

EUREKA STREET

Vol. 4 No. 2 March 1994

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The past and other countries

South Africa looks forward to democracy: **Tammy Mbengo** and **Maryanne Sweeney**

Western Australia looks back to separate development: **Mark Skulley**

Stephen Gaukroger and **Keith Campbell** chase John Carroll through the ruins of Western civilisation

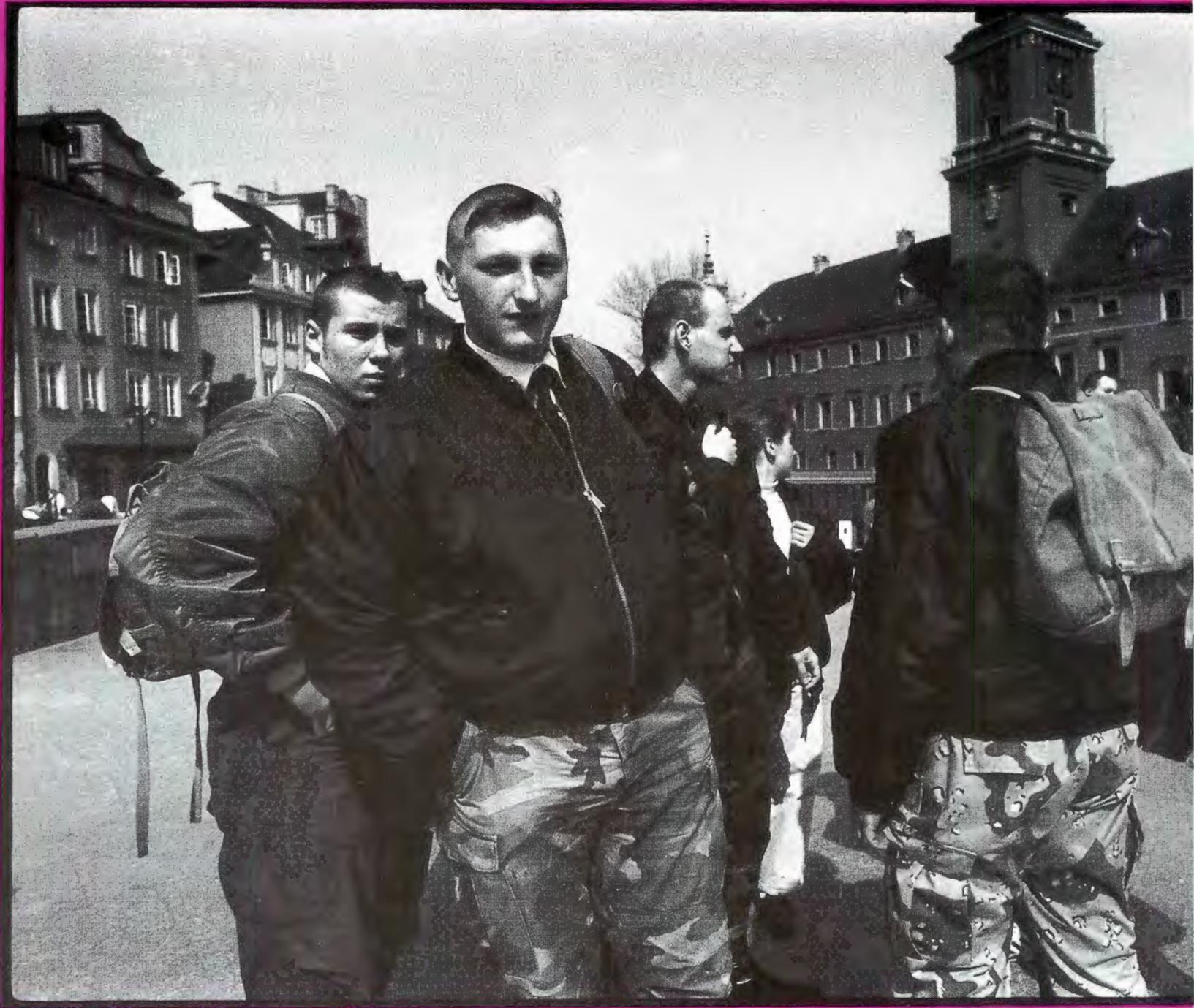
Paul Barry chases Conrad Black through the corridors of power

Deborah Zion juggles Jewish tradition and the ordination of women rabbis

Elaine Lindsay flies to the moon with a post-Christian feminist

Ray Cassin watches moral theology try to stay down to earth

H.A. Willis is in pain, and asks when it will end



In 1993, *Eureka Street* photographer **Emmanuel Santos** went to Europe to visit the Nazi death camps. His cover photograph shows David Dann in Majdanek, confronting a past that destroyed his family.

On this page Santos catches part of Europe's present: Catholic youth in Warsaw preparing for an anti-Semitic demonstration during the commemoration of the Warsaw ghetto uprising. The young men claim that Poland should be for the Poles: no Jews, no Russians, no Germans, no immigrants.

Santos is himself a Filipino, born into an Igorot hill tribe. The neo-Nazi youth tolerated his attentions because they took him for a Mongolian, and Mongolians in Poland derive power from controlling a large part of the country's black market.

In this month's *Eureka Street* our writers and reviewers look at the intersection of past and present around the world—in South Africa, the United States, Europe and Australia.

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Cover : David Dann at Majdanek death camp, Poland, where prisoners were stripped, gassed and cremated within two hours of arrival. Dann's family, from Lodz ghetto, all vanished during Hitler's extermination campaign in Poland. Photo by Emmanuel Santos.

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Jesuit Publications
PO Box 553
Richmond VIC 3121
Tel (03) 427 7311
Fax (03) 428 4450

Publisher

Michael Kelly SJ

Editor

Morag Fraser

Production editor

Ray Cassin

Consulting editor

Michael McGirr SJ

Editorial assistant: Jon Greenaway

Production assistants: J. Ben Boonen CFC,

John Doyle SJ, Juliette Hughes,

Siobhan Jackson, Chris Jenkins SJ.

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Brisbane: Ian Howells SJ

Darwin: Margaret Palmer

Perth: Dean Moore

Sydney: Edmund Campion, Andrew Riemer,

Gerard Windsor.

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US correspondent: Thomas H. Stahel SJ

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In transit

IF YOU STOOD TODAY at the intersection of 37th and O Sts, NW, in Washington DC, facing down a gentle slope, the snow would be turning to mush under your feet. This is partly because of a change in the weather, and partly because this is the main entrance to Georgetown University, and at most times of day or night somebody is ploughing through.

At your back would be the meditative statue of John Carroll, founder of the university, and behind that the first of an array of buildings old and new. A plaque on the wall advises that the most recent president to visit the place was its alumnus William Clinton, and the most remote, George Washington. Near that plaque is the university chapel, which is lodged near the whimsically-named Red Square. Above the entrance to the main library is the verse from John's Gospel which proclaims that 'you shall know the truth, and the truth will make you free', which presumably has more title to be here than it does (where it also appears) in the lobby of CIA Headquarters, across the river in Virginia.

Georgetown, like Washington, like most cities of any size, is a school of ironies. A temporary expatriate is likely to notice these more than a resident does. Mind you, if you suppose that all of us are, in the phrase of the immigration departments, 'resident aliens'—a view that has been well rehearsed in our time—then life's curiosities are there to be seen by all. Last century, Walter Bagehot noted that 'the soul ties its shoes; the mind washes its hands in a basin', and whatever the thrust of his remark then, it goes on having resonances in modern society. Here, limousines nose past beggars; a cobbler's is called 'Shoe Hospital'; a junk-food outlet faces a bookstore that could nourish the spirit for a lifetime. If you were wondering whether we really do have two lobes to the brain, two wings to the heart, this is a place to confirm the initial view.

But in the snow, at 37th and O, you might also reflect on the dynamic between process and stasis, flow and stand. There is more chastening weather on the way, they tell us, and the mush will be returning to ice, which will continue to have its on-again, off-again way until spring's thaw takes hold. A few blocks away, the Potomac fluctuates between flowing free and surrounding the ice. And since the alien climate turns a person thoughtful, what better place to observe how big a part is played in our lives, our very identities, by shift and stand and shift again?

In the metropolitan buses, one advertisement cajoles, 'How to land a better job', and the next, 'Help a boy become a man.' The bus runs, the mind runs, the process runs—or doesn't. Anywhere you go in America, somebody is trying to precipitate something, or to swing aboard some wagon going past.

The first words I remember hearing from an American abroad were, 'Somewhere to go, something to do'. All this declares a deep-bred policy, but that in turn comes from an intuition that this is the way things are. In the old contest between Heraclitus, who thought that whatever was flowed incessantly, and Parmenides, who thought that that was no way to be, there is no doubt where the American constituency would be. Whatever is, sooner or later, streams.

But there are, inevitably, concessions to Parmenides. The American poet Howard Nemerov, celebrating the art, speaks of 'vowels like water, consonants like rock'; if life is fluvial, something banks it. Just behind the spot at the university from which George Washington spoke on his visit, there is a painting of him crossing the frozen Delaware, with his numbed soldiers. They have themselves been frozen, as it were, monumentally, like the later American soldiers in the Iwo Jima monument not far away. And although our lives from birth to death could in principle be filmed continuously, the showing would still move from frame to frame. Our selves can be seized, 'to engross the present and dominate memory', as Yeats put it. I am a something, and a someone, not simply a has-been or a can-be.

While you think such thoughts, and though you have hunched deep into your coat, the cold will reiterate that you are a thing indeed. Such weather gives us back our sensorium. There is no doubt, at such moments, that we are in constant interplay with our environment—it plumes in and out as warm or cold air. True, the nose warms it up for us, which is apparently what the nose is for, but weather like this keeps saying that we abut on the rest of the cosmos, that we are profiled against it. It makes gazers-abroad of us, however prone we are to be, instead, gazers-within. The cold can be, not the resurrection of the body indeed, but its restoration.

ONE WRITER WHO MIGHT SYMPATHISE with such reflections is Diane Ackerman, whose *A Natural History of the Senses* (Vintage Books, 1991) is one of the most handsome testimonies I know to the startling beings we are. In it, exotic learning about the senses and their objects keep company with a readiness for reflection. So, that 'the average body has about five million hairs' goes with, 'The only shadows we see at night are cast by the moonlight, or by artificial light, but night itself is a shadow.' It is a book to make one take one's hat off to Gutenberg. Ackerman continues, 'It's our outer shell that seems to fear cold most, acting as a sentry on per-

petual watch. Receptors for warmth lie deeper in the skin, and there are fewer of them'; and, 'I've seen people out walking on a winter's day wearing layered clothes, wool sweaters, and bulky down coats; they look like freshly made beds on the move.' When you have been reading her for a while, the world seems to be arriving daily by special delivery.

The gazing art, cultivated, can issue in some remarkable things. The fine Irish writer of short stories, William Trevor, names as his hobby, 'watching', and the watching has outcomes. It seems to me a comparatively rare art, either professional or esoteric in most of modern city life. I don't know how many watchers there are in Washington, though of course the place is packed with opportunity-scanners and power-assayers. Things keep on the move, perhaps for good. As I write,



I hear that the president has just been running around in the Georgetown gym, and I hope that he's all the better for it.

Nobody here forgets that he made some of his earlier running as a student in these parts. Whatever he picked up at that time, what Thomas Traherne wrote in the 17th century is likely to have been true for him as well: 'There was never a tutor that did profess to teach felicity: though that be the mistress of all other sciences'. And today being two days before Ash Wednesday, that festival of rejuvenation, and being besides Valentine's Day, what can I wish you but felicity? ■

Peter Steele SJ has a personal chair in English at the University of Melbourne. During 1994 he is taking sabbatical leave at Georgetown University.

'Whatever is, sooner or later, streams': Ten years ago Sarajevo presented a different face to the world as the Olympic flame was lit in the city's Kosevo stadium.

Photo: UPI

It was all just an act

From Bob Berghout

During our 26 years of marriage my wife and I have loved, argued, shared our thoughts, visions, feelings and resources, taken physical and emotional delight in each other, been sources of joy (and sometimes pain) for each other, raised and enjoyed the company of several children, supported each other in many pursuits, and rubbed some of our rough spots off on each other.

Then I read Ross Saunders' letter (*Eureka Street*, Dec. '93-Jan. '94) about an archaeological fragment he had unearthed, written by Pius XI in 1930.

My perceptions of marriage were devastated: according to the Pius fragment marriage doesn't seem to be a way of being and relating. Rather it consists of performing 'The Conjugal Act'! It doesn't say precisely what this 'act' is nor who it is to be performed for, though I'm pretty sure no one has performed it for me. If Mr Saunders finds more fragments that describe it in detail I hope you will publish them. Illustrations might help too.

My distress stems primarily from the fact that according to the Papal fragment this 'conjugal act is of its very nature designed for the procreation of offspring'. Since it defines marriage The Conjugal Act can't consist of mere coupling. After all animals do that without any marriage. Nor can it relate to other aspects of human sexual activity since most of this is clearly not intended for procreation. Indeed the papal fragment suggests that such other human activity need not be restricted to marriage. The nearest human act that I can think of which is specifically designed for procreation is *in vitro* fertilisation, and I would marvel at Pius XI's scientific foresight if he managed to define marriage in terms of IVF back in 1930. O Brave Old World that had such popes in it!

I hope some of your correspondents can enlighten me further so that my wife and I can perform this conjugal act appropriately and not go to the grave unmarried.

Bob Berghout
Lambton, NSW

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.



War's image

From Frank O'Brien

Wars are about slaughtering the poor. They are about much else as well, but the reduction to corpses of multitudes of simple folk uncomprehendingly caught up in the myths of their tribes is central to armed conflict.

Your cover photo for November



'93 was wonderful. Why was this soldier here, half a world away from his home? Why should he die? What the hell is going on? The poor bastard stares past all such questions. He clearly does not know.

Congratulations on choosing so eloquent an illustration for your ferocious subject.

Frank O'Brien
Bellevue Hill, NSW

Senior Citizens' Week Ecumenical Service at St Paul's Cathedral

3pm, Sunday, 20 March 1994
Preacher: The Rev. Kevin Mogg EV,
Director of Catholic Social Services
Music from Haileybury College
commences at 2.30pm.

Sponsored by the Victorian Senior Citizens' Week Committee and Anglican Homes for the Elderly.

Enquiries: (03) 576 9011.

Visions splendid

The debate about creating an Australian republic has gone beyond the question of changing the head of state, to consider what kind of community Australians want their country to be, and what kind of institutions would be appropriate for such a community. This month Eureka Street publishes some of the many letters it has received on this subject.

From Henk Bak

My picture of a new republic is not simply to replace the head of state, change the letterheads and then run public affairs as usual. In my picture, the states are not abolished but become the custodians of culture in the widest sense: health, education, sports, arts and sciences. Local government is expanded into regions to be constituted as economic communities. The federation functions as a political body with Canberra as the legislative centre of Australia, developing civic, administrative and criminal law and creating legal frameworks for the states and regions.

Regional councils are formed as associative bodies, elected by all residents in the region (not just ratepayers) out of nominees from producers, consumers and traders' organisations.

State parliaments become one-chamber statutory bodies, elected by all residents in the state out of nominees from accredited, cultural organisations, medical, education, penal, sports, arts, sciences etc.

The Federal Parliament remains a legislative body, representing all residents in Australia not only through political parties but also through all-party committees. Elections' outcomes cannot be interpreted as 'mandates' and governments will consult the Australian people on main policy issues by referendums.

In the new republic land and money are subject to stewardship, not ownership. Nobody will be disowned at the moment the new republic is constituted, but all current and future transactions and contracts will be understood in terms of stewardship

rather than ownership. New legislation and jurisprudence will be developed on the basis of regional case studies and statewide consultation.

Distribution of work and of income becomes the responsibility of the regions as economic communities, individually and collectively. Economic surplus available for public service, government and public culture will be settled after a decent income for all Australians has been established, and work (not necessarily employment) in the economic sector has been distributed effectively.

This picture is not a blueprint. In its implementation everything may be different except the point that mature nationhood is based on arrangements between economic/ecological, political/social and cultural/spiritual functions of society rather than on ethnicity or language.

By creating a relative distance between the functions we open an opportunity for mutual perception. An intelligent nation is not only clever but also perceptive. Those functions moreover are not confined to one country. A creative and thoughtful arrangement in one country will therefore be a contribution to the world. And an oath of allegiance to a nation constituted thus will establish a loyalty to the community of nations as well.

Henk Bak
Caulfield, VIC

From Alfred Thomas

The report by the Prime Minister's Republic Advisory Committee, *An Australian Republic*, brought the republican debate to a higher intellectual level. There is an issue, however, that needs to be considered in any further debate. Several times the report mentions that 'Australia is a state in which sovereignty is derived from the people' ... and 'ultimate sovereignty derives from the people', and this principle seems to be accepted in a complacent and uncritical way.

Ever since the first appearance of human communities, there has existed an abstract 'sovereignty of the good' as a kind of transcendent criterion of right or wrong. And what alone gives moral legitimacy to all sovereigns—whether a monarch, parliament, or 'the people'—is the energy, commitment and integrity with which they

attempt to make this abstract sovereignty of the good a concrete reality. (Whether the source of this 'good' is God, or nature, or the General Will of Rousseau, or simply inherent in human physical and psychological needs, is a further argument.)

In the past the sovereignty of the good has been obstructed by the sovereign people just as it has been by other sovereign powers. R. S. Gardiner, a historian of Cromwell's republican government, warned that 'great as is the importance of constitutional forms, the character of the governor and the governed, is of far greater importance'. More recently, the sovereign people of Germany gave us Hitler, the Nazis and a world war—and Hitler and Goebbels gloated that they had 'come to power using democratic and legal means'. To say 'Oh, that couldn't happen here' would be a form of complacent racism, implying that only nasty foreigners are capable of such things.

There can be no purely legal guarantees or constitutional checks and balances to prevent similar political catastrophes from happening in the future, only moral and educational ones. And the really serious debate about this has not yet begun.

Alfred Thomas
Yokine, WA

From John M O'Connor

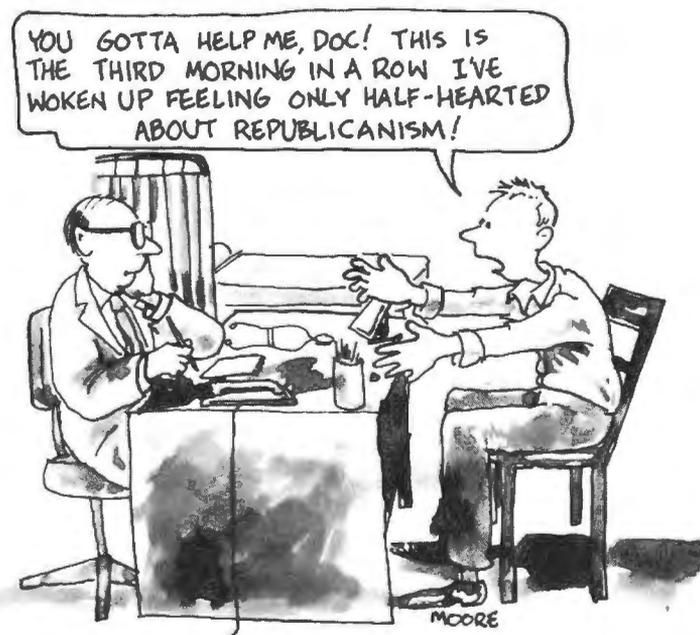
I made a submission to the Republic Advisory Committee and am writing to *Eureka Street* to further debate on the question.

My main proposal is that the constitution should have a 'preamble of common democratic national purpose'. I have taken ideas and phrases from various sources, but I was largely inspired by the personalist (not individualist) philosophy of such thinkers as Emmanuel Mounier and Jacques Maritain. My suggested preamble is as follows:

'The land now known as Australia is and has been the homeland of many peoples, first and foremost of its Aboriginal and Islander inhabitants. Over the years other peoples came: from the United Kingdom, Europe, Asia,

the Pacific and elsewhere, some in circumstances of great suffering and injustice; others seeking escape from persecution or after a better way of life for themselves and their families—those described on the Statue of Liberty as the tired, the poor, the huddled masses yearning to be free. Out of these many strands, cultural, religious, philosophical, linguistic and ethnic, a new community has been and is being formed.

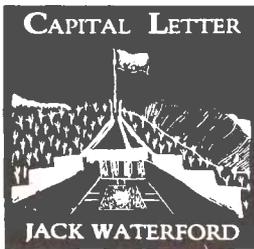
We have not always lived, nor do we always live, up to our own ideals. We have often met one another with violence, contempt and incomprehension. We have brought destitution and disease. We have exploited one another and many times have been blind to the unsought consequences of well-meant policies or of so-called benign



neglect. Nevertheless, among all our peoples we have seen many true heroes and heroines, both recognised and unrecognised. While accepting the frailties of human nature and rejecting the beguilements of narrow-based utopianisms, let us not be paralysed by the sins and mistakes of the past, but let us be determined to go forward together with vision, hope and goodwill.

We therefore now define our foundational institutions to reflect these ideals and this identity.'

John M. O'Connor
Mitchum, VIC



Forget the chatter, listen to the questions

THERE SHOULD BE SOMETHING TO DISAPPOINT EVERYONE in the next month or two, when the government, after juggling a vast array of committees and discussion papers, announces what it is going to do about unemployment, industry and the economic problems of particular regions.

Solving unemployment, the government will sadly say, depends on growth alone. Current projections suggest that at best it can only be halved by the year 2000, and that the primary victims, the existing long-term unemployed, will still be out in the cold. To ease our consciences there will be some special programs to prevent them entirely losing the memory of the time clock, but no big job-creation schemes.

Industry can expect so little that it probably will not warrant a special paper. It will be told that it should be all right because of the change in the economic cycle, because it should begin reaping the benefits of microeconomic reform (especially the labour-saving ones), and because progressively reduced public-sector spending (i.e. jobs in health, welfare and education) will liberate funds for further private investment.

Urban and regional problems, like unemployment, are matters of deep concern but there is nothing much that can be done other than to let economic growth create and recreate demands, and to try to steer it in particular directions by a more socially and environmentally conscious user-pays regime.

That this would be the general tack should not surprise anyone, least of all since the economic bureaucrats seized control of debate on the employment statement six months ago. In December, when the authors of the green paper on unemployment declared that 'today the number-one priority is to find jobs for unemployed Australians', they meant that it was the *number three* priority, after keeping the size of the public sector down and keeping inflation at current levels. So self-confident were they that they did not even canvass this assumption in their discussion paper, and instead put up the notion of a jobs levy to be debated and cast aside.

Whatever hopes may have been entertained about the Kelty taskforce on regional development were dashed when it became obvious that that taskforce's report was little more than a rewrite of the submissions it had received. The authors showed so little discrimination that pied-eyed proposals such as that for an Alice Springs-to-Darwin railway sat alongside more thoughtful suggestions about developing transport and communications in coordination with broader social goals.

Of course, spending a year or two listening to the pleas of regional or sectoral groups (or, in the case of those concerned with the unemployment paper, to bish-

ops, the welfare establishment and even a few of the unemployed), may have served to delay the clamour on these issues until the upturn in the economy takes the political heat off them. But why build up hopes that are bound to be dashed?

The real pity, however, lay not so much in a lack of inspiration on the government's part as in the poor quality of most of the submissions to these inquiries. Too often the supplicants were asking for the panaceas of old—big projects and special concessions, all funded by dipping into other people's pockets. In the process, they showed as little concern for reality, and genuflected to idols as often, as those in the box seat who were contemptuously rejecting their arguments.

IN THE MEANTIME, some real opportunities for improving the economy, the standard of living and social welfare may well be missed. For if one could draw together all the strands of all of the various task forces and committees one would discover that there is virtually a royal commission into the Australian economy going on. This commission is asking fundamental questions about our quality of life, our expectations and the way we understand each other and the world. These questions will determine the way in which the economy should respond to changes in population, to new industrial and communications technologies, and to the provision of health care and education.

But, as often as not, many of the ideas being tossed about cancel each other out. Some of the criticism of urban sprawl, for example, has been directed towards repopulating the inner cities. But others would argue that if a proper user-pays regime were in force, and more account taken of the employment being created by communications technology, the push would be outwards into Kelty's regions, where people could live more cheaply, work locally, and have better access to services—and all with far less pressure on the environment or the public purse.

In the latter context, the role of public investment would be less a matter of sopping up unemployment than of creating better community facilities and a more pleasant living environment. The role of government may be less directed towards fostering specific industries, or providing 'incentives' for business to invest, and more towards removing some of the disincentives. At the end of the day, it will not be growth *by itself* which creates jobs; that will be a matter of how growth occurs, and the sense of purpose that government brings to supervising it. ■

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



Strife on the western front

Western Australia's secession movement in the 1930s was a failure, but the issue has never completely died and many Western Australians nurse a sense of grievance about their state's place in the federation.

ROBERT DREWE'S FIRST NOVEL, *The Savage Crows*, has a scene in which the central character, Stephen Crisp, returns to Perth for a holiday in the 1970s. The locals reckon that Crisp has turned into a trendy eastern states pinko, who even sympathises with Aborigines. Crisp asks his brother why everyone in WA is so rich: 'Rich! This is WA, my boy. Personally I haven't got much dough but this place is rich in every mineral under the sun. This is the biggest quarry in the southern hemisphere. We support the rest of the country.'

'Oh, come on!'

'We could be the biggest at everything in the southern hemisphere if the East didn't bleed us dry. No bullshit.'

Crisp's brother in fact got money by marrying well—to a former Miss Western Australia—but details can wilt in WA's hard sunlight. Crisp later empties a genteel barbecue by musing loudly into glasses of claret about historic cruelties to Aborigines.

In the West today, many would stay and argue that the past is irrelevant, despite holding a lest-we-forget attitude to other histories. The entrenched positions over the Mabo judgment have given new life to the cry that outsiders 'don't understand' WA's special circumstances, such as having masses of Crown land. But the fundamental problem lies at home. Aborigines have lived in what is now known as Western Australia for about 30,000 years. The continent's western third was annexed in 1829 to set up Australia's first private enterprise colony and the only one in which land was granted according to the value of assets and labour invested.

The first European settlers were middle-class investors and their servants; Aborigines were on the land and, consequently, were seen as bad for business. The colony was ruled by governors for 60 years, and a conservative clique of minor gentry, military men and senior Anglican clergy got the plum land. (Other religious denominations bought up later—Bishop Rosendo Salvado, founder of the Benedictine monastery and mission at New Norcia, became a major rural and urban landowner.)

In 1850, the colonists put three proposals to the Colonial Office for regulating the occupation of Crown land, none of which mentioned the Aborigines, who were then in possession of the entire state apart from its south-west corner. The Colonial Secretary insisted that pastoral leases should have a clause preserving the

right of Aborigines to stay and take their living from the land. WA was granted self-government in 1890 on a limited property franchise, but the imperial government retained power over Aboriginal affairs. The colony was upset at not being trusted to deal fairly with Aborigines, and illegally repealed a clause in its constitution which provided that one per cent of gross revenue be spent on Aboriginal welfare.

Today, the state's isolation and peculiar history continue to mean that, for all the changes, some basic patterns and obsessions remain the same.

Easterners should imagine that they are standing on Cottesloe beach, looking west across the Indian Ocean; the next landfalls after Rottneest Island are Mauritius, Madagascar and southern Africa. Now turn your back to the sea; Adelaide is 2700 kilometres away, and Darwin is 4170 kilometres north by north-east. Or think of the state's isolation this way: WA isn't in the Australian national league but has entered a team in a Singapore competition.

Perth, a modern city in a beautiful setting, is home to three-quarters of the state's 1.6 million people. The median age is 30.5 years, more people are of English origin than is the case in Australia as a whole, and in recent times WA has attracted many white emigrés from the former Rhodesia and now, increasingly, from South Africa as well.

Robert Drewe, who was born in Melbourne but raised on the WA coast, wrote in his novel *Fortune* that it was a fact of life in a country with a small population that everyone over 30 knew everyone else. 'The sense of knowing everyone is enhanced in the more isolated and self-contained cities, the sorts of places where the newspaper's birth, death and matrimonial notices are still pored over each morning; the sorts of places like Perth ...'

MANY LOCALS LIKE IT THAT WAY. Others, in the professions, academia, the arts and politics move to a bigger pond. Sports stars can stay but national acceptance is a touchy subject, as the Australian cricket team discovers when it plays in Perth without any locals. Business people like the Wild West attitude, even if, as on all frontiers, it attracts cowboys and carpetbaggers as well as honest toilers. The few dissidents are well-known, as are friends and enemies, and gossip can spread like a bushfire. The sole remaining daily newspaper, *The*

West Australian, has dominated public discussion for 160 years, in a stolid sort of way.

Outside the metropolitan area is a jigsaw of huge regions in which the strength of local feeling and impatience with government increases in proportion to their distance from Perth, let alone Canberra. Dorothy Hewett's autobiography, *Wild Card*, shows how quickly newcomers could become Sandgropers: 'I am driving down Hay Street with my father in 1933. There are canvas signs strung across the road that read SECESSION and "Westralia for Westralians". My family are all eastern staters who have been transformed into patriotic West Australians. They are secessionists who believe that all farmers' troubles can be traced back to Canberra.'

Hewett was recalling the 1933 referendum when Western Australians voted overwhelmingly for secession (see panel). The arguments are still heard: Canberra is unsympathetic to WA's needs, despite the fact that the state earns so much of the country's export income; farmers pay too much for machinery and materials; local manufacturing is stymied by east coast factories.

Victoria's Crown Counsel, Greg Craven, wrote a book, *Secession: The Ultimate States Right* (1986) which concluded that secession was legally impossible because clauses of the Australian constitution refer to the colonies being united in a federal commonwealth, imposing a continuing bond of unity. Craven adds however, that the law tends to follow politics, which means that it is possible if you can get away with it. The Confederate states lost the American Civil War and their secession was deemed illegal: 'It's always a matter of artillery, not logic. If you can do it, you can do it.'

WHAT MATTERS is the widely-held and historic sentiment that Western Australia has been hard-done by. WA has legitimate gripes over its share of federal funding for scientific research and defence—an old fear that recalls the World War II 'Brisbane line' strategy of defending only south-eastern Australia in the event of a Japanese invasion. But the basic arguments for secession have always been about the chief obsession of the state's public life, economic development.

WA was very much the Cinderella colony until the gold rushes of the 1890s. The state's population leapt sevenfold in 20 years, mostly from 't'othersiders' escaping the deep recession in the eastern colonies. As in later boom times, some newcomers made money fast, from mining, the share market or real estate. But most did not and settled in the wheatbelt or Perth, where they worked hard to make a crust.

In *A New History of Western Australia* (1981), Professor Geoffrey Bolton writes that the two themes which came to dominate the locals' concept of the past stemmed from works written during the goldrushes:



'The pioneers were to be seen as tough and enduring stalwarts whose qualities deserved to be respected by later generations and rewarded by material progress; and if that progress failed to eventuate, it was not because of any defect in Western Australia or its inhabitants, but because of unsympathetic outside influences. Lacking a Canberra, the 19th century had Downing Street as a villain.'

Aborigines and convicts didn't fit this scheme, and an influential faction of older families in the Royal Historical Society of WA later tended to perpetuate the 'tradition which in honoring the pioneers ignores the contentious, disreputable, and insanitary features of their lives.' It was the wealthier colonists who had agitated for convict labour, but its arrival was resented by other settlers. Professor Tom Stannage writes in his social history, *The People of Perth* (1979), that the lags often gave as good as they got from their underpaid guards. 'In these experiences lie the origins of strongly held and persisting popular attitudes towards the police, as well as that prickliness, that defensiveness, which is so characteristic of the Western Australian police force.'

Many pastoral fortunes were founded on cheap Aboriginal labour in the far north, the scene of black massacres as late as the 1920s. Events like the black resistance in the Kimberleys led by Jandamarra ('Pigeon')

A message for London: H.K. Watson arrives at the Houses of Parliament in 1934, with petitions calling for WA's secession from the federation.

Photo: Battye Library BA 556/3



in the 1890s, or the historic strike for better wages by black pastoral workers in the Pilbara in 1946, were largely ignored in the history taught to white schoolchildren until the past decade or so.

Since the 1960s the pastoral, mercantile and professional fortunes of Perth's older families have been eclipsed by the largely institutional money of the miners and finance houses. But, if less conspicuous, the money and influence of those families endures. The establishment's Weld Club is still at the bottom of Barrack Street, even though it lives in the shadow of skyscrapers built by the new money.

Sir Charles Court made the mineral booms his own, first as Minister for Industrial Development and the North-West and later as Premier. Helped by the Whitlam government's 'centralist' and environmentalist policies, Court successfully painted Labor as anti-development. In fact the state branch of the ALP adopted a largely bipartisan approach to development, but its politicians did not know as much about the subject as Court did. The ALP was perhaps bound to look wimpy at a time when extremists like Lang Hancock could suggest excavating a north-west harbour with a nuclear bomb.

Relations between Labor and the conservative parties were fairly chummy until young turks like Brian Burke began to get a rise out of Sir Charles. The biggest battles were fought through the media rather than in Parliament, and focused on local rather than party-political issues—whether to build an aquatic centre in

Campaigning, '30s-style: the alternatives in the referendum were 'yes' to secession or 'yes' to a convention on federal-state relations.

Photo: Battye Library 3964B/5



King's Park, whether to demolish the historic Pensioners' Barracks for construction of a freeway, and whether to reclaim parts of the river for traffic use.

The concern over Perth's growing pains was deepened by nostalgia for the city's way of life before it was

dubbed the City of Lights by astronaut John Glenn in 1962, before it hosted the Empire Games in the same year, and before the serial killings by Eric Edgar Cooke, the last man to be hanged in WA, who was executed in 1964.

The Aborigines had their own sense of loss. They began to find voice with the foundation of the Kimberley Land Council in 1978, a process quickened by the dramatic events at the Aboriginal-owned Noonkanbah pastoral station in 1979-80. An Australian subsidiary of the US mining giant, Amax, wanted to drill an oil well on the station despite objections from the community, who said the drilling would desecrate a sacred site and sought wider recognition for Aboriginal traditional law. The Court government directed the WA Museum's trustees to give the consent required for the drilling under the Aboriginal Heritage Act. Amid mounting protests from Aborigines, trade unions and church groups, the WA Police escorted a convoy carrying drilling equipment to Noonkanbah. The government later took possession of a privately-owned rig and proceeded to drill, without success.

NOONKANBAH SPLINTERED ANY CONSENSUS on Aboriginal affairs in WA. The then federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Senator Fred Chaney, had called for negotiation rather than confrontation. In reply the right-wingers who still dominate the WA Liberal Party, led by Bill Hassell and Senate deputy president Noel Crichton-Browne, later blocked Chaney's attempt to move to the House of Representatives, thus ending his aspirations to lead the Liberal Party.

In 1983, Brian Burke won office—and two key seats in the north—on a platform that promised Aboriginal land rights. But after a campaign against land rights by the mining industry and the conservative parties, which included television advertisements showing anonymous black hands locking up chunks of the state, Burke introduced legislation that watered down the recommendations of the Seaman inquiry into land rights. The bill was rejected by the state's conservative-dominated upper house, Burke dropped the idea of taking it any further and publicly warned the Hawke government not to introduce overriding federal legislation.

Burke's way of overcoming Labor's perceived shortcomings in fostering economic growth was to bed down with the 'four-on-the-floor' entrepreneurs of the 1980s. Media manipulation was substituted for Charles Court's more basic means of blunting public opinion, section 54b of the Police Act, which forbade unauthorised public gatherings of more than four people.

After some umming and ahing, the Dowding and Lawrence governments which succeeded Burke also came down on the side of development. But the ALP is still being trumped by the Liberal-National Party coalition, now led by Richard Court, son of Sir Charles, which

has approved oil exploration near the Ningaloo Reef marine park off Exmouth in the north-west.

A group of Nyungahs (south-west Aborigines) led by Robert Bropho have fought a long campaign, under Labor and now the coalition, against the development of a former brewery located on a prime riverside site. They say it is a sacred site, but even the Mabo judgment offers nothing to urban Aborigines and they continue to slog away through the courts and elsewhere.

WA Aborigines have the highest unemployment rate in Australia and massive health problems. They are less than 2.7 per cent of the population but account for 43 per cent of prison numbers, with a lot of frequent, short-term custodial sentences. Professor Richard Harding, director of the University of WA's crime research centre, says the state's rate of violent crime is about average compared with other states and is not on the increase. The state leads the nation in the rate of break-ins and car thefts, despite controversial laws on recidivist juvenile offenders.

Nonetheless, the WA Police Union and a Perth talkback-radio host, Howard Sattler, go ballistic over individual crimes. That suits the police, whose workings have been a subject of controversy since the unsolved murder of Shirley Finn, a Perth brothel keeper, in 1975. Brothels in Perth and Kalgoorlie are tolerated under a police policy of 'containment' that is not spelt out in law.

The State Ombudsman gets 1000 written complaints about the police every year, but they are largely handled as an internal police matter. Meanwhile, a WA court has heard allegations that a senior police officer gave the principals behind the theft of about \$2 million in diamonds from the Argyle mine regular updates on the investigation into their activities.

Then there is the state's upper house, the Legislative Council, where country votes have almost three times the weight of metropolitan votes and where the ALP has never had a majority. According to a political scientist at Curtin University, Professor David Black, WA is the only state to favour country voters in both houses simultaneously.

ALL THESE ISSUES can and do overlap. An independent MP, Reg Davies, has succeeded in getting a parliamentary inquiry into the structure of the WA police force, but it is government members who will have a majority on the upper-house committee.

Some argue that an enhanced role for the upper house, and Parliament in general, would check WA's historic tendency towards government by executive fiat. Small chance, when the Court government rushes its native-title legislation through the upper house, applying the guillotine on debate for only the second time in the chamber's history. The law seeks to extinguish native title, but give statutory rights to traditional lands. It does not provide for ownership.

So far, Richard Court has only risen in the opinion polls, but a welter of litigation awaits. Noonkanbah showed that there is a limit to the WA public's admiration for the hairy-chested approach. The Court government is challenging the federal Mabo legislation, but

1901: WA agrees to join the Australian federation after the Goldfields threaten to join as a separate state.

1906: First reading of a bill proposing secession.

1917: The *Sunday Times* newspaper begins to crusade against federation.

1926: A secession league is formed, precursor to the Dominion League which successfully campaigns for referendum.

1933: WA votes two-to-one to secede, with most support from the wheatbelt and south-west and the least from the Goldfields and the Kimberley.

1935: A House of Commons select committee rejects the petition on the grounds that WA had no legal right to request legislation on the Australian constitution. The matter lapsed as the economy improved at home.

1951: WA votes strongly in favour of the Menzies government's proposal to ban the Communist Party, although it is defeated elsewhere.

1967: WA votes in favour of the Commonwealth legislating on Aboriginal affairs.

1970: Prince Leonard Casley's Hutt River Province 'secedes' from the rest of Australia in protest at wheat quotas.

1974: Lang Hancock founds the Westralian Secession Movement with the ultimate aim of independence for WA. The W.S.M. polls one per cent of the vote in the May Senate elections, but keeps fielding candidates for the rest of the decade.

1993: The WA Secession 2001 Association is formed, led by former National Party vice-president and Senate candidate Michael Jardine.

Aborigines are challenging the state law, and are taking two massive Mabo-style land claims to the High Court.

One of the claims began with three tribes in the Kimberley—the Worora, Wunumbul and Ngarinyin—who only came in close contact with whites in 1912. An early missionary documented how their traditional lands which include the Mitchell Plateau had systems of tenure and strict laws of entry and egress. The tribes have since been moved three times to their present abodes, the Mowanjum reserve outside Derby and at Kalumburu. Like the Mabo case, the Kimberley claim rests on evidence from elders about traditional ties to the land. But, as Eddie Mabo found out, it is a long road to the High Court.

The latest of the original plaintiffs in the Kimberley claim to pass away was Daisy Utemorrhah, 71, who spoke the community's three languages and won a human-rights award for books based on traditional stories and poems. Last year she told a newspaper: 'We have to sit and talk to the judge for a while and tell him we're getting very old and we might die soon and we have to teach our children before we go and leave them. But if [he] don't come and sit and talk with us, I might not live to see my land. I'm getting very old now.'

Much of the Mitchell Plateau is reserved for bauxite mining, but no mine has yet been planned. ■

Mark Skulley is a freelance writer who was raised in Perth.

• The Mowanjum community gave *Eureka Street* permission to use the name of Daisy Utemorrhah.

Soldier's story

SOLDIERS HAVE RARELY, since the days of greater Greece and rampant Rome, proven to be reflective writers. How extraordinary, then, that the particularly cruel and pointless civil war on Bougainville—which still has no clear end in sight—should have produced a minor classic: *Bougainville Campaign Diary*, written by Yauka Liria, an intelligence officer in the PNG army who served two terms on Bougainville before quitting to take up studies.

This is a first-person book, worthy to stand alongside *Fear Drive My Feet*, Peter Ryan's astonishing account of his late teenage years, spent as a soldier spying on Japanese military movements from the mountains of Morobe up behind Lae in Papua New Guinea. Liria's book (published adventurously by Indra Press, 142 Ryans Road, Eltham North, Victoria 3095) is the first inside account to emerge from the bloodiest war in the South Pacific since the war in which Ryan fought, 50 years ago.

Bougainville is the great watershed of modern PNG, as were the 1987 coups for Fiji. Most observers and friends of PNG, and Papua New Guineans themselves, had previously always presumed that consensus solutions would prevent any long-term drift into violent confrontation. But the traditional 'Melanesian Way', a concept usually enlisted to describe consensus strategies, has equally been, both historically and prehistorically, one of conflict.

Typically, in the absence of more sophisticated problem-solving structures, tensions tend not to be articulated but are left to fester in village life until they either slowly vanish, or can only be resolved by the removal of their presumed cause, through murder sometimes cast in religious terms as 'sorcery'.

The conflict on Bougainville, which was decades in the making while a range of institutions resiled

from the need to confront the causes, is now effectively a civil war between the 45,000 central Bougainvilleans who remain at odds with Port Moresby, and the other 200,000 Bougainvilleans whose land surrounds them. It eats at PNG's capacity to deliver services elsewhere, greatly increases the number and type of weapons, and the acceptance of violence, in the wider community, and brutalises the disciplined services.

On his low-key official visit to Australia last month, PNG Prime Minister Paias Wingti was dogged at every turn by a tiny group of pro-rebel Bougainville activists, typifying an irritant proving hard to shake off either at home or abroad. Like Paul Keating, with whom he renewed a comfortable relationship, Wingti is adept at deal-making. Yet Bougainville makes Mabo look a cinch. On Bougainville Wingti cannot pull off the sort of deals he has struck with foreign mining companies elsewhere, and at which he is adept on his home turf of the Highlands, and in Parliament.

Bougainville is both a symptom and a cause of PNG's 1990s anxieties. It serves as an 'extreme case' model of the effects of unresolved tensions between different levels of authority, formal and informal; of the failure of successive attempts to commercialise land use without offering compensatory economic security through ongoing employment; of an overdependence on a few huge resource projects (the loss of mining revenues from Bougainville sparked PNG's first major balance of payments crisis); and, not least, it has led to an unravelling of intertribal issues that were temporarily smothered during the colonial era—with the army itself, in effect, becoming a new tribal player.

Liria describes a mutiny in 1989: 'On the eve of a village search near

Arawa, the company got together and told the company commander they would not be involved. The men told him they wanted to go home to Wewak the following day, saying they had had their three months' operational duty and "just wanted to go home". Soldiers then fired their weapons indiscriminately in the camp to vent their frustrations and to show how serious they were.'

The commander, shouting in the dark, appealed to his men—against the pounding of the waves on the black volcanic sands of Aropa beach. 'No!' they chorused back ... and were flown home.

Liria describes a later incident when Colonel Lima Dotaona ordered a group of soldiers to stop beating an innocent villager. The colonel, a calm and sympathetic man, is today head of the staff college at Lae. He almost became army commander last month, but Wingti stepped in to waive the regulations requiring retirement at 50, thereby extending the term of his own appointee, Bob Dademo.

On this occasion on Bougainville, the men's officer asked 'Who said to stop the beating?' and advanced on Dotaona and Liria, his M16 raised. 'I knew that, if he pressed the trigger, the colonel and I would be as good as dead.' Dotaona stared coldly and maintained his composure, and the officer finally backed off. Charges were, again, never pursued.

LIRIA, A 30-YEAR-OLD southern highlander, told his story because 'I believe that we in the military should not be immune to accountability and public scrutiny.' And he wished to explain how and why the army was so ill-prepared at first for its Bougainville assignment, its first shooting-war since the 'coconut war' skirmish on Vanuatu in 1980.

The PNG Defence Force had its

Bougainville ... has led to an unravelling of intertribal issues that were temporarily smothered during the colonial era—with the army itself, in effect, becoming a new tribal player.

origins in the Pacific War, when PNG 'irregulars' plus a formal battalion acquitted themselves well against the Japanese. The Defence Force was integrated substantially into the Australian Army and indeed, much of its budget continues to come directly from Australia through a defence arrangement that is allocated separately from the rest of aid to PNG.

But now half its officers, trained at Indonesian staff colleges, are inclined to the more interventionist style of the Indonesian military—hence the army's upfront role in Bougainville administration, where it retains an effective right of veto over the decisions of the civilians. Senior Indonesians have quietly advised both PNG and Australian politicians, that PNG's failure to deliver services in rural areas might be best tackled by the traditional Indonesian approach.

After World War II the PNGDF's aim continued to be to prepare for foreign attack, not insurrection. Its ethos remained, in the spirit of its wartime genesis, somewhat maverick, never subjected to the same type of discipline as the police. Indeed, rivalry between the two disciplined forces has been and remains intense.

The PNGDF's officer corps was highly regarded. After the retirement of its founding general, Ted Diro, and his entering Parliament, however, defence ministers began to involve themselves in ever more detailed areas of administration, and soon senior officers were shifted and replaced according to purely political criteria (there have been five commanders in the 13 years since Diro left). The vital sense of the PNGDF being a truly national force became lost, as promotions were made according to officers' regional origins. This, combined with an annual erosion of the defence budget, led to a drop in morale that proved catastrophic when the army was forced truly to prove itself, on Bougainville.

However, hard lessons have been learned. The army, now more disciplined and focused (even though it continues to defy instructions from the government, just as the government has left it in the lurch by failing to pay its bills), returned successfully to support 'resistance' efforts by Bougainvilleans opposed to the Bougainville Revolutionary Army.

Liria describes the enemy: 'Rambo' groups of village-based young men, inspired by the style of the Sylvester Stallone movies, their leaders wearing red headbands, often shod with Bougainville Copper Ltd safety boots.' Ominously, he writes, 'This terrain which overlay the rich copper and gold deposits we were squabbling over, consisted of hundreds of rugged, steep, narrow and heavily undergrown ridgelines, further cut by numerous small ravines. They were too slow, and wear down, our patrols, sometimes swallowing them up, presenting a perfectly bunched-up target for the rebels waiting up on the ridgeline ahead.'

The rebels—to whom many of the soldiers ascribed superstitious powers, powers to transform themselves into dogs and steal their weapons by night—picked off the first or last soldiers on such patrols.

Liria recounts the night when, on patrol at Panguna, his walkie-talkie wavelength was intercepted by rebel leader Sam Kauona, who trained as a lieutenant at Portsea in Victoria, and who was a friendly rival before Kauona had deserted after the killing of his cousin by police. They argued in the night, as friends and enemies.

THE BOOK DESCRIBES the use of mortars, the important and controversial role of helicopters, including the attachment of machine guns, and the key failure of the rebels to attract international support save from a group of lobbyists in Australia and New Zealand.

Liria tells of the original deployment of the army: 'I met many men and officers who admitted that they were dying to go into action in Bougainville, even though it was to be against their own people, people we are trained to defend.' And he writes of how the news of the withdrawal from the island, in March 1990, was received, in a barracks mess while watching TV after the evening meal: 'It just poured out. Frustration, anger, hope. But mostly complaints. The debate eventually became heated, one group arguing that we, the PNGDF, had lost, and the other group saying that we would have won if only the politicians had allowed us.'

In counter-insurgency warfare,

Liria stresses, 'and especially on Bougainville, there are no strongholds, nor does taking ground really matter.' Loyalty is the key. And the Papua New Guinean's loyalty, he writes, 'is firstly to his parents, then his immediate relatives, then in order the clan, the village, the tribe, the district, the region, the occupation, such as soldier, and the nation-state of PNG comes last.' That was why 'my buddy Sam was somewhere up there at Guava Ridge, fighting us, fighting me.'

The notion of insurgency, as presented in training to the PNGDF, had always retained the ultimate note that this was a catalyst for foreign power involvement. Encountering hostile Papua New Guineans, especially in contrast to the friendliness of those met while patrolling the rugged Indonesian border, came as a terrible shock soon interpreted in a familiar way, as tribal hostility.

Strange repercussions continue, to what has settled into a long-term stand-off between the rest of Bougainville (and PNG) and the still-hostile central Bougainvilleans. One of the ironic fruits of the affair, which had its roots in landowner neglect, has been a resurgence of landowners as the most successful pressure group in PNG.

Yaw Saffu, professor of politics at the University of PNG, says: 'Bougainville has enhanced landowners' self-confidence, their ability to drive home cautionary lessons (encapsulated in the slogan 'Land is Life, Land is Marriage, Land is Power'), and they enhance this by their readiness to question or ignore agreements, and to take the law into their own hands to enforce their interpretations.'

After Liria has completed his degree, a publisher should sponsor him to return to Bougainville. Part two of his diary might prove equally fascinating. Such clear-eyed self-searching is rare enough in any institution; in a losing army, it is all but unique. ■

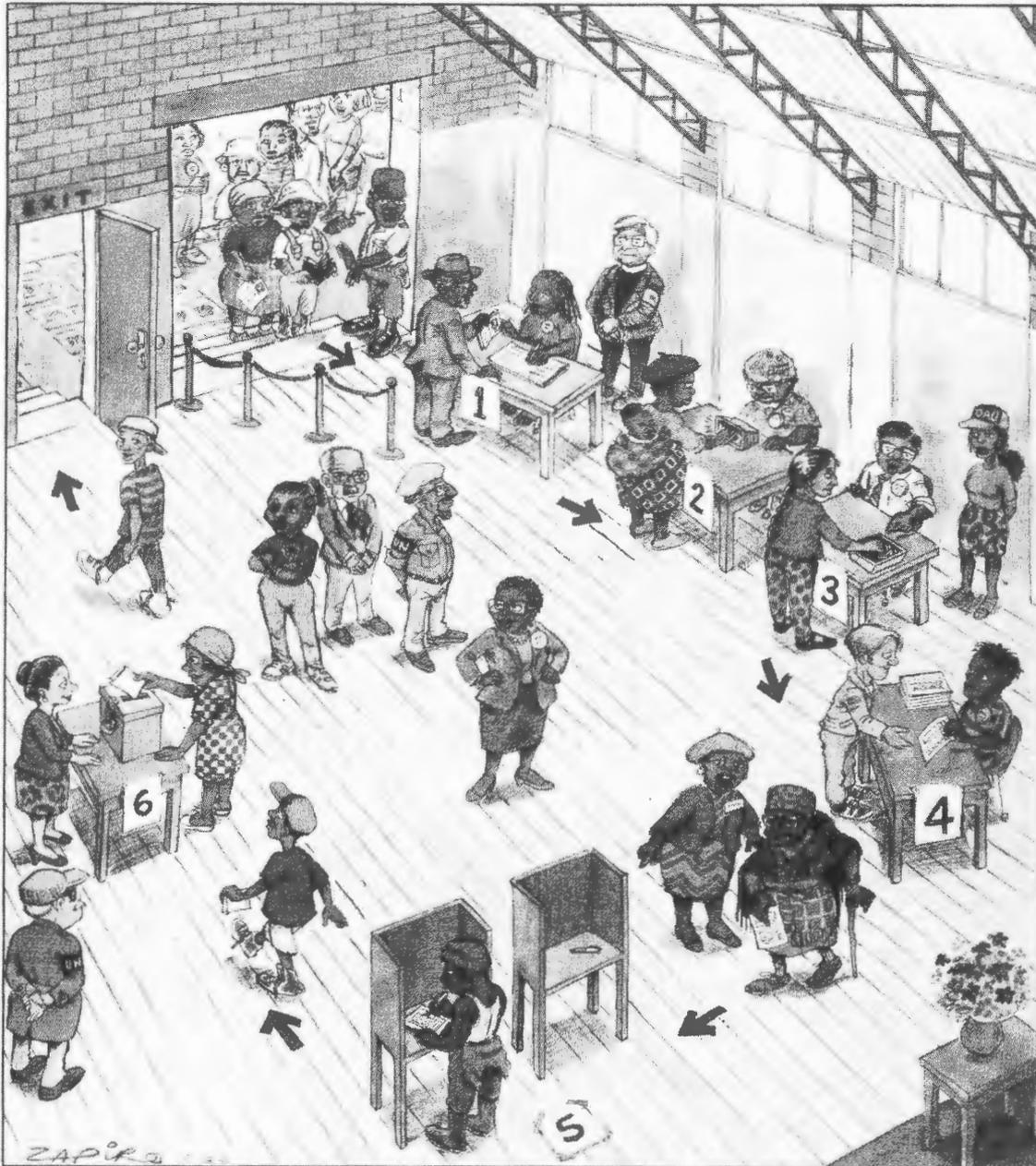
Rowan Callick is an associate editor of *The Australian Financial Review*.

The Papua New Guinean's loyalty 'is firstly to his parents, then his immediate relatives, then in order the clan, the village, the tribe, the district, the region, the occupation, such as soldier, and the nation-state of PNG comes last.'

TAMMY MBENGO
AND MARYANNE SWEENEY

Balloting for a future

*South Africa's
democratic experiment*



A Voter Education and Elections Training Unit poster being used in South Africa.

—Courtesy of
Jenny Beacham.

MOST SOUTH AFRICANS ARE EXHILARATED by the thought that next month their country will experience its first multiracial elections. Their excitement is tempered, however, by an awareness of the huge task facing those trying to educate millions of illiterate or semiliterate new voters in the meaning and the methods of democracy.

Since 1992 voter education has been the aim of more than 40 local and international non-government organisations associated in the Independent Forum for Electoral Education. These organisations have long been involved in training civic groups, trade unions and youth movements in the black townships, and many of their white activists were imprisoned for illegally entering black townships during the 1980s state of emergency.

By combining the networks, resources and experience of its member organisations, the forum aims to

provide a substantial program of non-partisan electoral education, giving special attention to those who have been most disadvantaged by apartheid. This includes encouraging individuals to obtain identity documents and coordinating nation-wide monitoring activities. The forum has the support of the major political parties and a cross-section of other organisations, and is represented on the South African Broadcasting Corporation's steering committee for voter education.

Prominent among the Forum's member groups is the Black Sash, a long-standing anti-apartheid and civil liberties organisation run by women, which monitors human rights violations and operates citizens' advice offices around the country. ('Black Sash', a nickname bestowed by the press, refers to the women's practice of wearing black sashes to mourn the loss of constitutional rights.) The organisation's vice-president, Mary Burton, says it will do anything it can to help ensure that voters are prepared for the election: 'We have been monitoring the process since 1990; we know there are problems ahead. We have studied the legislation and we're keeping a close eye on the transitional structures.'

A Black Sash voter-education coordinator in western Cape Province, Val Goldschmit, complains of 'vicious' intimidation from farmers who have refused to allow the organisation to hold workshops with farm labourers. 'The farmers denied us access to their premis-

es,' she says. We suspect that farmers are arranging voter education with other organisations that will serve their interests.' Paul Magadla, a 68-year-old winery labourer who has worked on the farm lands for more 25 years, says: 'Our boss won't give us food if we vote for a party which he doesn't belong to. He said we must vote for the *Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging*' (the far-right Afrikaner Resistance Movement).

At a voter-training workshop run by the non-partisan Matla Trust in Cape Town, factory worker Godfrey Jacobs, 38, was concerned that some parties conduct voter education 'to canvass for the elections'. He also feared the election might be 'rigged' and said he had experienced threats of violence to secure his vote. Intimidation, though still low-key, has occurred on a wide scale in some parts of the country.

Ntombazana Botha, a national convenor of the Independent Forum's voter education and training commission, says that dealing with intimidation is the responsibility of the Independent Electoral Commission, which was established by Act of Parliament to oversee the whole election process. Says Botha: 'We've got a problem with some political parties that vowed not to take part in the election, and would disrupt and cause mayhem during the election.'

Church groups have taken an active role in the preparation for democracy through the Ecumenical Monitoring Program in South Africa, which represents national and international church bodies in the Independent Forum. The program conducts voter education

in most South African churches, in conjunction with the World Council of Churches.

Project Vote, a non-partisan organisation, holds national workshops for civic and political organisers who in turn train others. At each workshop a simulated voting station is set up to enable participation in mock election-day exercises, and, since reading material is at best of limited use in many parts of the country, the workshops are arranged so they can be adapted for people who are non-literate. All materials are available in the country's major languages: English, Afrikaans, Sotho, Tswana, Pedi, Xhosa and Zulu.

Many of the people that the voter-training programs are trying to reach live in rural areas, and because of the educational disadvantages they suffered under apartheid, are at best semiliterate. In large parts of South Africa, both in rural areas and urban squatter camps, newspapers are rare, television is known about but seldom seen, and movies are virtually unheard-of. Some areas have no electricity, no running water and no telephones.

In one of several surveys conducted in rural South Africa, a man described a photograph of F.W. De Klerk as a one-rand coin, but did not know whose image it

'Our boss won't give us food if we vote for a party which he doesn't belong to. He said we must vote for the Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging' (the far-right Afrikaner Resistance Movement).

—PAUL MAGADLA, 68,
CAPE PROVINCE FARM LABOURER

Sharing an Australian experience

AUSTRALIA IS INVOLVED in the international efforts to ensure the success of South Africa's first non-racial democratic election next month.

Several senior officers from the Australian Electoral Commission are members of international observer missions in South Africa. One, Tim Glanville, is funded by Australia's overseas aid agency, the Australian International Development Assistance Bureau, which has contributed \$250,000 to the Commonwealth Trust Fund for observers. The Commonwealth will send about 70 'eminent persons', some of them Australian, to monitor the elections. Electoral support for the transition to democracy is part of Australia's aid to South Africa, worth about \$7 million in 1993-4.

In mid-January another Electoral Commission officer, Michael Maley, joined the United Nations Observer Mission in South Africa, as deputy

director of its electoral division. He had previously spent 18 months in Cambodia helping the UN prepare for the elections which took place there in May last year. The commission sent 25 electoral officers to Namibia and 44 to Cambodia, and probably will send many more to South Africa. During the election campaign the UN will coordinate the work of up to 3000 international observers.

Paul Dacey, a senior Australian Electoral Commission officer, visited South Africa in February, to identify ways in which Australia might assist with technical support. As a result, the Independent Electoral Commission readily accepted assistance in devising procedures for overseas voting, available for the first time at this election. Arrangements for voting will be made for South Africans resident in Australia, including those not living in Canberra. There will be no postal

voting. Four Australian electoral officers joined the Commonwealth team in mid-January to help newly-appointed provincial electoral officers with staff training.

On a partisan level, the Australian Labor Party is providing financial and human support for the African National Congress' election campaign. At the invitation of the ANC, a three-person ALP delegation, Jenny Beacham, John Della Bosca and Ian Henderson, visited South Africa for ten days in October last year. They offered campaign advice and made suggestions on how the ANC might manage the many offers of international help it has received. The ALP and the trade union movement have also made financial contributions to the ANC. ■

Maryanne Sweeney, a Melbourne freelance writer, is doing postgraduate studies in southern African politics.

was. The problem does not end there. Many of those interviewed thought the cross placed on a ballot paper was a signature, a bad mark or something given to students who were absent from school. Six out of 10 people did not know who Nelson Mandela was, and more than 80 per cent could not read or write.

Such findings are extremely worrying to politicians and publicists who are trying to reach a potential electorate that comprises a third of South Africa's population. Reaching out to rural voters is the Voter Education and Election Training Unit, another independent organisation, which has so far conducted more than 30,000 voter-education programs in the Western Cape. 'There are difficulties in the rural areas,' says trainer Willie Manie, 'where people find it hard to comprehend everything in a day. Rural people find it more exciting just to watch a voter-education video than to try to get the message.'

Radio broadcasts have been an effective means for conveying electoral information to rural people. The South African Broadcasting Commission (SABC) broadcasts in nine African languages, and a national survey indicated that about 66 per cent of people in rural areas listen to radio election programs in their own languages. Electoral training on radio is popular in some urban areas, such as Guguletu and Khayelitsha townships near Cape Town where people listen to voter-education programs produced by independent organisations and broadcast on the SABC's Radio Xhosa.

More than 70 per cent of the estimated 22 million South Africans who are eligible to vote will be voting for the first time. And those who have voted before will be more familiar with 'first-past-the-post' ballots, not the proportional representation system agreed upon by the multiparty negotiations that have been taking place since the unbanning of political organisations in February 1990.

The urgent need to intensify the pre-election voter education drive is highlighted by the experience of another country in the southern African region. Angola, with one of the highest levels of illiteracy on the African continent, had a 12 per cent spoiled ballot rate in its last elections in September 1992. South Africa cannot afford the wasted votes of 2.6 million voters. ■

Tammy Mbengo is a freelance journalist based in Cape Town. He spent seven years in exile in Europe and Canada before going to Zimbabwe, where he studied journalism. He returned to South Africa in June last year.

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The appearances of lesser angels

WHEN IT COMES TO EXPERIENCES of transcendence, bush walking gets a better press than cycling. When you are walking in the bush, you don't rely on man-made roads, and you have an established canon of literature telling you that in the woods and hills you will find the relevant gods and spirits.

In this business cyclists are poor cousins. But the *eruditi* know that on bikes you may expect occasional enchantments and mysterious visitations. These encounters, however, like those enjoyed when Mount Carmel has been ascended, take place after long and arduous journeys of detachment from the everyday. Then, like those touched by the glory of God in the Scriptures, cyclists, too, may have visions of heavenly cities and of new and mysterious paths; they, too, may meet strange figures—like Melchizedek—who come from nowhere and are never seen again.

My first such vision was vouchsafed me in England. I had left Bristol very early on a frosty morning, and had ridden steadily south along tiny back roads into the low hills of Somerset. As was my custom each midday at opening time, I stopped at a remote pub by a crossroads for pint of cider to ease the remaining hour before I stopped for lunch at a further village. On this day, the ride had been long, the sun had become warm and I was thirsty. But I was a bit disappointed in the cider. It was bitter and had stalks in it: must be the bottom of the barrel, I thought.

I remember leaving the pub and taking a quiet road along the ridge overlooking a shallow valley. As I went, I became aware of a vision on the other side of the valley. Lit up by the sun was a huge church and collection of buildings, yellow in the soft light, floating on the valley. Wells Cathedral, I thought. Fifty miles away by the map, but visibility must be good today.

I enjoyed the vision until I came to a cross-roads and consulted my map. I was holding it upside down, but that didn't seem to matter. Surely if you held the map upside down and cycled backwards, you would get to the same place as you would if you held it up the right way and pedalled forwards. This new way of travel seemed natural and wonderful. And it seemed to work. After a period that is blocked out of memory, I stopped for lunch. The mystical writers are agreed that such loss of memory is normal after heightened spiritual experience.

By evening, I had crossed into Dorset, where I stayed the night with friends. I described my vision of the day

to them. They were sceptical. Not heavenly but earthly spirits, they said: Scrumpy, the local Somerset brew, which has the alcohol content of whisky. Not Wells Cathedral, they said, but Downside Abbey. But they were not cyclists, and knew little of these higher things.

There are times of need, too, when you meet the powerful angels which offer reassurance and strength. On one journey through the Scottish Islands and Highlands, we were staying in one of the inappropriately named Youth Hostels at Fort William. We had just crossed from Skye, where we had been prepared for our later encounter by a vision of chthonic forces. We were travelling along a dusty road, littered with whisky bottles, without a tree or house for twenty miles, when we had a vision of dark-suited and dour Highland men walking in procession over the crest of the hill. They were carrying a coffin, walking in total silence. No notice did they take of two solitary cyclists, who dismounted and stood silently, hoping that they, too, would not be summoned into this procession of the dead.

The next day in Fort William, at the crack of dawn, the bunk above creaked, and a man who had confessed the night before to being 75 years old, could be seen descending to the floor. Further creaking, as his knees and ankles took the strain. He was on his way to climb Ben Nevis, the last and highest of the seven high mountains of Scotland.

Confronted with such valour, we mere cyclists felt momentarily despondent. But as we stood there, in grave risk of backsliding, we had a vision of the greater angels. Two figures, a man and a woman, were preparing their bikes.

'Where are you going?' we asked casually.

'To Murlaggan', they said, 'and then over to the Kyle of Lochalsh Road'.

'But there is no road', we said.

'Oh, we'll carry our bikes over the hills and pick up the road on the other side. There are minor roads, in the valleys.'

So off they went, like bit players in *The African Queen* remade for an audience of mountain climbers. And, awestruck, we went on, once again assured by this vision of the Great Rightness of our path.

But, when all is said and done, the greatest consolation comes not from these grand visions and appearances, but from the visitations of the lesser angels. These, too, are usually granted after a hard morning spent making one's way through the Fallen World of cars and tourists.

Most recently, we had come along the Great Ocean Road from Peterborough towards Apollo Bay. It was a hard morning. The cars were ravenous, snuffling like

broody pigs at any cyclists who crossed their path, and the coast was packaged with warning notices, signposts and wooden walkways, wrapped up in ways even Christo would never have dreamed of.

The climb from Gellibrand River to Lavers Hill is long and steep; the day was wet and we were tired and hungry. No joy at Lavers Hill: a playpen for cars, crammed with coffee shops, pubs and craftshops, Volvos and BMW's muzzled and grunting outside. We ate, shook the mud off our wheels, and prepared to continue through the rain to Beech Forrest. At the edge of the settlement is a crossroads—the traditional place for visitations—where the road from Lavers Hill to Beech Forrest bisects the road from Apollo Bay to Gellibrand.

There, in the distance, we saw what looked like a sherpa walking a yak, the pair all square with hair trailing along the ground, and coming up the hill from Apollo Bay.

As the vision drew nearer it turned into a boy with a bicycle, panniers almost to the road on the front wheel, panniers on the back, more bags on the rack, and himself wearing a Souwester and a wide-brimmed plastic hat. We waited, thinking that since the road was flat enough there to ride, perhaps he had a puncture and needed help.

'Are you all right,

mate?'

He came close and we saw that he was a young Asian man.

'Yes', he answered.

'Where have you come from?' we asked.

'Japan.'

'Yes, but where from now?'

He answered laconically, 'From Melbourne. Today, from Apollo Bay.'

'And where are you going to?' we asked.

'To Perth.'

'How long will it take you?'

'Who knows?' And, perhaps seeing our incredulity, he added: 'The last time I came to Australia, it took six months to ride from Perth to Darwin.'

He went on his way towards Peterborough. Perhaps he rides still and will do so until he comes to the edge of the world.

We continued to Beech Forrest. By then the cars had fallen away, and we were grateful for the appearing of this lesser angel, who had shown to us the true way, and anticipated for us the last day when the Great Separation will take place—car drivers to the left, and cyclists to the right to ride forever in unalloyed and unmotorised bliss. ■

Andrew Hamilton SJ is indebted to Ezekiel 10: 9-15



Rachel's children

Memories of the fight over women's ordination are fresh in the Anglican Church, and the issue is still a matter of dispute in the Catholic Church. But it is not restricted to Christians—the role of women in congregations is one source of division between Orthodox and Liberal Jews.



WHEN JUDITH BEHEADED HOLOFERNES, she sang a song of victory. Throughout the Hebrew scriptures, women sing victory songs when they save the Jewish people from conquerors or restore the covenant after internal strife. The victory hymn reappears in a different key in the New Testament, when Mary sings the *Magnificat*.

The Anglican women who triumphed and received ordination could be excused for being too exhausted to sing after years of fighting to overcome sexual inequality within the church. These women and their supporters not only fought against sexism, but also waged a far more complicated battle that pertained to the letter and spirit of religious law.

Every community that has ordained women in the Judaeo-Christian world has gone through this debate separately, although the arguments have a wearying similarity. This is certainly the case with the ordination of Jewish women, which now has a 20-year history in Liberal or Progressive congregations but is not even being considered by the Orthodox.

In an interview in *Generation*, the Chief Rabbi of the British Commonwealth, Jonathan Sacks, addressed the question of diverse leadership within Judaism. 'I think we often forget the multiple models of leadership ... For instance, there was a Moses and there was an Aaron ... Without both a Moses and an Aaron, I think

the Jewish people in the wilderness would have split apart.' The omission of Miriam, the sister of Moses, from this analogy is a telling one, and points to the dissatisfaction of many women within Orthodox Judaism, where their roles are prescribed and their power is limited. However, it is within the diversity of Jewish congregations that many Jews—and in particular Jewish women—have found a haven. For Liberal or Progressive Jews, the battle for ordination was won in 1972, and the female rabbinate has begun to redress the balance of power within these congregations.

Many Jews celebrate their culture rather than practise their religion. But even the religion, monolithic to outsiders, contains many different forms, congregations and sects. Among these, three main groups can be distinguished: the Orthodox, for whom the ordination of women is out of the question; the Conservatives, who ordained women in 1989, but whose female rabbis cannot witness religious documents; and the Reform, or Liberal, congregations, who ordain women on equal terms with men. Temple Beth Israel is Australia's largest Liberal Jewish congregation, and women Rabbis, mostly American, have been officiating there for the past 10 years.



female ordination in the Anglican Church have been accused of obfuscating the deeper issues through a literal interpretation of the Gospels and the Pauline documents. In the same way, those who opposed the female rabbinate were often seen to be using *halakha*, or Jewish law, in the same way. But, as Torop adds: '*Halakha*, like any legal system, does not exist in a vacuum ... The strength of *halakha* has been its ability to adapt and meet the demands of every new age and time.'

There are several points of Jewish law that went through tortuous interpretation in both the Reform and Conservative congregations before women were ordained. Five major points of *halakha* distinguished the roles and responsibility of women and men, and these provided the focus for the rabbinical debate. According to some Talmudic interpretations of the *Torah*, women were ineligible to be appointed to any office of public responsibility in the Jewish community.

Women were exempted from the obligation to study *Torah*, although this was not forbidden to them. They were exempted from positive time-dependent commandments—with a few notable exceptions, such as the lighting of the Sabbath candles—and were traditionally ineligible to serve as witnesses in judicial proceedings. (Since Jews in many parts of Eastern

A young girl among a crowd of Hasidim during prayers after Sabbath at the Yeshivah synagogue in East St Kilda, Victoria. She is allowed to be with them because she is under the age of three.

Photo: Emmanuel Santos.

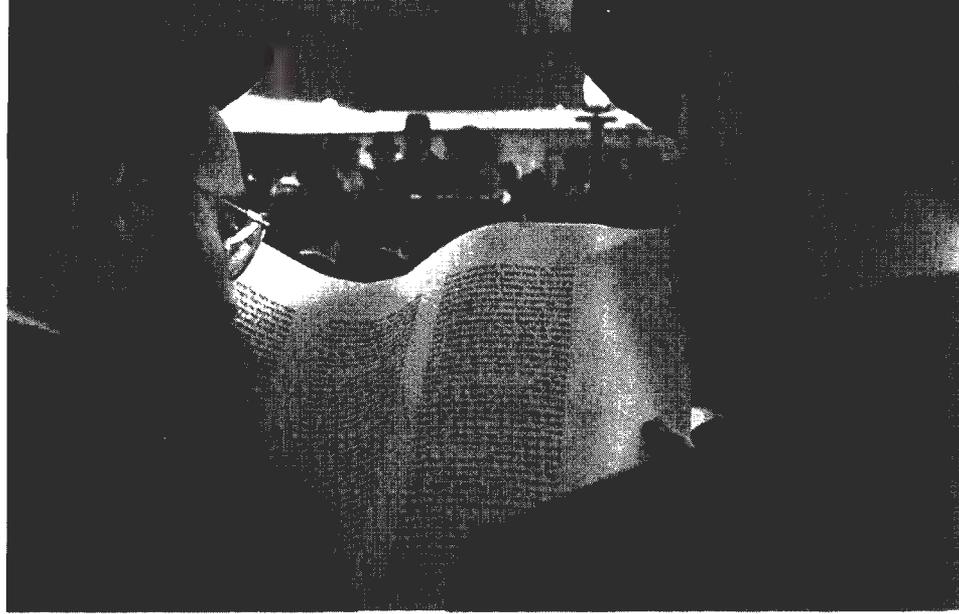
There are many similarities between the debates over female ordination in the church and the synagogue, but there are also differences, based on the role and tradition of spiritual leadership. The historic function of a rabbi was simply that of a teacher. Until the modern period, and in some cases in the present, (as in the case of certain Hasidic sects in New York) the religious and moral leadership of a Jewish community was dynastic. Within the letter of Jewish law, there is no prohibition of ordination for women. Certain functions rabbis perform, however, appear to be forbidden to women, particularly reading out the *Torah* [the Pentateuch], leading prayer, and acting as witnesses.

THE DEBATE AMONG Anglicans and Catholics about priestly ordination is somewhat different, because those churches trace clerical authority back through an 'apostolic succession' to the 12 companions chosen by Jesus, none of whom was a woman. But as Betsy Torop, a rabbi at Temple Beth Israel in Melbourne, wrote in *Generation*, women religious leaders 'are linked in one obvious way. We are equally at the mercy of male religious leaders who refuse to seize available options and opportunities to implement change.' Many opponents of

Europe lived outside the national law well into the 20th century, this last had serious implications.) Finally, women were considered by most traditional authorities to be ineligible to serve as leaders, despite the biblical example of Deborah.

The rabbinate as we know it was not established in Jewish texts, but evolved through responding to social need and custom. Therefore, none of the points raised by *halakhic* law necessarily form a barrier to female ordination. As well, there has been some confusion as to which parts of the *halakha* can be altered. Jewish law has two foundations: *de-oraitaita*, the actual laws set out in the *Torah*, and *de-rabban*, rabbinical commentaries on those laws which are found primarily in the *Mishnah*, the *Talmud* and some later texts. In many cases it is difficult to disentangle the law from its common practice, and attempts to recover the meaning of the law in its original context can reveal more about present-day Judaism and its leaders than about the past. (Perhaps there is a parallel here with the experience of Catholics during the Second Vatican Council.)

Although the Orthodox and the Conservatives have been primarily concerned with *halakha*, the Progressive community decided that the spirit of Judaism was based on its struggle for equality and justice. The reasons for this have to do with the origins of Liberal Juda-



'It is not just the rabbinite but prayer and history that have to be addressed within religious practice': Hasidim read from the scroll of Esther during the Purim Festival.

Photo: Emmanuel Santos

ism in 19th century Berlin. The movement's founders believed that Jews could enjoy the citizenship and civil liberties recently granted to them, and practise their religion in a way that was not at odds with their secular identity.

In Liberal synagogues the service was performed in the vernacular as well as in Hebrew, men and women sat together, and an organ and choir were installed. Thus by abandoning the Orthodox tradition of women sitting behind a screen on a balcony, their distracting voices hushed, Liberal congregations made an important assertion about the spiritual equality of women and men.

More significantly, these reforms made a strong statement that these Jews, at least, were going to draw from the best ideals of the secular world in which they lived (ironically, this goes back to a theme represented constantly in the *Torah*.) The great Jewish migration of the 1880s and 1890s moved the centre of Liberal Judaism to America, and it was here that Liberal Judaism encountered feminism, and began to question the position of women within its congregations.

First-wave feminism, as it has come to be known, centred on female suffrage, and giving women equality before the law. The changes that took place in the contemporary American Jewish congregation mirrored wider social change. Women were given voting rights within the congregation, and rabbis performed similar confirmation ceremonies for boys and girls, including readings from the *Torah*. Although granted more power within the community, however, women were still not seen as potential rabbis.

The first test case occurred in 1932 when Martha Neumark, the daughter of a professor at the Reform rabbinical seminary in Cincinnati, requested ordination. The community's final refusal was not based on Jewish law as it was stated that 'in view of the fact that Reform Judaism has in many other instances departed from traditional practice, it cannot logically and consistently refuse the ordination of women.' Instead, the problem was social: the seminary's board of governors feared that the synagogue might become even more 'an affair of the women', and that their own authority would be undermined. The re-emergence of feminism in America and Europe in the late 1960s, as well as the ordination of women in some US Protestant congregations earlier in the decade, reopened the debate about female ordina-

tion in the Reform community. This culminated in the ordination of the first woman rabbi, Sally Priesand, in 1972. Priesand encountered initial opposition, but her ordination was the first of many and there are now as many women as men entering American Reform seminaries.

Ordination for Orthodox women, however, is many years away. The Orthodox believe that women and men are intrinsically different, spiritually and socially. It is a woman's first obligation to marry and have children. Nor is there the alternative of a life of religious chastity for either men or women—unlike Catholicism, Judaism does not regard a celibate life as a vocation. Women's religious duties all centre on the home, and Orthodox girls have traditionally received only enough education in *Torah* to fulfil their domestic obligations in accordance with *halakha*, such as keeping the home kosher.

Groups of Orthodox women in Melbourne have begun to meet to study the Bible and its commentaries, however, and are increasingly involved in synagogal government. Nevertheless, they do not take part in leading the synagogue service, and sit apart from the men. The Orthodox have problems about purity and danger regarding women, and these stem from the relationship between the Fall and menstruation. During menstruation powerful taboos prohibit interaction between women and men in Orthodox households, and every month

Orthodox women are obliged to visit the *Mikvah*, or ritual bath, to be purified.

IDEAS OF WOMEN AS 'DANGEROUS' exist within Catholicism, but they are balanced by the powerful, if ambiguous, figure of Mary. Orthodox Judaism, has no such equivalent role model for women; the role models that do exist vary enormously and are invoked selectively. It is to the 'virtuous woman' of the *Book of Proverbs*, a kind of super homemaker whose price is 'far above rubies', that many Orthodox women turn to give authority to the domestic sphere. Other role models do exist in the Bible and in the later writings, including Deborah the judge and Beruria the scholar, whose knowledge and wisdom are applauded in the Talmud, but the Jewish historian Judith Plaskow sees a problem that goes beyond role modelling. In her book *Standing Again At Sinai* (1990), she states: 'Entry into the covenant at Sinai is the root experience of Judaism Given the central importance of this event, there can be no verse in the *Torah* more disturbing to the feminist than Moses' warning to his people in *Exodus* 19:15. 'Be ready for the third day; do not go near a woman.'... At the central moment of Jewish history, women are absent.

How does a female rabbinite address this absence of women? Judaism is a religion that is obsessed with history and with memory. To include women in positions of public authority immediately sets a precedent. Rabbi Betsy Torop suggests, however, that theoretical equality is one thing, and real equality another. It is not just the rabbinite but prayer and history that have to be

addressed within religious practice. Even the *Reform Prayer Book*, now under review, portrays an intensely masculine idea of God. Ideas of female spirituality, as portrayed by the *shekinah*, or female spirit, as well as the bride shabbat or Sabbath are no balance for constant petitions to 'Our Father and King' that begin many Jewish prayers.

Torop suggests that the female rabbinate in Australia is well accepted when pastoral care is involved, but that in the ceremonies of the life cycle—such as circumcision, confirmation, marriage, and death, some members of the congregation still prefer a male rabbi. Torop believes that this situation will change, and bases her belief on the American example, where the female rabbinate is in its second generation and entirely accepted within the Reform congregations. She also sees the ordination of Australian women as vital to this process of acceptance. The first Australian woman rabbi, Aviva Kipen, was recently ordained in London. Another, Linda Joseph, will be ordained next year in the US and a third has entered the seminary.

Yet the effect this will have on the entire Australian Jewish community is probably fairly minimal. Unlike the United States, where practising Jewry is mostly Progressive or Liberal, the Australian community is mainly Orthodox, and Liberal Judaism is something of an exception. A female rabbinate is one of the strains upon the association between the Australian Progressive and Orthodox communities, which do not enjoy a close or harmonious relationship.

So what of Orthodox women in Australia? Jonathan Sacks, speaking from a position of enlightened Orthodoxy, has suggested that the importance of Conservative and Reform Judaism rests in their ability to put consequential issues on the Orthodox agenda. Viewing the position of Orthodox women as worthy of close investigation, Sacks has launched a working party on women, which will cover education, lay representation in the synagogue and prayer groups, though not ordination. But it is inevitable that these moves will bring ordination one step closer, as women rediscover the rich tradition of female authority in the *Torah*, and Judith, Miriam and Deborah begin to rival the Virtuous Woman.

A thorough examination of the *halakha* by learned women among the Orthodox may also force many of them to look outside the letter of the law, and to the powerful ethical message concerning equality contained within it, as the Progressives and Conservatives have done. As one such woman from the Conservative community, Anne Lapidus Lerner, wrote in the final report to the commission on female ordination in 1979: 'Although the *halakha* may allow for the ordination of women it does not require it. What it does require is justice, a consideration often outside the *halakha* when narrowly defined.' ■

Deborah Zion is a lecturer at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology.

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Owning up about owning the media

DID CONRAD BLACK DO a deal with Paul Keating? 'Balanced' coverage in the Fairfax newspapers for Paul during an election campaign and suitable exercise of foreign ownership rules for Conrad so that he could cement control of Fairfax? If Keating did such a deal—if he *could*—what does that say about the existing rules and their enforcement through the Foreign Investment Review Board?

A Senate committee controlled by the opposition and the Democrats' leader, Cheryl Kernot, is now trying to unravel the government's decisions over Fairfax and foreign investors in late 1991, when Black's Tourang consortium was initially permitted to acquire the premium newspaper group from receivers, and in April last year, when Black was allowed to lift his stake to 25 per cent. (For

ian ownership, the application of the rules in practice has increased foreign interests, as shown in the accompanying table from the Communications Law Centre's submission to the committee.

The current inquiry may be viewed as another tentative move in an intriguing rebalancing of power among the arms of government. Concentration of media power is so great that media is now arguably on a par with the legislature, executive and judiciary. (The argument is succinctly put by John Keane in *Media and Democracy*, Polity Press, 1991.) The traditional model casts media as watchdog on the exercise of power by the usual three arms of the state. Liberal theory paints media as 'of and for the people' and certainly outside government. Keane and others say, in effect, that media is part of

government and in some senses above it because of technology and global markets.

How then will media be held accountable? Its traditional watchdog role remains important—witness, for instance, the disclosures that led to the Fitzgerald inquiry in Queensland—so control of media content by Parliament and the executive remain an anathema. But Parliament does have a legitimate role in counter-checking media power, particularly when, as in the current Senate inquiry, the issue is a potential alliance between media and the executive that may be a perversion of the

mainstream media could not credibly ignore it.

Last year, the Senate legal and constitutional affairs committee, chaired by Senator Barney Cooney, began its exploration of the 'rights and obligations of the media' (*Eureka Street*, Sept 1993, p14), an issue which receives scant attention in the media itself. When it does, the permissible terms of debate are usually narrow and the conclusions self-serving, even smug. Cooney's committee means Parliament can conduct a debate in which the media are properly participants but not also the adjudicator. Again, so long as it does not try to regulate media content, but merely uses its powers to probe and disclose, Parliament does us a favor in holding media accountable in such ways.

It should be a comfort to us all that these parliamentary committees have so unsettled both the media and the executive. Paul Keating and the Treasurer, Ralph Willis, refuse to give evidence or to provide the foreign-ownership committee with documents, and have instructed Foreign Investment Review Board officials to disclose nothing about decisions that, ironically, were taken in the 'national interest'. We can only assume that they calculate the public-relations cost of this intransigence as less than the cost of disclosure of their media decision-making.

The media's discomfort can be seen in its uncharacteristically hesitant coverage of the issues as well as the irritability displayed by Kerry Packer in his celebrated appearance before the Lee committee and the performance before the current inquiry of Black's appointee as Fairfax chief executive, the South African Stephen Mulholland. What effrontery that the people's elected representatives should question those who, unelected, control media that take it on themselves to investigate and criticise all others!

It is a measure of the perceived relative power of media and Parliament that Senator Kernot was moved at one stage to ask Mulholland if he was threatening the committee. In response, the man in charge of most of the nation's quality press asked her to tell him how he could do so. ■

Paul Chadwick is Victorian co-ordinator of the Communications Law Centre. Copies of the centre's submission are available from the Senate committee, Canberra (06) 277 3339, or the centre on (03) 642 0282 or (02) 663 0551.

FOREIGN INTERESTS IN MAJOR AUSTRALIAN MEDIA		
Media group	Nationality of key interest holder 1984	1994
News Limited	Australian (Murdoch)	US (Murdoch *)
HWT	Australian (Diversely held)	US (Murdoch)
Fairfax	Australian (Fairfax family)	Canadian (Conrad Black)
Seven Network	Australian (HWT/Fairfax)	Australian/US (Telecom 11 %, other Aust; Murdoch 14.9 %)
Nine Network	Australian (Packer)	Australian (Packer)
Ten Network	Australian (Murdoch)	Canadian/Aust (CanWest/five Australians)
Satellite Licence A		US/Australian (Century/CVC, Hadid)
Satellite Licence B		US/Australian (Lenfest/Australis)

* In September 1985 Mr Murdoch became an American citizen in order to meet US media ownership rules when developing the Fox TV network.

an earlier instalment of the saga, see *Eureka Street*, March 1993, p7.)

Whatever it may reveal about the relationships between politicians and media owners, the 'select committee on certain aspects of foreign-ownership decisions in relation to the print media' has an opportunity to consider precisely why Australia should or should not preclude foreign control of media. That analysis is overdue, for although existing law and rhetoric imply a preference for Austral-

roles of both.

In 1991, the Hawke government was driven by the Labor Party conference to establish a House of Representatives select committee into print media ownership. Chaired by then backbencher, now Communications Minister, Michael Lee, the committee's scrutiny was timid and its recommendations tepid. But it nevertheless provided the first privileged forum for debate about concentration of ownership. Being parliamentary, the

Some costs never add up

The Industry Commission's inquiry into 'charitable organisations' has highlighted the gulf separating free marketeers from those whose prime concern is with human needs that markets cannot satisfy.

AROUND AUSTRALIA, church and community-based welfare services which receive government funds are on the alert. Why? Because the Industry Commission is coming.

The commission is conducting an inquiry into charitable organisations, and its terms of reference define 'charitable organisation' very broadly, although they exclude from scrutiny organisations providing basic health and education services, and some 'public benefit' organisations, such as those concerned with the protection of animals and the environment.

Among welfare lobbyists there is considerable suspicion about the inquiry's intentions, given that the Industry Commission takes its brief from the Treasury and has a reputation for favouring free-market economics. They wonder what a team of zealous free marketeers will make of a sector which cannot measure its successes solely in terms of numerical outputs, and which, indeed, seeks to redress injustices exacerbated by free-market policies.

During the past two years the Industry Commission has come under attack for its ideological perspective and for its limited capacity to respond creatively to changing circumstances. Although the commission's chairman, Bill Scales, has repeatedly insisted that it has no hidden agenda, it will take more than such assurances to convince the growing number of critics who fear that the commission is simply a new 'razor gang', seeking to slash government spending and reduce economic regulation.

The inquiry into charitable organisations will give the commission an opportunity to answer those critics

and to demonstrate, more broadly than it has in the past, an ability to respond to the human consequences of structural change in the economy. The commission is doing its best to overcome the welfare sector's suspicion. It has extended the time available for submissions to the inquiry, and has recruited to its team Sr Margaret McGovern, the executive director of Mercy Family Services in Sydney, and David Murray, of the Anglican Mission of St James and St John in Melbourne.

It is to be hoped that they will widen the perspective of the commission's economists, but it would be naïve to think that the belief in the virtues of the free market which is so characteristic of those economists will not also influence the inquiry. No social research is entirely value-free, or lacks a political context.

DAVID POLLARD, who is the head of research staff for the inquiry, wrote the following lines in his book, *Social Need and Social Policy* (1992): 'It should not be imagined that the collection of data is, in all circumstances,

in the service of objective and disinterested truth.

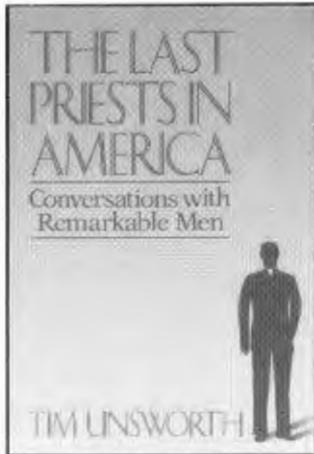
'The political context of social re-

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search dictates that such research is essentially the marshalling of sets of data to counter opposing sets of data. Social research in the cause of social policy is itself in essence a political process. (p29)'. In a perhaps unintended reference to the Industry Commission itself, Pollard says: 'governments can shop around for the evaluation they need to support or oppose a

Conversations with remarkable men



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particular welfare-targeting measure.' (p45)

Those comments suggest that the course of the inquiry can be predicted with some confidence. Essentially, the Industry Commission will want to know how the federal and state governments can get the most value out of their welfare dollar, and it is likely to recommend that governments should, as far as possible, off-load the provision of welfare services onto the 'voluntary' sector, while tightening accountability for funds.

THIS INTERPRETATION IS SUGGESTED by the inquiry's terms of reference, and by an issues paper released in February. The issues paper identifies public funding and accountability of welfare agencies as key aspects of the commission's investigation, and the terms of reference include among the matters set out for investigation: 'the nature and appropriateness of the interaction' between services provided by charitable organisations and those provided by governments; the 'appropriateness of the present taxation treatment' of charitable organisations; and 'the effectiveness of current government financial or other assistance to charitable organisations'.

The terms of reference also specify that the Industry Commission should 'have regard to the established economic, social, industrial relations and environmental objectives of governments'. Of particular relevance here is the federal government's deficit reduction strategy, which has already forced state governments to cut their spending on social services.

It is doubtful, therefore, whether the commission would recommend that governments should take over provision of any welfare services from charities. This is not to say that it would automatically recommend that less be spent on welfare—the inquiry is more likely to concentrate on measures that, in its view, would increase the efficiency of government welfare spending, and which would devolve responsibility for running government-funded programs to the non-government sector.

That approach would be consistent with the vogue political theory of 'new governance'. The fundamental

metaphor of 'new governance' is boating, and it promotes the idea that governments can 'steer' a social policy agenda without having to do any 'rowing' themselves. It has the political advantage of allowing free-market ideas about smaller government and less welfare spending to be implemented gradually, without harsh rhetoric about abandoning the boat completely to market forces.

What policies would allow the government to keep its hand on the tiller and at the same time to extract greater efficiency from the charities that are doing the rowing?

The favoured device among neo-classical economists (such as inhabit the Industry Commission) for increasing efficiency is to combine greater competition between suppliers with greater capacity of consumers to choose between them. Three kinds of recommendations may suggest themselves to the inquiry.

First, instead of running welfare programs, governments could increasingly 'contract out' such programs to non-government agencies. The aim would be to decrease government overheads and to increase competition among welfare agencies for government funds.

Secondly, where charities are providing services in a competitive market, such as in aged care and institutional child care, the tax exemptions that give charities an advantage over commercial suppliers of such services could be removed. Supposedly, this would also enhance competition. (The commission will almost certainly recommend changes to the tax-exempt status of commercial businesses that charities run to help finance their welfare operations).

Thirdly, instead of giving welfare agencies direct grants based on expenses, the commission could recommend that funds be increasingly allocated according to the nature and number of an agency's clientele, as in the federal funding of aged care, and the Victorian case-mix funding of public hospitals. This would represent a move away from subsidising providers to subsidising users, and could set the scene for full-blown voucher-type and user-pays funding in the future.

These changes, so the argument goes, would 'empower the consumer'



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and force 'the discipline of the market' upon charities, which in turn would result in better use of limited government funds. This sounds very appealing and in some areas may bring benefits. The argument, however, has certain flaws that limit its applicability.

The problem with the neoclassical economist's faith in the market as a provider of social services is that it reduces people to the status of demanders or suppliers, thus commodifying human relationships. Further, this kind of thinking also assumes that markets can be created which will provide for kinds of decision-making that are not now market-based. For example, there is a market for aged care in which nursing homes compete, but the idea of a market in safety from domestic violence, with women weighing up the pros and cons of each competing refuge before they take the children and flee the house, is absurd if not obscene. Some services simply cannot be provided by markets.

Another unproven assumption of free-market thinking is that only competition and self-interest will increase efficiency, and that, where competition is impossible, strict regulation is necessary to remove flab. Many if not most people working in the welfare sector are not motivated by personal financial gain, so incentives for improving services which assume that their decisions are based on self-interest are unlikely to be effective.

To say this is not to argue that welfare agencies are beyond criticism. Improvements in efficiency and effectiveness can always be made. The big question, however, is *how* does a welfare agency measure its efficiency and effectiveness? The Industry Commission will probably emphasise *cost* effectiveness, that is the number of clients helped divided by number of dollars spent, or some other similarly crude measure, whereas most community agencies are more likely to be concerned with the quality of personal care they provide. But how does one measure that?

In the absence of 'hard data' on this kind of qualitative outcome, undue emphasis could be given to quantitative measures of efficiency. And one unfortunate consequence of that may be a recommendation that a plethora of small agencies impedes the effi-

ciency gains of 'economies of scale', so that fewer and bigger welfare agencies will provide better value for the government dollar.

Some agencies may be forced to amalgamate to get a 'competitive advantage' over other 'super-agencies' in the battle for government funds. And when they win that funding, it is likely to be tied to government-designed programs over which they have little or no control. Their own identity, values and autonomy may be compromised in this process, to say nothing of the quality of the service they provide.

If charitable organisations feel uneasy about some of the implications of these hypothetical recommendations, they ought to begin 'marshalling sets of data to counter opposing sets of data'—in particular, the sets of data that the Industry Commission is likely to use to justify the market-based provision of welfare services.

CHURCH-AFFILIATED welfare agencies should be especially wary of any affirmation of their role by the Industry Commission, since it could well be based on a belief that providing welfare services is not the business of government but the role of 'civil society'. The task of church welfare agencies is not simply to clean up the human problems created by a materialist society, but to work to change the values and institutions of such a society. Yet an affirmation of the spirit of Christian voluntarism could be used as a spoonful of sugar to help charities swallow the socially corrosive medicine of the free market.

The crucial question facing the welfare sector is whether to succumb to the political dominance of free-market economies, and to distributing the scraps that fall from the government's table in the way the government wants them to, or whether, on the other hand, to commit itself to articulating and lobbying for economic and social policies that promote a just and compassionate society. ■

David de Carvalho is a social policy officer with the Good Shepherd Youth and Family Service in Collingwood, Victoria.



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On the rack

Chronic pain can ruin lives. Does current drug policy help sufferers? H. A. Willis gives an insider's view of the experience, the theory, and the available treatment.

DURING THE SUMMER of 1984-85 I was dumped in the surf at Perth's City Beach. The small wave stood me on my head, ground my face into the sand and twisted my shoulders and hips in opposite directions. I clearly recall the slow-motion thought: 'If this doesn't let me go ... it's going to break my back'. It did let me go. My wife helped me from the water. I recovered my breath, stood up and walked away—lucky.

After that I noticed a new persistence in the minor backaches accrued from my years as a storeman. Looking for less strenuous work to rest my back, I took temporary jobs and resumed writing. I had some pain, some days, but nothing with which I couldn't cope.

Late in 1985, presenting with the dual complaints of intermittent back pain and recurrent prostate inflammation, I sought medical advice. The doctor decided my prostate gland required specialist attention and that Serepax should 'settle down' my back. At the age of 37 I was admitted to a hospital for the first time in my life. As a day patient at Royal Perth I underwent a procedure known as cystoscopy—threading a fibre optic probe through the urinary tract of the penis to have a peek-a-boo inside the bladder. My bladder was fine, so the urologist conducting the procedure (which requires the patient to be placed in stirrups) decided, while I was anaesthetised, to massage my prostate gland. I never asked for this. The first I knew of it was from a casual remark several hours afterwards.

The following day a pain started in the right side of my lower back. Since then, February 1986, that pain has never left me. I have met at least two other men with spinal injuries either acquired or aggravated while under anaesthetic. Such injuries have a specific but rarely used name - iatrogenic, from the Greek *iatros* (physician). When physiotherapy did not ease my pain the G.P. made it plain to me, and to my wife, that he thought my trouble was principally psychological. A CAT scan, ordered by the doctor to whom I turned for a second opinion, revealed my lumbar 4/5 disc to be prolapsed. Surgery, recommended by two specialists, altered the nature of the pain but gave no relief. Indeed, the removal of one disc increased strain on the already weakened others, according to doctors I have spoken to since.

I have pursued many cures: acupuncture, physiotherapy, chiropractic, hypnotherapy, psychology, anti-depressant drugs, prescription analgesics, alcohol, steroid injections, surgery (twice), electrical nerve stimulation, epidural blocks and cryotherapy. Some of these treatments were initially promising but none provided sustained relief; others, particularly chiropractic, worsened the injury. Although there is evidence of damage and deterioration throughout the lower back, most of my present pain seems to emanate from the region of the lumbar 2/3 disc—that is, from between the third and fourth vertebrae up from the sacrum at the base of the spine. A recent discogram (an injection of radio opaque dye) has confirmed that this disc is severely prolapsed. Such an apparently precise site does not necessarily reveal a precise cause. The spine is a complicated thing and pain, as any honest doctor will admit, is a phenomenon about which we are surprisingly ignorant.

The details of how people come to be in chronic pain vary. Our experiences become a common story, however, when we seek treatment and understanding. Slowly, insidiously, our symptom—pain—becomes the diagnosis.





MOST OF US DO NOT DWELL ON memories of hammered thumbs, last year's sunburn or toothaches. We tend to forget 'normal' pain. Is it not the expectation that pain will pass which gives us the fortitude to bear it? Chronic pain betrays that expectation. Pleasure fades; pain has real staying power. The medical profession's distinction between acute and chronic pain more or less comes down to what responds to treatment and what does not. After a time, say six months, intractable acute pain becomes chronic pain. The inadequacy of this simple distinction is confirmed by recent neurological research suggesting that chronic pain may be physiologically different from acute pain.

Some 350 years ago René Descartes described the nervous system in terms of a rope being pulled to ring a bell. His analogy remains the common perception of pain. It goes like this: A brick dropped on your big toe sends pain impulses along the nerves to the spinal cord, which relays the sensation up to the brain. You say, 'Ouch!' Even our present, sketchy knowledge of brick-on-toe acute pain shows this bell-rope model to be at least misleading.

There are actually two separate but interacting pain pathways to the brain. Phasic pain (pricking, sharp, localised) travels rapidly from the injury to the spinal cord along A delta fibres; tonic pain (dull, persistent aching) is transmitted more slowly through the smaller C nerve fibres, as are burning sensations. Both systems enter the spinal cord through the dorsal horns—incompletely understood junctures, 'gates' where it is sometimes possible to block pain impulses. Neurotransmitters generated in the dorsal horns also travel up the spinal cord along separate pathways, projecting phasic pain into the sensory cortex and tonic pain into the brain's limbic system, a subcortical region dealing with emotion and motivation—and, according to recent research, perhaps as instrumental in generating consciousness as the cerebral cortex itself.

Descartes' model does not, however, accommodate another phenomenon. Signals are also sent *down* the neural system. Biochemicals from the midbrain inhibit phasic pain transmissions from peripheral nerves by shutting the 'gate' at the dorsal horns. The instruments of this process are endorphins and enkephalins, opioids produced by the body. I shall return to the subject of opioids and opiates later, but it is worth mentioning here two findings made by Professor Ronald Melzack and his students at McGill University in Montreal.

Experiments with rats convinced Melzack and his collaborators that the distinct neural systems of phasic and tonic pain have different tolerances to morphine. Further, it was observed that anaesthetics were far more effective against tonic pain when administered in time to prevent the early, phasic response. Phasic pain somehow contributes to the tonic response. The as yet undelineated link is undoubtedly in the brain.

'Long-lasting pain', Melzack postulates, 'is determined not only by sensory stimulation during the discomfort but also by brain processes that persist without continual priming.' Although not the first to state such an opinion, Melzack has considerable authority and influence. Melzack and Wall's 1973 book *The Puzzle of Pain* (revised as *The Challenge of Pain* in 1982) is an international text, while the *McGill-Melzack Questionnaire* provides pain clinics with a diagnostic tool in the subjective matter of classifying pain. When Ronald Melzack says pain is in the brain he is shifting the balance, perhaps decisively, in a long running debate that has enormous social and economic implications.

In the US the debate has been between opposing camps known as centralists and peripheralists. It has been acrimonious. Peripheralists represent the traditional medical opinion that pain results from tissue damage and is maintained by continuous impulses from that source. Centralists argue that 'a central pain generator mechanism' (in the brain) takes over and keeps pain alive long after the original lesion or injury has healed. Other neurosurgeons maintain that chronic pain can be generated in a similar way from the spinal cord itself.

The leading proponent of peripheralism is Dr John J. Bonica, a pioneer of the pain clinic movement. Bonica and the peripheralists advocate nerve blocks and surgical interventions to cut pain pathways. This methodology still dominates the work done in Australian pain clinics. The centralist's guru is Dr Benjamin L. Crue. In the 1950s Crue's work on *tic douloureux* (a facial pain) led him to conclude that pain could indeed originate in the brain. He has since extended his thesis to include a range of intractable pains, including spinal pain.

In 1981 Crue wrote, 'The overwhelming majority of patients we see with chronic intractable benign pain syndromes have had both their pain syndrome and their pain behaviour iatrogenically reinforced over and over again ... It is time that neurosurgeons, orthopaedists and anaesthesiologists admit that with very few rare exceptions they are bankrupt when it comes to treating chronic intractable benign pain syndrome patients.' A major obstacle to a wider acceptance of the centralist theory has been the understandable reluctance of patients to abide the idea of their pain being 'in the mind'. But Crue has never claimed centralist pain to be imagined or merely 'mental'. It is, he says, a real



Try to imagine the pain of an abscessed molar, transfer it like a hot, live coal into the small of your back, and then ask how you would feel after eight years.

neurological event in the *brain*. Chronic pain has its own distinct pathology, a neurological rather than a personality disorder. This is the side of the argument to which Ronald Melzack has added his voice.

Melzack has examined the phenomenon of phantom limbs, which affects about 70 per cent of amputees. The sense of the missing limb *being there* may persist or recur for many years. Tingling, fatigue, burning, itching, cramps and chronic aching - the full range of sensations have been reported. Weird things happen. A lucky minority of amputees can sometimes relieve an itch by scratching the phantom site. I have yet to read of an instance in which a phantom hand did the scratching but almost anything seems possible. In treating phantom-limb pain, surgeons have cut nerves just above the stump, at various sites along the spinal cord and even around the thalamus, in the brain itself. Such procedures usually leave the phantom intact and any pain relief is temporary.

Melzack now theorizes 'that the brain contains a neuromatrix, or network of neurons, that, in addition to responding to sensory stimulation, continuously generates a characteristic pattern of impulses indicating that the body is intact and unequivocally one's own'. He calls this pattern the 'neurosignature' and believes it involves at least three major neural circuits of the brain—the sensory cortex (phasic pain), the limbic system (tonic pain) and the parietal lobe, a region known to be essential to the sense of self.

A significant feature of phantom pain is that it may be the continuation of specific pain—a gangrenous ulcer or a tight ring—present before amputation. This suggests Melzack's matrix can be imprinted to store the memory of pain. There appears to be no logical or known neurological hindrance to such a feedback loop giving rise to chronic pain. Indeed, the longer pain persists the more likely seems the possibility of it becoming locked on.

Another reason the centralists' theory of neurological bedevilment has been resisted is that it appears to offer chronic pain sufferers scant hope. Where, after all, is the circuit-breaker? The brain is a very big place. Peripheralist intervention at least offers immediate action and, it must be stressed, sometimes works. I know a man whose back pain was completely alleviated by spinal fusion—that is, the removal of a ruptured disc and the fusion of adjoining vertebrae. He had been in pain for more than forty years. Chronic, by any standard. Even so, the relief obtained by nerve blocks and surgery for chronic benign pain is often temporary and every pain clinic has a solid core of 'thick-file' patients. Increasingly, clinics are adopting a broader, multi-disciplined approach to the problem of pain. As well as the gradual acknowledgement of the centralist theory, this reappraisal has also brought a cautious liberalisation in the contentious matter of morphine's use as a long-term palliative.

Although the accumulating weight of research evidence is levering changes in treatment methods, one obstacle to further progress lies beyond the compass of medical science.

That hindrance is the way we think about and give meaning to pain—and meaning is a cultural construction.

PAIN IS NOT ONLY A MATTER OF ANATOMY and neural impulses whizzing through the body; it is a complex perceptual experience that any religion or philosophy worth its salt attempts to explain and invest with meaning. Sufferers or not, we all participate in this process, consciously or otherwise. Following the body/soul demarcation, medical science and religious thinkers found it convenient to distinguish between pain and suffering. Pain, an automatic neurological event, was left to the doctor; while suffering, our emotional response to pain, was the territory of the priest.

It is actually quite possible to uncouple pain and suffering. Not so long ago prefrontal lobotomies were being performed for just that purpose. Patients still felt pain after their operation but it no longer 'bothered' them. Neither did much else. Although lobotomies are now 'out', the deep nexus of pain and suffering still entices the medical profession to treat the former via the latter. In particular, the treatment of depression seems to offer a tenable method of alleviating or modifying pain. Chronic pain and depression go together like the moon and the tides, the physiological link tacitly acknowledged by the many doctors who prescribe anti-depressants to chronic pain sufferers.

I was on anti-depressants for more than three years. I think they saved my life. But their long-term use is a serious matter and I began to wonder whether I had given myself a biochemical lobotomy. My sense of self was eroded until things became almost as bleak as my original condition. Doctors often claim that anti-depressants are like any other medication used to control such chronic disorders as diabetes or high blood-pressure. This analogy is disingenuous. It is also said that anti-depressants are not

addictive. There is, however, a fine line between addiction and dependence and I found it very difficult to forego my little red pills. Coming off can be as dangerous as not going on. Primo Levi's suicide is thought to have resulted from his having given up anti-depressants too quickly.

Even though we have but a vague notion as to why they work, anti-depressants do ameliorate some chronic pain. This not only justifies their cautious use, it also strongly indicates that research to clear away the grey web of 'suffering' may yet yield a clearer picture of 'pain'. All the same, I suspect the willingness to administer such mood-altering drugs has as much to do with society's needs as it does with any concern for the well-being of individuals. We expect people in pain to complain. But our tolerance of complaints is based upon the perspective of acute pain, a model that fails to explain pain which never stops. Non-fatal (if we ignore suicides) and invisible, lacking the palpability of deformity or contagion, chronic pain resists meaning. We simply never learn what to do with pain that does not go away.

Chronic sufferers soon learn that pain can test the truest of loves, the strongest marriage and the firmest friendship. How many patients have been persuaded to accept anti-depressants by the well-meant (and often valid) argument that the feelings of others ought to be considered? The trouble is, offered as a temporary fix, anti-depressants often become the final solution.

Virginia Woolf wrote that in the matter of pain 'language at once runs dry'. It does so not only because it is very difficult, although not impossible, to describe pain, but also because the world just does not want to hear. Our society admires the stoicism that plays down or even denies pain. Whingers are held in dismissive contempt. Above all, we are taught the virtue of suffering in silence. There is, too, a cultural inheritance linking pain to original sin. The word *pain* derives from the Latin *poena*—punishment. Pain is a penance or a test of faith. In the form of boils, it was Satan's trump card in goading Job to question God. When God finally does speak to Job, from out of a whirlwind no less, He poses His own series of unanswerable questions, the subtext of which amounts to: 'Look, Sport, I'm bigger and stronger than you and if I want to move in mysterious ways, that's my business.'

If, reinforced by cultural imperatives, it is in the very nature of chronic pain to impose silence, then it should not surprise us that this is reflected in government social policies. The chronically ill are not permitted to transfer from a Sickness Allowance to a Disability Pension on the basis of mere pain. Pain, I was told by a Commonwealth Medical Officer, is not a disability as such. Which, of course, is bullshit. Given that one may not collect the Sickness Allowance for more than twelve months, I was put on Job Search Allowance (Unemployment Benefit) and offered retraining. They had in mind, apparently, 'keyboard skills'.

The policy of not acknowledging pain as a disability certainly causes a lot of distress and waste, but this stupidity does not arise solely from ignorance. Apart from the admittedly real if overstated risk of fraud, there is the nasty question of cost.

Consider the case of Sumatriptan, hailed as the most effective migraine treatment yet developed. Many of Australia's 1.7 million migraine sufferers believe the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Board's decision not to include Sumatriptan on the 'free' list was in large part due to the drug's estimated \$100,000,000 per annum price tag. The Board's stated reason for twice refusing the drug is that about 4% of users experience the side-effect of chest pains. Despite such concern Sumatriptan is nevertheless available to those who can afford it at \$27 a tablet. A severe attack may require a tablet a day to keep within coo-ee of a normal, functional life. Meanwhile, the majority of migraine sufferers must wait for the drug company and the Commonwealth Government to negotiate a realistic price.

In comparison with other forms of chronic pain the migraine example is relatively clear-cut. Spinal injuries produce an array of conditions notoriously difficult to prove and treat. The bad back is still virtually a by-word for malingering, as countless Australians who have pursued compensation claims can grimly attest. There will need to be a considerable change in public attitudes before our health and welfare agencies recognise chronic pain as a distinct disorder, a tiger concealed in the bamboo thicket of ailments.

I believe that change, that recognition will come soon. The murmurs and mutterings are already there. Years of wide-spread unsafe work practices, traffic injuries and, ironically, sports and exercise injuries have steadily factored a lot of hurt into an ageing population.

A FEW DEFINITIONS

as they apply to pain-killing drugs

ADDICTION is a behavioural pattern of drug use, characterised by:

1. A craving for the drug;
2. Drug-seeking behaviour;
3. Use of the drug for effects other than pain relief;
4. And often, physical dependence also.

PHYSICAL DEPENDENCE: After repeated use of a drug, abrupt withdrawal from it may produce abstinence syndrome (an example of which is the DTs). It can occur with alcohol, opioids and benzodiazepines (valium *et al*) but, so far as is known, not with anti-depressants.

TOLERANCE: After repeated administration, a given dose of a drug may produce a decreasing effect, or increasingly larger doses may be needed to get the original effect. (Tolerance is not well understood, but it is by no means inevitable with the prolonged use of opioids)

NARCOTICS: Narcotic analgesics is an obsolete term (but it still occurs in some of the literature). It was derived from *narke*, meaning torpor or numbness, and referred to all morphine-like drugs.

OPIOID: a general term for morphine-like drugs, whether natural or synthetic (synthetic drugs include pethidine, methadone and oxycodone). This term is now preferred to 'narcotic analgesics'.

OPIATE: a specific term for *naturally occurring* compounds derived from the juice of the opium poppy.

Australia tends to follow—and in the US chronic pain is now described as an ‘invisible epidemic’. David B. Morris, whose *The Culture of Pain* (1991) is one of the better introductions to the subject, wrote, ‘Chronic pain, indeed, though far less visible than cancer or AIDS, certainly belongs among the characteristic maladies of our time.’ Estimates vary, but perhaps one family in three may have someone in chronic pain, the severity of which is often carefully hidden. Without harping about our own particular pains we must quietly insist that the present situation is intolerable. I would not wish my pain on anyone; but try to imagine the pain of an abscessed molar, transfer it like a hot, live coal into the small of your back, and then ask how you would feel after eight years. And there are plenty of people whose condition is a lot worse than mine.

TO ANYONE IN PAIN it must be said that despair is your worst enemy. For most treatments that failed me I have met someone for whom they worked. Find a sympathetic GP, pursue an accurate diagnosis and patiently work through your many options. Correct exercises, relaxation therapy and, yes, the proverbial Positive Mental Attitude are good, probably necessary, foundations to achieve equilibrium and then control of your pain. Explain your situation to family and friends but don’t slip into pain behaviour to gain sympathy. Seek understanding, not pity.

There is hope. An increasing number of researchers are working towards understanding the true nature of chronic pain. Most significantly, extensive work is being done to treat chronic pain at its source—in the brain, or spinal cord. In December 1992 newspapers around the world reported that scientists in California and France had cloned an opiate receptor gene; and work in Israel had identified a natural brain molecule (named anandamide, from the Sanskrit *ananda*, meaning ‘bliss’) that reacts with the marijuana receptor. Such findings, it is claimed, open the way ‘to precisely design drugs that target specific receptors and are effective in their therapeutic role, while exhibiting fewer negative side-effects, such as addiction.’

Pain, as we saw with Sumatriptan, is very big business; a substance to block chronic pain would be as valuable a prize as was aspirin when the British seized it as part of German reparations after WW1. But until a new generation of non-addictive opioid analgesics are developed people in chronic pain must continue to suffer, preferably in silence. Or do they? Is it possible that an effective drug already exists? A drug not widely used because of cultural disquiet rather than scientific or medical doubts?

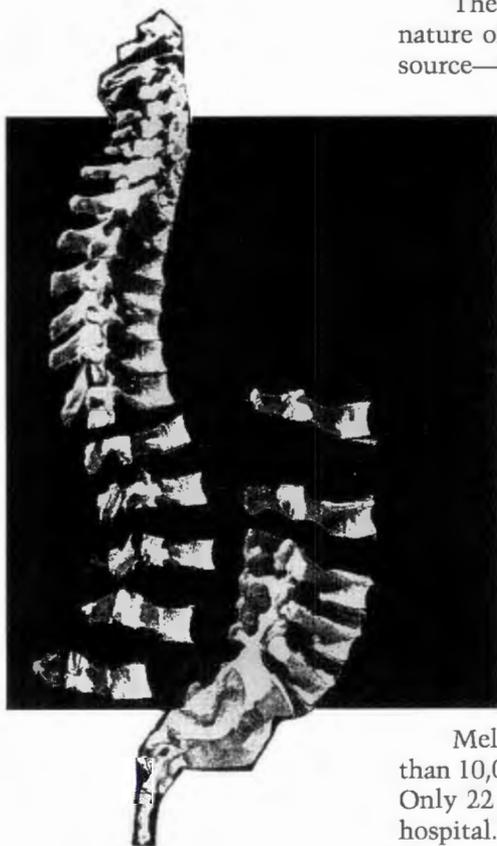
In the February 1990 issue of *Scientific American* Ronald Melzack published an article, *The Tragedy of Needless Pain*. ‘Morphine’, he wrote, ‘is the safest, most effective analgesic (painkiller) known for constant, severe pain, but it is also addictive for some people.’ He went on to counter the concern about addiction by asserting that ‘when people take morphine to combat pain, it is rare to see addiction.’

Ronald Melzack has been studying the neurophysiology of pain for almost 40 years. When he urges the use of morphine for chronic pain then the medical profession, the general public and, ultimately, governments ought to listen. If the many studies he cites in support of his claim that morphine is not necessarily addictive are correct, then continued tight restrictions on the drug’s availability are inexcusably cruel.

Melzack refers to studies conducted in England, Canada and the US. He reports a survey of more than 10,000 burn victims, most of whom received injections of narcotics for weeks, sometimes months. Only 22 patients—all with a history of drug problems—went on to abuse after their discharge from hospital. Another study of 38 patients with severe, chronic non-cancer pain found that about 60% of subjects had their pain eliminated or reduced by regular use of opioids; furthermore, with half the patients in that study receiving the drugs for four or more years (six were treated for more than seven years) only two—both with histories of drug abuse—had trouble with increased tolerance.

Change is occurring. Over the past decade or so morphine has been increasingly used to palliate cancer pain. Many doctors, however, are still cautious of increasing a patient’s tolerance. Increased tolerance can be a problem in its own right, but all the studies suggest that it does not necessarily indicate addiction. The prescription regimen in Australia is usually *pro re nata* (as needed), which is often too little too late. To overcome established pain requires a greater dose than is needed to hold it at bay.

Even so, the example of opioids administered for cancer pain (and, to a lesser degree, burn victims) has opened the door on the taboo of morphine being used to control chronic but benign pain. Since the late 1980s several Australian pain clinics have been fitting spinal injury patients with small, surgically implanted pumps that deliver a steady dosage of opioid through a catheter into the dural sac. Because the dural sac, a sleeve of fluid protecting the spinal cord, is an enclosed system, patients avoid the side-effects of intravenous or oral doses. A reservoir in the body cavity is regularly replenished by hypodermic injection.



Although the long-term effects of this device are yet to be fully assessed, for appropriate patients it seems to be remarkably beneficial. It is, of course, expensive to put in place and requires careful maintenance and monitoring. It has become increasingly evident that the most efficient method of providing morphine or opioids to the majority of chronic pain sufferers is some form of oral dosage.

Since late last century some British hospitals have used, for cancer pain, a liquid analgesic known as the Brompton Mixture. The recipe has varied—morphine, heroin, cocaine, chloroform water, alcohol and flavouring—but morphine has become the cocktail's standard active ingredient. (The cocktail has varied greatly from hospital to hospital, and is rarely used now. Oral opioids, generally morphine, are the mainstay of control of cancer pain and are often given as mixture for convenience as it is very easy to alter doses.) Designed also to allow patients the autonomy of administering to themselves at home, the modern mixture is either a tablet or a beverage; a typical dose being 10mgs of morphine every four hours.

It has been demonstrated by hospital patients given control of electronic pumps (called PCA or Patient Controlled Analgesia) delivering an infusion of morphine under the skin or into the bloodstream directly, that they actually use less of the drug than do those on a traditional *pro re nata* regimen of injectable opioids.

Slow release capsules and suppositories that provide a steady, continuous dose of opioids are available for the terminally ill. Some benign pain clinics now prescribe these medications to their worst, most intractable cases, but this is usually not done until all other options are exhausted. For the vast majority of chronic pain sufferers such treatment is not yet available. This is especially true for those patients who do not or cannot attend pain clinics.

Those allowed an opioid to use at their own discretion are likely to be given Oxycodone, sold in Australia as Endone. While this drug has been widely used in hospitals for the treatment of acute pain and cancer pain, its application for chronic benign pain is a fairly recent innovation many GPs regard with considerable wariness. It is, they argue, an opioid and therefore potentially addictive.

Melzack's thesis that morphine and opioids are non-addictive when used for chronic pain undoubtedly requires further study. I can only say that I have been using Oxycodone periodically for eighteen months and have shown no sign of addiction, although I do now need a higher dose than when I first started using the drug. My longest spell on the drug was four months, with a daily intake of 15 to 25 mgs. Not a high dosage, admittedly, but enough to test my propensity towards addiction. I can, and do, stop with no ill-effect other than increased pain. Larger doses induce constipation and some drowsiness but these side effects can be minimized by choosing appropriate medication times.

Although I still have bouts of severe pain that do not yield, the drug does otherwise provide periods of partial relief. Chronic pain is like the old army punishment of holding a rifle above your head. It soon becomes very heavy and even a brief respite sustains your overall endurance.

What is now urgently required is a federal government initiative to provide morphine as well as other opioids to chronic pain sufferers. This, of course, entails the significant risk of a spill-over that would give addicts easier access to their poison. For everyone's protection any program supplying opioids (previously called narcotics) must rigorously screen and monitor participants' susceptibility to addiction. Such monitoring would probably be the scheme's most expensive component, but it is essential if society and the medical profession are to distinguish between the addict and those of us who have been left in pain far too long.

When scientific research has clearly drawn that distinction, not to recognise and act upon it is plain barbarism. ■

H. A. Willis is a freelance writer who lives in Perth.

Pain is not only a matter of anatomy and neural impulses whizzing through the body, it is a complex perceptual experience that any religion or philosophy worth its salt attempts to explain and invest with meaning.



Quixote has stubbed his lance.
He'll be back next month.

Deserts of vast eternity...

John Carroll's Humanism: The Wreck of Western Culture purports to chart the rise and fall of humanism, arguing that it was doomed from the start. Stephen Gaukroger and Keith Campbell ask whether what Carroll calls 'humanism' is one -ism or many, and whether all humanisms are doomed.

ZYGMUND BAUMAN, ON THE COVER BLURB of *Humanism: The Wreck of Western Culture*, tells us that some readers will find it eye-opening and some will find it infuriating. I'm afraid I come in the latter category. The issue that Carroll takes up—the rise and decline of a humanist culture between the 16th century and the present—is an undeniably important one, but it is also a deep one, and depth is not one of the book's more evident qualities. Smashing and bulldozing his way through five centuries, Carroll is either trotting out banalities or laying down the law on death, Shakespeare, painting, the history of science, philosophy, America and the decline of the West. Before the reader has had time to stop and think about Carroll's claims, the author has raced on 50 years, stating opinionated views as if they were clear matters of fact.

Take the treatment of the topic of death in two of Holbein's paintings, *Christ Entombed* (1522) and *The Ambassadors* (1533). Carroll sees in these a premonition of the precarious constitution of humanism. The first shows the body of Christ, not hanging from the cross in a blessed or Godlike guise, but as a corpse covered in sores

Humanism: The Wreck of Western Culture, John Carroll, Fontana, London 1994. ISBN 0 586 09233 RRP \$16.95.

and rotting before our eyes. The second shows the French envoy to London, Jean de Dinteville, and his friend, Georges de Selve, Bishop of Lavour, with the full trappings of their power. But the painting also has much iconography of death, and is indeed dominated by a large skull in the foreground, distorted by perspective into a disk. Carroll's verdict is that, for the ambassadors, life has lost all sense: 'without God, without transcendental law, there is only death.' (p31).

For anyone who had dipped into the extensive literature on the iconography of the macabre, this will seem a peculiar judgment. Studies of the literature and iconography of death between the 14th and 17th centuries show that the traditional body-and-soul resurrection becomes progressively ignored both by theologians and the general populace. Increasingly, the image of death becomes the decomposing cadaver, and the judgment of each individual soul immediately after death is accentuated. This is re-

flected in literature, painting, theology, popular preaching, and even philosophy. If humanism is connected with the macabre image of death, it is a tangential connection, and the genre of the macabre is not one for which it can be held responsible. The responsibility for that lies with the extensive process of 'Christianisation' of the population in the Reformation and Counter-Reformation, a process that was concerned, amongst other things, to give God's judgment of a person an immediacy that meant distancing it from resurrection.

The culture in which this was achieved was a radically anti-humanist one. Its key doctrine was that of *contemptus mundi* (hatred of the body and the world, a belief in the pervasiveness of sin, and a sharp sense of the fleetingness of time), something originally developed and refined in the monasteries, and later transmitted to the whole of society. Now it is possible that, by some historical irony, such a conception had a role in shaping early modern humanism—through the role it played in 'internalising' religious attitudes and precepts. For example, it drew attention to individual psychology in a way that was to be

The Body of the Dead Christ in the Tomb, by Hans Holbein the younger, 1521 or 1522. Basel, Öffentliche Kunstsammlung, Kunstmuseum.



crucial for humanism. But in Carroll's style of analysis such considerations are simply swept out of the way.

A similar problem arises in the case of free will. This is a much more complex question, but the simple association of humanism and free will is very problematic, given its origins in Augustine. Augustine introduces free will (for the first time in the philosophical context of responsibility for action) to get round the problem of the origin of evil. If God cannot be the source of evil, and if, *contra* the Manicheans, there is only one God and he is good, how does evil arise? Augustine's solution, which subsequently became a constitutive doctrine of Christianity, was that human beings were responsible for evil, a responsibility which derived from a faculty missing in philosophical thought up to this point (and which many recent philosophers have criticised), namely the will.

Again, it is true that humanism in some respects comes to take over the will as its own, but this is probably due to the exigencies of providing an account of psychological functions which attempts to show how these are constitutive of character. It is true that the will comes to define the person in 17th, 18th, and 19th-century philosophical culture. The interesting point is why and how it does so, but one learns nothing about these

questions from Carroll's account.

THIS IS NOT TO SAY that Carroll does not occasionally make reasonable points, but as often as not he manages to make them look ridiculous by overstating them. *Hamlet*, we are told (p41) should not be classified as a tragedy but as a melodrama, for 'there can be no humanist tragedy'. Now it is true that classical Greek tragedy, where the drama is generated (as Car-



The Ambassadors, by Hans Holbein the younger. Reproduced by courtesy of the Trustees, National Gallery, London.

roll points out) by a violation of the greater order of things, is different from *Hamlet*. But *Hamlet* is surely as different from the theatre of Ibsen and Strindberg. It has elements of both, in that the drama does not result simply from a violation of a cosmic order, but neither is Hamlet's behaviour to be explained psychologically: there is much more than psychology to Hamlet's tragic dilemma (just as there is more to Oedipus' tragic dilemma than an Oedipus complex). Just because later writers such as Ernest Jones have seen in Hamlet a psychological prototype of sorts, this does not mean that we are obliged to accept such a reading.

This points to a more general problem. Carroll demonstrates scant sensitivity to the question of later reconstructions of thinkers and writers. The Enlightenment, in particular, tended to reconstruct earlier thinkers very much in its own mould. The French Enlightenment *philosophes* seized on Descartes as their hero, for example, d'Holbach declaring that Descartes was rightly accused of atheism because 'he very energetically destroyed the weak proofs of the existence of

God that he gave'; and d'Alembert maintained that he was 'one of the chiefs of the conspirators who had the courage to raise the banner against an arbitrary and despotic power, and who, in preparing a brilliant revolution, laid the foundations of a government more just and happier than any ever seen established'.

We tend to look askance at such assessments these days, but many of our own unreflective judgments are equally ideological. Indeed, we need to be especially careful of figures like Bacon and Descartes, who have been subjected to all kinds of 'reconstructions'. So, for Carroll to tell us that for Descartes, 'reason was everything', simply will not wash. Descartes spent most of his time on the very practical business of grinding lenses, dissecting animals, constructing new mathematical compasses, calculating refractive indices and so on. And to point to the famous day in the stove-heated room where Descartes discovered his 'method', as if this were evidence for his supposed all-dominant reason, is at best naïve.

This naïveté is matched on some occasions by disgracefully simplistic



readings of major thinkers. The most peculiar doctrines are attributed to people in a reckless fashion. Descartes, we are told, believed it was impossible for a person to do wrong (p120). Compare this with his account of how we can control our passions so as to act ethically in *The Passions of the Soul*. Marx, we are informed, was not the slightest bit interested in democracy (p142). Compare his *Civil War in France* and the 1872 Preface to the *Communist Manifesto*, where the commune representatives are to be elected by universal suffrage. And Freud, Carroll confidently maintains, 'offers knowledge as a cure' (p173). Compare Freud's comment in his essay 'Wild' *Psychoanalysis*, that 'if knowledge of the unconscious were as important for the patient as people inexperienced in psychoanalysis imagine, listening to lectures or reading books would be enough to cure him'. The account of Darwin, in which Carroll moves from natural selection, to relativism, to nihilism in an astonishingly speedy leap of the imagination—not to mention of logic—betrays a complete inability to engage the issues seriously.

More generally, the author repeatedly fails to do more than skim the surface. So, for example, chapter seven, entitled 'Reason and Romance', looks at the clash between the Enlightenment and the Romanticism that followed it, a key question of Carroll's thesis. Yet he doesn't really engage with the failure of the Enlightenment at all. After all, the Enlightenment believed it had shown up religion, myth, etc. as inadequate forms of thought now replaced by science. Yet Romanticism immediately turned back to myth with a vengeance, even to the extent of reconstructing national identities on the basis of a mythical past. And the question of the place that myth, in the broadest sense, can play in a humanist culture (which has been explored by writers like Cassirer and Blumenberg) does not get a serious airing.

There are much better accounts of the issues that Carroll raises, which give due consideration to the depth of the problems—Hans Blumenberg's *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age* stands out as one of the classics of the genre. The present contribution is in-

tellectual *kitsch*, the author evidently having confused being erudite with being opinionated. It has all the answers without ever having asked the questions. 'Full of sound and fury, signifying nothing,' as one humanist said. ■

Stephen Gaukroger is Reader in Philosophy at the University of Sydney. His *Descartes, An Intellectual Biography*, will be published by Oxford University Press next year.

JOHNN CARROLL TACKLES REAL QUESTIONS: why is so much of contemporary Western literature, visual art, architecture, and music so nihilistic, misanthropic, and ugly? Why is Picasso lionised? What happened to courtesy, loyalty and honour?

Carroll offers us a single villain, the phenomenon of humanism. This is that cast of mind and feeling which, throwing off transcendental obligations and supports, sets up mankind as master of its own, glorious destiny. Carroll chooses as its most representative expression the injudicious Pico della Mirandola's 'We can become what we will.'

The work is a broad-brush, polemical jeremiad, full of hyperbole; that style is not much to my taste, but it is, in the long run, an inessential characteristic. The thesis is that humanism represents an effectively single, unitary cultural phenomenon, whose inner logic leads inevitably to this century's cultural devastation.

What we have is an extended sermon on the sin of pride. A stylish example in some respects, and more interesting than many productions of that kind, especially in its analysis of significant works of literary and visual art. But it suffers from the problem faced by all sermons on this theme: if in truth we are without supernatural supports, if there is no grace, the sin of pride is no sin, but the virtue of self-reliance. The notion that we should choose our metaphysics by the test of whether or not they are good for us—which is implicit in blaming Humanism for our current condition—is itself a shining example of that megalomaniac anthropocentrism for which Carroll scolds modernity

Again and again we are given lamentations that we have lost any 'Archimedean point', that there are no longer any fixed places to stand, no firm rocks to anchor a morality and a life. And that this is our fault. But if there is no hand to hold ours in the cold cosmic night, pretending otherwise is infantile, and bemoaning our lot undignified. A little Stoic courage would be more becoming. And a little cheerfulness at the absence of demonic overlords.

As that ornament of the Anglican Enlightenment, Joseph Butler, said: 'Things are as they are, and the consequences of them will be what they will be. Why then should we seek to be deceived?' Butler's confident Christian humanism serves to remind us that there may be many mansions where Carroll portrays a single ruin.

Again and again, the author returns to the theme of death. According to him, humanism cannot accomplish the death of death, it cannot provide any transcendence in which death will be defeated. He supposes that in that case, all human life, spoiled by mortality, becomes empty and worthless. He takes at face value the nihilists' Dostoevskian claim that without a transcendent basis and validation life is 'absurd and horrible', and presents such nihilism as our current condition.

There are two crucial mistakes which vitiate Carroll's argument. The first concerns free will. The freedom for which the humanists contended—along with the Catholics, and against the hard-line Protestants—is some scope to follow and live by, or to ignore or bypass, the goods and duties of life. It is a freedom in our response to values antecedently valid. It is emphatically not a freedom to create, alter, or destroy the values themselves. The last idea, unrestricted voluntarism, is confined to the desperate fringe of humanism, the tradition of Kierkegaard, Stirner, Nietzsche, and Sartre. It is by no means an inevitable part of the humanist outlook—as Carroll himself recognises, in his discussion of the 'masterpiece of the Enlightenment', the ethics of Kant.

Kant's ethics form one example of a moral system owing nothing to theological backing yet a million miles from voluntarist nihilism. Another,

which to my surprise Carroll shows no awareness of, is a naturalism in moral philosophy to match a naturalism in metaphysics. According to this neo-Aristotelian way of thinking, human beings are so constituted that with food, shelter, companionship, the chance to develop active faculties, and the scope to exercise them, they flourish and their lives are fulfilling.

Lives lacking these resources are wretched. Our obligations and the proper aims of life flow from these facts. This is not a matter of our choice or decision, either as individuals, or collectively. Virtues are habits of actions which tend to foster, and vices to subvert, human flourishing. Morality is objective, even if natural, and secular. We need neither exult, nor dread, that everything is permitted. Humanism need not involve the wild claim to create, or transvalue, values. So it is not, *per se*, decadent and not, *per se*, the root of modern discontents.

The second great error concerns values themselves. Carroll supposes, again in company with the nihilists, that what is transient is worthless, and what has no point beyond itself is vile. Secular humanism is described as implying this, but it does nothing of the sort. Some activities are intrinsically satisfying. Dancing is a pure example. The point of dancing is not any goal it achieves, nor any product it provides. Yet the best dances have a finite structure; they would actually be spoiled by being prolonged beyond their proper span.

SO WITH MANY ANOTHER aspect of life. The rhythm of planting, tending and harvesting is good, in and of itself, and good because, not in spite of, its finite cycle. The notion that if death ends life, life itself is absurd or horrible, meets uncomprehending rejection from anyone who has the skill and opportunity to make a garden, or turn wood, or make music, or enjoy conversation, or raise a family, or engage together in worthwhile common projects. Only morbidly sensitive, solitary intellectuals could fall for such a fallacy. People with a real job of work, to which they are committed, need not brood on the eventual end of life on earth, as an outcome which mocks their efforts and aspirations. They can

cheerfully and gratefully get on with it. To everything there is a season. With few exceptions, mostly of a cultural sort, what lasts a hundred years lasts quite long enough for human purposes. Secularism does not imply that life is not worth living.

Carroll has a case to make; he wants to indict humanism itself, rather than one of its contingent, pathological variants. So he wants to show that decadence is an inevitable outcome of Humanism's essential character. Accordingly, we are offered a one-sided diet of examples (something Wittgenstein complained of in philosophy). Carroll gives us caricatures of Marx and Darwin, and the tendencies of their thought.

He spends a chapter providing portentous analyses of John Ford movies. But there is not a mention of many

heroes of the humanist epoch who do not fit his story of decline and fall. For example: Montaigne, Leibniz, Samuel Clarke, Addison, Montesquieu, Joseph Butler, Hegel, Coleridge, George Eliot, Balzac, Dickens, Trollope... All these had more sensible, because more limited, ideas than Pico della Mirandola of the extent to which human beings can fashion themselves. An overweening pride is not an inevitable hallmark of a humanistic stance.

Readers should enjoy, and profit from, the discussions of the chosen works of art, but not let the argument, nor the relentless rhetoric of ruin, waste, death and deserts depress them unduly. ■

Keith Campbell is Challis Professor of Philosophy at the University of Sydney.

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Black by himself

A Life In Progress, Conrad Black, Random House, Australia, 1993. ISBN 0 09 182865 1 RRP \$39.95

and concerns for that country'.

I find it hard to imagine that anyone would read this book for pleasure; it is a glorygram on Conrad Black's journey through life. But since Black is now one of the powers in the Australian media, I suppose at least some of us have a duty to know what he's like—apart from being a windbag, that is.

On the evidence of this book, Black is a tough, opinionated man with an extraordinary belief in his own talents. He is also rarely if ever wrong, which is doubtless why he has come so far. A former teacher Laurier LaPierre, says that even as a school-boy Black considered himself to be an instrument of history. And history certainly obsesses the man. He is fascinated by battles, leaders and military campaigns, and writes about himself in similar vein.

There is one towering hero in Conrad Black's world (apart from Napoleon, Churchill, De Gaulle and other legendary leaders), and that's General Blackaparte himself. His loyal lieutenants are lavishly praised, for *he* has picked them, but the rest are defeated or damned. Black affects fondness for those who perish in his battles, but they are culled or condemned nevertheless.

In the fight for control of Fairfax newspapers in 1991, for example, almost everyone, according to Black, has a fatal flaw that leads to them being trampled underfoot. Trevor Kennedy is lazy, disloyal and unreasonable, so he has to go. Malcolm Turnbull is greedy, disloyal and intemperate, so he goes too. The Friends of Fairfax are hysterical, puerile and platitudinous, so Black sues them to

teach them a lesson. And the 'lobotomous', 'naive' and 'insolent' back-bench politicians who oppose Tourang are swept aside by a broadside from Black's partner in the syndicate, Kerry Packer.

The then Treasurer, John Kerin, is branded as stupid and untrustworthy by Black, and gets his come-uppance. So does the Prime Minister, Bob Hawke, who is said to be terrified of Packer.

Black's big rival for Fairfax, the chief executive of Heinz, Tony O'Reilly, is labelled 'insidious', 'outrageous', 'ingratiating', 'frivolous' and 'vexatious'. In Black's description, the Irishman is a phoney who 'oils' his way into the affections of Black's misguided opponents. But he gets his just desserts, like the rest of them.

In the battle for Fairfax, Kerry Packer is almost alone in escaping Black's scorn. Sure, he's the roughest, toughest businessman Black has ever met; he's domineering, vindictive, foul-mouthed, earthy and salacious. But he's also astute, 'strangely gentle and protective' and loyal to the core. And he obligingly falls on his sword at the last moment, so that the general's victory march can continue.

Black's inside story of the Fairfax takeover is the part of the book with the most obvious relevance to Australian readers. But, even if one doesn't accept Malcolm Turnbull's view, expressed to the Parliamentary Inquiry into the Print Media, that Black's version is complete nonsense, it's hard to be enthusiastic about it. True, it contains the notorious account of the conversation with Paul Keating, in which Black was allegedly promised a 35 per cent stake in Fairfax if his



All good fellows, jolly good company: Conrad Black and his wife, Barbara Amiel, with Margaret Thatcher and the Duchess of York.
Photo: Black collection.

I DON'T MUCH LIKE CONRAD BLACK. In fact, I find him insufferable. And reading this autobiography hasn't changed my mind one bit. In the words of Disraeli, he is 'inebriated with the exuberance of his own verbosity'.

Black's language and sentiments recall those dreadful prigs one meets in the novels of Jane Austen: they are impossible to reproach, but just as difficult to like. Yet Rupert Murdoch speaks well of him, the great and the good sit on the boards of his companies and newspaper proprietors around the world say that he is talented, amusing and excellent company. And I'm sure he wouldn't disagree. So perhaps the fault is in me.

Black says he has written his autobiography at the age of 50 to set the record straight, to encourage others who face the obstacle he has scaled, and because 'I owe my countrymen a statement of why I am not now mainly resident in Canada, and of my hopes

papers covered the election in a 'balanced' manner. But apart from that, Black's account is of a rather tedious royal progress, in which everyone else plays bit parts to his wise and powerful king. It could have been a study of personality and the manipulation of political power, or even a decent business thriller. But Black just makes it dull.

The rest of the book is little better. Black has a droll sense of humour that makes tales of his upbringing and adolescence amusing, and his accounts of meetings with newspaper proprietors and politicians contain nuggets of interesting information. But the author's contempt for much of the human race permeates the book, making it increasingly unpleasant to read.

Black's famously contemptuous description of journalists is worth repeating. 'My experience with journalists authorises me to record', declared Black at the tender age of 25, 'that a very large number of them are ignorant, lazy, opinionated, intellectually dishonest and inadequately supervised. The profession is heavily cluttered with abrasive youngsters who substitute "commitment" for insight, and to a lesser extent with aged hacks toiling through a miasma of mounting decrepitude. Alcoholism is endemic in both groups.'

No such criticisms are evident when Black comes to talking about himself. It is hard to detect an ounce of humility in the man. 'The tide turned decisively with my peroration... heavy and prolonged applause ensued' writes Black, in describing the 1991 annual meeting of Fairfax shareholders, when he beat off Malcolm Turnbull's 'preposterous indictment' of the high rewards proposed for several of Fairfax's senior executives.

NOR DOES BLACK EXHIBIT a high moral tone when discussing his own misdeeds. He tells the story of stealing exam papers at school and selling them to fellow students without a hint of shame or remorse. He recounts with relish his refusal to sell to one pupil who 'actually knelt in front of me, begging an examination paper,' and boasts easily of rifling and altering the school's academic records.

Black claims that at school he was

a 'fundamental subversive'. But nowadays he seems to be the exact opposite. He loves being a tycoon, adores power and those who exercise it, and collects politicians from around the world—especially rightwing Americans—for his boards in the way that some people collect china. He is also a conservative through and through. Black describes Margaret Thatcher as 'brilliant', 'magisterial', 'beatific', 'beyond estimation' and 'one of the greatest Prime Ministers in British history'. But he likens her opponent, the former British Labour leader Neil Kinnock, to a 'drunken Welsh football yobbo'.

Nor does Black keep his views to himself, despite his regular statements that he does not interfere in his newspapers. He relates proudly how, in the British general election of 1992, he and Max Hastings, his editor-in-chief at the *Daily Telegraph*, 'went as far as we could in rational editorial argument in favour of the government ... most of our most powerful and elegant writers fired every cannon we had in promotion of the government's cause. I had called Perry Worsthorne (then editor of the *Sunday Telegraph*) from Florida the week before, after he had virtually endorsed Labour, so colourless and convictionless did he find the Tories. I urged him to contemplate the full horror of a Labour win and he gamely responded.'

On the evening of the Tory victory in that election, Black held a party in the Savoy Hotel, at which Margaret Thatcher was the guest of honour. She arrived proclaiming 'We've won again. We've done it.' Black told her that even if the people weren't voting for her as Prime Minister any more, they were voting for Thatcherism. Shortly afterwards, the new Prime Minister, John Major, wrote to Black to thank him for the *Telegraph's* support.

Whether there is anything wrong in newspaper proprietors throwing their support behind political parties in this way is a matter of opinion. It is probably inevitable that they do. But it does not accord with my understanding of the sort of 'balanced' coverage that Conrad Black has promised Australia. Nor does it square with his repeated assurances that he is a proprietor who does not interfere. On this evidence, Black is a conservative pro-

prietor who puts the weight of his newspapers behind the more conservative candidates within the more conservative parties. He is on intimate terms with government leaders, and certainly expects to discuss with politicians how their policies will affect his business interests.

The one saving grace is that Black obviously doesn't write his editorials himself. And we will know if he ever starts to do so, for his style is unmistakable.

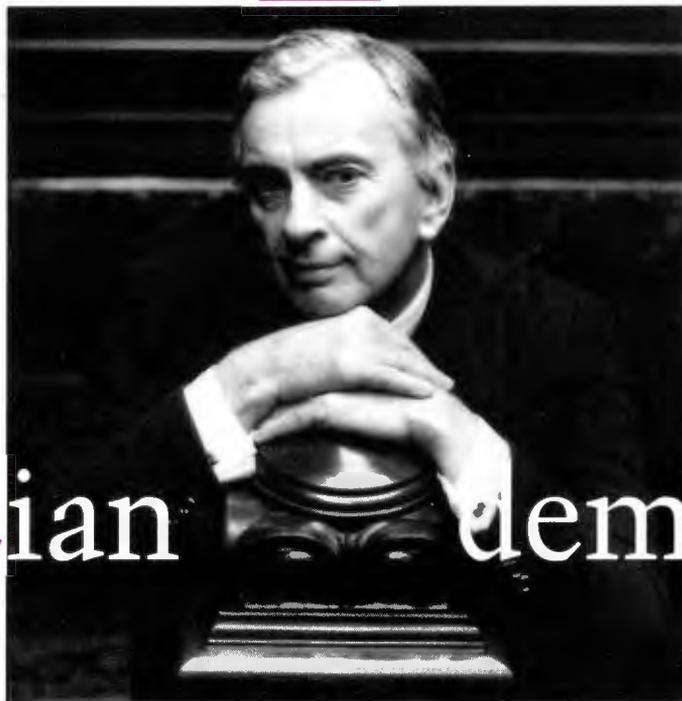
The sentences are long, the language archaic and subordinate clauses abound. His characters don't have a drink, they 'take a libation'. They are 'not uninfluenced' by 'laudations', nor 'unimpressed by double negatives, which they employ not infrequently. They are often 'agreeable' or 'congenial' and meet in 'convivial' surroundings such as Kerry Packer's place (yes, really).

I suppose one should say that he is smart. In particular, he is smart with money and with newspapers. Whether or not one likes Black, he tops the list of potential newspaper purchasers when good properties come on to the market. And, I would guess, he is as good as Packer or Murdoch at making them pay. Despite his apparent vanity (some say he doesn't take himself seriously at all, though I find that hard to believe) he also knows when to say no, as he did with New York's *Daily News*.

So make no mistake: Conrad Black is a man to be reckoned with. But a word of advice, Mr Black: Don't give up your day job to become a full-time writer. ■

Paul Barry is the author of *The Rise and Fall of Alan Bond* and *The Rise and Rise of Kerry Packer*.

Whether there is anything wrong in newspaper proprietors throwing their support behind political parties in this way is a matter of opinion. It is probably inevitable that they do. But it does not accord with my understanding of the sort of 'balanced' coverage that Conrad Black has promised Australia.



Patrician democrat

For Adelaide Festival Writers' Week, Gore Vidal was the one that got away. But Max Teichmann found another means of surveying four decades of Vidal's involvement in American public life.

HAVING REACHED the Green Year of 68, as he describes it, Gore Vidal has given us a collection of his essays published during the past 40 years. They are only part of an astonishing literary output, starting with a first novel written during war service in the Aleutians and published when he was 21.

Vidal went on to write another 15 novels, some of them quite remarkable. Then there are television plays and Hollywood screenplays, and regular appearances on television talk shows—until he was squeezed out for incorrect utterances on the state of America. Vidal continues to make incorrect utterances on a wide variety of matters. As for the missing chat shows, he thinks the level there is now as low as is possible to get without actually serving the viewers gin.

Vidal has twice run for Congress, and finished second in a California Democratic Primary. He can be seen playing the senator in the film *Bob Roberts*, seems to know or to have known just about everyone, and to be related by birth to some of the leading political figures in American history. He now divides his time between Los Angeles and Ravello, Italy.

Although his background is nothing if not establishment, Gore Vidal has been a persistent and effective

critic of contemporary America—its leaders and its parties, its lobbies and its media, its manners and mores. He has also made frequent sallies on behalf of the homosexual community, of which he is a member. The publisher speaks of Vidal's reputation as America's finest essayist, and I think this is true. Peter Ackroyd says he is 'an astringent and necessary corrective to the rubbish that is always being written about rubbish'. Hallelujah! I regard Vidal as a man of considerable guts, remarkable stamina and tons of *chutzpah*—every ounce of which he has needed. He is a man whom it is difficult not to envy.

These essays are divided into three categories, or 'states'. State of the Art covers literature; State of the Union politics and public life; and State of Being is about personal responses to people and events: friendships with Tennessee Williams, Anaïs Nin, Italo Calvino, recollections of childhood, making movies, tackling television, his house in Italy and his visitors there, and so on.

Vidal has been most noted as a literary man—as novelist, critic and friend of the celebrated. The majority of reviewers have concentrated upon

these aspects of the man, so I am going to dilate upon his political and social opinions, which are as important as they are heretical.

An analogy may be drawn with Edmund Wilson, of whom Vidal has written a lot, and with H. L. Mencken. Temperamentally, Vidal is at odds with the spirit of his time, and of his own country and society. He probably always was, but the gulf has grown ever wider. He is an idealist about the America he would like to see, and a realist about what America is really like—and its increasingly baneful influence upon the rest of the world. Though not a conservative, he is regrettably nostalgic about the America that has gone. In recent times, he has stopped calling for its return. Even heroes get tired.

V IDAL BELIEVES that the republic has been sold out. Not simply the republic of the founding fathers, but anything even faintly resembling the model still being presented in the schools, the media, the pulpits and the voting chambers of America. People, especially the young, notice this, and are appropriately cynical. The reality is an armed bureaucratic state, enmeshed

United States Essays 1952-1992, Gore Vidal, Andre Deutsch, London, 1993.
ISBN 0 233 98832 7 RRP \$49.95

with the greatest plutocracy in the world. The giant banks work with and over these two groupings.

This is the *Finanz Kapital* of Lenin and Bukharin, the 'power elite' of C. Wright Mills. And, legitimising this unelected government while distracting, disinforming and sedating the public, is the media succubus described by Noam Chomsky. Vidal warmly recommends Chomsky's *Manufacturing Consent* as the best recent account of the malignant activities of the media monopolists—clones of Dr Mabuse. Vidal has some interesting tales of shows from which he was excluded at the last moment by managerial interference, and of programs made and then scrapped for blatantly political reasons. It all seems like old times to me.

Since the 1830s two main parties have carved up power in America and succeeded in beating off rivals to their money-based oligarchy. One is called Democratic, the other Republican. Vidal keeps advertizing to his country's original constitution and the promises implicit in its adoption. He calls for a major reduction in the powers of the president, for the president is a dictator elected by half of one half of the people, from a very short list given them by the Banksparty. Thus Nixon's 'landslide victory' of 1972 unpacked into a vote of 26 per cent of those eligible to register.

Vidal, with characteristic modesty, gives his own State of the Union addresses, and one can find some of his core judgments therein. In 1980 he spends time on the Chase Manhattan Bank, which stands for all the multinational financial predators. Most of the United States is controlled by 4.4 per cent of its population. This gilded class possesses 27 per cent of the country's real estate and 60 per cent of all corporate stock.

Chase Manhattan is the *Cosa Nostra* of the 4.4 per cent, and the US government is the *Cosa Nostra* of the Bank. Vidal recalls the Trilateral Commission set up in 1973 by Banksman D. Rockefeller, in order to bring together politicians on the make (tautology?) and academics like Kissinger, 'the sort of gung-ho employee who is always eager to start a war or to improve the bank's balance sheet'. Vidal thinks the commission is a perfect

symbol of how America is ruled: 'When Trilateral Commission member Carter was elected president after having pretended to be An Outsider, he chose his Vice President and his Secretaries of State, Defence and Treasury, as well as the National Security adviser from Chase Manhattan's commission!'

As there is no left in America, Vidal expected some gentle conservatives, who like to think of themselves as liberals, to say something. They didn't. Perhaps too many work for the Bank. Only the American right supported him, which Vidal found embarrassing. He thought they should be supporting the Bank—but on this he was mistaken.

MANY RIGHTWING POPULISTS dislike big banks and big business, and, with the collapse of liberalism and socialism, rightwing populists are on the move in America, Russia and other places. The squalor and self-disgust induced by finance capital and mass society turn some people towards apathy and others towards revolt. Not since Huey Long, observes Vidal, has a major leader come forward in America and said, 'We are gong to redistribute the wealth of the country'. Long also said that when fascism came to America it would march under the banner of anti-fascism. This appears to be what is happening. And Long, of course, was assassinated—by yet another deranged person—just as he was looming as a major threat to Roosevelt and the Bank.

In his '75 *Address* Vidal includes a debate with 'the vivacious Barbara Walters', and puts some of his most radical proposals. No one should inherit more than half a million dollars. The separation of powers has collapsed and America should adopt a parliamentary system. The US should pull out of NATO and stop all military aid to the Middle East. Election campaigns should last four weeks instead of four years, and campaign funding should be screwed back until average Americans, not just the puppets of the 4.4 per cent, can run for office.

The CIA, the FBI, and the NSA (National Security Agency), Vidal says, should be closed down. The last mentioned body, an illegally created arm of the Defence Department, employs

250,000 people worldwide and is even less accountable than the others, with a record of fabricating threats, interfering with the affairs of other states, and suborning their military and security elites. (A former head of the NSA and a senior CIA man under Reagan has just become the new Secretary of Defence.)

Vidal refers in detail to a National Security Council document of January 1950, NSC68, which laid down a blueprint for an America on a permanent war footing. It envisages a population permanently mobilised and ideologically driven, and provides for a massive arms industry and budget. The document was declassified in 1975 but in Vidal's view it essentially remains in place. It is a matter of finding new conflicts and selling them to the public, only half of whom vote anyway. This is the media's job, as it is in the countries with whom the Bank is linked. So now we turn to the Gulf, North Korea or the clown Zhirinovskiy as pretexts for keeping war as the distractive option. Vidal quotes Grover Cleveland: 'The US is not a country to which peace is necessary.'

In his historical novels and his philosophising, Vidal has tried to awaken his fellow Americans to the hijacking of their republic by the rich and their armed helpers. Why the great man believes his fellows will respond is perhaps difficult to say. He observed the remorseless decline of literacy among the young and their teachers as early as the mid-70s. He notices that television sets are on seven hours a day, with the contents plumbing ever new depths of irrelevant vulgarity. And he envisages a time when he and most other writers will write mainly for one another. *Fahrenheit 451* would have shackled up with *Brave New World*.

How he expects to get a revolution out of this, I really don't know. Vidal thought that after Watergate there would be a political breakdown that would produce a new order. Both parties were disgraced, people were refusing to vote, and the media were perceived as liars. But the new order amounted to the peanut populist Carter, who snuggled up with Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI), followed by the somnambulist on the white horse with his fake

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Star Wars. But for the collapse of the communists, we would have been in for some major traumas.

This sombre account of his views doesn't do justice to the amazing levity and insouciance that he has brought to his political battles, nor to the ways in which he has demolished, through ridicule, so many opponents and shonky causes. On social matters his campaigns on behalf of feminists and homosexuals, and against the established religions of America, which he believes have successfully secured widespread prohibitions on personal freedom, are beautifully executed and very funny. So too are his *bon mots* on fellow writers, the media, and innumerable politicians. Vidal has little patience for fools and phonies. And, as the publisher says, 'he can express in a phrase what a more solemn essayist would be hardpressed to fit in a paragraph'. Everyone should read his delicious demolition of Norman Podhoretz and Midge Decter, when they open their lunch-talk on homosexuals. Also, his defence of Kate Millett against characters like Norman Mailer and Irving Howe, whom he reduces to bumbling misogynists.

How has this man got away with such a sustained act of multi-faceted iconoclasm? Partly because he is rich and well-born, and partly because he has never neglected to amuse and entertain even his critics. And, finally, because he keeps moving his power base. When television comes in, he is first aboard. When the press dries up, he does the lecture circuits. Little journals often save his bacon, and in fact most of these essays come from there. *The New York Times* and *Time* hate his guts, and he hates their lack of it. And their seats on the board of the Bank.

As a networker and *bon vivant*, Vidal has few equals. But he has made sure that he has a second home in Rome. Europe! Like Voltaire, Vidal has been able to slip through the fingers of his persecutors while maintaining friends in high places—and always with a plane ticket to Europe in the pocket of his expensive jacket. How the Bank's servants must hate him. ■

Max Teichmann is a Melbourne writer and reviewer.



OBITUARY

JAMES GRIFFIN

Dr Francis Kevin Heathcote Maher

LL.D (hon causa), MA, LL.B
1905-1994

SEVERAL TIMES while we were promenading around the Xavier College, Melbourne, playing fields disaggregating lunch—boarders' fare, often a roast followed by a sinker and custard—Frank Maher told us he was planning a book on decision-making. He marvelled at the process. I remember Joe O'Dwyer, the ebullient English master, and myself, both peremptory chaps, being amused, for Frank, while one of the kindest, was one of the least decisive men we knew.

When his solicitous and brisk wife, Molly, died in 1957, we wondered how, with his abstracted, ruminative, though by no means eccentric style, Frank would cope. With his family's firm support, he did. Frank had had a temporary senior lectureship in Law in 1951 but his full-time services were then dispensed with. He was unwilling in mid-life (born 1905) to resume legal practice. He had in the '30s been a short-lived principal in the firm, Adami and Maher, where Adami did not believe in much documentation while Frank meticulously kept it but could rarely find anything. So in 1952, he had to return to schoolteaching.



Faces of hope in the thirties: Frank Maher is on the right. With him were Campion members, from left: Val Adami, Bill Knowles, Kevin Kelly and John Daley. Judge Arthur Adams is seated in front, and the photographer was the founder of Melbourne's Central Catholic Library and its bookshop, Fr William Hackett SJ.

Photo: courtesy of the Australian Jesuit archives.

Frank had taught variously before (at Seymour, St Kevin's, Xavier) but this was now a comedown. Although he did not complain, and certainly his students did not, in 1958 he moved swiftly to accept tenure in the law faculty once it woke to the need for an encouraging pedagogue to raise its first-year retention rate rather than hire a legal eagle with high-flying publications.

In time Frank became co-author of the pre-eminent heuristic text introducing the epistemology of law, and took final year jurisprudence. The honorary doctorate conferred on him in 1985 capped a career that had started in 1921 with a clerkship in the university registry at £1 a week. Later studies had brought him two degrees and the Wyselaskie prize for economics but had offered little prospect that one year (1963) he would teach British law in Rome.

Frank has entered the history books as virtual founder of the Campion Society in 1931. In a Catholic Church dominated by ossifying Irish pragmatism he had been searching for an intellectual role—at one stage he joined the Jesuits for some months—in which he could apply modern religious principles to a disintegrating society. Pope Leo XIII's critique of both capitalism and atheistic socialism in the encyclical, *Rerum Novarum*, went back to 1891 but Catholic (Labor) politicians had hardly heard of it. The papal principles were reaffirmed in 1931 in Pius XI's encyclical, *Quadragesimo Anno*, when the Great Depression was deepest, and a Catholic, Jim Scullin, was Prime Minister. How were the increasingly edu-

cated Catholic laity to absorb these ideas and use their talents in the service of the church?

Frank's initial inspiration came from C.C. Martindale SJ's visit to Australia for the Sydney Eucharistic Congress in 1928, with his invigorating news of the Catholic Literary Revival in England. Its triumphalist warriors (e.g. Chesterton, Belloc, Dawson, Knox etc) hectored Whig historians about where they had gone wrong and extolled 'the faith' as the lucent font of European wisdom. 'Christianity has not failed; it has not been tried,' wrote Chesterton buoyantly.

There were other influences (e.g. Jocism) but Frank remained a dedicated Chesterbellocian, of which even his brushy moustache was a symptom. The spread of Campion activities and influence into the Catholic Evidence Guild, *The Catholic Worker* etc, has been told in the histories of Patrick O'Farrell *et al.*

Not knowing Frank until he was a despondent 46, I had some difficulty in seeing him as a galvanic leader. Probably it was his more eirenic coordinating talent and judicious integrity that made others look to him for leadership, so that he became, in 1937, the logical choice as the first director of the National Secretariat for Catholic Action.

ACAREFUL READER of the autobiography of the secretariat's first assistant director, B.A. Santamaria, will note how little reference there is to Frank, but it was never a secret that Frank became dismayed at the direction the secretariat took with the creation of the Catholic Social Studies Movement in 1941-42. In the late '40s Frank was still producing texts on Catholic Action saying that it was obliged to eschew politics. But the more cogent Santamaria had the ear of Archbishop Mannix, and other Campions who might have persuaded Mannix against the disastrous course he was taking were at the war.

Frank had no stomach either for

practical politics or for opposing the archbishop he revered. He exasperated researchers in later years by refusing to discuss the Catholic Action secretariat, implicitly revealing his own unhappiness with events. But, if he clearly did not relish the Movement, he could be sharp about its armchair critics too. If he did not kiss the crook of authority, he wore the manacles of loyalty. Whether it is fair to say his position at the secretariat was usurped can be dealt with elsewhere, but certainly he was sidelined, ostensibly in 'ill-health'. In 1946 he was fobbed off with a European study tour but managed to visit only England. By 1951 Frank had resigned from secretariat.

So Frank will take his place among both the achievers and 'might-have-beens' of history. No Mannix, no Santamaria; no Santamaria, no Movement—this seems indisputable. But no Movement, no Labor Party split as in 1954-5? That's too much to say, but without the Movement the ructions that were building up in the ALP would not have had a sectarian character, especially with many by then well-off Catholics who were moving from rosy to blue in the political spectrum.

I am not sure how comfortable Frank felt with his church of the post '60s. A couple of meetings and letters were our only contact. Prior to Vatican II he had embodied tolerance and Christian humanism, subverting rather than confronting the repressive clericalism that even the lay Movement had reined into its service.

Mercifully, Frank had a second career. During the early '50s he had kept his skills alive editing *20th Century* and writing reviews and articles, often under *noms de plume*. When he retired he 'published widely', his doctoral citation said, 'on the use of language ... and on legal paradox'. Perhaps a draft on decision-making will be found among his relics. ■

James Griffin is an historian. He lives in Canberra.

Flight of fancy

Outercourse: *The Be-Dazzling Voyage*, Mary Daly, Spinifex, Melbourne 1993. ISBN 1 875559 12 4 RRP \$34.95

IF WILLIAM BLAKE CAN SUP with Ezekiel and Isaiah, why should we be non-plussed by Mary Daly's decision to write her autobiography from the other side of the moon, in company with Wild Cat and Catherine the Cow? Is poetic licence less acceptable when evinced by our contemporaries? Does it cause us to wonder how seriously we should take the rest of Daly's *oeuvre*: can we distinguish between serious intent and send-up?

There are enough indicators in Daly's autobiography to suggest that she's not entirely sober-sides. The title of the book is hardly conventional—*Outercourse: The Be-Dazzling Voyage, containing recollections from my 'Logbook of a Radical Feminist Philosopher' (be-ing an account of my time/space travels and ideas—then, again, now and how)*. Daly also tells us that the *Logbook* does not exist, and that the only journals she keeps are those 'Written in Memory'. It can't be said that Daly conceals the fact that her narrative is overwritten, self-indulgent and selective; it's up to each reader to decide to what extent it's redeemed by her ebullience, imagination and sense of the ridiculous. Opinions will differ.

Why has Daly written her autobiography? She wants to tie her life together, to see where she's come from and how she's arrived at where she is. And maybe she's hoping to gain some insight into where she's going next. There's a political purpose too, to energise herself and others. In Daly-speak: 'It is my hope that these Re-Callings will be helpful to women—my Self included—in overcoming the time warps that mark the Age of Dis-Memberment—the foreground "present" that impedes our Living a true Present/Presence. It is my Hope also that this Re-Membering will generate more Gynergy for further Be-Dazzling Voyaging.'

Unexpectedly, the structure of

Outercourse is conventional, a chronological telling of Daly's progress from Catholic theologian to academic, ethicist, lexicographer, philosopher and Wild Woman. Being Mary Daly, the periods of her life are divided into Spiral Galaxies, not just plain old sections, and she cannot resist commenting upon her own writing. Thus we have Prefatory Notes prior to the Introduction, a Prelude at the beginning of each Galaxy, and Reflections on the Philosophical Themes therein engaged at the end of each Galaxy. At the end of the book itself there's a 'Concluding—Beginning' which comprises 'The Great Summoning and The Great Summation', followed by 37 pages of notes that are supplementary to the footnotes scattered throughout the book.

How does Mary Daly recall her life? The First Spiral Galaxy (Oh!—1970) starts before birth. Daly taps into her Archaic Memory Code and reports that, even prior to conception, she was critical of the poor showing of males who wielded patriarchal power on earth, while she was much impressed by the vast number of truly great women, especially those from pre-patriarchal times. She decided to be born a female and become a 'woman-identified woman warrior and philosopher—to counter patriarchy and embark on a Be-Dazzling Metapatriarchal Voyage'.

So it came about that she was born to Anna, a switchboard operator and Frank, an ice-cream freezer salesman in Schenectady, New York, and raised a Catholic in Depression America. Even in her working-class co-ed elementary school Daly realised that myths of male intellectual superiority were just that, myths, and she raced ahead of the boys in math and science. She tells us, modestly, that she was known as 'the brain' and describes herself 'insufferably stubborn and self-confident' and a natural gang-leader.



'Moments of Momentous Re-membering'

—Illustration for
'The Fourth Spiral Galaxy'
of Mary Daly's *Outercourse*

Daly decided that higher education was the way out of marriage or a mundane career as a secretary or teacher. By the end of the First Galaxy she has acquired seven degrees, including three doctorates—in religion, sacred theology, and philosophy. The last two doctorates were taken at the University of Fribourg because, unlike the Catholic University of America, Swiss faculties of the theology are incorporated into state universities and are not permitted to discriminate against students on the basis of sex.

Daly makes frequent mention of her degrees, suggesting that her scholastic ability is a sensitive issue; understandable given the criticism her work draws in some academic circles for its 'subjective' (read 'feminist') nature.

In 1966 the Jesuit-run Boston College hired Mary Daly as an assistant professor in the theology department. Her battles with the college permeate the remaining three Galaxies of *Outercourse*, with the college trying to terminate her contract, threatening to sue her for breach of contract obligations, and denying her promotion. In each skirmish she records support from students and other academics, but her reference to the increasingly conservative cast of students suggests she may have lost her power base. For the time being she remains employed by Boston College to teach feminist ethics, although she spends most of her time on leave, writing books and giving public lectures.

The high point of the First Galaxy is the publication of *The Church and the Second Sex*, a scholarly critique of the Catholic Church. The Second Galaxy (1971-74) starts with the Harvard Memorial Church Exodus, which marked Daly's formal departure from Christianity, and sees the publication of *Beyond God the Father: Towards a Philosophy of Women's Liberation*. By this stage Daly is critical of the misogyny of the Judaeo-Christian religion and is moving towards the idea of Archaic Memory and an ancient woman-centred spiritual consciousness.

The Third Spiral Galaxy (1975-87) includes Daly's visit to Australia in 1981, an event which has passed into feminist folklore (in Sydney at least), and the publication of *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism*, *Pure Lust: Elemental Feminist Philosophy*, and *Webster's First New Intergalactic Wickedary of the English Language*. It is obvious, even from her titles, that Daly has forsaken all patriarchal religion and has moved from theology into philosophy, women's studies and politics. She is on the attack against all forces that divide women.

By the time we reach the Fourth Spiral Galaxy we have passed into the Be-Dazzling Now: Moments of Momentous Re-Membering (Off the Calendar, Off the Clock). Here we have an account of Daly's voyage to the moon and, during a brief return to Boston, a Witches' Trial of Patriarchy (pornographers, serial killers, Earthrapers, Media Wit Dimmers, professional Mind-fuckers, academic Brain-drainers and 'His Nothingness of Rome and His Arrogance, Cardinal Flaw, figure-heads for the Soul-killers of women'). Needless to say, the defendants (dummies with balloon heads) are found guilty, Hexed with Force and Fury, and de-headed—'a Metaphor with Terrifying Power'.

Outercourse concludes with the First Intergalactic Interdisciplinary Congress on the Other Side of the Moon. Daly (naturally) is invited to give the Final Keynote Address, speaking after Granuaile the Transtemporal Pirate, Hypatia the Self-Identified Pagan Philosopher, Susan B Anthony, Harriet Tubman, Sacajawea and Spider Woman. And what is her mes-

sage? The need for women to work together to transform a world that has been near-destroyed by death-loving patriarchy. Not that Daly expresses it so artlessly:

'The exponential increase of our Energy, which is needed for continuing to Remember Now, requires more and more Daring and Drastic Action. We must keep on Spiralling farther Out, that is, Outercoursing. We must move on in our Intergalactic Voyaging. Only in this way can we accurately ascertain our Cosmic Context, continuing to chart the way for Others.

'We must have our workshops on the Other side of the moon, and we will have Congresses Here again when the Times are right for these. But we must commute continually to earth, working to free our Sisters, carrying on the Fight for Life on earth. Bringing together our many centuries of study and action—as philosophers, astronomers, poets, warriors, healers, musicians, activists, teachers, Survivors of the sadosociety, and Agents of Nemesis—we must convey the Momentous Message. Susan has said it well: "Failure is impossible!"'

As an agenda for change, this is not particularly specific. Where is Daly leading? She admits she's not sure, but she's not worried because the seed of one Galaxy grows from another. Eventually she'll find herself somewhere, and so, perhaps, will her followers.

Outercourse is a personal document, offering neither a map for the future nor an explanation of Daly's philosophies. Instead we are given a record of the events of her life, her friendships, her triumphs over authority, the circumstances surrounding the writing of her books, their public reception, and her search for Irish origins. Absent is any reference to feminist thinkers outside of Daly's circle and any serious engagement with ideas contrary to Daly's own.

BY HER OWN ASSESSMENT Daly has become part of a Memory-Bearing Group. In the cronehood of Feminism her role is to evoke radical change through the power of her memories and to speak others into action by her own example. Certainly she has been a key figure in naming women's op-

pression, in fuelling righteous anger, in revealing the duplicity of religion and language, and in subverting patriarchy. She has promoted women's traditions, rewritten language to register women's presence, and given women courage to dream and permission to act.

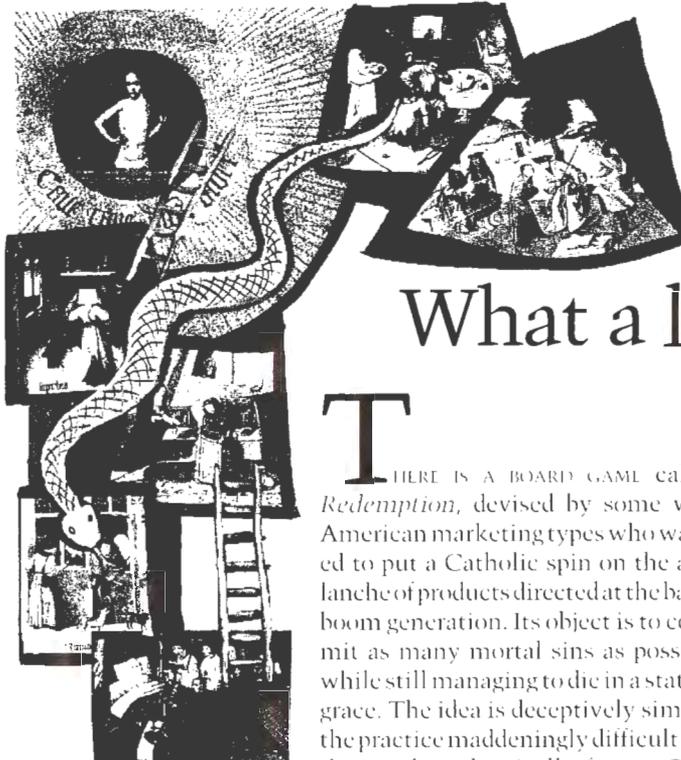
But she has become an increasingly difficult act to follow. Her condemnation of patriarchy appears to include every man ever born and a fair number of women as well, her flights into the abstract risk leaving the 'real' world behind, and her language serves tedium and obfuscation more than it foments revolution.

And Daly's work sparks doubt. Is it possible that patriarchy feeds off her attacks, that every time she evokes the obscenity of men's power over women she confirms that power? As long as Daly defines women in relation to patriarchy, can it be said that patriarchy is still defining women?

Outercourse is a revealing introduction to the voyaging Mary Daly and offers a way into her other books. It portrays a woman with a strong sense of herself and a fierce turn of humour. The latter is directed against the pomposity of the phallogocracy and, sadly, is not brought to bear on the pomposity of her own work. In Daly's writing everything is so inflated that nothing is important. Every task is momentous and every bright idea is an enormous explosion in Daly's psyche which hurls her even further on her Intergalactic Voyage. There is no room for other voices, or even for the reader, who is likely to feel she's been blasted by a starship.

Is Daly's relocation to the moon a sign that she's lost the plot at home? Or is she reinventing herself for a renewed attack on gynocidal/biocidal atrocities? 'There are and will be those who think I have gone overboard. Let them rest assured that this assessment is correct, probably beyond their wildest imagination, and that I will continue to do so.' Admission or threat, these are not comforting words, but they are consistent with the frontispiece of Mary Daly, smiling broadly and playfully fingering a two-headed axe. ■

Elaine Lindsay is co-editor of *Women-Church. An Australian Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*.



What a long, strange trip it's been

THERE IS A BOARD GAME called *Redemption*, devised by some wily American marketing types who wanted to put a Catholic spin on the avalanche of products directed at the baby-boom generation. Its object is to commit as many mortal sins as possible while still managing to die in a state of grace. The idea is deceptively simple, the practice maddeningly difficult and the result cathartically funny. Only

the latter quality, perhaps, will be an unfamiliar part of the exercise to the baby-boomers for whom *Redemption* caricatures a view of Christian life acquired, if not at their mother's knee, then from Sister Mary Fabulata, Brother Tarquinius or Father O'Loonassy.

In a sense, these books describe the rolling back of that view. Formally, they are both introductory surveys of moral theology, but the title of Hogan's book properly suggests a wider significance. Moral theology, which began as a kind of advice to confessors on how to advise—or admonish—penitents, has always been the theological discipline with the greatest potential impact on the lives of ordinary Catholics. And what each of these books offers is a synthesis of the changes that have taken place in that discipline during the past half-century.

Yet, though its influence was pervasive, until the middle decades of the century moral theology was also the most intellectually undernourished form of inquiry carried out in Catholic academies. Biblical studies may have been subject to greater censure and constraint, in consequence of the Modernist controversy, but moral theology remained more or less in the atrophied state in which Alphonsus Liguori (d.1787) had left it.

Freedom and Purpose, Robert Gascoigne, E.J. Dwyer, Sydney 1993, ISBN 0 85574 285 2 RRP \$19.95

On Being Catholic Today, Arnold Hogan SJ, Collins Dove, Melbourne 1993, ISBN 1 86371 292 5, RRP \$18.95

Alphonsus' achievement had been to steer mainstream theological reflection between the rigours of Jansenism and the blandness of 'laxism', and coincidentally to broker a peace between warring Jesuits and Dominicans who were enmeshed in their own dispute over the nature of grace and freedom. This Liguorian peace was imposed on exhausted combatants, which is one reason why it lasted. And the result was an acceleration of the fragmentation of theological disciplines that had been taking place since the Council of Trent.

In the Tridentine view, a priest's chief pastoral duty was to help the faithful understand the demands of right living, and the forum in which he did so most often was the confessional. A proliferation of manuals mingled moral considerations with the requirements of canon law, to delineate the boundaries of mortal and venial sin so that penitents might understand how far they could go. It was just like playing *Redemption*, except the stakes were real.

As the Irish theologian Vincent MacNamara has observed, this kind of thinking set its sights low. The totality of Christian life, as described in the great medieval syntheses such as that of Aquinas, was ignored and for practical purposes Christian life came to be divided into morality and 'spirituality'. The former, concerned with the basic commandments, was all the laity had to bother about and the latter, a kind of overdrive, became largely the preserve of clerics and members of religious orders and congregations.

The theological ferment of the 1950s and '60s brought changes in moral theology, as in other theological disciplines. Catholic moralists took advantage of the renewed access to

the insights of biblical scholarship, began cautiously to reformulate their work in the idioms of contemporary philosophy and the human sciences, and to reconsider polemical positions adopted in the wake of the Reformation. The Second Vatican Council, which in its decree on priestly formation had singled out moral theology as requiring reform, gave impetus to the new mood.

It was a time when some old authorities were interpreted in new ways: Thomas Aquinas sounds very different when the treatise on virtue in the *Summa Theologiae* is read as being logically prior to, and thus underpinning, the treatise on law. It was a time, too, when some contentious teachings seemed likely to be revised: most notably, when the commission advising Pope Paul VI recommended a change in the teaching on artificial contraception.

AS EVERY CATHOLIC baby-boomer knows, however, Paul VI decided to reject that advice and in *Humanae Vitae* (1968) he upheld the existing teaching. Since then the barricades have gone up again, and moral theology has become a difficult and sometimes dangerous pursuit for anyone who regards it as involving more than the explication of official church teaching.

The publication last year of Pope John Paul's encyclical on moral teaching, *Veritatis Splendor*, will not make this state of siege any easier. The encyclical takes aim at a number of pivotal concepts in contemporary moral theology, especially the 'fundamental option' and the theory of human acts known as proportionalism, and one merit of the books dis-

For practical purposes Christian life came to be divided into morality and 'spirituality' ... the latter, a kind of overdrive, became largely the preserve of clerics and members of religious orders.

cussed here is that they clearly explain what is actually argued by proponents of those theories. In this respect Gascoigne and Hogan do a great deal better than *Veritatis Splendor*, which caricatures proportionalism so grossly that the theologians concerned have no reason to acknowledge the views under attack as their own.

Although *Veritatis Splendor* is not the subject of this review (for a discussion of the encyclical, see *Eureka Street*, November 1993, pp5-12) it is impossible to consider these books without adverting to it. *Freedom and Purpose* and *On Being Catholic Today* are elementary presentations of mainstream views; they do not themselves advance those views further, and were it not for the atmosphere created by the encyclical that might be all that needed to be said about them. The mind of Rome is now such, however, that a fair summary of mainstream opinion in moral theology can amount to a summary of what the present Pope and his advisers think is rotten in Catholic intellectual life.

It is not the first time in the history of the church that Rome has set its face against intellectual fashion—more than one commentator has compared the current crackdown on moral theologians with the treatment of biblical scholars during the Modernist ‘crisis’ at the turn of the century. What is curious about the present mood, however, is that some of the views under attack from Rome are a development of traditional teaching, whereas some of the alternative views commended by the encyclical are, in effect, a departure from the tradition. For those who are new to the debate, the books reviewed here can explain how this kind of turnaround has happened. (Though the fact that they may be read this way is not a matter of authorial intent. Both books had gone to press before *Veritatis Splendor* was unleashed on the church.)

Proportionalism, for example, depends on a philosophical understanding of human acts which is continuous with that elaborated by Aquinas. Some proportionalists couch their arguments in the terminology of later philosophers, but essentially the view is bound up with Aristotelian-Thomistic assumptions about the nature of moral judgment and action. The Cath-

olic tradition in ethics has been *teleological*—i.e. it has accepted that an adequate account of human action must include reference to its intentional structure. The tradition has also eschewed *consequentialism*—the view that outcomes *alone* determine the moral character of an action—and not the least odd thing about *Veritatis Splendor* is that the Pope often writes as though teleological and consequentialist modes of thought were the same thing.

The encyclical is strongly *deontological* in its approach—its emphasis is on the *commands* of what the Pope likes to call ‘the divine and natural law’. Philosophically, the guiding spirit of *Veritatis Splendor* is not Aristotle but Kant (not acknowledged as such, but he’s there): the encyclical blurs teleological and consequentialist views because it construes them both as trying to ‘justify, as morally good, deliberate choices of kinds of behaviour contrary to the commandments of the divine and natural law’ [VS76].

PROPORTIONALISTS CAN correctly object that their views have been misinterpreted if they are taken to be arguing that a morally wrong action may be justified by a good intention. The point at issue is *what* one determines ‘the action’ to be, for a proportionalist would maintain that the intentional context of an action is partly constitutive of that action. Consider the ethics of truth-telling: for a deontologist a lie would simply be the deliberate telling of an untruth, whereas a proportionalist/teleologist might describe a lie as the deliberate concealment of information from someone who had a right to know that information—yet proponents of either view could maintain, *pace* Pope John Paul, that the telling of lies was ‘intrinsically’ wrong.

The point is made neatly in an example cited by Gascoigne, from the work of Bernhard Häring CSsR: ‘When German nuns, who were responsible for a large number of mentally and physically handicapped children, were asked by Hitler’s obedient slaves how many children they had of this or that category of deficiency, they responded simply that they had none of them. Did they lie? They did not, because in the context there was no communica-

tion about children and children’s sickness; the real question asked was “How many children do you have to deliver for our gas ovens?” And the only truthful and, at the same time, life-saving response was “None”.’

I have concentrated on aspects of the philosophical background to Christian ethics rather than on what some take to be ‘the content’ of moral theology, but, as Gascoigne or Hogan or any good basic text will explain, another way of approaching these matters is to inquire whether there is a *specifically* Christian content to morality. And since the answer one gives to that depends in part on the place given to norms in moral reasoning, the dispute between deontologists and teleologists will reappear in another form.

For example, is ‘the divine and natural law’ to be understood, according to a homely analogy proposed by Herbert McCabe OP, as more like a football rule book or as more like a football coaching manual? A rule book is about individual acts, whereas a coaching manual is about how to acquire dispositions—and these are logically quite different kinds of discourse.

If one takes a coaching-manual approach to the prescriptions of the Decalogue and the admonitions of the Sermon on the Mount, the baby-boomer neuroses lampooned by *Redemption* start to wither away. This does not amount to a ‘soft-sell’ repackaging of Christian moral life; after all, learning how to play a game is a longer and more perilous process than learning a set of rules, because the player has to grasp the point of the game that the rules define. For Christians, that kind of insight is bound up with the theological virtues of faith, hope and love as well as with the traditional moral virtues. But pursuing this line, as Aristotle would say, means making a new beginning. If you’re so inclined, these little books by Gascoigne and Hogan aren’t bad places to start. ■

Ray Cassin is production editor of *Eureka Street*.

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Australia's most wanted

LAST MONTH I COMMENTED on the boom in musicals during the past half-dozen or so years, but suggested that musicals were by no means the only things Australians were seeing on their professional stages—especially upon those subsidised to any extent by public funds. Again drawing on *The Australian and New Zealand Theatre Record*, it turns out that in Australia last year the greatest number of professional productions of plays by an individual author were of plays by William Shakespeare.

There were 22 Shakespeare productions, which happens to be about the same number of musicals seen in the same year and which, at least on the criterion of separate professional productions staged, easily makes Shakespeare our leading playwright. (Obviously, I am counting John Bell's *Hamlet* as just one production, although it was seen in several cities; on the other hand, there were at least three separate productions of various versions of *Titus Andronicus*, created by different companies).

Mainstream state theatre companies, like the Melbourne and Sydney theatre companies, the Queensland Theatre Company and the State Theatre Company of South Australia, tend to dominate the list of Shakespeare productions, although the launching of the touring Bell Shakespeare Company in 1991 has helped to swell the numbers by three plays each year in several cities. Regional companies, such as Newcastle's Hunter Valley Theatre Company also sometimes do Shakespeare, and the Bard occasionally gets an airing from companies like Playbox in Melbourne—though usually in unorthodox productions which

tend to be 'explorations' of the works chosen.

Festivals also commonly feature at least one of Shakespeare's plays, often in imported productions. Last year he turned up in Perth (with the Royal Shakespeare Company's *A Comedy of Errors*) and Melbourne (with the Romanian National Theatre of Craiova's production of *Titus Andronicus* and an adaptation of the same play by a local company, Theatre-Works). Indeed, one of the big features of the 1988 Melbourne Spoleto Festival was the English Shakespeare Company's *Wars of the Roses* cycle of the history plays.

Shakespeare's popularity among performing arts companies of all kinds was further demonstrated by the choice of various of his works for adaptations: into opera, for example, with the Australian Opera's production in July of Benjamin Britten's version of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; or dance, with the Queensland Ballet's *The Tempest* in March; or into anthologistic works, like Canberra's A Break in the Silence Productions presentation in March of *The Rest is Silence*, a collation of speeches and soliloquies on the subject of death, many of which were drawn from Shakespeare's plays.

THERE WERE COUNTLESS amateur and semi-professional productions of Shakespeare, including many by university groups and the various theatre training institutions. A random sample from *The Record* includes a brace of *Macbeths* (one from the Q Theatre in Adelaide and one from another Canberra group, CADS—and no prizes for guessing that both might have

been influenced by the presence of that play on high school syllabuses!), a *Julius Caesar* from Paper Moon Productions (at ANU), a *Twelfth Night* at Melbourne University's Open Stage, a *Much Ado About Nothing* from the Brisbane Arts Theatre and a pair of *King Lears* (the first by the long-established Adelaide Theatre Guild and one from yet another Canberra group, Theatre of the Heart).

Macbeth, in fact, copped something of a hammering in 1993. As well as the two non-professional productions mentioned above, there were at least four more. These included productions by the Hunter Valley Theatre Company and a new Melbourne group, the Stage Theatre Company. There were also two interesting outdoor productions of the same play: one in Perth's superb New Fortune Theatre replica (by an ad hoc professional company called Fortune Productions) and one in the wilds of the You Yang mountains near Geelong. This latter production had seemed likely to become an annual event for Postcard Productions, the Geelong company that began it in 1992; a news release received late last year, however, announced that the January 1994 performances of *Macbeth in the You Yangs* would be the last.

Shakespeare in the open air continued to be quite a trend. Glenn Elston and FEIPP! (Fabulous Entertainments in Public Places!) have been doing Shakespeare (mostly *A Midsummer Night's Dream*) in Melbourne's Royal Botanic Gardens since the summer of 1988-89. Elston's *Dream* was also seen in the botanic gardens of Adelaide and Sydney last year, and just before Christmas resumed in the Melbourne gar-

dens in a new version. Hobart's Zootango Theatre Company has also occasionally used the Royal Botanical Gardens for summer productions and did so again in 1993, when a lively, knockabout production of *As You Like It* was directed by Richard Davey.

Also noticeable last year was an almost unprecedented interest in Shakespeare's Roman plays. In addition to the twin *Titus* productions for the Melbourne International Festival, the Sydney Theatre Company's experimental New Stages company, under the direction of playwright Michael Gow, gave a somewhat controversial *Titus*, and the parent company weighed in with a *Coriolanus* that was widely regarded as one of the best productions of the year in Sydney. Not to be outdone, John Howard's Australian People's Theatre (a quasi-community group also associated with the STC) had a crack at *Anthony and Cleopatra*.

JOHAN BELL'S COMPANY retained in its 1993 repertoire *Richard III*, which premiered in 1992, and a significantly developed version of the *Hamlet* with which it was launched, and added a youthful *Romeo and Juliet*. The company has yet to tackle a comedy, despite the often rather pointed humour that seems to be part of its house style in the histories and tragedies.

Shakespeare has been the leading playwright, by weight of productions, in Australia at least as long as the *Australian and New Zealand Theatre Record* has been published and probably for as long as this country has had a permanent professional theatre. In 1992, there were upwards of 20 professional Shakespeare productions (*Twelfth Night* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* being the most-produced plays, with five and three productions respectively). In 1991 Shakespeare had a slightly quieter year, with 15 separate productions, and 1990 was quieter still, with only 10 productions. But in 1988 and 1989, the numbers were 17 and 16 respectively.

A reason often given for the popularity of Shakespeare is that his plays tend to show up on high school syllabuses, so that there is a guaranteed audience. There is some truth in this, no doubt, though whether the profits from doing Shakespeare for school

audiences are automatically huge is debatable. I believe that the reason for the Bard's inclusion on school syllabuses is more important: Shakespeare is still widely regarded as a paradigm of the British part of our cultural heritage, and as such is bound to find a prominent place in the repertoire of mainstream theatre companies as well as in school literature courses. Shakespeare productions are usually heavily booked by company subscribers as well as by schools, especially when they feature, as they so often do, one or two star actors.

This raises another point. Theatre companies also regard Shakespeare as something of a touchstone, although the attraction lies more in the opportunity to display their own talents against the great roles and staging problems than in the author's literary merit. Directors in particular, I suspect, enjoy the opportunity to find a great vehicle through which to express their own visions of the world. There can surely be no playwright (apart, perhaps, from the ancient Greeks) whose works are so tampered with and so frequently used as 'metaphors' (as so many program notes tell us) of contemporary relevance!

I suspect the most basic reason for Shakespeare's popularity, however, especially among audiences, is relatively simple: it's the sheer strength of the stories and their characters. To watch an audience watching Glenn Elston's *Dream* in the gardens is often to watch people who are 'hearing' the story for the first time, and who are revelling in it as they would in a thriller or a romance. Their joy in this kind of entertainment—alloyed with the pleas-

ures of picnic hampers though it may be—does not depend on ritzy, computerised scenery and the like; it's the pure delight of the story and the magic of the performance.

Other plays from the so-called 'classical' repertoire (which some companies define broadly as works written before the beginning of this century) that have enjoyed success in Australia in recent times include those of Ibsen and Chekhov (with about a dozen professional productions across the nation since 1987), together with the odd Molière and the occasional Elizabethan contemporary of Shakespeare.

In the past couple of years, Australian theatre directors have turned their attention to the ancient Greeks. Apart from the occasional production

Even before Lethal Weapon, he suffered: Mel Gibson as the lovesick Romeo, with Michael Smith as Benvolio, in John Bell's 1979 Nimrod Theatre production of Romeo and Juliet. The photo is taken from The Bell Shakespeare Romeo and Juliet, the first in a new series of Shakespeare texts and commentaries published in Australia by Science Press.

Photo: Robert McFarlane



by a James McCaughey in Melbourne or a Ray Omodei in Perth, I had hardly come across a Greek tragedy in 10 years of professional theatregoing, but in 1993 we had three *Agamemnon*s, two *Oresteias* and two *Medeas*, not to mention an *Elektra* and an *Oedipus*.

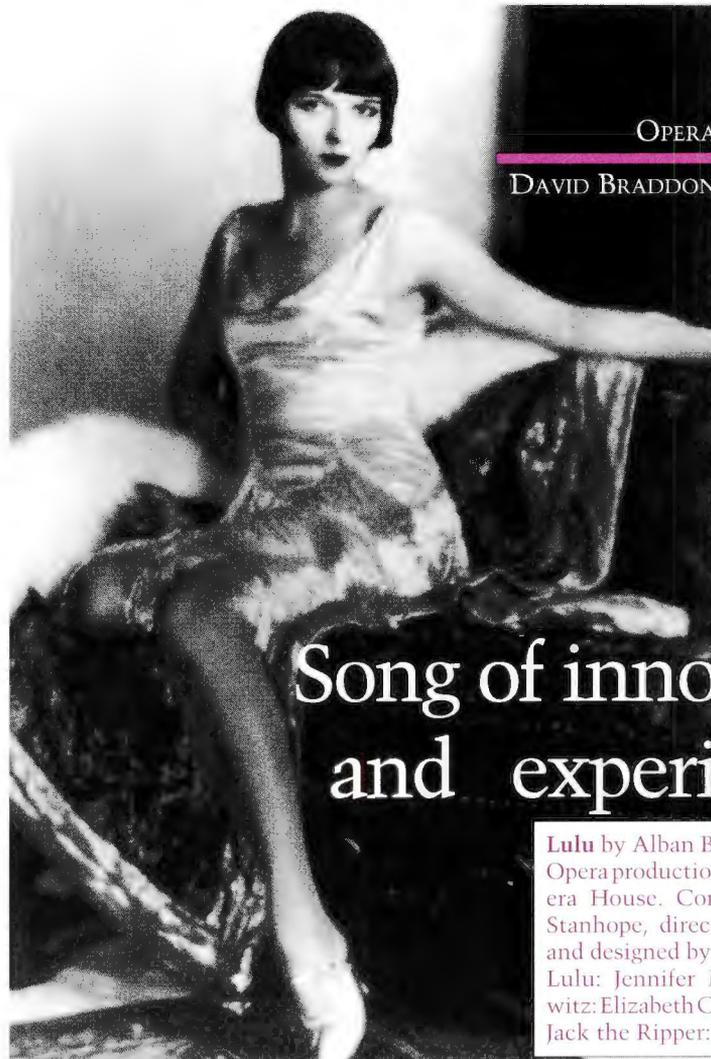
The leading modern British and American playwrights in Australia in recent times have been Ayckbourn and Pinter (with 25 and 17 professional productions respectively, since 1987) and Arthur Miller and Neil Simon (17 and 13). Last year Ayckbourn again led the British field, with some competition from Caryl Churchill, though David Mamet was the most-seen American playwright.

Among Australian playwrights, David Williamson has led the field (and, indeed, been second only to Shakespeare) of individual playwrights for the past decade and a half. His best year in recent times was 1987, when there were at least eight professional productions of his plays, including separate productions in each state of *Emerald City*.

Williamson has had some stiff competition in recent years, in the form of Michael Gow (whose plays *Away* and *Europe*, especially, brought him great prominence in the last years of the 1980s), Andrew Bovell and the young people's playwright Richard Tulloch, all of whom have had more productions since 1987 than Ibsen or Chekhov. The leading competition in 1993, however, (and the same was true in 1992) came from relative newcomers to the leaders' board and they were mostly women playwrights. Apart from the prolific Louis Nowra (who had five productions of four separate plays done in 1993), they were: Katherine Thomson (with six productions, like Williamson), Tobsha Learner (with four) and Mary Morris (with three).

I want to return to these busy new women playwrights next month, but in the meantime it should be clear that what passes for an Australian theatre repertoire is pretty varied and that the canon is neither to be taken for granted nor, for the time being, to be entirely fired off. ■

Geoffrey Milne is head of the Division of Drama at La Trobe University and a drama critic for the ABC.



OPERA
DAVID BRADDON-MITCHELL

Song of innocence and experience

Lulu by Alban Berg. An Australian Opera production at the Sydney Opera House. Conducted by David Stanhope, directed by Mark Gaal and designed by Angus Strathie. *Lulu*: Jennifer McGregor; *Geschwitz*: Elizabeth Campbell; *Dr Schön*/*Jack the Ripper*: Barry Mora.

A Lulu who made the role her life: Louise Brooks, star of G.W. Pabst's 1928 screen version of the story. (See p54)

LULU CAN STILL SHOCK. It is an opera about a woman whose first two husbands die from jealousy, who kills her third husband because of his jealous rage, who escapes prison because someone who is in love with her deliberately infects her with cholera, and is finally killed by Jack the Ripper after being reduced to street prostitution in London. This new Australian Opera production at last gives us a chance to hear the whole of the work in Friederich Cerha's completion.

Lulu confronts us with a story of unrelenting physical and emotional violence, of a very direct and strangely contemporary kind. Nothing is romanticised, and a story that we might ignore on tabloid television seems to insist that it be somehow assimilated into our understanding when told through Berg's extraordinary score, and moved into the surroundings of an opera house.

This insistence has produced some bizarre attempts to fit the drama to a moral template. Berg himself thought

that the Wedekind plays on which he based the libretto showed the cost of constraining sexuality unnaturally. But, at least to contemporary ears, his own music belies any straightforward version of this. It is unclear that *Lulu* genuinely has any sexuality of her own, as distinct from her power to draw people to her in a way that is usually either unwelcome or merely instrumental. The music tells us that genuine sexual urgency only controls her at the end, when her desire for Jack the Ripper results in her paying him for what will prove to be her murder. So there's little sense of what life would be like without sexual constraints.

But such a reading is no more implausible than the alternatives. One of these is to see the work as a kind of morality play, counting out precisely the wages of sin, as *Lulu*'s husbands come back to haunt her in the form of her clients when she works the streets of London. This is the view that Pierre Boulez seemed to hold when he wrote

an essay on *Lulu* at the time of his premiere performance of the completed version. (*Lulu* was left incomplete after the composer's death, because Berg's widow thought no one else was up to the job when the other Second Vienna School composers turned it down.) At the other extreme you might read the opera as a kind of patriarchal masque, displaying the ever greater indignities that men might impose on someone whose sole source of power comes from her sexuality.

The reality is that none of these readings works because though there is something right in all of them, the opera defies a conventional dramatic foregrounding of any of its strands, either musical or moral. An example: writers have looked for some expression of 'pure' love in the opera. Boulez found it in Alwa (the son of Lulu's third husband, Dr Schön), yet his is a strange, deranged obsession, unaffected by his father's death at Lulu's hand.

A better place to look for selfless love is the Countess Geschwitz, compellingly sung by Elizabeth Campbell. Here is a woman whose love for Lulu is merely tolerated. She gets nothing from Lulu, yet remains devoted. She engineers Lulu's macabre escape from prison, infecting herself with cholera and having herself imprisoned in the process. Yet Lulu remarks—cheerfully, according to the stage directions—that, '*das arme Ungeheuer*' (the poor monster) is in prison in her place. The only pity comes from Jack the Ripper, who pats her head as though she were a dog, saying 'she's in love ... poor beast'.

GESCHWITZ ALSO HAS THE FINAL BARS of the work to herself: Lulu is dead, Jack the Ripper is gone, Geschwitz is dying and sings in music of an aching beauty to rival any in opera 'Lulu, My angel! Appear once more to me! For I am near, I'm always near'. Another opera might have made this central—it would have been an opera about unrequited love. But Geschwitz does not even appear until the second act. For all its compelling quality, this part of the work is just one strand of the whole.

The very fact that people so often search for purity in a character or some moral scheme in the whole opera testifies to its shocking unpalatabili-

ty. No one is to be emulated in the world of *Lulu*, yet—Jack apart, and even he is given a disturbing gravity—no one is overwhelmingly evil. The opera explores distorted passions and folly of many kinds, all woven together. The moments of light emerge only evanescently, in tiny flickers, much as they do (against a far less grim background) in Verdi's *Falstaff*. No solutions are on offer; and that is why *Lulu* doesn't preach.

Perhaps it does, though, in a small way. Much of the opera has a more or less strict use of various neoclassical forms mingled with serial techniques—the very forms that in their time were the framework for order and beauty. But the points in *Lulu* that allow us to remember, in however contorted a way, what order and beauty might be, are the ones where rules are set aside momentarily. These moments can sound more structured and ordered than those where order is applied by fiat.

The Australian Opera has, on the whole, done the work justice. Jennifer McGregor's Lulu is solid. She seemed sometimes to be saving her voice overmuch, but there is so much singing for the lead that this is hardly surprising. Elizabeth Campbell's Geschwitz was very moving and generally well-pitched. Perhaps Barry Mora's Schön and Jack could have been fuller. The orchestral playing had some ups and downs of ensemble and intonation, but I'm sure this will improve as the season progresses. David Stanhope's shaping of the work came together by the last act to give a structure and impetus to the crucial final scene that was most impressive.

A quibble about the direction: the orchestral interludes are accompanied by a pair of dancers that perform around the edge of the pit. I'm not sure that this was a great success in general, but in the film music interlude before the second scene of Act II, it is a great pity that the dance replaces the silent film depicting Lulu's arrest that was called for by Berg. Much else of the design and direction, though, is very evocative and well thought out. This *Lulu* deserves to be heard and seen. ■

David Braddon-Mitchell is a Canberra critic and philosopher who writes regularly for *Eureka Street*.

OK, so prima donnas aren't exactly unknown

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FLASH IN
THE PAN

Father and son

In the Name of the Father, dir. Jim Sheridan (Greater Union). A day or two before I watched this film, I saw a photograph of Dominic McGlinchey's two young sons carrying his coffin. McGlinchey was the leader of the Irish National Liberation Army and a killer. He had said once that only his sons would care what happened to him. It was the elder son, who had already witnessed his mother's murder, who was there to see his father shot.

That's one kind of father-son relationship produced in Northern Irish ghettos. Another sort is far more common: the ineffective father, diminished through all sorts of injustices, the wayward son, who has never understood possibility or fulfillment. That's the kind of relationship depicted in the film. It's a 'true' story, of course: the tale of Gerard Conlon and his father, Giuseppe, who were among a number of people convicted for the 1974 bombing of a pub in Guildford. They were innocent, but it was not until 1989 that the British judicial system (and government) admitted the 'wrongful conviction'.

The music in the film passed me by, but I can tell you that it was written and performed by people like Bono and Gavin Friday and Sinéad O'Connor. What really gripped me was the way *In the Name of the Father* put before us just how things might happen. The opening sequence in Belfast, for example, sets out the dynamics of family, of ghetto community and of riot, including the comedy of it all. In fact the whole Irish side of the story is told with the most resounding ring of truth.

Twenty minutes into the film, when we still had ahead of us the 15 years of imprisonment and struggle for freedom, I wondered if I could bear it. Most of the action is within the claustrophobic confines of the courthouse and jail—and under a cloud of oppressive prejudices. The spotlight is very much on the actors who play father and son, Pete Postlethwaite and Daniel

Day-Lewis. They survive its scrutiny in a way that the British end of things doesn't, quite. There's a slight touch each of Rumpole and the police drama to the courts and the inquisition, and Emma Thompson as the crusading lawyer is a bit of a box-office mistake.

Which brings me to the *Schindler's List* factor—you know, some

Eureka Street Film Competition

We're not going to let you forget that it's the Year of the Family, and to prove it here are Daniel Day-Lewis and his screen dad from *In the Name of the Father*. In recent films Day-Lewis has been an American frontiersman, a New York gentleman, an Irish political prisoner and his own left foot. Tell us what he's likely to be next 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 in Dec.-Jan. was Ian Wilkinson, of Mt Martha, VIC, who thought Michelle Pfeiffer was about to say: 'Don't you dare put words in my mouth!'



stories are better left off the screen, left to words like 'Four innocent people spent, between them, 60 years in jail because of a judiciary and a police force and a government tainted by self-interest, racism and dishonesty'. What's missing from words like that are character and relationship, the real dimensions of people and cultures. The point of *In the Name of the Father*

is that it adds all these things in, and it becomes possible to discern the real Giuseppe Conlon, father, who died in prison, and the real Gerard Conlon, son, who goes on.

What's more, the father comes up trumps, which is not the usual course of events in modern Irish storytelling.

—Margaret Coffey

Malice mouth

Naked, dir. Mike Leigh (independent cinemas) has been billed as a downbeat masterpiece about a London 'many people would prefer to ignore'. Its central character, Johnny (David Thewlis), is described as the 'ultimate anti-hero of the '90s—cold, cynical and immoral, yet at times caring and compassionate.'

Sadly, the film is a load of pretentious tripe. There is nothing new about Johnny—he is the latest in a long line of truculent, smart-arsed, working-class philosophers, spiritual descendants all of Jimmy Porter in John Osborne's *Look Back In Anger*.

Johnny flees Manchester for London, where he shakes the worldviews of a lonely nightwatchman who offers him shelter and of several women who are attracted to him despite his carping selfishness, sadistic impulses and unwashed body. A subplot follows a sneering yuppie landlord who, improbably, manages to look like a debauched Cliff Richard.

Thewlis gives an extraordinary performance as Johnny (picking up a British Academy Award and the best-actor award at Cannes) but the character is a misogynistic bore. Good jokes are scattered between exhausted one-liners like 'Thanks for the marmarries', and, although two of the women in Johnny's life (Lesley Sharp and Katrin Cartlidge) have the makings of appealing characters, they remain in dumbstruck orbit around this scruffy bard.

Naked won the best-director award for Mike Leigh at Cannes last year. The film may be technically fine but it is colder than a well-digger's bum, unlike earlier Leigh offerings such as *High Hopes* and *Life is Sweet*. Britain's post-Thatcher film industry appears to have no middle ground between the grunge of Mike Leigh or

Ken Loach and the tweeness of Merchant/Ivory. With *Naked*, Leigh is groping towards some sort of statement about class, but I haven't a clue what it is. Go see *The Snapper* instead.

(PS: I wonder how many women think *Naked* is a masterpiece?)

—Mark Skulley

The heart of Texas

Flesh and Bone, dir. Steve Kloves (independent cinemas). 'Evil is patient in the deep dark heart of Texas'. The publicist's blurb is not a bad one-liner, and a pretty good hint at the mood of this not-so-menacing-as-it-would-have-you-believe psychothriller from the director of *The Fabulous Baker Boys*.

The film opens with a botched robbery turned murder, committed by Roy (James Caan) and watched by his young son, Arlis (Jerry Swindall). The story then jumps rather awkwardly over 30 years to find the adult Arlis (Dennis Quaid) leading a nomadic but very ordered life as a servicer of vending machines. The film's soft centre consists of his meeting with warm, spontaneous Kay (Meg Ryan), who is running from a past life of domestic abuse. She falls in love with Arlis, a decent man but a control freak. He is, as the Americans say, 'in denial' over his memories of violence.

Flesh and Bone is a serious but not entirely successful attempt to deal with the problem of evil. It asks what makes people capable of murder, and avoids offering any pat answers. The film has problems with a meandering, sluggish script, but the central fault lies with uneven performances. Ryan, despite the projectile-vomit scene which marks her entry into the plot, is a bit dull, and Quaid just keeps staring at the ground.

In contrast, Caan is terrific, managing to mask his good looks with a desiccated, deathly appearance that is really frightening. I hope for his sake that it was done with make-up

—Catriona Jackson

Spanish accent

La Belle Epoque, dir. Fernando Trueba, and *The Fencing Master*, dir. Pedro

Olea (both at independent cinemas). These two movies follow a lot of good Spanish films recently shown in Australian cinemas. *La Belle Epoque*, in fact, has been nominated for Best Foreign Film in this year's Academy Awards and, although it has stiff competition, could fluke it.

The two films are very different in approach. *La Belle Epoque* flows with sunny hedonism, although the viewer knows with hindsight how fragile is its genial tolerance; it is set in 1931 and the politics that it keeps at a safely derisive distance will soon crush the delicate balances of kindness.

The Fencing Master, by contrast, is austere, even a trifle stilted, but it is the formal stiffness of an old Sherlock Holmes story. Assumpta Serna, as Adela, makes a wonderful foil, in more ways than one, for Omero Antonutti as the punctilious Don Astarloa, the eponymous hero whose exquisite sense of honour receives a supreme challenge.

There is an indescribable quality in Spanish art that compels us—they call it *duende* and we haven't got a word for it because we can only admire it without being able to emulate the *hubris*, the *chutzpah*, the *je ne sais quoi* ... It is the kind of arrogant, erotic courage shown by the bullfighter and the flamenco dancer: an ability to look into the abyss and make a joke. (Compare this with the Scandinavians, who look courageously into the abyss and just get terribly depressed.)

—Juliette Hughes

Serendipity

Shadowlands, dir. Richard Attenborough (Village Roadshow, through selected cinemas), a film of great substance and exquisite style, exhibits the extraordinary skills of the doyen of British film-makers.

Set in Oxford during the 1950s, it tells the story of C.S. Lewis, professor of English language and literature and a prolific writer of science fiction, Christian apologetics and children's books, who late in life fell in love with an American divorcee, Joy Gresham.

Shadowlands remains essentially a love story, though Lewis' existential dilemmas and theological reflection

are integral to the drama. There are touches of humour to lighten the emotional load and, charged with pathos though the film is, Anthony Hopkins and Debra Winger ensure by their brilliant portrayals of Lewis and Gresham that it never descends to mere sentimentality (Winger is one of this year's Oscar nominees).

Their love is an attraction of opposites. Lewis, a reserved, middle-aged bachelor, ill at ease with women, is an intellectual who abandons himself only when writing fiction. Gresham has a bold, vivacious personality and an incisive intellect that, as Lewis discovers, has little time for the conventions of the English class system.

As with every good romance, there is a twist: the pair marry, but only as a legal formality, to allow Gresham to live in England. It takes a crisis in her life to reveal to Lewis how deeply he loves her, and he begins to experience deeply something that he has lectured and written about so elegantly, but rarely known himself—pain and suffering.

The stage play of *Shadowlands* has already been a success worldwide, and this screenplay adaptation is equally compelling. It is filmed on location and the soundtrack, featuring the London Symphony Orchestra and Magdalen College Choir, adds icing to the cake.

—Brad Halse

Philadelphia story

Philadelphia, dir. Jonathan Demme (Hoyts). Despite earlier flirtations with the subject, *Philadelphia* represents Hollywood's first real close encounter with AIDS. The film, which stars Tom Hanks and Denzel Washington, provides two hours of quality acting. Hanks plays Andy Beckett, a young and gay hot-shot litigation lawyer in a large Philadelphia firm, who is dismissed suddenly for incompetence.

Ostensibly, his dismissal relates to the loss of the file of an important client and a narrow escape from litigation being barred through delay. Beckett, however, thinks that he has been set up and that the real reason for his sacking is the awareness of the partners that he has AIDS in its later stages with its symptoms becoming

obvious. In his search for a lawyer to represent him, his ninth choice is the homophobic Joe Miller (Denzel Washington), who is at first reluctant to act for him and indeed seeks medical advice about possible infection after his initial contact with his client. The rest of the film involves the court case, the deterioration of Beckett's condition and the growing strength of their relationship.

Washington is convincing as the 'smarter than paint' lawyer. Jason Robards caricatures the rascally, manipulative and unenlightened senior partner.

Hanks, who will probably win the AA for best actor, basically plays a thin and greying Tom Hanks, but there is one marvellous scene where he seeks emotional refuge in the recorded glory of an aria sung by the young Callas, a scene which rivals Juliet Stevenson's unforgettable grief in *Truly, Madly, Deeply*.

On occasions sweeping violins intrude, and personally I found the low-budget 1990 movie, *Long Time Companion*, more moving. With a sad ending (with AIDS, surely no surprise) the film will need Academy awards to be a box office success. However, Hanks' performance and a superb soundtrack make compatible travelling companions.

—Gordon Lewis



Perhaps out of time, never out of mind

Pandora's Box, dir. G.W. Pabst, 1928 (State Concert Hall of Victoria).

'What counts is the image': Pabst was defending the silent film heritage almost a decade after it had been obliterated by sound. Since then, almost 90 per cent of that heritage has been lost, crumbling into dust, recalled only by those who saw fit to record their memories in the sturdier medium of print. Like *Beowulf* saved from the Cotton fire, however, *Pandora's Box* has survived for us to marvel at.

The problems of conveying Wedekind's stridently word-driven play in silent idiom are obvious, but it was attempted with varying success several times. The character of Lulu, the archetypal *femme fatale*, has fascinated film-makers from the very beginning. (There have been many Lulu-esque creations, notably the Lola-Lola in *The Blue Angel* portrayed by a disappointed Marlene Dietrich—she missed out on the real Lulu.) Pabst succeeded brilliantly, but recognition of his achievement was delayed until well into the 1950s.

The choice of Louise Brooks as the eternal, amoral innocent was inspired. This is a Lulu who is not vicious, but whose complete lack of insight into herself and others makes her a catalyst for catastrophe. Her talent for disaster stems from her inability to discern other people's desires and agendas for her. Brooks herself had an extraordinary attraction, not entirely explicable in terms of her luminous beauty; something more profound was going on. With her perfect black helmet of hair and graceful, dancer's body, Brooks epitomised the looks and aspirations of young women in the 1920s far more than bigger stars were able to do. A German newspaper described her as having 'sphinx-eyes', and only Marilyn Monroe has since matched her for screen presence.

Contemporary critics panned Brooks' subtle portrayal as wooden, but they were judging her against an acting norm that now seems ludicrously overblown. The expression on Lulu's face as she is caught kissing Dr

Schön is a minor miracle of minxish triumph—and in the film it is as malign as she ever gets to be.

Pabst's triumph in the silent medium was to elicit performances from his actors that stand—timeless, admirable, even awe-inspiring. It is a masterpiece that, like *Ulysses* or *Les Grandes Baigneuses* or the works of Shakespeare, fulfilled, redefined and ultimately threatened the future vitality of its genre. It is ironic that the talkies ensured that silent movies never really got a chance to see if there was life after *Pandora's Box*.

Of course, it is difficult to make useful comments on silent film since so much of it is lost forever. In America, collectors opened treasured cans time after time to find only gritty dust; in Europe it was war, that well-attested rationaliser of libraries, that did its usual. So, when so much of our perception of silent film is formed by revivals of Laurel & Hardy and *Son of the Sheik*, and when other remnants are kept inaccessible in archives, what can we learn from *Pandora's Box*?

Quite a bit. We can enter into a pre-television view of things, in fact a pre-audiovisual view of things, where information was allowed into the brain, through the eye alone, at a speed that remembered the leisureliness of the three-volume novel attention span. Towards the end of the film there is a scene where Alwa, (Lulu's lover and the son of the husband she accidentally shoots on their wedding night) is descending the rickety staircase of their foul London garret while she, oblivious as ever to peril, entertains Jack the Ripper as her first and last client. The audience is forced down those steps with him in *real time*—it must have been 30 seconds. It is an exercise in contemplation as concentrated as Duchamps' *Nude descending a staircase*.

The only comparisons that make sense, then, are with our experiences of other examples of the greatest art. *Pandora's Box* at least has survived, and that is something to be grateful for.

—Juliette Hughes

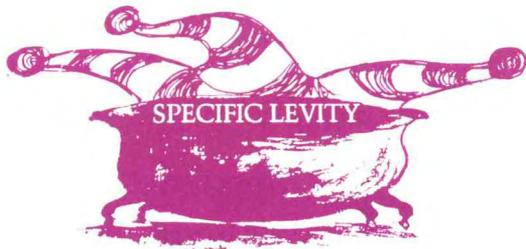
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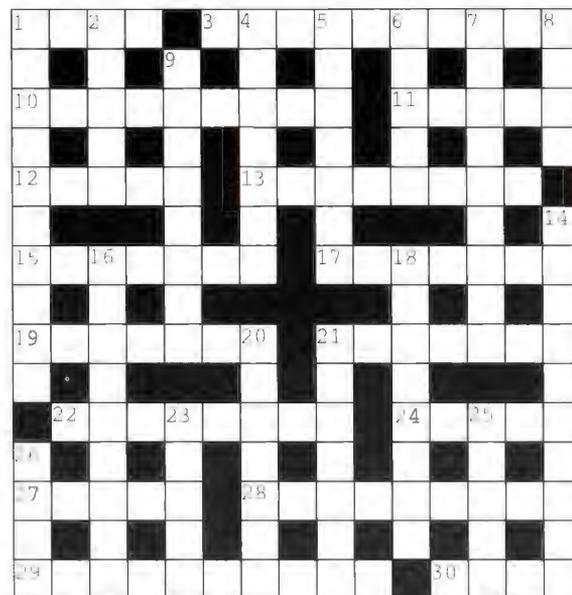
Devised by Joan Nowotny IBVM

ACROSS

- 1 Fast time? (4)
- 3 Festive time—so dieter eats confection with joy. (10)
- 10 O! I quit, and disaster overtakes me every day. (9)
- 11 Royal architectural style found in Bantu dormitory. (5)
- 12 A blow to cause embarrassment! (5)
- 13 Strength of the wind in the Service (3,5)
- 15 Regulations in great numbers are legally binding when you are in 13-across. (2,5).
- 17 Military officer tells Prime Minister about island in the Mediterranean. (7)
- 19 Poet Henley's head is bloody but not bending. (7)
- 21 Artist returns in the ship of the desert to find something sweet. (7)
- 22 Former Earl of Beaconsfield will somehow deal with Iris. (8)
- 24 Broadcasting, for one, is perhaps a dime a day. (5)
- 27 Progression of events in the convoy. (5)
- 28 The way I bandy words in time is essentially different. (9)
- 29 Making a claim before nursing is just being fanciful. (10)
- 30 Let some of the best etchings stand as before. (4)

DOWN

- 1 A meal of quail mixed with couscous, but without the top of the custard, makes one talkative. (10)
- 2 No Os, with an A, will help spell this holiday resort. (5)
- 4 Put it in a doorway to cause a stir. (7)
- 5 Beneath the brown shirt is a spirit that can produce a burst of temper. (7)
- 6 A proportion of the allowance spent without any heart. (5)
- 7 It would show bad manners to pile a rice mound untidily on a plate. (9)
- 8 Did he threaten to raze anew the walls of Jerusalem? (4)
- 9 His Highness initially had a big row, strangely displeased about such erudite taste. (8)
- 14 Mail returned is held by father, or possibly mother, in the house. (10)
- 16 Make up story about eating new rib at café. (9)
- 18 Round about here I jam the brakes. What a prophet of doom! (8)
- 20 Was Danny the Red dead? Somehow it's what I feared. (7)
- 21 Give a little credit to 'im, son. No way, 'e's in the red! (7)
- 23 Go up round the pole and apply clean water. (5)
- 25 Sketch the outline? Sounds like a breeze! (5)
- 26 The favourites go up the stair. (4)



Solution to Crossword no.20, February 1994



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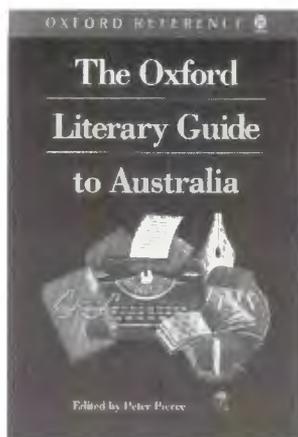
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