a Fianna Fail leader who could make so light of the party's great *raison d'etre*, partition, as to believe that Borderland was just a dancehall in Clones.

'Albert Reynolds will be the first leader of that party to have a background not in the clash of the ash or the echo of the Thompson gun, but in the flash of the cash and some mean ticky-tacky drumming from the Melody Aces. While Charles Haughey's achievement was to bridge the gap between the rhetoric of Fianna Fail's national aspirations and the realities of an enthusiastically materialist culture, there is, for Albert, no such gap. He has always been on the far side of that divide, an inhabitant, and indeed a creator of the new pragmatic Republic ...

'In choosing Albert Reynolds to lead it, the party is placing its faith in his ability to know which is the right night in Mullingar and which in Rooskey, which band will go down well with the voters of Clones and which will pack them in in Darndale. It is leaving behind the party of aspirations once and for all and going for the party of pragmatism. It is leaving behind the party of visions and going for the party of keen eyes and quick calculation. It is giving up the articulation of national hopes and going instead for the skill of giving the people what they want.

'In doing so Fianna Fail is making a very big mistake ... We don't really know what we aspire to until someone invents a vision and puts it before us. What nine out of 10 cats really prefer, as Albert Reynolds must know, is not to be bothered with market research, but to have their owners make interesting choices and present them for their acceptance or rejection. Mary Robinson did that ... But I can't see Albert Reynolds doing so. When Mary Robinson said "Come dance with me in Ireland" and the people accepted the invitation, knowing what would fill a ballroom on a wet Tuesday night in Rooskey was no part of the equation.'

Not bad as a linguobatic circuit of a nation's destiny and politics, harnessed to a comprehensively bleak assessment of human nature combined with the idealist's vision of *Erin Go Bragh* and a rippling wingdip to one of Irish literature's great lodestars, the invitation to the dance.

I'm not sure what the 200 year long transfusion of Irish blood has done to England, but genetic shifts are always possible. I was being parental one morning at Our Lady of Muswell school in North London (an attachment of OLM parish, the most vigorous one I've ever been connected with, and offering the best family Christmas Mass I've ever joined in, and presided over by a very English priest with the very English name of Dunkling) when two small boys approached me.

'What's your name?' I asked the first.

'Glen. And what's his name?' he pointed to his friend.

'Ah ... Freddie?' I tried.

'No.'

'Marmaduke?'

'No.'

'Osbert?'

'Nooo! It's *English*.'

'Aah ... I give up,' I conceded. 'What is it?'

'It's Romek.' ■

Gerard Windsor is a Sydney writer. His book *Family Lore* has recently been reprinted as a Minerva paperback.

Adelaide does it differently

***Edmund Campion** reconstructs Writers' Week at the Adelaide Festival.*

A WEEK LATER, the Man from Sydney sat at the airport and tried to collect his thoughts. Flick, flick, flick—like colour slides of an overseas trip, images came and went. Before they blur into oblivion, freeze some, look at them more closely.

Start at the beginning. Nothing to remember about the opening speeches. The literary awards predictable: Malouf for fiction and Marr for his Patrick White biography. Poetry? Vincent Buckley's posthumous *Last Poems* was in the running and the Man from Sydney had spotted Penelope, Buckley's widow, in the crowd; so his heart began to pump as the judges' report was read. Would it be Buckley? Yes, it was. Good one.

The widow rose to speak. He admired her calm concern for her husband's fame, noting how he had missed inclusion in a recent anthology and had predicted his own posthumous diminishment. This prize would delay oblivion, she said. Yes, thought the Man from Sydney, and the $16,000 would be useful. She broke into his reverie with an announcement that she would give the Adelaide prize money towards a Vincent Buckley Prize, to exchange poets between Australia and Ireland. Her largesse brought tears to his eyes.

Being a Celt, he cries easily. He cried that morning at Mass in the cathedral. The choir sang Bruckner's Mass in C minor, the congregational hymns were not the debased jingles heard elsewhere and the liturgy was reverent, dignified, yet instinct with a flavour special to Adelaide Catholicism. 'Hail to the Arts! Hail to the Festival!' the priest had cried from the pulpit. In recognition of the festival , his sermon opened with quotations from Shakespeare and Gilbert and Sullivan, then went on to Aristotle, St Ambrose, Dale Carnegie and Billy Graham. This was a widely read priest; or perhaps he had a good dictionary of quotations. Whatever, you wouldn't expect to hear a sermon like that elsewhere. In Adelaide, yes.

Picking at some kangaroo prosciutto before lunch, the Man from Sydney read Archbishop Faulkner's Lenten pastoral. One of the sentences pulled him up: 'Recently, I listened to a man called Greg describe his own experience at work.' Remarkable, almost shocking. '*Listened, listened,*' he shouted to a startled restaurant. 'Do you realise you have a *listening* archbishop here in Adelaide?' Again, choked emotion.

He should have been floored by emotion the next afternoon, when Hilary McPhee launched Helen Garner's *Cosmo Cosmolino*. A new Garner novel is an Australian literary event; the tent was crowded. But not only for Garner. This was a farewell to Hilary McPhee, who was leaving the firm she and Diana Gribble had founded in 1976. He remembered how he had formed the habit of dropping in at their Carlton offices any Friday evening he was in Melbourne and how he had met there a succession of women who had contributed their bit to this unique Australian publishing enterprise. The afternoon in Adelaide was a moment for celebration of the best in our literary culture. Characteristically, Hilary McPhee let it pass and kept the focus on Helen Garner's achievement. And yet everyone there knew that this was more than just another book launch.

Next morning there was Oliver MacDonagh, the finest writer among Australian historians. Anyone who has stood puzzled before the statue of 'the Liberator' outside Melbourne's cathedral—why 'the Liberator'? Why here?—needs only to read MacDonagh's biography of Daniel O'Connell to come to terms with their puzzlement. How Vincent Buckley would have enjoyed MacDonagh's opening remarks. He spoke of growing up in the west of Ireland where pure Elizabethan English survived, and then going to the Jesuit school in Dublin that had nurtured James Joyce and which also nurtured him. He spoke of being taught English in the schoolroom where Gerard Manly Hopkins had taught Greek—but surely this was some trick of memory, for Hopkins taught university, not schoolboy, Greek in Ireland. At first MacDonagh wanted to write poetry; but then, realising his paucity of talent for it, 'I went to Cambridge, did history and lived happily ever after.'

REMEMBERING OLIVER MACDONAGH'S years at Adelaide University, the ladies and gentlemen of Adelaide turned out in force to hear him. They must have been puzzled by his concentration on Catholic emancipation—what had this to do with Adelaide? No Irish or convicts featured in their early years and they were mighty proud of the fact. The Man from Sydney recalled another

Writer's Week and a similar audience, when Manning Clark was asked what, in his opinion, had been the single most creative element in Australian history. 'The convicts', he had replied, to the dismay of his freeborn audience. Ah, Adelaide! Some things never change there, like the blue 'honour line' over which children dare not trespass during the John Martin's Christmas parade. When the Governor-General arrived to launch a book at Writers' Week, one-third of the tent leapt to their feet. Ah, Adelaide!

And yet it hosts the most cosmopolitan Writer's Week in Australia. Space was found for the Turkish poet Orhan Pamuk, Ivan Klima from Prague, the Czech poet Miroslav Holub, satirist John Clark and even Paul Keating, PM, who launched a book. Publishers and literary agents flew in from overseas to check out the Australian territory. Despite heavy rain, record crowds turned up to hear the stars: Alice Walker, Oliver Sacks, David Marr, Thea Astley, David Malouf.

The Man from Sydney's favourite was the biographer of Shelley and Coleridge, Richard Holmes, a quirky English mimic of jokey accents. Holmes could start a joke on his first public appearance and then develop it through subsequent readings and talks. His most poignant story he told to a luncheon table. Before leaving England he had visited Salman Rushdie in hiding. He noticed the fugitive was wearing state-of-the-art running shoes, and could not help staring at them enviously—until he saw their soles: they had never been outside the house. The Man urged him to tell the story in public but he would not, judging, perhaps, that it would give comfort to the enemy.

At Adelaide there was little sense of literature as a dangerous occupation, one that might land you in prison or deliver you up to a modern Inquisition. Instead there was laughter. Laughter breaking out in tents and cascading across the lawns; laughter punctuating the most serious session of elevated reading. Laughter, one of the Irish contributions to literary life in Australia. The Man from Sydney remembered an Indian writer in Adelaide years ago being astonished at all the laughter. It would not happen in India, where laughter at a literary gathering branded you an unserious person.

Laughter dampened the possibility of rows or disputes at Adelaide. The nearest one came to a serious issue was when Penguin sales chief Terry Moloney raised the spectre of a coalition government's Goods and Services Tax on books. Response was instant—the literary community fears the GST and will be working against its imposition. Whether in the form of a tax on books or in cuts to library spending, Thatcherism in Australia handicaps the poor.

SEVEN DAYS GONE. They are calling his flight at Adelaide airport. The slide projector moves to fast forward.

Flick: confusion of his table companions about that father of OzLit, A.G. Stephens of *The Bulletin's* Red Page; one, an arts bureaucrat, thought him 'Inky' Stephensen; the other, a literary agent, Professor Stephen Roberts. Is there any hope?

Flick: the eye-popping garb of Susie Counsell, events coordinator for Christopher Pearson's *Adelaide Review*: a white feather miniskirt at the opera and a lime-green clingwrap with Primavera hat of fruit and vegetables offstage at the British Council luncheon. If Adelaide is the Athens of the South, Mrs Counsell is its Betty Grable.

Flick: the man who ordered the do-it-yourself suicide manual from Mark Rubbo's Readings bookshop and then complained that it cost $429.95.

Flick: curious sights: the Gibraltine head of Margaret Whitlam moving above the crowd; someone wearing a $4500 Fenech-Nelson fight bomber jacket; rained-on papooses on their parents' backs.

Flick: the panel on teaching creative writing spoke incessantly of workshop 'situations' and workshop 'scenarios'.

Flick: no public phones, although OTC was a major sponsor.

Flick: the woman who had self-published a book of her own poems and had 1000 copies left.

Flick: 'Historians are eavesdroppers on the past.' (MacDonagh)

Flick, flick, flick ... ■

Edmund Campion teaches at the Catholic Institute of Sydney.

MICHAEL MCGIRR

Mystery and matters of soul

Cosmo Cosmolino, Helen Garner, McPhee Gribble, 1992.
ISBN 0 86914 265 8 RRP $29.95

THIS IS THE SAME HELEN GARNER who used to suffocate her characters. By the end of previous books such as *Monkey Grip* and *The Children's Bach*, the page is not so much bloody as blanched. In both cases a woman has tried to break out of a stuffy and airless relationship. In both cases she is drawn inexorably back by 'the seductive little whispering of despair'. Elsewhere one of Garner's characters remarks typically that 'Getting married isn't something you do—it's something that happens to you'. In these books, Garner's people are trapped.

Cosmo Cosmolino is the same but different. On the one hand, it's another book about shared households. It belongs to the same world of inner Melbourne where noticing an ungrammatical sign at the Victoria Market such as 'Rabbit's and Hare's' or knowing the correct pronunciation of the name of the Kino Cinema are all signs of belonging to one little place in the whole cosmos. The book is still as capable of drawing blood as anything else Garner has written. One character 'has no talent for intimacy'. Another, in dealing with people, has 'a bottomless pit of tactical blunders at her disposal'. Garner hasn't blunted her wit either: 'the furniture filled Ray's panel van like an excursion of handicapped children'.

On the other hand, *Cosmo Cosmolino* opens wide new ground. It is a loosely structured story the main burden of which comes to fall on three characters. Janet is an 'unwifely' journalist and lives alone until she is joined by Maxine, a woman who seems incapable of disbelief and who gives her heart and soul to everything from a four-dollar crystal that 'unified every aspect of life' to a pyramid scheme called The Golden Aeroplane which is guaranteed to 'spiritualise money'. Maxine may be a figure of fun but she is a maker as well. She pours energy into building furniture inlaid with all kinds of spiritual carvings, the most poignant piece being a trembling cradle made from the twigs of a tortured willow.

The third member of the household is Raymond, a born-again junkie who turns up from the North and starts slipping gospel messages under Janet's bedroom door. Maxine sees Raymond as an angel, albeit from one of the lower echelons, and helps herself to his money so she can keep faith with The Golden Aeroplane. At one level, a kind of religious comedy is being played out in the house, the final act of which is Maxine's exultant flight over the rooftops of suburbia.

There is plenty of spriritual static on the airwaves in 'Sweetpea Mansions'. But there is more besides. At one point, Raymond warns Janet that 'you've got to test the spirits'. Strange to say, this is precisely what Janet alone is capable of doing. She emerges as the character best able to understand her own spiritual experience precisely because she is the most disbelieving and sceptical.

JANET IS A DAMAGED WOMAN. Her friends and husband have used her badly. But out of a need, as she puts it, for the 'bruised' house to become a household, she risks preparing a meal for the three occupants to eat together. The event is a failure and its end finds Maxine, Raymond and Janet each alone in separate corners of the house, each praying in their own way. Maxine's prayer is a kind of 'mental sheet lightning', willing The Golden Aeroplane to success. Raymond crawls into a sleeping bag with his Bible and, self-centred, utters anything that enters his head.

Janet, in contrast, has reached rock bottom. She notices, sleeping on the couch, that her hands are clasping each other in the posture of prayer, almost as if they belong to someone else. She longs to say 'Help me' but can't. She is not suffocated: she is winded by grief. She says nothing and this nothing is her prayer. Janet's humiliation yields the moment at which she begins to recognise and live with the silent column that has stood for ages at her back, patiently waiting. Until now it has been beyond the reach of her eyes. The morning after her failed dinner party she bestows on it a glance of respect.

The change that comes over Janet is simple but, in its own way, dramatic. She starts making room for others. Raymond and Maxine could tell you about spiritual odysseys on a grand scale but nothing in *Cosmo Cosmolino* is as touching as the straightforward gestures of hospitality with which Janet bears witness to her healing. Janet's last word is 'come'.

The last word for *Cosmo Cosmolino* might be 'spacious'. It looks over its shoulder at the communal households represented in *Monkey Grip* and *Other People's Children* and is nostalgic for all that was wonderful about them. At the same time, there is a single-line summary of that life: 'The gods had long ago been mocked and forgotten. Nobody prayed.' Janet's 'Sweetpea Mansions', in contrast, has a least one completely empty room. Like the house, the book has room for all sorts. It accommodates spiritualities that are nothing if not *de trop*. But mundane hospitality, it suggests, is the spirit's most legible calling card.

Cosmo Cosmolino is a funny book about angels. It is also an ordinary story about mystery and matters of soul. It's a book that wriggles around in your hand as it shifts from mood to mood, from irony to joy. This is a book that breathes. ■

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RAY CASSIN

Where Angels Stare

A Book of Angels, Sophy Burnham, Ballantine, New York, 1990.
ISBN 0 345 36157 1 RRP $17.95

SALLY FOX IS a New Orleans woman who sees Bob Hope when she closes her eyes. She believes that the comedian is criminally insane and has entered into a conspiracy with Ronald Reagan, George Bush and the FBI to interfere with the thought processes of normal Americans. She lobbies members of Congress to investigate the conspiracy, and corresponds with other Americans who also believe that Bob Hope is interfering with their minds.

Sophy Burnham is a New York woman who frequently sees angels and sometimes sees ghosts. In *A Book of Angels* she has collected a great variety of angelic lore, and many reported sightings of angels by her friends and family. The sightings are sometimes of beings conventionally recognised as angels—beautiful, shining, winged creatures—and sometimes of beings in human form. The latter are usually strangers who have stopped to help Burnham or her friends when they are in distress, or to offer a word of encouragement. The angels also appear as animals, with or without the power of human speech.

So why do we readily believe that Sally Fox is mad, but think Burnham may merely be wrong? Why can Burnham get a book accepted by a reputable publisher, when Fox's biggest achievement is an FBI file marked 'vexatious complainant'? The answer, I think, goes beyond the obvious point that Burnham's claims are untestable, whereas Fox's claims could be tested by referring both her and Bob Hope for psychiatric assessment. For Burnham's book is more than a record of indulgent fancy. In a sense probably unintended by its author, *A Book of Angels* is a commentary on the form that popular religious sentiment is taking in Western societies.

The book is a curious compendium of personal anecdote and knowledge gleaned from wide scholarly reading. Burnham is aware that belief in angels has historically been associated with the monotheistic religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam; that the notions which all three have of angels have been influenced by other Middle Eastern religious traditions, especially that associated with the Persian sage Zoroaster; that this monotheistic readiness to accept the existence of angels may reflect a desire for intermediaries between the human world and a remote deity; and that the scriptural references to angelic visitations could be construed as metaphors for divine communication.

BURNHAM KNOWS that when Christianity displaced polytheism around the Mediterranean and in Europe, the gods of these older religions—or the functions associated with them—sometimes got taken aboard by the new religion in the form of angels, saints or demons. She is aware also that neoplatonic metaphysics, with its celestial hierarchy, made it easy for the church fathers to find a place for angels in their theologies. Finally, she is acquainted with the developed scholastic theology of angels, including the differing views of Aquinas and Scotus; with the imaginative presentations of angels by poets such as Dante and Milton; and with the pictorial representations of angels by painters from the Renaissance onwards.

Balance all this, however, with a typical Burnham anecdote. It concerns an argument between Burnham and her mother, while her mother lies dying in hospital. Her mother berates her for perceived failures in life and Burnham replies in kind. A Jamaican woman enters the room to mop the floor and says, 'I grudge you the mother talk.' Not understanding the woman's accent, Burnham asks her to repeat what she said. She does so, adding: 'My own mother died when I was 12, and I've had no one in all these years to give me mother talk. It is so nice to hear.' The woman then finish-

es mopping and leaves the room.

Because of this meeting, Burnham feels she has been 'hit by joy. Of course! She [her mother] was cuffing the cub, was all. I had not understood ... I did not consider her [the Jamaican] an angel at the time, but marveled at the synchronicity of the encounter, this woman walking in to explain my mother's behaviour and walking out again. From that moment our relationship took a turn. We began to talk on another level. We could approach the topic of death, say how much we cared for each other.' (pp34-35)

Later, Burnham decides that the visitor who brought glad tidings and then quickly departed must have been an angel. After all, that is what angels do. But this is not, of course, the only possible religious explanation of her experience. One could just as easily have said that God most often speaks to us through our prayerful reflection on the ordinary circumstances of life, and that in this context the things that other people say and do will often have consequences that they did not intend and may never know about.

So why does Burnham prefer the angelic explanation? It is not a matter of theological traditionalism, since *A Book of Angels* makes clear that Burnham does not feel constrained by the tradition. Or rather traditions, for it is not just Christian angelic lore that interests her. Burnham sees angels everywhere, and other aspects of traditional Christian belief sometimes get assimilated to this angelic preoccupation. She regards the Virgin Mary as an angel, for example, and is as ready to accept reports of the Marian apparitions, including those of Medjugorje, as she is to accept her friends' stories of encounters with angels.

This free-wheeling pursuit of signs and wonders is not, I think, to be dismissed as mere confusion on Burnham's part. Still less, given her acquaintance with the history of religion and theology, is it a matter of ignorance. Burnham is a syncretist, a consumer in that supermarket of all things weird commonly termed the New Age. The phrase does not appear in *A Book of Angels*, and she does not afflict her readers with pronouncements on the efficacy of crystals or the insights to be had from palmistry and tarot cards.

But, like all New Age devotees, Burnham has a propensity to divinise nature: 'What force governs? Looking back and seeing the pattern, I understand that that has been the question at every moment of my life ... My answer at the moment is that there are two worlds, visible and invisible. They tangle with each other in increasingly perceptible ways ... I begin to think now that this blending is perhaps so complete that we cannot separate the butter from the batter, the physical from the spiritual. It's all one thread, the wild, mad, beautiful, and ever-changing creation of dreams of Brahma sitting on his lotus flower. The thing is that the dream can be dreamed by us as well, dream and participant and dreamer being all the same.' (pp219-220)

THIS IS BREATHTAKINGLY BATHETIC stuff, and easily parodied. If it were not for the fact that there is a growing market for it, that would be all it deserved. But it is one of the ironies of late 20th century Western religious thought that the more mainstream Christianity has tried to find a point of contact with the perceived secular culture around it, the less secular that culture has become. This century has seen two religious developments that would have astonished 19th century apostles of progress and modernity: the resurgence of Islam, that defiantly anti-modern faith, in much of the old colonial world; and the reappearance in the West of paganism. And the latter phenomenon reflects how little the West has understood its own past.

For we have seen much of this before. In the world in which Christianity first appeared, a common Hellenistic culture and the political unity imposed by Rome permitted a heady and often indiscriminate exchange of beliefs and ideas. In that respect, it was a world not so very different from our own, which has been given a semblance of unity by American military dominance, American films and popular music, and economic integration.

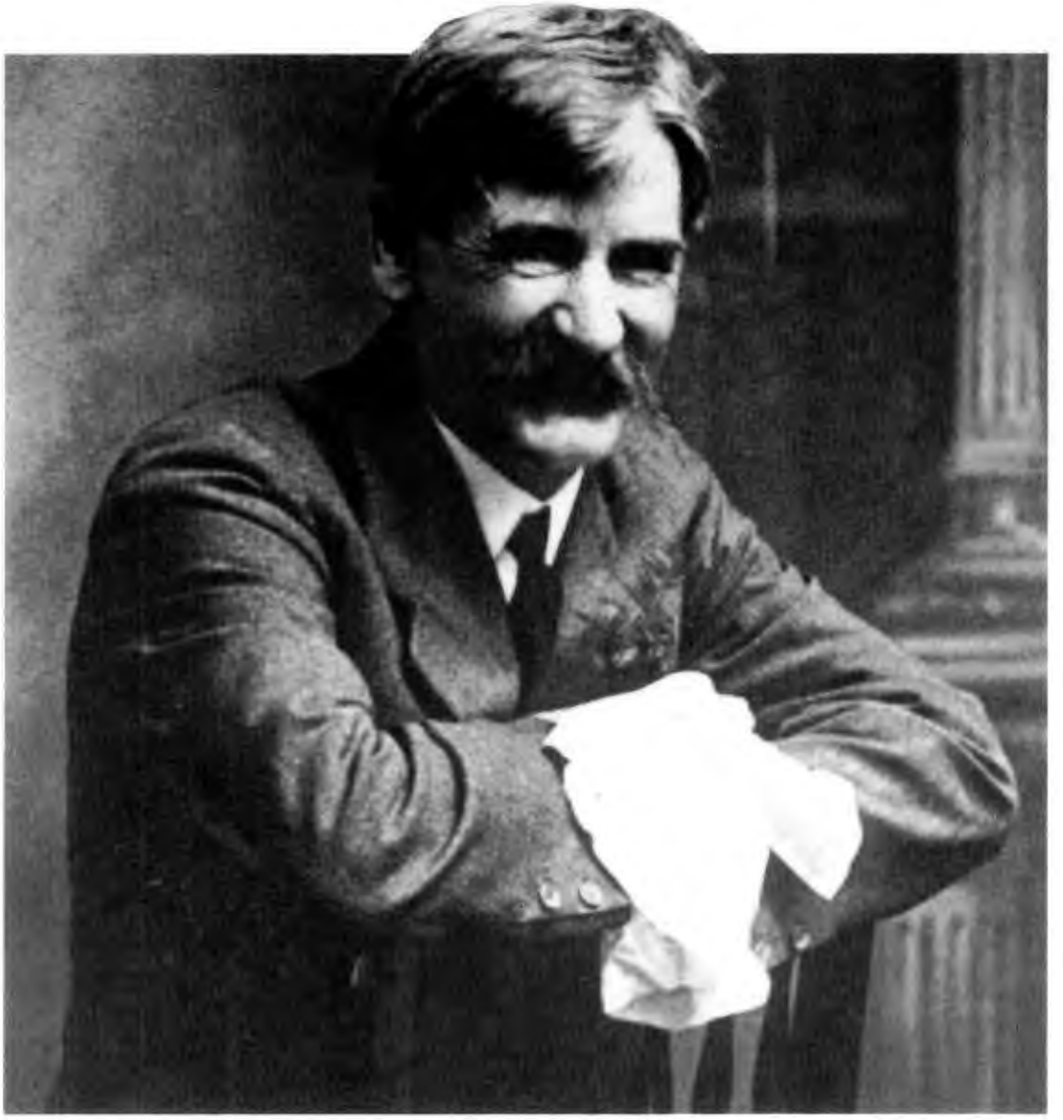
In the ancient world Christianity, its gnostic rivals, other mystery cults and the official public cults all clamoured for adherents—the supermarket comparison again comes to mind. Popular paganism with its many divinities was refined by the educated elite into a syncretistic pantheism that Burnham would probably find quite congenial. A world regarded as one divinity, made manifest in various local gods, is not so very different from Burnham's 'ever-changing creation of dreams', in which almost any mysterious encounter can become an angelic visitation.

If nothing else, it is amusing to find that Christianity's oldest rival has also been its most tenacious. Marxism has disintegrated, and sceptical atheism has always had limited appeal outside intellectual circles, but paganism is still with us. How Christianity is to respond to the new pagans, I do not know. In the ancient world Christian theologians and pagan intellectuals shared a common philosophical vocabulary, for the Christians had borrowed it from the pagans. This common neoplatonic inheritance, reworked after the Aristotelian revival in the medieval West, culminated in the angelology of Aquinas and Scotus, which was more, much more, than arid debates about how many angels can dance on the head of a pin. (To the best of my knowledge, no one ever actually asked that question.)

St Thomas, in his treatise on the angels in the *Summa Theologiæ*, set out a theory that both accounted for the scriptural references to encounters with angels and allotted angels a place in the divine governance of the world—the spheres of the fixed planets were all guided by angelic intelligences. In other words, Thomas was content to take the best paganism had to offer, provided it was malleable enough to fit the Christian notion of creation.

Thomas' answers cannot be our answers, however, and not just because of the modern preference for reading the scriptural references to angels as metaphors. Indeed, I suspect that one could read most the scriptural references in this way without seriously disconcerting Thomas. The real problem, of course, is the music of the spheres, which only medieval theologians and New Age astrologers really expect to hear. Modern cosmologists may look more kindly on teleological explanations than Newton did, but the angelic intelligences are still out of a job. ■

Ray Cassin is production editor of *Eureka Street*.



ROD BEECHAM

A face in the street again

The Picador Henry Lawson, Geoffrey Dutton (ed.), Pan Macmillan Publishers Australia, Chippendale, 1991. ISBN 0 330 27176 8 RRP $25.00
Flying Low, Geoffrey Dutton, UQP, St Lucia, 1992. ISBN 0 7022 2366 2 RRP $14.95

IN THE LATE 1880s Henry Lawson was writing angry urban poetry such as *The Army of the Rear* and *Faces in the Street*. The latter work, particularly, exhibits a strain of bourgeois realism visible in Lawson's English contemporary, John Davidson, and which, in English poetry, culminates in the famous London Bridge passage of *The Waste Land*. Yet Lawson is remembered as a writer of the bush, for although he wrote of other things his literary endurance is based on his depiction of distinctively Australian characters in distinctively Australian settings, and the fact that he did this more often and better than anyone else.

Geoffrey Dutton seems to feel that this unfairly limits Lawson, and his selection is arranged accordingly on thematic rather than chronological lines. To my mind, however, the claim for Lawson's range is not supported by the textual divisions employed. *A Child in the Dark and a Foreign Father*, for example, could just as well be placed in the section titled 'Women' or, indeed, in 'The Family' as in 'Immigrants and Foreigners and Those not White'. Lawson's reputation will not be enhanced by the assertion of an eclecticism he did not possess.

Three famous poems, *The Sliprails and the Spur*, *The Roaring Days* and *Past Carin'* are not among the 27 examples of Lawson's verse that Dutton gives. I find this surprising: lack of space was evidently not a consideration, and all three are clearly superior to the anti-feminist doggerel of *Ripperty! Kye! Ahoo!*, which has been included. This decision cannot be attributed to a desire to present Lawson 'warts and all' because Dutton assures us in his introduction that, 'For all his tirades against some women, Lawson is no misogynist.' The inclusion of this poem, therefore, must be regarded as eccentric.

A GENEROUS SELECTION of prose is presented, including *The Union Buries Its Dead*, *Crime in the Bush*, *The Loaded Dog*, the Joe Wilson series, and the justly celebrated *The Drover's Wife*. Regrettably absent is *Going Blind*, a fine example of Lawson's ability to give resonance to an apparently simple and sentimental story, but this is a quibble. The insight that animates Lawson's best writing and makes him truly our national voice is abundantly evident:

'There seemed something queer about the whole place—something wanting; but then all out-of-the-way bush homes are haunted by that something wanting, or, more likely, by the spirits of the things that should have been there, but never had been.'

In Lawson's day, as in ours, the bulk of Australia's population clung to the urban periphery of the continent, but here, in *No Place for a Woman*, is felt Lawson's vision of the alien interior as both the metaphor for our sense of displacement and lack of identity and the explanation of the

national character. The value of this specificity, and the misguidedness of Dutton's claim that Lawson goes 'far beyond Australia to the country of universal humanity', are nowhere exemplified better than in the close of *The Bush Undertaker*:

'He sat down on a log nearby, rested his elbows on his knees and passed his hand wearily over his forehead—but only as one who was tired and felt the heat; and presently he rose, took up the tools and walked back to the hut.

'And the sun sank again on the grand Australian bush—the nurse and tutor of eccentric minds, the home of the weird, and of much that is different from things in other lands.'

THE DENIAL OF PROFUNDITY in Lawson's explanation of the old man's gesture is neither ironic nor nihilistic but uniquely truthful. The undertaker is not a self-conscious Old World hero: he recognises nothing beyond the external facts. This is not because he is inadequate to the event but because there is nothing else to recognise. During the burial the old man made liturgical references because, we realize, he has been conditioned to feel that these are in some way necessary, but he remembered little and muddled what he did remember, showing both the futility of Old World values in this environment and his own intuitive authenticity. Manning Clark rhapsodised about this passage, but in comparing it with Sibelius he invoked the whole frame of reference the story so superbly rejects. Lawson's achievement was the stripping away of inappropriate cultural constructs.

Brian Kiernan's excellent volume in the UQP Australian Authors series gives more of Lawson's best writing from his best period, the 1890s, but all in all *The Picador Henry Lawson* is a commendable selection. It is larger than the Kiernan volume without being significantly more expensive, and has the added attraction of photographs—the cover photograph of Lawson is a gem. Unfortunately, at 522 pages the book's size entails some practical difficulty for the reader, as the text runs too close to the gutters and a paperback cannot be crushed open without damage to the spine. It is to be hoped that readers will not be discouraged, because by including and arguing for work from Lawson's so-called 'decline' Dutton should stimulate debate about this later prose.

Flying Low IS A NOVEL ABOUT RAAF pilots during World War II. To some extent it is a reworking of Dutton's earlier novel *Andy*, and Andy—he is not given a surname—remains the central character. He and his associates are never sent to the front, but see plenty of action nonetheless: in a military prison after court-martial, among the society of women of Tasmania, and on Bougainville at the war's end.

Dutton was a war pilot himself, enabling him to create an authentic atmosphere without appearing to attempt it. There are no lengthy descriptions of aircraft, airfields or wartime RAAF procedures in a book almost exclusively concerned with human interaction, but the natural working in of these subjects, especially in dialogue, reveals the author's authority. The narrative is basically chronological, although there are flashbacks, and is for the most part terse and direct, being sustained largely by humour.

A simple example of Dutton's approach occurs when, after a corporal says, 'You know what I mean, you bastard,' the narrator interpolates, 'They were on first-name terms now.' This is excellent because it is like an intimate aside to the reader, who has realised from the term applied by the corporal to his interlocutor that friendship has blossomed, and now has it confirmed by a narratorial remark that wittily describes the Australian male's habit of expressing affection through profanity.

DUTTON IS ALSO GOOD with pace and timing. The story opens with Andy in prison, where he has been sent for crashing a Hawker Demon. The offence is later described, and the narrator continues: 'It was a court-martial. Oddly enough, the three officers sitting on the board of the court-martial had all known Andy in his cadet days before the war. One of them had, in fact, been on the board of his last court-martial.' Dutton displays a professional sureness of touch in isolating physical details to reveal character. Of a particularly nervous man it is noted that, 'The only thing about him that moved was his Adam's apple, running up and down his throat like a hump-backed mouse.' Vince, an untrustworthy, coarse and greedy individual, is discovered 'chopping down a poplar tree that was the only beautiful object in sight.'

The novel would be enjoyable enough were it simply an amusing tale of the irrepressible Andy and his mates, their drinking, womanising, flying and imprisonments in the charmingly absurd context of wartime Australia and its bureaucratic inanities. But Dutton offers more; the presence in the jail of Henry Kinnaird, an innocent man made to wear leg irons and kept in a special cage, introduces a harsh note. Later, we hear that Andy's brother Ted, landing in enemy territory, was beheaded by the Japanese. Acquiring some Japanese swords as souvenirs at the war's end, Andy's habitual relaxed cheerfulness drops away:

'Andy drew one out and looked in the mirror of steel and ran his thumb across the razor-sharp blade. It was beautiful. And evil. For perhaps the first time in his life Andy felt a presence of evil. Normally the very word was slightly absurd, a gothic excess irrelevant to Australian sunlight.'

Andy uses one the swords in a drunken assault on a cat, an assault born of confusions and frustrations that he cannot articulate. And when he is detailed to fly an important Japanese officer to see an allied general, Andy confronts in human form the otherness that has been disturbing him. Captain Kano Tsuji is perhaps a rather stylised character, but his arrogance, courage and perfect manners, all manifesting themselves in disconcertingly un-Western ways, serve to deepen Andy's awareness.

There are a few irritating printing errors in this book, but the text itself is accomplished and, in the best sense, mature. Recommended. ■

The undertaker is not a self-conscious Old World hero: he recognises nothing beyond the external facts. This is not because he is inadequate to the event but because there is nothing else to recognise.

Rod Beecham is a freelance reviewer .

FLASH IN THE PAN

BlackRobe, dir. Bruce Beresford (Hoyts). Fr Laforgue (Lothaire Bluteau), the hero of this film about Indians and Jesuit missionaries in 17th century Canada, is grim, lonely and unyielding. His vocation was inspired partly by his mother, and partly by the boyhood experience of serving Mass for a horribly disfigured missionary who has returned to France after being tortured by the Indians. In pursuing this vocation Laforgue becomes a small figure in black up against a magnificent and alien landscape.

At one point in his journey, Laforgue encounters another religious exemplar, the sorcerer Mestigoit (Yvan Labelle). Mestigoit is a dwarf and, to the European mind, a freak. Yet, as the vitality of Labelle's performance convincingly shows, within the Indian culture the sorcerer has great power. In the early stages of *Black Robe* nothing is as alienating as Mestigoit's authority, which in a sense matches that of the disfigured priest whose Mass Laforgue once served.

For the most part, the story of *Black Robe* is told with severe justice, and neither the Indians nor the Jesuits are romanticised. The violence of the Indians, and Laforgue's uncompromising assurance of being right, might have put a great emotional distance between a 20th century audience and the clash of cultures it is witnessing. But this doesn't happen. *Black Robe* manages to get under our skin—possibly because, for a tale of spiritual power, it is a very bodily film.

Comparisons with *The Mission* are inevitable, but there are no pretty waterfalls this time. Just one or two hard words about faith.

—Michael McGirr SJ

The Prince of Tides, dir. Barbra Streisand (Greater Union). Tom Wingo (Nick Nolte), an earthy southerner with a failing marriage and a suicidal sister, meets Susan Lowenstein (Barbra Streisand), a Jewish analyst from Brooklyn. She cures him while trying to cure his sister, and love ensues.

Against this framework *The Prince of Tides* tries to do a lot. It almost manages to penetrate convincingly into the collective mind of a family numbed by its history. There are moments of authentic terror, and even of near poignancy in the relationship between Wingo and Lowenstein. But too much goes wrong. The film is swamped by James Newton Howard's truly noisome score; the script collapses into clichés at crucial moments; and the love that blossoms between the principals is dealt with in the worst traditions of romantic cinema—wordless snippets of golden evening and morning light.

At times Nolte overacts almost embarrassingly, in a crude attempt to underline how he is affected by his past. Wingo is supposed to be an expert dissimulator but it is hard to see this in Nolte's performance. And the other relationships in the film—especially those between Wingo and his wife, and Lowenstein and her husband—are too thinly developed for the dramatic purpose they serve. The highlight of the film is Kate Nelligen's performance as Wingo's mother, Lila. Perhaps it is worth seeing for this, but don't give it a high priority.

—David Braddon-Mitchell

Eureka Street Film Competition

Before entering politics, Ronald Reagan learnt how to be the great communicator in screen classics such as *Bedtime for Bonzo*. If you'd like to tell us what Ron is saying to Bonzo (that's the ape), we'll award two tickets, to the film of your choice, for the answer we like best. The winner of last month's film competition was Clive Keeley, of Lesmurdie, WA, who thought that the Three Stooges were negotiating disarmament (geddit?) before Operation Desert Storm.

Freejack, dir. Geoff Murphy (Village). Having successfully revived the Western with *Young Guns II*, Murphy and the star of that film, Emilio Estevez, have now turned their attention to science fiction. Here they are not working in a field that has long lain fallow, and *Freejack's* plot, based on time travel and mind-body exchange, leans heavily on a number of other sci-fi movies, including the *Robocop* and *Terminator* films, *Total Recall*, *Blade Runner*, *Escape from New York* and *Back to the Future*. The borrowings extend to cinematography, too—a scene at the climax of the film is a straight rip-off from *2001: A Space Odyssey*.

To be fair, *Freejack* makes no attempt to hide these debts. Indeed, in the film's best joke Estevez repeats in faltering tones an expletive-ridden line of invective that Arnold Schwarzenegger made famous in the first Ter*minator*. Nor is Murphy afraid to cast familiar faces in familiar roles: Anthony Hopkins appears as an evil genius—surprise, surprise, eh?—and Mick Jagger plays the bad guy who will turn out to be a good guy in the end. The standoff between these two and Estevez manages to sustain interest for most of the film, and when interest flags there are several car chases.

The big-name stars, however, are trumped by the supporting cast: there is a shotgun-toting nun with a wonderfully scatological turn of phrase, and Jonathon Banks as a disloyal henchman who covets Hopkins' evil empire. Banks adopts the archplotter persona with such melodramatic flair that it is a pity he was not given a waxed moustache to twirl.

Freejack's main achievement is to show that making a genre movie means doing one of three things: making a film that is faithful to the traditions of a genre, as Murphy did with *Young Guns II*; making a film that uses a genre allusively, as the Coen brothers did with *Miller's Crossing*; or making a film that simply hijacks the work of other directors and screen-

writers. This time Murphy chose the last alternative.

—Ray Cassin

Frankie and Johnny, dir. Gary Marshall (Greater Union). Johnny (Al Pacino) is just out of prison and is given a job as a short-order cook by a big-hearted Greek cafe proprietor. In the cafe he meets Frankie (Michelle Pfeiffer), is instantly attracted to her, and hounds her unrelentingly until finally they go to bed together. Immediately thereafter he announces undying love.

At that point I realised that I wasn't responding to this film the way it intends. Frankie isn't impressed, feeling uncomfortable at such a headlong plunge into intensity, and this seemed perfectly reasonable to me. But it isn't meant to—if a woman has doubts about responding favourably to declarations of love from someone she has only just met, she must have a hidden problem. Frankie does, of course, and in the course of the film this is revealed to Johnny, who sensitively massages it away. True love blossoms.

Apart from any qualms about the assumptions the film makes, it is sometimes heavy-handed. Frankie is lonely, as is Johnny. How to underline this? Ah, of course, lingering scenes of them alone in their flats at night. Cut to Frankie looking out her window, and watching the lives of people in the flats across from her. Cut to little vignettes from the bedtime experience of various other characters.

If I sound irritated it is because, despite all this, it has the makings of a reasonable film. It is well acted, and some scenes work beautifully. But it just doesn't come together.

—David Braddon-Mitchell

Eureka Street's inaugural 'Don't ask them, just tell them' award goes to Melbourne's HSV7 for this billboard pictured below, which touts the station's evening news bulletin, read by Jennifer Keyte. The graffitist's curt reply suggests that it is still easier for a spiv to sell television news—or used cars, or anything—by declaring 'Hey, have I gotta deal for you!' than it is for a person of sincere visage to sell the same commodities by starting a conversation. Perversely, perhaps, we find this reassuring.

It is also reassuring to find how little the graffitist's art has changed over the centuries, as the following examples from the walls of Pompeii will show. Translated by Antonio Varone, they were first published in the American journal *Archaeology*.

Personal abuse

Chius, I hope that your ulcerous pustules reopen and burn even more than they did before. (Wall of the basilica.)

Sex

Whoever loves, go to hell. I want to break Venus's ribs with blows and deform her hips. If she can break my tender heart, why can't I hit her over the head? (Wall of the basilica.)

Politics

In Nuceria vote for Lucius Munatius Caeserninus Asduovirquinquennalis: He is an honest man. (From a tomb.)

Crime and punishment

A bronze vessel has disappeared from this house. There is a 65 sesterce reward for its return and another 20 for the name of the thief. (Over a shop.)

Food and drink

Would that you pay for all your tricks, innkeeper. You sell us water and keep the good wine for yourself. (Wall of a tavern.)

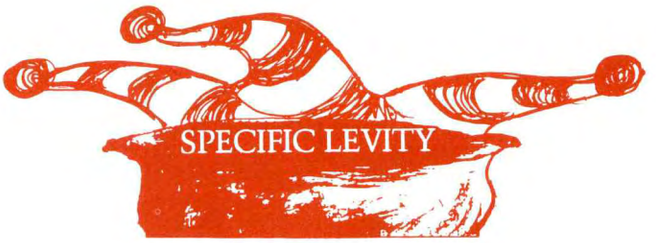
Graffitist v. graffitists

I am surprised, O wall, that you, who have to bear the weariness of so many writers, are still standing. (Wall of the basilica.)

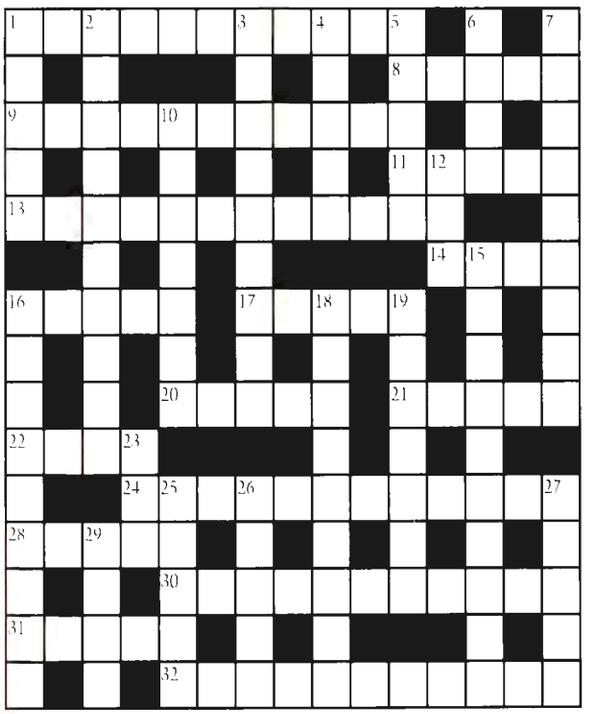
Perhaps this last message was left by an ancestor of the person who inscribed Channel Seven's billboard.

Finally, our Gregor Mendel award for the most intelligent typo goes to *The Age*, for its report (Tuesday, March 10) on asthma research by Professor Peter Phelan, of Melbourne University. Professor Phelan hopes to identify a gene that makes people susceptible to the disease, and *The Age* quoted him as saying that isolating the gene would 'dnable' allergies in newborn infants to be controlled. ■

Photo: Bill Thomas



Eureka Street cryptic crossword no.1, April 1992.
Compiled by **Joan Nowotny IBVM**
(The solution to this puzzle will be published next month)



ACROSS

1. 'All this ... and sweet' (Marvell). Sounds like Irish summer rain. (4,3,4)
8. The major's servant, in a temper, lost his head but found his soul, perhaps, in India. (5)
9. His basic philosophy explains why this spy came to destroy rather than construct.(11)
11. Some repeat both rumours monotonously. (5)
13. What a discovery! There is knowledge to be gained along this road. (6,6)
14. The chemical formula for this can be found in the almanac lent to me by the old sailor at the arms talks. (4)
16. Right up to the present time, this is the place for tranquil spirits. (5)
17. In ethical terms, does 9 explain this evil? (5)
20. The measure becomes extremely random with the heat. (5)
21. Pale, like Palm Sunday residue. (5)
22. Shaken by the storm, in a poetic way. (4)
24. What a friend might have said to nervous William, pointing his crossbow. (3,6,3)
28. In ancient Rome and 13, there is place for discussion. (5)
30. Not a red letter day, but dark and bloody perhaps. (5,6)
31. O mighty mount, you lure us to our centre, but without quarter for some. (5)
32. Record rewards, I hear, for great undertakings. (11)

DOWN

1. The lady seductive, but deadly in France. (5)
2. Should one ask searching questions or bury opinions in 28?
3. A confused and sad boy, Ern was like a desiccated skeleton at times. (3,2,4)
4. The willow tree would be more pleasant if its top hadn't been lopped. (5)
5. There is a sense in which it is entirely personal. (5)
6. The ruler sounded cooler when he was back. (4)
7. Lively ensoulment! (9)
10. After the fish, permit me to have a crumpet. (7)
12. Initially he thought someone should abridge the letter to the earl at postcode 4012. (3)
15. Did he discover a plain on the moon when working at 13? (10)
16. Take it or leave it, the number in question is crucial to our finances. (5-4)
18. Is he a whining schoolboy, a clock thief or a kite tamer perhaps?(4-5)
19. A kind of wine, bottled in France. (7)
23. In some parts, that author uses a Greek character. (3)
25. The leader will inspire us to fight or die, we hear. (5)
26. The ox is the animal that surpasses all others in carrying a load. (5)
27. Although he sounds loud, the poet looks indecisive. (5)
29. Love in the groove can be utter defeat. (4)

EUREKA STREET bookshop

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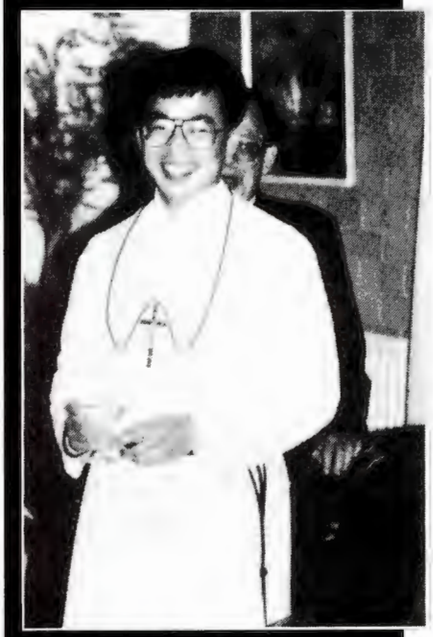

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