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EUREKA STREET

Vol. 3 No. 3 April 1993 $4.00

Easter 1993

Visions and Revisions

Jack Waterford on Paul Keating, **Rowan Callick** on Michael Somare

Andrew Riemer on Shakespeare, **Peter Steele** on Derek Walcott

Dorothy Lee on Goddess worship

Patrick O'Farrell in Belfast

Peter Pierce at Euro Disney

Gerard Windsor in Bali

SBS TV Guide

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EUREKA STREET

Volume 3 Number 3
April 1993

A magazine of public affairs, the arts and theology

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COMMENT

CHRIS MCGILLION

The vision thing

LAST YEAR GORE VIDAL published an appalling book entitled *Live from Golgotha*. It was intended as a spoof on the early development of Christianity, the television culture of the late 20th century, and the social construction of history. Except perhaps to fundamentalists and faint-hearted churchgoers, sacrilege was the least of the book's failings. The plot was chaotic, the point obscure, and the jokes fell flat and never managed to get up again. But Vidal had raised an interesting proposition: how would the television networks have covered the events surrounding the last days of Jesus and the first days of the risen Christ, and what would our understanding be of Jesus if they had?

The idea is not quite as silly as it sounds. Increasingly, our understanding of the world, our attitude towards it, and the policy responses of our political leaders are all shaped by images on a 48cm tube. Remember the Gulf War? Operation Desert Storm was the first truly televised war, a visual narrative from beginning to end, unlike the confused montage of Vietnam or the newsreel clips of earlier conflagrations. *Gulf War* was presented by CNN, sponsored by the United Nations and directed by the Pentagon. But, for all that opportunity and expertise, the production left the viewer no wiser after the event. More bombs were dropped on Iraq during the first few weeks of the campaign than were dropped on Europe by both sides in World War II. But to hear the overnight four-star celebrities tell it, or the anchormen repeat it, this was a war we could all feel good about, because nobody of consequence was actually getting killed.

After the Gulf War, the television crews discovered the Kurds of northern Iraq and the death camps of Bosnia. Good prime-time footage, and lots of opportunities for *60 Minutes*-style moralising. In each case Western leaders were prodded into action, though not out of sensible foreign-policy considerations, much less out of a desire to alleviate suffering or secure justice. The half-hearted responses attest to that: the Kurds got a safe haven but no hope of a long-term political settlement, and the residents of Sarajevo got food and clothing while the gunmen in the hills picked them off like flies. No, the point was to satisfy television audiences that something was being done, and to remind them that the New World Order was just around the corner.

Somalia is the latest example. Nothing like an African famine to get the ratings up. Forget the nightmare next door in Sudan—can't confuse the viewer with too much geography—

and don't blow the story by getting involved with reasons. Just get plenty of close-ups of dying mothers with dying children—or, better still, dying mothers with dead children—and package them with a suitably sombre voiceover and mood music. Commenting on her visit to Somalia last year, the Irish president, Mary Robinson, said 'it often seemed to me that I was in a circle of Hell, where women and men and children were not only outcast on the world, but granted the ironic and terrible technological privilege ... of actually dying in front of us—on our television screens, in our kitchens, in our living rooms.'

The crucifixion would be presented with a similar theme in mind. This, after all, is the West Bank (or is it the East? Who cares?) before the civilising influence of the Israeli army. Lots of wailing or gnashing of teeth would build the drama as Dan Rather, Tom Brokaw or Ted Koppel followed the procession in the streets. And, at regular intervals, the viewer would be reminded of the debt he/she owes a fast-food chain for bringing the world this historical event live.

On Golgotha itself, the camera crews and boom microphones would already be in place. Just time for the prerecorded two-minute backgrounder on Jerusalem under Roman occupation before Jesus and others make it up the hill. Dan (or is it Ted?) is close behind, trying to get an exclusive with Mary Magdalene about life on the road with a bunch of fishermen and tax collectors.The floor manager calls for more light as the afternoon grows curiously dim.

While they nail Jesus to the cross, an expert back in the studio explains the finer points of Roman execution techniques. Then they hoist the King of the Jews aloft and the cameramen close in, shouldering the mourners out of the way. We follow the dying as though to watch it is to live it, and to understand. And, because our attention will wane, there are more prerecorded fill-ins on the events in Jesus' life, interviews with those whom he is said to have cured, and updateson the official line from a spokesman for Pontius Pilate.

Then Dan—or Tom—breaks in: 'Wait! I think he's saying something.' *Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani.* 'Get that translated for me, fast,' Dan is heard to mutter as we cut to a hamburger commercial.

THE THIRD DAY would present a few problems, since no one would have got the tip-off. Hence the scene at the tomb has to be re-enacted after the event, with a little help from the special-effects people. Time for a quick play on emotions and a lasting image to be imprinted on the mind. A bit of levitation and white sheets flapping in the breeze won't do; go for the holograms and Dolby sound—this is technology's moment to proclaim the medium!

Meanwhile, Dan has tracked down the Risen One himself: 'I'm sure the viewers want to know what it's like to be dead and what message you have for the world,' he intones solemnly into the microphone. The first take of the question is OK, the camera cuts and Dan takes Jesus aside: 'Take my advice, son. Make it short. Look how the one-liner saved Reagan's bacon. A soundbite will have more effect than a sermon from the mount.'

Can there be any doubt why Jesus chose to be incarnated before the age of mass communications?

In a culture where art isn't just imitating life but obliterating the distinction altogether, the Gospel of Mark is a sobering corrective. Mark tells how Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome went to the tomb of Jesus to anoint his body on that first Easter morning. There they were told that their purpose was in vain because Jesus had risen and was on his way to Galilee: 'So they went out and ran from the grave, because fear and terror were upon them. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.'

So ends Mark's Gospel, on a dramatic but inconclusive note. No visions. No further miracles. No triumphant ascension into heaven. Mark seems content to leave his readers to draw their own conclusions about what happened, and what it means. This is not just an expression of faith in the risen Christ, but in all of us as well. ■

Chris McGillion writes for the *Sydney Morning Herald*.

Prospects

WITH THE ELECTION OVER and the long leadership siege concluded, at least for the governing party, it is now possible in Australia both to turn outward, and to take a less frantic, less politicised view of some our own institutions.

To our north an era is ending with the resignation from the Pangu Party of Papua New Guinea's founding Prime Minister, Michael Somare. Rowan Callick, who knows both the man and his territory, reports on a career that focuses many of the difficulties facing leaders in postcolonial cultures. (p10).

From Belfast, frequent visitor Patrick O'Farrell observes another species of postcolonialism, and registers much of the intransigence but also the causes for hope in Northern Ireland. (p24).

Is political correctness the order of the day in our universities? Andrew Riemer, Peter Steele and Peter Pierce pose the question, in our review section.

While the coalition is taking stock of its philosophy and its base of support in the community, Australian unions are also doing some rethinking. Terry Monagle reports. (p14).

And next month *Eureka Street* goes inside the business community to look at one of the issues of the decade: what do business people mean, and what do philosophers mean, when they talk about business ethics? ■

—Morag Fraser

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.

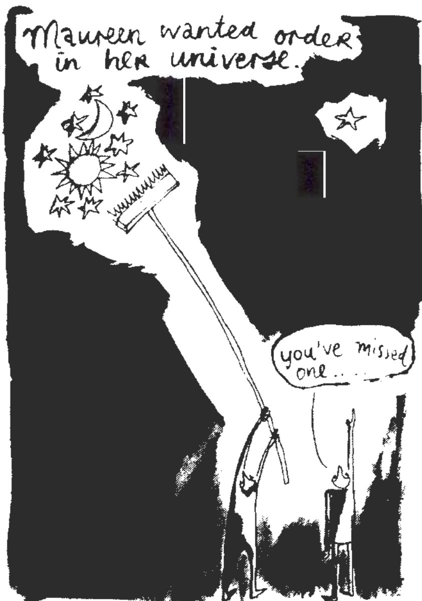
A matter of how

From Paul Ormonde

No one can read Andrew Hamilton's saga (*Eureka Street*, February and March) of the Cambodian boat people, and their three years of frustration and humiliation in Australia, and feel that Australia's policy on refugees in this case has matched our humanitarian ideals.

Hamilton offers his answer: these people have suffered too much already; to return them to Cambodia would confront some if not all of them with serious danger; therefore accept them. Such a solution at least reasserts the importance of civilised standards in Australian public policy. It's hard to disagree.

There is a broader question that remains: the clarification of a practical philosophy on refugees and other asylum seekers. Merely to assert, as Hamilton does, that Australia must adhere to the UN Convention on the Status of Refugees by giving 'onshore refugees' protection and asylum 'whether they come in their tens or their thousands or whether they are expected or not' is a laudable ideal but not a viable public philosophy.



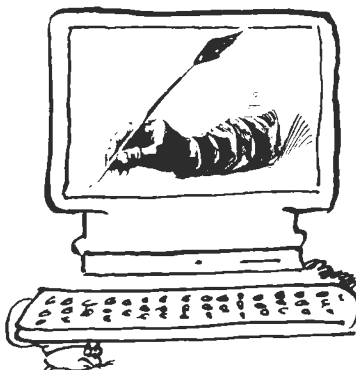
Any government that openly supported such a philosophy would be quickly turfed out—almost certainly in a welter of racist electioneering that would produce ugly conflicts in Australian society. Hamilton has put the case for special treatment for one group of boat people. He has opened a wider debate. He has not clarified how Australia, in a politically practical and humane way, can deal with future groups of unexpected arrivals.

Paul Ormonde
Brighton, VIC

ADs on the DPs

From Joseph O'Reilly

Andrew Hamilton's article (*Eureka Street*, February 1993) 'Three years hard' is an excellent overview of Aus-



tralia's legislative and political dealings with Cambodian boat people. The lack of due process, disregard for fundamental principles of justice and the contempt for all involved shown by the Federal Government is appalling.

However, other more recent changes to the Migration Act are equally disturbing. Fundamental human rights, basic principles of equity and access and equality before the law are consistently being challenged by legislative change directed towards deportation of a seeker by executive decision.

The independence of the judiciary, access to the courts, legal counsel and rights to adequate information have all been successfully threatened by the support of both the Government and the Opposition on these vital issues. Hamilton clearly establishes that both the old parties were in agreement on every regressive change to migration legislation, but he does not do justice to the significant and consistent opposition of the Australian Democrats.

The Democrats' spokesperson on ethnic affairs, and on legal and constitutional matters, Senator Sid Spindler, was the only effective voice of reason for principles of legal and social justice as it related to asylum and the Cambodians. It is worth noting that the Australian Democrats' record on asylum and migration is a worthy one that includes:

• Advocacy of an end to detention for asylum seekers;
• Opposition to the government measures reducing grounds of approval for asylum seekers, thus creating inequality before Australian courts;
• Opposition to Federal Government interference in court proceedings and its attempt to circumvent High Court judgments;
• Opposition to forced repatriation;
• Calls for the establishment of clear criteria for custodial treatment;
• Opposition to the Government and Opposition decision to enforce a six-month waiting period for social security benefits on newly arrived migrants;
• Undertaking to offer permanent residence to Chinese students resident in Australia during the Tiananmen Square Massacre;
• Support for existing levels in the family reunion program and opposition to cuts which would result in reductions of this program;
• Support for access to courts for appealing refugee status determination;
• Opposition to cuts to the English-language program;

The way Australia and the world has treated refugees and migrants is a litmus test for the commitment of governments to social and legal justice. Dealing with population movement in a humane and just fashion is an urgent requirement of Australian public policy. The Australian Democrats have shown a significant commitment to generating and implementing such a policy.

Joseph O'Reilly
Richmond, VIC

In the picture

From Paul Swain

Thank you, *Eureka Street*, for another year. In particular, thank you for Emmanuel Santos' and Hwa Goh's photographs in the 'Orientations' article (October 1992), and for Andrew Stark's photographs throughout the year. Is there any chance of large, 'frameable' copies being made available?

Paul Swain
Meadowbank, NSW

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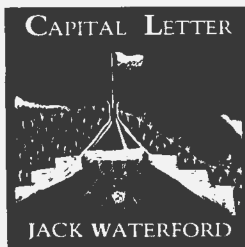


Now watch him do it

THOSE LOOKING FOR SIGNALS of what Paul Keating wants to do now he has won government should not take too much notice of his first year in office. It's a different ball game now. Keating's stunning win against the odds (and yes, I was wrong, along with most of his own ministers, in thinking he couldn't do it) has consolidated and legitimised his power, and he is now in a position to show some of the real person. Up till now it has all been survival mode, with a single-minded focus on winning. So now he's there, what's he going to do about it?

The big argument against Bob Hawke was that although he badly wanted to be Prime Minister, and enjoyed the job, he didn't actually want to do anything with it. Keating is not like that. He likes the power and the prestige—but the power is there to be exercised. It has always been clear that his agenda goes beyond economic management, and he has given hints about what a visionary leader might do. He certainly sees 2001 as a milestone, and for more than the declaration of a republic. He has a lively interest in the arts, a (newfound) interest in the changing role of women, in positioning the nation in Asia, in cities, and (privately) in changing the balance between Parliament and the executive—in favour of Parliament. And the Rex Connor influences are yet to emerge as well. But the vision is not yet fully articulated.

Assuming the best for the vision, however, Keating may have problems realising it unless he adjusts to a new routine of government. The management style he applied so successfully as Treasurer and as a campaigning Prime Minister is appallingly presidential, and could frustrate everything.

Bob Hawke could read a brief, and was a good chairman. He could listen and stand back—often, indeed, while others like Keating were working themselves hard, but it gave him perspective. In cabinet, he would often take the temperature of a meeting before deciding his own views. This would infuriate Keating, who would often go into cabinet thinking he had Hawke locked into his own strategy, only to find him changing his mind several times in the course of a debate.

As Treasurer, Keating developed intensely personal relationships with a staff of exceptional quality, who could adjust to his moods and compensate for his weaknesses. They would go through cabinet submissions together and establish a line, deciding which approaches were likely to work and which were not. Keating has a short attention span for documents and depends on oral briefings. And, because he likes to win, not all of his victories were through argument alone. He has been a master of the leak to the media, and of personalising a debate so that it is less about the point at issue than about tackling him, and by implication threatening the stability of the government.

Added to this is some impatience with allowing everyone to have his or her say, and a desire to resolve issues quickly. Paul Keating is not a good committee man, let alone a chairman. He is almost invariably late for meetings, usually without explanation, and eager to be off. So far, government under Keating has been neither a parliamentary or an executive affair; it has been the work of a president, operating through informal meetings with a close circle of advisers, only some of whom are elected. Keating likes blasting through policy stalemates, to get things moving. Sometimes he has been more interested in getting some momentum up than in resolving issues with principle and consistency; some of the solutions have been quick fixes that, in the long term, caused the government much bigger problems.

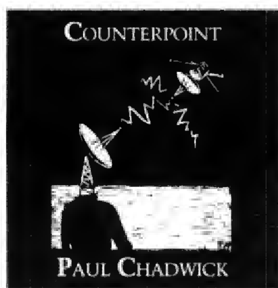
His advisers are fanatically loyal and protect him jealously. They can be quite frank with him in private but give him pop-star adulation in public. One cannot get to Keating but through them—if one cannot persuade them that an issue is important enough, one cannot get through to him at all. They shield him from wasting his time, but in the process, can shield themselves from accountability as well.

With so little being decided formally in cabinet and so much being decided on the run, there are problems of communication. Government decision-making does not necessarily proceed by cabinet minute. Those involved do not always agree about what was agreed, and those who are affected are not always told.

The way in which public service advice is frozen out can be even more of a problem. Keating and his advisers prefer to deal with ministers and their advisers, so that bureaucratic advice is always filtered. When the deals are being made, independent and professional counsel is not necessarily helping to shape the compromises. Keating's answer to this is that politicians run the government, not bureaucrats; but shunning advice from able and disinterested people is not necessarily the best way to get results.

At the end of the day, Paul Keating and his private office cannot run the government alone, whether to an agenda or in response to crisis. The Prime Minister is not paid to be an administrator: the quality of the government he delivers depends on his selection of able people and his willingness to give them a chance. That involves stepping back a little, too. Looking for that sort of change of style may be as important as finding out whether Paul Keating has a vision, and what that vision is. ■

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



Knowing no bounds

In 1991 THE RENOWNED Australian dancer, Kelvin Coe, was dying of AIDS and did not want his condition publicised. When the arts editor of Melbourne's *Sunday Herald-Sun*, Bob Crimeen, tried to confirm the rumours, the Australian Ballet Foundation would make no comment. Crimeen made two unsuccessful attempts to reach Coe's solicitor. He did not speak to Coe.

The paper's editor, Ian Moore, consulted the then editor-in-chief, Piers Ackerman, and Crimeen's article, headed *Ballet Star Ill With AIDS*, was published on 25 August. Together with the news that Coe was 'terminally ill with AIDS' were separate photos of Coe and the chief conductor of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, the late Stuart Challender, who a few weeks before had spoken on television about his homosexuality and his AIDS-related illness.

The article noted that 'ranks have closed and nobody close to the stricken dancer is prepared to comment publicly on the illness or Coe's contribution to ballet.' Although not mentioning Coe's homosexuality, the article in effect 'outed' him. His partner, Stuart Robertson, later said that Coe had become afraid to leave his house.

Bob Crimeen (right) gestures with paint-splattered hand after Stuart Robertson made his protest at the Regent Hotel in 1991 Photo: Ponch Hawkes.

From this unhappy episode flowed events that reached their resolution in the County Court of Victoria last month. They compel examination of the media's self-regulation to protect privacy.

Two days after publication Robertson, infuriated by the article, lured Crimeen to a meeting at the Regent Hotel by claiming to be 'James Dwyer', a source who would tell Crimeen more about HIV-AIDS and the dance world. After they had ordered drinks, Robertson said his real reason for meeting Crimeen was to humiliate him in public, and then splattered paint over him. As Crimeen later recalled it, Robertson said he wanted 'the world to see me with blood on my hands'. Robertson, who later that day sent Crimeen a fax explaining his identity and relationship with Coe, was charged with assault.

A month later Crimeen and his wife were at a performance by the Australian Ballet in the State Theatre. As the performance ended and they prepared to leave their seats, Crimeen became aware that Robertson was standing in the row behind him.

According to Crimeen's later evidence, Robertson said to the throng around them: 'This is Mr Bob Crimeen, journalist from the *Herald-Sun*, who writes stories about outing homosexuals. This is Mr Bob Crimeen, journalist from the *Herald-Sun*, who wrote the story about Kelvin Coe dying of AIDS. This is Mr Bob Crimeen, journalist from the *Herald-Sun*, who writes stories about homosexuals dying of AIDS.'

Robertson followed them and repeated slight variations of these sentences for 20-25 minutes as Crimeen and his wife left the theatre and went upstairs to the St Kilda Road exit. As the three climbed the stairs, Robertson said: 'Mrs Crimeen, I don't know how you could be married to a man like this.' (A judge later observed that this is said to lots of women.) The Crimeens returned to the Arts Centre, to call the police from a public phone. Robertson said to them: 'I'm leaving now, but I will be at the opening night of every performance of the Australian Ballet.'

Days after this incident, police charged Robertson with offensive behaviour. Before a magistrate last July, he pleaded guilty to assault and criminal damage, and was put on a two-year good-behaviour bond, with the conditions that he pay $1000 into the court fund, and pay $1500 to Crimeen for damage to his clothes.

ROBERTSON UNSUCCESSFULLY PLEADED not guilty to the offensive-behaviour charge arising from the later incident at the theatre, and was fined $500. He appealed, and last month his appeal was upheld. After hearing evidence about the article and the paint-throwing, Judge Gordon Lewis found that Robertson's words and conduct at the State Theatre did not satisfy the requirements of the statutory offence. Although in poor taste, ill-advised or discourteous, they had to be more than hurtful, blameworthy or improper to amount to offensive behaviour in law. Judge Lewis said that the only reasonable inference to be drawn from the article was that Coe was homosexual, and that the article amounted to outing. It was unclear, the judge said, whether it was legally relevant that the words Robertson had spoken at the theatre were true.

Without condoning Robertson's paint-throwing, we can sympathise with him and Coe. The law offered them no comeback to the newspaper's disclosure. Australian

law does not recognise any action for breach of privacy. To sue for defamation would have been futile: it is a complete defence to such an action in Victoria that what was published was true. In this case, it was.

A more subtle objection, from Coe's perspective, was that the law of defamation is meant to help those whose reputation has been damaged by a statement that, in the classic definition, holds them up to hatred, ridicule or contempt. To have brought an action would have been to acknowledge, implicitly, that a revelation of homosexuality somehow damaged one's reputation—that it was somehow bad to be homosexual.

In the ethics of journalism, the usual test applied when personal privacy is in the balance is to ask whether there is an overriding public interest in disclosure—an interest that goes beyond what the UK Press Council has called 'a prurient and morbid curiosity'. No such countervailing public-interest factor was offered by the *Herald-Sun* in an editorial on 29 August 1992, in which it attacked Robertson for throwing the paint. It argued in part that 'while turning public attention on and off at will might be a wild fantasy, it is not realistic. What in the good times is adulation might look more like macabre curiosity in the bad times, but it will not go away, no matter how much his (Coe's) friends try to paint over the problems.'

Under cross-examination in court, Crimeen denied that he had been interested in sensational journalism. Coe was a famous dancer, and the fact that he had AIDS was, in the editor's judgment, of interest to the paper's readers, he said. When Crimeen insisted that, although he took responsibility for writing the article, he took no responsibility for publishing it for that was the editor's decision, Judge Lewis interjected: 'What, are you shocked to find that your copy is published?'

Both the editorial and Crimeen's evidence reveal a deeply disturbing failure to acknowledge that the public's curiousity about the lives of famous people is not something that magically reveals itself to journalists and compels them to satisfy it. They anticipate it, they make reputations for themselves and money for their employers by feeding it, and when they intrude on privacy to do so they make ethical decisions for which they should be held accountable.

Stuart Robertson has been held accountable for damaging Bob Crimeen's clothes. In a sense, Crimeen has been held accountable twice: in a rather crude way by Robertson, and by the public cross-examination and the judge's comments. But his superiors have not answered publicly for their actions, nor have they been forced to defend the attitude that underpinned their decision to breach the privacy of Kelvin Coe.

That attitude shames journalism, and may yet lead—as it has in Britain—to legal 'reforms' with the potential to weaken the precious, defensible freedoms of the media. ■

Paul Chadwick is Victorian co-ordinator of the Communications Law Centre.

VIEWPOINT

PETER COLLINS

Revaluing

AT THE MOONEE VALLEY TROTS in Melbourne, when the announcer declared that the Labor Party had won, the crowd went silent and moved to the TV monitors to watch the election coverage instead. At Bankstown, Sydney, the Labor heartland chanted,'We want Paul!'. 'You've got him, you've got him', beamed a jubilant Prime Minister. 'This is the sweetest victory of them all. This is the victory for the true believers.'

Labor won the 'unwinnable election' because Keating convinced enough people that the coalition's policies would make Australia less fair, less compassionate and more divided. And the most powerful aspect of Keating's election rhetoric was his use of the language of faith. His pitch was to the 'true believers who want to do it compassionately'. For Keating, the election was a choice about fairness, about standing up for those who are in need and about the kind of society we want to be.

You can argue that it was this value-driven language that broke through the barriers of cynicism and communicated to the Australian people political issues that mattered to them. And it was an appeal that laid the foundations for the win. Last year, when Keating annnounced that Labour would not block the GST in the Senate, he set the political landscape: 'us and not the GST' or 'them with one'. He then attacked *Fightback!* as unfair, regressive, punitive—'the wrong plan which would turn Australia mutant, into a country marred by conflict and no sense of communal values.'

When John Hewson himself could not explain simply the complexities of *Fightback!*, or appeared to dodge answering questions, the Keating one-liners came into their own. 'If you don't understand the GST, don't vote for it. If you do understand it, you wouldn't vote for it.' But the GSTwasn't the only issue on which the fight for values and for government was contested. Compassion was the Labor cry in the debate about unemployment and jobs, and Keating, in his victory speech, made this promise: 'If we can't get people back to work, we're sure as hell going to look after them. We're not going to leave them in the lurch.'

Keating's electoral pitch about equality was a change from the appeals to the hip pocket nerve and the smooth promises that no one believes will be honoured anyway. And it was a message that seems to have registered with an electorate put off by ecospeak and fed up with broken promises.

As a strategy it was spectacularly successful. The Labor heartland returned to the fold and the victory is being hailed as the most remarkable in Australian political history. It also suggests the degree to which the electorate holds to values such as fairness and equal opportunity. It demonstrates that a fair go and standing up for others still have currency and meaning.

Paul Keating's first promise as Prime Minister was that he would tell the truth, 'I will not gild the lily.' The 'true believers' have made a gigantic leap of faith in Paul Keating. They, and perhaps all Australians, have to hope that he will fulfil that election night promise: 'I won't let you down'. ■

Peter Collins SJ is a politics graduate from the University of Melbourne.

ROWAN CALLICK

Farewell to the Chief

PNG's first Prime Minister, Michael Somare, has left Pangu, the party he founded, to sit as an independent MP and may leave Parliament altogether. His departure from Pangu closes the door on an era in his country's politics.

SIR MICHAEL SOMARE—'the Chief'—incorporated the pride of the people of Papua New Guinea for the best part of two decades. He remains the only Papua New Guinean widely known by name and appearance to Australians. But now his political career is moving to a somewhat forlorn, peppery conclusion. It is an instructive story that exemplifies his country's extraordinary and convulsive transformations, and its uncertain prospects.

Last month Somare not only quit the leadership of the Pangu Party, and thereby of the Opposition in which it is by far the largest group. He also resigned from the party, of which he was the founding leader. The reasons are jumbled up within the motivations of this complex 'simple village man'.

Somare was born 57 years ago, on 9 April 1936, in a hospital in Rabaul. His early years foreshadowed his major political theme: national unity. Like the 'founding fathers' of many countries, he would find the challenges of developing an independent PNG much tougher than the glorious but straightforward task of leading the nation to independence.

His father, a policeman from the Murik Lakes, a remote and poor area in the Sepik, was posted in Rabaul, and young Michael learned first Pidgin, and then the local language, Kuanua, before his father took the family home to Sepik for leave. Then, aged 6, he began to learn his own language. The Japanese arrived soon after, and Somare's first school was Japanese. Many people wept, he says, when they were forced to retreat. He has retained strong connections with Japan, not least through the controversial businessman and philanthropist Sasakawa.

On finishing school Somare became a teacher himself. In his autobiography, *Sana*, he recalls becoming incensed at this time, when he saw a missionary breaking some of his people's sacred flutes. 'This was the first time that I had ever opposed a white man.'

In 1961 he was selected as one of a group to attend a political education course, before being commissioned to explain to people in the Sepik area what elections were. He then became interested in broadcasting, and was seconded to Radio Wewak as newsreader. There he became politically active, through the Public Service Association and the Workers' Association. He was accused of being a rebel, of being Sukarno-inspired and communist-influenced. Then, having married his wife Veronica, he moved to Port Moresby to attend the Administrative College.

It was 1966, and he met many like-minded men. (PNG's political culture was then, and remains, a male world—there have been no women elected to Parliament since 1982.) They talked politics constantly, and were spied on by the Australian Special Branch. They became known as the Bully Beef Club—because that was the staple that kept them talking when they met at the home of Albert Maori Kiki, who became PNG's first Foreign Minister. After an electoral defeat he became a successful businessman, and has hardly spoken a word about politics since.

The Bully Beef Club went on to form Pangu—an acronym, in the style of the African parties that excited them, for Papua New Guinea Union—on 13 June 1967. The rest of Somare's rise, as they say, is history: election to the House of Assembly in 1968; a remarkable political coup in the 1972 election (for which CRA's Bougainville Copper Ltd provided $3000 of Pangu's $4500 campaign fund), when he persuaded Julius Chan to lead the People's Progress Party into a coalition, defeating the much larger, planter-backed United Party; becoming Chief Minister in 1973; and then Prime Minister at independence on 16 September 1975.

Throughout this key period, Somare, a stocky, busy figure in his trademark sulu suit (adopted in part thanks to the influence of his considerably taller friend, the former Fiji Prime Minister Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara), devoted himself to nation-building, especially through the schools and through radio. And he stressed the value of consensus, which he saw as 'the Melanesian way'.

He was fortunate in having an Opposition Leader, the gentle Highlander Sir Tei Abal, who agreed—and who backed the country's first independent government in its early years. But then Sir Iambakey Okuk (PNG has as many knights as Queensland *circa* 1985) took over the Opposition and led a brutal charge for power. Sir Michael was finally defeated in Parliament in 1980, and replaced—a cruel blow—by his former deputy, Sir Julius Chan.

This was a crucial period, when PNG politics—and Somare—lost their sense of innocence and, perhaps, the hope of identifying a new path that would lead neither to the grandiose failures of African nationalism-cum-socialism nor to what some saw as the crass, destructive capitalism of the West.

Despite Somare's generous public face in defeat, he felt betrayed; and from then on he appeared to seek ways in which the nation could serve him, as well as vice versa. He had another spell as Prime Minister from 1982 to 1985, when Paias Wingti, another former deputy, unseated him. Somare stepped down as Pangu chief just in time for the new leader, Rabbie Namaliu, to win power back in 1988, when he became Foreign Minister for four years until Pangu's next defeat, again to Wingti. Namaliu, rejected as Prime Minister by just one parliamentary vote last July, quit the Pangu leadership to spend more time with his brilliant wife, Margaret Nakikus, who had then just been diagnosed as suffering from a terminal illness.

Somare was back as leader. But his heart was not in the business of opposition—he agreed with too many of Wingti's nationalistic policies. Since renegotiating the Bougainville Copper agreement in 1974, and throwing Kennecott out of its Ok Tedi prospect, Somare has always favoured giving miners a tough time. And he had other things on his mind. He had always loved travelling, and in the '80s had gained the acquaintance of men in business and politics, chiefly in Asia, who were building dynasties. He wished to hand wealth, as well as prestige, on to his own children.

As Foreign Minister, he had organised a deal with the Taiwanese government for a $20 million loan to build a 12-storey 'Somare House'. Adjacent to Australia House—which for two decades was, awkwardly, the tallest building in the Waigani valley—the building remains incomplete. And the Taiwanese have yet to receive the diplomatic recognition they so keenly seek; PNG still recognises the People's Republic as the sole China.

Somare House was built by and for Damai Pty Ltd, which had been established as Pangu's business arm. But the company's Somare-appointed manager, an Australian, Ian Fleming (no apparent relation to the creator of James Bond), said last month that Damai and its tower no longer had any connection with Pangu, but were Somare family interests. The management of Damai is contracted through the cheekily titled SFA—Somare, Fleming and Associates. This Somare is Michael's son Arthur, who was arrested last year after a fracas at Port Moresby airport in which he pointed a pistol at an unarmed security guard. The Somare children have so far disappointed their father, who went so much farther with so much less education and other opportunities. The Damai mess—in almost 20 years, the company has failed to build up the asset base the party expected—was a major factor in Somare's losing the confidence of the Pangu caucus.

On Namaliu's resignation last July, Somare had agreed to stand aside for a former Forests Minister, Jack Genia, in nine months. But PNG politics is the art of the impossible, and Somare could have clung on if he had turned in a sparkling performance. The 21 Pangu members clearly wanted a change, however, and although Genia is unlikely prime ministerial material he makes a suitable stopgap. If Namaliu beats a corruption charge to be heard in June, he will probably

be back as leader. If not, there are a number of bright new Pangu wannabes waiting in the wings.

This is a novel situation. In previous parliaments, Somare has had a core of Pangu MPs who owed their loyalty primarily to him, rather than to the party. This was the bane of Namaliu's prime ministership. Somare, his Foreign Minister, constantly pursued policies that ran counter to his own, proposing a series of projects that required protection and government guarantees—including a state-owned oil company that has been abolished after costing the country almost $10 million.

Early in 1967, he was asked to accompany some Australian journalists on a visit to the Highlands. At a coffee plantation the owner, a former South African, invited all the party except Somare to tea. He told the journalists he did not allow 'goons' in his house. Gus Smales, then of the Melbourne Herald, *said in that case he would stay with Somare. The Chief never forgot—when Smales finally left PNG he threw a huge farewell party for him.*

Now, with the possible exception of the father of the House, Sir Pita Lus, the Pangu caucus is more loyal to the party than to its founder. New leaders are emerging, including Chris Haiveta, Jerry Nalau and Bart Philemon. And the party may even attract more members who were previously alienated by Somare's style, which has become less consensual down the years. He now advocates a more directive role for national leaders and tougher discipline imposed throughout society, along the lines of Asian cultures he admires. At the same time, he remains at home in the company of Australians. His children were educated in Australia, and he frequently visits Sydney, where he loves to attend the races. He is an inveterate gambler, like Bob Hawke, who in the 1960s was seconded by the ACTU to work in Port Moresby for several months as an advocate for the Public Service Association, with which Somare was also involved.

Somare has not always been a good judge of people, and has often been let down by his staff, with a handful of honourable exceptions. One former Damai manager was sentenced to a decade in jail in Cairns for smuggling a massive cannabis consignment. But of late Somare has himself alienated some formerly devoted supporters, through ungenerous acts of which the Sir Michael of old appeared incapable.

He is increasingly becoming a loner in public life, like the present Foreign Minister John Kaputin, whom Somare had looked after in 1961, when Kaputin was the first Papua New Guinean to play representative Rugby League. After a game in Madang, where Somare was teaching, Kaputin was not allowed, as a native, to stay in a hotel with the rest of the team, so the local league president asked Somare to put him up. Fifteen years later, Somare was to sack Kaputin from his cabinet.

THEY BOTH REMAIN staunch nationalists, but their policies have failed to develop much beyond the nationalist stage. Somare was, to a degree, misled by poor advice to the effect that economic growth was certain, and that the distribution, rather than the production, of wealth would become PNG's central issue. The slow rate of growth has built great frustration among the jobless young, whom Somare at first simply told to stay in their villages. He declined to develop industrial policies, in case this might lure the youngsters away from the bush.

He has always, however, impressed internationally—despite his huge frustration, 18 months ago, at failing to win the presidency of the UN General Assembly. The job appeared to be within his grasp but was snatched away by Saudi Arabia, which after the Gulf War gained the support of the US. Somare has been a staunch supporter of greater South Pacific solidarity through the Forum founded by his favourite golf partner, Ratu Mara, but has never been on intimate terms with the other patrician Melanesian politicians, Solomon Mamaloni of Solomon Islands and Fr Walter Lini of Vanuatu; perhaps their proximity breeds a sense of rivalry.

Somare's immense charm and fluency, with a strong sense of humour and a set of anecdotes unrivalled in the region, happily survive. But his openness has not always been his best political asset. He lost a degree of support just before the crucial no-confidence challenge in 1980, when the late Peter Hastings quoted him, in a *Sydney Morning Herald* interview, as saying, 'Jesus, Peter, I'm not a Christian ...'

It is most unlikely that Somare will ever again be in a position to challenge for the prime ministership, though he could end up in another ministry during this Parliament, under almost any Prime Minister, including the incumbent, Wingti. But his biggest failure has been in letting Pangu shrivel from its early promise of a mass, rural base to a small, political elite seeking patronage. Ironically, however, the fact that Pangu has survived the departure of its founder now augurs well for the party itself, which has had a sufficient infusion of talent to regenerate itself. In the region only Vanua'aku, in Vanuatu, which last year removed its founder, Fr Lini, and the Fiji Labour Party, which has survived arguably even bigger tests including a coup and the death of its own founder, Dr Timoci Bavadra, have managed to do the same.

Somare said he was quitting Pangu to become an independent 'with a heavy heart'. The party, he said, 'has become foreign to me.' Sadly, the reason for this is that he has become foreign to the party. Pangu at first differed from its rivals in setting up grass-roots ward committees. But electoral victories and the challenge

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ACR111ES

PROJECT COMPASSION

of independence diverted the attention of Somare and other leaders from the need to sustain the party's membership. Today, like PNG's other parties, Pangu only holds conferences immediately before elections, when endorsements are decided. It has a tiny membership, centred on its own MPs. It failed to provide competent leadership at the important second tier of administration, the 19 provincial governments, and has now joined Wingti in seeking the scrapping of the whole system.

Pangu once also had a social-democratic emphasis on equity, in interesting tension with its first coalition partner, Chan's PPP, a full-on capitalist party. But parties in PNG today, with the sole exception of the League for National Advancement, which champions a village-development program, differ only in their leaders and regional bases. Pangu has strong prospects for a return to power once Wingti is able to be challenged, early next year. But it then faces the challenge of convincing a generation of voters that continues to venerate Somare to stick with the party. Younger Papua New Guineans, however, born since independence, will be entitled to vote later this year. Wingti's spiked beard and commanding voice are more familiar to them than Somare's barking tone.

Ultimately, Somare's ambition over-reached itself. Despite his emphasis on consensus, he found delegation difficult. Thus two other major parties, the LNA and Wingti's People's Democratic Movement, began as breakaway groups from Pangu. His flawed formal education failed to equip him to compete with a new generation of rivals, once those peers who owed him unquestioned loyalty began to lose their seats or to retire. Only a look back through Somare's extraordinary, crowded life can reveal just how big-hearted, and how characteristic, a Papua New Guinean he has been.

Early in 1967, he was asked, as a government information officer, to accompany some Australian journalists on a visit to the Highlands. At a coffee plantation the owner, a former South African, invited all the party except Somare to tea. He told the journalists he did not allow 'goons' in his house. Gus Smales, then of the Melbourne *Herald* and today of *Business Review Weekly*, said in that case he would stay with Somare. The Chief never forgot—and when Smales finally left PNG in 1980, he threw a huge farewell party for him.

For the time being, Somare remains in public life. To his credit, he has turned down the Governor-General's job more than once—he will remember well how painful his old rival, the late Sir John Guise, found the powerlessness of the position. A major job with an international organisation is more likely to lure him at last from his Sepik parliamentary seat. But until then he will remain, alternately wry and resentful, the ghost at the banquet of power in a PNG that has disappointed him, just as he ultimately disappointed it. ■

Rowan Callick writes for *The Australian Financial Review*.

TERRY MONAGLE

The way ahead

The defunct was a young union labourer, about 25, who had been drowned the previous day while trying to swim horses across a billabong of the Darling.

He was almost a stranger in town and the fact of his having been a union man accounted for the funeral. The police found some union papers in his swag and called at the General Labourer's Union office for information about him. That's how we knew. The secretary had very little information to give. The departed was a 'Roman' and the majority of the town were otherwise—but unionism is stronger than creed.

—HENRY LAWSON, 'THE UNION BURIES ITS DEAD'.

'Grass-roots' campaigning by the union movement, according to Senator Bronwyn Bishop, was one of the factors that helped to defeat the coalition in last month's federal election. For their part, unionists will be euphoric about the election result, and confident that the attacks on them launched by the Kennett government in Victoria have, for the present, been blunted. But the historical trends that are eroding the base of Australian unionism were not halted by the election, and there is an urgent need for unionists to focus on these changes.

As someone who has worked in the union movement for 10 years, I find myself asking questions. Does the movement have a soul? Have unions ossified into rigid, passionless bureaucracies, bereft of ideals and addicted to fighting each other in courts? Have technological change and the globalisation of the economy rendered them obsolete? Can unions still be voices for justice and democratic values?

The question of whether unions still have a role to play lies at the heart of debates about individualism and collectivism. Despite, or perhaps because of, the Hewson defeat, some of Australia's elites in the media and the economics profession will continue to argue that unions are malign forces in the nation. Unions, so the argument goes, lack genuine support from their members, serve the interests only of the bureaucrats who

lead them, and would wither away if they were not guaranteed monopoly coverage through the arbitration systems. Further, the rigidities unions impose on the labour market prevent Australia moving flexibly into the global economy.

The union movement is in numerical decline, with membership hovering around 40 per cent of the workforce. Unions have shown little ability to recruit among the young, in the private sector, among women and in emerging hi-tech industries such as computing. Unions have remained strong in the public sector, which is physically and ideologically easier to organise than many parts of the private sector.

The cultural and demographic contexts that bred unionism in Australia are also in decline. Craft unionism was the initial form of the movement in Australia, and it then became strong in large, blue-collar workplaces. These have largely gone, though there are exceptions in places like Burnie and the Pilbara. New technologies, new patterns of ownership and the gentrification of work processes are testing the relevance of union structures.

Under the leadership of Bill Kelty, the movement has tried to tackle these problems. Kelty's chief advantages have been a close relationship with Paul Keating, the Accord process, and the central position of unions in the machinery of the industrial relations commissions. The Kelty strategy was set out in *Australia Reconstructed*, a document that has been the movement's blueprint since 1987. Its premise was that Australia must participate willingly in the global economy. Australia needed, the argument went, to reform its manufacturing and training culture in order to compete with other nations. Industry plans would be developed through tripartite bodies representing employers, unions and the government. Unions would participate in national economic planning through the Accord, and they would amalgamate into industrial mega-unions, large bodies able to offer a much wider range of consumer services to their members. Recruitment would be organised more efficiently, with special attention to areas that are not unionised at present.

Kelty has achieved much of this agenda. He has also largely defactionalised the movement. Although the factions retain their formal structures, their influence at ACTU level has dissipated. Fights are much more likely to be between one union and another, irrespective of left-right factional alignment, rather than between factions. In inter-union disputes Kelty has smiled upon unions like the Australian Services Union (formerly the Municipal Officers Association), which have adopted his program enthusiastically and have tried to recruit in new areas such as the information-technology industry.

The union movement under Kelty, and the Hawke and Keating governments, also configured the wages system to make the labour market more flexible, in order to help the export drive, while still ensuring a central position for the unions.

Another important area of tripartite co-operation has been in the massive reforms to the status and extent of vocational training known as the 'national training agenda'. Kelty regards training as a crucial part of the the new, export-oriented workplace, and union involvement in this area is an attempt to provide a new form of service to members, as the relevance of some more traditional services fades. The alliance between the government, the ACTU and employer groups has led to the allocation of new funds for training, in order to achieve nationally accredited vocational training, based on the acquisition of skills rather than on formal curricula.

But with all this attention to structures, what has become of the ethos of the union movement? Has there been a cost? I believe that unions have become large, impersonal bureaucracies, with individual members motivated not by notions of solidarity or community but by a desire to take out a kind of private employment insurance. 'If ever I were to be dismissed,' runs the rationale, 'there would be some experts to fight my battles.' Union officials have developed technocratic skills and attitudes, internal debate is about personalities rather than ideas, and officials spend significant amounts of money on legal action against each other. Such struggles are unsubtle and unproductive, and a kind of moral sterility has descended upon Australian unionism.

THE IDEALS THAT HAVE SUSTAINED the movement during the past decade amount to a lukewarm nationalism: we will sacrifice wage rises to allow investment in new plant, we will sign enterprise agreements to boost Australia's export capacity, and so on. This kind of reasoning is based on the false assumption that national governments still control national economies.

What, then, is the future of Australian unions? How can they withstand the attacks on them by the new generation of conservative governments? How can they

recover a moral dimension, and continue their long history of contribution to Australian cultural and political life?

It may be that attacks on the fundamental right of people to associate, such as those made by the Victorian Premier and some advocates for the business community, will give unionists a sense that they have a role in defending the human rights of Australians. There will be an enormous organisational struggle as conservative governments try to exclude unions from industrial negotiations, and to undermine the capacity of unions to collect revenue. Such struggles may distract unions from a destructive and egoistic obsession with demarcation.

To defend itself against these attacks, the union movement will need to develop better relations with groups such as the Australian Council of Social Services, the Australian Conservation Foundation, consumer organisations and, on occasions, farmers. Such alliances, and the assumption of wider social responsibility might dissolve the image of Australian unions as self-interested, middle-class pressure groups. There has, for example, been a campaign for more honest product labelling, jointly supported by the ACTU, consumer groups and farmer organisations. In Australian politics, that is an almost irresistible combination of pressure groups. The ACTU has also co-sponsored a campaign with the Australian Conservation Foundation, and alliances such as these are likely to develop more strongly under conservative governments. Attempts were made at the beginning of 1993 for the Accord process, normally the preserve of the ALP and the ACTU, to be widened to formally include these other groups.

MORE PROFOUNDLY, IT IS ESSENTIAL that unions recover an ideology. Doctrinaire Marxism has become irrelevant; and Kelty's nationalism is a dead end, because it means the movement ends up serving the purposes of the national government and because in the long run it is economically naive. What would be useful would be a theology of community, an indigenous liberation theology. The prevalence of the economic rationalist creed—in both parties—makes liberation theology applicable to Australia with an unexpected sharpness.

Structural change will be needed, too. Under a decentralised industrial-relations regime, unions will also have to become decentralised in their structures, methods of communication and industrial claims. Unions will need to be well organised at the workplace level, and members at the enterprise level will need to be able to make final decisions. The ACTU, trades hall councils and union central offices will be far less important, taking on a coordinating and training role in industrial issues, and an educative role about a variety of social issues. At the ACTU level, these might not be about narrowly 'economic' or industrial matters, but about civil-rights questions that flow from attacks on freedom of association and on public services. Unions will have to fight the war of the flea: in the past they have paid lip service to the empowerment of members, but now it will be necessary for survival.

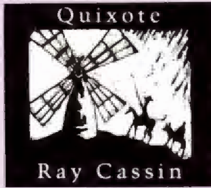
The other important source of regeneration for Australian unionism lies in the full realisation of the consequences of economic globalisation. Unions become irrelevant if their patterns of organisation do not mirror the pattern of organisation of the firms in which their members are employed. In the past 50 years capital has become internationally mobile, but labour has not. This gives capital enormous strategic advantages. More and more companies operate with a global identity and a global reach. With modern information technology, head office is wherever the chief executive happens to be today. In some ways, it is pointless for a union to fight to preserve wage levels if the company simply seeks out a country where labour is cheaper and pollution controls are fewer. Similarly, if a union loses a battle for maintenance of wages it fails workers in two countries, since employment might be relocated from somewhere else. It is this strategic advantage of capital that the Hewsons and the Howards are expressing when they argue that Australia's labour-market rigidities prevent us from trading successfully.

The globalisation of labour is therefore imperative. But forming alliances with unionists in other countries is not just a tactical matter: it is a way of building solidarity. This is not completely new, of course, but hitherto it has been a marginal activity for Australian unions. One food union, already internationalised, has signed an agreement with a company that governs employer-employee relations in any of the company's plants, wherever they might be in the world. The ideal end-point of such developments is that labour costs will be eliminated as a competitive factor in the international marketplace, being replaced by knowledge and technology. In Europe, 'works councils', as they are known, are multinational meetings of unionists from each plant of a company, wherever they are located. Paul Keating's avowed aim of transforming Australia into an 'Asian trading nation' carries consequencs for unions as well as for business: unions, too, should integrate their structures with those of their Asian counterparts.

The moral strength of the union movement in Henry Lawson's day was in its identity with the poor and oppressed. That battle was won, as it turns out, temporarily. Union strength and industrial legislation placed fundamental rights of association and of comparative wage justice at the heart of Australian culture; but the mobility of capital allows it to evade national regulation of labour practices, and free-market political forces in Australia are determined to make such evasions easier.

Australian unions should look to amalgamation with comparable unions in other countries: a transformation that will both require and assist unionism to be a close adjunct to creed. ■

Terry Monagle is a research officer with the State Public Services Federation.



Commissions and omissions

Shrieks of laughter echo along the corridor, broken up by the thud of doors being opened and closed. There is a knock at my door and I open it to find Alison, breathless with questions. 'What's on the wall in your room?' she asks, pushing past me to find out for herself. 'There's a ghastly print of the Turin shroud in ours.'

I tell her that there isn't any other kind of Turin shroud print. She looks around and pouts, disappointed to find no comparable specimen of Catholic kitsch. The room's regular occupant has left behind not traces of piety but the apparatus of leisure: a ghetto blaster and a dog-eared Leon Uris novel. The latter, Alison and I agree, can remain on its shelf but the radio may provide a diversion from some of the papers at the conference we are attending.

'Did you have a picture of the Turin shroud or anything like that when you lived in one of these places?' she asks.

'No, such things are a matter of personal taste.'

Her face colours. Perhaps she thinks she has offended me.

'Mr D'Souza has this little lamp with red-tinted glass under the picture.'

'Mr D'Souza?'

'The man whose room Robert and I have been given. I found his name on the student list at the end of the corridor.'

I explain about votive lamps. There is another knock at the door. It is Robert, come to announce that it's lunchtime. Or to look for his wife.

The three of us thread our way along several corridors towards the refectory, and sit at a table underneath the portrait of a gaunt former rector of the college. Facing it, on the opposite wall, is the portrait of a rotund former archbishop. Neither cleric looks comfortable at being subject to the gaze of the other. And none of the diners below looks comfortable at the thought of being caught in the middle of an ecclesiastical standoff.

Alison tries to break the spell. 'It really is a beautiful building. And what a marvellous site for it,' she says, gesturing towards the window besides the rotund archbishop. It is a fine, still day and the line of Pacific breakers is visible for miles along the coast below.

'It's a seminary,' I reply. 'And it looks as though it was built as a playpen for the Bronte sisters.' Alison leans across the table and pretends to stab me with her fork. '*You'd* make a prison out of anything, even if you'd never been a prisoner yourself.' She lowers the fork slowly, and smirks. I suppress a twinge of lust. Robert, who has said nothing since we sat down, asks me to pass the salt.

The three of us become four. The Grand Old Man whose paper we have all come to hear walks round the table, pauses at the empty seat between Robert and myself, decides not to take it and sits beside Alison instead. The Grand Old Man is supervising Robert's thesis. Robert introduces me, and explains that I am writing a thesis too. The Grand Old Man asks me what it is about, and when I tell him he opines that it is a profoundly Quixotic project, since no one else working in the area would take seriously the view that I wish to defend. Now it is Robert's turn to smirk, and Alison becomes exultant: 'Well, you'll never talk him out of it, now you've put it that way. *He* just loves the idea of being scorned by everyone else.'

The Grand Old Man's paper is probably as good as everyone expects it to be. I cannot tell, since I hear it but do not listen to it. I spend most of the time staring at the ceiling fan, imagining that I see reflected in its rotating blades the alternately leering, jeering faces of Alison and Robert. They are old friends. And I am writing a thesis about friendship.

I do not stay for the discussion after the paper but take a walk along the beach. It is a long walk, and I do not find it too difficult to resist an inclination to look back at the college on the cliffs above.

When I return I am relieved to find that I have missed dinner. Most of the conference-goers are in the common room, emptying wine casks and arguing about what Jones said in reply to Smith's criticism of Brown's analysis, in the latest *Philosophical Quarterly*, of Aristotle on weakness of will. Or maybe the analysis was in *Analysis*. Robert is locked in earnest discussion with the Grand Old Man and Alison is perched on the arm of a sofa, leaning on the Grand Old Man. It is hard to tell whether she is trying to distract him or Robert.

Deciding that I am not fit company for anyone, and especially not for Alison, Robert or the Grand Old Man, I take refuge in the television room. When I switch on the set there is a promotion for a new drama series about the seven deadly sins. Except there are more than seven; a few rather dull and unalluring modern sins have been added to the traditional list.

The door opens behind me and I know it is Alison even before she speaks. 'Television? God, you're as boring as the other two. What are you watching, anyway?'

'It's about the seven deadly sins. I was just thinking that modern people aren't very convincing on the subject.'

She squeezes beside me on the chair and hands me a glass. 'You would say that, of course you would. ■

Ray Cassin is the production editor of *Eureka Street.*

PROFILE

ALAN GILL

A day with the General

Eva Burrows, the Salvo from Tighes Hill in northern NSW, is to retire after seven years as General (international leader) of the Salvation Army. Many consider her to have been the army's best leader in modern times.

IT WAS A SINGLE WORD, *papabile*, that brought us together. It happened 20 years ago, when Eva Burrows headed the Salvation Army's work in Sri Lanka. An election for a new international leader was about to occur, and I used the term in an article to imply that Burrows was someone to watch—she was then in her 40s and considered too young—as a long-term prospect for the leadership.

Someone sent her the clipping, and she was amused by the comparison with the papacy. Several years later, by which time she was in charge of the work in Scotland, she was photographed with the Pope in Glasgow. So she sent me a clipping, with a lighthearted note about being *papabile*. (They met under a statue of the Scottish reformer, John Knox.)

In 1986 my prophecy came true and Eva Burrows was elected General. Three years later I wrote to her, asking if I could visit her in London; the idea was that I should spend a day in her presence and record my experiences. It finished as a day and half the night. The most memorable part took place after midnight, at an underpass near Waterloo Station, known as the Bullring. By day it is thronged with commuters. By night the Bullring becomes Cardboard City. Hundreds of homeless people sleep there in all weathers, making shelters from the cardboard packing cases discarded by city offices.

That night Cardboard City had a visitor. Eva Burrows glided among its inhabitants, proffering hot soup and cheerful conversation. It is a place in which strangers are unwelcome. Photographers have had their cameras smashed, but the Salvo uniform was like a passport. Inside one box movement was just discernible. There were holes for eyes and breathing. 'Hello Tom, how are you?' From inside came a grunt of recognition. 'Tom, give me your hand.' A filthy hand emerged from the box, and soup was handed over. 'I would like to pray with you.' Burrows knelt on the concrete, using her gloves as a mat. She leaned forward, and her head almost disappeared in the box. From inside the voice exclaims: 'Hey, Missis, I thought you wanted to pray with me, not get into bed with me.'

Burrows has just completed a tour of Australia, which will be her last as General. She retires in a few months and is expected to make her home in Victoria. An English newspaper once described her as the third most-powerful woman in Britain, after the Queen and Margaret Thatcher. The ousting of Thatcher as Prime Minister presumably makes Burrows number two.

Burrows, who is 63, is the 13th General of the movement founded in the 19th century by William Booth. He coined the phrase 'Some of my best men are women,' and Eva Burrows is the second woman—and the second Australian—to succeed him. She was 56 when elected, the youngest General in the army's history.

Burrows lives a fairly regimented life, and would be at home in a religious order. For my 'day in the life of' story I arrive at her flat in the Barbican just before 7am, which is earlier than expected. I find her spruce and dressed, having already been up for about an hour. I glimpse an exercise bike in the kitchen, but she tells me she doesn't use it much, prefering other exercises. A jar of Vegemite on the table provides an Australian touch. While I eat a poached egg, the General has half a grapefruit, a piece of toast and a Vitamin C tablet. I look around. On a shelf is a family photo: her parents were Salvation Army officers, and Eva was the eighth of nine brothers and sisters. One brother was, briefly, a publican. I suspect the others talked him out of it.

ARE THERE DIFFICULTIES in being a woman and/or single in the army's top job? 'No,' she replies. 'It stems from Booth, who was the first Christian pragmatist. If you do the job well no one minds if you're a man or a woman. Being single also has many advantages. Some claim that, like a celibate priest, you cannot understand

Safely in tow: General Eva Burrows on the Sydney Harbour tug named after her. Photo: John Fairfax and Sons.

people's problems. I don't accept that. As a single person you can be totally devoted to the work.' The photographer chipped in with a question about women priests in the Anglican Church. 'The argument has become tainted with so much humanistic thinking,' Burrows says. 'But I think it is natural that women should be involved in ministry.' I ask about 'headship'—the belief, held by many evangelical Christians, that a woman should not have charge of men within a congregation. Burrows grins: 'They'll wake up.'

At her office, she starts the working day by holding a policy meeting with her senior officers. I am amazed to see how quickly they deal with complicated issues. Matters that would take the Anglican Synod years to resolve were settled in minutes. According to Burrows: 'When a decision is made we don't have people coming back and saying "I disagree". Everyone is loyal. We salute and obey.'

The military style comes through in many ways. When a person becomes a soldier (lay Salvationist) he or she signs a document that used to be called the Articles of War. (It is now the Soldier's Covenant.) This statement of doctrine and pledges has been revised at the suggestion of the General, and now includes reference to modern problems such as marital infidelity. An Advisory Council to the General was introduced by General Alfred Orsborn in 1946. It is advisory, not executive. As Burrows says it, smiling at the impact of her words: 'I don't have to accept. I'm like the Pope in that sense.' The council has seven members, chosen by her. She reminds me that the General is the only 'elected' person in the Salvation Army.

It is the General's custom to attend morning prayers with sections of the headquarters staff. On the day of my visit she joins the PR department, and I am introduced to staff of the *War Cry* and other journals. Salvos often boast that the *War Cry* is the world's largest selling religious newspaper. Rival editors challenge this on the basis that it is not 'sold' but given away, often in pubs and betting shops, in exchange for a donation. The *War Cry's* basic diet is of inspirational articles, often pegged to a topical theme such as a popular soap opera.

In PR terms the Salvos can do little wrong. Eight years ago a controversy arose over allegations of fraud and mismanagement in the running of an English Salvation Army hostel. The story was broken by a television current affairs program. The next day Burrows, then the army commander in Scotland, was alarmed to receive a telephone call from the editor of a popular tabloid, widely regarded as a scandal sheet. 'Outrageous,' said the voice at the other end of the line, who then made it clear he was speaking not about the alleged impropriety at the hostel but that the army should be thus calumnied. The editor then launched into his war story—how a Salvation Army worker had brought tea and buns to him and his mates in the jungle, while a battle was in full swing. He had never forgotten it.

Incidents like this are legion, and help to explain why the army often avoids the flak directed at other religious bodies, or media analysis generally. Journalists also tend to think of the army as a welfare agency rather than as a religious denomination. In a secular environment this has advantages.

NEXT IT IS TIME for a trip in the General's Ford Granada, to the International College for Officers in Sydenham. On the way I put to her the complaint, sometimes heard, that in contrast with the firebrand reputation of William Booth, the Salvation Army is now too much a part of the establishment. Burrows disagrees: 'Booth lived in the day before Beveridge's welfare state came along. The army was not then an international organisation ... we must be very careful not to lose our position in Third World countries. We can say things in Zimbabwe and get thrown out.'

'At the same time the army doesn't just want to look to its own reputation. It exists for people—the homeless, the inarticulate, the poor, and it guards the message of Christ. If we are too concerned with our own image and reputation then we are not the Salvationists we should be.'

At the college, Burrows speaks to the students about unity, uniformity and central rule. Could there be a Federation of Salvation Armies? She had raised this at another international gathering, and all had said no. An Indian officer had said: 'It is a priceless gift to belong ...

Crossing national and international borders is our treasure and should be maintained.' Burrows tells the class that unity and freedom are 'not mutually exclusive. We're not a missionary society, by which I do not mean to say that we do not want missionaries. In Africa we are the same Salvation Army as in Britain. Everywhere is the same. Alleluia.'

SOMEBODY ASKS ABOUT UNIFORMS. In Argentina and other parts of Latin America, wearing a uniform carries overtones of military repression. Burrows says she is proud of the uniform. 'The uniform identifies us. It says what we stand for.' Other students raise questions about the army's 'autocratic' rule. It is the subject of growing internal dissent, and often appears to run against the organisation's benign public image. But nobody in the class is in favour of change, which is one up to the traditionalists.

I ask about 'headship'— the belief, held by many evangelical Christians, that a woman should not have charge of men within a congregation. Burrows grins: 'They'll wake up.'

Back in the General's car, we discuss the question of 'image'. Burrows says the army seems 'old fashioned', but is not immune to theological and other changes. She says she is pleased with the openness now found in dealings between churches. But she is uneasy with American-style 'prosperity' theology—'This was certainly not Jesus' line.' What about the neo-pentecostal movements that have been making inroads in evangelical Christianity, the army's theological base? 'I think we must be cautious about "signs and wonders" and dramatic gifts. We should look less at the exotic features, and concentrate more on the working of God so that people's lives are transformed.'

The army is suspicious of liberation theology. It was a founder member of the World Council of Churches but withdrew from full membership a decade ago, while retaining fraternal status. Burrows says: 'Funding terrorism and violent groups is not a role of the church.' (The WCC claims this is a misconception of the role of the council's Program to Combat Racism.)

I am a little bolder than before. Has she ever lost her faith? 'I went through a rebellious stage.' What about romance? 'I had boyfriends at Sydney Uni. But when I entered [the army's training] college I knew it was quite likely that I would not marry. If you enjoy working in God's service there are compensations.' What career would have appealed if there were no Salvation Army? 'I think I would have been a teacher, university lecturer, perhaps a politician.' What politician has she most admired? 'Golda Meir; she was a woman of great conviction.'

I ask about her views on feminism. 'I'm sympathetic, but I challenge some of their views, particularly where they militate against strong family life. Self-development is important, but when a woman marries, she takes on other commitments. On the whole, I believe feminists have done good service. Women are inclined to come off second-best.'

Visits to a children's home and an old people's home follow, and then it is on to the International Strategy for Growth Conference, at an army training college in Denmark Hill. The conference, arranged by Burrows personally, is chaired by an Australian, Colonel Ian Cuttmore; there are 92 delegates from 39 of the army's 48 territories. Like other religious bodies, the Salvos are undergoing a difficult period. Extraordinary growth in Africa and the Third World is offset by a static situation or gentle decline in Britain and Europe. From the start, questions were candid. A young officer suggests that the army's boast of absolute equality between the sexes is defective. Specifically, he says that the talents of married women officers are not being fully used. (Male officers or officer candidates may only marry women who are themselves prepared to undergo officer training).

To this Burrows responds: 'The army used to talk about single women officers having the opportunity for higher office. There is a new awareness. An officer's wife should use her gifts, find a sense of fulfilment in ministry.' Then she qualifies her statement: 'We must beware the feminist philosophy ... the view that a wife must have a task regardless of her family situation.' Another delegate asks about leadership and democracy. In the old days the roof might have caved in, but if Burrows is surprised she doesn't show it. 'The army is changing to a more consultative style. A decision from the top is better if there is consultation lower down.'

FINALLY, SOMEONE RAISES a delicate theological issue: 'Are you willing to negotiate on baptism and the Lord's supper?' The Salvation Army, unlike other major Christian bodies, does not baptise and has no eucharistic worship. The stand is taken on the basis that all of life is a 'sacrament', but other Christians are faintly shocked. On a practical level, ecumenical bodies sometimes treat belief in the two sacraments as a basis of membership, implying that the army is not a 'church' at all.

Eva Burrows replies that the army's view is set out sympathetically in the World Council of Churches document *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*: '[The authors] accept that it does not invalidate our position as a church of Jesus Christ in the world ... It does not mean we are devoid of God's grace. The Salvation Army is unlikely to change its sacramental position at this time.' ■

Alan Gill is a former religious affairs correspondent for *The Sydney Morning Herald*.

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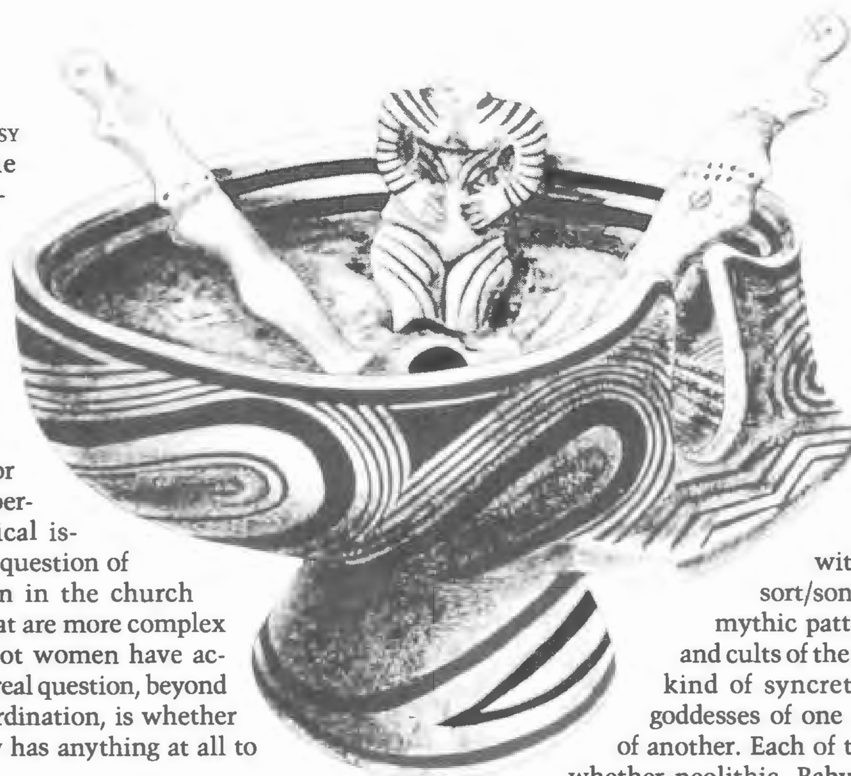
DOROTHY A. LEE

Dethroning the Goddess



An open-shrine model, with the Goddess holding her hands over the pregnant belly and seated in front of a hole for libations. From Romania, circa 4000-3800 BCE.

THE CONTROVERSY surrounding the ordination of women to the Anglican priesthood has been variously reflected in the media. Although media coverage has been sympathetic to the women, it has failed, for the most part, to perceive the theological issues at stake. The question of the role of women in the church raises questions that are more complex than whether or not women have access to power. The real question, beyond that of women's ordination, is whether or not Christianity has anything at all to offer women.

For many feminists, the answer would be a emphatic 'no'. Some—the secularised majority, in countries such as Australia—see the question of religion as irrelevant. Others, those for whom religious questions are still important, see the church as so patriarchal in its structures, language, liturgy, and sacred texts, that no concourse with feminism is possible. Women, they argue, have no option but to move beyond organised Christian religion and to find a spirituality elsewhere.

But leaving the church creates a painful dilemma. Either women find an alternative source of spirituality, one more conducive to 'women's experience', or they are left in an intellectual and spiritual vacuum. Postchristian scholars, particularly in North America, claim to have found a satisfying alternative by returning to ancient Goddess spirituality. This alternative poses sharply, for spiritually-minded feminists, the question of whether Goddess spirituality can indeed nurture women's spiritual life.

Goddess religion, as conceived by postchristian, separatist feminists such as Mary Daly, is built on a syncretistic interpretation of prehistoric and ancient texts and artefacts. It begins with the premise that religion in the neolithic period (*circa* 10,000-2500 BCE) was matriarchal, owing allegiance to 'the Goddess' (with or without a divine consort/son), and sees the same mythic pattern in the religions and cults of the ancient world. This kind of syncretism identifies the goddesses of one religion with those of another. Each of the female deities—whether neolithic, Babylonian, Graeco-Roman, Nordic, Celtic, African, etc—is supposedly a manifestation of one Goddess, the Great Mother, overthrown by patriarchal deities (*not* coincidentally) at the dawn of Indo-European civilisation. But this religion survived in pockets, so the theory goes, down through European history, particularly among women. Thus, the witch burnings from the 14th to 18th centuries, it is claimed, represent an attempt by the church to stamp out the last vestiges of Goddess worship.

Feminists in religion who accept this interpretation believe that women need to revive the ancient cult, because only by reviving it will women find a spirituality that reveres, rather than exploits, the female body and the earth. The new spirituality takes different forms. For many, including Mary Daly, it offers women powerful symbols of wholeness. For others, especially those involved in the 'Wicca' (witchcraft) movement, it involves the use of ritual magic to enable women to tap inner sources of strength and healing, and to work for peace in the world. The Goddess is believed to be the life force, the regenerating and revivifying power of na-

ture to which human beings, and all other life forms, belong. Such a spirituality is not necessarily separatist: for Carol Christ, a leading North American scholar of religion and a devotee of goddess spirituality, and for the now-famous Starhawk (writer, counsellor and self-confessed witch), it is as open to men as to women.

The problem with all these theories is that the Goddess myth is largely a construct of 19th century male romanticism—Frazer's *Golden Bough* is the best-known example. As the feminist theologian Rosemary Radford Ruether has pointed out, the cradle of the Goddess myth is a Romantic view of nature, rekindled by the counterculture of the 1960s. The myth itself is based on slender archaeological evidence. Little enough is known of early religion to make simplistic and generalised assertions, let alone to support a feminist ideology or to lead a religious revival.

FURTHER, EVEN IF IT COULD be established that the religion of the human race was originally matriarchal, where would that lead? Female deities are no bulwark against patriarchy—even when they are not acting in league with male powers, their main concern is with fertility. For modern feminists, who do not believe that motherhood is the only authentic female vocation, and who have campaigned for the right of women to control their own fertility, this is surely problematical. A return to Goddess worship is a return to fertility and motherhood with a vengeance. What appears as a way out for women is, on closer inspection, only a way in again. Goddess spirituality, at least in its ancient manifestations, represents the glorification of motherhood in a manner that is every bit as stereotyping as patriarchal marriage in the postindustrial West.

The aspect of the revived Goddess cult that has most attracted women is its respect for the realm of body-earth-matter. Reacting against a Platonic dualism that sees the body as inferior to the soul, which has permitted the rape of the earth by human (usually male) greed and domination, women find genuine appeal in a religion that respects the earth as sacred, and sees the body in terms of a holistic understanding of the self.

But is Goddess worship the only, or even the best, way to affirm the sacredness of the material realm? Seeing the earth as itself divine—part of the very being of the Goddess—may seem to be a means of safeguarding the fragile ecological balance, but in fact it is highly contestable. In Christian theology, such a view is judged idolatrous, confusing the creator with the created. Yet the problem with patriarchy—which has caused so much damage to the body of the earth, as well as to the female body—is precisely that of idolatry: the idolatry of the male over the female, the idolising of the human over the rest of creation. There is no way forward if we substitute one form of idolatry for another.

The issue is further complicated by the vagueness of most feminist exponents of Goddess spirituality about just what is meant by 'the Goddess'. Is she a divine *person*, a mysterious 'other' with whom we can nonetheless enter into a relationship? Or is the term another name for what we once called 'Mother Nature'? Is she merely a personification of female power—'womanspirit rising' (to cite the title of a collection of essays by Carol Christ and Judith Plaskow)—in a male-dominated world? Such vagueness is unhelpful to women, since it perpetuates the stereotype that women are more intuitive and less rational than men, and thus incapable of giving a coherent account of their faith.

Moreover, how does worship function in such a context? To whom is our love and adoration directed when we participate in Goddess ritual—in prayers and rites directed at ancient goddesses (such as those Carol Christ addresses to the goddess Aphrodite in her book, *Laughter of Aphrodite*), or in sacred rites directed towards the more 'scientifically respectable' Gaia? If she is little more than a projection of the self, the notion of worship becomes meaningless and ludicrous. The self-love and self-respect that women unquestionably need is subsumed into narcissistic self-adulation. This is precisely the kind of idolatrous distortion of which feminists have (justifiably) accused male patriarchal culture.

From a Christian perspective, there are other issues at stake. Goddess spirituality presupposes a deity who is wholly immanent, whose presence is a divinisation of the earth. The Goddess is seen, therefore, as inseparable from the cycles of nature, and from the death and regeneration of the earth: a deity who shares the fate of the world cannot, in any sense, stand outside it. Against this, Christians believe that God is both immanent and transcendent. The Christian doctrine of the Trinity is an attempt to articulate that paradox. The world is sacred for Christians not only because it is the work of the Creator but also because, in the incarnation, Creator and creation are united in the historical person of Jesus. Only a God who both dwells in and transcends the world is able to stand in judgment on the abuse of creation, and to guarantee its life.

From a Christian viewpoint, Goddess spirituality echoes Enlightenment fantasies about a return to 'nature' that will solve human problems. It operates on the assumption that prehistoric and primal cultures were whole and pure, and that women are instinctively more whole, integrated and pure. This kind of idealising of some human beings and some cultures over others can easily became oppressive.

GODDESS SPIRITUALITY RUNS THE RISK of divorcing nature from human history and culture. While exponents of the Goddess are eloquent on the subject of human creativity, there is no place for history in such a picture. History is either downplayed or ignored, and the Goddess belongs primarily to the world of nature—for example, Christine Downing's picture of Gaia in her study, *The Goddess. Mythological Images of the Feminine*. The Jewish and Christian scriptures, on the contrary, affirm the relationship of God to history and culture as well as to nature. The mythological stories of

Genesis tell not only of the creation of the world, but also the rise of culture. Both aspects are seen as God-given and God-inspired, but also distorted by sin and death. Even from the beginning, however, the hope of liberation in the face of human and cosmic alienation is present in Scripture, being picked up again in key passages of the New Testament such as Romans 8: 22-25 ('We are well aware that the whole creation, until this time, has been groaning in labour pains. And not only that: we too, who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we are groaning inside ourselves, waiting with eagerness for our bodies to be set free. In hope, we already have salvation; in hope, not visibly present, or we should not be hoping—nobody goes on hoping for something which is already visible. But having this hope for what we cannot yet see, we are able to wait for it with persevering confidence.' —NJB).

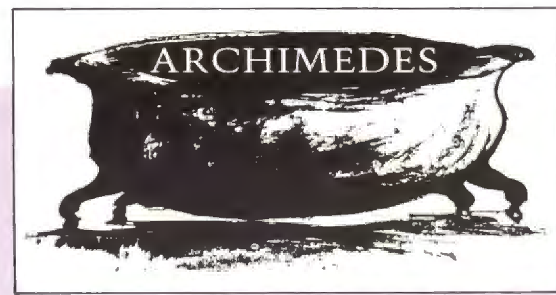
What remains attractive about Goddess spirituality, however, is the way in which it draws attention to the tiresome use, in Christian language, of solely male images and pronouns for God. It reminds us that it is not enough for Christian theology to reiterate smugly that God is not male, while ignoring Christian iconography and the effect of male symbolism on the spirituality of ordinary Christians. To read the various feminist writings on goddess spirituality is to be reminded of the pain that many women have experienced in their sense of exclusion, as women and theologians, from the church. In Ruether's words, they have been 'deeply wounded by patriarchal religion'.

If women are to recover a sense of female and male as made *co-equally* in the divine image, we need to recover also feminine symbolism for God—already present, at least implicitly, in Scripture. It may help to regain a sense of God as holy mystery, beyond human imaging or imagining, and to see both the strengths and weaknesses of all gender language for God.

But the basic disagreement between Christian feminism and postchristian goddess feminism is over the historical particularity of Jesus. For writers such as Mary Daly and Naomi Goldenberg, a male saviour by definition cannot save women, since it is from male patriarchy that women need to be saved. In a Christian feminist spirituality, on the contrary, the uniqueness of Jesus as an historical person protects the uniqueness of every living person, female and male. While gender, class, age, and race all limit Jesus to the particularities of history and culture, it is precisely in that particularity that the inclusiveness of the Christian gospel has to begin.

As the Risen One, Jesus is no longer limited by boundaries of space and time, but symbolises the universal divine love for all human beings and stands for a new, inclusive humanity beyond patriarchy. As Paul says in Galatians 3, quoting an earlier baptismal creed: 'There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.' In Christian feminist spirituality, reconciliation at all levels of existence—personal, social, mystical, cosmic—belongs to the Christ, who reveals neither the maleness nor the patriarchal power of God, but the redeeming love of the divine Father-Mother who gathers all creatures and all creation into the divine embrace. ■

Dorothy A. Lee teaches New Testament in the United Faculty of Theology, Parkville, Victoria.



Eggs-actly

WHICH CAME FIRST, THE CHICKEN OR THE EGG? Though this is one of the most ancient of scientific questions, the answer is quite indisputable: eggs were around long before chickens came on the scene. Dinosaurs laid eggs, for example, and it is quite arguable that much of our bird-life evolved from relatives of the dinosaurs. And, confectioners being the learned folk that they are, those very large chocolate Easter eggs—the size of footballs—that we can buy nowadays must also be symbolic of the evolution of higher forms of life after the demise of the dinosaurs.

Eggs are symbolic of new life emerging from entombment. Easter eggs, originally, were richly decorated real eggs and were given out on the feast of the Resurrection. In the Greek community there is still the wonderful custom of bravely smashing the egg in one's hands and crying out 'Christ is risen!'. Most of us today, however, have to cope with chocolate imitation eggs.

But why chocolate? The answer is possibly, though I admit it is drawing a long bow, to be found in a recent article in *Nature*. Every 100 grams of chocolate contains about 660 milligrams of phenylethylamine—$C_6H_5(CH_2)_2NH_2$—a stimulant that is closely related to adrenaline and which has the same effects on blood pressure, heart rate and blood glucose as does, so *Nature* tells us, sexual climax. More new life?

Chocolate also contains small amounts of methylxanthine—$C_5N_4O_4H_4$—and theobromine—$C_5N_4O_2(CH_3)_2H_2$—which are caffeine-like in the kick that they give our metabolism, though one would need to go on a huge chocolate binge palpably to feel their effects. These chemicals tend to stimulate the kidney rather than the brain, however, which may offer an explanation, other than the phenylethylamine factor, for chocolate being a good bed-time drink.

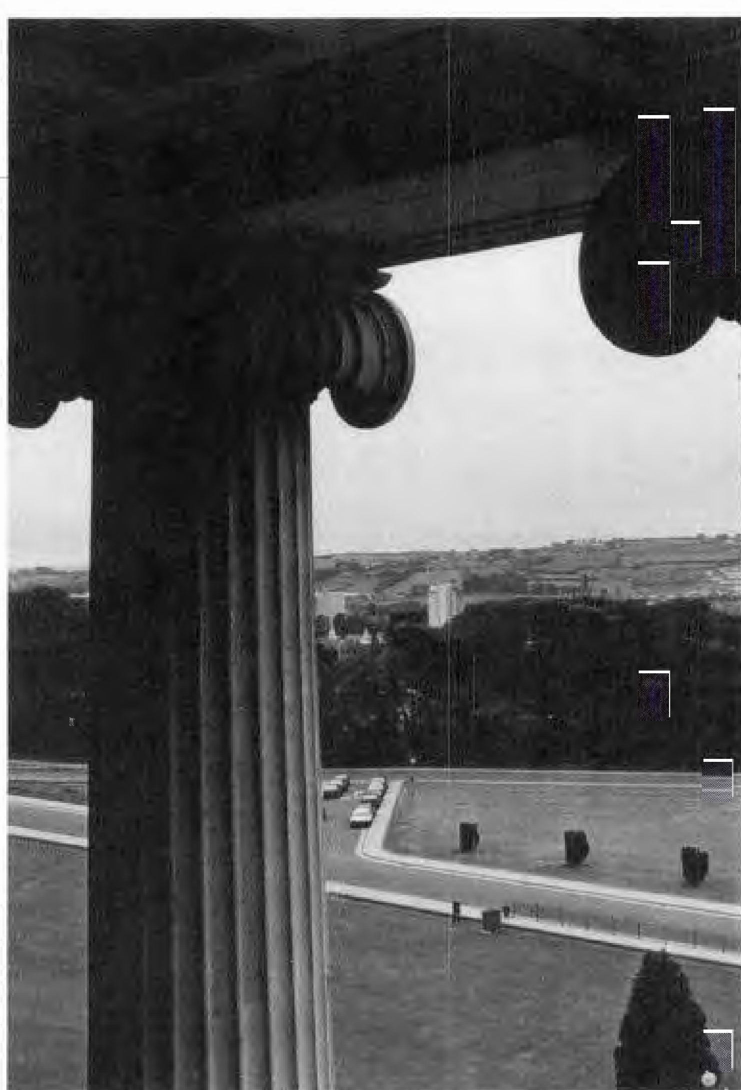
The good news is that cocoa butter, although a fat, has little effect on cholesterol levels. And it is cocoa butter that gives chocolate that delicious sensation of melting in the mouth: the temperature there is just right for such an effect. But what about our teeth? Here there is more good news: researchers at Melbourne University have isolated a milk extract called casein phospho-peptide which fights tooth decay and could be blended in with chocolate. The Easter egg has so much to offer us!

Meanwhile, as Archimedes heads for his Easter holiday, he is somewhat sobered by the advice of an old golf professional: the best way to clean the blades of your golf clubs is to soak them overnight in Coca-Cola. You can't beat the real thing. ■

—**John Honner SJ**

PATRICK O'FARRELL

Belfast? Belfast!



SOME MUSIC (WHY?) TAKES ON an idealised and impossible form within the recording apparatus of the head. All exterior performances trigger off this personal disc between the ears—and they never quite measure up. Not that the best of such interpretations don't hold true, just that over many years and repetitions, they have educated you past themselves.

For me, something the same is happening with Belfast. Part of this lies in size. With a population of 600,000, Greater Belfast remains within experience and comprehension, as London does not. Much more, in my case, lies in the mode of encounter. To *live* in a large place, other than one's birthplace, for a protracted time—Sydney, Dublin, in my experience—it is necessary to build artificial surrogate homes, so as to shrink the unmanageable range of possibilities. We have only *visited* Belfast, but so frequently, intensely, and over such a span of historical time, that these brief engagements with place have taken on the character of experiencing discrete performances.

This impression is enhanced by the variety of settings and atmospheres. Same composition, but playing in fair weather and foul; in quiet times of prehistory, more recently in halls of violence; jostled by soldiery who are then ordered back stage; the scenery—long summer evenings or close winter fog. Add the swings and reversals that have been British policy in Northern Ireland since 1968, and the viewpoint of whom one happens to be with, and one's own purpose for being there, and the variety of Belfast's performances can be bewildering.

This too because it is shallow on the land. Ireland's other cities are ancient and retain something of the urbane style and stance of their antiquity—*gravitas*. But Belfast is a city of our superficial age and atmosphere—the industrial. Its first explosion was of population in the early nineteenth century, as Catholics from the poverty of the West poured their labour in, to transform a village into a brick and steel machine of industrial capitalism. The hubris—and sectarianism—of Harland and Woolf, builders of the *Titanic*, was its dominant symbol. The Belfast style was of that age of iron: violent, divided, working class, managerial; profits and the Bible were the language it spoke, in dialects different from the rest of Ireland. But to the visitor from Queen Victoria's colonial cities its architectural face was familiar indeed, for it was merely another one of them.

OUR FIRST ORCHESTRATORS to the Belfast performances were ourselves, travelling by car in July 1966 as what amounted to tourists, to see what the place was like. This required some effort. Cars had to be exported and re-imported across the border, requiring prior application, massive documentation, and vehicle searches and inspection at several points, designed to deal with the massive cost differential between South (high) and North (low). It was common to drive from the Republic on bald tyres and get reshod in Newry at British prices—half the Irish ones. And re-groceried and re-liquored at similar savings. My pass says we re-entered Ireland at the 'Cloghore Frontier Post', a fair description. It was like a thirties movie set from the Balkans; raining, narrow lane, suspicious officials, unbelieving search. I long wondered why the cool reception until I realised (and to an extent this still holds good—or ill) that no respectable person from Dublin went North, full stop: if they were holidaying in Donegal they went via Sligo which

The view from on high: approach avenue to Stormont. Photo: courtesy of the Northern Irish Tourist Board.

eye could see, not only from flagpoles, but from sticks stuck on chimneys, gateposts, trees, barns, tractors—proclamations of loyalty proliferating beyond reason or restraint, divorced from crowds of people, a strange impersonal sea of imperial affirmations belonging to a forgotten (by us) sepia world, but fluttering out of their time; red, white and blue. As experienced then it was odd, disconcerting. As was that glimpse on the media horizon of a cloud no bigger than a distant Bible: some bizarre Reformation relic called Paisley was making silly trouble, calling the Pope 'Old Red Socks', getting himself into riots and gaol, ranting generally. Perceptive intelligent people like me knew that what was really important was that the Prime Ministers of North and South were getting together for the first time, for economic talks. Oh dear.

avoided the border. The Frontier Post men were used to encountering lying local smugglers, or persons of other types of ill-repute. Why on God's good earth would decent persons wish to go to Belfast?

Why indeed? I had encountered another example of prescriptive Customs' wisdom when flying into Dublin from Rome in 1965. The man before me had a luggage search which revealed a selection of mildly pornographic magazines: it was a time when Rome bookstalls carried Henry Miller but Ireland was still the isle of protected innocence. The Customs officer said 'Now sir, you won't be wanting these', removed them and waved him through.

So with Belfast. How often have we been asked in the South, or told, as recently as last year, , 'You don't want to go *there*'. Having been there, in 1966, before recent 'Troubles', I would have agreed. We saw it first on a glorious day, but my recollection (and my wife's) was of mild shock and revulsion: here were the endless red brick terraces so familiar from the then kitchen sink dramas of contemporary British film. (Again film, the colonial entry port). But the whole Belfast thing—slums, haze, cram, atmosphere—was a sullen sin, committed deliberately against the beautiful landscape that gave it space. Moving through promptly to Donegal, we had no profound intimations that the old Northern edifice was on the brink of challenge. Indeed the countryside was ablaze with Union Jacks, (I think there was some Royal visit) an extraordinary sight as they rippled as far as the

We lived in Dublin again for the academic year 1972-3. The North was a war zone: 467 people were killed in 1972, 89 of them soldiers from the 21,000 stationed there. It was the height of the indiscriminate bombing campaign, and the fear spilled south to produce a surge of virtual hysteria and nasty nervousness in the Republic which I have not seen either acknowledged or analysed: suddenly the North, all Southern national theory and high principle before, had become venomously real. No one with any sense went North at the best of times. This was the worst. As the author of *Ireland's English Question. Anglo-Irish Relations 1534-1970*, published in 1972, I felt obliged to go, given Sir Keith Hancock's advice that the historian needed a stout pair of boots; that is, to tread his ground. More than boots were necessary. Not just the jokey obvious—a tin hat and lots of luck—but more importantly, intimate acquaintance with the terrain and lots of local knowledge and arcane information—which I thought I could acquire. It was neither the time nor way to do so, nor was I my own best guide.

Train from Dublin was best access. Up on the first, back on the last, offered a full day in Belfast, without the accommodation problem of finding a hotel standing. (The pleasant Coleraine hotel I stayed at in 1973, to lecture at the New University of Ulster, was destroyed a few weeks later.) So train it was, the first of many such journeys my wife and I made that year, for we were

soon to meet that remarkable Northern historical entrepreneur, Dr Brian Trainor. Then director of the Northern Ireland Public Record Office, now director of the Ulster Historical Foundation, Brian embodied—still does—all that was best in our experience of the North—boundless enthusiast, unstinting friend, Catholic in high places, with a charming Spanish wife, frequent and intrepid border crosser, generator and facilitator of all things scholarly on an all-Ireland basis—schemes, books committees. It was he who introduced us to the marvellous collection of Australian emigrant letters in the Public Record Office and facilitated their use: that, and he, remained our Belfast magnet.

The hubris—and sectarianism—of Harland and Woolf, builders of the Titanic, *was its dominant symbol. The Belfast style was of that age of iron: violent, divided, working class, managerial; profits and the Bible were the language it spoke, in dialects different from the rest of Ireland. But to the visitor from Queen Victoria's colonial cities its architectural face was familiar indeed, for it was merely another one of them.*

1972 and trains. The two railway systems ran their own rolling stock the whole Dublin-Belfast route and one boarded which brand was in the station. Northern Ireland's were royal blue with gold crowns rampant. The Republic's were green: did they have emblazoned harps? These trains attracted sectarian stoning according to colour. From hidden railside places, tribes of youths with large rocks pelted the colour of their hatred as it sped along.

The effect on travellers was bowel-loosening, as the noise of a brick impacting on the metal side of the train next to one's seat was explosive (the windows had been strengthened). The practice was sublimely indiscriminate. A Northern Ireland blue could well be packed with dedicated Irish nationalists, while an Irish green could be conveying diehard Paisleyites. This border crossing railway ritual (a very mild one) ceased as the British got their helicopter act together and patrolled the line. More liturgical was the famous railway-iana encountered—permanently to my experience—at the entrance to Belfast station, stanchion graffiti to depress or gladden the pious heart—'F... the Pope'. Hello, Belfast.

That first trip in 1972 I set out studiously to walk the inner city, and to buy all the extremist publications I could. I queued at a newsagents to buy the Paisleyite newspaper and others, behind a heavily armed soldier who had been deputed to buy his squad's pornography to kill the time in their cheerless galvanised iron barracks. At the edge of the city centre, I realised that I was the only person walking, and that I did not know the difference between Protestant and Catholic taxis: one (whichever) hailed me. In the absence of a bus service, virtually destroyed at the time, multiple-hired taxis serviced the various sectarian areas. They were distinguishable by their routes, essential local knowledge which I did not possess. Wearing a Dublin coat and hat, but with Paisley's paper under my arm, I may have presented some confusion to the local observer. I doubt it—bloody idiot tourist, more likely. But it could have been said of the corpse, 'He had a papish face on him'. Time to catch an early train home. Not again.

SUBSEQUENT JOURNEYS IN 1972-3, with my wife, escorted by Brian Trainor into the 19th century world of Australian emigration housed in the heavily secured Public Record Office, offered weird contrasts between immersal in quiet time past and the unpredictable menace of time present. The real, soldier-ridden, helicopter-tormented Belfast encountered briefly in those passages through to the archival refuges of the past, was a city in grim control of itself, in winter brooding, functioning fitfully through stoppage and outrage, but nowhere near breaking or even thinking about it. Silly practical things remain in the mind—the staff of Queen's University library using their stack tower to spot explosions and traffic jams that would impede their routes home. At the time Dublin was another emotional story: there it was possible to encounter (and we did) incidents of suspicion and fear and hostility verging on the hysterical.

Twelve years passed before we saw Belfast again, still under threat, but the search gates gone, city plazas, the military less visible, the worst housing razed; in 1985 still tensely dangerous, but a happier place. Something was beginning to be thought and be done, beyond mere waging of repressive war. Thought and done, the scholar's mode; research and reflection—that had been our Belfast, and that of the people we moved with there: it was an irony to see what could be done, contrasting the city of 1973 and that of 1985, with intelligence, with the powers of the mind, with insight, reflection, in the wider world of affairs, power, violence. Not everything, but at least something.

1990 took us back to a facet of that wider world—that of the police. Our rental car was stolen from our guest house, just behind the Wellington Hotel, bombing target in Brian Moore's *Lies of Silence*. The previous week the army had shot dead two joyriders but cross-city transport remained a problem worth the risk and our car joined what was a nightly exodus to West Belfast. A telephone call to the RUC brought personalised service, a visit from a heavily armed officer who explained that they should locate the car in a couple of hours, but their 'understanding with terrorists' precluded their approaching it: they didn't touch it; it wouldn't be booby-trapped. Belfast honour. The RUC would convey the owner to the vicinity of the car, or one could have it towed home for £20. Two hours it took. Being of little faith, we had it towed: hopefully, anything nasty would shake out en route. I asked the cheerful man who brought it, with the ignition hanging out, is it driveable? Deirdre produced the key. A short debate decided

we should go together if we went—which we did, but back to Dublin. Not before officially reporting recovery at the nearest RUC station. Waiting there, we watched, and were watched by, the extraordinary collection that passed through of manifestations taken by the RUC. The only uniform, female, was behind the desk. The rest ranged from plain clothes of *The Bill* variety, to apparent tradesmen, to scruffy bums. Consequent idle thought: throw in army special units, Special Branch, MI5 and 6, and who *are* the people who walk Belfast's footpaths, drive its streets? Add terrorists. Arrive at the surreal: perhaps they are *all* players in the great and grim game?

In October 1992, being on a research trip to Ireland, we accepted an invitation emanating originally from Sydney, via the British Foreign Office, to hear and see Northern Ireland government at work: two days of briefing by officials and meetings with politicians and community leaders. No strings, all facilitation. Too good to miss, particularly as the peace talks, chaired by Sir Ninian Stephen, were still then in session in Stormont.

First to Stormont Castle, adjacent to the Parliament building for briefings. Six miles east of Belfast, high, beautiful, proud, assertive, its approach is an imperial avenue to a mile-distant gate, beyond which are the unwashed, in the Blood of the Lamb sense, as well as the other. In front of it all a giant Edward Carson (1854-1935), brilliant political architect of so much hatred, division and trouble, his hand raised in gesture interpreted by Catholics as a familiar contemptuous obscenity, the statue plinth inset with depictions of the signing in Protestant blood of the 1912 covenant against Home Rule.

Ever helpful, my spontaneous suggestion to our guide was, topple Carson and demolish that building constructed, to quote the first Prime Minister, as 'A Protestant Parliament for a Protestant People'. If these domineering stone affirmations affront irrelevant me—and they do—what of those they were meant to monumentally oppress? Much in Belfast leaves me in the classic historian's predicament—seeking, or at least glimpsing and sensing all sides, alive to all perceptions and interests—but on this I am quite clear: the symbols of the old regime must come down, or who is to believe, in the circumstances of Northern Ireland, that it does not exist still?

At the briefing Deirdre asked awkward questions; I concentrated on the how of what was said. The officials were Northern Ireland people, not relocated Brits. They are a British people. Again and again the phrase—'in this part of the country'. In this part of Ireland? No: in this part of Britain. The identification is automatic, uncontrived, as in the other frequent phrase closer to historical origins: 'over the water'. We are the Britain over the water. All the developmental figures, all comparisons, relate to Britain: it is a deep embedded mind-set. None related to 'Ireland' as a political concept. So, the accent is 'Northern', the province 'Northern Ireland', but what it is North of, has no political meaning to these people. Over the border is the Republic, a foreign state. No question though, that for them 'Ireland' has a cultural meaning, a sense of belonging and society and unique place in the island of Ireland.

Certain consequences follow. Taxed with the question of using oppressive, illiberal, indeed immoral security arrangements, their defence is that of the lesser evil, the occasional malfunctions of a compelled response. As they see it—and that passionately—they represent and administer a decent society which is being outrageously put upon by 700 extremists (their figure). They are dealing as best they can with an attack which is unreasonable, undemocratic, immoral, evil. And they are very sure of themselves, at core untroubled and unthreatened. They believe they belong, they believe their stance is reasonable, they believe they are making the best of things.

As to criticism, they have little patience with the type of high-minded abusive rant which seems to be the stock-in-trade of some journalists. Nor do they have high regard for the level of knowledge, or intelligence, brought to their briefings. An American politician listened to their exposition of the role of the various forms of the Unionist Party. He complained, 'I thought you guys said you have very few labour problems'. (Just in case: the Unionist Party supports Protestantism and some form of union with Britian; it opposes power-sharing and an Irish dimension.)

The view from below: statue of Edward Carson, outside Stormont. Photo: courtesy of Northern Irish Tourist Board.

But the nature of the situation constantly challenges official confidence and optimism. Failure is a daily event, even built in, and of a kind which is not simply frustrating, but distressing, deadly. Two examples. First, the so-called peacelines, high brick walls with wire overhangs that separate adjacent Catholic and Protestant housing in various parts of the city. These are new constructions, very high, permanent, and officially designed and built, each of these characteristics an implied admission of policy failure: they have walled sectarianism in, in keeping it out. Our questions about this, on a city car tour elicited evasion. Daily failures? Seeking to avoid what was obviously a major traffic jam, our driver detoured, but directly into the cause. The RUC were taping off a sectarian murder scene, from which the

assassins had fled, torching their getaway car a few blocks away—the cause of the traffic problem. Officialdom would rather we had not encountered this silence-inducing 'incident'. The theory had been explained at Stormont Castle. Assassins had developed techniques which made forensic identification from gun exhaust gases extremely difficult. All wear boiler suits, rubber gloves and boots, complete head coverage, and cotton wool in nostrils and ears—all this dumped immediately.

Failure was obvious without such confrontation. The IRA had announced it would bomb the city at will, and kill RUC men in the city at will. In response the army had sealed off the city area: traffic searches and delays were constant. But—on the night of our arrival we were awakened, at the University, by a distant city bomb (just a bank facade) and two days later an off-duty RUC man was shot dead in a city pub.

What to do? Carry on. But that too seems bizarre. The press kit issued by the Belfast City Development Office contained three enormous bright postcards—the Botanic Gardens, the Harbour Office, and Belfast main street by night: normalcy pushed to the absurd.

The Northern Ireland Office had arranged that we meet major party representatives. The SDLP (Catholic nationalist) young man was serious and sensible, taking the chance to niggle the official who was with us about the provocative behaviour of the army in West Belfast. We knew what he meant, having encountered some military contempt, generated by our names, at the Enniskillen border crossing.

The presumed significance of our names was also insinuated gratuitously into our conversation with two senior Unionists. Had we not met embodiments of what is in fact, the moderate Unionist position, we might not have appreciated so fully the profound difficulty of dealing with people such as these. Whatever the facade of reasonable argument, the eyes—and the outcome—tell a story of Not an Inch, No Surrender. Only direct personal encounter, the intangibles of human communication, renders the frustrative unreachable hardness of such people believable. And I wonder whether, in some private journal, they have deposited some equally unflattering picture of ourselves, as further minor, uncomprehending menace to their world.

Of course we met no 'extremists'. All we encountered were inhabitants of some middle ground, seeing themselves as being, in some way from somewhere, fired upon, targets. They have a long way to go before they can reach a productive commonality in sharing that recognition.

So again, what to do? So far as officialdom is concerned, what they *are* doing, and that amounts to attempting to undo four centuries (or is it eight?) of history. In conjunction with major physical rebuilding and new industrial initiatives, the social engineering being attempted is astonishing in its ambition and optimism. At last the pretence has been dropped that this is not a religio-cultural war. For the first time the government is facing the Catholic/Protestant divide in the workforce, even in 'peace-lines'. So much for crude Marxism and blind secularism which have confused the issue since 1968—and some satisfaction for one who wrote, in the 1970s, two books arguing the religious and cultural case. (But, Deirdre asked, might not you emerge from this engineering homogenised, less yourselves, unique identities gone? Disconcertment.)

Yet, yet—since 1800, Ireland has been a social laboratory for English purposes. Traditionally it has taken what were the benefits and yielded very mixed returns. Add to this some 1991 census facts—43 per cent Catholics, soon to outnumber Protestants. And the country lacks a young middle class. Sent 'over the water' for education, most do not return.

Grounds for pessimism? The men of violence—that unhappy political cliché—but, more widely, rock-hard immovabilities and incomprehensions of mind and heart, the old order and its disorders. Grounds for optimism? The Northern variety of Irish kindness, compassion and generosity; ingenuity, determination to do one's best, courage not to be terrorised and to work for the long term. Belfast is a place where one may come upon real evil as daily bread but also—and this has been our constant experience—meet great, ordinary, good, under extreme and prolonged duress. Good people there have learnt very practical meanings for those high-sounding but down-to-earth virtues—fortitude and temperance.

Complications enough, but outside all this is a weird maverick factor operative in and on the South—American academic visitors engaged in what amounts to an intrusive and dictatorial attempt to take over the Irish scene, by right of tribal connections and money. This astonishing proprietorial imperialism is another Irish story, as is British diplomatic stupidity in dealing with it, but its flavour is nicely caught by an incident at the Dublin conference of the Irish Association, to which we were kindly invited shortly after returning from Belfast in October last year.

An American speaker forcefully reminded the genteel Irish audience of the duties that flowered from eight centuries of oppression. The professor of history at Cork rose to enquire if some compromise might be reached on this matter. Perhaps the Americans could retain four centuries for themselves to dwell on, while the Irish could have the remaining four. Laughter—but not much: the perfect light riposte to an unconsciously outrageous invasion of sovereignty.

Over all these performances, and possible performances to come, who hears the true Belfast: the idea is preposterous, as is the concept—like the old Irish lady vehemently repudiating belief in the fairies: 'But they are there!' ■

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PETER PIERCE

Goosed by Captain Hook

ON 12 JANUARY THIS YEAR, nine months to the day that Euro Disney opened, we trekked there by Metro and RER to Marne-la-Vallée, at the end of the line. In those months, the theme park and its encampment of hotels lost 492 million francs ($A500,000) a day. This January morning it seemed that there were more employees than visitors in the park. As if awaiting a mock shoot-out, Mainstreet USA was deserted. In each of the four 'lands', restaurants were closed. The bleak Festival Disney shopping arcade was shut. Not a solitary executive traveller mistakenly in search of lost fitness or sexual opportunity passed in or out of the doors of Club Mickey.

Euro Disney's cruel abandonment by people made conspicuous the exotic cleanliness of this island within the Ile de France. There were no *clochards* and no alcohol, no litter, neither dogs nor dog shit, indeed little that was French at all. The messages of efficiency, politeness, the glories of adolescent culture and food that the New World intended to transmit to the Old were going unheeded. Despite benign 'demographics' (68 million people within four hours' drive), Euro Disney was nearly empty.

Paradoxically, it is best savoured that way. In cold, breezy weather, after school holidays, there was no need to queue for an hour in herding pens to ride Big Thunder Mountain. Tourists summoned from the hinterlands of the New Europe and from the USA are warned, in expectation of crowds that have rarely materialised, that two days will be required to enjoy all the resort's delights. Hence the accommodation on hand: the pink clapboard Hotel Disneyland above the main entrance; Hotel Cheyenne (off Desperado Street); three others on the shores of Lac Buena Vista, an expanse that Euro Disney hopes will vie with Versailles.

Those Americans who feel cultural twinges, recalling Henry James or Jim Morrison, and wish to leave these precincts, can buy the *Michelin Guide to Euro Disney*. In familiar green cover (although it ought to blush red) this piece of puffery spends dozens of pages on the attractions of animatronic elks and whimsical trappers nodding by the Rivers of the Far West; the 'mocktails' available in the poshest restaurant on Mainstreet (in Disneythink, believing in the virtues of the past means support for prohibition); Michael Jackson in 3D at Cinémagique. At the back of the book, such peripheral attractions as the three-star sights of Paris, and detours to Reims or Fontainebleau are listed for those not surfeited with culture at Marne-la-Vallée.

An end to churlishness: a deserted, spotless, safe Euro Disney was a wonderful site for adult nostalgia and spontaneous pleasures for children. Three passports at $60 each took us everywhere inside. In Fantasyland, the sanitised adventures of Snow White and Pinocchio (as Robert Coover never imagined him) radiantly fleshed out familiar cartoons. As well as Big Thunder Mountain and the riverboats, Frontierland oddly hosted Phantom Manor, but its hologram ghosts were wonderful. Throughout the resort the sound system was eerily clear, as if it could watchfully monitor one's progress as well as cheerily explaining each location. Tomorrowland, as we Mousketeers once knew it, has been righteously renamed Discoveryland, with regard to educational fad instead of the promised romance of science. Yet, in the Visionarium, Jules Verne came along for the ride, while George Lucas collaborated to create the vertiginous terrors of Star Tours.

Adventureland is the core of any Disney version of the world. As my daughter and I climbed the marvellous replica of the Swiss Family Robinson's treehouse, we were oblivious to the true adventure happening below. Clad in a Chinese downcoat, which made her resemble a glum refugee from the still unconstructed Easternland, my wife was seized from behind by a giant, chuckling, costumed figure. Captain Hook's embrace took her beyond childhood to the primal scream. Disney therapy at its keenest, this prompted our retreat across the border to Frontierland, within the fake adobe walls of a Mexican restaurant.

Euro Disney officials blame 'seasonal factors' for the theme park's catastrophic losses, as though it were a race mare. Perhaps they should be patient. The recession may abate; attendances rise as the last spasm of French resistance to capitulation to American popular culture runs its course. Rough red wine can be turned on, and *clochards* dressed as Hook, Smee and Goofy. The New European Order may yet boast of its Anaheim or Orlando on the Marne. ■

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Gerard Windsor

Inferno in paradiso

I have become irritated by the easy distinction between traveller and tourist. The traveller, this tired wisdom holds, is an extinct species: the tourist a ubiquitous one. As an act of defiance I went to Bali. I went furthermore with a wife and child, and we were packaged into a four-star hotel.

It was the oldest hotel in Bali, the second largest hotel in the world, a Japanese war reparation, and the jewel in the Jakarta government's entrepreneurial crown. Along the colonnades the stone gods had fresh hibiscus flowers laid behind their ears each morning. Chorus lines of squatting gardeners clipped the beds. The chattering frenzy of the monkey dance echoed faintly from the walls by the bedroom doors.

We took advantage of all the facilities. We asked for a safety deposit box. The attendant, in her cell, in front of her numbered wall of gun-grey metal, finished lighting a stick of incense. The hallowing sweet odour drifted across our valuables. We placed them in the long drawer. Passports, return tickets, Australian currency, marriage certificate, all the tokens of identity, loyalty and freedom.

'Do we have anything else?' I asked Louella.

'No, it's all there,' she said.

'Any more valuables?' articulated the attendant.

'No, that's the lot,' I said. 'All we've got.'

We went out for the day and viewed a volcano and had monkeys and bats make themselves at home all over us. When we returned the hotel was being razed by fire. We stood on the beach and watched the flame in our breakfast room searching for a last combustible corner. On the ten floors above, refractory suites still blazed and the ironwork balconies writhed under the heat. At the shallow end of the swimming pool three men in identical coats, hardly a uniform, worked a pump. Thin jets spent themselves futilely along the length of hose. From the nozzle the surviving water leapt into the murk of the ground floor.

Our room was in the garden wing. The fire had not vaulted across the palm trees, the thatched roofs were untouched. Our quarters, our luggage were intact, and we were transferred unscathed to another hotel.

Two days later the safety deposit boxes became accessible. We returned to the hotel and made a statement about our valuables. It was taken down by hand. We took the document to the police. They sat twitching their cigarettes in the ground floor room of the garden wing. They inserted forms and carbon paper, and typed our statement, but they were dissatisfied at their mistakes, and they typed it again. They had no English, we had no Indonesian. It was not a perfect document.

I was taken to a neighbouring room. 'I'll come too,' said Harry. The blackened boxes lay in rows across the floor. Debris, charred metal filings, indeterminate carbonised matter sat on coffee tables in neat piles. I looked at the boxes on the floor. The metal had kept its shape. Each box had a clear plastic bag slipped over it. The bags were numbered in marking pencil. 016, with a thick black crust beginning to obscure its clean lines, lay beside A93 whose singe-marked sides still exposed some lightings of grey. No two boxes had been taken uniformly. I said nothing for half a minute.

The attendant rose from behind his table and stubbed out his cigarette. 'Would you care to see a sample?' he asked reverently.

'Thank you,' I said.

He lifted back a lid. Wafers of ash grew from the base in a barely spread fan. They swayed under the minute disturbance of the air. 'Thank you,' I said.

I held up my key. 'Could I see my own?' I asked. 'A37.'

He took the key and held it to the light. 'Certainly sir.' He began to inspect the ranks along the floor. He worked his way several times across the whole parade. He was joined by a colleague. They slipped off several of the plastic bags and lifted lids. A white card with a number had been placed inside. They checked this against the number on the plastic bag. I backed out of their way and stood with Harry on the verandah. We watched the tropical energy of the rain.

The attendant spoke into his phone. A third man appeared, managerial, in his discreetly batik shirt. He carried an annotated list of numbers. I took an intrusive step back into the room. 'I thought all the boxes had been opened,' I said.

'They have, sir,' said the manager. He jiggled his sheaf of papers. He was in some pain. 'All the boxes have been opened. Both police and military were there. All boxes have been removed to this room. Those that had anything in them.' He pointed to a number on his list. 'A37 had nothing in it.'

'Nothing?' I repeated, squeezing the metal of my key between my fingers.

'No, sir,' he pointed to a code on his list. 'When your box was opened there was nothing in it at all.'

'But there must have been something.' I dangled the key at him. 'Ash at least.'

'No, sir, nothing at all. It must have been completely empty.' He shrugged, but in distraught puzzlement rather than any indifference.

'But ...,' I was at a loss. 'I have the key, I placed things in it, I've had to get new ones, I've signed a statement ... Can something be burnt so completely that it disintegrates entirely, there's no trace of it? I don't know... Look, I have the key.'

THE MANAGER SHRUGGED. He asked me to wait. A more senior manager came. They talked. 'Would you like to inspect your box?' the senior man invited me.

Harry and I followed down the colonnades, past the policemen, under the cordons. We were ushered into the lobby. Wires, cables, beams, air-conditioning ducts hung into the black hole. Smudged silhouettes of Balinese woodwork flanked the opening. Underfoot was a splodgy, crackling soup of burnt matter, water, shattered glass. I lifted Harry into my arms and went in. The managers went down a level that was no longer steps. 'Would you like to come this way.' They gestured towards the reception desk. I tightened my grip on Harry, I looked at my sandalled feet, and then at an advancing horizon of unalleviated dark. 'No,' I said, 'I'd prefer not to.'

The managers went on and were swallowed up. The light of a torch bobbed somewhere off. The managers returned nursing the long cartridge of a box. It was the least damaged one I had seen. I looked for a number. There was none. 'The number's on the outer door, in there,' said the senior manager, nodding behind him. He lifted the lid and held it vertical. I craned my head and peered up inside. He turned the box upside down and shook it. 'Nothing there,' he said.

'No, I agree,' I said. 'Nothing.'

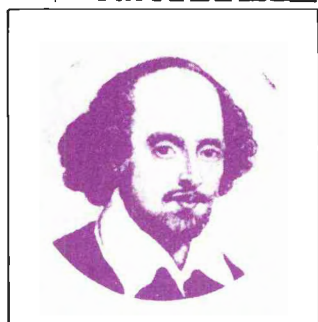
So we went white-water rafting. The brochure said the company observed the highest international safety standards, and the experience was suitable for non-swimmers and for everyone from 5 to 75. We pushed off in torrential rain. A large Swiss youth and a slight Swiss girl paddled at the front, Louella and I in the middle, Harry grinning at the rear, arm around the thigh of our steersman and guide, Juana. We bounced through the spray and the excitement of our first rapids. At the bottom there was a craft capsized. This was the run-in to Omaha Beach. Heads bobbed in the water, some near the upturned dinghy, others adrift and spinning downstream. 'Forward, Stop, Back,' yelled Juana. He manoeuvred us to a bank and tied up, then jumped into the water, and waded, swam, edged his way 30 metres upstream to where a helmeted face showed between two rocks. Below us the guide from the capsized boat was feeling out his position in the middle of the stream, crouched, legs apart, bracing himself.

Juana released a snagged paddle and it surged downriver, marking the channel of the current. The waiting guide caught it, grasped it like a quarterstaff and readied himself for Juana and his burden. But Juana picked his way without a stumble through the brown swirling flood, and came to his own boat. From him we grasped the lifejacket of a young German woman and hauled her in to lie between us in the bottom of the craft. 'Hey, Mrs,' Juana called gaily to the Swiss girl. 'Forward, this', and he made a motion with his paddle digging thewater back upstream. We untied and shot forward.

The German woman lay in our boat for an hour and a half sobbing and shuddering, breaking out into brief smiles, her legs twitching in shock. Harry's grin never left his face, but when we stopped his knees were blue and he could not stand, his legs paralysed with tension.

I could not sleep. The elements roared and cascaded around me, and what I most cherished was no longer in my hand. ■

Gerard Windsor is a contributing editor to *Eureka Street*. He is currently writing an account of religious life in the 1960s, a sequel to his fiction, *Family Lore*.



Books

Andrew Riemer

Behold the Bard

Shakespeare and the Goddess of Complete Being, Ted Hughes, Faber & Faber, 1992. ISBN 0 571 16604 0 RRP $50.00

There has never been a shortage of crackpot theories about Shakespeare—attempts to prove (almost always at enervating length) that one fact, and that fact alone, resolves all doubts and puzzles. Such 'solutions' are at times biographical: the plays were written by Christopher Marlowe, King Edward VI, Francis Bacon, the Earl of Oxford etc. Or else they offer cryptogrammatic revelations: the plays encode the mysteries of the Rosicrucians, the location of the Holy Grail, or the secret history of the Lost Tribes of Israel.

In its very appearance Ted Hughes's massive volume declares affinities with such obsessive fantasies. The opening paragraph resounds with warning bells: 'Shakespeare's "myth" is made up of two actual myths. Since his way of combining them takes the form of an equation where the first half, by its own inherent dynamics, produces the second half, and where the constants and variables work quite a bit like algebra (as they generally do in the life of myth), always producing the tragic explosion by the same chemistry, and eventually always producing the rebirth into transcendence by the same chemistry, I have called it Shakespeare's Equation, or, more often, his Tragic Equation, and sometimes his Mythic Equation, though occasionally it is more convenient to call it simply his myth.' (p.1)

All of this intricate study is dedicated to tracing that myth or equation through Shakespeare's career, principally from the moment the myth is supposed to have imposed itself on his imagination in *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece* in the mid-1590s, to its triumphant transformation in *The Tempest* some twenty years later. Almost every detail in the plays and poems—no matter how insignificant or apparently unrelated to the 'myth'—is subsumed within Hughes's grand design. He pursues the myth's origins and development by means of allusions to historical and biographical facts, to intellectual and religious preoccupations, to Western cultural history and to etymologies both precise and fanciful; in short a whole raft of 'facts' of the sort that are all too familiar from those harebrained attempts to enrol Shakespeare as a Rosicrucian (or whatever) that keep on cropping up in the seemingly inexhaustible products of the Shakespeare industry.

The Equation, then, is all. Yet what it is takes many pages to emerge. When it does emerge from its chrysalis—Hughes is very fond of using such images throughout the book—it is revealed to be as pertinent to Hughes's poetic imagination as to Shakespeare's plays and poems. Its chief implications are as follows: Hughes argues that the whole of Shakespeare's mature and characteristic work flows out of the two, complementary narrative poems of 1593 and 1594—*Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*. He sees Shakespeare's life from the moment the myth seized hold of him as an exploration of its power and consequences.

With *Venus and Adonis*, according to Hughes, Shakespeare returned to the potent mythic implications of a story which his contemporaries knew only in Ovid's prettified and tamed version. In this poem, he argues, Shakespeare uncovered the disturbing sacral origins of the story—which had emerged from the many fertility cults of the Mediterranean world—in which Adonis's rejection of Venus leads to the unleashing of her terrible powers, converting her from the Goddess of Complete Love into the Goddess of Hell. That conversion provokes the 'charge of the boar' which rises from the underworld to gore Adonis, causing a speckled flower—purple and white—to grow on the spot where he was slain.

In the myth to which Shakespeare gave new life at the end of the 16th century, according to Hughes's account, the blooming of that flower marks the moment of the rebirth of Adonis as the 'hot tyrant', the tormentor and ravisher of female chastity and purity. Shakespeare embodied that aspect of the myth in what was later to become the second part of the Equation in the narrative poem of 1594, *The Rape of Lucrece*, where the virtuous Roman matron is ravished by Tarquin, the 'hot tyrant', the complement or mirror-image of the dying Adonis. Most of his subsequent work—certainly the plays written after the 'problem plays', *All's Well That Ends Well* and *Measure for Measure*—push farther and farther into the matrix of this grand theme, reaching culmination in the great tragedies, and commencing a journey to transcendence with *Antony and Cleopatra*, the precursor of the Romances of the last

phase of Shakespeare's career. In the tragedies, Hughes claims, the Equation—where the charge of the boar converts Adonis into Tarquin—is explored with attention to minute details of the myth's poetic substance. Everything is made to fit into a pattern. The plays must not be allowed to reveal any inconsistency, any deviation from that purpose.

The impulse to include all and to account for everything leads Hughes on occasions into wild, whirling conjunctions, as in his attempt to establish an affinity between Jaques, the melancholy mocker of the absurdities of love in *As You Like It*, and the malevolent Iago by way of the shrine of St James at Compostella, also linking the phenomenon to *All's Well That Ends Well* just because a shrine of St James—and not necessarily that at Compostella—is mentioned in that play. In his attempt to build a great system Hughes cannot allow anything to be left hanging, everything he mentions (though there are important elements in these plays over which he remains entirely silent) has to be fitted into an elaborate pattern.

Yet for all that, and despite one's temptation to fling the book aside as an eccentric and indeed self-indulgent fantasy, *Shakespeare and the Goddess of Complete Being* is a work of singular importance both in the way it looks at Shakespeare and because of its relevance for the present state of our culture. By the end of this intricate, at times dense and tortuous, at times almost wilful meditation on the works of Shakespeare's maturity, the strength of Hughes's vision is confirmed. The book says something more valuable and urgent both about Shakespeare and about why Shakespeare has (or should have) remained at the centre of our literary culture than most other studies I have read in the course of the past decade or two.

MOREOVER—AND THIS IS PERHAPS the most surprising revelation this book has in store for its readers—it becomes evident that Hughes has appropriated, with some boldness, the methods and procedures of contemporary critical approaches to Shakespeare of the kind that allow no room for preoccupations such as his.

One all-important theme resounds through *Shakespeare and the Goddess of Complete Being*. The power of Shakespeare's art rises from his fundamentally religious view of the world. Though Hughes connects this to the great conflict between Rome and the reformed churches in the consciousness of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, he finds that the religious power of Shakespeare's vision resides not in any specific doctrinal formulations but in his having tapped into the rich source of 'truth' resident in pre-Christian and pre-Judaic myths. His basic assertion is that Shakespeare's mature works lead a life far removed from the social, political, psychological and sexual spheres of their superficial narrative and theatrical existence. They are poems, leaps of the metaphysical imagination which takes up residence within, or perhaps beneath, the individual characters, their lives and secular predicaments.

There is nothing new in this. Since at least the beginning of the 19th century it has been assumed that Shakespeare's most significant work reflects and is sustained by essentially abstract preoccupations. Consequently, the history of Shakespearean criticism until recent decades reveals an attempt to disclose the inner life of Shakespeare's works. Nor is the machinery employed by Hughes at all novel. The attempt to align Shakespeare with the great body of fertility rituals and cults has been examined by several scholars, notably John Holloway in a now sadly neglected book entitled *The Story of the Night*. His seeking to establish some links between Shakespeare and the teaching of the occult hermeticists, principally Giordano Bruno, was thoroughly explored by Frances A. Yates. The view that the 'transcendental' elements in *Antony and Cleopatra* anticipate the Romances, chiefly *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*, was stated with great elaboration by G. Wilson Knight. What is novel and fresh, as well as highly significant, is the new life Hughes has given to these traditional preoccupations by his appropriating the techniques of a school of criticism that has replaced these older approaches to Shakespeare in the course of the past 25 years or so.

The most revealing sentence comes late in the book. Having conducted his readers to the point where *The Tempest* is about to be revealed as the culmination and the transformation of the Equation—the reconciliation of Adonis and Tarquin—Hughes writes: 'There are certainly other ways to dismantle *The Tempest*' (p429). He could just as easily have written 'deconstruct', for his techniques are indistinguishable from the practices of Deconstruction, even though he 'dismantles' or 'deconstructs' these plays in a way quite contrary to the ideological preferences shared by most practitioners of Deconstruction.

Ideologically the book is entirely incorrect ... It does what Deconstruction is eminently suited to do, but which its practitioners have almost entirely refused: to liberate the suggestive power of Shakespeare's plays not merely from historical or conceptual probabilities, but also from the political or ideological preoccupations of this particular moment.

In traditional literary study, to establish some congruence between a writer's work and abstract philosophical or religious notions the criterion of probability must be satisfied, no matter how slippery all concepts of probability might be. To give a specific instance, *King Lear* cannot be 'about' the nuclear holocaust unless one were to argue that Shakespeare had been endowed with prophetic powers. That certain readers or directors of the play might regard the storm-racked heath where Lear endures some of his most searing insights as a post-nuclear landscape, was beyond the terms of reference which conventional literary scholarship had imposed on itself. Therefore, if you wished to argue that Shakespeare had been influenced by Giordano Bruno's mysticism, you had to deduce some 'evidence' that Shakespeare had encountered Bruno's esoteric teachings, perhaps

during the latter's residence in England. Given the late 20th century's deep disillusionment with a mechanical, Newtonian view of cause and effect in the physical world, it is not surprising that the restrictions of the 'burden of proof' should have grated on the sensibilities and ambitions of literary critics and theorists. An instance of this was the emergence during the seventies of a Shakespearian journal which sported the cheeky title *The Upstart Crow*—the sole requirement for submissions was that each had to be accompanied by at least two authenticated rejection slips from established traditional journals.

THAT WAS ONE of the first inklings of what was to come: the dismantling of the traditional boundaries of Shakespeare scholarship, and an attempt to allow free play to associations, suggestions, implications and the like which may be discovered within Shakespeare's works even though neither he nor his world could have 'known' anything about them. Henceforth you could write learned papers on the importance of the wristwatch in *The Comedy of Errors*. David Lodge summed up both the heady liberation and the considerable danger in this wonderful discovery when he made the central character of *Small World* achieve fame and fortune through a typist's error—his doctoral dissertation came to be mistitled *The Influence of T.S. Eliot on Shakespeare*.

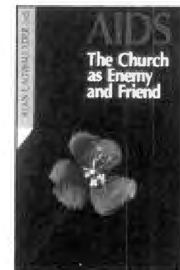
Thus was Deconstruction born. It gave theoretical (and jargon-ridden) justification to the lifting of restrictions which had hobbled critical imagination and ingenuity. It took apart a 'text'—a Shakespeare play, an ode by Keats—to emphasise what was absent, or buried, or denied. It went beneath the certainties of Shakespeare's 'happy' comedies to uncover their brutality in a much more thoroughly radical fashion than, say, Jan Kott did in the sixties. It insisted on dragging texts out of their historical contexts and to cast them into conjunctions with different, seemingly incompatible or incomparable cultural phenomena. It gave licence to the imagination and to ingenuity, both of which had been severely circumscribed by the stern dictates of traditional scholarship.

The benefits of such liberation must not be denied—even if many of us continue to hear a nagging, pedantic voice that insists on the need for some, no matter how generously defined, limitation to ingenuity and inventiveness. The great harm Deconstruction and its offspring the New Historicism (which is in effect an attempt to impose some limits on critical discourse) have produced has been a consequence of their disastrous conjunction with certain ideological and political preoccupations which have, in essence, little to do with the philosophical impulses that brought these cultural phenomena into existence.

Deconstruction arose at a time when literary academics (usually monolingual and increasingly ignorant of cultural history) became wholly preoccupied with the social, materialistic, political and psychological aspects of literature. Their emphasis on what they understood to be the principles of Marxism or the writings of Derrida, their narrowly schematic views of the problems of race, class and gender led to the exclusion of those aspects of literature that deal with or appeal to the imagination, the spirit or that numinous life which is above and beyond the particular worlds represented in a play, poem or novel. To cite but one instance which received considerable attention in the course of 1992: *The Tempest* is most often discussed in terms of the colonial exploitation of the 'New World'. Other attitudes, which see the play in terms of individualism, which regard Prospero as a figure of considerable (though flawed) benevolence, or treat the wonder and mystery of the play as positive elements within Shakespeare's design (rather than as the *Europeans'* delusions) are usually suppressed as politically incorrect. A censorship as rigid as any encountered in traditional criticism operates in contemporary Shakespeare studies, the aim of much of which (as in the reported attitudes of one Australian professor of English) is to remove Shakespeare from the curriculum.

IT IS AGAINST THIS new barbarism that Hughes directs the massive missile of *Shakespeare and the Goddess of Complete Being*. Ideologically the book is entirely incorrect. It stresses Shakespeare's imagination and individuality, it aligns his plays with deep currents of religious speculation, and it dares to discuss Othello's blackness as a symbol of his possession by the Goddess of Hell, or Lady Macbeth as the most thorough embodiment in the plays of the malevolent aspect of the tripartite Goddess. It does—scandalously but most importantly—what Deconstruction is eminently suited to do, but which its practitioners have almost entirely refused: to liberate the suggestive power of Shakespeare's plays not merely from historical or conceptual probabilities, but also from the political or ideological preoccupations of this particular moment in the long history of culture. For that reason, it will probably make many more enemies than friends. Yet what it has to say could, and indeed should, stand as a bright beacon in an otherwise benighted world. ■

Andrew Riemer is associate professor of English in the University of Sydney. His next book, *The Habsburg Cafe*, will be published by Angus & Roberston in May.



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PETER STEELE

The contours of exile

The poetry of Derek Walcott

IT HAPPENED, AS IT DOES, that a Nobel Prize-winner's publisher was caught on the hop when the name was released; but by now Faber's new printings of Derek Walcott's poetry have become available here. Once upon a time, a less-garlanded poet could still be omnipresent, at least in some circles—as when Robert Lowell's work was taught in all four years of English at the University of Melbourne—but tides have turned. The poet's laurels have lost their sheen in many eyes, and the critic's blade gleams in their place. The result has been, sometimes, that dead foliage has been pruned, but more often that the metallic has replaced the organic. In such a climate, even a Nobel celebrity may find it hard to flourish.

Still, for Walcott, the condition of flourishing has always been one of the things under question. Consider, for instance, this characteristic poem:

Preparing for Exile

Why do I imagine the death of Mandelstam
among the yellowing coconuts,
why does my gift already look over its shoulder
for a shadow to fill the door
and pass this very page into eclipse?
Why does the moon increase into an arc-lamp
and the inkstain on my hand prepare to press thumb-downward
before a shrugging sergeant?
What is this new odour in the air
that was once salt, that smelt like lime at daybreak,
and my cat, I know I imagine it, leap from my path,
and my children's eyes already seem like horizons,
and all my poems, even this one, wish to hide?

It has been said that poetry usually brings bad news, and perhaps it does, though not as its last word. Exile is by definition bad news for the exiled person, but it has precipitated some of the greatest of poetry—witness Ovid and Dante. Brodsky, reflecting on 'The Condition We Call Exile', said that 'Exile brings you overnight where it normally would take a lifetime to go into the condition in which all one is left with is oneself and one's own language, with nobody or nothing in between'. For an artist, that is good news, though of an austere and exacting kind. Wherever Walcott has been physically, whether in his native Caribbean or in Boston or London, his best work has been written from that difficult country of the mind. Like it or not, all poetry worth a second reading comes from the Land of Abnormality, against the grain of expectation. In the words which open L.P. Hartley's *The Go-Between*, 'The past is a foreign country: they do things differently there'. The poetical past, and present, and future, is a foreign country. Writing is always writing home from exile.

Of course, *Preparing for Exile* is greatly concerned with the dark side of futurity, death. If poetry 'estranges' consciousness, death is the estranger *par excellence*. What Rome did to Ovid, and Florence to Dante, death does to all of us. And it does it to others, especially the storied and celebrated ones, before it does it to us. Gwen Harwood, in a poem mourning the death of Vincent Buckley, wrote, 'Irish Darling. It's mortals who die';

there is an element not only of the affronting but of the outrageous about the exilic death of those who have immortalised themselves to us. And that is why there is something singularly touching in Walcott's citing 'the death of Mandelstam'. Mandelstam gave himself to poetry as the candle gives itself to the flame; but in time he died, with many millions of others, as a victim of killers with a boundless hatred for creativity and liberty. That lends to his death an outrageousness far beyond anything due to our organic fragility.

I MAKE THE POINT because, although Walcott can and should be characterized in a variety of ways, what has often been overlooked in him is the metaphysical note—the *ictus* that can leave the reader where it caught the writer, somewhere between provocation and stillness. Good poetry stops us in our tracks, visited as we are by whatever it is that has stopped the poet in his tracks. This agency may properly be, as in Walcott's case, something stemming from cultural marginality, from a fascination with the dramatic, from an equipoise between the lyrical and the epical, or from the interweaving of all these. But what *lasts* poetically often does so because the words re-key alertness from a minor to a major mode. And one of the best-established ways to bring that off is in the vein of questioning.

In a much-anthologised poem, *A Far Cry From Africa*, from his first book, Walcott, reflecting on his bloodline, asks,

I who am poisoned with the blood of both,
Where shall I turn, divided to the vein?
I who have cursed
The drunken officer of British rule, how choose
Between this Africa and the English tongue I love?
Betray them both, or give back what they give?
How can I face such slaughter and be cool?
How can I turn from Africa and live?

This might be a mantra to be repeated in the face of many a colonial and postcolonial predicament—and, as such, as relevant to a Gaul under Rome, or an Argentinian under Spain, as to the simmering cauldron of Barbados. It also makes explicit Walcott's bewitchment by 'the English tongue', a thing which is, for its lovers, as good a sacrament as any yet to be dreamed up. And it has all the air of dramatic interrogation, of Elizabethan flair, which has over the centuries lent vivacity to so much writing in English, whether in poetry or in prose. But for my money, the telling note in this poem of thirty years ago is the reverberant *question*, as such. I will back poetry's capacity to ask us what is so, as against its proficiency at telling us what is so, any day. That in doing so it diminishes the gabble of the ideologue, of whatever stripe, is not its main excellence, but is something for which to be grateful.

I do not know why the committee at issue balloted for Walcott. The Muse, allowed a vote, might bear in mind three things: his ability to write (like Keats, and like Eliot) in the shadow of the eclipse at once of language and of personality; his sense not only of the vividness but also of the imminence of experience, whose index is sensuality; and his alertness to what Seamus Heaney calls 'the sorry deprivation that occurs when any conjectural meaning is divorced from the poem's body of sound'.

Just so, all of us are swaddled in mortality, are prompted by stimuli, and are the sound-paths of sense. Poetry of distinction embodies this ensemble as if its free accomplishment were all-but-inevitable. That it should, as in 'Preparing for Exile', be occasioned by the prospect of unspeakable loss, does not, somehow, prevent it from occurring.

The one-and-a-bit poems I have quoted will make it clear that Walcott is the beneficiary of much 'cultural endowment'—the sort of thing which the sippers of sundowners have begrudged 'the natives', and concerning which the newly-liberated feel, to say the least, wary. As religion, degraded, clogs the heart instead of exposing it: as intellectual critique, manipulated, preens the wits it claims to employ: so the 'devices and desires' of poetry can take writer and reader, together, back to some cultural sac. This is worse than a world away from the shock of recognition I mentioned earlier: it is its anti-world. Auden said that it was the poet's business to disenchant and disintoxicate. However beguiling the writer's strategies, and however engaging his adornments, he comes to apply astringents. Poets who do not tend to keep us awake have been telling us lies, and this is no less true if they have been lying while shouting at us.

Recently, the first book of essays on Walcott's poetry has appeared. I have not seen it, but at least one review suggests that it is worth the carriage. It would be a sorry thing if his work were not attended, as Heaney's, for instance, has long been, by intelligent and taxing critique. But the further we go in time, and the more intensely the relationship between word, world, and self is debated, the more paradoxical it would be if the great pallium of interpretation were to be flung, smotheringly, over the shoulders of the poems.

True, Walcott has knocked around with the past, with a vengeance. For at least thirty years, for instance, he has alluded, glancingly or substantially, to *The Odyssey*, and last year he put a version of the whole damn thing on the stage at Stratford-upon-Avon. Combing through his hundreds of poems, I am taken, almost without exception, by his filial indebtedness to his imaginative begetters. To take those debts away would be like taking away Yeats' debts to the engenderers of his dreams. But who reads Yeats simply to hear him trumpet his progenitors? We want to hear his hurt said in such a way that we know in it something of our own: and, in the good saying of that hurt, something of our healing. What is on offer from Walcott is there on those terms.

HAD WE BEEN there to ask Dante from what he was exiled, he might have said various things: from Florence; from Heaven; from Beatrice; from youth; from serenity. Had any of us had the wit or trenchancy to press the question, we might have asked him about his exile from the art itself—the thing implied in his own citing 'the skill of the art and the trembling hand'. Such questions attend, sooner or later, all writers of major ambition.

And if ours were a culture disposed to interrogate prophets, we would ask of them not only how accurately they addressed what is so, but how imperatively they drove us into what we have not yet seen. If this were a culture taking its writers seriously, it would fear what they divulged, not because that was, necessarily, menacing, but because it was, inevitably, awesome—and was so because common speech, uncommonly wielded, could take us into zones of realisation which were also zones of transformation.

AS THINGS STAND, though, we are safe from such interrogations. The spirit of contemporary Australia is such that Walcott and his like will make no difference to our consciousness, whether inside or outside the institutions which claim to foster education. The bitter, but by now commonplace, truth is that to face into the vocation of poetry as Mandelstam did, at his life's cost, is in the present milieu of the West equivalent to diving handcuffed over a cliff.

Anti-humanism has become such a cultural axiom that to protest against it is taken for prating. 'In the kingdom of the blind, the one-eyed man will have his eye wrenched out': Kafka did not say that, but then Kafka did not live in 1993. In his time, you had to invent and sustain your own despair: it was neither institutionalised, nor subsidised by the public.

After which, genially, I commend to you the works of Derek Walcott. They are praised, in handsome terms, by his distinguished peers. They are prolific in autobiographical gesture, in complaint and satire in the face of society's self-lesions, and in all those good postcolonial sentiments which continue to cost him more than they are likely to cost most of their applauders.

Far more importantly than any of that, the poems display the insignia of a human being who, when first he entered the world, entered the word: and who found, soon enough, that they are one. As things go nowadays, that makes him an exile indeed. ■

Peter Steele SJ is reader in English at the University of Melbourne.

PETER PIERCE

Babes in the woods

The Secret History, Donna Tartt, Viking (paperback) 1992.
ISBN 0 670 84365 2 RRP $24.95

THE PLOT OF *The Secret History*, Donna Tartt's first novel, is unusual but readily summarised. By chance, Richard Papen escapes from the *lumpenbourgeois* world of a Californian small town to study classical Greek at an exclusive college in New England. The movement back east represents both historical and social disruption. At Hampden College, Richard is embroiled in the fascinating, and finally murderous, attempts of five fellow students of Greek to re-enact ancient bacchanals in the nearby woods. His apparently rich and blessed colleagues are Henry Winter, the twins Charles and Camilla (naughty, topical Tartt), Francis, a homosexual, and Buddy Corcoran, who is 'as unsubstantial as a hologram'. Like Melville's Ishmael, Richard alone survives to bear witness; he is left at least semi-intact, with 'the only story I will ever be able to tell'.

Tartt fashions a bravely self-indulgent vehicle for that story. Her peremptory intelligence, combined with a resented inexperience in the shaping of fiction, means that the novel's technical procedures are in clear and vulnerable view. Desiccated critics may deconstruct them at leisure, but novels remain their authors' hard-won efforts of craft. One of the primal, if now illicit, pleasures of reading is to respond to those efforts with sympathy.

In the case of *The Secret History* Tartt sets herself some rough problems to handle. These include the internal balance of satire and melodrama; how to sustain sympathy for those dead-weights of the novel, characters who are brilliant and/or charming; the need to vary dialogue, not to telegraph too many punches and to play fair with clues to behaviour. Admiration, sympathy and disappointment are the predictably mixed responses to what Tartt achieves. She has been belaboured by reviewers around the world for her (or her publishers') uncertain Greek. One suspects that she would more dislike critics' qualified praise for a typically valiant, technically flawed first novel.

This is because she tries so hard with its construction, while endeavouring to give the impression of insouciant ease. Faced with the task of making the unlikely seem veritable American reality, Tartt adopts a hallowed point of view on the events of her story. *Moby Dick*, *The Great Gatsby*, *All the King's Men* and *Burr* are works in one great tradition of the American novel. All are narrated by emotionally hampered outsiders who tell of the barely credible deeds of men much more dangerous and powerful than they will ever be. In a minor key, this is Richard Papen's relation to the 'gilded youth' (their blurb for it) with whom he becomes involved at

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Hampden. Thus he witnesses to self-destructiveness in one of many American grains.

Tartt has moral questions in view: the costs of intellectual hubris, not only for those who are victims of it but for the innocent on whose lives they trespass; the nature of teaching, and in particular the responsibility of such a fabled academic as Julian Morrow for the courses of action that he encourages in his pupils; the dispensability (or otherwise) of human life. If such a listing sounds portentous, that is the novel's way. When Henry Winter speaks of how it felt to murder a stranger in the woods (an irascible farmer, as it happens, but his life was of no importance to the initiates in bacchanal who killed him), he tells Richard of how it enabled him to do what he wanted most: 'To live without thinking'. Moreover, he rejoiced in 'that surge of power and delight, of confidence and control. That sudden sense of the richness of the world'.

This revelation comes much too late in the book for its ethical implications to be scrutinised, even by the credulous Richard Papen. Recall that Henry is meant to be a genius, who reads Sanskrit for fun, translated Anacreon at 18 and even studied the methods of those 'master-poisoners', the Persians, when he was considering toadstools rather than a cliff as the means of ridding the group of scholars of its whistleblower.

Hannibal Lecter, the character created by Thomas Harris, is a genius too; and it was Harris who imagined murder—especially serial killing—in America as a perverse form of art. *The Secret History* is dedicated to a writer who sensationalised that amoral view, Brett Easton Ellis, who enjoyed a brief season in the shade (and under plastic wraps) as the author of *American Psycho*. For all its length, *The Secret History* refuses the challenge to analyse the psychopathology, the causes and costs of the two murders that it contains. This represents both a technical and ethical evasiveness at the heart of the novel.

Weakest at its principal business, *The Secret History* has incidental strengths of a kind that Tartt might reckon commonplace. While she never persuades us of the powers of mind and will of Henry and his mentor Julian (Richard lamely explains that 'it is impossible for a mediocre intellect to render the speech of a superior one'), Tartt effectively evokes the ordinary American life that they disdain. The novel's most harrowing and best-written episode has nothing to do with mutilations committed by pompous youths in bloodstained sheets, but with a funeral in Connecticut. There a hearty, self-deceiving father and a febrile, embittered mother admit mourners for their son into their upper-middle class display home. Tartt here finds something to write about that is not bound to chic, or to cerebral duty.

Without evident authorial awareness, *The Secret History* veers between accomplished, dry wit (George Orwell's reputedly chilly opinion of Julian Morrow) and hammy melodrama (a pregnant dog is 'a very bad omen', sighs Henry). There are lapses that threaten to make Tartt's whole project look risible: 'A November stillness was settling like a deadly oxymoron on the April landscape.' Too soon lauded, and abused, besides being threatened with translation into film, *The Secret History* may already have doomed Tartt to live out that most poignant of writer's fates in America, wherein she will bitterly discover the failure of success. ■

Peter Pierce teaches in the Centre for Australian Studies at Monash University.

Paintings by
Waldemar Buczynski

Australian Galleries—Melbourne

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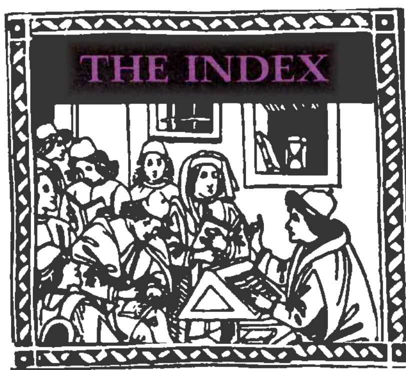
until 8 April



Wasteland to World Heritage, Colin Michael Hall, MUP, 1992, ISBN 0 522 84496 0 RRP $24.95

This worthy but dry book began its life as an undergraduate geography essay and became part of the author's postdoctoral studies. It reads like it. The research is painstaking, and the text is dotted with lists and tables. The book is packed with information invaluable for anyone seriously interested in environmentalist politics, but for those who just like cuddly animals and trees, getting from cover to cover will require more commitment than the average bushwalk.

The author traces the history of demands for wilderness preservation from the 1960s, when the modern conservation movement emerged, through the controversies over the Barrier Reef, the Daintree rainforest and the Franklin Dam, up to the present day. He deals almost exclusively with 'wilderness', not broaching the other big conservation issues, such as land degradation and salinity. The book concludes that the Commonwealth has the power to develop a national wilderness reserve preservation system, and makes a plea for action, although the author obviously doubts that the political will matches the legal power.

—Margaret Simons

Whitlam Revisited: Policy Development, Policies and Outcomes, Hugh Emy, Owen Hughes and Race Mathews (eds), Pluto Press, Leichhardt, NSW, 1993. ISBN 0 949138 99 1 RRP $24.95

The Keating government as Whitlam's true political heir? That's what Paul Keating claims in his preface to this collection of conference papers on the Whitlam legacy. Despite Labor's flirtation with free-market economics during the 1980s, some of the changes in the party's vision of the world that are usually associated with Hawke or Keating in fact began under Whitlam: the scaling down of tariffs; a preference for public investment in the form of transport and urban services; Medicare rather than a British-style health service; a steady expansion in tertiary education. All these may be traced to the changes in the ALP made possible by the federal intervention in the Victorian branch which Whitlam engineered in 1970. That resulted in a more democratic party with a new rhetoric: less emphasis on equality of outcomes, and more on equality of opportunity and fostering a greater sense of national identity.

Still not convinced? The interest in these essays and memoirs lies less in what the writers have to say about a turbulent time in Australian politics than in their anxiety to be seen both as initiators of change in their own ranks and as sharers in a great tradition. I wonder whether contributors to *Keating Revisited*, 20 years from now, will feel the same way.

—Ray Cassin

Inky Stephensen: Wild Man of Letters, Craig Munro, UQP, 1992. ISBN 0 7022 2389 1 RRP $29.95

We've all met Inky Stephensen in some shape or form. He could 'stir a pub to life'. D.H. Lawrence said he was unable to sleep after their first meeting because 'the walls of the room still shook' with Stephensen's exuberant conversation. But he was equally capable of taking to his bed for a fortnight when he got hit by the glums. Nettie Palmer reckoned 'such bubbles have notorious powers of failing'.

One of Craig Munro's many achievements is that he doesn't psychologise such an uneven character into comforting explanations. Instead this re-release of his 1984 biography is a unique and rather sad account of a Queensland Rhodes scholar whose untimely political passions had him sent down from Oxford as a Bolshevik in the '20s and interned as a pro-fascist at Tatura during the '40s. His literary passions were equally out of joint as he struggled against all reason to establish a publishing industry in Sydney in the '30s. Such was Stephensen's fascination, however, that the whole narrow world of literary Australia would have to feature in any telling of his ups and downs—and it does.

—Michael McGirr SJ

Talking Points

The Regulation of Conscience

Key Issues in Business and Professional Ethics

A symposium presented by
the St James Ethics Centre and the Centre for Philosophy and Public Issues, University of Melbourne.

In association with
the Business Council of Australia and the Victorian Council of Professions.

The Grand Hyatt, Collins Street, Melbourne,19-20 April, 1993.

Speakers include: Mr John Gough, chairman, ANZ and Pacific Dunlop; Dr Davis McCaughey, chairman, advisory board, Centre for Philosophy and Public Issues; Phillip Adams, broadcaster and commentator; Dr Judith Lumley, Centre for the Study of Mothers' and Children's Health, Monash University; Peter Costello, MP; and Jane Elix, executive director of the Australian Federation of Consumer Organisations.

Inquiries: Rachel Sommerville, Centre for Philosophy and Public Issues, University of Melbourne.
tel (03) 344 5125 **fax** (03) 344 4280

Philosophy and Applied Ethics Re-examined

A conference in Newcastle, NSW, 6-8 August 1993.

Once it was thought that applied ethics (especially medical ethics) had given philosophy a rebirth. However, now disillusionment has set in: there appears to be a significant gap between the theory of applied ethics and its practice. What is the role of philosophy in applied ethics? Should the philosopher be involved in decision-making? And who should teach applied ethics?

Speakers include: Ms W. Bacon, freelance journalist and senior lecturer in journalism, University of Technology, Sydney; Prof. L. Chipman, pro-vice chancellor, University of Wollongong; Prof. A. Coady, director, Centre for Philosophy and Public Issues, University of Melbourne; Prof. M. Charlesworth, director, National Institute for Law, Ethics and Public Affairs.

Inquiries: Keith Joseph, Department of Philosophy, University of Newcastle, NSW.
tel (049) 21 5186 **fax** (049) 21 6928

JOANNA MENDELSSOHN

Ear ornament (Manuli). — from Sumba

Art from the edge

Art, politics and cultural diplomacy

Beyond the Java Sea: The Art of Indonesia's Outer Islands
Australian Museum, Sydney, until 30 May
Queensland Museum, Brisbane, 1 July-30 September

ON ONE LEVEL, *Beyond the Java Sea* is a triumph of cultural diplomacy. It is, as we are reminded in the press kit, the most significant cultural link between Australia and Indonesia since the signing of a joint cultural agreement in 1968. The careful wording of the official Indonesian embassy speech at the media launch says it all: 'We at the embassy are of the opinion that the improvement of bilateral relations that is now taking place will not be complete if the cultural component is neglected.' *Beyond the Java Sea* is cultural diplomacy operating on a large scale; the importance of the works in the exhibition is subsumed by the subtext of closer cultural links between the two countries.

Professor Moegiadi, who delivered the speech for the ambassador, also neatly made the point that: 'The mounting of this exhibition will not only enable Australians to develop a greater appreciation of Indonesia's cultural treasures but is also a real demonstration of our two nations' commitment to continuing dialogue, interaction and co-operation. It will have implications in the realms of politics, economics, trade, education and tourism.'

Although the subject of Australia's joint military exercises with Indonesia was not mentioned, it was clear that support for the exhibition ties in with the Australian government's policy of fostering links with this neighbouring military power.

So if it is a Good Thing to get on with the neighbours, why does the marketing and presentation of *Beyond the Java Sea* leave such a feeling of disquiet? The original version of the Smithsonian-organised exhibition toured the US in 1991, and later the Netherlands. A significant proportion of the works were then returned to their Western owners, and works from Indonesian collections were substituted.

According to the Australian Museum, although some of the substitutes were made because fragile pieces could not cope with an extended tour, most of the changes happened because of political considerations. In the Year of Indigenous Peoples it is surely proper to encourage the original owners and to give less emphasis to the collections of the colonisers; but Indonesia itself, of course, has a history of unhappy relationships with its own indigenous peoples.

The politically inspired substitutions caused a slight ethical dilemma in the Australian Museum's conservation department. Australian conservation practice runs on the motto of 'do no harm'. There is a recognition of the integrity of the artefact and while advanced technology is used to preserve pieces, only the damaged ones are restored—nothing is scrubbed back to look like new goods. Many of the American pieces in the exhibition have come via dealers, so the entire exhibition has been treated to a glossy restoration job. Pieces hundreds of years old have been made to look new, and the Australian conservators have had to clean back the substitute pieces so that they would fit in.

But the real problem with *Beyond the Java Sea* comes from the notion of colonisation, and the question of who exactly are the indigenous people of Indonesia. Because even with the greatest goodwill in the world it could not be argued that the people of 'Indonesia's outer islands' are at the centre of that country's political and cultural life. They are the 'colonised' of the present hegemony, just as all of the Indonesian islands were once colonies of the Netherlands and Portugal. The former states of East Timor and Dutch New Guinea are just the most politically vocal of a multitude of cultural minorities.

THE IMPORTANCE OF the exhibition to Australia is that for the first time we can get some sense of the range of different cultural and ethnic groupings of modern-day Indonesia. The different religious traditions—and by implication the different histories—are there, woven through the textiles, moulded in the metal, carved and painted in the wood of the many artefacts.

There are old histories. One piece of pottery, found at Gawa in the Solomon Islands, has been dated to approximately 1000 BC. The traders of the old spice islands have been going a long time. A bronze drum from Sangean Island, one of a group that string out to the east from Java, stands at the entrance. It is between 2000 to 2500 years old.

The lack of precise dates given to this, and also to the terrifying armour of the Nias Warrior (captioned 'before 1917') is an indication of the nature of serious scholarly attention to these cultures. The expensive dating processes of modern technology are yet to be applied to these works, and parts of modern Indonesia are not easily accessible to archaeologists.

But the works speak eloquently for themselves without dates. There is the warrior armour from Nias, the swords from Batak and Sulawesi, the multi-pronged sword from Timor, the warrior jackets from Borneo's Dayak people. All these are cultures that value war and may settle their disputes in battle. The military nature of the Indonesian regime ceases to be a surprise.

As well as war, there was and is trade. From time immemorial the inhabitants of these islands have been putting to sea to buy and sell produce. Even the north-west coast of Australia had frequent visitors who fished the waters and came to know the local Aboriginal population. It is understandable then that some ceremonial woven cloths from the Lampung region in southern Sumatra should be known as 'ship cloths'. In a world in which change and renewal come from the sea in a boat, it is appropriate that the festivals of change—birth, marriage and death—should be wrapped in fabric celebrating sea travellers.

The sea brought trade, wealth—and religion. Images and motifs from Hindu and Buddhist iconography occur throughout the eastern part of the islands. The tree of life, protective peacocks, elephants and motifs usually associated with India occur in carving and cloth.

But in the small trading-post courts, Islam became the dominant religion after AD1300. The rajahs turned into sultans, and the cultural mix was further enriched. Calligraphic images appear on military, domestic, and decorative metal work. Some woven patterns recur throughout much of the Islamic world. Trade with Turkey was joined with European and Chinese contacts: the art and artefacts of these island kingdoms have small and subtle influences from a very large world.

It is in looking at the different religions involved in the many cultures of modern Indonesia that unease about this exhibition surfaces again. With the exception of Java, and the unique variant of Hindu belief in Bali, so many of the cultures of Indonesia spread towards neighbouring political states. Mainland Malaya has a great deal in common with island of Sumatra. In a curious way the cultural spread is recognised by the exhibition's catalogue which includes a photograph of a Dayak man captioned 'Sarawak', which is in Malaysian Borneo. Borneo, of course, was central to the Indonesian confrontation with Malaysia in the 1950s and '60s. Too many of Indonesia's political embarrassments have taken place in these 'outer islands'.

Irian Jaya, once known as Dutch New Guinea, is well represented in the exhibition, and for those familiar with the culture of the eastern part of New Guinea the similarities between the arts of two parts of one island are striking. It would, of course, be a mistake to think of New Guinea as one nation. Until this century many of the highland people had little contact with the coast, and the different languages they spoke were only the most obvious cultural differences.

But the artefacts from Irian Jaya have more in common with the rest of the Australian Museum's New Guinea collection than with the gold jewellery of Sulawesi or the carved and painted boat prows of Kalimantan (Indonesian Borneo). The most memorable New Guinea pieces in the exhibition are two skulls enclosed in wood. They are not the victims of head hunters but rather ancestor figures, to be venerated and consulted. Honouring the dead in this culture is rather different from the religious concerns of the Hindu grave monuments of Batak, or the carved gravestones of West Timor.

There are no pieces from the former Portuguese colony of East Timor; archaeology is not compatible with guerilla warfare. But for the purposes of political propaganda, East Timor is included in the map for the exhibition.

The marketing of *Beyond the Java Sea* has been a combination of security guards and acute tact. The praise for the cultural richness of Indonesia's many islands, the need 'to respect the cultural diversity of other people', has been proclaimed to a background of tall men standing nonchalantly outside the museum and muttering into their radios.

The only hint at another agenda came in a speech that the NSW Minister of the Arts, Peter Collins, gave at the media launch. After praising the cultural importance of the arts, and pointing out how much his government was paying to support the exhibition, Collins twice referred to a shared heritage between Australia and these islands of modern Indonesia: World War II. He spoke of 'Australians like my own father who served in parts of Indonesia during the war', and suggested that many visitors to an exhibition of this kind could be 'Australians who may have served in parts of Indonesia during the Second World War'.

The audience, which included many Asia specialists, was of course aware that the islands on which western soldiers experienced some of the heaviest fighting included those that continue to politically embarrass the Jakarta government. ■

Human figure on dagger shaft. —Minangkabau work from Lima Piluh, West Sumatra

Joanna Mendelssohn is the art critic for *The Bulletin*.

Names of note

Malcolm X, dir. Spike Lee (Hoyts). Given its subject—black and white—*Malcom X* was bound to upset some of the people all of the time. It is a pity that the resulting film should also be too long (three and a half hours) and burdened with Hollywood gloss at the expense of character development.

Spike Lee closely follows *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, which its subject co-wrote in the 1960s with Alex Haley, the author of *Roots*, although a new revisionist biography, Bruce Perry's *Malcolm: the Life of a Man who Changed Black America*, disputes key episodes of Malcolm's early life, such as an attack on the family home by the Ku Klux Klan.

Lee spends too much time on Malcolm's early manhood as a zoot-suited hustler who endured painful 'conking' treatment to straighten his hair. Flashbacks to Malcolm's childhood sit uneasily with nostalgic recreations of jazz joints and cameras panning over lemon convertibles with white sidewall tyres. Lee himself also makes a gratuitous acting appearance as Shorty, a sidekick of the young Malcolm (Denzel Washington).

The film tightens up when Malcolm is sent to jail for burglary—copping the maximum sentence for the extra 'crime' of sleeping with white women. Malcolm is transformed in jail—joining the Nation of Islam, educating himself and spurning drugs—and Denzel Washington makes the process believable. He also delivers Malcolm's speeches convincingly, but is less assured in showing the private face of the man.

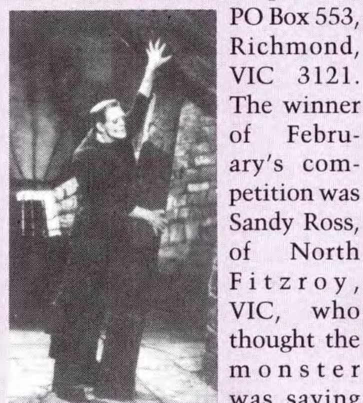
The supporting actors generally do well, particularly Angela Basset as Malcolm's wife Betty, Delroy Luido as a West Indian racketeer, and Albert Hall as the convict who converts Malcolm to Islam and them becomes his enemy. The soundtrack is a survey of black musical genius—swing, bebop, gospel, soul, rhythm 'n' blues, and almost everything else.

Malcolm X's own version of his life, the *Autobiography*, is being reissued, so perhaps Spike Lee has succeeded in his political aim of restoring a symbol of black pride. But the film tries too hard to be an epic, almost collapsing under its own weight. Maybe Lee reveres his subject too much; and maybe any colour film about a man etched into memory in austere black and white images is bound to seem frivolous.

—Mark Skulley

Eureka Street
Film Competition

What's put the skids under Charlie? Tell us why the Little Tramp looks so surprised and we'll award two tickets, to the film of your choice, for the answer we like best. Send entries to: *Eureka Street* Film Competition, PO Box 553, Richmond, VIC 3121.



The winner of February's competition was Sandy Ross, of North Fitzroy, VIC, who thought the monster was saying about Francis Ford Coppola:'He's a disgrace to the name of Frank; crucifixion's almost too good for him.'

Chaplin, dir. Richard Attenborough (Village) is entertaining, clever, stylish and engrossing. It also raises the question of whether one should expect the same standards of accuracy from a film biography that are expected from a written one.

The film is long but provides only slices of the Chaplin story, though these hang together well enough and cover most of the interesting aspects of Chaplin's life: his impoverished childhood, his mother's bouts of insanity, his several marriages, his remarkable rise to fame, his several court cases and eventual exclusion from the US.

Chaplin is honest enough about the outline of this life, but individual episodes tinker with the facts enough to create perspectives on the real Chaplin that are quite distorted. To confuse matters more, the film presents George (Anthony Hopkins), a fictional editor of Chaplin's autobiography, interviewing the aged Charlie to obtain his fictional views on these fictionalised events. Where this device could have been usefully employed, it isn't. For example, George asks Charlie why he only devotes five sentences of his autobiography to his second wife. 'Because she's a bitch,' Charlie replies. But since information about the marriage does exist beyond the single paragraph in the autobiography, why not use the interview to tell us more?

These matters aside, there is little to find fault with in Robert Downey Jr's portrayal of the master clown (though he doesn't get the cockney accent quite right), and his re-creation of the Little Tramp is so telling that Attenborough is able to interpolate cuts from Chaplin's films without the slightest jarring.

Some interesting casting adds to the film's strengths: Chaplin's daughter Geraldine gives a convincing performance as her own insane grandmother, and Moira Kelly plays both Chaplin's first love, the chorus girl Hetty Kelly, and his last, Oona O'Neill.

—Dean Moore

Hoffa, dir. Danny De Vito (Hoyts). Jimmy Hoffa was a crook who, supposedly with the help of the Mob, ran the teamsters (truckdrivers) union in the US until he was jailed for corruption. He then mysteriously 'disappeared' after his release in the 1970s. Perhaps something interesting can be made of the background to these facts, but Danny De Vito's film doesn't do

it. In fact, he and scriptwriter David Mamet have managed to spend 135 minutes producing a singularly pretentious and meaningless film.

I had thought there might be some insight here into the moral dilemmas of power exercised on behalf of the powerless, but no such luck. Apart from a few gestures towards Jimmy's understanding of working folk, the film meanders aimlessly through a factually distorted version of Hoffa's career, without giving any sense of union politics or the political context of his rise.

It has been criticised for glorifying Hoffa—and Hollywood certainly has no compunction about worshipping thugs, as the forgettable *Bugsy* and other better offerings have shown—but this script can't make up its mind what to think about Hoffa. The music swells heroically, but what gets adored in the end is power. We get no sense of Hoffa's character, nor why he inspired such devotion as he did. Jack Nicholson blusters and shouts a lot, when he is not looking tired, but he has nothing to work with. The photography is often clever and sometimes good, but it all leaves you wondering why the film was made in the first place.

Danny De Vito has some talent as a comedian. He should get back to it.

—Tony Coady

Book looks

The Last of the Mohicans, dir. Michael Mann (Greater Union). If you were to cross James Fenimore Cooper's classic mélange of American revolutionary history and Rousseauean Romanticism, with Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights*, you just might end up with a film like this one. Mann retains much of the historical precision of Cooper's account of one passage in the conflict between the French and the English in America. And he demonstrates with more wit and less mush than could Kevin Costner in *Dances with Wolves* the implications for indigenous American tribes of these territorial incursions. In this film the Hurons and Mohicans are both players and victims

The drama—in part a tale of vengeance—in which both Indian and English men are implicated, is played out against the luminous wild mountains of North Carolina (doubling for Cooper's New York State).The cinematography is a triumph. Less successful is the romance. Cooper's Hawkeye is one of literature's mysterious characters—almost genderless, a register of moral impressions. Mann's Hawkeye is a fixating ironist. But then what producer could have resisted turning Daniel Day-Lewis, as Hawkeye, into a riveting romantic lead, with Madeleine Stowe (as the English heroine Cora) set to quiver in front of great waterfalls with him.? It will draw audiences in droves. And then they will have the pleasure of seeing Wes Studi's extraordinary performance as the vengeful Huron, Magua.

—Morag Fraser

Of Mice and Men, dir. Gary Sinise (Greater Union and independents). To film a novel of substantial reputation is to risk a sneer in some quarters these days. There are those who complain about a 'literary' approach to cinema, and chafe at the constraints of narrative form. Fortunately, Gary Sinise has not been intimidated by fashionable theory in creating this screen version of John Steinbeck's novel. The cinematography by Kenneth MacMillan is indeed superb—but all the more so because nothing is allowed to obscure the simple telling of a simple tale.

Sinise himself plays George, one of a pair of itinerant farm labourers in Steinbeck's favourite fictional locale, Depression-era California. George is the friend and protector of Lennie (John Malkovich), a feeble-minded giant whose lack of comprehension of the world is matched only by the extent of his vulnerability to it. This film has many merits, but it is worth seeing for Malkovich's performance alone; to compare it with his equally convincing portrayal of the decadent, jaded aristocrat in *Dangerous Liaisons* (dir. Stephen Frears,1988) is to be grateful that there are still screen actors who are more than talking heads.

And, though Malkovich shines, the minor players are not diminished—especially Ray Walston, as Candy, the old man who briefly shares a dream of home and security with George and Lennie. Walston has just the right touch for a role that lesser actors would drown in sentimentality. (There is also unwitting humour for Australians like myself, who have hitherto known Walston only in *My Favourite Martian*: I kept on expecting to see antennae emerge from his head.)

—Ray Cassin

The good oil

Lorenzo's Oil, dir. George Miller (Greater Union). Lorenzo Odone's story begs telling. Like the rare disease that captured his life, and became the focus of his parents' lives, it won't let go.

When Lorenzo fell ill in 1984, he was five years old. Within weeks he had become a pathetic shadow of his former gifted, energetic self. The doctors diagnosed adrenoleukodystrophy, which attacks the myelin sheath surrounding the nerves, causing brain dysfunction. Speech and hearing loss, paralysis, and then death—usually within two years—are the outcomes.

Lorenzo's parents, Michaela (Susan Sarandon) and Augusto (Nick Nolte) refused to accept the medical verdict of inevitable death. They wanted a new umpire, and when none was available assumed the role themselves. They not only questioned their son's prognosis, but asked the right questions—the mark of wisdom. And rather than buckle at the horrifying screeching of Lorenzo as his body withered before their eyes, they began to search for a cure.

The film moves cautiously, almost with a mood of docudrama , and is far from straight entertainment. Sarandon gives a passionate performance as Lorenzo's determined and feisty mother, and Nolte, except for his Italian accent, works well with her. Perhaps the real Augusto sounds like this, but Nolte is not Italian and viewer perception, rather than 'authenticity', should have won the day. Peter Ustinov, as Professor Gus Nikilias, personifies a medical world altogether too cautious for the Odones' liking.

Lorenzo's Oil is a compelling medical detective story and deserves a viewing. Or even a listen—the soundtrack, featuring everything from African music to Verdi, Mahler and Bellini, is superb.

—Brad Hulse

Television Program Guide

Michael McGirr

Documentaries

The Satellite Sky
It's hard to believe but America once expected to lose the Cold War. *The Satellite Sky* captures the profound anxiety created in the west by the early Soviet lead in the space race. Richard Nixon, then Eisenhower's Vice-President, told a visiting Nikita Khrushchev: 'You may be ahead of us in space research, but we're ahead of you in colour TV.' Khrushchev had the good sense to wear a white hat for the cameras. Screens 1 April at 8.30pm (8pm Adelaide).

Macedonia: the Last Peace
It's not so long since Greek interests were taking full-page advertisements in the Australian press to assert their territorial rights over Macedonia. This documentary is sympathetic to the claims of Macedonian nationalism and SBS expects it will provoke a strong reaction.

Macedonia is parcelled out between Greece, what remains of Yugoslavia, and Bulgaria. Officially, it is not a country. Officially, it is one of the few places in the Balkans that is not at war. But this film reflects strong feelings bubbling unchecked in every quarter. It shows a rally of a million Greeks in Thessalonica claiming that 'Macedonia is free and Greek'. It shows, on the Yugoslav side of the border, Albanian Muslims rancouring under the control of the Macedonian majority.

In an interview someone remarks, 'One thing the Balkans produce excessively much is history.' Perhaps that's why, suffering from the other problem, it's so hard for many Australians to understand this part of the world. This is an enlightening but disquieting film. Screens 6 April at 8.30pm (8pm Adelaide).

Models
Peter Lindberg and crew follow the fortunes of five supermodels: Cindy Crawford, Naomi Campbell, Linda Evangelista, Tatanja Patitz and Stephanie Seymour. 'Women see pictures of us and wonder why they don't look like that, but what they don't realise is that we don't look like that. It's a whole created image.' The problem is when image meets reality. Beautiful figures may be shot against urban squalor to enhance an effect. But the squalor is still squalor. Screens 16 April at 8.30pm (8pm Adelaide).

Artemisia
The pick of the month. Adrienne Clarkson wrote, directed, produced and narrated this film but it's Germaine Greer who brings it to life. Artemisia Gentileschi, born in 1593, was an Italian painter. Apart from 30 paintings, a number of business transactions and the records of a rape trial for which she had been the victim at the age of 15, the film asks what remains of her now. The answers are intriguing. At the age of 17 she painted the biblical figure of Susanna being spied upon by men, not as a figure of beauty but as the figure of a violated woman. Later she painted versions of the story of Judith in which she hacks off the head of Holofernes not in a timid way depending upon divine strength but as an act of real revenge. She hacks him with her own strength.

Greer asks why Western art has produced so few great women painters. She says it is because great art cannot come out of damaged egos, defective wills or emotional and sexual dependency on men. To this rule she calls Gentileschi 'the magnificient exception. Hers is the legacy of genius triumphing over the degradation of her body.' Screens 26 April at 8.30pm (8.00pm Adelaide).

Summerhill at 70
A.S. Neill began Summerhill School in Britain in 1921 as a campus in which children could be completely free. All discipline and organisation is conducted in the weekly general meeting of staff and students, in which students have equal voting rights. In 1991 a documentary team spent a term and a half in the school. At the beginning we see Ena Neill, the elderly widow of the founder, cutting a cake. She continues to look on silently for most of the film. Shortly afterwards Zoe Neill-Readhead, the present headmistress, stands up in a general meeting and says 'This place is up shit creek because if you have a community which is complete anarchy then it fucking well doesn't work.' She later implies that every principal in the world thinks as much from time to time but at Summerhill she is not free not to speak her mind.

At Summerhill problem people are dealt with 'practically and not morally'. If an individual causes trouble, they are 'brought up' in the meeting and a full and frank discussion takes place with and around them. The meeting then votes on what action should be taken. One of the teachers credibly defends Summerhill against the obvious criticism that the place looks like a setting for *Lord of the Flies*. But at one stage a couple of students decides to 'go steady' in the school. What takes place is not a celebration but a parody. They are paired up by a teacher 'in the name of the meeting, and of the chairperson and of the freedom to not attend lessons'. Such a trinity doesn't necessarily strike me as much to believe in. *Summerhill at 70*, incidentally, is a superb piece of television. Screens 27 April at 8.30 pm (8pm Adelaide).

Music

Verdi's *Requiem*
Verdi's *Requiem* was occasioned by the death of two fellow Italian men of the arts—Rossini and Manzoni. Even so, it is not entirely out of place in the middle of the afternoon on Good Friday. This live performance features soloists Jessye Norman, Margaret Price, Jose Carreras and Ruggiero Raimondi. Screens 9 April at 2.35 pm (2.05 pm Adelaide).

Katia and Marielle Labèque
These two sisters have resurrected a performance item—the piano duet. Side by side, they play 140 concerts a year in 90 cities, their four hands criss-

crossing and tumbling through an extensive repertoire. There is plenty of music in this documentary which also shows the two in concert and rehearsal with the guitar virtuoso, John McLaughlin. Screens 12 April at 8.30pm (8pm Adelaide.)

Series

Redemption Song
Most Australian schoolkids think the West Indies is a single country. But in these seven films, Jamaican-born Stuart Hall explores the complex mosaic of the postcolonial Caribbean. Viv Richards, Bob Marley and V.S. Naipaul are seen as typical of people from these countries who have made a name for themselves and gone abroad. Communal achievements are much less common.

The series concludes on 26 April, with Hall visiting the house in which his mother grew up. It has now fallen into ruins, a sight which occasions mixed feelings. It is, ironically, a sign of hope for Hall that the grand colonial architecture which once seemed so permanent has now collapsed. He holds out the same hope for the postcolonial bogies of debt, corruption, poverty and unemployment. This poignant image is one of many such images and stories in a frank series which is, understandably, slow to offer answers. Screens every Monday at 7.30pm (7pm Adelaide).

Greek Fire
What do pornography, pathology and philosophy all have in common? Like so much else that fills our dictionaries, they are all Greek words. 'Greek Fire' is not a history of Greek civilisation so much as an account of how ancient Greece still makes its presence felt. The series began in March with a camera roaming the streets of a quiet town in Wisconsin, called Sparta, while a bracing account of life in ancient Sparta was read as a counter point. Eventually the camera discovers the local police lieutenant who has collected the police patches from seven other Spartas and one East Sparta, all in the US. Another time, we see goldfish swimming round a plastic replica of the Parthenon. The whole series is creatively executed. More than that, it accumulates evidence that our own culture is increasingly ready to ransack the past in its frenetic attempts to salvage some little scraps of identity for itself. Screens every Tuesday at 7.30pm (7pm Adelaide).

Rocky Star
Rocky Star is a series of five-minute adventures for Dianna, Mitch and the hero, Rocky, three fearless Sydneysiders from the year 1950. Or 2050—it's not clear which. They tangle with two flying-saucer commuters, Zog and Cos. Often you'll hear jazz or a country song in the middle. Screens every Thursday during *Eat Carpet* at 11pm (11.30pm Adelaide).

The de' Medici Kitchen
Friday evenings have become the traditional timeslot for wine and food on SBS. This year the network is serving up a 12-part series on Italian cuisine, hosted by a rather homely aristocrat, Lorenza de' Medici. Phillip Adams said, apropos of the series, that 'gastronomy is the new porn'. He also remembers Malcolm Muggeridge as saying that the west spends more money on dieting than the east does on eating. These are real questions but out of place. This series is closer to *Babette's Feast* than it is to a Peter Greenaway consumer orgy. It locates eating in a profound sense of culture. Screens every Friday at 7.30pm (7pm Adelaide).

The Lenny Henry Show
This series coincides with the visit of Lenny Henry to Australia. He plays the role of Delbert Wilkins, founder of the Brixton Broadcasting Corporation and 'Crucial FM'. This friendly series attempts to create a kind of humour of the underclass and ends up landing somewhere between *On the Buses* and *The Young Ones*. 'We could do a program on nappy rash and call it *Rawhide*,' Henry says. 'Why don't you shut your north and south or I'll kick you in the orchestra stalls.' Screens every Tuesday at 8pm (7.30pm Adelaide).

The voice of Brixton: Delbert Wilkins, aka Lenny Henry, The Lenny Henry Show *screens on Tuesday at 8pm.*

Film

The Gospel according to St Matthew
Pasolini was a Communist, but this is one of the few gospel films that really hits the spot. One reason is that it takes the text of Matthew at face value, rather than conflating different gospel stories and implying a few words about the American way of life or something similiar. Most of the actors are Italian peasants, whose faces speak worlds, and the role of Mary is played by Pasolini's own mother. There is a depth of understanding beneath the naive manners of Pasolini's filmmaking. The moment at which Mary tells Joseph that she is expecting is wonderful. Screens 10 April at 10.30pm (10pm Adelaide). ■

POSTSCRIPT

SHANE MALONEY

An old familiar light

On the hill now occupied by the Myer car park at Melbourne's Chadstone Shopping Centre there was once a small Gothic church. It stood surrounded by solid, slate-roofed buildings behind a high wall, looking down on the suburban blocks mustering in ever-increasing numbers in the valley below.

When I was 10, I would rise before dawn, put on my grey serge shorts and pedal my bike up the hill, through the dewy cow paddock and into the Middle Ages. In a dim and silent sacristy I would dress in a floor-length red robe with a lace collar, then take a wax taper into the dark chapel and light the high brass candles on the white marble altar.

The priest, an unimaginably ancient old man never seen outside the precincts of the convent, would emerge and genuflect before the tabernacle. His silk vestments—chasuble, maniple and stole, their colours and mystic epigrams dictated by the liturgical calendar—rustled and shimmered in the candlelight. *Introibo ad altare Dei*, he'd say. Quick as a flash I'd shoot back with *Ad Deum qui laetificat juventutem meum*.

This Latin repartee would continue unabated for the next 40 minutes, while Fr Prisoner-of-Zenda and I conducted a rite that, we were both convinced, re-enacted the event at the centre of the universe. It was heavy stuff, with no room for ad libbing. The procedure was strictly laid down, right from the Top. Each prayer and its response was a matter of liturgical prescription, and had been performed in exactly the same way in every Catholic church, in every town and village, for centuries. It was not to be amended, stumbled over or deviated from, under pain of the most dire consequences.

The dire consequences themselves knelt in the half darkness behind me—the Sisters of the Good Shepherd, massed for early Mass in the nacreous candlelight. Each sat in her own carved wooden pew. Each was dressed in the identical black-and-white habit of her order, beneath the voluminous folds of which, I knew, was concealed the stiff leather means to correct the errors of small boys in grey serge shorts. Each was boring her eagle eyes into my back, waiting for the tiniest impious mistake.

At the height of the proceedings I was required to undertake a particularly precise manoeuvre involving various genuflections, raisings of the priestly hem, tinkling of hand bells and the fundamental transformation of the nature of matter. By this time I was in less a state of immortal grace than a condition of mortal terror.

Night and day I pored over my missal, rote learning my cosmological bit part until I had it word-perfect. No sooner did I have it all down pat than along came Vatican II. Suddenly the Mass was being said in custard-bland English, across trestle tables in churches that looked like basketball courts, by priests in cufflinks and Pelaco sports shirts. The nuns changed into twin sets and started accompanying themselves on guitar while they sang 'I fought the law and the law won.'

My faith, free from the bonds of enchantment and terror, flew away. The church was knocked down, to be replaced by a shopping mall.

But the course of progress is never as inexorable as it seems, and timeless mysteries still sometimes stalk the suburbs. Last year Greek Easter arrived the week after Chocolate Easter, and all over Melbourne uncounted thousands gathered in the darkness to commune with the ineffable in streets barricaded expressly for this purpose by cooperative local authorities.

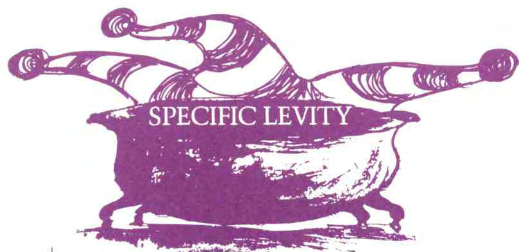
From South Melbourne to Bundoora, in Northcote, Richmond, Springvale and a dozen other places, hushed crowds of old people, subdued adolescents and couples with babies in their arms gathered late on Saturday night in front of strange, darkened buildings filled with lacquered images of angels, sages and the Holy Mother. There was chanting in an ancient language. At midnight, bearded and ornately garbed priests emerged, surrounded by acolytes and young boys in floor-length robes, and declared in Byzantine tones that *Christos anesti*. Then the metaphorical light of the world was sent out into the crowd as innumerable red, blue and white candles were lit, one from the other. In their glow, strangers and neighbours embraced. Effies and Cons cracked boiled eggs they pulled out of their pockets, Roman candles flared and skyrockets burst.

Half an hour later the streets were again deserted. The only evidence that the risen Christ had passed this way was the candlewax on the asphalt, the spent fireworks casings and red eggshells in the gutter.

The Australian Democrats, I read, wish to replace the Easter Bunny with the snub-nosed quokka or some such unfortunate marsupial. The ecumenical movement believes that sporting green and gold sunflowers will give it the marketing edge over Red Tulip.

The Greek Church has been in the eternity business for too long to feel pressured into reviewing its packaging policies. It is, after all, a dab hand with the mysteries that can draw a long-escaped Catholic out of the pub on a Saturday night, stand him on a street corner with a 69 cent candle from the Sparta Delicatessen in his hand and make him think of the car park at Myer Chadstone. ■

Shane Maloney is a freelance writer.



Eureka Street Cryptic Crossword no. 12, April 1993

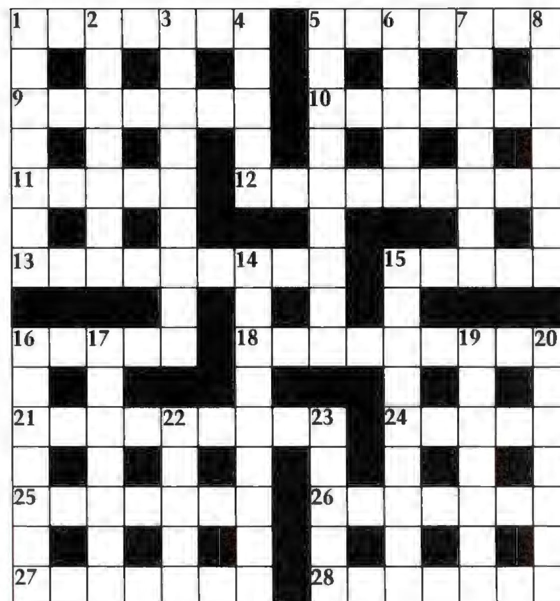
Devised by Joan Nowotny IBVM

ACROSS

1 In the play it is important to be sincere without a claim to a name. (7)
5 One can take the girl's wine to divert oneself. (7)
9 The prepositions 'of' and 'under' can be combined to give a new basis to the language, perhaps. (7)
10 Learn somehow about the Northern Territory, and so discover the light. (7)
11 During her part, Portia raised it to her head. (5)
12 Separate the cracked Easter egg from the rest. (9)
13 State the provision stipulated. (9)
15 It's far from poetic to burst right into a nosegay. (5)
16 Tear a little out to allow it to mature (5).
18 Go before the 'New Times' initially to set an example. (9)
21 Even though I spared Ed, unfortunately he lost all hope. (9)
24 Be on the watch for some bread staler than the rest. (5)
25 Is it Annie Wong, née Chan, perhaps, who will augment the value of her property through marriage? (7)
26 Extraordinary, but it's not habitual. (7)
27 To have the sun over the opening is like having gold in the bank—by no means bankrupt! (7).
28 In a time of disorder, thy beer, sir, is scarce because of that. (7)

DOWN

1 Afflicted with a rare facial twitch, his behaviour was somewhat eccentric. (7)
2 Hold back the chorus. (7)
3 The insertion of a Greek letter turned high spirits into rivalry. (9)
4 Edits, possibly, current affairs? (5)
5 Care for the old stagecoach with proper attention. (9)
6 Be aware of the meaning. (5)
7 I don't want stewed orange. O get me a herb! (7)
8 Numbers by the English cathedral were working under emotional strain. (7)
14 I am without fault, but can be tense. (9)
15 Too early to 16 across. (9)
16 Based on South, the emitter goes up to produce this quality of colour. (7)
17 The time is over for the crumbling ash. Clap your hands for this Easter candle. (7)
19 Carry out the order to inflict capital punishment. (7)
20 To keep the score correctly is to correspond with reality completely. (7)
22 Whether single or married, the girl in 25 will retain her name or else get her gun. (5)
23 We do. But perhaps we are uncertain. (5)



Solution to Crossword no.11, March 1993

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

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—JUNO

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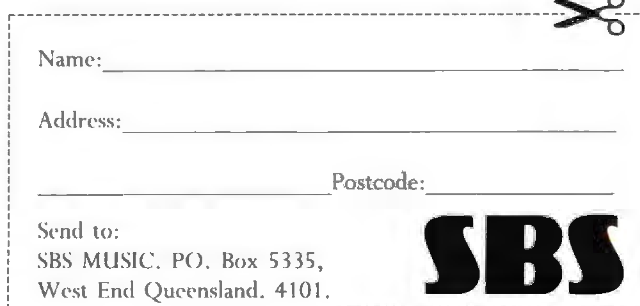

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